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**2012 REUNION  
ANNOUNCEMENT  
& NEWS**

**103d INF DIV WW II**



**103d 2012 Reunion in KC, MO - August 1 thru 4** - Page 2

**Why Our Artillery Support in WW II Was So Effective** - Page 9

**Kansas City** promises to be a great place for our reunion, especially for the 103d Association since a big percentage of our WW II personnel came from the mid-west reception centers, and it appears that a big percentage of attendees will drive there. Furthermore, since KC is close to the geographical center of our great country, it has become the convention capital of the USA and has many venues to peak our interest. If anything, we may have trouble scheduling all the available sites which may interest you. One significant advantage is the relative short distance that our ultra dedicated archivist must haul his documents & archives for your review. Zack Sigler lives in Wichita, only a short hop down the road from KC, and by coincidence, he is very familiar with the hotel and highly recommends it. My better half has arranged a great time for us, please refer to page #2 for details. However, please make your hotel reservations NOW, before the next newsletter in April, and at that time make your reunion event reservations when you receive NFTCP #31 in April. IF then you cannot attend, you may cancel anytime up to within 24 hours of check-in without penalty.

**Attrition** is taking its toll on our veterans, very apparent in the past few years, and much more so in the past year - as you might expect since we are aging rapidly! Now unfortunately, we must report the passing of Two 103d Association Giants: Rabbit Lejeune Wilson and BG Harold F. Pacha, two of our most esteemed veterans (Refer to page 7). Rabbit passed into eternal rest February 12 after a short intense battle with cancer. Harold appeared in good health in New Orleans in July, however, he passed into eternal rest November 16 with heart failure. Additionally, I want to mention Richard T. Ball, in the recent past a very active past president (2005), now, still in excellent physical health, however, he is beset with severe dementia. (He is receiving care in an assisted-living facility in Sarasota, FL - near his son) This leads me to observe that with all the medical advances in health care, we must learn to cope with the anomalies which these advances spawn.

**Our web-site** ([www.103didww2assn.org](http://www.103didww2assn.org)) continues to bring a lot of interesting situations, especially the inquiries made by hits on the site and the spin-off we learn from the inquiries. For instance, the highest rank obtained by any 103d veteran remaining in the military after WW II was achieved by former first sergeant Walter S. Sillery, 3BnHqCo 409th Inf Regt, retired as a major general (Pg8) and now in eternal rest in the Saratoga, NY National Cemetery. However, the factor which provides all our "new-found" information became available as the result of Zack Sigler obtaining and transcribing all the unit morning reports (M/R's) which when catalogued as he is doing, readily provides full detail on *each* person who served with 103d ID in WWII. This project is scheduled for completion in the fall of 2014, with the complete M/R's available for each of 103d's 120+ company level units. (See *Web-site Report - Page 5*)

# Kansas City Here We Come.

## 2012 Reunion August 1 thru 4



If you had two full weeks vacation, I'm not sure that would be enough time to see and do all that Kansas City has to offer. Frommers, The #1 Travel & Vacation Bible, names Kansas City in the Top 10 Travel Destinations in the World for 2012. Citing the city's burgeoning arts scene and appearing alongside destinations like Curacao and Ghana; Kansas City is the only American city to make the list. After doing my research, I can certainly understand why. Kansas City is a dynamic city backed by a vibrant arts scene, world-class attractions, and an electric mix of restaurants. What I have done is put together four interesting and exciting days for what I thought most interesting for the majority of the group. I will then list several other options, for your personal pursuits. The dates chosen are Wednesday, August 1 through Saturday August 4, and why - because July was jam packed with craziness, starting with the Major League All-Star Baseball game and a couple of conventions each

hosting two to three thousand people, thus, the August option. The Aladdin Hotel itself, is a national treasure. Built in 1920 and recently fully restored to its original glorious Art Deco style, features a hip design and vintage style as well as upscale amenities. You are in for a spectacular treat. Only \$99 for two, \$10 each additional person, to include daily, one breakfast buffet per room occupant in the Zebra Room Restaurant. Please make your reservations early and often. **Call the hotel directly at 877-224-2870** In order to get the group rate, you must identify the 103rd ID Association WW II Reunion.

On Wednesday, plan a two or three o'clock arrival time for a complementary Champagne or Cookies and Punch check in. The esteemed Board of Direction Meeting will be held at 4 PM followed by a delectable dinner in the Roof Garden Ballroom. There will be goldfish on the centerpieces, but not for swallowing. Please let me know how many are interested, as all

are welcome. Ladies, I am encouraging your flapper dresses, and headbands, and, gentlemen wearing pin striped shirts, as the infamous Tom Pendergast will be with us for the evening. Let's hope we're not raided!

On Thursday, we will leave late morning for a leisurely guided tour of Fort Leavenworth, being welcomed by the Installation Commander with a group photo opportunity at the Buffalo Soldiers Monument. John Richley will be your guide, a retired officer who doesn't believe in ghosts, but in the past 25 years has collected some of the post's stories that center around them, and has written a book, "The Haunted Houses of Fort Leavenworth". Have lunch with the Harvey Girls (remember them? - and not to be confused with *Hooters Girls*) and be entertained by the "prisons" barber shop quartet. All this fun and frivolity for approximately \$35 per person, including the bus; please join us! The bus will arrive back at the hotel around 4 PM.

*(Continued next page)*



*(Continued from previous page)*

For dinner Thursday evening, may I suggest the Zebra Lounge at the reunion Hotel, or one of the many restaurants at nearby Crown Center ...”.....or, sign up for dinner as a group for Pierpont’s at Union Station where you will experience high quality food with exceptional service.””....not to be missed. Pierpont’s has been named “Best Place to Entertain an out-of-town Guest” and “ Best Place to take a Group” from the local press. All this and Union Station, too.

Friday is destined to be an unforgettable treasure. “Bess Truman” herself, will arrive late morning to address the group.. ..”My Life with Harry”. Then motor-coach to Independence to meet “Harry” for lunch in Historic Independence Square, and for those who wish to indulge, a stop at Clinton’s ice cream parlor where Harry had his first job. You’ll then be treated to a city tour with Bess and Harry and on to a guided tour of the Truman Presidential Museum. What a great day! All this for \$55 per person. Remembering Truman made the fateful decision to drop the Atomic

bomb on Hiroshima, saving in excess of one million American lives which would have been the cost of the military invasion of the Japanese homeland. It will become our opportunity to find out more about this great man.

Friday night is a chill out night - you can just sit back in your slax and relax .. .. OR.. ..1, you can sign up for dinner at the Golden Ox restaurant at the stockyards. The Golden Ox Restaurant opened its doors in May of 1949 to furnish a good place to dine for the ranchers, farmers, and their wives who brought their livestock. At one time over 1.8 million cattle per year passed through. Today the stock yards are gone, but the tradition lives on. The Golden Ox Restaurant is a big part of that tradition, located on the first floor of the Livestock Exchange Building. Visit the Golden Ox Restaurant and discover the real reason Kansas City is famous for it’s steaks! OR... Plan on a spectacular evening at the Power and Light District, only 5 blocks away, all downhill going, and with everything to do. Diversified restaurants, theaters, live entertainment - fabulous experience

Now, Saturday is your “do anything you want” day until two o’clock when we plan a visit to the World War I Museum - purportedly the best in the USA. Then pop over for another unforgettable event with a Kansas City Barbeque and KC jazz; Banquet and Dancing at the Commemorative Air Force Heart of America Wing, New Century Airport, Olathe, KS (Close-in KC metro area). Our Saturday evening event includes round-trip motor coach, KC BBQ buffet dinner, Jazz Orchestra, the cash-bar bartender, rides in vintage jeep, vintage aircraft tours (WWII & Korean era aircraft), fly-over by one of the CAF’s (Commemorative, that is, not Confederate) vintage open-cockpit aircraft and a “surprise” guest. As well as the possibility of a glorious Kansas sunset. Also, includes: customized dog tags, museum tour, CAF Representative on each motor coach out-going to the hanger to provide the history of the Olathe Naval Air Station and the Commemorative Air Force. All the above, including WWI Museum Tour (3-5pm) \$60/each.

*Are you as excited as I am about K.C.?!*

*Fran Rogers*

**To Help us Plan the 103d’s KC Reunion this August 2012 Please Respond IF you are considering Attending. This is NOT a reservation -- Only an indicator of preference for OUR planning guide!**

**Please, using one of these means, advise us-number in your party anticipated to attend each event:**

**Email** - chanrogerskc@gmail.com

**Telephone** - 508-533-0423

**US Mail** - 17 Deerfield Road, Medway, MA 02053

	Number Attending
<b>Wednesday</b>	
<b>Welcome Dinner .....</b>	_____*
<b>Thursday</b>	
<b>Ft Leavenworth Tour &amp; Lunch.....</b>	_____*
<b>Pierponts Restaurant at Union Station .....</b>	_____*
<b>Friday</b>	
<b>The Truman Library Experience.....</b>	_____*
<b>Evening Dinner - The Golden Ox .....</b>	_____*
<b>Saturday</b>	
<b>WWI Museum .....</b>	_____*
<b>BBQ Dinner/Dancing at New Century Airport .....</b>	_____*

\* Number in your party - Please respond NLT March 25, 2012

# Discretionary Activities available in KC for Small Group Choice (on your own)

## The Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts



What began as a sketch on a napkin has become an architectural icon and home for the performing arts in Kansas City. The Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts has changed Kansas City's skyline, as well as the experiences of artists and audiences throughout the region.



A cornerstone of KC's cultural renaissance, [the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts](#) opened this fall to national acclaim. Designed by renowned architect Moshe Safdie, the \$413 million facility is KC's new address for ballet, symphony, opera and more.

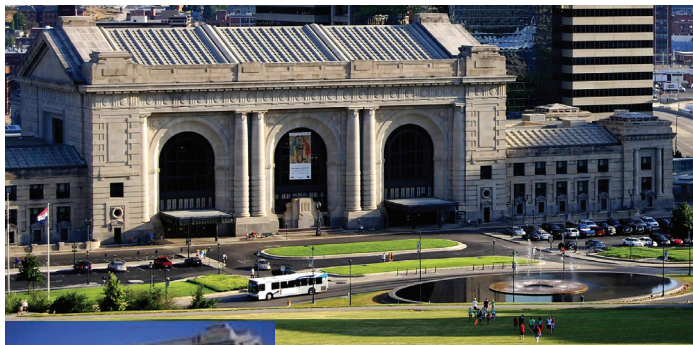
## Power & Light District

The Kansas City Power & Light District or Power & Light District is a shopping and entertainment district in Downtown KC. The \$850 million "mixed-use" district is one of the largest development projects in the [Midwestern United States](#)<sup>[2]</sup> The Power & Light District is one of only a few places in the United States where possession and consumption of [open containers](#) of [alcoholic beverages](#) are allowed on the street, although they remain prohibited on the street throughout the rest of



Kansas City. At the heart of the Power & Light District is Kansas City Live!, a one block area devoted to live music and entertainment venues. Offering over a half million square feet The Kansas City Power & Light District is the mid-west's premier entertainment epicenter. With more than 50 unique and captivating retail outlets, restaurants, bars, and entertainment venues, the district offers something for everyone

## Union Station



There is no place in Kansas City – or any city – quite like Union Station. This fully restored landmark is Kansas City's most prominent destination for cultural and entertainment activities.

Built in 1914, Union Station encompasses 850,000 square feet and originally featured 900 rooms. In its prime as a working train

## The Country Club Plaza



Make no mistake: this isn't a golf course strip mall. Known as "The Plaza", this 55-acre site is Kansas City in her most glamorous pose—hair "did", makeup flawless, acrylics polished. Speaking of poses, pose in front of the designed-in-Paris [J.C. Nichols Memorial Fountain](#) for a snapshot, grab your credit card(s), and work it!

- Don't Miss: New additions to the 15-block district include [Zoom toy store](#), [Sperry Top-Sider](#), [Rally House](#), Kansas City designer [Tomboy](#), and [XXI Forever](#) mega store.
- Don't Worry: After nearly 100 years, [Halls](#) is more relevant than ever. This Plaza specialty department store, featuring everything from couture to cosmetics to home furnishings, is the standard bearer for Kansas City style.
- Don't Starve: Dozens of restaurants and bars include locally-owned [Blanc Burgers and Bottles](#) and [Starker's Restaurant](#), specialty pizza joint [Coal Vines](#), and familiar chains like [The Capital Grille](#) and [Houston's](#).

## The Crown Center



Located in the heart of downtown Kansas City, Crown Center is often called a city within a city. Three levels of great shopping and dining complement two of the city's most luxurious hotels, exquisite office buildings, a residential community and several entertainment attractions. It all surrounds the worldwide headquarters of Hallmark Cards, Inc. Bring your family and your imagination for an unforgettable visit to Crown Center.

station, accommodated tens of thousands of passengers every year. At its peak during WWII, an estimated one million travelers passed through the Station. The North Waiting Room (now the Sprint Festival Plaza) could hold 10,000 people and the complex included restaurants, a cigar store, barber shop, railroad offices, the nation's largest Railway Express Building (used for shipping freight and mail) as well as a powerhouse providing steam and power.

As the world pauses to reflect on the 100th Anniversary of the Titanic, Union Station will pay tribute to the tragedy with a poignant look at the ship and its passengers. "Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition" will feature more than 300 relics from the ship and its debris field ([March 3-Sept. 3](#))

Romantics treasure the scale and polish of this **Beaux Arts beauty**. Cynics love its gritty past, and its custom-fitted connection to the Prohibition-era '30s thanks to gangster, [Pretty Boy Floyd](#). Whatever version you want, the second-largest working train station in the country has something for everyone. Pose on the grass patch below neighboring Liberty Memorial and proceed inside. Single file, of course.



Larry Wayne

## **103d WEBSITE UPDATE**

### **Larry Wayne Webmaster & 103d Association VP**

**G**reetings go out to all Cactusmen, their families, and members of the 103d Infantry Division World War II Association. We hope you had a joyous and memorable holiday season and you are looking forward to meeting once again; this year in Kansas City, MO. You can keep up with the latest details on this year's reunion, as Fran Rogers puts them together, at the 103d Website, [http://www.103didww2assn.org/next\\_reunion.htm](http://www.103didww2assn.org/next_reunion.htm)

Since our last report, we have completed scanning all the available 103d Infantry Division General Orders; from November, 1942 to September 1, 1945 when the bags were packed for return to the States and inactivation. There are only nine orders missing out of the entire time the Division was active, and six of those orders were issued prior to departure for the European Theatre. There are searchable data bases, by Date, Name, Award, or Unit. This provides the capability of searching to find specific information on individuals, units, or awards. Each data base provides the General

Order Number and Date issued, thus allowing researchers to access and view the actual order. You can find the General Orders at [http://www.103didww2assn.org/Gen\\_Ord.htm](http://www.103didww2assn.org/Gen_Ord.htm)

We have also added a section titled, "MAIL CALL" which is a collection of various information, letters veterans wrote home, bugle calls, furlough documents, transfer orders for medical transfer back to the States, and a complete copy of the "Spiritual Almanac for Service Men 1943-1944." View this section at [http://www.103didww2assn.org/Mail\\_Call.htm](http://www.103didww2assn.org/Mail_Call.htm)

The 103d Website continues to attract many family members who are conducting research. The son of SGT Warren J. Martin, D/411<sup>th</sup>, was able to use information available on the website to request the U.S. Army Human Resources Command to review a recommendation for SGT Martin's Bronze Star that was approved. However no order was ever issued to effect the award. Unfortunately, the USAHRC was not able to verify the data, but the effort did result in the award of the Bronze Star for the SGT Martin earning his Combat Infantryman

Badge. The former daughter-in-law of SGT Gordon Flenniken, G/409<sup>th</sup>, is tracing his service, from the time he entered the Army until his discharge. The nephew of 1LT Harry Schweikert, I/410<sup>th</sup>, submitted his uncle's bio for posting on the 103d site.

A few more biographical summaries have been posted since the last website update. 1SG William Sillery, HQ Co/409<sup>th</sup>. After the war, 1SG Sillery continued his career, obtaining a commission, ultimately joining the New York Guard and he retired a Major General. (MG Sillery's bio is Page 9 of this issue) Another biographical summary was written by the family of SGT Gordon Flenniken, G/409<sup>th</sup>. If you would like your biographical summary posted, or that of a veteran family member, contact me at [info@103didww2assn.org](mailto:info@103didww2assn.org).

Remember, this is your website. Any information you have on yourself, as a veteran, or concerning a family member's service with the 103d Infantry Division, please contact me at [info@103didww2assn.org](mailto:info@103didww2assn.org). Pictures and documents are scanned and returned.

### **Remember – Memorial Day Service**

**May 28, 2012 at 103d ID WW II MEMORIAL**

**1300 hours – Confirm via next NFTCP (#31)**

**Travel & Information Center – I-35 Southbound**

**Gainesville, Texas**



## HONOR ROLL



**103d INF DIV ASSN of WW II**  
(Deceased reported after NFTCP issue No 29)

Beall	John Bryant	410 2Bn Hq Co
Bennett, Jr.	John C.	410 Hq Co
Brown	James W.	411 Co C
Danielson Jr.	William J.	409 Co D
Dargols	Simon	103 Rec
Derounian	Judge Steven B.	411 Co G
Gonyo	Grant B.	410 Co C
Hale	Earl P.	411 Co G
Insel	Shepard A.	409 Co K
Martin	Rex	411 CO I
McGovern	Eugene P.	409 Co C
Milhoan	Joseph J.	409 Co B
Murphy	Robert J.	409 Co B
Norstrand	George H.	411 Co A
Pacha	Harold BG	411 Co G
Rogers	Robert R.	409 Sv Co
Sallman	Charles M.	409 Co A Med
Vokal	Casimer	410 Co C
Weatherup	James H	409 Co A
West	Robert W.	411 Co I
Widmer	Joseph E.	103 Hq Co
Wiedman	Charles August	410 Co M
Wilson	Lejune	328 Eng Co C

## 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>
	<b>Line Companies</b>				
	<b>Hq Companies</b>				
	<b>Support Units</b>				
	<b>A + B + C</b>				
	<b>Battle Deaths</b> (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/44	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

## IN MEMORIAM AND TRIBUTE TO LEJEUNE “Rabbit” WILSON



Rabbit Wilson was born November 4, 1924 in Ft. Worth, Texas to Elizabeth Ellis Wilson and Macy Adolphus Wilson. He graduated from Polytechnic High School in Ft. Worth. Rabbit began college at Texas Wesleyan University and when World War II broke out, he enlisted in the Army. He served in 103d Infantry Division 328th Combat Engineer Battalion where he saw a lot of action in the European Theater. When the war ended, he returned to college to get his Bachelor's degree in Petroleum Engineering from the University of Oklahoma. Rabbit was a member of Sigma Tau, Tau Beta Pi and Pi Epsilon Tau at the University of Oklahoma. After college, he left for Venezuela to work as an engineer for Mene Grande Oil Company while engaged to Mary Ruth Nielsen of Norman, Oklahoma. She followed him to Venezuela and they were married there. They lived in Venezuela from 1948 through 1952. Rabbit and Mary returned to Oklahoma in 1953 where he got his Master's degree from the University of Oklahoma. He then left for Peru while Mary remained in Norman where their

first child, Susan, was born. Mother and daughter followed to Peru shortly thereafter, followed by a move to Colombia. During that time, Rabbit and Mary had three more children (Jeff, Janet and Trish) and then moved to Venezuela followed by Southern California in 1965. The family then moved to Dallas when Rabbit accepted a position with SEDCO where he held positions of increasing responsibility culminating in the position of Vice-President of Personnel and Training. After retiring from SEDCO 1986, he was appointed the Director of the Southwest Region for the Small Business Administration by President George H. W. Bush. Rabbit's post retirement activities included participation in Republican Party politics, the local Rolls Royce Club, and reunions of his WW II army division. Rabbit was one of the driving forces in the 103rd ID monument project that can be seen from Interstate 35 and located at the visitors center near Gainesville, TX. Rabbit played the lead role in securing approval of the monument's location, for which, the 103d Association is eternally grateful. After being widowed, he married Margarita Reeves in 1997. Rabbit and his wife Margarita were very active members in the Episcopal Church of the Ascension where Rabbit started a very successful bread ministry for delivery to those in need. He was recently designated as the Master Breadmaker of the church. His first priority remained his family and friends who will miss his wisdom, wit and caring nature. He is survived by his wife, Margarita, his daughters Susan Ruth (Edward) of Whittier, CA, Janet Postlewaite (Frank) of Sammamish, WA and M. Patricia Duke (Mark) of Dallas, his 4 step daughters, Margye Solomon (Norman) of Cincinnati, OH, Donice Kaufman of Fairview, TN,, Stephanie Reeves (Robert Hill) of Ashland City, TN, and Carolyn Benick-Brown (Matthew) of Nashville, TN. He was pre-deceased by his son, Jeffrey Scott Wilson and Jeff's wife, Dorian. He is also survived by his brother, Charles Ellis Wilson (Judy) and by 8 grandchildren, 13 step grandchildren, his niece, Judianne Camefix, his nephew, Charles Wilson (Collette) and their children.

## TRIBUTE TO - HAROLD F. PACHA Brigadier General - Illinois National Guard



Harold F. Pacha was born September 16, 1918 in Richland, IA, the son of Joseph P. and Clara S. Pieffer Pacha. He married Marian A. Leahy in 1942 and she preceded him in death in 1975. He later married Dorothy D. Mills in 1977. She also preceded him in death in 2004.

Lt. Pacha served with the United States Army's 103rd Infantry Division, initially in training at Camp Howze with Co G 411th Infantry, and just prior to departure to Europe, Lt Pacha was transferred to the Division G-4 Section where he served throughout WWII. He achieved the rank of major prior to his US Army discharge and joined the Illinois National Guard where he served in supply and maintenance positions and at the time of his retirement was Director of Maintenance for the Military and Naval Department, State of Illinois. He retired in 1973 from the military service after serving 34 years with the Army of the United States and the Illinois National Guard. After retirement from service, he was employed by the State of Illinois as Facilities Officer, Military & Naval Dept. until his retirement from the State in 1981.

He was chairman of the organizational committee for Holy Family Knights of Columbus Council 4179 and was elected Charter Grand Knight of the council in February 1956. He was a member of Church of the Little Flower, Little Flower Men's Club, 3rd Degree life member of Knights of Columbus

Council 4179, 4th Degree life member of Sir Knight of Bishop Griffin Association, a member of the Knights of Columbus Hall of Fame, American Legion Post 759, life member of VFW Post 8157, life member of National Guard Association, and Retired Officers Association.

He is survived by his two sons, Jim Pacha of LaFayette, CO and Tom (wife, Karen) Pacha of Springfield; daughter, Marina Pacha Powell of Springfield; two grandchildren, Michael and Ken Pacha; one great-grandchild, Rachel Roseberry of Chicago; sister, Helen Adam of Richland, IA; and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins.

## MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM S. SILLERY 1918-1999



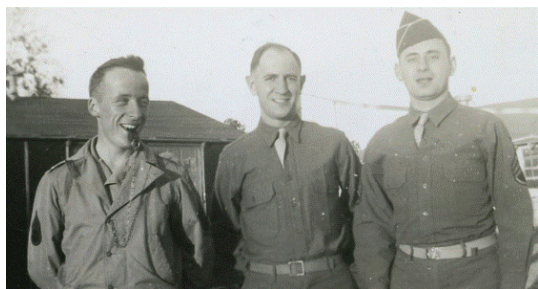
William S. Sillery was born in Rensselaer, New York January 18, 1918. He attended St. John's Academy in Rensselaer. After graduation General Sillery entered Siena College in Loudonville, New York, majoring in chemistry. Prior to his enlistment into the Army, the General worked as a chemist with the General Aniline and Film Corporation in Rensselaer.

Then Private Sillery entered the Army in Albany, New York on May 14, 1942. Ultimately, his career would take him through every rank from Private to Major General. Adding to this distinction, General Sillery served as commanding officer at the company, battalion, and regimental levels and also served in all staff positions at the division level, including Operations Officer and Chief of Staff.

After joining Headquarters Company, 3d Battalion, 409<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment in November, 1942, it took General Sillery less than two years to advance from Private to First Sergeant of Headquarters Company. On June 7, 1945, First Sergeant Sillery was commissioned a Second Lieutenant. In a rare instance, Second Lieutenant Sillery was assigned back to Headquarters Company, 3d Battalion, 409<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment on June 10, 1945. In August, 1945, he applied for and was accepted as a Regular Army officer.

First Sergeant Sillery was awarded his first Bronze Star for Valor for heroism in battle for action that occurred on December 12, 1944 in the vicinity of Merkweiler, France. A motorized convoy was unknowingly directed during travel on a confusing network of roads and encountered heavy concentrations of enemy artillery fire. With complete disregard for his own life, First Sergeant Sillery dashed to the head of the convoy, ascertained the extent of the problem, and then directed the vehicles to cover. First Sergeant Sillery courageously exposed himself again to the intense artillery fire to locate the battalion command post. After orienting his proper route on the map, he rejoined his convoy and led them to their destination. As a result of his valorous actions, First Sergeant Sillery relieved the convoy from a perilous position without the loss of a vehicle.

After leaving Active Duty, General Sillery was assigned to the U. S. Army Reserve, where he served until his promotion to Major. In 1967, he left the U.S. Army Reserve and joined the New York Guard as a Lieutenant Colonel, where he commanded a battalion and later as a Colonel commanded regiment of the New York Guard. Ultimately he retired as a Major General. General Sillery was a graduate of the Infantry, Adjutant General & Military Intelligence Career Courses, Command & General Staff College and War College. In the picture to the right, Major General Sillery and wife Virginia prepare to attend his retirement ceremony.



*F/Sgt Sillery on left*

Rensselaer City Planning Commission.

In his later years, General Sillery served as a Hearing Officer for Property Tax Grievances. He was also a past officer of the Junior Chamber of Commerce and was the New York State President for the Reserve Officer's Association. General Sillery was a former Commander of the Gerald O'Neil American Legion Post #168. He was also a member of the New York State Assessors Association, BPOE Rensselaer Lodge #2073, Ancient Order of Hibernians, Watervliet Arsenal Officer's Club and the Rensselaer Kiwanis Club.

General Sillery passed away November 24, 1999. He and Virginia were married for over 53 years and were proud parents of two children, William J. Sillery and daughter Natalie A. Sillery DiPonzio. General Sillery had two granddaughters, Elaine and Jaclyn Sillery,

General Sillery's decorations include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star with two Oak Leaf Clusters, Purple Heart with one Oak Leaf Cluster, Army Commendation Medal, Army Reserve Components Achievement Medal, American Campaign Medal, European-African-Middle East Campaign Medal with Silver Battle Star, World War II Victory Medal, National Defense Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge, and Airborne Jump Wings.





# Why Was Our Artillery Support So Effective ?

It was SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) to monitor artillery supporting fire for the infantry in order to insure the maximum possible effectiveness. Each field artillery firing battery had a forward observer team (FO Team) in its TO&E (Table of Operation/Equipment) and typically the team was assigned to (embedded with) an on-line rifle company and stayed close to the infantry company commander or as otherwise directed by him while that rifle company was on-line. Usually each regiment would have 4 rifle companies on line at a time and the assigned artillery battalion supporting each regiment had three FO teams available to embed with the infantry on-line companies, leaving randomly one rifle company without an FO Team for direct liaison. The FO function, while routinely performed by the designated officer, could readily be performed by the commo technician assigned as the communications specialist to the team, either a T/4 or sergeant. As a matter of practice, it became routine for the enlisted members of the FO Teams to become expert in the actual artillery refinements (changes in fire-direction) needed to effectively adjust artillery to cover the target. Over time, all three major functions of the team became interchangeable due to experience of working together and working with other experienced FO team members, particularly as casualties caused substitutions within the working team. Routinely, the officer FO managed the team and maintained direct liaison with the infantry

company commander, or his designee. The crucial responsibility of the FO team was the maintenance of communication with the specific firing battery or gun section; this responsibility was that of the team communications specialist, and the preferred means was wire (telephone), however, much of the time, and particularly during offensive operations, only radio was available. The bottom line was the FO Team connecting with the firing battery resulting in specific adverse impacts on the target: i.e. rounds hitting the target! *The major issue was communication of the results of artillery fire and immediate directions for improvement of the results: i.e. fire-control via direct observation!*

The objective in this process is the transfer of artillery fire performance information direct to the firing battery so that the battery crew may adjust the fire to perfect the results and the essential ingredient in this process is the ability of the parties involved to communicate direct with results of each artillery round. Technical detail in fire-adjustment became secondary to adjustment by trial and error which is readily understood by non-artillerymen and communicated without specific fire-control experience. However, as stated above, the essential element in this effort is the establishment of direct communication between the fire battery controller and the forward observer, wire preferred or via radio.

The 103d ID had 4 battalions of artillery organic to the division; 3 battalions of 105 mm howitzers - one

battalion assigned for direct support of each infantry regiment or as otherwise directed by 103d Artillery HQ (Divarty), each battalion had 3 batteries (corresponds to company sized elements) A, B, & C battery of 4 howitzers each, plus a Hq and a Service battery. The fourth artillery battalion was a 155mm howitzer battalion with 3 batteries of 4 guns. At the longer range, potential targets were not observable from front-line positions and FO teams not included in the TO/E. The three 105 battalions had 9 FO Teams in the TO/E, however, more could be improvised if needed, and were frequently utilized. Included in this issue is James H. Murphy's experience as an FO Team member of C/928 FABn, see Page 10. We are also pleased to advise that two 103d ID artillery FO Team members have published very professional and interesting WW II experience books based on their FO Team activities. The books are: 1) *US Army Serial Number 37531447* by Cpl Kenneth L. Lenke, A/928 FA Bn and, 2) *Dangerous Assignment* Sub-title: *An Artillery FO in WWII* by (T/5) William B. Hanford, B/928 FABn. Both books are apparently readily available, Lenke's thru Google to Boarder's and Hanford's (living in Palm Harbor, FL) thru the Stackpole Military History Series. Also check our website. NOTE: The Army Corps also provided direct heavy artillery support and tactical air support!

# Fading Memories Of A World War II Forward Observer

By James Huston Murphy, Forward Observer (FO)  
Battery C, 928<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion (411 Regt Combat Team)

The first news of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that infamous Sunday, December 7, 1941 began to crackle on our Philco radio. I was 17 years old, at home with my parents in Macon, Georgia. We listened, trying to comprehend what was happening. We knew we were at war. As WWII became an instant reality, we in ROTC were learning much about military organization and rank, close order drill, parade ceremony, inspection, and other protocols. But we knew nothing about war. We would learn soon enough.

I and most college ROTC students all over the U.S. had enlisted in the reserves. The Army wanted to remove us from the draft and have us complete college and officer training. Then we would move to active duty. That program was short lived. In March 1943 we were called to immediate active duty for the Army needed ground troop replacements. Those of us from Georgia Tech reported to Fort McPherson in Atlanta. Our world had suddenly and dramatically changed. My first hurdle came at our induction physical examination. As we came to the eye exam I was dreadfully aware that I was blind in my left eye from birth, and would surely be disqualified, declared 4-F, and sent home. No way. I simply could not accept that. I was told to cover one eye with my hand and read the chart. So I covered my left eye with my left hand and easily read the chart to the bottom. Then I was told to cover the other eye. I quickly covered my left eye again, this time with my right hand, and again read the chart to the bottom; 20-20 both eyes.

I had passed. Later on I had to use this strategy twice more, once when processed into the 103d Infantry Division and again to be cleared for overseas combat duty. It worked each time.

Basic training went well at age 18. In late summer of 1943 about 250 of us with prior college were ordered to report for ASTP at Texas A & I, a delightful coed college in Kingsville, Texas, home of the famous King Ranch. Perhaps the Army felt guilty for removing thousands of us from college while our Navy counterparts were left to get their degrees and commissions. Sadly for us the Army soon changed its plans again and declared those in ASTP were urgently needed as combat ground troop replacements. Most of us at Texas A & I were ordered to Camp Howze near Gainesville, Texas, to join the 103d Infantry Division. I'll never forget the long mournful blowing of the steam engine's whistle as the train pulled into the station at Kingsville to take us away. Because of my artillery basic training I was assigned to Battery C, 928<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion; a 105 mm howitzer unit. We trained long and hard, knowing that we were soon headed for war. I was promoted to T-5 corporal. My job was to provide communication by radio or by ground strung field telephone wire when possible. In WWII there was absolutely no other way for Forward Observers advancing with front line infantry to give fire commands to the artillery crews several thousand yards to the rear.

Much has been written about our first few days in France,

unloading, trudging loaded down all night that first night through Marseille and miles Northward in the cold rain with absolutely no light, and the next day setting up muddy acres of tents in our staging area. We survived somehow and prepared to start our long trek up the Rhone River Valley in cold rain and sleet to reach our first combat encounter as we approached the Vosges Mountains of Northeastern France.

My Forward Observer team was Lt. Michael Allison, Sgt. Harvel Bennett, and myself. We were all very young; near the same age. We liked and respected each other and worked well together. Early in our combat experience, on November 28, our team officer, Lt. Allison, was not far from me when he was killed by rifle fire in the small town of Barr, France. Another forward observer, Lt. Jim Vidal had previously been wounded. This meant Sgt. Bennett and I would carry on for the remainder of the war as a two man forward observer team without an officer. We knew we could do the job and we did. For this we were awarded Bronze Stars.

I will not attempt to describe all of my war experiences during the record cold winter months of 1944-45. Movies, documentaries, and pictures have well described the ordeal that all of us suffered in Northern France, Belgium, and Germany. Our artillery battalion supported the 411<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment thus the 411<sup>th</sup> war route was ours, except for occasional special assignments. We were one of the first 7<sup>th</sup> U.S. Army Infantry divisions to enter Germany. Thank God the fear, death, destruction,

*(Continued next page)*



*(Continued from previous page)*

dismemberment, despair, and agony of the war somewhat diminishes from our memory over time. Some experience, however, can never fade. On Thanksgiving Day 1944 I was with an infantry patrol that had become cut off by advancing German forces. We had no rations and no way to escape death or capture except to cross a raging, freezing cold very large stream. In sheer desperation we managed to cross it with our full combat gear and rifles, using two unsteady small wire cables strung across, one to catwalk on and one higher up to hang on to. We all made it except one who fell and was swept away. We found our way back to U.S. forces the following day, exhausted, starved, and very grateful.



“Chow time”. Jim Murphy

On Christmas day 1944, I was at the German border manning a dirt embanked log covered forward outpost, constantly watching a German outpost less than 200 yards away. It had turned clear and very cold with several inches of frozen snow on the ground. Because it was Christmas, we were not shooting at each other. I could hear German Christmas music coming from their outpost station. A runner from our infantry

unit, hundreds of yards to the rear, somehow managed to bring me up a mess kit of warm Christmas dinner with turkey, dressing and gravy. It was a total surprise and I cannot describe my gratitude. There had been no cooked food for days, only C rations. Christmas night I became very sick, an awful pain in my side, and vomiting. I was bent over and could barely move. I wondered if I had been shot. I called for the medics. Two quickly came up, at risk of being shot, and carried me back on a stretcher to the Infantry field position. There they strapped me onto the back of a jeep and drove me to an emergency medic tent a few miles back. I remember lying on that stretcher, hurting, wondering if I was dying, and looking up into the bright full moon and millions of stars and thinking of the fate of our badly wounded, and the horrors of war. An Army MD said I had acute appendicitis. On the way to the Field Hospital for operation, in the light of a full moon on the white snow, my ambulance was strafed by a low flying German plane; thankfully it was a near miss. I was operated on in the early hours of the morning and the surgeon confirmed that my appendix was ruptured. After surgery I was carried to a bed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the old brick building used as the field hospital. The cries and moans of the severely or emotionally wounded in the building were unnerving beyond description. The next night all Hell broke loose. Shells and bombs were coming in, German troops were advancing, and the hospital had to be quickly evacuated. Surgery notwithstanding, I had to walk down 2 flights of stairs and climb into the back of an Army transport truck full of other very sick patients. We had a cold and agonizing rough ride

some distance back to a larger and more secure hospital. A few days of recovery in that hospital were enough. I was feeling better and knew my Battery needed me. I asked for release to my battery and was told no, I was to be reassigned. So I put on my uniform, left against orders and somehow hitched rides on military vehicles forward to find my outfit. I don't know how I managed that, but I did.

I caught up with them on January 1, 1945, having a brief New Year's Day break with mail call. I was delighted to find mail waiting from my parents and from Rosa Schofield, a high school sweetheart. The men warmly cheered and welcomed me back and I knew I had done the right thing. Harvel Bennett was ecstatic. He was going on an observer mission alone the next day and I insisted I was able to go with him. I don't know how I managed that either, but I did, carrying my heavy radio pack and nearly passing out several times. There are so many other stories, like the time I loaded my jeep with fine champagne from a castle and took it back to my Battery, and the time road signs had been switched and I drove my jeep into a German occupied town, and the time I went to Paris for two days. My stories, like everyone who was over there, could go on and on. Some are good. Most are dreadful. War is Hell ! Says it best !

**YOUR EDITOR'S NOTE:** You can read Jim Murphy's full story on the 103d Infantry Division website at <http://www.103didww2assn.org/stories.htm>. It is truly amazing that Jim 'snuck out' of his hospital bed to rejoin his unit: B Btry 928th FA Bn 103d ID!

# Commo Section – Battery B 928th Field Artillery Battalion – 103d ID



From left to right: T/5 David W. Leiss, Pfc Joseph S. Soho, Pfc Zachary J. Hawe, Jr., Pfc Glenn S. Ingersoll, Cpl Arthur Kuchenbecker, Pfc Dale B. Ride, and Pfc Robert H. Wilmouth, Jr.. Picture taken SW of Speyer, Germany, about April 1, 1945 while officially performing Army of Occupation duty. Wilmouth & Ride frequently performed Forward Observer Team duty, whereas the others performed with FO teams as substitutes. Only Wilmouth is still living - a member of the 103d Assoc in Lepanto, AR. It is interesting to note that Dale Ride is the father of Sally Ride - America's first female astronaut.

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