

# September 2014 NEWS FROM THE CACTUS PATCH Issue No 35

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If you have not paid your 2014 dues,  
please send a check for \$25 to treasurer  
Pat Lofthouse above and include your  
telephone number & email address.

## CAMP HOWZE

- Site Selected December 18, 1941
- Size 59,000 acres
- Location Northwest of Gainesville
- Purpose Infantry Training Facility, Air Support Command Base, and a German Prisoner of War Camp
- Named for General Robert Lee Howze
- Construction began Spring 1942
- Base activated August 17, 1942
- Forces Arriving at Camp Howze
  - 84<sup>th</sup> Division Infantry 1st Signal
  - 86<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Infantry Back Hqs
  - 103rd Division Infantry Cactus

The impact on Gainesville was significant  
The city flourished with rapid growth and  
development during this time

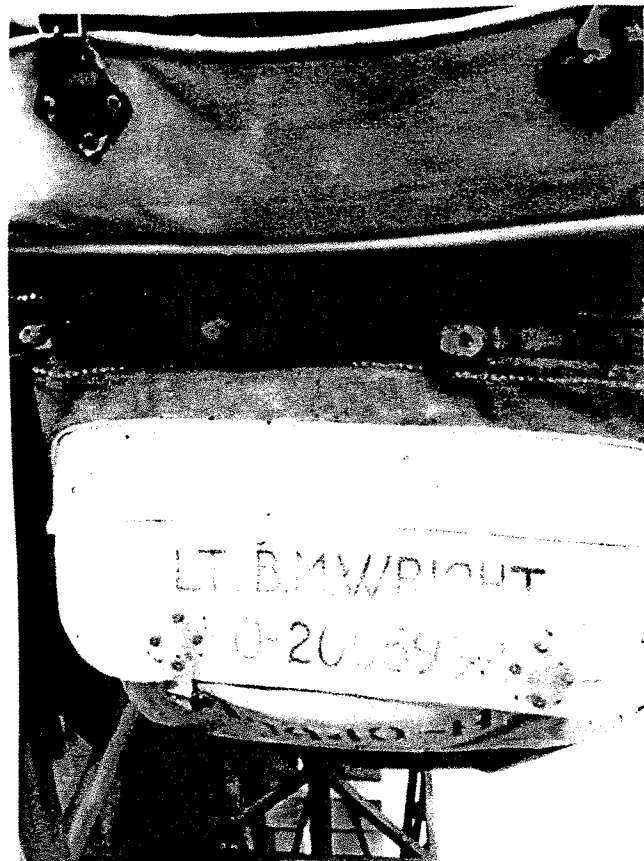
### Howzeville

- 1271 Bed Hospital
- 6 Movie Theaters
- 4 Post Offices
- 8 Chapels
- 20 Post Exchanges

### Dunk

Newspaper  
Switchboard and Teletypewriter System  
German Prisoner of War Camp  
Camp Howze closed in 1946

Hard Times when Camp Howze was located  
and known for its fresh summer sandstone  
The North Texas summer is hot and dry  
and the winters were cold and windy. The  
soldiers who came from northern climates were  
not affected by the cold but they had never  
experienced a hard "ice" "how" "how"  
Camp Howze became known to many as  
"Lucky Howze" not only because of the  
weather conditions but also because of the  
messiness and appearance.



## **2014 Reunion, Gainesville, Texas**

### **“Where the members of the 103d were trained in the art of war”**

Pat Lofthouse, Bob French & Francine Vuilleux

Is it a cliché to say, “A good time was had by all,” if it’s really true?

The 2014 Reunion held in Gainesville, Texas, over the Memorial Day holiday was a great success. It was, of course, the site of Camp Howze, where most of the 103d Division trained before being shipped overseas. About a hundred people registered, including 21 veterans and their families. The City of Gainesville rolled out its red carpet for the 103d, including allowing us to use the city’s civic center.

The weekend began on Saturday morning at the Gainesville Civic Center, where Zack Sigler and his wife Noreen, along with a little help from their friends, set out his extensive collection of 103d archival materials. President Chan Rogers’ wife Fran had ordered specially-made 103d caps that were well received. She also ordered all of the table settings. Their children, Ammie, Greg and Jack, cut, painted, unpacked and assembled the patriotic centerpieces and set up the tables.

That afternoon we took a bus tour of Camp Howze, conducted by Morton Museum docent, Barbara Pybas. Soon after the war, in 1946, the camp was declared surplus, disbanded, and leveled. Though not much remains at the site other than some cement pilings, the trip down the dusty roads still produced several tears.

The ladies were then escorted to an exquisite High Tea and tour of a beautiful antebellum home in which Morton Museum President Lynette Pettigrew and her husband, Don, live.

We returned to the Civic Center, where Zack Sigler presented a photo slide show of 103d veterans. After a delicious catered roast beef dinner, we were then wowed by the music of the Gainesville High School Jazz Band, directed by Taylor Kami.

Sunday opened with a mouth-watering sweet table breakfast hosted by Morton Museum Director Jayleane Smith. We then visited the nearby museum to view its exhibit “Sentimental Journey – Camp Howze and the Men and Women of the Greatest Generation.” Indeed, the whole museum has been converted to look like Camp Howze, with many period items including Mel Wright’s duffle bag!

During the day, Doualy Xaykaothao of KERA/National Public Radio interviewed some of the veterans about their war experiences. She returned the following day to attend the Memorial Day wreath-laying ceremony.

Members held the general meeting and Zack Sigler demonstrated on the screen how to access the resources of our amazing 103d website maintained by webmaster Larry Wayne.

The group then enjoyed more era music with the Gainesville Swing Band, directed by Dean Patterson. Clips from the performance are available online at

[www.gsobigbandswing.com](http://www.gsobigbandswing.com) or on YouTube at  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PC4nCH8oXM>

Mary McMahon and her family, the children and grandchildren of veteran Frank Waldeck, graciously provided homemade treats. The night culminated with a tasty chicken dinner.

The Memorial Day ceremony of remembrance was at the 103d "Call to Duty" Memorial, located at the Texas Department of Transportation Travel Information Center off U.S. Interstate Highway 35 north of Gainesville. The ceremony was covered by the *Gainesville Register* and *Weekly News of Cooke County* newspapers, TV station KXII, and public radio station KERA. Gainesville mayor Jim Goldsworthy welcomed the veterans to Gainesville and to the memorial. George Grounds, commander of the local VFW (Post 1922, Gainesville, Texas), read a letter from 103d Association president emeritus Mel Wright. Ed Paige, wearing his original uniform, read the Honor Roll. Offspring whose fathers or grandfathers had not returned home laid wreaths before the plaques listing the names of the 848 members of the 103d Division who lost their lives in World War II. For some, the warm Texas weather provided a poignant contrast to the freezing winter of 1944-45 in the Vosges Mountains and Alsace, where many of the men had lost their lives.

David Gilbert offered these thoughts about the reunion:

*I think having the reunion in Gainesville was a wonderful idea. To return to the place where most of the 103d veterans trained was a fitting and noble choice. Life moves in circles and the reunion in Gainesville brought the surviving veterans of the 103rd back to the place where it all began some 70 years ago.*



## **A Home for the 103d**

We are pleased to announce the Board of Directors has unanimously approved a resolution for the transfer of the 103d website and all Association owned artifacts and memorabilia currently in the care of Zack Sigler to the University of Southern Mississippi (USM), Department of History in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

Finding a home for the 103d archives and website has been a top Association priority for several years. The World War II Museum in New Orleans was contacted and thought was given to the US Army Museum under construction at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. Additional consideration was afforded the Army War College, Infantry Museum, and even the home of the current 103d Sustainment Command, Fort Dodge, Iowa. Fort Dodge received some books and items without benefit of a Deed of Gift. When the museum closed, these items were transferred to the USAR Command Museum at Fort Bragg. Texas A&M University was offered as a potential recipient. Jim White, an Alumni of A&M worked with the Commandant of Cadets, who expressed interest, but A&M declined stating they did not have the space to exhibit or store artifacts. They also passed on the website. When I was brought on the Board of Directors as Vice President of Archives, I had preliminary discussions with Dr. Kenneth Swope about our search. Dr. Swope is a Professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of History at the University of Southern Mississippi (USM). He is my nephew and the grandson of 103d veteran Clarence O. Swope (Co B/409). Dr. Swope discussed our search for a repository with his colleagues at USM and they were very receptive. USM has one of the top military history graduate programs in the country and the 103d collection will be an invaluable addition to the program.

We are in the process of finalizing our inventory in preparation for the transfer to USM. The 103d Association-owned books, other hardcopy materials, and artifacts will be housed in USM's McCain Library and Archives. The 103d website will be linked to USM's Dale Center for the Study of War & Society, described as "a local, national, and international resource for the study of the history of warfare at the social, economic, political, cultural, and military levels" The 103d website will be an integral part of the Dale Center website, where it will be maintained by graduate history students.

The University of Southern Mississippi is the premier research university for the Gulf South and a Carnegie research university. The university maintains a close working relationship with Carlyle Barracks and the US Army War College, as well as the National World War II Museum in New Orleans. The University of South Mississippi's willingness to take on the 103d Association's collection presents us with an excellent opportunity to ensure the maintenance of the historical record of the 103d Infantry Division of WWII.

Tom Swope  
103d Vice President of Archives

## OUR WEBSITE

Looking back, the genesis of the 103d Association website was the 2010 San Antonio reunion. The topic of creating a website was broached by a number of individuals and was presented as a viable and cost effective option. Over the past four years, the website collection of digital history has grown to receive recognition by historians and researchers as one of the most complete sources of information on a World War II Infantry Division on the web.

At the suggestion of a Past Association President, a RECENT UPDATE section was added to the HOME PAGE. Over the past year, few items were added, but those that were include several stories covering wartime experiences of veterans of the 103d and a couple of news articles. We invite you to visit at <http://www.103didww2assn.org/index.htm>.

It is now time for the Association to turn its attention to preservation of the vast digital holdings contained on the website. Permanent preservation of the total content of the Association's website by a credible repository is crucial to future generations. At a time when age is taking its toll of our veterans, who are the eye witnesses to history, preserving the legacy of the 103d is the absolute responsibility of the Association. This must take the form of artifacts pertinent to veteran's stories of their combat experience and the digital records found on the website. Such digital archives must remain freely accessible. Because, in the event of the Association dissolution, it is essential that this historical information is maintained by a responsible third party who will perpetually make the content available to all. The recent selection of the University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Mississippi to act in this capacity presents itself as the best of all worlds to accomplish this end.

The USM is a prestigious university and one of the nation's finest Military History Departments. The USM has stated that its goal is to cause this information to remain available as a matter of historical record. The digital information that will transfer to the USM will remain publicly accessible due to the historical significance it has to researchers, historians, family, and those who have interest in those horrific events that we called World War II.

Larry Wayne, Webmaster

### To Donate to USM

Veterans of 103d and their families are welcome to donate items to our collection at the University of Southern Mississippi. Dr. Swope tells me they are especially interested in original photos and documents, including discharge papers and wartime letters. If you have a diary or memoir that is not already in the 103d collection, we encourage you to submit that as well. Basically, they are interested in small, original, wartime items. Please contact me for more information.

Tom Swope  
103d Vice President of Archives  
(440) 255-7410  
E-mail: [swopetunes@juno.com](mailto:swopetunes@juno.com)

## **Memorial Day ceremony honors veterans**

By Cathy Mounce, Register Staff Writer

Gainesville — Flags were flying during a Memorial Day celebration Monday honoring members of the 103rd Infantry Division Association during their visit to the World War II memorial at the Texas Department of Transportation Travel Information Center off U.S. Interstate Highway 35 north of Gainesville.

Wreaths were placed honoring the members of the division, those classified as missing, those who were wounded in battle, and the 847 men who sacrificed their lives during the World War II European campaign.

The division, also known as the “Cactus Division,” was activated on Nov. 15, 1942 with much of their training and instruction happening at Camp Howze, just north of the city.

The 103rd Infantry Division is recognized as an official “Liberating Unit” by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum for their liberation of Kaufering concentration camp, a subcamp of Dachau.

The remaining members of the division are few and far between with many arriving in wheelchairs accompanied by children and grandchildren.

For many it was the first time back in the area since they were young men about to go off to war. With difficulty their indomitable spirit pushed each one onward as they made their way to the monument that once again united them with their band of brothers. The 103rd Division was deactivated Sept. 22, 1945.

Gainesville mayor Jim Goldsworthy, welcomed the veterans to Gainesville and to the memorial, thanking them for their efforts, past and present.

The 103rd Infantry Association members attending included: Earl Brown, Frank Brzeczek, Jesse Cox, Glen Crain, Paul Henson, Harry Jacobs, Bob Larson, Frank Laurence, Louis Lipoglav, John Malone, Lucas Martin, Wally Morgan, James Mulligan, Ed Paige, George Reichel, Robert Rathgeber, T.L Riggs, Chan Rogers, Herbert Rothchild, Frank Waldreck, Bear Walters and Carroll Cook.

- See more at: <http://www.gainesvilleregister.com/local/x611384879/Memorial-Day-ceremony-honors-veterans#sthash.oWOcgHQu.dpuf>



David Gilbert, a descendant of a member of the 103rd Infantry Division, places a wreath commemorating those who were members of the World War II liberating force also known as the “Cactus” Division. Staff photo Cathy Mounce

Letter to the Editor:

For many years the 103d Association has been searching for an institution that would accept and maintain the 103d Website, Archives and Artifacts – thus keeping the legacy of the 103d Division alive for future generations.

Through the efforts of Association member Tom Swope and Dr. Kenneth Swope (Tom's nephew) of the University of Southern Mississippi, our search is finally over.

The University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, MS has graciously agreed to accept and maintain the 103d Website, Archives, and Artifacts.

At our last reunion in Gainesville, TX, it was decided to hold our 2015 reunion in Gainesville again. When that vote was taken in May, 2014, this new development involving The University of Southern Mississippi was not known.

I feel strongly, and I hope many of you do too, that we hold our Golden (50<sup>th</sup>) Reunion in Hattiesburg, Mississippi rather than in Gainesville, TX.

By gathering in Hattiesburg, MS, and then as a group, formally turning over our Website, Archives and Artifacts to The University of Southern Mississippi, we would show the University and the community of Hattiesburg our commitment to preserving the legacy of the 103d for all generations. We would also show our deep gratitude to the University for assuming the responsibility for our Website, Archives and Artifacts.

Hattiesburg, MS is a college town with more than 30 motels, over 200 restaurants, and many sites to see including the Armed Forces Museum and the African American Military History Museum. There are also several historic districts in Hattiesburg, some dating back to the 1880s.

Many of us have enjoyed the opportunity to visit different parts of our country through our reunions. This is our chance to see another part of America while enjoying each other, and more importantly preserving the history of the 103d Infantry Division for all time.

Sincerely yours,

*Lucas C. Martin*  
Lucas C. Martin  
HD 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn. 409th

### **Association Membership**

Since last year's reunion, 140 members have contributed \$3500 in current dues. We particularly thank those members who have contributed \$2255 in donations beyond their membership dues.

We presently have 1257 entries on our Master Living Roster, including both veterans and their family members. We are still working on researching the disposition of the 150 members whose newsletters mailed last spring were returned to us as "undeliverable."



News > U.S. > Around the Nation < World War II Vets Honor Their Own In Cactus Division

May 26, 2014 6:37 AM ET

DAVID GREENE, HOST:

On this Memorial Day, let's spend some time with veterans from the 103rd Infantry. In World War II, it came to be known as the Cactus Division because so many of the men came from the American Southwest. And that is where they are gathering again today, in Gainesville, Texas. Doualy Xaykaothao, of member station KERA in Dallas, met up with these aging veterans, who as young men helped defeat the German army and in the process liberated the Dachau concentration camp.

DOUALY XAYKAOTHAO, BYLINE: When Kansas-native Torrence Riggs was only 24, his division, the 103rd, entered Southwest Germany.

TORRENCE RIGGS: I seen a lot of soldier boys that - with grim faces. I'll tell you that. I had one, too.

XAYKAOTHAO: It was 1945, and the people in the concentration camp, he says, had either been worked or starved to death.

RIGGS: Terrible. They were all just white as can be. And they wore outfits that looked like pajama outfits. We didn't see how they could walk. They'd come out. They'd look like walking skeletons. And they was - they brought the people that live there - they brought them in and had them carrying their dead.

XAYKAOTHAO: Riggs, now 92, says he doesn't know who's going to be alive for the next reunion.

FRANK LAWRENCE: Frank Lawrence, 28th field artillery.

JAMES WHITE: 409.

LAWRENCE: 409. No, I worked with 411 mostly.

WHITE: Did you know Miller?

XAYKAOTHAO: James E. White has helped organize past annual meetings with Army buddies. He's hoping the public will remember why Memorial Day is important.

WHITE: Remember it for what it means and not that it's a holiday. And I can remember my dad. He was mad as you know what when they changed it from May the 30, which was any day of the week, and set it up on Monday as a three-day holiday, which diminished the meaning of the holiday.

XAYKAOTHAO: He was wounded but considers himself lucky.

WHITE: I said, yeah, it's the best thing that ever happened to me. People look at me as if I'm crazy. But a couple of days later, 90 men in my company were taken prisoner. If I'd a been taken prisoner, I probably wouldn't be here today.

XAYKAOTHAO: At Sunday's gathering, the vets and visitors had K-rations for lunch. This is the Army meal in a bag that was introduced during World War II. Ammie Rogers and Gregg Rogers, children of a veteran from Boston, were trying to help guests figure out the meal.



G. ROGERS: I want this to be a legitimate war experience.

A. ROGERS: Well, we could go outside underneath a tree or dig a hole.

ROGERS: It'd be helpful if someone had a gun. They could shoot it.

XAYKAOTHAO: They danced, shared stories about foxholes and Germans, but there were a lot of tears, too.

JAMES MULLIGAN: I shouldn't be like this. I really don't have a good reason for it, but I just get too emotional that's all.

XAYKAOTHAO: James Mulligan was just 18 when he joined the Army. He can't forget the friends he left behind. He still takes pills at night to sleep. In his unit, 834 soldiers died or went missing. Lucas Martin, who traveled here from Delaware, says he wants his grandchildren and their children to know how civilization was saved.

LUCAS MARTIN: Because Hitler had plans to dominate the world. He really did. And we helped stop him.

XAYKAOTHAO: A monument to honor the Cactus Division now stands just north of here, close to the Texas-Oklahoma border. For NPR News, I'm Doualy Xaykaothao in Gainesville, Texas.

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### **Available!**

#### **Interviews and accounts by and about 103d Infantry Division veterans**

*Cactus Soldiers Remember: Interviews—Narratives* (July 2009—Nashville, TN)

*Of Officers and Men* (August 2012—Kansas City)

*The Girls We Left Behind* (July-August 2013—Indianapolis, IN)

*Chow Time: Mess Halls, Rations, and Scrounging* (May 2014—Gainesville, TX)

These booklets of interviews and accounts by and about 103d Division veterans are from the *103d Infantry Division of WWII Albums of Remembrance*, compiled by Luke Martin, 103d Association Historian. They are available free of charge.

To get copies, contact Bob French by phone (508.207.7681),  
e-mail ([rfrench@northstarlc.org](mailto:rfrench@northstarlc.org)), or mail (83 Durfee Street, New Bedford, MA 02740).

## Preserving Our Stories

I have been a volunteer with The Veterans History Project since 2001. This Library of Congress project has become the nation's largest volunteer oral history project with thousands of submissions. As one of the top interviewers with The Project, I was invited to attend the dedication of the World War Two Memorial in Washington D.C. during Memorial Day weekend of 2004. About a dozen volunteers from around the country received invitations as guests of The Library of Congress and The Smithsonian. We did interviews and moderated panel discussions and one of the veterans on a panel I moderated was Joseph De Luca, Jr. (411th Regiment, Company C). He was there at my request. I was told I could invite four veterans I had interviewed (with expenses also paid by the Library of Congress and The Smithsonian) and the first person I called was Joe because I wanted the 103d to be represented at the dedication. I am sharing this because I want all veterans of the 103d to know you will be remembered.

The inspiration for my involvement in this is my father, Clarence O. Swope (409th Regiment, Company B). My father kept a diary and later recorded and wrote a memoir of his wartime experiences. After dad died in 1995, I tried to keep his story alive by sending it to various archives. When I learned about The Veterans History Project, I submitted his story. As a direct result of my dad's submission, I decided to get involved as a volunteer and over the past 13 years, I have recorded and submitted more than 450 interviews to The Project. I also produce a radio show that has featured stories from more than 200 World War Two veterans and I have written a book. It is not a stretch to say that because of my dad - a veteran of the 103d - hundreds of veterans stories have been preserved for posterity.

I encourage you to tell your story and I can help. If you live in Northeast Ohio, I can do the interview. Otherwise, I know you can tell your story. Do it on your own or sit down with a friend or family member and just talk. It doesn't have to be a video. An audio recording (even on cassette) is acceptable. Or you can write about your experiences. You do not need to be a professional writer. Just share your story about your time in the Army. You can also submit photos or letters to The Veterans History Project. Contact me and I will tell you the guidelines. And I can help you with the submission to The Library of Congress. Send your story or photos or letters to me and I will fill out the paperwork and make sure it gets there. Veterans of the 103d, you will be remembered, but I need your help.

Thank you,  
Tom Swope, 103d Vice President of Archives  
(440) 255-7410  
e-mail: swopetunes@juno.com

## "REFLECTIONS OF A DAUGHTER"

By Julie Partynski

Daughter of Thaddeus F. Partynski, Hq Co 3d Bn 411th, died July 30, 1993

As a very young man, you got on a ship and sailed to a land you knew nothing about to fight for people you did not know so that they may enjoy what we had on this side of the pond. It was your duty. And you were proud to do it. You fought hard for your country. You fought against the evil and the hatred. You saw things terrifying, hopeless. Things that changed you as a man. You came home, you quietly went on with your life.

Men who serve say, "If you were there, I don't have to explain it. If you weren't there, I can't explain it." Yet, I need to know something about that part of your life. I am blessed to have met some of the wonderful men who were by your side in the battle. And have since met their children and those who feel as strongly as I do about keeping your legacy alive.

Since you are no longer here, I need to walk part of your path, albeit in a time of peace. They are throwing you and your comrades a party, Dad. They are grateful for what you did. They are aware of how different and potentially horrible their lives would have been if you hadn't been there.

We're going to the party, Dad; your beautiful bride of 37 years, your five children, and the wonderful son-in-law and beautiful granddaughter that you never met. We are both anxious and excited to hear this part of the story. Born long after World War II ended, French police officer Bertrand Loubette is taking time out of his life to be our personal interpreter—to express his gratitude for the sacrifices of the American liberators. Colonel Pierre Alain-Antoine is leading the charge of this spectacular event.

Seventy years, Dad. You would have been 93 this year. We will share your love and gift of music with our new French friends. We will tell stories, and put our boots down where you did. We will find the joy now where there most likely was none back then. We will pray for peace. And I promise we will make you proud. You are so loved and missed. Thank you for what you did.

### **70th anniversary of the liberation of Saint-Dié-des-Vosges Commemorations, Events, Testimonials, Exhibitions**

**November 21, 1944:** The first American soldiers enter our city ravaged by a devastating fire set by the German occupiers. Within days, Saint Die des Vosges will be liberated from Nazi occupation.

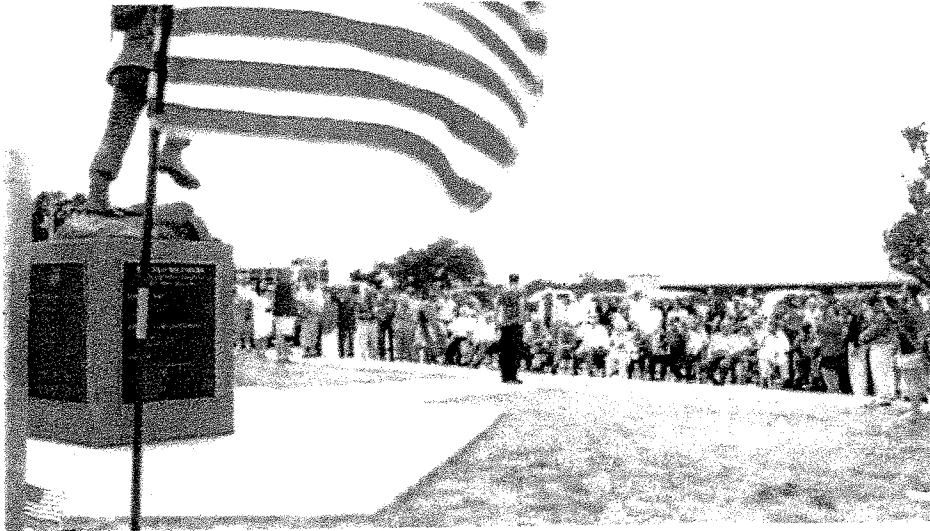
**November 22-23, 2014:** 70 years later, Saint-Dié-des-Vosges commemorates what constitutes the most important historical event for our city and its people. We will have the opportunity to listen to the testimonies that we can bequeath the last survivors of the World War, and pass on to future generations the memory of these essential pages for our freedom.

For two days, commemorations, events, testimonials, exhibitions will convey the fair value of this episode. We invite you to participate in this heavily symbolic manifestation of great magnitude. For info, contact Julie Partynski at [jules428@hoymail.com](mailto:jules428@hoymail.com).

## WWII Veterans return to basic training grounds in Gainesville

Updated: Tue 10:56 AM, May 27, 2014

By: Daniella Rivera



GAINESVILLE, TX - Surviving World War II veterans gathered in Gainesville today, to honor more than 800 of their brothers in arms who died or went missing during the war. Daniella Rivera was there as the group of veterans returned to North Texas, where their basic training first began.

Every year, survivors of the World War II 103rd Infantry Division reunite.

This Memorial Day, more than 20 veterans--many of them in their 90s--traveled to North Texas, where they completed their basic training at Camp Howze in the early 1940's.

"It was just a great reunion with some of my comrades, and paying our respects to our comrades who did not return," said veteran Frank Waldeck.

The 103rd Division's memorial monument in Gainesville bears the names of more than 800 fallen and missing soldiers.

"Some of the members are seeing their loved ones name, who was killed in action. There are a number of people who are seeing this for the first time," said veteran Cranston Rogers.

Diane Zaboith Helland was one of those seeing a loved one's name for the first time. Her father, Dennis Zaboith, was killed in action on December 15th, 1944.

"His name is on the wall there. I went and touched it," she said.

During the Memorial Day ceremony in Gainesville, veterans and family members laid wreaths and then paid tribute to the fallen with a three volley salute, and taps.

"World War II was so significant in giving us the freedoms that we have, that we need the generations to appreciate it, learn about it, and honor them," said Helland.

Her sister, Patricia Lofthouse, says this Memorial Day, she also honors her mother.

"I like to say that the women of World War II, were the greatest generation as well," said Lofthouse.