



"SOCIETY SIDEMEN"

Mike Morado

When Mike Morado of Kansas City, MO, comes to the Glenn Miller Festival this summer he will relive memories from World War II and visit a former service buddy, Weldon Jones, at New Market, just east of Clarinda. They were in the Seventh Army, both in the first group to arrive at Camp Claiborne, LA, on Dec. 12, 1942, when the 103rd Division was reactivated. Jones became a Company K medic and he an infantryman scout. They were together at Camp Howze in Gainesville, TX for training and were in the big convoy when the 100th and 103rd Divisions were shipped out from Camp Shanks, NY to Marseilles, France in October, 1944. In fact, Morado was in a hospital in England when Glenn Miller's plane was lost over the English Channel. Their reunion in 1984 at a Company K, 410th Regiment, 103rd Infantry Division, gathering in Omaha, NE, was memorable for both of them.

"Someone asked me if I remembered Weldon Jones and I had a mental picture of us going up a hill side by side under fire when I hit the ground, turned and saw Weldon hit the ground, too," Morado said. "I thought he got hit." So in reply to the question, he said he thought Weldon was killed in action.

Was he ever surprised when the questioner identified himself as Jones and they hugged each other. "You get a closeness that is closer than brothers, sharing life and death situations," Morado philosophizes. "His life depends on you and you on him. Everybody bleeds, everybody dies. No matter what you are, it doesn't make a difference. We all fear."

Their backgrounds certainly weren't similar, Morado being a Mexican American from a Chicago ghetto, accustomed to street fighting and distrusting others, while Jones was an Iowa farm boy, quiet, compassionate and generous, as Morado

continued on page 9



WORLD WAR II WARRIORS at a 1988 reunion include (from left) Weldon Jones, Bob Vickery, Jim Pemberton, Oscar Olson and Mike Morado.

Mike Morado

continued from Page 8

describes him. Their strengths led to their roles in the French invasion. Morado's job was to advance across open areas with another scout, so the others would know where the enemy was, as they went through the Vosges Mountains. The Germans didn't expect them to go through the mountains since they were so steep and the weather so cold. Another way Morado could help was as a translator for Italian prisoners of war, Spanish being similar to Italian. He was so impressed by the combat medics, he wrote a tribute to them years later, dedicating it to Jones. For instance, Jones froze his fingers once bringing out prisoners.

"For me, it was very comforting to have him around to look out for us, to inspire and motivate us and give us the will to live," Morado wrote of Jones.

Morado and he agree with the often-quoted statement that Glenn Miller music was the next best thing to a letter from home. Morado was familiar with Miller and his band, having heard them before the war at ballrooms in Chicago. He himself played guitar and sang in a small band. At the time of Morado's military discharge out of Michigan, women handed them sandwiches with notes inside the waxed paper indicating they were from the gals in Kalamazoo. Over the years, Morado has collected Miller music and emphasizes that Miller is well known in Hispanic communities, even today. In addition to attending the Festival in Clarinda the last few years, he goes to other places the Glenn Miller Orchestra plays and has a picture of himself taken with vocalist, Julia Rich.

Doing volunteer work is an important part of Morado's life, kind of a follow-up promise he made to God while he was in combat, he admits, but he feels it may have done more for him than for others. In 1993 he received an "Everyday Hero" award for his 50-plus years of volunteer efforts. He serves on a governor's commission to help senior citizens, is a life member of Disabled American Veterans and other veterans groups, and gives programs in Spanish and English.

An experience that brought purpose to his war experience occurred years later, when in 1989 he went back to France with others invited as guests of the French government. He still has dreams from the war in which he can hear machine gun fire and artillery, the cries of youngsters all around him and not being able to help them. In 1989 the children were waving French and American flags, calling the veterans liberators. A speaker at one of the monuments erected in honor of the 103rd Division said they were gathered to honor brave old warriors from the United States who came to sacrifice their lives so young people can live free, not only in their country, but in the United States and even children born after the war in enemy countries.

"It was good for me to know our suffering was for a purpose," Morado concluded.

MEDIC W. JONES

THE COMBAT MEDIC

The following comments, from the viewpoint of a Combat Infantryman, are meant to pay tribute and recognize the dedication, commitment, and the significant role played by all American troops, especially the Combat Medics, who served in all wars, throughout the world, which has kept our country free.

A special tribute to my boyhood friend, Hilario (Larry) de Alba Jr., from Blue Island, Illinois, who served as a Combat Medic, attached to Company L, 134th Regiment, 35th Infantry Division, in General Patton's 3rd Army, in Europe, during World War II. Also, to my war buddy, Weldon Jones, from New Market, Iowa, who served with me and many other dear friends and comrades, as a Combat Medic, in Company K, 410th Regiment, 103rd Infantry Division in General Patch's 7th Army, in Europe, during World War II.

The Combat Infantryman was a combination of many things. Among these, were courage and fear, as he was thrust into the fiercest close encounter ground battles. He was trained to kill or be killed. The Combat Medic, who was assigned to Infantry units, was also thrust into the fiercest close encounter ground battles. He was a combination of many things. Among these, were courage and fear, plus an additional quality called compassion, which a Combat Infantryman could not afford. The Combat Medic acquired compassion because he was trained to save lives.

Both faced the same horrors, the same bloody battlegrounds, but their missions were opposite from each other. The Combat Infantryman was trained to destroy the enemy in order to survive, while the Combat Medic was trained to give first aid to the wounded and comfort to the dying. The Combat Infantryman performs in self defense. The Combat Medic performs in defense of his fallen comrades. A Combat Infantryman gets rid of his frustrations by fighting back.

A Combat Medic builds up more frustrations by daily facing the dead and the dying. Many times not being able to do anything except to hold a dying soldier's hand and say a short prayer.

Medics earned and were awarded many medals and decorations for administering aid under heavy enemy fire to wounded soldiers who would not have survived except for the assistance, quick thinking, dedication, courage, and compassion of the Combat Medic, who was prepared to risk his life to save others. The most used word which comes to a wounded soldier's lips, besides Mother, is Medic.

I heard of a young WWII soldier who operated on a wounded comrade under fire and removed a bullet with a pocket knife. I heard of another WWII soldier who was awarded the Silver Star medal for crawling under a sheet of heavy machine gun fire to give first aid to two wounded comrades. There were also many other Combat Medics and American soldiers who performed unbelievable and unexplainable acts of courage.

The following appears in, "The Story of the 103rd Infantry Division,"† the Division I served with in Europe, during World War II.

Some men are hit in the trench ahead of you. There's a cry for a medic. The medic is crouching behind you. He jumps up automatically. You see

the medic's white face as he struggles past. He's scared to death, but his teeth are clenched and his eyes have a wild look. You know he's going to get to that wounded man or die himself. You watch the red cross on his helmet until he moves from sight around an angle in the trench. A thrill of admiration for that man goes through you. What a brave man! It gives you warm confidence to have a guy like that in your outfit — a guy who'll look after you when you get it.

Part of the following is also from "The Story of the 103rd Infantry Division."

Units of the 103rd, who were overlooking a meadow from a crest of a hill in the woods, were ordered to cross the meadow knowing that the enemy was waiting with heavy fire power.

You hear the lieutenant yell, "Let's get out of here — they got mortars on us." You drop in a fold in the ground with a buddy and sit there panting. Scouts out. Both of you watch a few men widely separated get up and walk into the meadow. There is a horrifying silence. "God," you think, "what a job to have." Then from nowhere the firing starts. Men in front of you have already run into the meadow and fallen. It's your turn to get up and follow your buddy into the meadow. You run fast, afraid you'll lose him. You haven't the time right then to be scared. When you hit the cold, dew covered grass, you start to shake and quake all over. You see your first wounded man — and a medic bending over him. "God," you think, "that medic has guts — to be so calm, so cool when slugs are kicking up dirt all around him."

The Combat Infantryman had to be strong of conviction due to strict discipline and animalistic training. Strange enough, he also had a strong bond of loyalty and affection for his comrades. The Combat Medic also had to be strong of conviction, but at the same time, caring and gentle.

These two opposites were flung into the same hell and the same death and destruction. However, I believe that all Combat Medics, when their assistance was needed, made this hell a little bit of heaven. I salute them, I respect them, I honor them. I am proud to have served alongside of them, as well as with all my other brave comrades. The close bond of friendship acquired amidst the misery, fear and suffering during combat, is difficult to explain. At times we did things which we don't know how or why we did them, but God knows and forgives.

It will never be known how many young soldiers survived the wars, because of the Combat Medic, and returned to civilian life to contribute many great things towards humanity. To me, the Combat Medic was an angel in disguise. He certainly will receive his reward in heaven.

April 12, 1991

Mike Morado
Combat Infantryman
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103rd Infantry Division
Europe — World War II
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† Quotes are from *Report After Action: The Story of the 103rd Infantry Division*, by Ralph Mueller and Jerry Turk, Reprinted by The Battery Press, Nashville, TN, 1945.