



TOUGH 'OMBRE TIMES

NEWSLETTER OF THE 90TH DIVISION ASSOCIATION

Message from the President Col [R] O. Findley Brewster

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Greetings to all members of the 90th Division Association. I am honored to once again serve as president of the Association. Anne and I are looking forward to greeting all of you in our hometown of San Antonio, site of the 2020 reunion. We are excited to return to the historic Menger Hotel, and have many special events planned for reunion attendees. You can find additional information about the 2020 reunion elsewhere in this newsletter.

I want to extend a special “thank you” to outgoing President Tad McClung, Associate Executive Director Ron Sholar and Executive Director Emeritus Rhoda Reid for the fantastic 2019 reunion held last July in New Orleans. They were a great team! We were thrilled to

have so many “first timers” attend the reunion, many of them children and grandchildren of our WW II veterans. It was a meaningful event for all involved. In addition, I want to thank Al Twisselman for his outstanding work as official 90th Association photographer. Because of his efforts, we maintain a great archive of reunion memories. Al has decided to retire from his photographer duties. The Executive Committee has noted his service by naming him 90th Association Photographer Emeritus.

On a sad note, we learned of the passing of Sandy Super shortly after last summer’s reunion. She was extensively involved in reunions, spearheading the Saturday night raffles that provided a lot of fun and excitement to the banquet. She will be remembered for her dedication to the Association and her willingness to assist in ways big and small throughout our reunion weekends.

Also, I want to welcome Nancy Rasmusson to the position of Executive Director of the 90th Division Association. Nancy is the daughter of Harry Rasmusson, a WW II veteran and Association member who attended many reunions, along with Nancy and her siblings. Nancy hit the ground running in August! You will have a chance to meet her at the 2020 reunion.

As you know, we continue to see the passing of our World War II veterans. As this transition occurs, we must look to the future and determine what our organization will become. As president, I am committed to several important goals. First, as an organization we must reach out to other veterans who have worn the “T-O” patch as they served throughout the world, during the Cold War, in Korea, Vietnam, Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan and other locations around the globe. Preserving the legacy of the 90th Division requires that we tell their stories in addition to the great stories of our WW I and WW II veterans. Second, we must educate the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren (who are attending reunions in larger numbers every year) in the rich history and significant contributions of the 90th Infantry Division. Third, we must maintain our connections to our friends throughout the world, particularly in France, as the work of preserving our shared history falls to younger generations.

Finally, you will notice changes in other aspects of the organization as well. For the first time, most of you are receiving this newsletter electronically. As an organization, we are becoming more technological in our

2019 - 2020 Officers

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communication and business practices. This not only allows us to save money in printing and postage costs, but allows us to stay better connected to our membership in real time. These enhancements will make registrations for reunions, updating annual memberships and conducting other forms of business with the organization easy and efficient. Chuck Griffith is to be thanked for spearheading the efforts to modernize our operations.

Just as it was when I wore the uniform, it is an honor to serve. I look forward to the coming year and seeing all of you in San Antonio, July 30-Aug. 2, 2020.

Message from the Executive Director Nancy Rasmusson



Dear Association Members,

It has been a very busy three months since beginning my role as Executive Director of the 90th Division Association, following the retirement of longtime director Rhoda Reid. In particular I want to thank the Executive Committee, Chuck Griffith, and Rhoda for their help during this transition. Rhoda left big shoes to fill after dedicating 30 years of service to the “job.” If you know Rhoda well,

then you know that serving the organization was truly a labor of love. I will do my best to maintain that same level of dedication to the organization!

My involvement with the 90th Division Association began when my siblings and I accompanied our father, Harry Rasmusson (315th Engineers) to the 2004 reunion in Alexandria, Virginia. I have attended many reunions since that first time. I have great memories of those events: getting acquainted with Tough ‘Ombres and their families, learning about the history and significance of the 90th Division and enjoying the sights and sounds of the various cities in which the reunions were held. Most importantly, I cherished the opportunity to learn more about dad, and the events that profoundly shaped his life. Dad answered the Call of Taps in 2008, at age 92. The 90th Division Association was important to him, and it is also very special to me.

Last June, in recognition of the 75th anniversary of D-Day, my sister and I traveled to Normandy. For the first time we saw the beaches, countryside and small towns where it all began. I finally understood the significance of fighting through the hedgerows (something Dad talked about often) and got to see the little



towns whose names were familiar to me. For those who have made the journey to Normandy as well as other areas of Europe bearing the 90th Division footprint, you know how profoundly life-changing such a trip can be. It was both inspiring and bittersweet. We were touched by the kindnesses of the French people, many of whom thanked us for our father's service. We were awed by the sight of thousands of white crosses aligned in perfect order across the rolling hillside of the American cemetery, and the hundreds of people from throughout the world who were there to pay their respects. We were thrilled when we stumbled upon a sight that was familiar to us via one of Dad's "war stories." We also learned more about the bigger picture



of the Allied landing at Normandy, and the role of the 90th Division in the liberation of a nation.

Following our tour through Normandy we traveled south and spent three days as guests of Christian and Evelyne Levaufré. They were generous and gracious hosts (as many of you have experienced) and introduced us to the way the "real French people" live. In addition, we learned much more about Christian's father Henri (whom we had met at 90th reunions) and his lifetime of recording, collecting and assembling a trove of artifacts and information about the role of the 90th Division in Normandy and the liberation of Periers. We returned home with deeper appreciation for history and the sacrifices made by so many in defense of liberty throughout the world. We also developed a closer connection to the "real people" of France and look forward to a return trip in the future!

This edition of the Association newsletter provides highlights from the 2019 reunion in New Orleans and also details regarding the 2020 Reunion in San Antonio. We hope you will plan to attend!

Nancy

Save the Date!

2020 Reunion July 31 - August 2

San Antonio

THE HISTORIC
MENGER
HOTEL

The 102nd Anniversary of the 90th Division Association reunion will be held July 30-Aug 2 in San Antonio, Texas. We are excited to return to the historic Menger Hotel, site of the 100th anniversary reunion in 2018.

The reunion officially begins on Friday with a noon luncheon and program, however a special activity is being planned for Thursday evening, for those who will arrive on Thursday. In addition, there special events being planned throughout the weekend. Children are welcome at the reunion, and special activities for "Junior Tough 'Ombres" are being planned.

There are deep ties between the 90th and the city of San Antonio. Camp Travis, a WW I army post was situated a few miles from downtown San Antonio and it was there that the 90th Infantry Division was formed in 1917. San Antonio is also home to Fort Sam Houston. Over the years, many Tough 'Ombres trained at this post. Of course, San Antonio is also the home of the Alamo, the symbol of Texas independence, which also has ties to the 90th Division. A special event is in the works to be held at the Alamo.

There are many fun things to do in San Antonio including museums, Sea World, Six Flags, Zoo, shopping and many other activities. Landmark restaurants feature distinctive Tex-Mex cuisine. Put the 102nd reunion on your calendar now and plan a vacation for the entire family!

Rooms are available at \$130 per night (the same rate at 2018!) You may reserve your room now by calling 1-800-345-9285, or you may contact the hotel directly to make your reservation at 210-223-4361, extensions 7373 or 6052. You must identify yourself as an attendee of the "90th Division 102nd Annual Reunion" to get the special room rate. You may also make your reservation online at www.mengerhotel.com. Parking at the Menger is available at \$20.00 per night and there is a "Super Shuttle" from the airport that leaves every 15-30 minutes and makes drop-offs to several hotels. The cost is \$15.00 one way or \$20.00 round trip.

More specific details regarding the 2020 reunion will be provided in the spring, 2020 newsletter. If you have questions at this time, you may contact me at 970-227-2744 or by email at Nancy@90thdivisionassoc.org.

2019 Reunion Highlights

Dedication of Hamilton-Levaufre Espace

Those of you who attended the 100th Reunion of the 90th Association in San Antonio (2018) will remember Christian Levaufre's presentation that detailed the connection between Henri, his father, and numerous veterans of the 90th Association that had visited Periers over the years. Many Association members had visited Henri and his wife, Janete, over the decades. Henri and Janete provided valuable information to those who came seeking it, and friendship to all of their guests.

Christian ended his talk describing the plan to establish a location in Periers to house many of the artifacts, mementoes, awards and documents that Henri had collected over the decades following the liberation of Periers in July, 1944. The plan was to use space in the building next to the Four Braves Monument which would be dedicated to Lt. Col. Ed Hamilton and Henri. Ed had been a battalion commander with the 357th during the liberation. Henri and Ed met in 1972, after two years of correspondence. Over the years their relationship outgrew the boundaries of friendship and they became "brothers."

Fast forward one year: The vision becomes reality.

A highlight of the 2019 reunion was the livestreaming of the dedication of the Hamilton-Levaufre Espace and museum which was held on July 27, 2019 in Periers, France. (The text of Christian's comments along with pictures of the Espace follow this article.) The dedication of the museum was the compilation of many months of work by the family and friends of Henri Levaufre.

Script of the dedication of the Hamilton-Levaufre Espace, July 27, 2019, Periers, France delivered by Christian Levaufre, son of Henri and Janete Levaufre.

Ladies and gentlemen, civilian and military representatives of France or the United States,
First of all thank you for your presence. It alone is enough to show how, beyond the jolts of the relations of our politicians, the bonds of heart which unite us to our friends in America, are still as intense and lasting today. Today we are together to remember. To remember an event and to remember two men and the friendship that linked them.

The event is the liberation of Périers by the soldiers of the 90th Infantry Division on July 27, 1944, 75 years ago today.

One of these two men is Henri Levaufre who has dedicated most of his life to the study of this outfit, of its soldiers and their pattern.

Their pattern: 9512 casualties, killed in action, wounded, prisoners or missing to cover the 35 kilometers that separate us from Utah-Beach.

By car it takes 35 minutes today, to them it took 7 weeks.

Next time, when you make the road, imagine on the side a wounded soldier every 5 meters, 1 killed every 20 meters. If freedom has a price, it also has a cost. These men were young and dreaming of a future. They sacrificed theirs to ensure ours, it would be disgusting to forget them and we think of them tonight.

His friend was my "uncle" Edward Hamilton, a battalion commander from the 90th.

I say uncle because if history has made them meet, it has also forged such a great friendship between them that they decided to become brothers.

My father had a passion, a passion to which he dedicated 60 years of his life.

He wanted to know, understand, analyze in detail what had been the tactical choices, the causes of victories and defeats and especially what was the daily life of the soldier, the miserable moments of glory for a won hedgerow at the cost of so many lost buddies, the humidity, the cold and above all the fear, this omnipresent companion who shuts you down at the bottom of your fox hole from which you will nevertheless have to get out without ever knowing if the next second, the next minute or the next day will be the one that will kill you.

American or German veterans my father will have been their confidant and with their testimonies he has found the material to write two books.

All this documentation texts, photos, maps ... will be donated to the Departmental Archives in Saint Lô where in the form of a particular fund it will serve as a support for the research historians of tomorrow.

For all the rest, that is to say, all the objects found on the old battlefields at the time when my father was crossing the countryside to bring power or given by other witnesses of the time, they will be shared between the Utah Beach Museum and the new memorial site that we are going to dedicate tonight: Space Hamilton-Levaufre

As for Ed Hamilton, he graduated from West Point in 1939. Landing in Utah-Beach on June 8, 1944, he commanded the 1st Battalion of the 357th Infantry Regiment within the 90th US Infantry Division and took part in all the battles for the liberation of Périers.

A skilled tactician and leader of men, he was in all the battles until September 10, 1944, when he was seriously wounded in the head and lost his left eye when taking a hill at Hayange in Moselle.

Retired from active service, he continued after the war a career in several state agencies and returned to Normandy in the early 70s.

My father and him then became the best friends in the world.

Ed was very attached to Périers that he called his second home and where he would regularly return.

Even if buried at the West Point cemetery part of his ashes were transferred under the 4 Braves memorial.

In exchange, part of my father's ashes should go to Ed's grave, which has engraved on the back of his tombstone: "To my brother Henri Levaufre".

These two have found each other and I have no doubt that up there in veterans' paradise, the 90th cap screwed on their heads, they are still walking side by side through the battlefields of summer 44.

Speeches following Christian's comments:

- Speech by Colonel James Bramble former member of the 90th sustainment brigade, heir unit of the former 90th Infantry division
- Speech by Brigadier General Michael Harvey Commander of the US Army Reserve 7th Mission Support Command and Deputy Commanding General 21st Theater Support Command
- Speech by M. Stéphane Travert, local congressman.
- Speech by Diana Cowell, daughter of Colonel Ed Hamilton
- Speech by Stephen Talbott, son of General Orwin Talbott

In memory of this event the liberation of Périers 75 years ago and in memory of these two men, Henri Levaufre and Edward Hamilton, we will now proceed to a wreath laying.

At the end, I would be grateful if you would go back to your place. Everybody will stand up and respect a minute of silence.

It will end with the national anthems.

Wreath laying: we will now proceed to the laying of 6 wreaths:

For the congress: Stéphane Travert, Bg Harvey, Diana Cowell

For the Regional Council: Mrs Christiane Vulvert, Evelyne Levaufre, James Bramble

For the departmental council: Mr. Gabriel Daube, François Levaufre, Vincent Barrand major of the French gendarmerie

For the city of Périers: Marc Fédini, Steve Talbott, Guy Parey

For the “Normandy 44-90e DI” association: Pierre Sauvage, Jean-Louis and Anne Marie Cousin

For the Utah-Beach Museum: Charles de Valavieille, Helen Patton, Dana Cowell

- Taps
- Minute of silence
- Star Spangled banner
- Marseillaise

Photos of the Dedication and opening of Espace Hamilton-Levaufre





Thanks to the Association members for their support of the Hamilton-Levaufre Espace.

The Executive Committee of the 90th Association has been in communication with Christian Levaufre throughout the months following Henri's passing. They agreed that Henri's collection needed to be preserved as a historical record and resource for future generations. There were significant costs involved in the disbursement of the collection. The Ex-Com decided to support the Levaufre family in distributing and maintaining the collection in the appropriate places. To that end, a Go Fund Me fundraising effort was established by Art Meier (past president of the Association) and communication sent to all of the Association members. The goal was to raise \$5000 on behalf of the Levaufre family to use as needed in the distribution of the collection. Thanks to the generosity of 90th Association members, the goal was reached! The financial support ensures that the shared legacy of the 90th Infantry Division and their French counterparts will be maintained for future generations.

Thanks to Art Meier for spearheading the effort and to the Executive Committee for their part in securing the legacy for the future!

German doctoral student connects with 90th Association



There were several presentations on a variety of topics during the 2019 reunion. One that captured the interest of the group was a presentation by Tamara Heger, a German doctoral student from the University of Regensburg in Germany. I had the opportunity to visit with Tamara, and through follow up emails learned more about her connection to the Association and her research on the liberation of the Flossenberg concentration camp on April 23, 1945.

On March 24, 1938, SS authorities determined a site near the small town of Flossenburg to be suitable for the establishment of a concentration camp, due to its potential for extracting granite for construction purposes. The site lay in northeastern Bavaria near the Czech border. Six weeks later, on May 3, 1938 the first 100 prisoners arrived at the camp. The SS planned to deploy the prisoners as forced laborer in the nearby stone quarry owned by the SS company German Earth and Stone Works. Initially non-

Jewish prisoners were held at the camp, mostly German and French prisoners. However, between 1944 and the middle of January 1945, at least 10,000 Jews arrived in Flossenburg and its subcamps. Some 13,000 more came in the winter months of 1945. At its high point in March, 1945, nearly 53,000 prisoners were in Flossenburg camp system .

U.S. forces approached the camp in mid-April, 1945. As they grew near, the SS began the forced evacuation of nearly 40,000 prisoners from the Flossenburg camp, ahead of the approaching U.S. army. Approximately 1600 of the sick and weak were left behind. The 90th Infantry Division liberated the main camp on 23 April, 1945.

As an undergraduate, Ms. Heger began to focus on German-American contact and relations in Germany. As part of her state exam, she did an oral history project about German-American contact after WW II in Grafenwoehr (there is a major training area and therefore strong American presence) focusing mainly on the German side. After deciding to pursue her PhD, she wanted to remain in the field of transnational relations, but give a stronger focus on an American perspective. Flossenbuerg as a possible site of research came in very early. She was familiar with the memorial, having visited it with her high school class. She discovered that there were no studies about the liberators of Flossenbuerg, so she decided to change that. She came across Vern Schmidt's name while looking through material available in the memorial's archive. The Director of the Memorial, Jorg Skriebeleit, referred Ms. Heger to Vern (Association member and former president) as Vern was involved in the liberation of Flossenbuerg on April 23, 1945. Ms. Heger made contact with Vern, and they have been sharing information since their first email exchange. Vern has been able to provide incredibly detailed information to Ms. Heger regarding the liberation. Vern invited Ms. Heger to New Orleans, and she shared the interesting story of her research with reunion attendees.

Ms. Heger is hopeful that she can fill the research gap regarding Flossenbuerg. Existing works focus either on the former inmates or the perpetrators. It is important to her that the experiences and the memories of Americans who liberated the camp be a part of the history of the Holocaust, specifically Flossenbuerg. Vern Schmidt has become a valuable resource for her. He has visited the camp five times since war's end (the first in 1993) and he and Ms. Heger plan to meet in Flossenbuerg in April, 2020, for the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the liberation. Vern describes Ms. Heger as a "very devoted person" who wants to ask the right questions.

Once again we learn that the threads of history intersect and weave new stories, and that the most profound

experiences of our lives do not lie dormant in our past. Our experiences, resurface in ways that help us to examine and make meaning from them, hopefully resulting in lessons from which future generations may learn.

We look forward to hearing more about Ms. Heger's research, and hope to chronicle the commemoration of the liberation of Flossenbuerg in April, 2020.



US Army Reserve 90th Sustainment Brigade presented the Colors at all reunion events.



Vern Schmidt, WWII veteran, Tamara Heger, German doctoral student, and Ron Sholar.



Raul Ramirez, Russ Wentworth (WWII veteran and reunion "First Timer") and Denise Taylor (daughter of Russ Wentworth, also a "First Timer")



Rhoda Reid, retiring Executive Director is honored by 1st Vice President Raul Ramirez.



Guests enjoy the program at the Saturday banquet.



La Pavillon, New Orleans, site of the 2019 reunion.



Sculpture outside of the National WWII Museum, New Orleans.



US Army Reserve Col Daniel Hershkowitz, current commander of the 90th Sustainment Brigade, was keynote speaker at the Sautrday night banquet.



President Tad McClung gives opening welcome at the Banquet.

Message from the chaplain

90th DIVISION ASSOCIATION
2019 MEMORIAL ADDRESS—“LEGACY OF HONOR”

BG [R] Rev. James Spivey

Legacy is important for next generations. Knowing the greatness of our past propels us into the future with confidence. Moses reminded Israel of this as it stood poised to enter the Promised Land: Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and you grandsons. (Deut 4:9). Likewise, God’s providence, brave Americans, and our remembrance of them have made our nation great.



For more than a century, Tough ‘Ombres have stood in the vanguard of American heroic ranks. Drawing men mainly from Texas and Oklahoma—‘TO’—this ‘Division of Honor’ was activated 25 August 1917 at Camp Travis near San Antonio. It proved its mettle in the St. Mihiel and Meusse-Argonne campaigns of World War I. The price was high: 7549 casualties. In ‘Blackjack’ Pershing’s words, “The 90th is one of the very best divisions sent over here; everyone says so.”

When it was reactivated 25 March 1942 at Camp Barkley near Abilene, some of those veterans charged the new Tough ‘Ombres with maintaining this ‘Legacy of Honor’: “the division so newly yours is a proud unit which in the hard way earned its spurs and the right to hold its head high in any company . . . proud because it has never lost a foot of ground; has never failed to take an objective; and has proved it could take it from the best the enemy could throw at us. . . . Take up where we left off and go from there.” This they did—and more!

The new division drew from every state in the union to fill its authorized strength of 14,000, and by VE day, over 35,000 men had served in its ranks. They faced an overwhelming task: one underestimated by later generations who blithely take World War II victory for granted. 300 million Europeans were in the iron grip of Axis powers who seemed invincible. In fact, Eisenhower was prepared for the worst. On 5 June 1944, he scribbled and tucked away an announcement to be used in case the D-Day invasion failed: “Our landings . . . have failed to gain a satisfactory foothold and I have withdrawn the troops. My decision to attack at this time and place was based upon the best information available. The troops, the air and the Navy did all that bravery and devotion to duty could do. If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt it is mine alone.”

Indeed, the magnitude and importance of the task was staggering, if not outright unnerving. But so much was at stake, Eisenhower along with all Tough ‘Ombres faced the day with steely courage. Too much was at stake. He put it this way: “The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other fronts, you will bring about . . . the elimination of tyranny over the oppressed people of Europe and security for ourselves in a free world.”

And the 90th did fight! They fought more days—308—than any other division in the European theater. They were

the only division with at least one unit in enemy contact every day from D-Day to VE-Day. The toll was high: 3889 battle deaths, 15,000 battle wounded, and a casualty rate off 74%—i.e. 26,000 men were killed or wounded in some way. They fought not for medals or recognition. But their citations for bravery speak for themselves: 4 medals of honor, 4 distinguished flying crosses, 1311 silver stars, 78 distinguished service crosses, 40 soldier's medals, 5057 bronze stars, and 21,271 purple hearts! Amazing!

What made them tick? Why were they so successful? Three of their qualities stand out.

First, they were audacious. Hitting Utah Beach fearlessly on D-Day, they never looked back. No obstacle stood long in their way. They stormed Hill 122—Foret de Mont-Castre—the high ground commanding the Normandy Peninsula. They fought through impenetrable hedgerows to contain the Germans in the Falaise Pocket. Winning the Battle of Chambois, they expelled the Germans and led the Allied breakout from Normandy. First Army Commander Omar Bradley described this as “the most decisive battle of our war in western Europe.” They took unassailable Koenigsmacker Fortress overlooking a strategic crossing of the Moselle River. With the 5th and 95th Divisions, TO's drove the enemy from the impregnable city of Metz at the Moselle and Seille River junction. During the Battle of the Bulge, they took strategic Hill 490 near Houffalize and, with the 6th and 35th Divisions, cut the German salient between Wiltz and Bastogne. With the 5th Division again, they seized the Rhineland capital Mainz and the crossing point of the Main and Rhine Rivers. After capturing Darmstadt in Hesse, they rolled over SS resistance in central Germany and took the entire 11th Panzer Division (15,000 troops) captive. Altogether, the 90th Division took 83,000 prisoners of war—equal to 6 divisions!

Second, they were selfless. Tough 'Ombres embodied President Roosevelt's description of American forces: “They fight not for the lust of conquest. They fight to end conquest. They fight to liberate.” All along the way, they were met with the cheers and support of grateful citizens like those of Perriere, France, who today still remember and honor their liberators. Marching south through Thuringia in April 1945, the division uncovered the Nazi monetary reserve and treasure trove hidden at Merkers Salt Mines in Merkel. They secured and protected its contents: over \$7 billion (current value) in gold and currency, plus 1000 cases of priceless, stolen art works. Generals Eisenhower, Bradley, and Patton toured the site on 12 April. After dinner that evening in Merkel, they received the sad news that President Roosevelt had just died. Vigilance by these 90th units enabled U.S. forces to safeguard the treasure, make restitution to numerous, robbed foreign banks, and establish a \$875 million (current value) fund to assist Holocaust survivors. On 23 April, the division liberated Flossenburg Concentration Camp near the Bavarian-Czech border. Earlier, it had housed 90,000 prisoners, but 30,000 had been killed and the SS evacuated all but 1500 survivors before the 90th arrived. Just two weeks beforehand, the German Lutheran pastor and resistance leader, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, had been executed there.

Third, they were relentless. Onward they tramped, undeterred, overcoming every obstacle. They fought through the hedgerows and swamps of Normandy. They crossed the Moselle river, one mile wide at flood stage. They bridged the Saar River, broke through the Siegfried Line and then bridged three more rivers. Racing across the Rhine River, they re-crossed the Moselle and then the Main. They marched with epic speed across the Hessen-Thuringian hills into Czechoslovakia as they split the enemy forces in two. The straight-line distance from Normandy to Czechoslovakia was 750 miles—1.5 million footsteps! But their trek probably was at least twice that long when accounting for all the twists and turns and doubling backs along the way. And for most of the troops this was on foot! They wore out a lot of boots!

Audacious. Selfless. Relentless. These qualities define their character. But let's not forget one of the most amazing facts of all. Most of them were incredibly young. Today the survivors are in their mid-90s. But back then, many of them were still teen-agers. Bill Sisk, Vern Schmidt, and Tom Ingram were just 18 on D-Day! Think about it: the fate of the free world and future of all in captivity rested on the shoulders of young men who, at that time, were not even old enough to vote! Remarkable! These were the kind of men XX Corps Commander Walton Walker commended to President Truman: “Without question, I can unequivocally state that . . . the 90th Infantry Division

so distinguished itself in battle by its extraordinary heroism, and exhibited such gallantry, determination and esprit de corps in overcoming unusually difficult and hazardous conditions on the battlefield that it set itself apart and above all other units then comprising the XX corps.”

Our Division Association crest symbolizes this ‘Legacy of Honor’. Above the ‘TO’ are four symbols. On the left, two bronze stars stand for the World War I Meuse-Argonne and St. Mihiel campaigns. The arrowhead represents the Normandy invasion. The silver star on the right stands for the five WW II campaigns in Normandy, Northern France, Ardennes (Battle of the Bulge), Rhineland, and Central Europe. In the background, the five-sided diamond also symbolizes these five campaigns and the French Croix de Guerre.

Today, Tough ‘Ombres wear a unit crest that honors all those, past and present, who have stood in the gap for freedom. The vertical blue arrow shaft represents their World War I service in France. The golden lion is taken from the Normandy coat of arms. The blue arrowhead stands for the amphibious assault on D-Day. The white-star background represents the geographical origin of Texas, with the five points standing for the five campaigns in the European theater of operations. And the crossed red bayonets symbolize the citations the division earned in World War II: the French Croix de Guerre and the Meritorious Unit Commendation.

Solving the mystery of the medals



One of the rewarding aspects of being involved with the 90th Division Association is to learn about and share remarkable stories like the following...

Earlier this summer, a resident of Washington state, Terry Jacobson, discovered a shadow box in the trash of a neighboring rental home. The residents had moved without leaving a forwarding address. The shadow box contained military awards: a Purple Heart, Silver Star, Bronze star and others. Terry recognized its importance and took the shadow box to his neighbor, Mike Kendall, an army veteran. Terry thought Mike might be able to help find the owner of the shadowbox. Their only lead was the name “James S. Sanders” on three of the medals. Through his initial research, Mike was able to determine that the medals belonged to 1Lt James Sanders of the 90th Infantry Division. Lt. Sanders had received the Silver Star for his actions on 19 August, 1944 in the Normandy Campaign (documented in 90th Division General Orders 180 dated Dec. 6, 1944.) Mike also learned that James Sanders died on 20 May 1988 and was buried in Bay Pines National Cemetery in St. Petersburg, Florida.



At that point, Mike reached out to several people, including Rhoda Reid, Executive Director Emeritus of the 90th Association. He hoped to find surviving family members of 1Lt James Sanders and return the shadow box to them. Rhoda forwarded Mike’s email to 90th Association historians Norm Richards and Tyler Albers, and to Chuck Griffith who maintains a database of Association members. Chuck

then sent a “blast” email to all Association members, hoping to connect with someone who might know something about James Sanders and/or his family.

The story intrigued Dorothy Weathersby, an Association member, was she able to provide genealogical information about James Sander’s ancestors.

Helen Patton, granddaughter of Gen. George Patton and a 90th Division Association member, forwarded the email

to Zachariah L. Fike, director of “Purple Hearts Reunited” an organization that reconnects historical military artifacts to their owners and/or family members. Mr. Fike was able to provide important details regarding James Sanders, and also made contact with a niece of James Sanders, Melody Sepskis, who lives in Boulder City, NV. She shed tears of joy upon learning that her uncle’s medals would be returned to the family. Melody has fond memories of her uncle who spent some time living with her family. She shared that her uncle was a bit of a character who “lived on the edge”. He loved motorcycles, hang gliding and Corvettes. He lived with Melody’s family for a time in order to recuperate from a bad motorcycle accident. Melody also shared that she is really grateful for the help of everyone involved to get the medals back to “a safe loving home.”

Mr. Fike also located another niece, Joy Sanders Sherwood, who resides in Lakeland, FL. Joy is the daughter of James’ brother who was also a WW II veteran. Cousins Joy and Melody, along with Joy’s son, Jason, decided that Joy would be the family’s custodian of the shadowbox. They intend to preserve and honor the WW II service of their uncle. Joy mentioned in a conversation with Mike Kendall that the medals will be the focal point for their family gathering at Thanksgiving.

The mystery was solved, the medals returned and a grateful family once again in possession of important family artifacts.

In the winter newsletter, Part II of this story will be told. Mike Kendall, who received the shadow box from his neighbor, Terry Jacobson, and initiated the hunt for the Sanders family is also an army veteran. He has a lifelong friend, A.L Bontrager, who lives in Leawood, Kansas. Mike mentioned his friend in an email to Nancy Rasmusson, who made contact with the Bontrager family. A.L. Bontrager and his wife were leaving the next day for a trip to France to tour the WW II beaches and battlefield sites and hopefully learn more about A.L.’s father, Arley L. Bontrager’s service in WW II. Arley L. Bontrager was also a Tough ‘Ombre who was awarded a Purple Heart and a Silver Star for his service in WW II. The Bontrager family is seeking information about his years in the service and is hoping the Association can help. I will share the “rest of the story” in the February, 2020 newsletter. Stay tuned. This is one of many amazing stories that are a part of the 90th Division Association history. The Association is a great resource for those who want to learn more about the role of their family member during his or her military service. Thanks to everyone who was involved in solving the mystery of the medals, and returning them to James Sander’s family.

Call of Taps

Fall, 2019

Alan Johnston Former Chief of Staff, AR COM	24 Sept., 2019	San Antonio, TX
Maurice Eugene Mace 385/D	14 Dec., 2018	Jefferson City, MO
John Eugene Neibarger 358/CN	12 Aug., 2019	Clinton, MO
Darrell Duane Petty 358/G	6 July, 2019	Sheridan, WY

We also honor the memory of these members of the 90th family:

Tom Hill, Jr 358/K (Nephew, Capt. Robert B. McHolland and reunion attendee.)	12 July, 2019	Ft. Worth, TX
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Sandy Super Daughter, WW II William King, 358/A Coordinator of the reunion Raffle for many years.	3 Aug., 2019	Addison, IL
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Sandy Super was an integral part of the 90th Association reunions. Her devotion to the event, her hard work to make the event special, and her friendship with Association members will be sorely missed. Our condolences to her family and friends.

Memorials

All Deceased 90th veterans by Herbert Reichlin

All 315th Engineers by Alan Twisselman

All 343rd by COL [R] Arthur C. Meier, II

Arivello, Sgt. Walter J, 357/B by Mr. and Mrs. Christopher Harrod

Bergdale, LTC [R] Harold G., 358/S VC by daughter, Lorna Bergdale Gilbert

Blank, Arnold T, 537/AAA by son, Tim Blank

Bulger, Richard H. (“Doc”), 358/Med Det by daughter, Jane C. Bulger

Chaffee, Sidney D, 357/H by daughter, Mary Lynn Chaffee

Conn, Charles, 344/FA Bn by son Joseph N. Conn

Deuer, Henry (“Duke”), 315/Eng by son, John Deuer

Dyke, Clifford A., 358/M by widow, Jane R. Dyke and sons Allen, Stephen and Arthur

Engle, Joseph, 358/HQ by friend Jane C. Bulger

Flowers, Jim 712/TK Bn by friend, MG [R] David R. Bockel

Griffith, SSGT Burl R. 357/L by nephew Charles Burl (Chuck) Griffith

Gryder, LTC Jimmy, ARCOM 244th PSYOP CO by CW4 Jim Valentine

Haley, T/Sgt William B, 357/B 3 Bn by Mr. and Mrs. Christopher B. Harrod

Hall, Raymond, 315th Eng by daughter, Sue Ann Loesch

Hamilton, LTC Edward S., 357/HQ by daughter, Diana Hamilton Cowell and by friend, MG[R] David R. Bockel

Hertzog, Col [R] Frank S. 345/FA Bn by daughter-in-law Deborah S. Hertzog

Hertzog, LTC [R] Frank A., RSC by widow, Deborah S. Hertzog

Hill, Tomas E. 358/K by cousin, Jerry D. Wiley (T. Hill was a cousin of Capt. Robert B. McHolland, 358/K)

Hoyt, Keen 357/K 3Bn by friend and Comrade-in-Arms, Jack L. Evans

Hughes, Rod H., 358/F 2Bn by widow, Dee Hughes

Kelley, William (Bill) J., 90th Signal by widow Patricia (Patty) Kelley and daughter Kandice Kelley

Kennedy, Clyde B., 915/FA Bn by Son, Craig A. Kennedy and friend, John Phillips

King, William J., 358/A by daughter, Sandra King Super

Kusmierz, Edward J., 358/HQ 2 Bn by widow, Irene K. Kusmierz

Larsen, Paul E., 359/C by daughter Helen M. Birchall

Legowski, T5 Joseph T., 358/F 2nd Plt. by son Robert J. Legowski

Lehtinen, Sgt. Wendell E., 357/B 3Bn, KIA: France, July, 1944 by Mr. and Mrs. Christopher Harrod

Levaufre, Henri, 90th French Historian, by friends MG[R] David Bockel, Mr. and Mrs. Christopher Harrod,

Dot McCharen Weathersby and COL[R] O. Findley Brewster

Long, SSGT George, 357/HQ 1Bn by daughter, Mary Long Staszewski

Martin, Alden D., 359/L 3 Bn by son, Ronald E. Martin

Martens, Raymond, 359/L 3Bn by daughter, Kristen Martens Faller

McCharen, Edward L., 359/L 3 Bn by niece, Dorthy (Dot) McCharen Weathersby

McKnight, Lee Roy 359/I KIA by niece, Barbara Wells

Miller, LaVerne W., 358 by nephew, David W. Miller

Monkelien, James M., 359/F 2Bn by son, Perry Arlan Monkelien

Oldani, PFC Charles T., 358/G 2Bn by nephew, David L. Oldani

Paepke, Carl A., 359/H by daughter and son-in-law, Jeanne and Steven Pouslen

Pine, Shawn, RRC by COL[R] James D. Beesley

Poole, Sr., Reginald M., 359/M by widow, Elizabeth (Betty) Poole

Rasmusson, Harry R., 315th Eng by daughter, Nancy A. Rasmusson

Reid, PFC James R., Sr. 344/HQ FA Bn by friend COL[R] O. Findley Brewster

Reisner, Thomas F., 315 Med Det by son, Ralph F. Reisner

Richards, Clyde, 358/D by son, Norm Richards

Robertson, William J., 359 by son, Dennis J. Robertson

Robinson, Billy W., ARCOM by widow, June Robinson and COL[R] O. Findley Brewster

Roper, Robert, 358/E KIA: 2/19/1945 by Comrade-in-Arms, Vern Schmidt

Rutherford, Joe T., 357/G by widow, Gerry Rutherford

Sherfy, Kay 90th/HQ by son, Dennis Sherfy

Shostrom, Earl R., 358/I by son, Keith Earl Shostrom

Silbert, William, 358/A by widow, Elsa D. Silbert

Speese, Andrew J., III 357/K, 3Bn, KIA by son, Andrew J. Speese, IV

Staley, Milton, 359/I 3Bn by Dot McCharen Weathersby

Stamatis, Peter, C., 357/F 2Bn by son, Mark A. Stamatis

Staruk, Walter, 344/FA Bn by widow, Catherine A. Staruk

Stenger, Sylvester (Wes) C., 357/HQ by widow, Viola L. Stenger

Stobbe, Joseph W., 358/G by daughter and son-in-law David and Catherine Hardy

Super, Sandra, daughter of William King, 358, by friends Beverly Stanford Abney and MG[R] Elvin and Roxanna Schofield

Twisselman, Donald G., 315/C Eng by son, Alan Twisselman

Whitty, Donald T., 537/AAA by daughter, Donna J. Whitty Monkelien

Wigton, Irving, 358/E KIA: 2/19/1945 by Comrade-in-Arms Vern Schmidt



Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the liberation of Thionville and the surrounding area by the American troops of Patton's Third Army will be held Thursday, November 14, 2019 - Tuesday, November 19, 2019.

If any member of the Association is attending the event, please contact Nancy Rasumsson, Executive Director, for a follow-up story in the Winter, 2020 newsletter.

New Members

Jason Bond

Jim Laduke

David Larsen

Krystal Peterson

Connie and Kirk Rickerman

Rebecca Ownby Smith

Denise Taylor

Russell Wentworth

Saginaw, TX

McPherson, KS

Pace, FL

Lance Creek, WY

Kingman, TX

San Antonio, TX

North Pole, AK

Ephrata, WA

Grandson, Arthur Carlson

Son-in-law, SSgt J. Tallman

Great Nephew, Lt. Franklin Beard

Great Niece, Bates Harris

Daughter, Charlie Lilley

Daughter, MG Robert Ownby

Daughter, Russell Wentworth

WW II 712/D TK BN



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM – July 1, 2019- June 30, 2020

Name:

First _____ MI _____ Last _____

Street _____ Unit or Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone: _____ Email _____

If Veteran:

Unit/Regt _____ BN _____ CO _____ ARCOM _____

RSC _____ RCC _____ RGG _____ SB _____

If you are not a Veteran:

Relationship to Veteran (include name): _____

Memorial Information:

In memory of _____

(If known) Unit _____ Reg _____ BN _____ CO _____ ARCOM _____ RCC _____

Annual Dues: (\$40.00) _____

International: (\$40.00) _____

500 Club Donation: _____

Memorial Donation: _____

Total: _____

Make checks payable to: 90th Division Association

Mail to: 90th Division Association, PO Box 125, Nevada, IA 50201-0125

If Questions:

Email: Nancy@90thdivisionassoc.org or call: (970) 227-2744