

◆ WWII MUSINGS ◆

Volume 2 Issue 3

March 1994



Golden Parachutists

Last month we talked about the Golden Parachutists of the Return to Normandy Association who want to jump at Normandy, June 5th, in the commemoration jump. Actually, they would like to jump after elements of the "younger" active duty members of the 82nd and 101st Airborne units do their commemorative jump. There are 33 WWII veteran combat paratroopers, in great shape, who have been training to put their "knees to the breeze" again to commemorate all WWII veterans but have met with resistance from the same organization that once insisted upon their service, fifty years ago, our United States Army.

Richard F Mandich, (101st Abn, 506th Parachute Inf Regt), President of the Return to Normandy Association says "This is the theme that we veteran paratroopers coming again to Normandy would like to stress - a theme of peace and freedom from global wars such as experienced in the past. We believe this theme would be powerfully projected to the entire world by the active young airborne men dropping first into Normandy followed by the veterans.... This drop, we feel would be to honor all the Normandy landings veterans and especially those of their comrades who died there." Most of the men made two jumps last February 18-20, and some have made three, without injury. The French are enthusiastic as they believe this commemoration belongs to those being commemorated, the WWII Veterans. What better way to

EDITORIAL NOTE:

This newsletter is based on the research of John D. Bowen, 613 Chichester Lane, Silver Spring, MD 20904-3331 in the National Archives in the World War II Unit Records. The information provided is from the actual After/Action Reports, G-2 and S-2 Intelligence Reports and Journals. These are reports as they happened. The information may have been found to be different with fifty years of history. It is presented here as it actually was written. Comments are welcomed. This information is in the Public Domain. Credit should be given to the National Archives Military Branch. It is distributed for the benefit of VBOB Chapter members.



commemorate. You can help by writing your Congressmen & Senators and asking whether our paratrooper buddies are going to be allowed to jump by the US Army? The veterans have agreed to sign liability waivers and to provide doctors statements to the effect that there is no medical reason why the veteran cannot do parachuting. Their requests are simple: a drop aircraft and parachutes be provided by the US Military to parachute into Ste Mere l'Eglise. Transportation to, and later from, the staging area would be at the veterans own expense unless the military would like them to return to the US with the active military. What greater tribute to WWII Veterans who answered the call and gave so much, then to have these 33 willing fellow Veterans represent them in one more jump. Surely our Army can express its thanks for past services and sacrifices by granting their wish and what better PR for the Army, in remembering its own. Why not? Many of these veterans are members of our Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge Association.



D-DAY REENACTMENT

If you can't make the real thing, commemorating D-Day in Normandy, then the next best thing will be at Virginia Beach, 1-5 June 1994. Last month we talked about Registration and included registration forms for those veterans who wanted to stay in the barracks. The cost for that including meals and the Saturday night entertainment is a super bargain at \$75.00. Whether you were part of D-Day or D-day + you won't want to miss this 50th anniversary event. You can't beat the price when you figure that you get five meals and a place to sleep for four nights, all for \$75.00. Remember that Registration must be in by 1 May 1994 for this outstanding deal.

A number of veterans asked about motel accommodations so they could bring their spouse or other as there are no accommodations for non-veterans and the fairer sex on the base. I am attaching a list of the hotels and motels to the president of the Chapters receiving this WWII Musings. Hopefully they will have reproduced them but if not you can call 1-800-VA BEACH and they will provide you with details. There are motels and hotels in all price ranges. This is a summer resort as you may know so it is important to make reservations as early as possible. Schools will be beginning to let out and families with early vacation thoughts may be in competition for rooms. For those wanting to stay as a group, in a motel/hotel please call Dick Kingsley, at 1-800-700-7702. He will arrange for a block of rooms at a more favorable group rate. There is no special rate for veterans, per se, other than through the group block of rooms that Dick Kingsley will arrange.

P a r a d e

D-Day Reenactment

(Continued from front page)

Participation

For those veterans wishing to do so, there will be an opportunity to march as a contingent Saturday Morning in Virginia Beach. If you feel up to it, be sure to break out your overseas cap, dust it off and be ready to march. If your overseas cap won't fit then get your Legion, VFW or VBOB cap ready. VBOB caps can be ordered through the Association. It has been requested that those veterans that can still fit into their old uniforms should wear them in the parade. The parade starts at 9:00 AM and forms at 8:30 AM on Atlantic Avenue beginning with 16th street, for those going to march. All veterans are encouraged to march with the VBOB Chapters contingent and should bring their Chapter flag.

Layout

Some have asked about Camp Pendleton and Fort Story. Camp Pendleton is not to be confused with the Marine Corp complex with the same name. Camp Pendleton, VA is now a National Guard Camp and sits at the lower end of the peninsular. It is where the reenactors and veterans staying in the barracks will be housed. Fort Story VA is about five miles on the other end of the peninsular and is where the actual reenactment will be performed. In between the two military installations is Virginia Beach.

Activities

For veterans staying in the barracks, they should proceed to Camp Pendleton and report to the Registration office, when they arrive. A list of activities is listed with the registration form. As with the Bulge reenactments the veterans will be providing their own entertainment and comraderie, taking part in the announced activities, taking in the sights of Virginia Beach as well as sharing with the reenactors. For those staying in motel/hotels they should take advantage of Virginia Beach and are welcome to visit the

D-DAY REENACTMENT & COMMEMORATIVE PROGRAM

Wed 1 Jun	10AM+	Arrival of Reenactors & Veterans-Camp Pendleton
Thu 2 Jun		Training & Tactical for Reenactors
Fri 3 Jun	10AM+	Historical Displays-Camp Pendleton VA
	10AM-2PM	Landing Rehearsal
	8PM-1AM	Commemorative Dance (Black-tie or Era Costume)
Sat 4 Jun	10-11:30AM	Parade-Atlantic Ave/ Virginia Beach Oceanfront
	2PM	Commemorative Ceremony-Fort Story
		Guest Speakers: Senator John Warner
		Dr. Brooks Kleber
		Dr G. William Whitehurst
		Re-Enactment begins following the ceremony
Sun 5 Jun	10AM	Wreath laying-Cape Henry Monument-Fort Story

veteran's barracks and say hello. The veterans barracks will be AIR-CONDITIONED. They should also plan to take part in the Friday activities at Camp Pendleton as well as the Commemorative Dance. For those attending the Dance there is some additional information. If you are a veteran not staying in the barracks the dance ticket is \$65 for you and \$75 for your spouse or guest. If have paid the Reenactors fee then the cost for the dance is \$50 for yourself and \$75 for your spouse or guest. The dance is black-tie or era costume.

On Saturday after the parade in Virginia Beach you should plan to get to Fort Story early for the Reenactment. The Reenactment starts at 1:30PM however it is limited to 10,000 people. Once that number is reached or the event begins, the gates will be closed. Upon arriving at Fort Story for the Reenactment be sure to identify yourself as a veteran. You will be given a special identifying tag that will allow you to park and sit in the veterans section that is being set aside for veterans. On Saturday Evening there will be entertainment. It is part of the Barracks package however those who are not staying in the barracks and want to partake of it will need to send in \$10.00/per person on the Registration Form. Make your plans now but be sure you have registered by 1 May 1994. Info or forms can be secured from John Bowen, 303-384-6533, 613 Chichester Lane, Silver Spring MD 20904-3331. A SSAE will help.

D-DAY NORMANDY

D-Day Normandy has become a 5 day celebration beginning on June 1 with a WWII scholarly seminar (see separate article). Historical displays featuring military vehicles will open to the public amidst patriotic music at Camp Pendleton VA on June 3rd highlighting Virginia's 29th Infantry Division's role in the D-Day invasion. That evening there will be a black tie (or era costume) commemorative dance with several WWII era celebrities as special guests. Saturday, June 4th opens with a parade down Atlantic Avenue in Virginia Beach with veterans, marching bands, historic vehicles and a vintage military aircraft flyover. At 2:00PM the Commemorative ceremony will begin at Ft Story with Senator John Warner, Congressman G. William Whitehurst and retired US Army Chief of Military History and veteran of UTAH Beach landing, Dr. Brooks Kleber as keynote speakers. Following the ceremony, the recreation of the Normandy invasion will begin replete with over 1,000 reenactors, tanks, landing craft, US Seal Team, simulated explosions, Naval vessels and vintage aircraft. A Stage Door Canteen will open shortly after the landing concludes to provide the public with special entertainment featuring WWII celebrities. Vendors will provide food and souvenirs throughout the day at Ft Story. D-Day Normandy's final program will be a wreath laying on Sunday morning, June 5th at the Cape Henry Monument to honor our nation's WWII Veterans. Eric L. Gibson is President and Event Coordinator.

**TACTICAL BOMBING
DEC OFFENSIVE**

HOUFFALIZE 6 or 7 Jan 45
0300-0330 hrs Houffalize was bombed by 10-20 heavy bombers. The attacks were made in approx 4 successive waves from approx 2,000 meters height. The town, crowded with personnel and vehicles, suffered heavy damage. All the vehicles were damaged beyond immediate repair, and the bulk of mobile equipment of 2d Bn 19 SS Gren Regt was destroyed. Many vehicles were buried under collapsed houses. PW saw 2 anti-tank guns destroyed, and heard that more had been eliminated. Casualties among military personnel appear to have run as high as 50%. Traffic was delayed for about 10 hrs, but PW thinks it would have been immobilized for a much longer period if the bridge had been hit. (Source: Uffz Heinz Pech, 6 Co 19 SS Pz Gren Regt, captured 21 Jan vic Geilich. US Strategic Bombing Survey PW Intell Bulltn No 1/40, National Archives)

GOUVY 7 (?) Jan 45
PW (French), hiding out with the intent to desert at Gouvy, saw 1515 hrs 7 (?) Dec that soldiers evacuated the town of all vehicles, military personnel, and civilians. An Army Sig unit had intercepted an Allied message ordering the bombing of the town 1430 hours hrs the same day. The bombardment occurred on schedule and destroyed most of the evacuated town. PW, a driver, said his unit had strict orders to drive only at night or on overcast days. (Source: O/Gefr Eduard Trenka, 3d Co 3d Para Eng Bn 3d Para Div, US Strategic Bombing Survey PW Intell Bulltn No 1/40, National Archives)

Famous Last Words

As I get older, I see things more clearly, that never were.
Col. Bill Hemphill



NOTES ON MORALE

PW "A" says that many German soldiers coming back from the front wear civilian clothes under their uniforms to make it easier to desert. The clothes are either stolen from deserted homes or given to them by sympathetic civilians.

PW "B" tells of a group of exchange prisoners who forgot themselves and said that they had been better off as PWs in the USA then they were in Germany. When the authorities found this out, the erstwhile PWs were all shipped to the Eastern Front.

A dream that never came true for PW "C" was that of settling in a "very comfortable," steam-heated fort somewhere along the front, for the duration. This was promised members of 811 Fortress MG Bn by their OC whenever morale needed bolstering.

**After the War
The Sheltered Life?**

The old lady who entered the reception room of the CIC offices did not appear to have been living in farthest Antarctica for the past year, but- - -

"I wish to see Herr Oberkriminalkommissar Peter Klein," she announced.

The interviewer rocked slightly. The only Peter Klein known to him was one of the leading members of the former Fulda Gestapo staff. "We, too would like to see Herr Klein," he told her.

She appeared puzzled. "Is this not the office of the Gestapo?" she asked.

After the interviewer had pulled himself together, it was explained to her that certain changes in personnel and policy had been made in Fulda police organization since April.

Whether she had planned to attend the Party Festival at Nuremberg this year is not known.

(Source: 3d Inf Div as found at the National Archives in Intelligence Summary No 31, Hq, 78th Inf Div, 7 Sep 45)

D-DAY SEMINAR

Travel America in conjunction with The War Memorial Museum of Newport News, VA is presenting a seminar, June 1-5 1994, on D-Day & The War in Europe: A 50th Anniversary Review. Veterans, students of military history and general history enthusiasts alike may be interested in this review of the Second World War in Europe. The seminar will include presentations on the prelude to American involvement, life in Nazi Europe, the German defense, life for the common soldiers and the beaches and battles. The seminar host will be John Quarstein, Director of the War Memorial Museum and Administrator of Museums and Historical Services for the City of Newport News, VA. Speakers include Dr. Carl Boyd, Eric L Gibson (President, D-Day Reenactment), Joe Gutierrez, Jr, Dr. Brooks Kleber, Dr. Michael Palmer, Col Joseph Whitehorse (USA Ret), Dr. G. William Whitehurst. Rate for the seminar is \$395 per participant, which includes 3 receptions, 3 dinners and 2 lunches; all lectures, admissions; touring; entertainment and taxes and gratuities. For those desiring the seminar with Hotel accommodations for 4 nights at the Sheraton Hotel, Virginia Beach the cost is \$689 per person twin basis or \$945 single basis. Of course veterans can take advantage of the Reenactment offer and stay in the veterans barracks for \$75. The seminar begins at 6:30 PM Wed, June 1 with reception/dinner and talk. Tours of Hampton Roads, US Naval Base and Newport News Shipyard as well as Fort Monroe and the War Memorial Museum and the Reenactment are included, in addition to the excellent talks. The program concludes at 12:00 noon on Sun, 5 Jun. Further info can be had by calling 1-800-225-2553. (In Mass. 508-927-4543) or writing Travel America, 131 Dodge Street, Suite 5, Beverly, MA 01915.



DEATH OF ROMMEL

The following sworn and attested declaration has been made by the seventeen year old son of the German Field-Marshal Rommel on the circumstances of his father's death. It is believed to be substantially correct.

"My father, Field-Marshal Erwin Rommel, died on 14 Oct 1944, at Herrlingen, an unnatural death, removed in the following manner at the order of the Reichskanzler, Adolf Hitler.

My father was severely wounded in the head (four skull fractures and many splinters in the face) through the explosion of a shell during an American low-flying attack on 17 Jul 44, in France near Livarat (Calvados). The first dressings were made in a hospital near Paris, and when he was able to be moved he was transferred in a truck to Herrlingen-Bei-Ulm, his home at that time. There was no danger of his dying. The fracture to his skull could be looked upon as already healed. My father was already going out for walks. I myself was then drafted out of the Home-Flak Battery, to which I had been appointed as an assistant, to help my father as a reader. My father still suffered from paralysis of the left eye. His treatment was in the hands of Professor Albert and Professor Stock, both of Tübingen University.

On 7 Oct 44, I had to return to my battery and came home on short leave on 14 Oct 44. I arrived on the 7AM train. My father was already up and we breakfasted together, then I went for a walk with him till 11 AM, during which time he told me that two Army generals and no doubt General Maisel and General Burgsdor, both of the Army Personnel Bureau, would be coming. He said that he did not have much confidence in the meeting and he did not know whether the stated object of discussing his further employment was not being used as a maneuver to get rid of him.

At 12 o'clock my father received the two generals. My father asked me to leave the room. After three-quarters of an hour I met my father going out of my mother's room. He told me then that he had taken leave of my mother and that he had been given the choice by Adolf Hitler either of poisoning himself or of being sent for public trial. Moreover, Adolph Hitler had stated that in the event of suicide nothing would happen to his family, but on the contrary they would be provided for. We observed in the meantime that the house was surrounded by at least four or five armoured cars. The cars were apparently occupied by armed civilians, so that the eight men on duty-watch in the house, who had only two machine guns, would be powerless. After my father had said good-bye to me and the orderly officer, he left the house in uniform, wearing a leather cloak and with Marshall's

baton and cap. We accompanied him to the car where the generals saluted him with "Heil Hitler" greeting. We saw an SS man at the wheel of the car. My father climbed in first and took a seat in the back, then the two generals followed.

The car went off in the direction of Blauberden. Fifteen minutes later we received a call from the Reserve Hospital Wagner-Schule in Ulm, to the effect that my father had been brought in by the two generals, apparently having had a brain stroke.

In my last conversation with my father he told me the following facts:

He had been suspected of complicity in the 20 Jul 44 affair (failed assassination of Hitler). His former Chief of the General Staff - Gen. Lt. Speidel - who had been arrested a few weeks previously, had said my father had had a leading interest in the 20 Jul affair and had only been prevented from a direct share in it by his injury. General von Stulnagel had made the same statement after his dismissal through Field Marshall von Kluge, and left in his car in the direction of Germany. On the way he tried to shoot himself, but only lost his eyesight. The SS found him, and gave him blood transfusions in order to restore him to consciousness to extract conclusive statements. Afterwards he was hanged. Moreover, my father had been put on the list of Oberbürgermeister Goerdeler as Minister President.

The Führer did not want my father's standing before the German people to be degraded, and gave him the chance of voluntary death by a poisoned pill, which was given to him on the way by one of the generals. This killed him within three seconds. In the case of a refusal he would have been immediately arrested and put before the High Court of Justice in Berlin. My father chose a voluntary death." (Source: 7th Army & records at the NA Intell Summary No 35, Hq 78th InfD, 5 Oct 45)

And They Grumbled!

Extracts from German Letters

"Who knows what is to become of our house? The 'AMIS' (Americans) will soon have damaged it to such an extent that it will only be good to serve as a barracks. You are supposed not to talk, you must not grumble, otherwise you are barred from the house. You have to keep smiling. All my cushions have gone (seven of them). There is a continuous coming and going of troops." (Source: 7th Army)



BULGE MONUMENT

Word has just been received as we go to press that the ground-breaking ceremony for the Battle of the Bulge Memorial, being spearheaded by the Delaware Valley Chapter of VBOB, will be held at 12 Noon on Sunday, 17 April 1994, at Valley Forge Military Academy in Wayne PA. Representatives of the Belgium and Luxembourg governments will be present. All are invited. Funds are still at the mid-point and the remainder must be raised before dedication on 11 Nov 94. Donations can be sent to George Linthicum, Del Valley Chapter, VBOB, 2605 Orchard Drive, Broomall PA 19008.