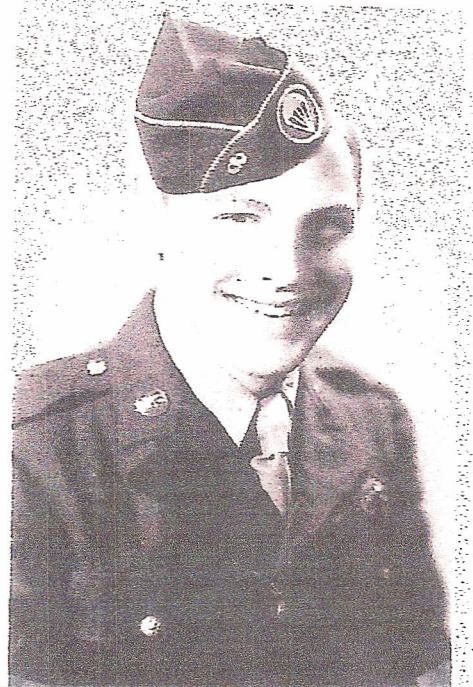


NOW • 2013

MELVIN C. TRENARY 517TH RCT



THEN - 1944

Melvin C. Trenary
517th RCT
1st BTN. CO. A.
1st PLTN. 1st SQD.

Turned 18 Nov. 30th 1942. Received greetings from Uncle Sam Jan. 1943. Tried to get exempt so I could graduate. No dice! They wanted young men for military service. Reported for duty March 3rd 1943 at Camp MacArthur in San Padre, California. I had been going to Manual Arts High School at the time, in Los Angeles, California the same school that Gen. Doolittle went to.

Made friends with a guy from PolyTech High School. We were given tests, shots, physicals and the third degree. A person in front of me passed out from his shots. I grabbed him from falling flat on his face and laid him down. I was told I could join any branch of service I wanted. They stood us outside in lines. Someone over a loud speaker gave us a lecture about the paratroopers. Sounded interesting. I had been a puny kid. Having had colds, flu and pneumonia a few times. This was a way to get into good shape. Besides it was something the average person wouldn't want to get into. This made it a special branch of service. When they asked for volunteers, out of about 22 guys, 2 stepped forward. Me and the friend from PolyTech High School. Back to the doctor we went for a second physical and many more questions. Accepted, they sent us home for a couple of days with new uniforms. The uniform was terrible! It didn't fit, and I had no choice but to wear it. When I got home, I told my mom what branch I had joined. I think I saw her gasp a little when I said paratroops. We both weren't sure what I was getting into. After my visit home, I went to the union train station and headed for an area called Toccoa, Georgia. Being the second time on a train, it was interesting to see the country side and all the towns go by. It was amazing to see all that soot collect at the windows, then rub off onto your clothes.

I met other guys heading to the same place. We were put on side rails several times to let other trains go by. When we got to Georgia I noticed the soil was red. Later on in the winter ice would squeeze up out of the soil and every step you took, it would crunch like stepping on egg shells. After we got to Toccoa, a sergeant took us to a barracks, lined us up and proceeded to give us a lecture on what to expect and what we were to do the rest of the day. Every other word was the "F" word. We couldn't help but laugh. In a few weeks, we were talking the same way. The first thing we learned was how to make our bed. If the sergeant dropped a quarter on the bed and it didn't go up in the air, your bed was not made right, and then the push-ups began. We were asked why we joined the paratroops, where we came from, how much schooling, what kind of courses, and what family we had at home. I told them that my uniform didn't fit very well. We were told that we won't be going out of the camp for some time, and by that time we would have new uniforms and shoes.

They had us cleaning the barracks and then took us to a 34ft. high platform tower, put harnesses on us and told us how to jump and then said "jump". We would glide down a cable into a sawdust pit. They showed us how to tumble forward, backwards and sideways without breaking our legs from about 20 ft. up, and we did push-ups the whole time. We had to do them every morning before breakfast and run a couple of miles rain or shine. We would run up Mt. Currahee and back. I think it was a total of 6 miles. We had to go to obstacle courses, then push-ups. We were finally given rifles, machine guns,

carbines, mortars and 45's. We were instructed how to field strip and clean them, and then how to shoot them. All of us learned how to shoot every weapon. We also learned how to handle and throw grenades.

We went on 5 mile runs, sometimes with full equipment. If you stopped, you felt like passing out or close to it.

One day we went to the firing range, and we stayed all morning. We went to the mess hall for lunch, and after lunch we went back to the firing range. Some guys still with ham sandwiches in their hands on the way back. Soon guys started falling out and vomiting on the side of the road. By the time we got to the range there was only a handful of us left. I was firing a few rounds and then it hit me, I hit the nearest ditch! We all ended up in the hospital. It turned out to be food poisoning. The ham had been left out overnight in aluminum pans. The nurses gave us Coca-Cola on ice to get over it.

One evening after the show I saw a lieutenant checking garbage cans, and he came across a whole pork chop. He took one bite and told the cook to finish it. I guess one of the GI's didn't like it for some reason. At breakfast one morning they had scrambled eggs with little chick's legs laying in it.

When they updated our shots, they had a needle bent in half lying on the table. It made you squirm a little just looking at it.

I can't complain about the food while training. It was great! Growing up in the depression, we were on county relief as my mother was raising my sister and me by herself. It wasn't easy for her. My dad wasn't much help. They had separated when I was about 5 years old. We went hungry off and on living in the city.

All of us qualified on the guns and mortars one way or another. I made expert on the machine gun, carbine and rifle. Kenneth Anderson did well on the machine gun, so they made him an assistant machine gunner. We called him "Pop Anderson", as he was 25 years old. Most of us were 18 or 19 years old. He had been a taxi driver in Denver, Colorado He was the other half of my pup tent form then on.

One day after a 6 mile run up and down Mt. Currahee, we were told we had an inspection in half an hour. Pop Anderson got a call that his wife was at the gate and wanted him for something. I cleaned the machine gun, his and my rifle, but didn't get my carbine cleaned. The Lt. doing the inspection threw my carbine into a ditch of sand, and told me no pass for the weekend. I told Pop Anderson from here on out I refuse to clean his rifle, no matter what. I think during our basic training I had KP twice and latrine duty once. We finally finished basic training. We went by train to Fort Benning, Georgia. That's where jump training begins.

They put us in parachute harnesses and showed us how to land and tumble. We had to learn to rig our chutes as well. We jumped from mock airplanes, and in between we did push-ups, "lots of them". We had already been issued our boots and jump suits. It was important for us to shine our boots. We broke them in by wearing them in the shower and putting saddle soap on them, wearing them on runs and field exercise, then polishing the hell out of them. Everyone had their favorite polish and ways of polishing them. We were located in barracks called The Frying Pan area. They had 250 ft. towers. We got in a parachute harness below a parachute, then pulled up to the top and released to guide ourselves to the ground as best we could. I always came towards the ground front ways. The last minute I would turn around as I could tumble backward or to the side better.

On one of the tower jumps I was to be the first. The wind was blowing hard that day. I got to the top and then released, the wind grabbed me. When I got to the ground I couldn't tumble as the

parachute had me horizontal and I hit hard. Several guys ran out to help me. We didn't jump anymore that day. I had a bad neck for a few days.

One day while we were at Fort Benning, some of the guys had cornered a flying squirrel. It jumped and glided a long ways away from the tree. It was the first time I had seen one. They also found 3 baby raccoons. I put my gloves on and made a harness out of rope, and proceeded to make friends with one. He fought me at first. I gave him some food and he got real friendly. He turned out to be the 1st platoon mascot for a while. We could not house break him. It didn't matter to him where he shit. He was very playful. If you scratched his tummy he would use his hind legs like a cat and act like he was going to bite you but wouldn't. He slept in my helmet on the train going back to Mackall from Ft. Benning. He would also grab your fingers like a baby.

We were finally ready to qualify for our 5 jumps. We had to pack our own chutes for the first five jumps so we were darn sure they were packed right. We went out to the airport and had help to put on our chutes and harness. Then we were told what to expect. They stressed the fact that the harness is to be very tight and snug. I understand our outfit (517th RCT) was the 1st in training to jump with helmets on. We had shin straps to keep the helmets on. All other before us had used the old style football type head covers.

We stood up and walked to the C-47 airplane. I think it held around 24 persons plus the instructors and pilots. I was the last person to get on the plane and sat right next to the door. As we got airborne I was fascinated by the fact that this big machine could fly up in the air. It was the first time for a lot of us to fly. Someone yelled "hey Trenary" you're going to be the first one to jump out. I looked at the Lt. and he said yes! We were trained right, so when the green light went on I stood up at the door, threw the static down past the door, looked at the horizon with hands at the door side and when the instructor touched my leg I went out. I closed my eyes and felt the chute open. It's quite a jerk on your body but it's a thrill. You drop about 70 ft. before your chute opens. We have what they call a static line which stays hooked to a line in the plane so that your chute opens automatically as you go out the door. As I landed I tumbled and just missed some cactus. I gathered up my chute, and a jeep came by and took us to the rig building where we packed our chute for the next day.

The next jump I decided to leave my harness a little loose as it hurt my family jewels! When my chute opened, the harness being a little loose caused my breast strap to hit my chin knocking me out. I woke up looking at the inside of my helmet. I pushed my helmet back on my head and still had time to tumble. I learned my lesson! It could have been worse! On our last qualifying jump (the 5th), one of the guys put on jump wings right after he landed. You could buy them at the PX. Later on they had a ceremony and pinned on our jump wings and congratulated us. Eventually we got on a train and headed for Camp Mackall, N.C. for more training, and then we went to Fort Bragg N.C. for additional training. A lot of it was maneuvers with other outfits so as to handle ourselves in battle. When we did night jumps or maneuvers, I was fascinated to see the rotted wood glowing at night when we walked through it. At this time we were part of the 17th division and wore the Eagle Claw as our shoulder patch.

Well I must say I got into the paratroops because I wanted to build myself up. They did that alright. I could lay my hands on the ground in front of me, then lift my feet above my head and stand on my hands all in one motion. We had one guy we called Tarzan. He could do push-ups on one hand with a person on his back. It was amazing! He washed out because they wouldn't let him stay at Ft. Benning as

an instructor. The friend that came with me from PolyTech quit and went into the Air Force. I remember him coming over and saying goodbye.

One jump, I went out the door and came back in. I forgot to let go of the static line. Another jump I was heading for a big dead tree. I pulled the risers to avoid going in that direction, however I was in a pocket among the trees and went straight down. My knee hit my nose causing a nose bleed; also I was in a briar patch. No matter which way I moved, I would get stickers in me, so I decided to hell with it and pushed my way out. It took about a week to get all of the stickers out of me! Another jump, the plane hit some strong air currents, surged upward causing me to go down to my knees, so I just crawled out the door on my hands and knees. Another time we had a night jump, flew to Florida and back. We were supposed to jump at a certain place, but the pilot got lost. We began looking out the door for place to jump, when one of the guys got his spare chute caught on something and it opened in his lap. That was the only time we had to land with an airplane instead of jumping from one. Later on we found that we could ride with the airplane crew as they got their hours in, so we could get used to flying.

A few days before our furlough one of the guys lost his wallet in the barracks. The sergeants along with the platoon Lt. searched all of us as we went out the door. After we all ended up outside and it wasn't found, the Lt. said now let's search each other. They ended up finding it in the pants leg of one of the sergeants. They took his stripes and put him in another platoon in another company. The time was getting close for us to go on furlough. They gave us passes for only 15 days. Going to California didn't give us much time to be home and see everyone. It takes about 4 days by train one-way. So a group of us from California decided we would meet at the Paladium in Hollywood on the last day of our furlough. The next morning we would meet at the Union Train Station in L.A. and go back together. That way the MP's would leave us alone. I had taken several cartons of cigarettes home and gave them to relatives and my mother. In return, they let me use my cousins "Model A" Ford convertible. Relatives gave me gas stamps too. I had a ball! Met the guys at the Paladium the last night. Bob Crosby was playing at the time. We met at the Union Train Station next morning. Going back to the camp, we decided to get off the train at New Orleans. Got our boots shined by two little talented black boys who danced and did the shining to the music. They were great! Later we jumped off the train at Montgomery, Alabama as we had seen a carnival. We were AWOL anyway. We also got off at Atlanta, Georgia. For some reason I got separated from the rest of the group and went back to the train station. MP's stopped me and took me to the brig. They gave me a pass to go the rest of the way to camp. When I got there I got an ass chewing I'll never forget, and was restricted to camp for two weeks. The other guys didn't have a problem when they came in. The raccoon was let loose in the wild after I left on furlough.

We went on maneuvers in Tennessee for a week at one point we had to bivouac in a field. Anderson and I found an old bed spring and got it in our pup tent. We fixed our bed on it. While fixing it, lightning struck two trees side by side about 30 yards away. Steam came up from the base of the trees. The next morning a stream was running thru our tent. The springs kept us from being washed out. The weather was rain, rain, and more rain. One morning Anderson and I decided to ask a nearby resident if they could make some breakfast for us. We were willing to pay for it. Keep in mind we were way out in the sticks. The place looked like a log cabin that had been there a long time. A little boy was out in front smoking a cigarette. His teeth were all brown. His folks were still in bed, but they agreed to fix breakfast. They could use the money! They put wood in the stove and we had thick sliced bacon, eggs and biscuits.

Boy what a treat! We had been on K ration for some time. We got back in time to leave with our outfit. I remember walking in a creek with buildings on both sides. I assume it was their main street. The rain had made a river out of it. It was all rock like a river bed. Another place we walked thru a cemetery all grown up with weeds. It had old grave site markers. Going thru the under-brush I looked up to see a green snake about 12" long hanging from a tree. I grabbed it and passed it around. We also went thru swamps with snakes going right beside us. They finally put us on trucks for the final trip back to camp. Our truck got lost (I think on purpose) we ended up at a little country store. We bought just about everything he had to eat. Behind the store was a farmhouse and stable with a mule and a couple of horses. One guy volunteered to break in one of the horses. It was fun watching him getting thrown several times. We finally found our way to the camp. I'm sure the driver got an ass chewing.

They sent us to Newport News, Virginia. All three BTLNS, plus a group of WACS were on the Santa Rosa. The 460th (artillery) and 596th (engineers) were on the USS Chrisobal. Both were liberty ships.

Note: The 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team was composed of the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment, the 460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion and the 596th Parachute Engineer Company. The WACS did all of our paperwork and made some guys happy. Two guys died on the trip from alcohol poisoning. Something they made themselves. We were in a convoy with many ships. We were told we were the first convoy to make it without being hit by a submarine. I got officers mess KP duty the first day. The food was good, so I volunteered to stay for the whole trip.

We arrived in Naples May 31st 1944. We docked in the harbor among sunken ships and walked across them to get to shore. We were placed in the Mussolini fair grounds. Our group got under the high floor on one of the buildings. Everyone dug out their stations. The Chinese cook had given me a sack of sandwiches. I brought it out looking at the guys near me. I couldn't help but laugh. I shared and got a half sandwich anyway. After lunch we went to a crater. Some guys had cartons of cigarettes strapped to their musette bag. Some Italian kids ran up and grabbed them. All of the BTLNS fit in that crater, pup tents and all. There were lights up at the rim of the crater at night. Some of us hiked up there and found a bar. We got drunk and tumbled back down to our pup tents.

We stayed there for a while. We got passes to see Naples. Andy and I were looking for a place to eat. When we got to town we asked a 10 year old if she knew a place to eat. In broken English she said her sister could fix us something. They lived in a hotel overlooking the harbor. They fixed us eggs, horse meat and Italian bread. It tasted good! When we left, we told the little girl that we were going to rent a row boat and go out in the harbor and to look for us. We did and we saw her waving from the window. On the 15th of June, we boarded LST's for a seaborne trip to a town called Civitavecchia and combat with the 36th division of the Nation Guard of Texas. I'm not sure where we were, but was walking fast to get to a place they wanted us to set up the machine gun. Shells were landing all around us; I glanced to my right and saw someone running about 30 yards sway in the opposite direction. I looked back to see where I was going for a second then I looked to the right again as I realized what I had seen. A person running with no head! By the time I looked again, he was down. I never did find out who it was. This has been hidden in my mind for a long time. It shook me up a lot! We fought till the 26th of June, when the 442 (Japanese Americans) took over. I remember having to cross a blown up R.R. trestle carrying my machine gun. All we could do was step from one R.R. tie to another. Dallas had found a portable German radio. We heard Berlin Sal welcome the 517th RCT to battle. When we pulled back we all donated money

for an Italian to butcher a steer and barbeque it for us. I was great! We got on trucks and went to a little town south of Rome called Frascati. We bivouacked, cleaned our weapons, got our clothes washed, had close order drill, inspections, had mail call and had hot food. The local Italians washed our clothes for a price. We also went swimming in a lake inside an old crater south of town. Something I forgot while chasing the Germans, was that we came upon a little town that had baths between buildings. While resting, some of us took our clothes off and jumped in. The cooks were setting up to fix a hot meal for us, "finally". However, mortar shells started coming in. The cooks were running helter-skelter trying to get cooking equipment back into their trucks and jeeps, while trying to get out of there. We didn't get a hot meal that day and we had to put our clothes on wet bodies in a hurry!

Being a machine gunner has its drawbacks. A lot of the time I was behind the riflemen, so I was unable to shoot at random like they could. The only time I'm in front of them is when we are stationary. We would set up the machine gun nest where it was required. I would shoot bursts of fire just to let the enemy know we weren't very far behind them as they were doing their best to stay ahead of us. We were really pushing them. Sometimes they would stop and give us a little hell, but we were ready. One day I came upon a bicycle with a pouch filled with black bread, a can of sardines and a can of butter. I ate all of it!

I saw a mule and figured it could carry my machine gun. I got it strapped on and was leading it when mortar shells started landing all around us. The mule took off towards the enemy lines with me behind it. I finally caught him and took the machine gun off and said to hell with that. It didn't work. I bet the enemy was laughing their ass off at me.

When we had pulled back to Frascati, we were given passes to go to Rome as it was an open city then. I saw a chaplain and asked if he knew where the 36 division was, as my cousin was a lineman with them. He found out they had left, so he gave me a tough shit card and punched it for me. In Frascati there was a little bar in the plaza. The bartender was a comedian and would act out some plays he had been in as a female impersonator. He kept us in stitches. One of our guys came in camp plastered one night. The next morning he was lying outside his pup tent with half of his handlebar mustache shaved off. Years later I saw him and he said he never had one since.

The old roads in Italy are narrow. In towns that have sidewalks, the buildings second floor goes over the sidewalk. The people in the upstairs can empty their slop jar out the window into the street. That's why men traditionally walk on the outside and women walk on the inside, so the women don't get spattered. A group of us were in town crossing a street, and someone emptied their slop jar out the window and I got drenched. It was funny to everyone including the person who did it. Later on it was funny to me after I had a few drinks.

Anderson and I got a pass to take a trip to Naples on a train. A couple of little boys 7 & 8 years old took a shine to us and wanted us to come to their house and meet their parents. When we got to Naples, we took them to a restaurant and fed them. The meal was horse meat, eggs and Italian bread. We joined them. We went to their home and met their folks. It was fun trying to communicate with them. One little boy we called Joe, came down the narrow stairs with a tuba horn as big as he was, blowing the heck out of it. His folks insisted on us to stay for dinner. It was spaghetti with no taste! We ate it anyway, and we gave the old man our cigarettes.

The next day we packed our stuff. We got on LST's and went back to Civitavecchia area. We were told we were going to jump into southern France called operation dragoon. Another name used

was champagne campaign. The area in France was where they made champagne. We did some swimming in the ocean and had hot meals. The last day we tried to stay busy having lectures etc. Had a hard time sleeping. Everyone being excited and on edge. We were given donuts and coffee. A cook slipped and poured hot coffee all over himself, someone got bit by a spider then someone yelled "grenade". Another person and I hit the dirt in the same place. Turned out to be a smoke grenade.

Finally the time came to put our chutes and equipment on. We had helped to get into the C-47s. The field was dusty from the prop blasts. After we got in the air and stabilized, someone brought out a bottle of cognac. Most of us took a swig, and then the Lt. threw it out the door. I don't remember how long the flight was, but time went fast. When the time came to jump, we stood up, hooked up, shoved the pack out the door that the machine gun, bar and ammunition for the same, then jumped following the red light on top of the pack. As we followed it down, I whispered to Anderson. We went towards each other. He was a little below me and I went right into his risers, then we pulled away and I came right out. Unbelievable with all the equipment hanging on me. Looking down it looked like water below us. I unhooked my breast strap and was trying to undo my leg strap when a tree went by me. I hit into a rock wall with a sickening thud. It was about 4:30 in the morning. The water turned out to be fog. After I got my wind back and my leg eased up from hurting, I crawled over to the packed and turned the red light out.

I could hear Anderson groaning like I was at the time. If the Germans had been there in the olive orchard we would have been in trouble. Some of the guys started showing up to help carry ammo etc. from the pack. As it started to get light we could hear vehicles going down the road near us. We finally got down to the road and met a group of our guys heading out to the point we should be at. They told us we had a long way to go. A truck came from behind us. It turned out to be the French underground along with some of our guys. The truck ran on burning charcoal. We all got together and headed for our destination. We ran into some small groups of Germans. One group shot at us. Someone shot their leader. The others were told to put up their hands and come forward. They were just kids crying and scared. Their leader was an older person with all kinds of medals on his chest. We had set up our machine gun just below where they had been in case there were more behind them. After we decided it was clear we had to walk by the old leader with the ribbons on his chest. He looked right at me, eyes glazed and gritting his teeth. It was the first time watching someone die. Most of the time it was someone already dead. I wasn't a medal collector, so I let him die in peace.

Later during a rest period, we set up the machine gun at a cross road. Looking around, I noticed some people coming from a ditch behind our position. Grabbed my carbine and waited. When they saw us they ducked back down. Then gradually came back up onto the road. They came slowly towards us. When they got closer within calling distance, they asked if we were Americana? I said si. (Having just left Italy) I should have said "we", in France. The woman ran over to me and grabbed me by both ears and kissed me on both cheeks. She also did it to Anderson. They asked us to come to their house for a drink. I said no thanks I had to stay with the machine gun. Anderson went with them. He came back a little later with his eyes watery. He said they put something in a shot glass. About a finger full. He thought it wasn't very much, but downed it anyway. It made his eyes water. It was powerful! Before dark that evening, we apparently got to where we were supposed to be and bivouacked. We made a make shift machine gun emplacement and settled in for the night.

The next morning eating our k-rations, I looked around and saw fire in the woods behind us and in front of us was a valley with movement in it, along ways off. I assumed it was the enemy. They were too far away to do any good in shooting. Behind our position was a two story white building. A group with an 81mm mortar apparently set up being the building and started sending rounds to the valley below us. The Germans started firing 88's to try knocking out the mortars. They had figured out where the rounds were coming from. They hit the building a couple times. Then one hit at the end of our machine gun in- placement, right where our feet were. Catching our breath after the dust settled, Anderson decided to get out of there. A replacement also took off. I didn't want to leave my machine gun, but the shells were coming in pretty regular and it was just a matter of time before one would make a direct hit. I couldn't carry everything so I looked for my carbine. It was gone. Another shell was close. The dust was everywhere. I decided to leave. I saw some guys about 30 yards away, so I headed for them. I got up and ran as fast as I could. By the time I got there, my right leg was hurting, so I knew I had been hit. A medic cut my boot strap and cut my pant leg. After he looked he gave me a shot of morphine. Anderson got hit in the arm. They took us to a cellar. Later we watched gliders come in near us. Some ran into buildings, some crashed into trees. Others landed and flipped over ending upside down. I was able to stand on one leg and look out the window. After a while all hell broke loose in the valley below us. The 45th and 36th divisions were coming in with artillery blasting. Planes were strafing with their guns and dropping shells on the enemy. It was a good show. The next morning they took us by jeep to the aide station. I laid there for some time. Saw a couple of soldiers die from their wounds. The doctor examined me and wrote something on a tag and attached it to the stretcher. I was put on another jeep and taken to the shore and put on a list, and took us out to a hospital ship along with some wounded GI's. I don't know what happened to Anderson. On the ship a young man across from me had his arm in a sling. He said the bullet went clean through, but did some damage inside. They took him into the operating room. He was gone for about 2 hours. They took me next. The orderly said they were going to put me to sleep and to start counting. I got to 6 and said good night. Shrapnel was taken out of my right leg and foot. The ship went to Naples. Went to a hospital high up on a hill. Nuns lived there. The nurses were great. They brought us food, gave us shots, bathed us and rubbed us down with baby powder. Sometimes the nurse would find a piece of shrapnel that worked its way to the surface of my back while rubbing it with powder. If she got too close to my family jewels, I'd get an erection; she would put a towel over it and flip it with her finger. That hurt, but took the starch right out of it.

I finally got some crutches. I learned to play badminton on one foot. Lloyd Constantine from Co.B 1st Btl. Played lot of badminton with me, to encourage my rehab. He even took my crutches away one time thinking it would help. My foot kept hurting, so I went to the doctor. He took x-rays. The next day I came to his office to get the results. He showed me the x-rays and there was still a piece of shrapnel in my right foot. I had to go through another operation to remove it. He tried a spinal twice and finally had to put me to sleep. Eventually I was able to get on a British ship to get back to my outfit in southern France. On the ship, morning, noon and night, we had mutton rice and hot tea with milk. On the deck above us were women that looked like gypsies and were being sent to their warriors for their pleasure. One of them lifted up her dress and had a tattoo of a heart just above her thing. One drunk soldier tried to climb up to that deck, but was taken away to sober up.

We finally got to Marseille, and got on a train to Nice. Then a truck to Sospel and then Fort Barbonnet. Walking in to where my Co. A was. It was dark and soldiers just sitting around having mail

call. I had some mail. When they called my name, I said here! Everyone got up to welcome me back. I love those guys. They had mounted my machine gun on the concrete wall overlooking the valley below on the Italian, French border. In looking over the valley, I saw a German leading a mule pulling a cart and heading away from us. He had been collecting the dead Germans. We had mail call again. I had a lot of mail and a package. The package was a cake that my aunt had sent to me. It was crumbs and mildewed. I came over to the fire some guys had going and was going to throw it away. Someone asked what it was and I told him it was a cake mildewed and in pieces. He said let me taste it. All of them around the fire put their hands in it. They said it tasted good, so I ate some also.

Vaughn and I went down four floors into the fort. Shells lying all over the place. They had tried to blow it up.

Someone gave us some raw chickens. I tried to boil it in my mess cup. It turned out terrible. There were times we would get some beer. It was put in a folded canvas with ice. It tasted like it was made the day before.

We went back to Nice and The Riviera. The French were already demolishing the pill boxes and removing the barbed wire. They were also advertising for a fashion show. Some of us had guard duty, KP duty, etc. I had guard duty. I was coming by a window of the make shift prison when a soldier came over to me inside the prison and wanted to sell me a 25 cal. pistol, bullets and all. I told him I was broke. He probably was AWOL or something and they were punishing him.

We finally went to an area southwest of Nice. I remember a creek with very cold water when we took a bath in it. We were put on a train December 6th heading north. Each car held about a platoon. On the trip north I got into a poker game with Anderson and some other guys. Andy and I didn't usually play poker, but were passing the time away. Andy and I ended up playing against each other. We had a can with a rag in it soaked with coal oil for light. I couldn't believe my hand. Andy also had a good hand. We kept raising each other. He finally got real irritated and put everything he had in the pot. I did the same. Believe it or not he had 4 queens and I had 4 kings. He was so upset that I gave him his money back. It was only 35 dollars.

We got stopped several times on the way. We finally got to a little town called Soisson, France around December 9th. We got off the train and went to barracks that I think were the Germans at one time. We were shown a place that was used for torture at one time. We proceeded to get ready for Christmas.

I and Critchlow went to a town nearby called Reims, France to see the town that his dad had been in during WWI. He didn't tell me this until we were walking down one of the streets. We had our mattresses stuffed with straw and were in the process of decorating our little tree when the word came down to leave our duffle bags and to prepare to get on trucks. The Germans had broken through the lines and were causing a lot of problems. As we came into a little town on the truck, someone started shooting at us. We started shooting back. Someone yelled hold your fire. It turned out to be our own troops in the building. They thought it was the Germans coming into town. Found out sometime later that this was called the bulge. It turned out to be very cold and we weren't dressed for it, nor prepared for it.

We started hiking towards what was called the front. Most of the time I didn't know where I was. It got colder and seemed to snow every day. I did have my trench coat. Some guys didn't even have that. It seemed we had walked for hours, crawled on our bellies at times. I remember going through mine fields or being behind a tank with bullets flying. The tank getting hit! No one came out. We didn't

stay put very much and were always on the move. I'd cock the machine gun every once in a while to be sure it wasn't frozen, especially if I hadn't used it in a while. My glove froze to the machine gun once in a while. I could take my hand out of the glove and it stayed on the machine gun.

I don't know where I was Christmas day of '44, but I remember having crackers, and jelly for Christmas dinner. Everyone did the best they could out of their rations. My feet got numb a long time ago and stayed that way most of the time.

I remember when Critchlow got killed. We had arrived at the edge of a forest one night and told to dig in. The ground was frozen. We dug anyway just to keep warm. We could hear the Germans in front of us, doing the same thing. As daylight came we could see a big hill in front of us. I couldn't see the enemy, I knew he was there. One of our replacements got up and walked right in front of the machine gun nest. I asked what are you doing up there? Trying to broadcast our position? He ducked back down but it was too late. The mortars started coming in. Shells landing all around us! I heard a machine gun to my right. The word came to us that Critchlow had been hit. I sent a burst of fire every once in a while, but never saw the enemy. I did see a cow grazing near the top of the hill. I guess we called for artillery as a lot of shells landed on the hill. The cow took off and the enemy did too!

Have you ever waked out at night and can't see a darn thing? It happened to us a lot. Yet when the moon is out it is beautiful with all that snow on the ground and on the trees. There were very few times we could build a fire to try to get our feet warm. I remember on one of our moves pushing the enemy, we came across a German plane that had crashed. The pilot was still in the cockpit frozen. One of our guys went over to it. When he got back, he showed us a ring he took off the body. He said he had to cut off his finger to get it.

One time as mortar shells were coming in I was pushing myself and the machine gun under a stack of wood they use for making charcoal. I hear someone yell get the hell out of here or you're going to get killed. I decided he was right. When I got up I saw it was Gen. Gavin doing the yelling. I assumed we were attached to the 82nd Div. at the time. We were pushing the enemy hard. Our group, at times would charge using the rebel yell. All I could do was yell like hell and run with them carrying the machine gun. No way could I use it. Everyone was in front of me. Many Germans would be dead, steam coming up from their bodies. Being cold as it was. Many Germans ran or surrendered. We did this several times. Soon the weather began to clear. We could see the sky once in a while.

Soon we came upon a row of empty buildings near a river. We set up for the evening in one of them. We set up the machine gun so I could shoot out a window if needed. I think we were in a town called Hotton, but not sure. I remember road signs of Hotton, Soy and Trois-Ponts. I was removing my musette bag when a mortar shell landed at the front entrance. A Lt. outside got hit and something hit me in the stomach. I looked down, afraid of what I was going to see and saw a piece of shrapnel stuck in my G.I. belt. I kept it for a long time and finally lost it. In the same area one of our tanks rolled up and some of us were trying to show the driver where we thought the enemy was. He was squatting on top of the tank when a snipers bullet went through his neck. He began to fall. We helped him to the ground and got him into one of the buildings. He went into shock and was fighting us. He didn't bleed, so the bullet didn't hit any large blood vessels. I had taken his 45 off and had sat it on a counter. After he calmed down, a couple of guys walked him to the aid station. I came back in the building and saw the 45. I looked out the door but they were already out of sight. I decided to put it on and gave the carbine

to someone else. This made it much easier to carry the machine gun and could get at the pistol if needed. The following was told by one of our soldiers. It is about some of the guys in our outfit.

About 3 or 4 Germans had been killed. One of our soldiers mentioned to the sergeants that it might be a good idea to bury them because of health problems. He agreed. They finally got the job done. Another one mentioned to the sergeant that he thought we should say something over the graves. He said "ya-ya okay"! He took his helmet off, and stood in silent rapture. He shifted from one foot to the other, him-hawed around and finally said "tough shit fellas", put his helmet on and walked off. The rest of us were following him.

We pulled back to a place west of Hotton. The sky clearing, we watched bombers going and coming back. Some were burning. We were yelling "get out, get out"! Jump-Jump! Sometimes we saw parachutes opening before it exploded or went down. We also saw dog fights very high. Some exploded. Nothing ever landed near us from the explosions.

As it was getting late, some of us got in a big barn. I set the machine gun on the floor, glove still attached. Andy and I got up into the hay loft. There was lots of hay up there. We changed into dry socks. I didn't put my boots back on, as it felt good without them. Besides we had plenty of hay around us. I laid down and went to sleep. Someone yelled get your ass up! It was early in the morning. I grabbed my boots putting my foot in it. It wouldn't fit. I took my sock off. My toes were black and swollen. I don't know how I got down the ladder, but finally made it. The platoon Lt. told me where the aid station was. I had to walk in my stocking feet to get there in the snow. I noticed the cooks fixing a hot breakfast as I passed them. Never did get that hot breakfast. I assume Andy took over the machine gun. After I got back to the states, I found out the machine gun nest took a direct hit and killed Andy and Misner. It hit me hard! I also found out that Critchlow had died from his wounds. It should have been me at the machine gun. Andy had a young wife and I didn't.

In 1992 I received a letter from a young man in Trois-Ponts, Belgium. He had found my shelter half in Berger Val, Belgium. He also sent me a picture of it. He was a collector of WWII stuff. I told him to keep it. He had contacted our historian and got my address. I correspond with him every Christmas.

At the aid station, the doc looked at my feet and put a tag on me. From then on I was carried wherever I had to go. It was late when about four of us was put in an ambulance and headed for a field hospital. They drove for a long time. It got very dark. At one place, the driver put on the brakes as tracers were hitting the pavement in front of us. A German pilot was strafing anything he saw moving. Apparently we arrived where the field hospital was supposed to be, but it was gone. The driver turned around. About that time a V-2 bomb came over. The motor stopped right above us. The drivers stopped the ambulance and took off running. The V-2 glided some distance away and exploded. The drivers returned and sometime during the night, they found the field hospital. We were put on cots overnight and told we were going to England for rehab. The next morning we were taken by ambulance to an unused power station. It was full of patients on cots. I don't remember hot meals. I think we had c-rations. While there, a V-2 bomb came over and landed very close. It shook the building so much we were all covered with dust. It broke every window. Some against the wall got injured from broken glass. One of the doors burst open and an orderly rushed in trying to get his pants on. The bomb had collapsed the portable shower he was in. We all laughed. Next day we were taken by ambulance to an airport. They put us in the C-47's on cots. All of a sudden every machine they had around the airport went off. A German pilot tried to get at us, and was stopped by the fire power. We were taken back to the power

station. The next morning we tried it again. This time we made it. I don't remember where we landed, nor the town the hospital was near. At the hospital, the doctor evaluated each one of us, and made a schedule for what we were to do. When the day came to walk on my feet, it was very painful. My feet gradually got better. They put me through rehab by walking, running, and digging trenches. I got pneumonia for a few days. They gave me something that tasted like castor oil. I got over it. Later they gave us a pass to go to town. Another soldier and I found a pub that was a family affair. We had fish and chips. That's french fries and shark meat. It was good and they served it on paper.

I found out years later when I did the genealogy of my family, there was a Trenary village in Cornwall, England. It is now a farm. If I had known about it when I was there, I would have gone there instead of chasing women, or done both.

The doctor told us we were going home. The war was about over. I assumed that's why we were being sent back to the states. We were sent to Bristol, where we got on a ship the next morning. The trip to the U.S. was rough. We were in a storm. One minute the waves were three stories above the ship, next they were three stories below the ship. When we hit port in N.Y., I kissed the ground. The Red Cross gave me cigarettes and coffee. We were taken to an army camp and fed steaks and lots of milk. I noticed German POW's doing the KP duty. Myself and another soldier were given a pass to go to town. The bartender saw the AA symbol on my shoulder patch, which was the 82nd division. He told us it was a Calvary division during WWI. I told him it is an airborne division now in WWII. We were on the train going to Camp Carson, Colorado when President Roosevelt passed away. It was April 12, 1945. After we got to Camp Carson, "now Fort Carson" there was things we could do besides exercise. I tried typing and woodwork. I made a tricycle for my half-brother. He was about 2 years old. Never did get good at the typewriter. They put us on a bus to a rodeo in Denver, Colorado. After we were there for a while, it started raining. I ran for the bus. In looking for it, I passed a person that looked familiar. We both stopped and looked at each other. It turned out; we had gone to grammar school together, all the way up to the 8th grade in Alhambra, California. We hadn't seen each other since '41. I had moved to Los Angeles in order to go to Manual Arts High School. We went out that night and got plastered. Hit every bar in town called Colorado Springs. The war in Europe ended on May 8, 1945. Got my discharge in August 1945. Got on a bus to Los Angeles, California. The bus stopped in the desert several times picking up or letting people off. Some were Indians. One female Indian got on carrying a baby. I asked her to take my seat. She refused and said if you don't mind you could hold my baby. I said okay. She put a mat on my lap and gave me the baby. He just laid there not saying anything. I noticed her dress was decorated with strings of silver dimes. Lots of them. She eventually got off in the desert.

I finally got home. I had a ball meeting the family. The army gave me some severance pay. I figured I had enough money to get a car in order to find a job. I had been sending money home too. It turned out she had to use the money to get her teeth fixed. I didn't hold it against my mother. Got knows she worked hard to raise me and sis. I went uptown to get civilian clothes. After I bought them, I went into a theater to see the news. When I came out, the town was celebrating Japans surrender. It was September 2, 1945. Had a hard time getting home because of the traffic. After a few days, I decided to put my uniform back on, as people were treating me like I was a 4F. I wore it for about a month. Long enough so that more guys my age were coming home and showing up.

Lloyd Constintine form Co.B, got home and gave me a call. We did a lot of running around together in L.A. I also ran into our 1st sergeant and his wife at the market place at Slauson and Vermont.

To summarize:

I'm aware of the fact that I made it through the war without getting killed, due to the fact that I was taken out of battle twice. I missed some rough battles the 517th RCT went through. I lost some buddies I had grown up with as well. I often think of them. I received a letter from the French General Consulate of Houston, Texas, saying that on the 6th of June 2014 the 70th Anniversary of D-Day, on the Battle Ship Texas in LaPorte, Texas (SanJacinto) that I would be presented with the Medal of Knight in the French order of the Legion of Honor award in recognition of my contribution to the liberation of France during WWII. It was a big event attended by local officials and all branched of the forces. There were 36 WWII veterans who received the medal.

I have gone to four reunions of the 517th RCT and was able to reunite with some who were in Co.A 1st Btl. Before they passed away. They were all in my thought when I received the medal. I'll be proud to wear it and wish to dedicate it to all my buddies who fell in battle and also have passed away over the years. The war was bad. We were united in those days and wanted to free Europe as well as Asia, from dictators. It was a challenge, but it was done. I never talked much about the war throughout the years, as I was raising a family and making a living. However, since the patriotic flights to Washington, D.C. to see the WWII monument, I started to write my memoirs about the war as people kept asking what it was like in WWII. The 517th RCT was attached to the following outfits during battles as well as I can remember. The 17th Division, Second Army, IV Corps, 18th Airborne Corps, 30th INF. Division, 7th Armored Division, 82nd Airborne Division, 106th INF. Division, 7th Division, 13th Airborne Division, and 3rd Armored Division.



517TH RCT PATCH



WORLD WAR II



82ND AIRBORNE DIV.



17TH AIRBORNE DIV.



CAP PATCH



JUMP WINGS W/ONE BATTLE JUMP STAR (SOUTHERN FRANCE INVASION CALLED OPERATION DRAGON)



18TH AIRBORNE CORPS



13TH AIRBORNE DIV.



517TH RCT PIN



PURPLE HEART



BRONZE STAR



PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION



EUROPEAN CAMPAIGN



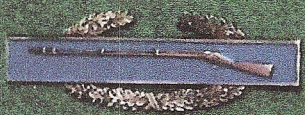
GOOD CONDUCT



AIRBORNE ASSAULT



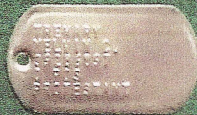
BATTLE OF THE BULGE



COMBAT INFANTRYMAN BADGE



HONORARY MEMBER FRENCH PARATROOPERS



DOG TAGS



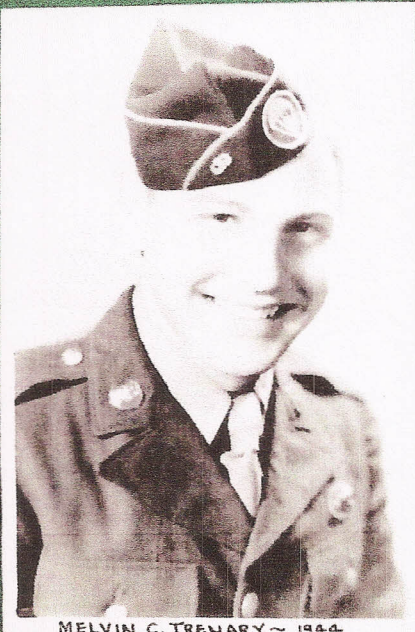
EXPERT MARKSMAN



MEDAL OF KNIGHT IN THE FRENCH ORDER OF THE LEGION OF HONOR. HELPING TO LIBERATE FRANCE IN WWII



MEL & WIFE JAY ~ 2003



MELVIN C. TRENARY ~ 1944

MELVIN C. TRENARY
BORN NOV. 30, 1924
WAS IN WWII FROM 1943-1945
FOUGHT IN ITALY, FRANCE &
BATTLE OF THE BULGE. HE
WAS A MACHINE GUNNER IN
THE 517TH RCT, 13TH BATTALION,
CO. A 18TH PLATOON, 12TH SQUAD



CONSULAT GENERAL DE FRANCE A HOUSTON

Le Consul général

Houston May 7th, 2014

Dear Mr. Trenary,

I have the honor of informing you that you have been awarded the medal of Knight in the French Order of the Legion of Honor, in recognition of your contribution to the liberation of France during WWII.

It would be a privilege for me to present you with this medal, bestowed to you by the French government, during a ceremony that will take place on D-Day 70th anniversary, June 6th at 9:00 am, on USS Texas, 3523 Independence Pkwy, La Porte, TX 77571, near Houston. This will be a big event, attended by local officials and all branches of the forces. Several other WWII veterans will be there to receive the medal of the Legion of Honor at the same time.

My assistant Marie-Laure Reed (marie-laure.reed@diplomatie.gouv.fr; tel 713 985 3266) will be liaising with you regarding the practical details of the event. You are most welcome to invite a few friends and family members on that very special occasion.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you most sincerely on receiving this award and I hope you will be able to attend the ceremony on June 6th.

Best regards

Sujiro Seam

*Melvin Trenary
110 Rainbow Dr. PMB #1068
77399 Livingston, Texas*

777 Post Oak Blvd, Suite 600 - Houston, Texas 77056
Tél : 713-985-3287 - Fax : 713-572-2911
www.consulfrance-houston.org
email : info@consulfrance-houston.org

If the file meets the criteria, it is sent to The Legion of Honor committee in Paris, through the French Embassy in Washington and the French Foreign Affairs ministry. The Legion of Honor committee approves or rejects the candidate presented after appropriate review of his file. ***Please note that other than receiving an acknowledgement of your records submittal, you will not receive further word unless you are ultimately selected for the honor. This process can take several months.***

Sequence of Events

Welcome

Bruce Bramlett, MC, Battleship Texas Foundation

B-25 Fly Over

Lone Star Flight Museum

Color Guard

75th Training Command

French and US National Anthems

Soprano Renée Porter, French American Vocal Academy

Remarks

The Honorable Louis Rigby, Mayor of La Porte

Presentation of the Awards

The Honorable Sujiro Seam, Consul General of France

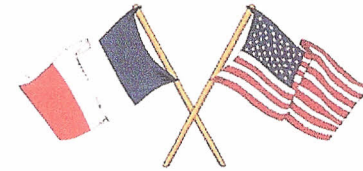
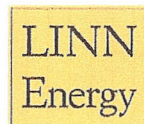
Assisted by students from the Awty International School
Davis High School, Westbury High School, and Sterling High School

End of Ceremony

Reception

For veterans and invited guests

*A special thank you to our partners Mark Roche and Kelly Elmore
and our sponsors:*



70th Anniversary of D-Day

Friday, June 6 2014

9:00 AM

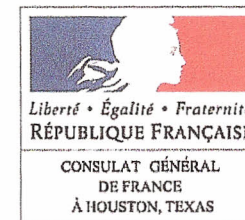
Hosted by

The Battleship Texas State Historic Site

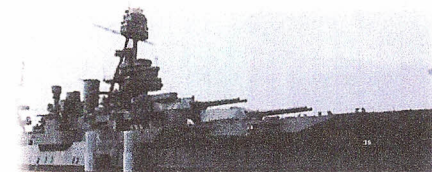
and

The Honorable Sujiro Seam

Consul General of France in Houston



Battleship USS Texas
3523 Independence Parkway South
LaPorte, TX 77571



The French Legion of Honour

The Legion of Honour was established to recognize eminent merits in the service of France. It may be awarded to French citizens and foreign nationals whether military or civilian.

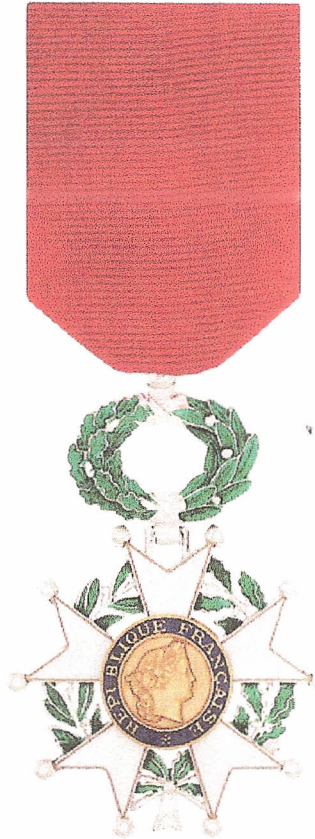
There is no precise American equivalent for the National Order of the Legion of Honour. It is the highest French decoration.

It shares the same characteristics with two U.S. decorations:

- The Medal of Honor, the highest decoration for military actions.
- The Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest decoration for civilian contributions.



D-Day Commemorative gift
From the Conseil Général de la Manche



Today, the service members listed below are receiving the medal of Knight in the French Legion of Honour for combat action in France during World War II.

RECOGNIZED SERVICE MEMBERS

Albert AARLIE	Indalesio ALCORTA
Edward ANDERSON	Leroy BASS
Leo BIELINSKI	John CHOPELAS
Bill CREECH	Grover CUNNINGHAM
Harold DIETZ	Arthur FILKINS Jr.
Edward FOWLER	Robert HAMER
Herman HAYDON	Jimmy HOLMES
Theodore HOOD	Milton JACKSON
Perry KERR	Clarence KELLY
Bernard LEE	Don LIPPINCOTT
Howard MILLS	Tsutomu OKABAYASHI
Joseph OSTROKOL	Robert PEISER
Guadalupe REA	Ted RUHLING
Horace SHANKWILER	Samuel SMITH
Clifford TALBOTT	Frank TIBBIT
William TOOMBS	Melvin TRENARY
Grover TRYTTEN	John TSCHIRHART
Raul VERA	Robert YOUNT



France Honors American World War Veterans

Published on January 16, 2014

France Honors American World War Veterans in the United States

Among his numerous missions and activities, the Ambassador of France to the United States regularly honors American veterans of the two world wars. Paying tribute to those men is a way to express France's gratitude toward those who risked their lives—and in many cases, gave their lives—defending liberty. After submitting an application, most American veterans who served in France during World Wars I and II are inducted into the *Légion d'honneur*, or [Legion of Honor](#).

The French Legion of Honor is an order of distinction first established by Napoleon Bonaparte in May of 1802. It is the highest decoration bestowed in France and is divided into five categories: *Chevalier* (Knight), *Officier* (Officer), *Commandeur* (Commander), *Grand Officier* (Grand Officer) and *Grand Croix* (Grand Cross). The highest degree of the Order of the Legion of Honor is that of Grand Master, which is held by the sitting President of the Republic.

Foreign nationals who have served France or the ideals it upholds may receive a distinction from the Legion of Honor. American recipients include Generals Dwight D. Eisenhower and Douglas MacArthur, Admiral Michael Mullen, and even, as an institution, the United States Military Academy at West Point. Today there are approximately 93,000 Legion of Honor recipients. American veterans who risked their lives during World War II and who fought on French territory qualify to be decorated as Knights of the Legion of Honor. Veterans must have fought in one of the four main campaigns of the Liberation of France: Normandy, Provence, Ardennes, or Northern France.

The Embassy of France honors U.S. veterans on a frequent basis. To follow Legion of Honor ceremonies and other events, please click [here](#).

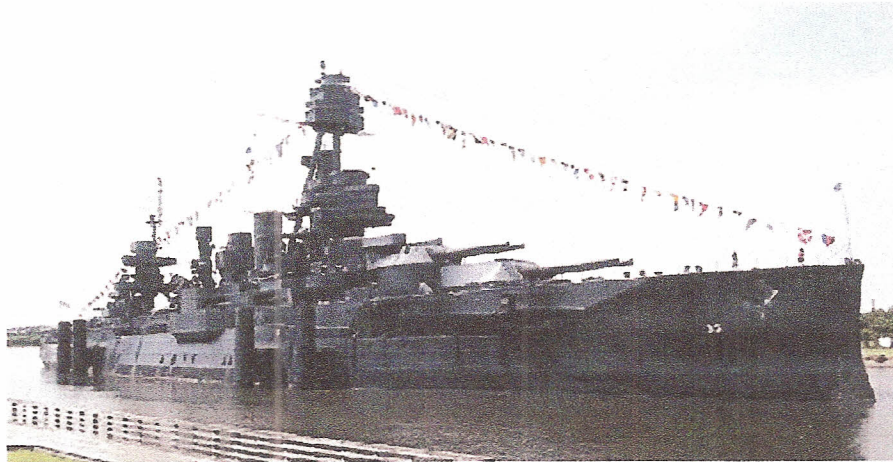
The year 2014 marks the 70th anniversary of the Allied invasion of Normandy, a military offensive commonly known as D-Day. To follow French activities held in gratitude for those who served in the liberation of France, please click [here](#).

To inquire about eligibility for the decoration of a U.S. veteran having served in France or with French forces, please contact coopcom.mmf@ambafrance-us.org.

For more information about applying to join the Legion of Honor, please contact your [nearest French consulate](#).

70th anniversary of D-Day on USS Texas Battleship

US WWII Veterans to receive the French Legion of Honor on June 6, 2014 to celebrate the 70th anniversary of D-Day



30 US WWII Veterans from Arkansas, Texas and Oklahoma to receive the medal of Chevalier in the French Order of the Legion of Honor from the hands of Consul General of France, Sujiro SEAM at USS Texas Battleship on June 6 at 9am. This special ceremony marks the 70th anniversary of D-Day landing in Normandy, when the ship provided essential support to the allied troops on Utah Beach and Pointe du Hoc. A few days later, during the Battle of Cherbourg, France, the Battleship was struck twice by large-caliber coastal defense guns.

The ceremony will take place in the presence of **Gene Green**, U.S. Representative for Texas's 29th congressional district, **Louis Rigby**, Mayor of La Porte and **Carl Salazar**, Director of the City of Houston Office of Veterans Affairs (COHOVA) .

Jay Guerrero, Regional Director for Senator John Cornyn and **William Miller**, Deputy Regional Director of Senator Ted Cruz will also attend the ceremony.

JROTC students from Davis High School (Army), Westbury High School (Air Force), and Sterling High School (Navy) will present the Colors. A delegation of students from the Awty International School will participate in the ceremony.

Military representation will include a color guard and officers from the **75th Training Command**, at Ellington Field .

Veterans who will be receiving the Legion of Honor: Albert AARLIE, Indalesio ALCORTA, Leroy BASS, Leo BIELINSKI, John CHOPELAS, Bill CREECH, Grover CUNNINGHAM, Harold DIETZ, Arthur FILKINS, Edward FOWLER, Herman HAYDON, Jimmy HOLMES, Theodore HOOD, Milton JACKSON, Perry KERR, Bernard LEE, Don LIPPINCOTT, Howard MILLS, Joseph OSTROKOL, Robert PEISER, Horace SHANKWILER, Guadalupe REA, Samuel SMITH, Clifford TALBOTT, Frank TIBBIT, William TOOMBS, Melvin TRENARY, Grover TRYTTEN, John TSCHIRHART.



The history of the Legion of Honor stems back to 1802, after all French orders of Chivalry were abolished during the French Revolution. Napoleon Bonaparte, who was then the First Consul of the First French Republic, instituted a new order as a way to recognize merit: the National Order of the Legion of Honor, which was meant to reward civilians and soldiers who had achieved great things in the service of France. Since its creation, the award has never been abolished, and has remained the highest, most prestigious, decoration in France. This order is awarded solely as a recognition of merit or bravery, being open to men and women of all ranks and professions.

When: Friday June 6, 9 – 11 am

Where: USS Texas Battleship , 3523 Independence Parkway South, LaPorte, TX 77571

This event is FREE and OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Many thanks to our Sponsors:

PIPE
multimedia & marketing

 **INT**


COLE
CHEMICAL

The Legion d'Honneur for US veterans

Recommend Share 299

Tweet 2



Upon presentation of their military file as detailed hereunder, US veterans who risked their life during World War II to fight on French territory, may be awarded this distinction. Those selected are appointed to the rank of Knight of the Legion of Honor. The Legion of Honor medal is not awarded posthumously.

Created to honor extraordinary contributions to the country, the Legion of Honor is France's highest distinction.

To be eligible to this outstanding award, the veteran has to fit strict criteria :

- ▶ Interested veterans of all the different armed forces must have fought in at least one of the 3 main campaigns of the Liberation of France: Normandy, Provence/Southern France or Northern France. Actions having taken place in Belgium, Germany, Italy or any other neighboring European country are not taken into consideration.
- ▶ The file presented must contain a copy of the military separation record (honorable discharge), the Proposal Memory application (below) and a copy of a current identity document with a picture.



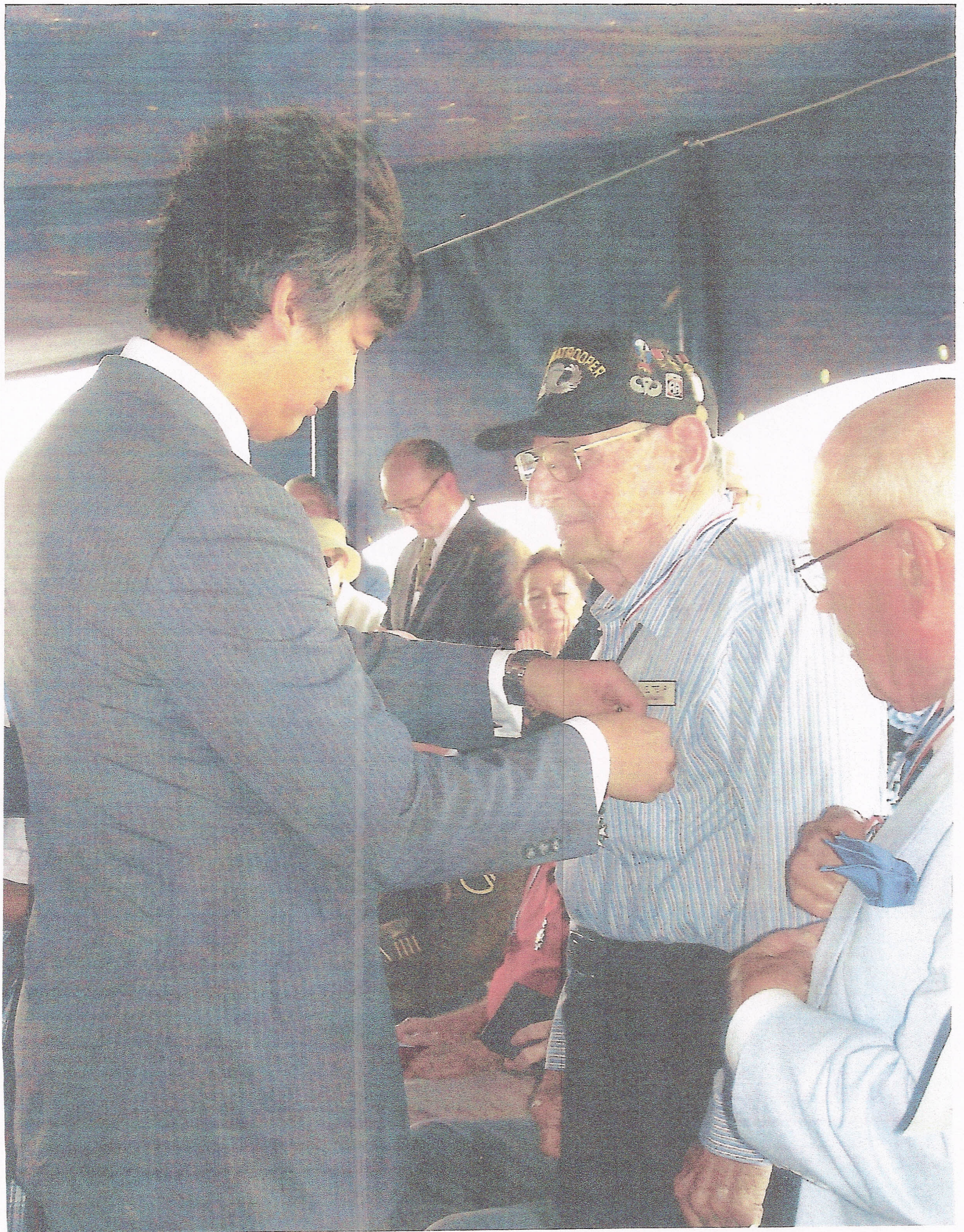
Proposal Memory application

If possible, it should also contain copies of citations for all the decorations already received in France or in the United States indicating meritorious action during wartime operations. This is particularly important for decorations that were not shown in the discharge document at the time of separation. To be considered, these citations must have been issued during WWII or the close aftermath, and must relate to events (outstanding actions, wounds, having been made prisoner, evasions, having taken action with the resistance, etc.) that took place on the French territory only which includes ground, airspace and coastal waters.

Since only a small number of Legion of Honor medals are awarded each year in the United States, care is taken to nominate only those with the most distinguished records. It is important to have such decorations as the Bronze Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, Purple Heart, Silver Star and higher, earned in French territory in order to have a competitive record.

If the veteran lives in Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont he or she must send the file with the request for consideration for the French Legion of Honor to the

Consulate General of France
31 Saint James Avenue, Suite 750
Boston, MA 02116





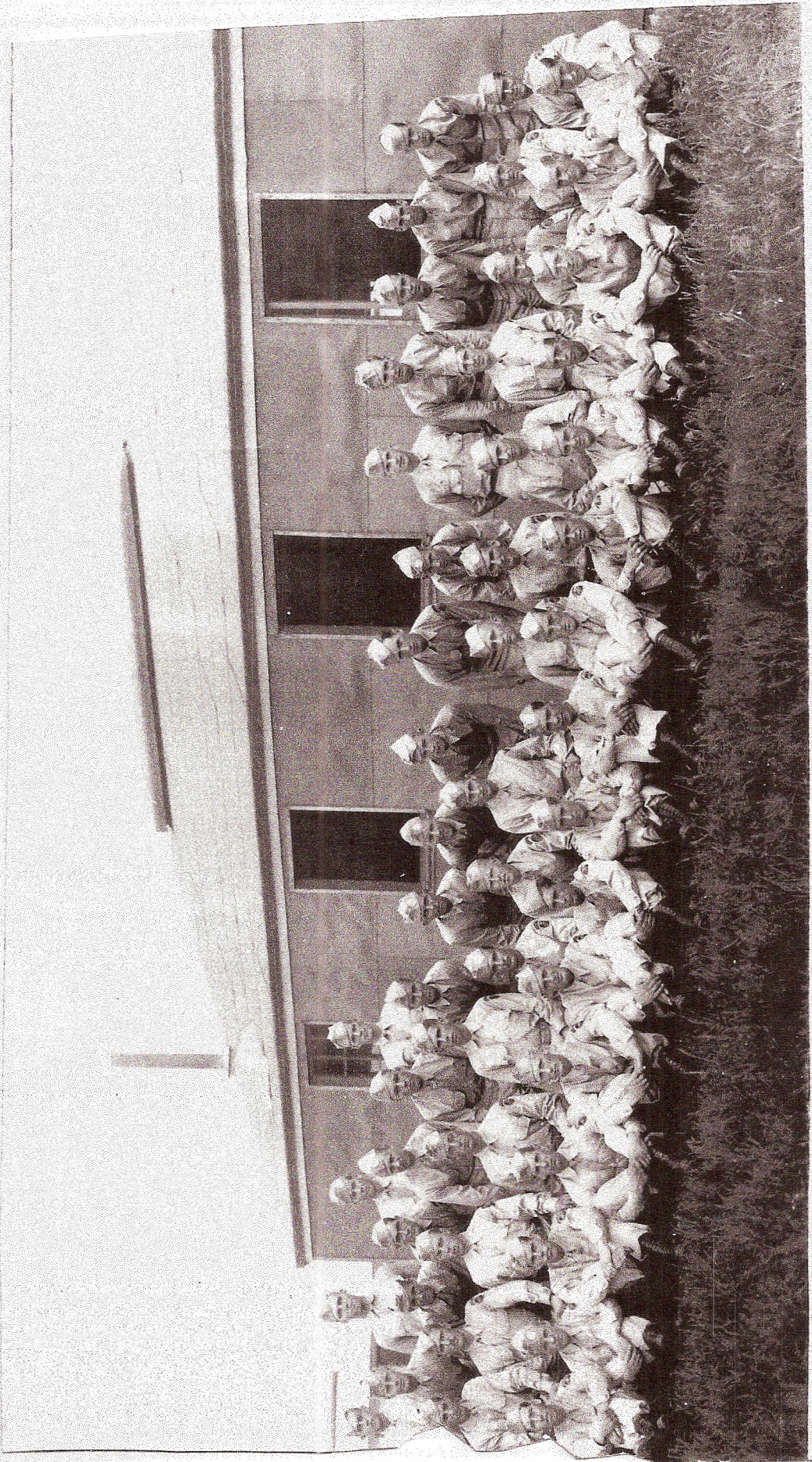
HOUSTON, TX. RODEO
VETERANS DAY 2014







CO. A, 517TH, PARACHUTE, INF., CAMP-TOCCOA, GA.



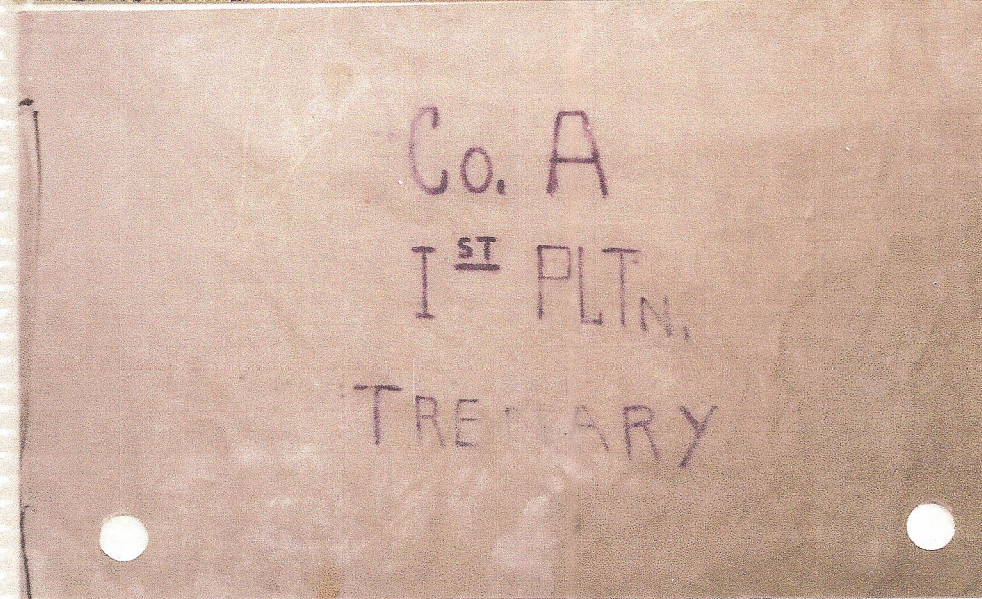


JEAN-FRANCOIS PONDANT
WITH HIS 3 BOYS
JUNE 1993

HE FOUND MY SHELTER HALF
IN BELGIUM IN '92



BERGEVAL WHERE
MY SHELTER HALF WAS
FOUND.



A PICTURE OF MY
SHELTER HALF HE
SENT ME

Veterans mark 'Forgotten D-Day'

■ Low-key events will commemorate the Allied invasion of southern France

By JOCELYN GECKER
ASSOCIATED PRESS

PARIS — Historians call it The Forgotten D-Day.

But aging veterans like John Shirley vividly recall Aug. 15, 1944, when they stepped ashore on the French Riviera and delivered an uppercut to Hitler's diminishing army.

"Maybe it was a sideline to the big fights up north, but it was a very important invasion," said Shirley, 79, speaking from his home in Livermore, Calif.

Tourists soaking up the Riviera sun this weekend will have to make room for Shirley and hundreds of other war veterans descending on the Provence region of southern France to commemorate Operation Dragoon and to be honored by the nation they liberated.

"The Normandy landings were a spectacular operation that everyone knows about, and we commemorate it with enormous fanfare," said French historian Andre Kaspi. "Then, there are the Provence landings that are more or less forgotten, but nonetheless essential."

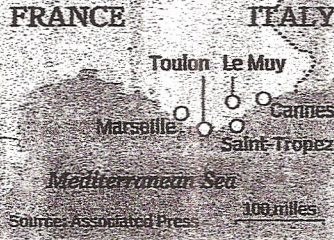
Operation Dragoon, and the D-Day landings in Normandy 70 days earlier, caught France's German occupiers in a pincer. Although smaller than D-Day in scale and Allied losses, Dragoon brought about 350,000 Allied soldiers ashore along a 50-mile stretch between Toulon and Cannes.

Compared with the D-Day anniversary hoopla in June — attended by President Bush, Queen Elizabeth II, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and others — the commemorations Saturday and today will be distinctly low key.

La Motte, the first village liberated in Operation Dragoon, will host a ceremony Saturday at which nine British veterans will be decorated with the Legion of Honor, France's most prestigious decoration.

THE OTHER D-DAY

In Operation Dragoon, 250,000 Allied troops stormed France's Mediterranean shores on Aug. 15, 1944, between Toulon and Cannes with paratrooper drops at Le Muy.



CHRONICLE

Later Saturday nine American veterans will receive the Legion of Honor from French Defense Minister Michele Alliot-Marie at the Rhone American Cemetery in nearby Draguignan. It overlooks the graves of 861 soldiers who fell during the landings and in the weeks that followed. The bodies of 1,600 other Americans were repatriated.

On Sunday, French President Jacques Chirac will be aboard the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle, anchored off Toulon, hosting leaders of 16 African nations that were French possessions in World War II and which provided soldiers for the Allies.

Also present will be several hundred veterans, including Shirley.

The former staff sergeant is leading a dozen U.S. veterans, mostly in their 80s, on a package bus tour that some say will be their last trip to the battlefield. One of them is 84-year-old George Burks.

"This is my last hurrah. I'm sure of it. I don't want to wait another 10 years," said the former first lieutenant before leaving Englewood, N.J., for his first trip back to France since 1944. He, like Shirley, fought with the 15th Infantry Regiment of the 3rd Infantry Division.

Operation Dragoon was to have coincided with D-Day but there were no landing craft to spare.



ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

DELUGE: Allied troops parachute into the French Riviera from C-47 planes in August 1944. Surviving veterans are returning to southern France this weekend to commemorate "The Forgotten D-Day."

Winston Churchill, the wartime British prime minister, had fiercely resisted the operation, preferring to focus Allied strength in the north. The Americans prevailed, arguing for a pincer movement.

French troops had played only a minor role in D-Day, and Charles de Gaulle, leader of the Free French forces, was eager for them to have a big part in liberating the important port cities of Toulon and Marseille. Half of Operation Dragoon's invasion force was French.

When the invasion finally was unleashed, thousands of paratroopers, mostly American and British, bore the brunt, preceding the amphibious operation in drops north of the coast. The night of Aug. 14, 1944, was foggy and many fell short and drowned at sea.

History books and many veterans recall thin German resistance to the invasion, but the chaos of battle has prevented a definitive count of Allied deaths. Shirley, whose 3rd Infantry Division had already fought at Anzio in Italy and helped liberate Rome, lost five

of his 12 men storming ashore near St. Tropez. "We didn't hit any mines, but we did run into German machine guns and rifles," he recalled.

Hitler pulled back German forces from the south just two days into Operation Dragoon. Allied troops liberated Toulon and Marseille in late August, and took Lyon, France's second largest city, Sept. 3.

Pierce fighting lay ahead as Allied troops moved into the Vosges Mountains near the German border.

"For the first month, it was amazing how fast we moved. But, then we got into October and the rains," Burks said.

He paused, then continued: "I can still walk out onto my back porch when it rains, and I can smell the Vosges. It all comes back."