

Veteran's "Short Biographies"

Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge (VBOB)

- **VBOB Presidents :**

Douglas Dillard

551st Parachute Infantry Battalion, Company A ("GOYA") 82nd Airborne Division, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment ("Red Devils")

Colonel Doug Dillard was born September 14th, 1925 in Atlanta, Georgia. Following in his father's footsteps, who served in North Africa early in the war, he joined the Army as a 16-year-old Airborne volunteer on July 3rd, 1942. His first deployment was to the Caribbean, in preparation for a possible assault on the island of Martinique, rumored as a potential base for Germans U-boats. In May 1944, after a return to the states for additional training, the 551st was shipped to North Africa, Sicily and Italy in preparation for the Operation Dragoon landings on the Mediterranean coast of France. Serving as a radio operator, then Sergeant Dillard followed his unit into the Bulge on December 21st, 1944, attached to the 30th Infantry Division in support of their defense around Francorchamps and Stavelot. On Christmas Day, they shifted to the 82nd Airborne, supporting the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment with recon behind enemy lines. Experiencing heavy losses into the New Year, the 551st was eventually folded into the 508th. At war's end in May 1945, the Regiment moved to Frankfurt to guard Eisenhower's headquarters. Awarded the Bronze Star, he chose a career in military intelligence, serving in Korea & Vietnam. Eventually becoming Chief of US Army Military Intelligence and earning a place in their Hall of Fame, he retired as a Colonel in 1977. Successfully raising four daughters in the vicinity of his long-time residence in Bowie, Maryland, Col. Dillard is the current President of VBOB (2012-2014).

J. David Bailey

106th Infantry Division ("Golden Lions") 422nd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Battalion, Company F

A native West Virginian drafted in November 1942, David completed basic training at Camp Wheeler, Georgia in April 1943 before qualifying for the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP). When ASTP was cancelled to provide replacements to depleted US divisions and establish additional units for deployment, he was assigned to the newly formed Golden Lions of the 106th. Landing at Le Havre on December 6th, 1944, his division was trucked straight to the front east of St. Vith, Belgium, relieving the 2nd Infantry Division in the Schnee Eifel sector – already inside Germany – "man for man, gun for gun"

on December 10th & 11th. Escaping the infamous German encirclement of the 422nd & 423rd Regiments at Schönberg, Belgium, he served in four campaigns was awarded the Combat Infantry Badge, two Bronze Stars and other citations. Serving with occupation forces headquartered at Bad Ems, he returned stateside in November 1945 via Camp Lucky Strike. He returned to university after the war, becoming a professor and independent consultant to the mining & energy industries. Over the years, he's served as an advocate for the Disabled American Veterans, VBOB president (2010-2012) and participated in numerous organizations focused on preserving the history of American service during World War II.

- ***Alphabetical Listing :***

Clayton Christianson

99th Infantry Division ("Checkerboard"/"Battle Babies") 324th Combat Engineer Battalion, Company A

Born in Charlotte, North Carolina, on July 18th, 1924, Clayton was drafted in his hometown April 8th, 1943. Reporting for duty at Fort Jackson in Columbia, South Carolina, he shipped overseas in September 1944. Like so many of his fellow GI's, he arrived in Europe via Omaha Beach. He saw his first action on December 19th, during the legendary American artillery campaign waged against the German advance from Elsenborn Ridge in East Belgium. In addition to serving in the Bulge, he continued on to the Rhine & Central Europe campaigns, ending the war in Berchtesgaden, Germany. Recommended for the Silver Star, he shipped stateside in March 1946. Currently living on the North Carolina coast, Clayton worked primarily in sales until his retirement in 1990.

Victor Cross

87th Infantry Division ("Golden Acorn") 345th Infantry Regiment, 1st Battalion, Company B

A native son of Flint, Michigan, Victor was born October 8th, 1925. Inducted in Detroit, Michigan, on July 24th, 1944, he was aboard the General William M. Black sailing from Boston on January 3rd, 1945. Experiencing his first combat east of St. Vith in late January, during the 87th Infantry Division's push back to the Siegfried Line, he fought with the Golden Acorn all the way to the Czech border near Plauen, where his war ended. Returning to America on July 5th, 1945, he was awarded the Combat Infantry Badge and Bronze Star. He worked as a tradesman for 7 years, specializing in arc welding, eventually becoming a machinist at a Chevrolet plant in Flint. He retired in 1980 after 22 years. He currently resides in Clio, Michigan.

Fred Gordon

9th Armored Division ("Phantom Division") 3rd Field Artillery Battalion, C Battery

Born in Emerson, Nebraska on July 14th, 1918, Fred entered military service as a 2nd Lieutenant in Des Moines, Iowa, in January 1942. Reporting to the 2nd Cavalry Division at Fort Riley, Kansas, he was assigned directly to the 3rd Field Artillery Battalion, still using horses at the time. Departing for Europe from New York aboard the Queen Mary on August 26th, 1944, he landed at Utah Beach on September 26th. Serving with the 9th Armored Division through the Bulge to their capture of the Remagen Bridge, he was in Czechoslovakia at war's end. Awarded a Presidential Unit Citation and Bronze Star, he headed back to the states in late 1945. Called back into service during the Korean conflict, he served with the Iowa & Minnesota National Guard, retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel. Working in the dairy industry, he retired in 1979 after 25 years with the United State Department of Agriculture. He is currently a resident of Delano, Minnesota, with Cheryl, his wife of 34 years.

Mike Levin

7th Armored Division ("Lucky Seventh") 489th Armored Field Artillery Battalion

Born in Venango, Nebraska in August, 1919, Mike's lifelong career in government service began in New York in 1942. A year-long tour of duty in Greenland preceded his returning to Fort Sill, Oklahoma for Officer Candidate School (OCS). Becoming a forward observer for the 489th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, his first enemy contact was near St. Vith, Belgium, during the first days of the Bulge. Fighting in the campaign to the Rhine, he was stationed in Halle, Germany, when the war concluded. He returned home in June 1946. Receiving the National Intelligence Medal as a precursor to his eventual career, he became an Intelligence Officer with the National Security Agency (NSA), rising to Director of Policy before retiring after 46 years of meritorious national service. He currently resides in Silver Spring, Maryland.

George J. Merz

818th Military Police Company

Enlisting in the Army in his hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, on May 12th, 1943, George Merz was born February 23rd, 1925. Serving with the 818th Military Police Company, most famous as the MP unit tasked with investigating the tragic auto accident that claimed the life of General George Patton in 1945, he set out for Europe from Boston harbor on February 25th, 1944. Landing in Normandy during the D-Day invasion, his campaign advanced through Brittany and the Brest Peninsula, eventually marching

through Paris on the way to Bastogne. Finishing the war in Zullenroda, Germany, he was discharged on January 25th, 1946. His decorations include a European campaign ribbon with five stars and Bronze Star. A lifelong resident of Louisville, he retired after a 40-year career in the aluminum industry with Reynolds Metals and ALCOA

Robert Thompson

2nd Infantry Division ("Indianhead") 23rd Infantry Regiment, 1st Battalion, Company A

Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on October 17th, 1924, Robert was inducted into military service on March 1st, 1943, in New Cumberland, Pennsylvania. Shipping out for Europe aboard the Argentina in mid-June 1944, he came ashore at Utah Beach in mid-July, joining the 2nd Infantry Division's campaign through the hedgerows of Normandy. Following the divisional arc through Central France to the Bulge, he was captured during the Rhine campaign, spending the remainder of the war as a POW. His personal war ended at Stalag VIIa in Moosburg, Germany. In addition to earning the Combat Infantry Badge and Victory in Europe Medal, he was also recognized with the French Legion of Honor and Jubile de Liberte Medal in the post-war years. Now a resident of Honey Brook, Pennsylvania, he retired in 1989 after 40 years as an engineer in the foundry industry.

Carl Wiggs Sr.

6th Armored Division ("Super Sixth") 50th Armored Infantry Battalion, Company A

Carl served as a rifleman in Patton's Third Army, as a member of Company A of the 50th Armored Infantry Battalion, 6th Armored Division. Born in Chattanooga, Tennessee in 1925, he was sworn into military service at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia in 1944. Shipping overseas on January 1st, 1945 aboard the Queen Mary from New York harbor, he experienced his first combat soon after in the vicinity of Bastogne, Belgium, followed by action in Luxembourg during the Allied reduction of the Bulge. He finished the war in Tauton, England, finally returning to the US in 1947. He was awarded the Purple Heart & Bronze Star for his actions during World War II. After the war, Carl Sr. took advantage of the GI Bill, eventually retiring to Montgomery, Alabama, where he currently resides.

Friends of 106th Infantry Division

The 106th Infantry Division “Golden Lions” was the last US Army infantry division to be activated in WWII. The division comprised of three regimental combat teams: 422nd, 423rd and 424th RCT. The division took over the ‘ghost front’ in the Schnee-Eifel sector on December 10, 1944. A week later the German Army attacked. Both the 422nd and 423rd Infantry and most of their supporting artillery and attached units were surrounded and captured on December 19th, 1944 after a valiant four day fight and out of ammunition and food. The 424th was able to pull back to Sankt Vith and participated in the rest of the Battle of the Bulge and the counteroffensive in January-March 1945.

- ***President :***

Bernard Mayrsohn

**106th Infantry Division
Cannon Company, 423rd Infantry Regiment**

° 1924 –

Home State: New York

State of Residence: New York

Army service: 1942-1945

Unit: Cannon Company, 423rd Infantry Regiment, 106th Division

Rank: Private First Class

Military function: Radio Wire Section, 2nd Platoon

Combat: Ardennes Offensive (Bleialf-Radscheid-Schönberg)

Prisoner of war

Bernard was a wireman in the Radio Wire Section, part of 2nd platoon of Cannon Company of the 423rd Infantry, stationed in Bleialf, Germany. He was wounded in action on 16 December 1944 in Bleialf, Germany by shrapnel. He continued to fight with Cannon Company until the 423rd Regiment was surrendered on December 19th, 1944 near Schönberg, Belgium. He was a prisoner of war at Stalag IV-B in the town of Mühlberg a/d Elbe for 6 months. The camp was liberated by the Russian Army on May 1, 1945.

Bernard studied at Cornell University and owns a successful family produce trading business (import and export in perishable foods) ‘Mayrsohn International Trading Co.’ with offices in New York and Miami, FL since 1947. Bernard is the current president of the 106th Infantry Division Association.

• ***Alphabetical Listing :***

Richard T. Lockhart

**106th Infantry Division
Anti-Tank Company, 423rd Infantry Regiment**

° 20 January 1924 –

Home State: Ohio

State of Residence: Illinois

Army service: 1942-1945

Unit: Anti-Tank Company, 423rd Infantry Regiment, 106th Division

Rank: Private First Class

Military function: Gunner 57mm anti-tank gun

Combat: Ardennes Offensive (Bleialf-Radscheid-Oberlascheid-Schönberg)

Prisoner of war

Captured in surrender of the 423rd Infantry Regiment on December 19, 1944 near Schönberg, Belgium. Prisoner of War at Stalag IX-B in the town of Bad Orb for 5 months. He was beaten by a German guard while on a woodcutting detail as a prisoner of war. Bad Orb was considered one of the worst German POW camps. Many of the Jewish soldiers in the camp were transferred to the infamous Berga concentration camp. He was liberated by the American Army in April 1945.

Before his time in the Army he studied at Perdue University, where he was also part of the ASTP program before enlisting in the army. In 1958 he started his own governmental affairs and lobbying company called 'Social Engineering Associates Inc.' in Chicago, IL. He still works full time at the age of 90.

Herbert M. Sheaner Jr.

**106th Infantry Division
G-Company, 2nd Battalion, 422nd Infantry Regiment**

° 12 August 1924 –

Home State: Texas

State of residence: Texas

Army Service: 1943-1945

Unit: G-Company, 2nd Battalion, 422nd Infantry Regiment, 106th Division

Rank: Private First Class

Military function: Regimental Scout and Company Sniper

Combat: Ardennes Offensive (Schnee Eifel, Schlausenbach, Laudesfeld, Andler)

Prisoner of war

Herbert was a rifle marksman and designated the company sniper. He also was a regimental scout and runner. His company held a section of the Siegfried Line near Schlausenbach, Germany. On December 19th, his regiment was decimated in an attack on Schönberg, surrounded and forced to surrender. Along with 500 men under the command of two majors a defense was organized, which held out for two more days 30 km behind enemy lines. They were forced to surrender on December 21st and Herbert became a prisoner of war at Stalag IV-B in Mühlberg a/d Elbe for 6 months. He was liberated by the Russian Army in April 1945.

Herbert studied at the University of Alabama and after the war coached high school track & field for 21 years with his teams winning seven State Championships. In 1952 he founded an insurance company 'Herbert M. Sheaner Jr. Insurance Agency' in Dallas, TX. He has authored the book 'Prisoner's Odyssey' about his WWII experiences.

Herbert is past-president of the 106th Infantry Division Association.

MNHM Diekirch – German veteran

Horst Hennig (Generalarzt a.d.)

352. Volksgrenadierdivision

8. Kompanie, Grenadierregiment 914

Horst HENNIG was born in 1926 as the son of a pharmacist. After his formal education, he entered the "Heeres-Unteroffizier-Vorschule" as a teen (Army NCO pre-school) in Marienberg, as his father wanted him to enter a military career. It is here that – at young age – he already had extensive infantry training and sports. In late 1944 numbers of students were integrated into the new "Volksgrenadiereinheiten" (people's grenadier units), as Germany was combing out its last reserves. Horst Hennig thus joined the 352. Volksgrenadier Division as a MG-42 machine gun team member of the 8th company of "Grenadier"-regiment 914. On December 16, 1944 his unit crossed the Our river as part of the attacking German forces on the southern shoulder of the "Battle of the Ardennes" and Hennig took part in the fighting around Tandel, Bastendorf, Diekirch, Ettelbruck, Mertzig until his unit after suffering heavy losses had to withdraw to a defensive position at Diekirch on the northern banks of the Sauer river. It was here on January 18, 1945 that Hennig fought against units of the 5th US Infantry Division during the Sauer river crossing operations until forced to withdraw. He was captured in February 1945 in the Eiffel and went into captivity in the UK. Due to his young age he was released in late 1945 and finished his secondary school in Halle and started studying medicine. In 1948 he was arrested by the Soviet secret police as a member of a university students' movement pleading for democracy in the Soviet sector of occupation. He was brutally interrogated, tortured and sentenced to 25 years of forced labor in a Gulag on the polar circle. As a political prisoner of the NKVD in Workutta he endured the extremely harsh conditions, but survived the brutal treatment as was liberated in 1953. He finished his studies and graduated as a medical doctor and soon thereafter joined the newly created German army (Bundeswehr), where he rose to the rank of a medical Major-General with part of his vocational training in Texas. He was

responsible for various medical and scientific testing programs for pilots inside the German air force until retirement in 1984. He became very active in the German war graves organization "Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge" and in several other fora to clarify missing in action cases. As an eyewitness and participant of the Battle of the Ardennes he has been a strong supporter of the National Museum of Military History in Diekirch. He has often participated in meetings with American veterans and as a classroom speaker in living history programs.

Victory in Europe / New Orleans

DONALD FOREST LEONARD PFC,

**513th Parachute Infantry Regiment,
3rd Battalion, "G" Company**

He entered Army at Fort Lewis WA on August 1943. Sent to Fort Benning Georgia- became a "G" Company man in the all-new 513 Parachute Infantry Regiment. After completing jump school he joined the 17th Airborne Division. He shipped out on August 26 on the USS Wakefield, arriving in Liverpool England on the 30th of August. They remained in England until the "Battle of the Bulge." "Starting on December 16, we were flown across the English Channel on December 25th & 27th in northern France and trucked up close to the front. The weather was extremely cold and snowy. Our orders were to attack on January 4th." He was wounded crossing the street by shrapnel from artillery fire by the Germans on January 7th in the small town of Flamierge, Belgium. He still carries a small piece of shrapnel the size of a nickel in his upper chest. He ended up in a hospital in England, away from his outfit for seven weeks.

When returning back to his unit, the Division was planning to jump into Germany across the Rhine River at Wesel, it was to be known as Varsity March 24th. This was the American 17th Airborne Division, and the British 6th Airborne Division. Their Division jumped from C-46's-(the only time that type of aircraft was used in combat). They jumped from less than 500 feet, and several planes were on fire as they exited the planes. He jumped with a 30 caliber machine gun attached to his chute harness. After his chute opened he pulled a pin and the gun dropped about 15 feet by way of a nylon strap so that it hit the ground before he did. They were jumping into 20 millimeter flack that was thick enough to walk on. "I was hit by a bullet on my way down, and I don't even remember how I got out of my chute. I cannot even remember the evacuation. The first thing I remember is being in the hospital. The doctor was saying *"Son, you are so very lucky for had that been a 1/4" lower, you would have been paralyzed from the waist down for the rest of your life."* God does work in miraculous ways. Three months later I was whole again and ended up at Camp Lucky Strike on the French Coast and from there boarded the William and Mary Victory Ship and she came back to the states. As I recall, we were in the middle of the Atlantic on our way home when V.G. J. day came about."

Facts about the Rhine Jump: The entire length of the column was 2 hours and 18 minutes long & consisted of 226 C-47's - 72 were carrying parachutes while 906 gliders were towed by 610 C-47's. The British had 42 C-54's, and 752 C-47's and 420 gliders airborne. Around this huge assembly were 676 US Fighters and 213 British fighter planes. The first day of this 'Varsity' jump, the 17th lost 158 men who were killed, and 522 were wounded.