

The ORION GALLIVANTER

Volume XLVIII, Issue 129

September 2020

1917 - 1919

Dickebush Sector

Mount Kemmel

Vierstraat Ridge

East Poperinghe Line

Hindenburg Line

LaSelle River St. Souplet

Meuse-Argonne St. Mihiel



1940- 1945

Makin

Majuro

Eniwetok

Saipan

2001- Present

Enduring Freedom,

Afghanistan

Iraqi Freedom

Noble Eagle

27TH ON A ROLL AT BEST WARRIOR COMPETITION!

One of the most common traditions in the military is the competition to determine who is the best junior enlisted and Non-commissioned officer. The name has changed over the years and is now known as the Army Best Warrior Competition (BWC). This event starts at the Battalion level and works its way up through the hierarchy of NY State units until a NYARNG Best Warrior in each category has been determined. Beyond State are Regional, Army Guard, and finally the Dept. of the Army competition held in conjunction with the Association of the US Army annual meeting in October.

The intent of the competitions is "...TO REINFORCE FUNDAMENTAL SOLDIER SKILLS, PROMOTE ESPRIT DE CORPS THROUGHOUT THE ARMY, AND RECOGNIZE SOLDIERS WHO DEMONSTRATE COMMITMENT TO THE ARMY

VALUES AND EMBODY THE WARRIOR ETHOS," EXORD 101-20 HQDA.



27th CSM Mclean, CPL Perez, SSG Ortiz, 1-69 CSM Butcher.

Over the past several years the 27th IBCT has had a great deal of success in advancing past State to the regionals and beyond. This marks the third year in a row that the 27th has presented the NYARNG at the Regional BWC.

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**THE ORION
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Past National CDR's

Sr. Past Gary Yaple

Jr. Past Ray Swift, Sr.

MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL COMMANDER

Hello Friends, I hope this Gallivanter finds you well. There has been so much turbulence this year with COVID-19 which has made it difficult to plan and execute an Annual Reunion. In lieu of a formal dinner this year we will be meeting at the Camp Smith Training Site to hold our annual meeting on Saturday October 24th. A BBQ picnic will follow as we acknowledge the winners and participants of the 27th Brigade Best Warrior Competition being held at the same location. Short notice for sure, for a reunion but the probably the only opportunity we have to gather and remember our Service and those we served with while taking the time to encourage those who continue to carry the flag this year. If you can make the time to come down, we will be having a social event on Friday night which is our custom. Please RSVP as soon as possible so we can have a head count and book your accommodations. Thank you, Paul Hujer, Geoffrey Milligan and Paul Fanning, for your continued contributions to the Gallivanter. Our prayers continue to be with Ray Swift Jr and his family as they mourn the loss of Ray Swift. Ray Swift Senior served his State and Nation for over 44 years! He selflessly continued to give back after retirement as the 27th Division Association National Commander and leading his local Post. We are forever grateful for his service, friendship, laughter and example.

Yours in service,

LTC (Ret) Paul Hernandez

EDITOR'S CORNER

Greetings,

I was saddened to hear of the passing of CSM Ray Swift. I met Ray in 2003 at my first 27th Division Association reunion in Syracuse while I was working with TF Empire Shield. I was brand new to the Association and he helped introduce me to the other members in attendance and made me feel welcome. He was the 2nd Vice Commander and I ended up being sworn in as the Third Vice that year. Fast forward to 2007, when I was supposed to be taking over as National Commander from Ray. The 27th was deploying to Afghanistan and the board asked Ray to stay in place for another year. Altogether I think Ray served almost three years as National Commander until we could get our routine back in place. Never did I hear any griping from him about having to hold things together while we were away at training or deployed. He loved the Association and you could see the joy in his face as he talked to the members and Soldiers at the Reunions. A fine NCO and a true gentleman, Ray you will be missed.

This edition sees two articles concerning what is now known as the Best Warrior Competition. The first is a report on the string of successes the 27th IBCT has had in recent years and the second is my personal take on the value to be found in taking part in the competition.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues and with it comes all the changes in our normal routines. Public assembly has been impacted across all our lives and that will affect our ability to hold any type of Reunion dinner this year. Commander Paul Hernandez continues to reassess planning for the 2020 Reunion and there will be more to follow on this. The best source for up to date information for now will be the Facebook page.

Respectfully,

Paul E. Hujer

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The key to success isn't a big secret, it is hard work – in the form of training and practice. The 27th has made a concerted effort in the past several years to actively support the Soldiers preparing for this event.

Sponsors are assigned to teach, coach, and mentor the Soldiers as they prepare, and the units make equipment available for the Soldiers to train with. Where and when possible, previous year's winners are serving as spon-



sors. The candidates prepare mentally by studying military history, doctrine, and the Common tasks manual. They prepare physically by honing their fitness and repeatedly conducting tasks under field conditions to build “muscle memory.”

2020 saw two Soldiers from the 1-69 IN, SSG Matthew Ortiz and CPL Troy Perez, succeed at the regionals in Jericho, VT. They will

now advance to the Army Guard competition at Camp Shelby, MS. September 13th-16th. If successful there, they will move on to the last stage at Fort Knox, KY and Washington, D.C. from 1-15 October 2020.

The competition consists of the following categories: board, written exam, physical fitness, weapons, and a mystery event. “Competitors are assessed by their breadth and depth of knowledge on areas such as military leadership and counseling, current events, U.S. Army history, tactical communications, survival, battle-focused training, weapons, U.S. government and the Constitution, land navigation, the NCO Creed and history, and a myriad other focus areas.” “Warriors must complete a written exam covering broad topics related to the U.S. Army and compose an essay on a surprise topic to be announced when the event begins.” “Warriors will take a rigorous Physical Fitness Assessment to assess their individual fitness level and warrior spirit. In addition, Warriors must meet Army weight standards in accordance with Army Regulation 600-9.” The new Army Combat Fitness Test is used for the fitness assessment. “Competitors are expected to be proficient in the list of more than 40 warrior tasks and battle drills. Not all will be tested at the Best Warrior Competition; however, competitors won't know which WTBD they'll face until they enter their competition lanes.” “Warriors must successfully zero the M4 rifle.” This task may also include a function's check, and remedial action. “Soldiers must be able to react, adapt and overcome a situation quickly and decisively.

Warriors will participate in a mystery event designed to see how well they can think on their feet while under both mental and physical stress.”

This is an event which can't be directly prepared for at home station and thus is a true assessment of the overall capabilities of the can-

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didate. Some past mystery events have been a road march, an urban combat scenario, and an obstacle course. This year's event was a tribute to the "Green Mountain Boys" and Roger's Rangers of the Vermont Militia dating back to the American Revolution. It consisted of a marksmanship competition using tomahawks thrown at a wooden target. Neither Soldier from NY had ever done this before, but they both ended up placing first in their respective groups. Good job!



The Competitors and their Sponsors: SGT Ryan (2019), CPL Perez (2020), SSG Ortiz (2020), and SSG Titov (2018).

The Gallivanter will keep you advised on SSG Ortiz and CPL Perez's journey in the Winter edition!

More information concerning this competition can be found at the following website: <https://www.army.mil/bestwarrior/>

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ON THE VALUE OF TAKING PART IN THE ARMY BEST WARRIOR COMPETITION

MAJ (R) PAUL HUJER

The following article is an attempt by myself to communicate the values to the individual Soldier and by extension to the unit, in competing in the Best Warrior Competition. I took part in its predecessor, which I will explain later, and I have supported this type of competition my whole career.

A little history on myself to set the scene. I started my career in the USMC and reported in to my infantry company in December of 1989. After attending a Marine Corps school for Squad Leaders, I was selected to represent my company at the Battalion Corporal Board. This was my first experience with this type of competition. I would later revisit this same type of event at the Sergeant's Board with the 108th Infantry in the NYARNG. These types of competitions looked at appearance, military bearing, and judged the Soldier on military knowledge, skills, and current events.

In 2003, I was selected to represent the 27th BDE at the NY NCO of the Year competition. This combined the appearance board aspect of the previous two boards I had experience with, but added a much more "hands on" task completion portion, along with a written evaluation. It was at this event that I really started to see the benefits of being a candidate.

With 11 years in the NY Army National Guard at this point, I had seen the address 330

Old Niskayuna Road many times on paperwork. This competition was my first time driving out to Latham and going to Joint Forces HQ. To be honest, I think this was only my second time to the Capital region (but it wouldn't be the last by a long shot!) In total each candidate had to complete an appearance board in the Class A uniform and a written test as well as evaluations on several common Soldier tasks in the Battle Dress Uniform. In order to prepare for this, I had to get help from my unit, Co. B 2-108th IN at Masten Avenue Armory. SGT Russell, our Commo SGT, and CPL Ware our NBC NCO helped me prepare by walking me through the SINCGARS and MOPP gear exchange. Neither of these Soldiers was full-time, but the unit coordinated to have them come in to support my training and I was very grateful.

As to the benefits I received from competing, I would say the following all of which served me well in the continuation of my career:

- ◆ I met several outstanding NY Soldiers at this competition, all of which I served with again either in my drilling unit or while deployed. Because I competed at the Regionals, I was able to network with the Top NCOs of VT, NH, MA, and ME. They represented a wide mix of MOS' and civilian

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backgrounds. Social media wasn't really prevalent so I didn't gain anywhere near as much benefit as someone could today with the ability to text or do a video call.

- ◆ I also had the opportunity to make several higher-level mentors, among them the BDE CSM Al LaChance, the State CSM Bob Van Pelt, and a former NY State CSM Claude Imagna (who son had been one of my Co CDRs.) I still reach out to Bob Van Pelt to this day for guidance. I also met officers at JFHQ whom I would later work with on unit deployments.
- ◆ As the BDE NCO of the Year I was invited to attend the 2-108 Spring Conference, where I was offered a position with TF Empire Shield. I served as an Operations NCO which in turn led to several other career enhancing events. I can directly attribute that offer to being NCO of the Year since I would never have been talking to the TF CDR if not for the invite. I was convinced to submit a Direct Commissioning packet and upon return from OBC, I was offered another position on ADOS supporting the 27th's deployment to Afghanistan.

Now each of these events are specific to me, but I have seen similar events occur with other Soldiers I competed with and other competitors in the years since then. I know of at least three Soldiers who ended up as AGR, two others who commissioned, and dozens who ended up on ADOS as a result of competing. *Why is that?*

The common factor is that once you have shown your Bn., BDE, and possibly DIV that you are an example of a hardworking, knowledgeable Soldier you become a "known quantity" with the leadership. When they start looking for someone to come on ADOS, send to a school, or represent the unit at a special event you are the top of the list. I cannot overstate the benefits this will provide if you want to move ahead in your career.

Today's Army Best Warrior competition is a much more involved event with an ACFT, weapons qual, and "mystery event" added in to all the events I had to undergo. That is an even better reason to compete. With the unit's assistance, you are being given a chance to train and perfect yourself in a holistic manner.

- ◆ Refreshing and enhancing your technical and tactical proficiency, testing your military bearing, increasing your knowledge of military doctrine and history, and working on fitness and marksmanship are all building blocks to boost you ahead of your peers when it comes to career progression.
- ◆ If you succeed to the Bn or BCT level, you will most likely be assigned a sponsor who can greatly assist you as a coach and mentor. *Who knows how long that relationship will last into the future and where that alone can take you?*
- ◆ Over the past decade the Battalions in the 27th have really gotten onboard with supporting the competitors.

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Allowing them to come in to the Armory and get hands on with equipment is of priceless training value.

- ◆ As Soldiers go higher of the chain of the competition, there are often opportunities for the Soldier to come on ADOS to train (though this is always dependent on the budget and unit missions – no guarantees implied!)
- ◆ Some of the benefits will only come with making it to the highest levels such as NGB or Army BWC. At these the events the people you meet will extend your network way beyond the border of NY state. Once again, being a “known quantity” to the Army Guard CSM or SMA cannot hurt your career.
- ◆ Finally, consider the experiences you will have working your way from Company level all the way up the chain. There is no doubt that you will be a better Soldier for having attempted this. You will pick up new skills, enhance current skills, make new friends, enhance current friendships, visit new places and expand your “bubble”. This whole experience is designed to take you of your comfort zone, stress and stretch you, with the aim of seeing what you are made of.

Do you have the will and desire to compete against the best of your Company, Battalion, Brigade, Division, State, Region, Army Guard, and Army? Ask your First Line leader how to sign up and when the next competition at unit level starts. If this isn't for you, consider helping out with training those who do sign up or just cheer them on.

GUIDON CALL !

(NEWS FROM AROUND THE FORMATION)



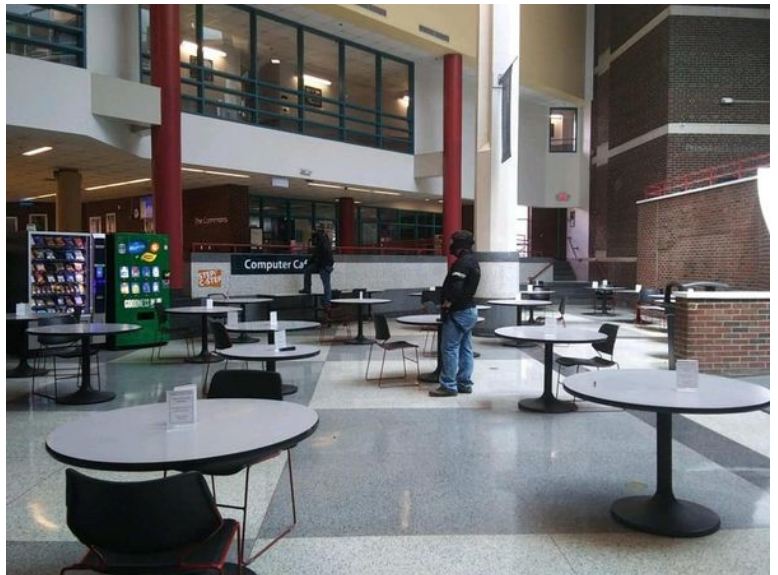
- Co D (MI), 152 BEB, conducted Military Intelligence Training System (MITS) evaluations this year at Annual Training. They were externally evaluated and mentored by Fort Drum Foundry, NY-J2, First Army East, and NGB-G2.
- The Soldiers who certified were the first National Guard MI Soldiers to do so and Co. D, was the first NG MICO to undergo this evaluation. “Always Out Front!”



SPC Millington, 35F, and CPT Meztler, D Co. CDR.



- Ghost Company, assisted the Schenectady County Sheriff's Office who were conducting Active Shooter drills.



GUIDON CALL !

(NEWS FROM AROUND THE FORMATION)



• HQ, 27th BCT personnel and contractors stand inside the new “Airbeam” tents which the BDE



• HQ, 1-69 IN showcases a new Command Post



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HISTORY CORNER

Artifact Highlight

Those of us who have served for any length of time in the National Guard are familiar with modern “fruit salad”. While it seems that being handed a package of medals for one tour of duty is a modern phenomenon, the 27th Division Soldiers of WWI received much the same. In addition to medals issued formally, many Soldiers took it upon themselves to “self-issue” some of the medals in this article, as well as adding commemorative “medals” from the VFW and American Legion, or other organizations.

The photos here are period examples and are based on those in a shadow box built by a WWI veteran of the 106th Machinegun Battalion.

The first is the US Victory Medal. WWI Victory medals could be issued with campaign bars, worn on the ribbon with one bronze star to represent each campaign, and clasps on the medal itself. Each clasp has the name of the campaign it represents on it. Most 27th Division Soldiers who stayed with the Division through the tour received three clasps, “Somme Offensive”, “Ypres-Lys”, and “Defensive Sector”, the latter indicating participation on a combat event not major enough to warrant its own clasp. Only one other AEF Division was authorized this combination of clasps, the 30th Infantry Division- “Old Hickory”. The 27th’s 52nd Artillery Brigade, which was split out from the Division, received two clasps, “Meuse-Argonne” and “Defensive Sector”.

Also unique to the 27th and 30th Divisions was the “authorization” for wear of the British War Medal. These Divisions were attached to the British 2nd Army (read Mitch Yockelson’s [Borrowed Soldiers: Americans under British Command, 1918](#) for the full story). While the British never issued actual War Medals to the average Soldier in either Division, many of the troops, assuming rightly or wrongly, figured it was fine to purchase one and add it to their rack.



Both France and Belgium issued honorary War Medals to the AEF troops, and again, many Soldiers acquired them for wear post-war.

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The fifth medal in this series was not issued by a country, but by the State of New York.



In addition to the NYS Great War Medal, many cities and towns across NY issued commemorative medals to hometown WWI veterans after the war. These were added to ribbon racks and worn proudly at parades in the years after the war.

As mentioned, a 106th MGB Veteran wore a ribbon set similar to this one. Maybe he is one of those Soldiers marching in the picture postcard below?



Machine gunners of the 27th Division on their way to the front at Dickebush, France

(C) Kadel & Herbert, N. Y.

The Association maintains a small collection of our own historical items. In addition the Historian has a large collection of material he has personally acquired. While HQ Department of the Army maintains several museums and collections, much of the personal memorabilia from the Soldiers of the 27th Infantry Division and its descendant units are lost every year. Photos, letters, scrapbooks, etc. are lost when people move or downsize their houses, etc. Consider donating items to the 27th Division Association so that their story will live on for future generations. See the Historian for further details.

Geoffrey Milligan, Historian—Geoffrey.milligan@gmail.com

TAPS



Raymond E. Swift, Sr, 86, died June 11, 2020. He is survived by his children; Raymond (Cristina) Swift, Jr., Tammy (Dave) Pangburn and Kandi (Keith) Eigen, 5 grandchildren; Jared (Jamie), Kiel (Ashley), Kate, Noah and Danny, a special friend Nandine Young, his siblings; Beverly Lilquist, Richard (Kathy) Swift and Sylvia (Dale) West, sisters-in-law; Toni Courtney, Sandra Oakley, brothers-in-law; William Wells and Frank (Linda)Wells, several nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his wife Joan in 2001 and his siblings Robert and William Swift, Marie Hinckley and Betty Benedict. He served his country for 44 years in the US Army and New York National Guard, retiring as Command Sergeant Major. Ray is a Past National Commander of the 27th Division Association.



LeRoy Joseph Forbes succumbed to cancer on September 6, 2020 surrounded by family at home. LeRoy attended Central High School, graduating in 1958. He retired in 1993, after a 30 year career with the NY Army National Guard. He was the maintenance shop supervisor and retired with the rank of Master Sergeant. He is survived by his wife, Karen; 3 children, Kim (Peter) Erbland of Waleska, GA, Scott (Renee) Forbes of San Marcos, CA and Douglas (Colleen) Forbes of Kernersville, NC; grandchildren, Alec and Emilie Erbland, Kaitlyn Forbes and Meagan, Hannah and Madison Forbes; sisters-in-law, Dawn Daggett and Hauouida Forbes; along with, nieces and nephews.

Sergeant Major Mike Ratkoski remembers Leroy. "I served with Leroy when he was the Commo Sgt, Maintenance Sgt, and HHC 27th Brigade 1SG. Leroy Forbes was a mentor to the Commo Section of the 10th Mtn when they were starting up in 1986. He served also as the NCOIC of the Bde 1SG Update Training Course. He was also the Maintenance Shop Supervisor in Syracuse. He was a Soldier's Soldier. He also made himself available after he retired to all the retired soldiers that had a question or a problem. He gave of himself always. A great leader, mentor, and friend."

SICK CALL



SFC Art Coons continues to recover from his stroke. All reports are that he is way ahead of where they thought he would be based on the average patient. I guess the doctors don't understand the drive that is in this Soldier!

For the Gallivanter:

- Unit & Personal Remembrances
 - 80 + Club
 - Historical Stories
 - Reunion Notices for Posts
 - Mailbag
 - Taps
-
- Memorial Fund donations
 - Change of Address

All to Secretary:

27th Division Association

P.O. BOX 2522

Syracuse, NY 13220-2522

Check out our Facebook page. Search for "27th Division Association" or use <https://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/168222080741/>

REUNION NOTICE

What: Annual Reunion

Who: The National Association membership & Guests

When: October 23 & 24th.

Where: Camp Smith Training Site 11 Bear Mountain Bridge Rd, Cortlandt, NY 10567

Why: This is the major annual event held by the National Association. This year it will be held in conjunction with the BDE Best Warrior Competition.

Costs: Cost: \$15.00 registration (pays for hospitality) for current members; \$25 registration for member renewal.

\$20.00 for BBQ

Lodging: Due to COVID-19, all double rooms will have single occupancy. You will not have a room mate. Select double room.

<https://bookings.centiumsoftware.com/USA/Cortlandt-Manor/Camp-Smith>

More information to follow on the Facebook page.

Times & Events:

Friday

1300 - Brigade Best Warrior Modified "Murph" PT event

1500 - Brigade Best Warrior Weapons Competition

1700 - Registration at Bldg. 508

1900 - Blinger (Icebreaker with Food and drink) Location IVO Bldg. 508

2100-2300 - Hospitality room open. Room TBP.

Saturday

0600 - Best Warrior Army Combat Fitness Test (Optional)

1000 Annual General Meeting, Election of new officers. Bldg. 508

1200-1600 - BBQ with BDE participants of Best Warrior. Times are subject to change.

Expect that all social events will allow for social distancing and that masks will still need to be worn at most times.



AMERICAN LEGION LIBERTY WALK 2020

Saturday October 10th, 2020

Commemorate the " Battle of the Vierstraat Ridge" by the
27th & 30th US Divisions Aug/Sep 1918.

Place to be: Visitors Center Kemmel

Start walk: 09.00-13.00

7, 12 or 18 km

Expo visitors center: 09.00-15.00

FOOD AND DRINKS AVAILABLE



**FOR MORE INFORMATION:
americanlegionlibertywalk@gmail.com**

The organization is not responsible for any accidents, damage or theft.
Responsible publisher: Joseph Schram, American Legion Flanders Field Post BE02

For those of our members or other interested parties, this event seems like it would be very worthwhile. Editor.

1918-2018 (WWI) , 2008-2018 (CJTF-PHOENIX) ANNIVERSARY BADGES/COINS

2018 Reunion Badge/Coin set: we have some badge/coin sets remaining- the badge is a very special item in the traditions of the 27th Association and you'll want to get one before they are gone!

[Available here on eBay.](#)



CALLING FOR SUBMISSIONS!

If you have a story or photo(s) that you want to submit to the Gallivanter here are our publication guidelines.

1. Must relate to the 27th Infantry or Armored Brigade/Division, or the 27th Division Association.
2. We reserve the right to edit for clarity, typographical errors, and length. When time permits we will send you an advance copy of what your material will look like.
3. Items may not appear in the very next Gallivanter published after you submitted. We will try to notify you in advance of when it will be published!
4. Lastly, all content should be something that serves to inform our readership about the training, combat service, and dedication of our Soldiers.
5. Send to 27thDivisionAssociation@gmail.com. Subject line should read "For Gallivanter". Thank you.



27th Division Association



New Membership/ Membership Renewal Application (\$15)

Full Name _____

(Last) (First) (MI)

Rank /Title _____ Spouse's Name _____

(Optional)

Address _____

(House Number and Street) (City) (Zone) (State) (Zip)

Current Phone # _____ E-mail Address _____

Unit Served _____ Dates: From _____ to _____