

DECEMBER 2005

The ORION GALLIVANTER

1917 - 1919

Dickebush Sector

Mount Kemmel

Vierstraat Ridge

East Poperignhe Line

Hindenburg Line

LaSelle River St. Souplet

Meuse-Argonne St. Mihiel



1940- 1945

Makin

Majuro

Eniwetok

Saipan

Okinawa

2001- Present

Enduring Freedom

Iraqi Freedom

Noble Eagle

IT WAS NO JOKE FOR BOB STEVENS OKINAWA: April 1, 1945

Copied from an article by DAVID KEELER

It was April Fool's Day 1945 but nobody was making jokes. 50,000 U.S. Marines and Soldiers were storming ashore on another of those strange sounding Pacific Islands names that most Americans had never heard of - Okinawa. This one would prove to be the bloodiest and final battle of WWII in the Pacific. It would also be the forewarning of how costly an invasion of the Japanese mainland would be.

Among the American forces was Bob Stevens, an amphibious tractor commander with the 77th Division. Stevens would survive the epic battle unscratched, as he did all the assault landings that he participated in during the war. His duties included ferrying combat troops from mother ships to landing zones on the beaches and then

returning with supplies.

Only 350 sea miles from Japan, Okinawa is located at the southern end of the Ryukyu Islands chain and was a main fortress for Japanese inter-island defenses.

With its four airfields in American hands, there would be no more outlying bases from which Japanese could launch interceptors against increasing B-29 attacks on the Japanese mainland. Even more important, Okinawa had good harbor facilities and was a natural staging area and jumping off place for what would be the final invasion of Japan, which would have come next, but for the Atomic Bomb. The Islands airfields proved to be a haven for crippled American bombers that otherwise would have been forced to crash land or parachute into the Pacific.

Battleships and Bombers pounded Okinawa for a week (March 24-31) prior to the invasion in what was described as the heaviest bombardment delivered to a Pacific Island. But as had been the case of previous Island assaults, the bombardment brought minimal losses to 120,000 Japanese forces on the Island.

It began on Easter Sunday, April 1, 1945 and was launched from an Armada of 1,300 ships including, 18 battle ships, 200 destroyers and 40 carriers. L-Day (landing day) was the military jargon for the start of the assault. Eventually, American forces on the Island would total nearly a quarter of a million.

Most of the forces involved in the Okinawa assault were seasoned veterans of the American Island-hopping strategy. Stevens was no exception, he had taken part in action on Saipan,

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27th Division Association
P.O. Box 2522, Syracuse, NY 13220-2522
Phone: 315-434-9724
Email: Roberta.Comerford@us.army.mil
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Commander's Message

Greetings many friends;

I would like to start by saying that I am humbled by the acceptance as your National Commander and feel that there is a considerable amount that the association can provide to ourselves and to the communities that we live in during the next few years. The 27th is again going through some big changes and will continue to serve as the pinnacle of the New York Army National Guard.

Another successful year has passed and we have had the opportunity to get together again for our annual reunion in Saratoga Springs. Much work went into the planning of the event and my thanks go to the staff of the association that run the day-to-day operations, without their effort we would not be able to have these events year after year.

With the pace of the war effort and the tempo that units are rotating into combat and state side missions there is now more soldiers and families affected by deployments than at anytime back to WWII. This brings me to the point of what I feel the organization can provide for the communities that we live in. Our experience as military members and long time family members of the military, puts us in a unique position of understanding the hardships and stress that deployments bring. While those sons and daughters of Orion serve to protect us and our way of life, we can assist there families through the unit family support organizations. Those individual posts in each of the communities that we live in should reaffirm those relationships with the individual armories and meet the members of the local family support groups.

Once those relationships start those families will realize that the association and auxiliary are there and may be able to answer questions or help in some small way. This is the basis of why the organization was founded and what we can do for those service members that are deployed or deploying soon.

To conclude supporting the troops is more than hanging a magnet on your car, we have valuable experience and relationships within the communities that we live in, and can serve as an advocate for those families affected by deployment. As individual posts we need to introduce ourselves to the family support groups and work with them to help those families affected by the continued deployments.

Yours in friendship,

Harold Jones IV

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NO JOKE FOR BOB STEVENS

Tianan, and Leyte.

Stevens, along with the members of the 77th. Division, took part in the landings on Xe Shima, a small island West of Okinawa mainland. His amphtrac carried 16 soldiers and a crew of three. When in deep water the amphtrac was propelled by it's specially designed track. You went real slow in deep water and were an easy target. Once, his craft took 28 hits from machine-gun fire. I heard them hit but they did not penetrate our armour. It looked like someone had taken a drill and poked holes along our side that did not go all the way through. You could just see a pin-hole of light through the holes. Eventually our unit took part in the siege of Okinawa interior. It was on le Shima where famed correspondent Ernie Pyle was killed by Japanese machine-gun fire.

Okinawa proved to be the bloodiest of all battles fought in the Pacific. Along with the Navy's heavy losses, American Army Divisions lost 4,000. Marine deaths totaled 2,398. American Aircraft destroyed 763 and 38 ships were sunk. Over 36,000 Americans were wounded.

The Japanese obviously fared far worse. Shore-based sailors as well as front-line riflemen, clerks, cooks as well as Okinawan labor conscripts found ways of dying almost to the last man. Japanese prisoners, including men too badly wounded committed suicide, totaling 7,400 plus, all others of the 120,000 died refusing to surrender. All of the Islands senior Officers including the commanding Officer General Ushimija committed ritual suicide, as did many of their subordinates and some civilian Japanese.

Kamikaze attacks and other losses

destroyed an incredible 2,800 Japanese aircraft. The battle also brought the virtual end to the Japanese Navy which lost 16 ships. The Okinawan population suffered horrible losses. Four-hundred and fifty thousand strong at the beginning of the assault, it's estimated that as many as 160,000 died, many being used as canon-fodder by the Japanese before the fighting ended in July.

Okinawa would prove to be one of the fiercest battles fought in the Pacific and holds claim to some of the wars grimmest statistics. It was the Islands relatively large size (80 miles long) and hilly terrain that made it different and deadlier than other Pacific Island battles. Torrential rains that bogged down advancing troops and devastating counterattacks by "fight-to-the-death" Japanese defenders added to Americans woes. Final moping-up operations weren't completed until July 2nd, 3 months after L-Day.

It was during the siege of Okinawa that Japan launched the bulk of it's dreaded kamikaze attacks. Nineteen hundred suicide planes were launched against American forces during the battle of Okinawa and sank 38 American ships and heavily damaged dozens more. The suicide attacks would come in waves consisting of hundreds of planes.

Over 5,000 American sailors died as a result of Japan's kamikaze attacks between April and June of 1945, the heaviest toll the U.S. Navy suffered in any episode of the war including Pearl Harbor.

Along with airborne kamikaze attacks, Stevens said that the Japanese used small one-man boats to launch suicide attacks against American vessels

(Continued on page 4)

MEMBERSHIPS

See Page 7

NO JOKE FOR BOB STEVENS

(Continued from page 3)

“Kamikaze attacks made life very interesting” Stevens recalls.

Unlike other amphibious assaults in the Pacific, where American forces were riddled when they approached the beaches, the landing on Okinawa was accomplished with few American losses, thanks to the change in Japanese strategy that allowed for American forces to land virtually unopposed and then drawing them into battle in what the Japanese regarded impregnable defense lines within the Island. The ultimate goal of the Japanese was to use it's kamikaze planes to drive off the American Fleet, leaving the marooned landing forces to be destroyed at leisure.


Even the famed Battleship Yamato embarked on a suicide mission against American forces at Okinawa. Loaded with the last 2,500 tons of fuel at her homeport, enough for only a one-way trip, the Yamato was ordered to penetrate the American screen around Okinawa and inflict unacceptable damage on the amphibious force. But American forces detected the huge Battleship long before it was within striking range on April 7. After suffering six direct hits from torpedo planes, the pride of the Japanese Navy rolled over and sank with almost all of the 2,300 sailors on board. American planes also sank the five ships that made up the escort force.

Within weeks of the cessation of fighting on Okinawa, Stevens and his unit were training for the invasion of the Japanese mainland. It was the horrible death toll on Okinawa that convinced Stevens and many of his contemporaries that dropping the Atom Bomb on Japan ultimately saved hundreds of thousands of lives, both American and Japanese. Offi-

cial estimates of the day claimed that an invasion of Japan would result in horrendous American and Japanese casualties totaling 1 million dead. As many as 100,000 Americans were expected to die just landing on the mainland. It would have been a blood bath for both Nations had we invaded Japan.

80 PLUS CLUB

First Name	Last Name	
Marvin	Mendelson	(Age 94)
Howard C.	O'Neal	(Age 86)



New Members

Welcome Aboard!

- Mr. Paul Conley Stike**
- BG Michael C. Swezey**
- SPC Jeffrey Scott Narbon**

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Memorial Fund

- \$30.00** **Michael Zuckerman**
In memory of Matthew Chirichella, Anthony Van Atta and Thomas O'Hare, recently deceased members of Co "D" 102nd QM Regt. (my buddies Matty, Andy and Tom, God Bless these dear fellows.
- \$25.00** **Howard C. O'Neal**
In memory of F Company who did not make it back.
- \$25.00** **Richard W. Knapik**
In memory of SGT Frank Joseph Coup.
- \$25.00** **Louis Turilli**
In memory of deceased members of the 249th F.A. Battalion.
- \$20.00** **Mary May Sluck**
In loving memory of my husband, William Sluck.
- \$20.00** **G Co. Reunion Group Fund**
In memory of Charles Pfeiffer Co. "G"
- \$15.00** **Marvin Mendelson**
In memory of the men of E Co 105th Inf, 27th Division
- \$10.00** **Charles E. Learn**
In memory of Capt. Norman M. Forbes
- \$10.00** **Sidney Jarmus**
In memory of Henry Mahler, Co B, 106th Inf
- \$10.00** **Robert Stefferson**
In memory of the boys of Co B, 106th Inf, 27th Div
- \$10.00** **Hyman Steckler**
In memory of Henry Mahler, Co B, 106th Inf
- \$10.00** **Louise Criscione**
In memory of my husband, PNC George M. Criscione
- \$10.00** **Celestina Perry**
In memory of Katherine Malatino
- \$10.00** **Celestina Perry**
In memory of George O'Laughlin
- \$10.00** **Celestina Perry**
In memory of Leslie Perry
- \$10.00** **John D. Baker**
In memory of John Demming who was killed in the Pacific, WWII
- \$5.00** **Nick Cavallaro**
In memory of my fallen buddies

MAILBAG

Lee B. Blehl

In all these years that I have received the Gallivanter, I haven't seen any article on my company. We serviced all the units in the 27th Division until the Division left us on the Hawaiian Islands. After they left, my company was sent to Iwo Jima. We were there for seven months until some of us came home for discharge.

Note from editor: Mr. Blehl does not indicate which company he was in, but he has previously told us he is in the 102nd Ordinance.

M. Downes

**1353 Roaring Springs Road
Fort Worth, TX 76114**

Does anyone have the 165th small pins left? I need three. God Bless.

Larry Turilli

In the September 2005 issue of the Orion Gallivanter, there was an article entitled

AppleKnocker Mike-3: Remembrances of War by Joseph J. Meighan. In the article, Mr. Meighan makes reference to a Naval Forward Observer and relates several experiences shared with that FO. That FO was my father, Louis Turilli. He would like to make contact with the family either by an address or phone number. They can reach us at:

My father can be reached at:

**Louis Turilli
475 43rd Ave Ct
East Moline, IL 61244
309-792-0087**

I can be reached at:

**Larry Turilli
6 Hearthstone Ct
Bloomington, IL 61704
309-662-4121 - Home
309-287-3898 - Mobile**

Bill Cattaneo

**451 Mallard Creek RD
Louisville KY 40207**

I was most recently referred to you by Michael Aikey of the New York State Military Museum regarding my second-cousin, Mateo Phillip Rolla, who served with the 27th Infantry Division during World War II and who was wounded in action during the Saipan invasion.

Mateo passed away in California last year, and I was hoping perhaps one of the surviving members of the 27th Division, who took part in the Saipan invasion, would remember Mateo and communicate with me.

I understand from Mr. Aikey that there is a 27th Division Association, and from that have wondered if the association has a newsletter.

Mateo Phillip Rolla, born 30 May 1920 in San Luis Obispo, California, was inducted into the service of the United States Army on 6 November 1941 in Los Angeles, California.

He passed away in California on 11 May 2004.

Note from the editor-- We'll pop a complimentary copy of the Gallivanter into the mail for you!

From Post 11

Our summer indoor picnic/meeting was held on 8 July 2005. Cmdr. Ray Swift opened event with pledge of allegiance and salute to the colors. Prayer offered by Chaplain Stan Gardner followed by a moment of silence to our departed members. Treasures report by Bob Wartonick... 41 members and guests enjoyed a picnic of hot dogs, burgers, baked beans, macaroni and potato salad, tossed salad, cold drinks, coffee, ice cream and cake. Prepared by the ladies of the VFW. As usual the Gardeners donated the traditional "WELCOME" cake. Our regrets that

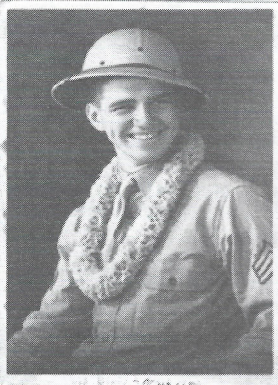
Mary and Nick Cavallaro were unable to attend. Nick suffered a stroke and is recovering. A silent prayer was offered for his recovery. Those attending were: Dale Barber. Bob/Mary Barton, George Borst, Al/Sandy Cadwell, Frank/Cathy Depersis, Nelson Dickey, Richard/Jaqueline Fidurski, Robert French, Matthew Garbett, Stanley/Esther Gardner, John/Bette Gorman, Woody Hayes, Richard/Sandy Holly, Jack/Audrey Howey, Harold Jones, Peter/Rosalie Julian, Joe/Mary Kille, John Lamonico and Ann Lipka, Matthew Miller, Harry Platt, Joe Podrazil, Peter/Rose Sawicki, Jeff Spring, Ray Swift and Nadine Young, Ray Swift Jr, Elwood Thorpe, Bob/Mary Ann Wartonick. A short meeting followed. Closed with a Prayer and salute to colors.

Theodore Roosevelt on Immigrants and being an AMERICAN

"In the first place we should insist that if the immigrant who comes here in good faith becomes an American and assimilates himself to us, he shall be treated on an exact equality with everyone else, for it is an outrage to discriminate against any such man because of creed, or birthplace, or origin. But this is predicated upon the man's becoming in very fact an American, and nothing but an American...There can be no divided allegiance here. Any man who says he is an American, but something else also, isn't an American at all. We have room for but one flag, the American flag, and this excludes the red flag, which symbolizes all wars against liberty and civilization, just as much as it excludes any foreign flag of a nation to which we are hostile... We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language...and we have room for but one sole loyalty and that is a loyalty to the American people."

- Theodore Roosevelt 19070

TAPS



James L. Boyle

My father James L. Boyle, Staff Sgt 27th Div. died suddenly July 7, 2005.

He served in the Pacific Theater 1940-1945, in Saipan and Okinawa. He received the Bronze Star, and numerous awards for valor.

Jim "Buddy" Boyle was born in Brooklyn in 1920, he then moved to E. Northport L.I., where he raised his family with his wife of 58 yrs Marie. He retired after 35 yrs with Western Electric in 1982. In 2004 they moved Oswego, NY and built a home. He is survived by his wife, daughters, Jeannie and Kate, son Mike. Six grandchildren, 1 brother and 4 sisters. He enjoyed reading the Orion Gallivanter, and when they decided to move upstate, it was the first address he had changed so he wouldn't miss an issue!



Ralph Britton

Ralph Britton Sr., 86 years, of Rensselaerville, passed away at St. Peter's Hospital on August 25, 2005. He was born in the town of Westerlo on April 1, 1919, son of the late William and Cora (Peck) Britton.

Ralph served in the U.S. Army from January 1941 through May 1945, and was a corporal in Company E 106th Infantry, 27th Div. He served three years in the Pacific, Majuro in the Marshall Islands, Battle of Saipan in the Marianas and Espirito Santo, New Hebrides. He received the American Defense Service Medal, Asiatic Pacific Theatre Campaign Ribbon, the Bronze Star and was given an award for Conspicuous Service by the State of New York.

Following his military service, Ralph worked at the Huyck Mill in Rensselaer, N.Y. as a weaver. Ralph and his wife

Magdalena, operated Britton's Soda Fountain in Rensselaerville, for nearly 20 years. He was postmaster in Rensselaerville for 26 years. Ralph was a charter member of the Rensselaerville Vol. Fire Co., serving as treasurer for 37 years. He was also a member of the Clark White Post American Legion for 57 years and a member of the 27th Div. Assn., Post 11 for many years. He enjoyed woodworking, caning chairs, refinishing furniture and bird watching. Family and friends were very important to him and he was always ready to lend a helping hand.

Surviving are his devoted wife of 59 years, Magdalena (Preisner) Britton; his loving children, Ralph Britton Jr. and his wife Patricia of Ravena, N.Y., Eileen Britton of Oakhill, N.Y., Diana Fritz and her husband Kenneth of Rensselaerville; his dear grandchildren, Brian and Michael Britton, Kimberly Henlin and her husband David, John Kotuc, Stephanie Stepp, Seth and Daniel Fritz. He was predeceased by his brothers, LeRoy Britton, Sanford Britton and a sister, Marjorie Moore. Also surviving are several nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

Rocco J. Mangino

Rocco J. Mangino of Whitestone, NY passed away February 8, 2005 at the age of 92. He was born in Astoria, NY and served in the Pacific during WWII with the 27th Division, 105th Infantry, Co D. He received the Bronze Star. His wife of 63 years, Ernestine, passed away on April 3, 2005 at the age of 91. They are survived by three daughters, 8 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren.

Col Robert R French

Robert R French from Exton, PA passed away 9 July 2005. He served with Btry C, 104th FA when the unit left for Ft McClellan in 1940. He attended OCS and served in the Pacific Theatre. On reorganization of the Guard in 1947 he was the first Battery Commander of the newly formed Battery C, 104th Artillery. He later served as a staff officer and eventually became the Battalion Commander. On reorganization of the Guard

in 1968 he was assigned as Battalion Commander of newly formed 204 Engineer Battalion until he was promoted to Colonel and assigned as a staff officer in the NYARNG. Col. French is survived by his wife, Helen, and 2 daughters. He was a member of Post 11, 27th Division Association.

Frank Frieser

Frank Frieser from Endicott, NY passed away in Sept 2005. He left for Ft. McClellan in 1940 with Battery C, 104th Artillery and served with the 104th throughout the Pacific campaign. His wife predeceased him in 1991. He is survived by 2 sons, 2 grandsons, a granddaughter and a sister. He was a longtime member of Post 11, 27th Division Association.

Milan Planavasky

Milan Planavasky from Binghamton, NY passed away 14 June 2004. Milan left for Ft. McClellan in 1940 with Company H, 106th Infantry and later served in the Pacific Theatre. He is survived by his wife of 62 years, Helen, 2 sons, 5 grandchildren and 8 great grandchildren. He was a long time member of Post 11, 27th Division Association.

Lt. John Donnelly

John Donnelly passed away at Vineland, NJ. John served with Btry C, 104th Arty from 1950 to 1961 until he moved to NJ. His wife predeceased him. He is survived by a son and a daughter.



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My son, husband, brother, father served in World War I-II
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With Company, Battery or Troop _____
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Age Please check <30 \$200 _____ 31-40 \$190 _____ 41-50 \$170 _____
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2LT PAUL E. HUJER
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KENMORE, NY 14217-2429

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CHECK YOUR MEMBERSHIP YEAR ON THE LABEL!

If it doesn't say 2006 or LIFE after your name then it's time to pay your dues. Post Members remit payment to your post. At Large Members please remit payment to: The 27th Division Association, Inc. P.O. Box 2522, Syracuse, NY 13220

Annual Reunion 2005

The 27th Division Association held its annual Reunion in Saratoga Springs, New York last October at the New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center. The Meals and Accommodations were provided by the Saratoga Springs Courtyard by Marriott and were absolutely top shelf! We had a large turnout this year with lots of familiar faces and several welcome new ones! The weekend started out with a fantastic meal at the Blinger on Friday Night. Saturday's Board Meeting at the Museum con-

firmed the 2006 Slate of Officers, and was capped off by a very generous donation from the late Kenneth Wilmot. In his will, Kenny directed \$15,000 be donated to the New York Military Museum. Tiny Jackson gave the museum the check on his behalf. From the men and women of the 27th Division Association we thank him for his generous support in maintaining New York's history. And a special thank you goes out to Mike Aikey and the Staff at the Museum. Their hospitality was wonderful as they gave our

members the "Red Carpet" treatment. Saturday evening's Dinner was wonderful as well, with BG Michael Swezey, Commander of the New York Army National Guard and LTC Dennis Deeley, Commander of the 2-108th Infantry Battalion addressing the Association's members. A great time was had by all, and we hope to see more of you at the Reunion next year!



"All right, Sergeant—Let's suppose there's a 'Blackout'—I'm sitting here like this, with my eyes closed! Now, what's the next step?"

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