

*Continuing Deployment Coverage and Season Greetings!*

# *The* **ORION** **GALLIVANTER**

*Dickebush Sector*

*Mount Kimmel*

*Vierstraat Ridge*

*East Poperignhe Line*

*Hindenburg Line*

*LaSelle River St. Souplet*

*Meuse-Argonne St. Mihiel*



*Makin*

*Majuro*

*Eniwetok*

*Saipan*

*Okinawa*

*Enduring Freedom*

*Iraqi Freedom*

*Noble Eagle*

## **Training, Training & More Training**

*- The 27th continues the preparation for Afghanistan -*

FORT DRUM -- Nearly 1300 Soldiers of the 27<sup>th</sup> Brigade Combat Team from across New York, plus hundreds of additional training support personnel completed an intense October three week training period at Fort Drum as the command's federal mobilization date in 2008 nears. The fall training was framed by the selection earlier in the year of the 27<sup>th</sup> for deployment in 2008 for Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. The 27<sup>th</sup> will take command of Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix VII, with the continuing mission of training, mentoring and supporting the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police and assisting the fledgling democracy there with reconstruction efforts, while also providing support to the Afghan people.

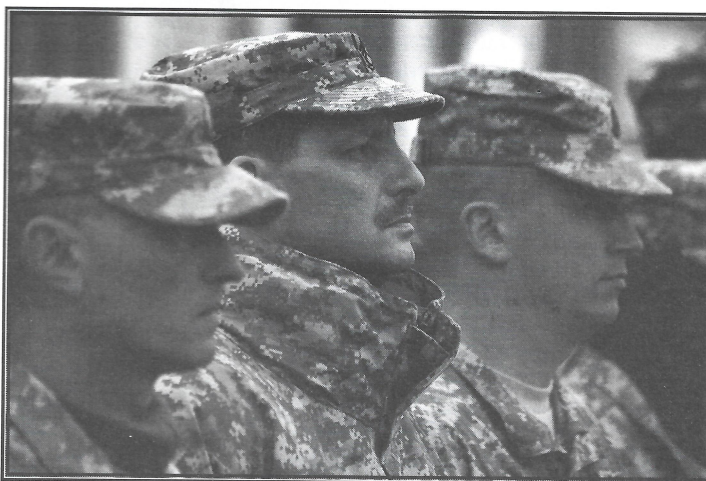
Six rotations from primarily National Guard brigades have been running this mission since it began in 2002. Presently, the South Carolina Army National Guard's 218<sup>th</sup> Brigade is in theater having taken over from the Oregon Guard's 41<sup>st</sup> Brigade in May.

### **Special Mission – Special Team**

The 27<sup>th</sup> will deploy with a special team of nearly 1700 members of the New York Army National Guard. The task force

includes Soldiers from the New York City and Hudson Valley areas, the Capital District, the North Country and Central and Western New York.

The TF Phoenix force in theater comprises nearly 7,000 military and civilian personnel from active duty, Guard and reserve American forces, plus troops from NATO nations including Great Britain, Canada, Germany, Italy, Spain, France and others.



Some task force personnel have already been called up. Send off ceremonies were held at four armories across the state for approximately 200 Soldiers from 27<sup>th</sup> units on Saturday, 29 September. About five platoons from 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 108<sup>th</sup> and Fighting 69<sup>th</sup> Infantry battalions were tapped to serve as a Security Force Company and were called in advance of the main force.

"I believe this is the absolute best brigade in the Army," said Col. Brian Balfe, 27<sup>th</sup> commander at a first-ever brigade prayer breakfast held two days before the end of the training. "I realize how far we have come in a very short time," he said. "For the last six months we have been preparing ourselves physically,

*(Continued on page 4)*

# THE ORION GALLIVANTER



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# Commander's Message

Greetings,

As I start to prepare this message, I can not help but reflect back over the past year, and how quickly it seems to have gone by. I have often heard that the older you get, the faster time seems to go by. If that is the case, I must be young at my doctors appointments, as it seems that I wait a long time before the doctors come in to see me. With that being said, I have one item that I must take care of first and it is as follows.

In the September Edition of The Orion Gallivanter, I covered many of the highlights of the annual reunion. However, I neglected to thank the many people, that put in countless hours of work, to do all the tasks that have to be done behind the scenes. they are the ones that found the hotel accommodations, decided on the meals, set up the itinerary, set up the hospitality room, arranged for transportation, set up and manned the registration table as well as other tasks that combined to make the reunion the great success that it was. I am very grateful to all who worked on every aspect of the reunion and I say **THANK YOU.**

I am sure that you are waiting for word about the deployment of the 27th Brigade Combat Team. As you read in the last edition of the Gallivanter, they are being deployed to go to Afghanistan. They have completed six weeks of intensive pre mobilization training at Fort Drum, NY(3 weeks in June and 3 weeks in October). They will be leaving in January and are scheduled to return home in January of 2009. I am sure all of you will join me in praying that everyone in the 27th Brigade is able to complete their mission and return home safely. Our editor will be keeping us informed as he is performing his duties with the Brigade. As he mentioned in the Editors Corner in September, ☐submissions to the Gallivanter will still be made through our Post Office Box☐, so please continue sending in articles about Post activities, Taps, Mail Bag, etc.

There will be a meeting of the Officers and the Board of Directors in December at Hafner's restaurant at 5224 West Taft Road in North Syracuse, NY. We will be covering next years agenda and I would like as many in attendance as possible. (Date and time to be announced.)

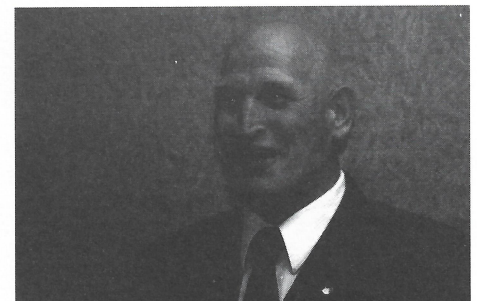
Thank all of you for the help and cooperation I have received during this past year.

As I conclude this message, I again ask that your thoughts and prayers be of past and present comrades and all of our troops and their families. I wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy Holiday season.

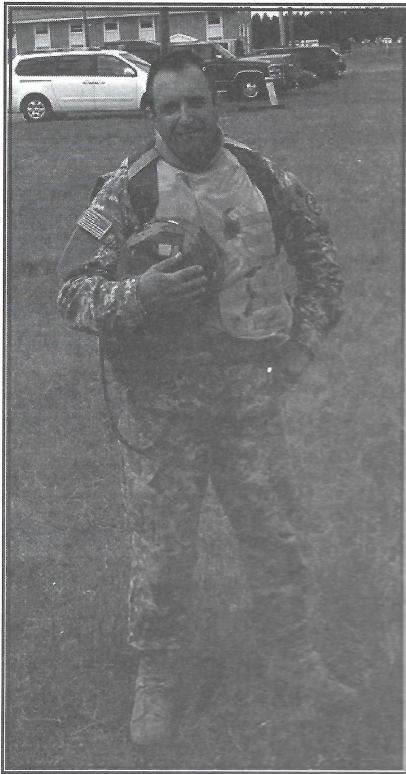
Yours in comradeship,

Raymond E. Swift

National Commander



## Editor's Corner



Fellow Orion Veterans,

This has certainly been a rather busy year for the 27th Brigade and the Division Association. The most obvious thing for the soldiers of the Brigade has been the multiple training events and preparation for our upcoming deployment to Afghanistan. For the Association, it was the planning and enjoying of the reunion in Syracuse.

To give you a better understanding of the country that we'll call home during the next year, this issue includes the first part of a series on the history, culture and people of Afghanistan.

October found the unit once again up at Fort Drum conducting a variety of drills and tasks to build on the training received in June. As you read this issue we'll be back a third time this year to complete our individual requirements. Next stop will be Fort Bragg in February. The March issue will fill you in on the advanced training and give you further updates on the deployment.

The new year will soon be upon us with its challenges, new experiences and opportunities. In my second year as your editor, I'll be working with our highly skilled Public Affairs section to bring you news directly from Afghanistan within the pages of the Gallivanter.

Lastly, please remember that you can continue to send in your submissions to the Division PO Box. I'll do my best to find space for everything - news from the Posts, Memorial Funds, Taps and of course, any well wishes you care to send our way.

Sincerely,  
Your Editor  
(CPT) Robert Romano



### Mailing Addresses:

#### 27th DIV ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

- Unit & Personal Remembrances
  - 80 Plus Club to the Editor
    - Historical stories
    - Reunion Notices
    - Mailbag items
      - Taps
  - New Membership application
  - Membership Dues-\$10.00
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    - Gallivanter Donations
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*(The Post Office does not tell us you have changed address, you must let us know.)*

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Make checks payable to:  
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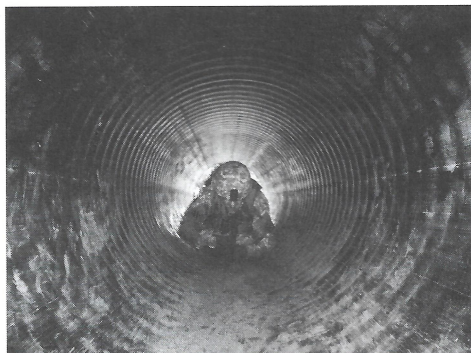
## New York's 27<sup>th</sup> Surges toward Federal Mobilization

mentally – developing our Soldier Craft so we will be able to train, mentor and sometimes lead the Afghan National Army and Police,” he said.

### Special Preparations

All deploying personnel rotated through the Soldier Readiness Processing at the Guard's new on-post armory. Each day, hundreds of troops lined up for complete administrative reviews, health checks including immunizations, dental checks and finance. Soldiers were seen by a chaplain, representatives of the state Family Program Office, officer and enlisted career managers and military lawyers.

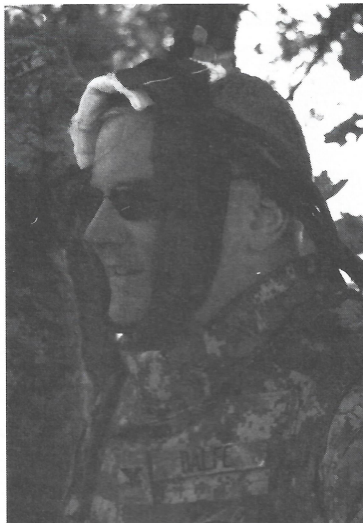
Another key objective was RFI – Rapid Fielding Initiative – issuing new individual pieces of clothing and equipment necessary for deployment to all members of the task force. Company-size formations cycled through the Guard's Maneuver Area Training Equipment Site. At the other end of the facility, contractors working for the Army's Operation Soldier program ran an assembly-line for “rapid” and efficient issue of new equipment required for the upcoming mission. At the end of a four-hour process, Soldiers returned back to their barracks with the newest “Molle” system and two full duffle bags of clothing and gear. And unit Supply Sergeants got the signed documentation.



### Intense Training

The troops were immersed in individual training essential for validation and deployment from 6 to 26 October. Hundreds of others participated in training at Army service schools. Non-deploying personnel of the 27<sup>th</sup> comprise Task

Force Orion and ran much of the training at Fort Drum and provided critical support in conjunction with the Rainbow Division's 42<sup>nd</sup> Training and Evaluation Battalion.



The momentum at Fort Drum was quickly built as troops began each day with Physical Training, then pushed to accomplish as much as possible during a long day and finish off in the evening with briefings and leader meetings. Every duty day lasted beyond 16 hours. To meet pre-mobilization goals, emphasis has been placed on completing key individual objectives ranging from briefings, warrior tasks and weapons qualifications. Time was the resource in shortest supply.

Troops completed dozens of individual and warrior tasks during the period. Hundreds of troops underwent special training, some of which included the use of electronic simulation systems. The Call for Fire Trainer, GUARD-FIST, the Humvee Egress Assistance Trainer (HEAT), the Electronic Skills Trainer 2000 and the Virtual Combat Convoy Trainer (VCCT) were used to help teach Soldiers critical skills needed for the combat theater.

More than 150 training slots for the four-day Combat Life Saver Course and more than 300 Task Force personnel underwent three days of training in the Blue Force Tracker system. Units rotated out to the field to conduct day and night live fire for both the M4A1 Rifle and M9 Pistol. Members of the

101<sup>st</sup> Cavalry and the 427<sup>th</sup> Brigade Support Battalion trained in convoy and tactical movement.

Three days before the end of the tour, the brigade executed a 4 and half mile formation march with each Soldier outfitted with their kevlar helmet, body armor and weapon. It began at 5 a.m. and lasted past 6:15 in the dark and in a light but steady rain. Troops cleaned up, ate chow and got back in the training.

Following federal call up in January 2008, the 27<sup>th</sup> will undergo additional post-mobilization training to complete its preparations and validation for deployment to the combat theater. Nearly two months of such training has already been planned.



“We are preparing for the combat zone in deliberate steps,” said Command Sergeant Major David Piwowarski, the brigade's senior non-commissioned officer. A key part of his job is to ensure standards are met, discipline is sustained and to advise and assist the commander with the challenge of preparing the task force for war. “This is a good team with an important mission but with a distance to go still ahead,” he said. “We must and will keep our focus and we will build in our intensity with each step forward. We haven't reached peak yet, but we will,” he added.

### Special Education and Guidance

Special presentations were made to officers and non commissioned officers through the Leadership Development and Education for Sustained Peace program. The instruction was held at Fort Drum's Battle Command Simulator Center. A retired U.S. State Department ambassador, a first secretary from the Afghan Embassy in Washington, D.C., retired

*(Continued on page 5)*

## Brigade Completes Three-Week Training at Fort Drum

military leaders from the U.S., Canada and Great Britain and other subject matter experts delivered executive seminars to an attentive audience that packed the After Action Review room and spilled over to another classroom.

Subjects included Afghan history, culture, religion, the drug trade, the Taliban and other topics. Leaders from the Oregon Guard's 41<sup>st</sup> Brigade and the South Carolina's 218<sup>th</sup> Brigade presently in Afghanistan delivered special presentations focused on the mission and the latest developments on the ground. They remained for a brigade headquarters command post exercise at the "Sim-Center" at the end of the second week of training.

### Special Ceremony on Day 1

On the first day of training, when units were beginning to travel to Fort Drum, a special ceremony was held at the brigade headquarters in Syracuse. The ceremony recognized several members of the brigade who had served in Afghanistan the previous year as part of an Embedded Training Team.



Bronze Star medals were presented to several Soldiers by the commander of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division in front of a formation of troops from the brigade headquarters and 427<sup>th</sup> Support Battalion. Family and friends of the honored were on hand along with local officials. Press attended to cover the ceremony as well as the departure of troops for training at Fort Drum.

The 27<sup>th</sup> Brigade Afghan National Army Embedded Training Team was a specialized detachment of officers and enlisted Soldiers of the New York National Guard that mobilized and deployed in 2006 to train, mentor and advise an in-

fantry force of the Afghan National Army.

The unit was mobilized in February 2006 and completed nearly three months of training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi before it was shipped into the combat theater and employed under the command of Oregon's 41<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat.

The unit arrived in Afghanistan in May 2006 and, in addition to living with and leading training for the Afghan forces, frequently engaged in combat operations along side them against attacking elements of the Taliban. During their time in the combat zone, members of the team encountered Improvised Explosive Devices, participated in raids to capture weapons caches, negotiated narrow mountain passages in unarmored humvees, exchanged fire with dug in enemy forces and rendered emergency first aid to wounded Afghan and U.S. personnel.

The team returned home in May 2007. The ceremony in Syracuse marked the Soldiers release from active duty and reunion with family, friends and civilian employers even as other Soldiers of the 27<sup>th</sup> were preparing for their future mission.

### Just the Latest Mission

The planned call up of the 27<sup>th</sup> BCT is the latest in the ongoing series of deployments of the New York Army National Guard for the Global War on Terror.

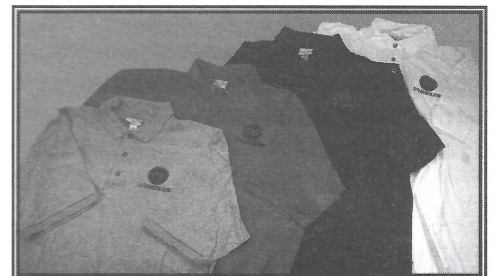
More than 6,000 members of the New York Army National Guard have been called to federal active duty for service mostly in Iraq or Afghanistan since 2003. Deployment levels peaked in 2004, when more than 3,500 troops assigned to nearly a dozen different units were on duty.

About 300 New York National Guard Soldiers are presently serving on active duty. Two military police units, a personnel services detachment and a medical company have returned home from serving in Iraq over the last few months. More call ups are expected for other units in the months ahead.

## The Quartermaster's Corner

Dear Friends,

There's still time to order your collectibles in time for the holiday season! The 27<sup>th</sup> Division Association Store has lots of new collectibles and we're adding to the store everyday. I will be coming out with a catalog in the near future. If you are interested in one please email, mail, or call me to request a catalog. Each will come with an order sheet. Remember, you can see all of the 27<sup>th</sup> Division Association items at the online store, [www.27thinfantry.com](http://www.27thinfantry.com). Shipping costs have increased to \$7.00 per item as the store will be using FedEx for shipping. If you have any questions or request e-mail me at [rollin.skellington@us.army.mil](mailto:rollin.skellington@us.army.mil) or call me at 315-254-9327.



**READY TO ORDER?**

See the order form on  
page #11

# - MAILBAG -

## -TAPS-

### John E Pfaff

Cpt. Pfaff formerly of Endicott, NY passed away 8 October 2007 at his home in Melbourne, Fl.. He served 28 years in the NYARNG - the 108th Inf. Bn, the 175th Armd. Bn, 27th Division. and after reorganization the 204th Engineer Bn. He is survived by his wife, Jeanette, a daughter, Karen, a son Edison, and 4 grandchildren

### Howard G. Garrison

Major General Howard G. Garrison passed away on September 14, 2007 at the age of 86 after a lengthy illness. The retired General was born in Vestal Center, New York and maintained his home in Johnson City, NY for 68 years.

MG Garrison was a decorated combat veteran with Merrill's Marauders and fought in Burma at the battle of Myitkyna. After the war he had two concurrent careers, one as a senior manager with the IBM Corporation and another as a continuing career with the Army National Guard. He rose to the rank of Major General in command of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division. His military career lasted 43 years until he retired in 1978. He was a member of the Airborne Association, the VFW, American Legion and the Ends of the Earth Society.

He was preceded in death by his wife of 59 years, Helen Cannon Garrison, his sister, Lee Garrison and brother Frank Garrison. He is survived by his son Steve Garrison of Glencoe, his grandchildren, Scott Garrison of Atlanta, GA and Laura Brook of Alpharetta Georgia, his great-grandchild, Alexandre Boulet and numerous nieces, nephews and friends. A true hero to his family and friends, his generous nature, dignity and love of family and friends will always be remembered by those who knew him and loved him.

-----  
Alexander H Shirrefs,  
July 29, 2007  
-----

Harold Turax, January 13, 2007,  
Crawfordville, Indiana  
-----

Joseph Tessitore, March 10, 2007,  
Oneonta, New York  
-----

## -Memorial Fund-

\$20 for the men of "G" Company  
-----

\$20 In memory of 1LT John  
Donnelly—104th FA  
-----

\$20 In memory of BG Richard  
Fidurski—204th EN  
-----

\$20 In memory of MSG Allen Roberts-  
204th EN  
-----

\$10 From LTC Clevelan in memory of  
Richard Fidurski  
-----

\$10 From Ann Lipka in memory of her  
husband, Ed Lipka  
-----

\$10 From Mary May in loving memory  
of her husband, Will Sluck  
-----

\$10.00 in memory of SSG Alexander H  
Shirrefs  
-----

\$25.00 on behalf of Richard Sloan,  
102<sup>nd</sup> Quartermaster Rgt  
-----

\$20 From Matt Garbett  
\$15 From Mary Cavallaro  
\$10 From Robert Barton  
\$10 Stan Gardner  
\$10 From DeWitt Schell  
\$10 From Margaret Tyarks

## -Request for Info-

To whom it may concern,

I am trying to search out the chronological order of my father's (George Albert Spears) military

service during WWII. He served from January 22, 1941 to October 4, 1945 with the 27th Division in the Western Pacific. He was assigned to the Service Battery, 106th FA BN as a machine gunner. We understand that after Basic Training he was posted at Fort Ord, California for 8 months. What we'd like to know is when he shipped to Hawaii and any information about what islands he fought on.

Any help is appreciated.

Lorna Spears Coats  
6221 Cootshill Rd.  
Hornell, NY 14843  
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To whom it may concern,  
I am trying to gather information about my father's service in WWII. He was part of the 105th IN from October, 1940 to August, 1945. Any help concerning his unit's history would be appreciated.

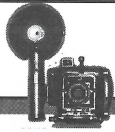
Harold Stewart  
17 Doris Lane  
P.O. Box 64  
East Parsonsfield, Me 04028-0064  
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Dear Orion Veterans,  
I recently found out that my father, Lysias Brown Chilton, served with the 106th IN, 27th DIV in the Pacific from April 1944 to August 1945. His separation papers list him as a scout for the Headquarters Company.

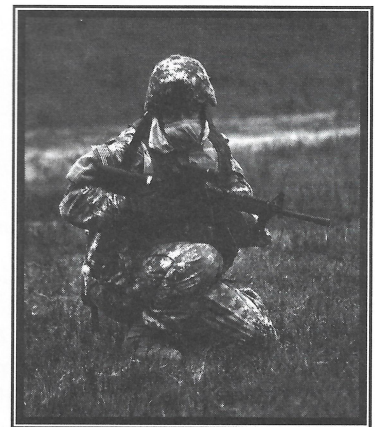
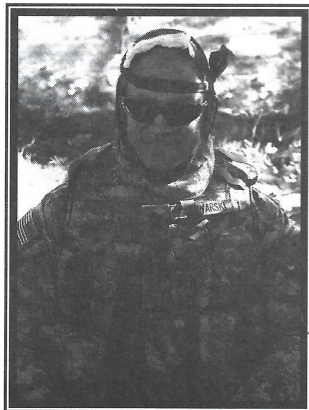
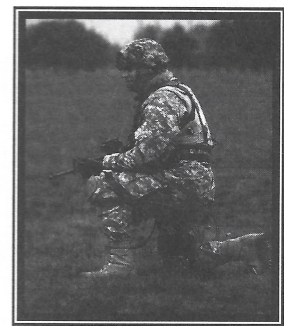
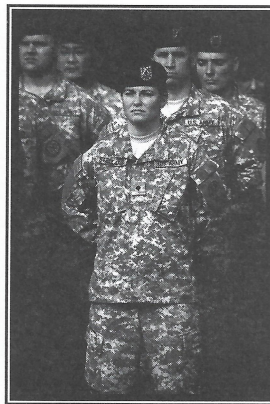
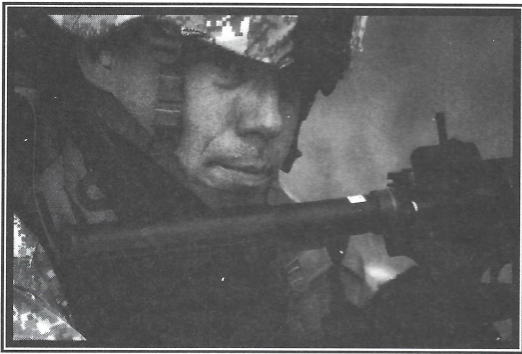
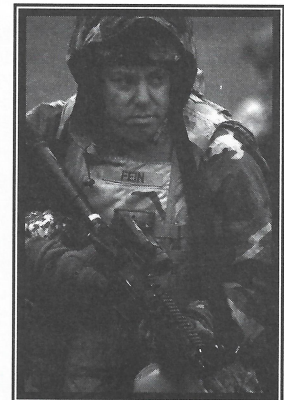
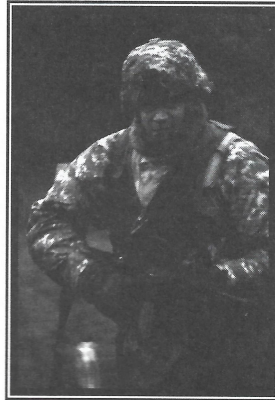
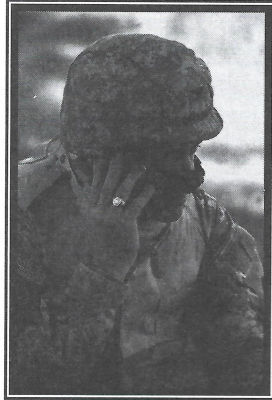
If possible, I'd like to find out if any Association members knew him.

I can be reached via mail:

Chris Chilton  
4408 Fair Creek Terrace  
Aledo, Texas 76008  
817-560-4229  
Chris\_Chilton@Charter.Net



# THE SHUTTERBUG PAGE



Have a picture you want to submit for the Shutterbug Page? Mail a copy of the photo to the Editor's Home address (See: Masthead) or E-Mail a scanned copy to the Editor at: [Robert.romano@us.army.mil](mailto:Robert.romano@us.army.mil)

## BUILDING 842

We were born just before the start of World War II. Beginning just after Labor Day, 1941, thousands of workers came to this area to build us and all of the other buildings that would become, Camp Pine. We were created from the very trees that gave this place its name. As the forests were cleared, we took shape – all 240 of us. We sheltered the workers that first harsh winter but soon with the country at war, the first soldiers arrived and would be taken under our care. The 5<sup>th</sup> Armored Division trained here – and would be the first to cross into Germany. The 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry – National Guardsmen from the Southwest, would land in Sicily and fight their way to Germany. The 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division would fight with General Patton and relieve the 101<sup>st</sup> at Bastogne.

The name of our home would change in 1951 to Fort Drum but our task and purpose remained the same: to protect the soldiers who trained here, regardless of rank or station from the elements. We would be their new homes for as long as they remained.

Some would curse us, for our accommodations are Spartan. They would shake their heads at their foul luck.

They would remark on our drafty windows in the winter or the heat that our walls held on to in the summer. Our stairs were creaky and the floors would echo any sound made – even if someone was trying not to wake his fellow soldiers with loud footsteps. Our paint seems to always be peeling. Our latrines have always been too small. But, most soldiers would make do, and not complain too much even if our plumbing didn't always work as well as expected or if our furnaces were too hot or too cold.



Within our walls we have witnessed every kind of human emotion. The nervous excitement of being in a new place as the soldiers first arrived; the sadness of someone who has received a bad letter from home; the common fear from all who were getting ready to deploy; the solitary guilt of some who returned but left friends behind; embarrassment from a recruit who has been chided by his NCO at our front steps, the burden of concern from a young Company Commander sitting alone in the end offices; the laughter through our bays as stories from that day of training are told; pride from a unit as deserving soldiers are promoted; and even melancholy smiles from those who appreciated what we gave them as they boarded a bus for the last time.

In the end, sooner or later, we gave every soldier a feeling of security. At midnight on a fall day, marching back in the rain – cold, wet and weary – regardless of the curses thrown at us previously, we were now a safe haven. Shelter from the cold; a place to rest and recover - no matter how creaky our stairs or ugly our paint.

To this day, we still serve these soldiers. Mostly National Guard and Reservists now, but we're still standing tall. Ready to do our job for the grandchildren, maybe even great-grandchildren of the first soldiers who walked through our doors.

But, all this is forgotten or disregarded by bureaucrats a thousand miles away. They have deemed us unworthy of continuing our service. They have decreed that to make way for something new, something old must be destroyed. We are old, and beginning next year, we will be "decommissioned". (A polite way of saying, torn down, razed, destroyed.) Nothing new will be built on our remains. The plan is to allow the ground to lie fallow. With hope, the pines will return, even if we never will.

*(Editor's note: As of January 30, 2008, the entire 700 & 800 blocks of "Old Post" at Fort Drum will be decommissioned and razed. With this action, sixty plus years of history will be destroyed.)*

## The Christmas Truce of 1914

On Christmas Eve in the winter of 1914, during a war that took eight and a half million souls, a most unusual event took place on the battlefields of Flanders. The British had been in a fierce battle with the Germans, and both sides were dug in and resolute, holed-up in deep, mud-filled trenches that seemed to stretch all the way to Hell. All about them were coldness and dark, the memories of fallen comrades, and the fears of battles to come.

We can't be sure how it started. But we do know that something that night inspired the German troops to put small Christmas trees, lit with candles, outside of their trenches. Then, they began to sing. "Stille Nacht! Heil'ge Nacht! Alles schläft, einsam wacht ..."

The British heard the singing and were confused. Could - could the Germans be singing "Silent Night"? They looked across the way, over the icy "no man's land" that separated them from their enemy, and saw the golden fire of candles lighting up trees like winter fireflies. How strange and lovely it must've been to see such a thing in the middle of a moonlit, bloodied battlefield! Through the wintry darkness shone a symbol of Christ!

One of the British soldiers begin to sing in response, soon enough, the Germans across the way could clearly hear their enemy singing the words of a different carol, an English one: "The first Noel, the angels did say ..."

The Germans began to sing a third carol, "O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum..." - to which the British replied with "Adeste Fideles."

Then the Germans put up signs in fractured English: "YOU NO SHOOT, WE NO SHOOT". Some British units improvised 'MERRY CHRISTMAS' banners and waited for a response. More placards on both sides popped up. The Germans proposed a Christmas truce, and, all along the miles of trenches, the British troops accepted. In a few places, allied



troops fired at the Germans as they climbed out of their trenches, but the Germans were persistent and Christmas would be celebrated even under the threat of impending death.

Soldiers left their trenches, meeting in the middle, in that frosty "No Man's Land," to shake hands. The first order of business was to bury the dead who had been previously unreachable because of the conflict. Then they made gifts of the things sent from home -- chocolate cake, plum puddings, cognac, coffee, butter-scotches, tobacco, postcards. In a few places along the trenches, soldiers exchanged rifles for soccer balls and began to play games. (The British diarists will say that they one 3-2, while at least one German account states it was 3-2 in favor of "Fritz".)

In at least one account, a German barber offered free haircuts to British troops.

It didn't last forever. In fact, some of the generals didn't like it at all and commanded their troops to resume shooting at each other. After all, they were in a war. Soldiers eventually did resume shooting at each other -- but only after a few days of wasting rounds of ammunition shooting at stars in the sky instead of at soldiers in the opposing army across the field.

For a few precious moments there was peace on earth, and all because men's hearts were filled with the spirit of peace. These men, however briefly, embraced the words, "Peace on Earth, goodwill to men."



### **"Belleau Wood"**

***Oh, the snowflakes fell in silence  
Over Belleau Wood that night  
For a Christmas truce had been declared  
By both sides of the fight  
As we lay there in our trenches  
The silence broke in two  
By a German soldier singing  
A song that we all knew***

***Though I did not know the language  
The song was "Silent Night"***

***Then I heard my buddy whisper,  
"All is calm and all is bright"  
Then the fear and doubt surrounded me  
'Cause I'd die if I was wrong  
But I stood up in my trench  
And I began to sing along***

***Then across the frozen battlefield  
Another's voice joined in  
Until one by one each man became  
A singer of the hymn***

***Then I thought that I was dreaming  
For right there in my sight  
Stood the German soldier  
'Neath the falling flakes of white  
And he raised his hand and smiled at me  
As if he seemed to say  
Here's hoping we both live  
To see us find a better way***

***Then the devil's clock struck midnight  
And the skies lit up again  
And the battlefield where heaven stood  
Was blown to hell again***

***But for just one fleeting moment  
The answer seemed so clear  
Heaven's not beyond the clouds  
It's just beyond the fear***

***No, heaven's not beyond the clouds  
It's for us to find it here***

## Afghanistan: An Introduction

Afġānistān, officially the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is a landlocked country that is located in the heart of Asia. It is variously designated as located geographically within Central Asia, the Middle East, or South Asia. It has religious, ethno-linguistic, and geographic links with most of its neighbors. It is bordered by Pakistan in the south and east, Iran in the south and west, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the north, and China in the far northeast. The name Afghanistan means the "Land of Afghans." Afghanistan is a culturally mixed nation, a crossroads between the East and the West, and has been an ancient focal point of trade and migration. It has an important geostrategic location, connecting South Asia, Central Asia and Southwest Asia. During its long history, the land has seen various invaders and conquerors, while on the other hand, local entities invaded the surrounding vast regions to form empires to themselves. Ahmad Shah Durrani created a large empire in the middle of the eighteenth century, with its capital at Kandahar. Subsequently, most of its territories were ceded to former neighboring countries. In the 19th century, Afghanistan became a buffer state in "The Great Game" played between the British Indian Empire and Russian Empire. On August 19, 1919, following the third Anglo-Afghan war, the country regained full independence from the United Kingdom over its foreign affairs. Since the late 1970s, Afghanistan has suffered continuous and brutal civil war, which included foreign interventions in the form of the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the 2001 US invasion of

Afghanistan in which the ruling Taliban government was toppled. In December 2001, the United Nations Security Council authorized the creation of an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). This force, composed of NATO troops, has been involved in assisting the government of President

refusing to hand over Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaida followers. The US made a common cause with the former Afghan Mujahideen to achieve its ends. In December of the same year, leaders of the former Afghan Mujahideen groups and diaspora met in Germany, and agreed on a plan for the formulation of a new democratic government that resulted in the inauguration of Hamid Karzai, an ethnic Pashtun from the southern city of Kandahar, as Chairman of the Afghan Interim Authority.

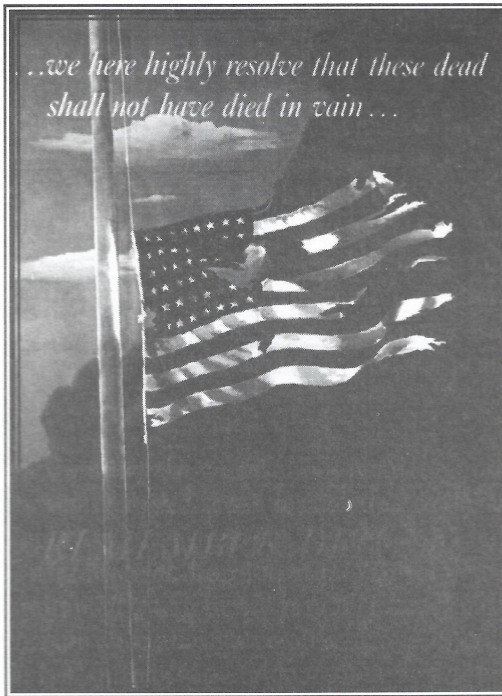
After a nationwide Loya Jirga in 2002 Karzai was chosen by the representatives to assume the title as Interim President of Afghanistan. In 2003, the country convened a Constitutional Loya Jirga (Council of Elders) and a new constitution was ratified in January 2004. Following an election in October 2004, Hamid Karzai won and became the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Legislative elections were held in September 2005. The National Assembly – the first freely elected legislature in Afghanistan since 1973 – sat in December 2005, and was noteworthy for the inclusion of women as voters, candidates, and elected members.

As the country continues to rebuild and recover, it is still struggling against poverty, poor infrastructure, large concentration of land mines and other unexploded ordnance on earth, as well as a huge illegal poppy cultivation and opium trade. Afghanistan also remains subject to occasionally violent political jockeying. The country continues to grapple with the Taliban insurgency, the threat of attacks from a few remaining al Qaeda, and instability, particularly in the north, caused by the remaining few semi-independent warlords.



Hamid Karzai in establishing authority across the nation. In 2005, the United States and Afghanistan signed a strategic partnership agreement committing both nations to a long-term relationship. In the meantime, about 40 billion US dollars have also been provided by the international community for the reconstruction of the country. Following the September 11, 2001 attacks the United States launched Operation Enduring Freedom, a military campaign to destroy the al-Qaeda terrorist training camps inside Afghanistan. The US military also threatened to overthrow the Taliban government for

*Remember:  
December 7, 1941 -- a date which  
will live in infamy*



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