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*Hi John*  
 Hello, Helpmates, all,

At this moment, this is probably the hardest job I have had since I have taken over the publication of the newsletter. As you may know, our trusty copier went south, and has remained dead after the trip. It stopped working while I was printing the last issue, and I had to have the issue copied commercially, at great cost. I will not be able to continue having it copied at the local Kinko store, because it costs nearly \$140 to do a single issue. I have the dough to do this for 3 issues, and that is what I will be doing, unless things change. I have several lines in the water, and I haven't given up, but things are more tenuous than at any other time I can remember. But on to other topics. Damn those torpedoes.

Back to more pleasant days. Took my usual trip to Florida which included most of January, and the early week in February. Had a little of my usual problem area at the Moon Lake property, and got that cleared up some - again. I saw Ray and Marge for a few minutes, then got back to the Auburndale area. Jeep had his family with him, so we didn't get to make China Jade, and then didn't get to see him later. We usually try to catch one visit to the old den of calories, but not this time.

Then over to the condo to see over, not over-see, the repairs on the hurricane damage. I was surprised to find that the people involved were taking care of other damaged property, so I had to get in line. This took about 2 weeks, and I had a couple from St. Louis over for 2 or 3 days. We took in the usual eating spots, went to the umpire school to see our St. Louis umpire, and enjoyed nearly a full day watching the budding officials learn the tricks of the trade. It was good to see Rich Reiker again, and he was happy to show us the school, and it's 180- students. He was going back to St. Louis for some

family function or other, so we didn't plan any more visits to his facility. I was sort of glad that we missed the rhubarb drills they have in the advanced training. Last year we hit that day, and the language was fouler than foul.

When my company left, I fiddled around the place, washed windows, fixed screens, cleaned the place up some, and filled my stomach with nasty calories. I went to see one of the Helpmates, George Ford, who lives just up the beach from my town, but it takes about 15 miles to get there, because they do not have a bridge from our island, to theirs. It is only about 300 or 400 feet between, but neither of the communities want the added traffic that a connection would invariably foster. George has had some medical problems, and requires some extra rest, but is doing OK generally. I was glad to have seen him, because I have not made contact with them at all before. I hope they will be available next year, and I will sure try to see them.

Finally got the painters into the action, and they fixed the paint problems which were in evidence after Irene. They got the work done before my renter showed up on Feb. 1, and I was sure glad to get that done. The only rental we have there was a good friend of Babe's and she will be allowed to use the place as long as she wishes.

Watched a great football game while at the condo. Some upstart team, the St. Louis Rams were matched against a rival team from Tennessee, and just barely squeaked thru to win the Super Bowl. It was a poorly played game, if past history were concerned, but I was glad for the outcome. St. Louis had a fabulous sport year in 1999. What with McGwire, the Rams and a good hockey season, they brought back the sports atmosphere always present there.

When I left New Smyrna Beach I went by to see my relatives in Titusville, and sat thru one of the shuttle aborts on the highway which is in sight of the launch pad (still about 14 miles away from the site). Saw my niece, her mother and brother (brother Rick's family), another brother and his group, and talked with still one more of my brothers who lives in Sebring. Then to Auburndale, and a day or two with my brother Gene.

Visited for a few days in the Riverview area and got to see George and Dorothy Ralcewich and Mel and Betty Donaldson. We had a few hundred hands of our favorite card game, and the Florida bunch relieved me of some of the dirty St. Louis money. As I left the area I drove down to Arcadia to see my brother-in-law who stays in that town thru the winter. His new wife was at home when I arrived, and in about 5 minutes a call came from Steve who was at a garage in town with a disabled car. I drove to get him, we had lunch and a visit, then I took both of them back to the garage where a new alternator had been installed, at the usual cost in Florida, \$200-. It was good to see Steve, but Babe's wishes would have been to get out, so I went.

But not without problems. I was going back to brother Gene's, when a loud bang rang thru the area, and I didn't see any glass shattering, or any problems with the car, but I pulled into a nearby filling station to look around. Not a thing was out of place, so I got back into the car, and sped back north. Got to Auburndale OK, and still did not know what hit me. But I did the next AM. The passenger side rear tire was flatter than a pancake on the bottom side, and I had to get a new tire. Some of the cords had torn loose in about a dozen places. A new tire fixed that, hopefully, so I continued my stay in Auburndale. The next day, I went back to the west coast, checked on the work that should have been accomplished, and generally wasted a day doing nothing. I get used to that while I am in Florida. On Thursday, Feb. 3, my very own 77th birthday, a few of us got into gear, and met at the Cracker Barrel on the 175 near Bradenton. Moe Sweetgall, the Donaldsons, the Ralcewiches, and the birth-

day boy had a leisurely lunch, a nice visit, and built a few more memory strands in our loaded brains. Janet was at a book review, Ray and Marge were getting over a sudden flu-like thing, and the rest of the group had other jobs or doctor visits, and couldn't come. But we were glad to have made it, and we parted company after the visit.

Went back to Auburndale, and then returned to St. Louis on Saturday, Feb. 5.

Not much new here. I found a card from the Hartley's in the mail, and am sorry to have not noted this in the last issue. Not another thing from the Helpmates, so have no other news to give you.

Since then I have been working to get another copier, and no luck so far. The mechanic thought that he might be able to find the part in one of the units probably in their store, but that hasn't happened yet. I have tried to talk to the boss about working something out, but he is very busy, and I suspect we are not foremost in his mind. Patience, JB. The world took 7 days to complete.

We have been trying to get my house up to snuff for marketing. As I mentioned earlier, we removed 40 cubic yards of clutter which had been built up in the many years we were here. I still had many things to toss, but that is easy in the hands of son John Jr. He picks something up, looks at it, and tosses it. Now it may shine like a diamond, but he throws it, then he wonders if it were valuable. Well, he and the kids had all gotten together while I was away, and painted about everything in the house. Then he ripped up the carpeting in the basement, had the floor sealed, cleaned and had new carpeting installed. The place looked super, for sure, until I came downstairs this very morning, and found a puddle of water in the middle of the new carpeted floor. It rained very hard last night, and the drains backed up, and a puddle of water located itself in the middle of the floor. I started the shopvac, sucked up as much of the water as possible, and called the roter people to run their machine down the sewer pipes to remove any debris which could have obstructed the drainage. I should have guessed that it was a general problem when the receptionist at the store told me that the

people would be by later in the day, about 5 PM. Well, it didn't happen, I am probably on the list for tomorrow, but thousands of the folks in our fair town had the same problem as I had. It rained about 2 inches, and it really came down hard. Hope that is all, tho. I get suspicious when nature turns the tables on us.

The plumber came this AM, and as I suspected, the lateral drain had filled up with rust and other junk, and had become stopped up. He rooted it out, and it drained fine afterwards, so I hope the problem is behind me.

Son Dan is in Cleveland, son is in a hockey tournament, and son John is in Florida with 5 or 6 of his buddies, golfing this next week. John makes this trip every year, and they go all around the deep south, hitting the various courses. They have a good time, until it rains. A year or so back they played 1 round, and dodged raindrops the rest of the week. No more golfing in the Biloxi area for them.

Now some news about the reunion. I have made contact with one of the operators in the Knoxville area, and he will be able to furnish us a 28 seat motor coach for a day for \$250. That is a bargain, but the amount of walking still required would prevent several of the group seeing the best of what is there. So I have asked Tom Allen to try to get us a spot in Nashville, on the same week-end. He is from Tennessee, before coming here, and he also feels that the move would be wise, and will try to get a spot in that music town which will meet our needs. The prices in Knoxville were in the mid \$60 range, and probably could have been pared a little lower, but he thinks we can get good accommodations somewhere in the \$55 - \$59 range. He will try, and I will try to work with that in mind. The location is super, and there is a lot to do and to see in the region, and I will hope that we can work out something there. The days of good, and inexpensive, locations are about over, I fear. The dates chosen are either not available, or are premium ones, or whatever else they can manufacture on short notice. I am going to work on the 24 - 27 August weekend, so if this is not available to you, please let me know soon. I am not sure that the location will be available, at that time, but we can try.

Well, I finally got a call thru to the owner of

the business machine outlet, and he is going to try to get something which we can call our own. He is to get back with me, so I will have lots of time to report back. The kitty has just over \$400 in it, so we can hopefully get some used equipment which can serve our purpose. I will report back to you when I know something.

One of the 283rd FA Bn members is still in touch with me, and he sent me a clipping from a local newspaper about one of our own. Richard Fowler, Drums, Pa. Has died after a long illness in that area. I will try to place the clip in this issue, but it is some light, so may not come out just right. I do not know what Dick did in the 284th, but maybe one of the members will let me know, and I can pass it on.

Robert Pensock is the 283rd member, and he tells me that he sees Abe Plotkin on occasion, and Abe looks great. I haven't heard from Abe for a while, so maybe this will jiggle a response from Scranton. Robert enjoys hearing from us via the Bulletin, belongs to, and is active in, about 20 veteran's groups, and is kept quite busy. Always good to hear from you, Robert. The bulletins keep rolling, but the copier does not. Thank you very much for the kitty fodder. It will help.

Talked with Millie Nelson the other day. She had left a message on my recorder, and she tells me that the kids had made a trip to Florida possible for her, and that she would be in the southwestern coast. She intends meeting with any of the Helpmates who could make it, and I sent her a roster so that she could look for someone there. Good luck, Millie. Keep active with us, and get to meet some of our very active widows. And thank you for the info concerning Bill's funeral. I will place it in this issue if space is available.

I think I had better get this on the way. I may be able to give you some info on a copier, but if not, it will await the next issue. There is not much mail coming in, and it is hard to keep the pages full if no one contributes.

And good news it is. The person who got me the last copier has located one which is older, but which we can afford. It takes the kitty down a lot, of course, but it seems to be one which we can live with. It has the advantage of

being a "duplex" type, that is, it copies both sides of the paper at one pass, but it is not able to copy colors. We can live with that, but the kitty will have to get some fodder before too long, or slowville again.

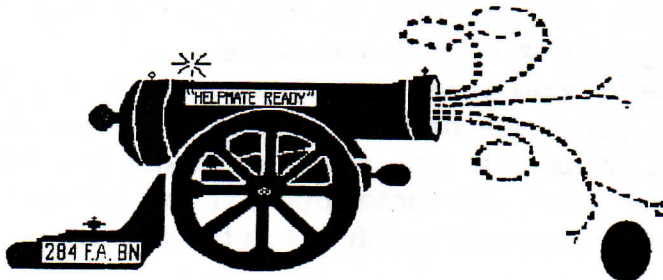
Now for some bad news. Got a phone call from Warren Shields with info that Don Rigney had died on March 4. Must have been sudden, and Warren is going to send me the info to include in this issue. That is a shame, because he had just started coming to our gatherings, and enjoyed them so much. I will send our regrets to Millie, and include a small memorial in our behalf. All of the group will join me in expressing our sincerest sympathy for Don's family.

I am in touch with a Nashville facility in which to have our 2000 Reunion. We are not at the final stages, but things look good for the time being. I am going to put Nashville on our Bulletin for the 2000 locate. Hope things work out. There are lots of things to do there, and we will not have the physical exertion which I felt the Knoxville locate would require. Anyhow, plan the last week-end of August as our meeting time for this year. I will do my best to get it locked down before next issue.

I am in touch with John Wasilewski quite a lot lately, and he is trying to get us a web page on the internet. I will keep you posted as to this adventure, and hope that those of you who have net locates will avail yourselves of this service.

And now, in spite of all of our problems, this issue is going to bed. Sorry for the delays, but be glad that we will still be able to kick out an issue or so of the bulletin. Take care of yourselves, and do write the Message Center with news.

As ever,  
JBS



In Memory of  
"Bill"  
WILFRED A. NELSON  
Woodhull, Illinois  
Born  
MARCH 13, 1925, Galesburg, Illinois  
Died  
NOVEMBER 28, 1999, LaSalle, Illinois  
Age 74 Years  
Services  
DECEMBER 1, 1999 - 2:00 p.m.  
Grace Lutheran Church, Ophiem, Illinois  
Clergy: Rev. Michael Massa  
Soloist: Clair Colburn  
Organist: Elizabeth Robinson  
Bearers  
Roger Norberg Don Stromquist  
Carl Lovdahl Vern Wilson  
Eldon Poppy Carl Johnson  
Honorary Bearers  
Bill Besse Don Gould Jim Peterson  
Interment: Grace Lutheran Cemetery  
Military Rites:  
Ophiem American Legion #1077  
In Charge of Service  
Peterson Wallin Knox : Alpha and Woodhull

*Just wanted to say heartfelt  
Thank you for the Memorial  
from "Helpmate".  
Slow in getting this sent.  
Went to Son Harry's in Wash.  
for 4 mos. Came home, have  
had the flu. No things are  
as a stand still. As you well  
know, losing a loved one is a  
difficult task. Eunice Gilbert  
tells me it takes time. She is  
such a sweet one.  
Enclosing a check for "Helpmate"  
from Family Choice's Memorial.  
Good to be left on the waiting  
list for the Newsletter.  
You do a great job with it.  
Sending wishes for a  
Blessed & Happy 2000 to all  
Helpmate & their families  
Sincerely  
Millie Nelson  
Family*



**Donald Ray Rigney**

**DONALD RAY RIGNEY**, 76, of Huntington, WV, passed away Sunday at his residence. Funeral services will be conducted by Dr. Terrell Bradley and Reverend Peter Sierson at 11:00 AM on Tuesday, March 7 at **Beard Mortuary**. Burial will follow in Woodmere Memorial Park with full military honor by VFW Post 9738. He served with the U. S. Army in Europe during World War II. He was employed with the Chesapeake & Potomac Telephone Company for 37 years and retired from AT&T. He was a member of Highlawn Baptist Church and a past member of their building committee and trustee board. He was a Little League Coach with Steelworkers Local 37 and an avid Marshall fan. He was born July 1, 1923, a son of the late Owen and Mabel Rigney. He was preceded in death by three sisters, Rose Marie, Betty and Maxine. He is survived by his wife of 56 years, Zelma Watts Rigney. He is also survived by a daughter and her husband, Sharon and Hank Blume of Huntington; two sons and their wives, Michael and Nancy Rigney of Huntington, and Mark and Tammy Rigney of Russells Point, OH; two brothers, Marshall Rigney of Baltimore, MD and Chester Rigney of Huntington; three grandsons, Michael Todd, Andrew Alan, and Donald Alan; and one granddaughter, Tonya Gregory. Friends may call from 6-8 p.m. Monday at the funeral home.

*Look 3 more this issue*

*Good hearing from you on E-mail*

**Richard L. Fowler**

Richard L. Fowler, 89, of Old Turnpike Road, Drums, died Wednesday morning at Hazleton-St. Joseph Medical Center following a lengthy illness.

Born in Hazleton Sept. 15, 1910, he was the son of the late Richard D. and Mary E. (Kauffman) Fowler. He spent the past 50 years in Drums after moving from Hazleton.

He served in the Army during World War II and owned the former Log Cabin Restaurant in Drums before retiring.

He was a member of the Disabled American Veterans.

Preceding him in death, in addition to his parents, were his wife, the former Margaret Hackett, in 1970; brother, Harry; and sisters, Ada Price, Myrtle Messinger, Eva Thompson, Edith O'Donnell, Emily Bitto-roff, Estell Lavoie and Dora Gernhart.

Surviving is a son, Richard J., Drums.

The funeral will be held at 9 a.m. Saturday from the Mark S. Harman Funeral Home (east), Butler Drive, Drums. The Rev. William Fairchild will officiate.

Burial will be in Calvary Cemetery, Drums.

Friends may call at the funeral home on Friday from 2 to 4 and 7 to 9 p.m.

**Wilfred 'Bill' Nelson**

Wilfred A. "Bill" Nelson, 74, Woodhull, died Sunday, Nov. 28, 1999, at LaSalle, Ill., Veterans Home, after a long illness.



Services are 2 p.m. Wednesday at Grace Lutheran Church, Ophiem, where he was a member. Rev. Michael Massa will officiate. Burial is in Grace Lutheran Cemetery.

Visitation is 5 to 8 p.m. Tuesday

at Peterson-Wallin-Knox Funeral Home. Alpha. Memorials to Grace Lutheran Church or Illinois Valley of Hospice, Peru, Ill.

Wilfred A. Nelson was born March 13, 1925, in Galesburg, son of Wilfred J. and Ruth Lund Nelson. He married Millie Farr Aug. 23, 1947, in Rock Island.

He graduated from Oxford Township High School, Alpa, in 1942. He was partner/owner of the W.J. Nelson & Sons Inc., Ophiem. He was a former church council member, charter member of American Legion 1077, Ophiem, past president Illinois Farm Equipment Dealers Association and former member of Oxford Township/Ophiem Fire Dept.

He was a U.S. Army WWII veteran. July 1943 to January 1946 serving in Northern France, Ardennes, Rhineland, Central Europe. He received the European-African-Middle Eastern Theater Ribbon with four Bronze Battle Stars.

Bill enjoyed boating and fishing with family and friends. He loved his family and he was dearly loved by them.

Survivors include his wife; son and daughter-in-law, Garry and Jacque Nelson, Farmington Hills, Mich.; grandchildren, Aaron, Lee and Laura; sister and brother-in-law, Marilyn and Jack Dorman, Scottsdale, Ariz.; sister, Inez Frankhouse, Albuquerque; sister, Pat Nelson, Santa Monica, Calif.; brother and sister-in-law, Dick and Joann Nelson, Ophiem; and nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents and son, Michael.

**Joseph Digirolamo**

**WOOD RIVER** — Joseph Digirolamo, 75, died at 8:46 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 26, 2000, at Wood River Township Hospital.

Born March 15, 1924, in Collinsville, he was a son of the late Sam and Veronica (DiMaio) Digirolamo.

He was a World War II U.S. Army veteran who worked many years for Granite City Steel and retired. He was a member of the Wood River VFW #2869 and the Wood River Knights of Columbus.

On Sept 9, 1950, he married the former Jean Guarino, and she survives.

Surviving are two daughters and sons-in-law, Joann and Rick Orr of Geff and Nancy and Christopher Chestley of Collinsville; a son, Sam Digirolamo of Wood River; and four grandchildren, Kristi and Casey Orr and Nicholas and Curtis Chestley.

Three brothers, Hank, Phil and Alex Digirolamo, and a sister, Enza Alleria, preceded him in death.

Visitation will from 4 to 8 p.m. Monday at Marks Mortuary in Wood River, with a prayer service at 4 p.m.

A funeral Mass will be celebrated at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday at St. Bernard's Catholic Church in Wood River, with Fr. James Neuman as celebrant.

Burial will be in St. John's Cemetery in Collinsville.

Memorial may be made to St. Bernard's Catholic Church.

My Jesus have mercy on the Soul of

**JOSEPH DIGIROLAMO**

*Born*

March 15, 1924

*Died*

February 26, 2000

O gentlest heart of Jesus, ever present in the Blessed Sacrament, ever consumed with burning love for the poor captive souls, have mercy on the soul of Thy departed servant. Be not severe in Thy judgement but let some drops of Thy Precious Blood fall upon the devouring flames, and do Thou O Merciful Saviour, send Thy Angels to conduct Thy departed servant to a place of refreshment, light and peace. Amen.

May the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

Merciful Jesus grant eternal rest.

*Funeral Mass*

St. Bernard's Catholic Church  
Wood River, Illinois

Tuesday, February 29, 2000  
10:30 a.m..

*Celebrant*

Father James Neuman

*Interment*

St. John's Cemetery  
Collinsville, Illinois

*Memorial*

St. Bernard's Catholic Church

*Pallbearers*

John Guarino Sam Guarino  
Christopher Chestley Rick Orr  
Sam Digirolamo Tony Stassi



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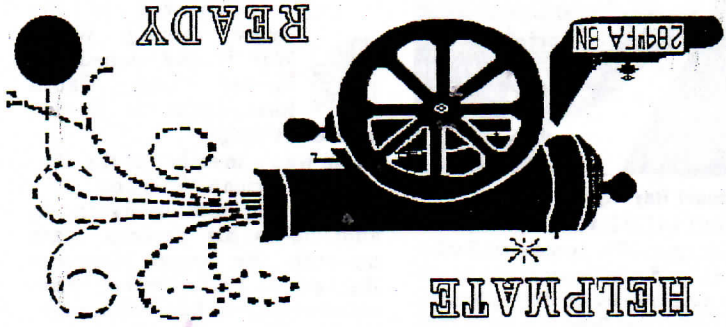
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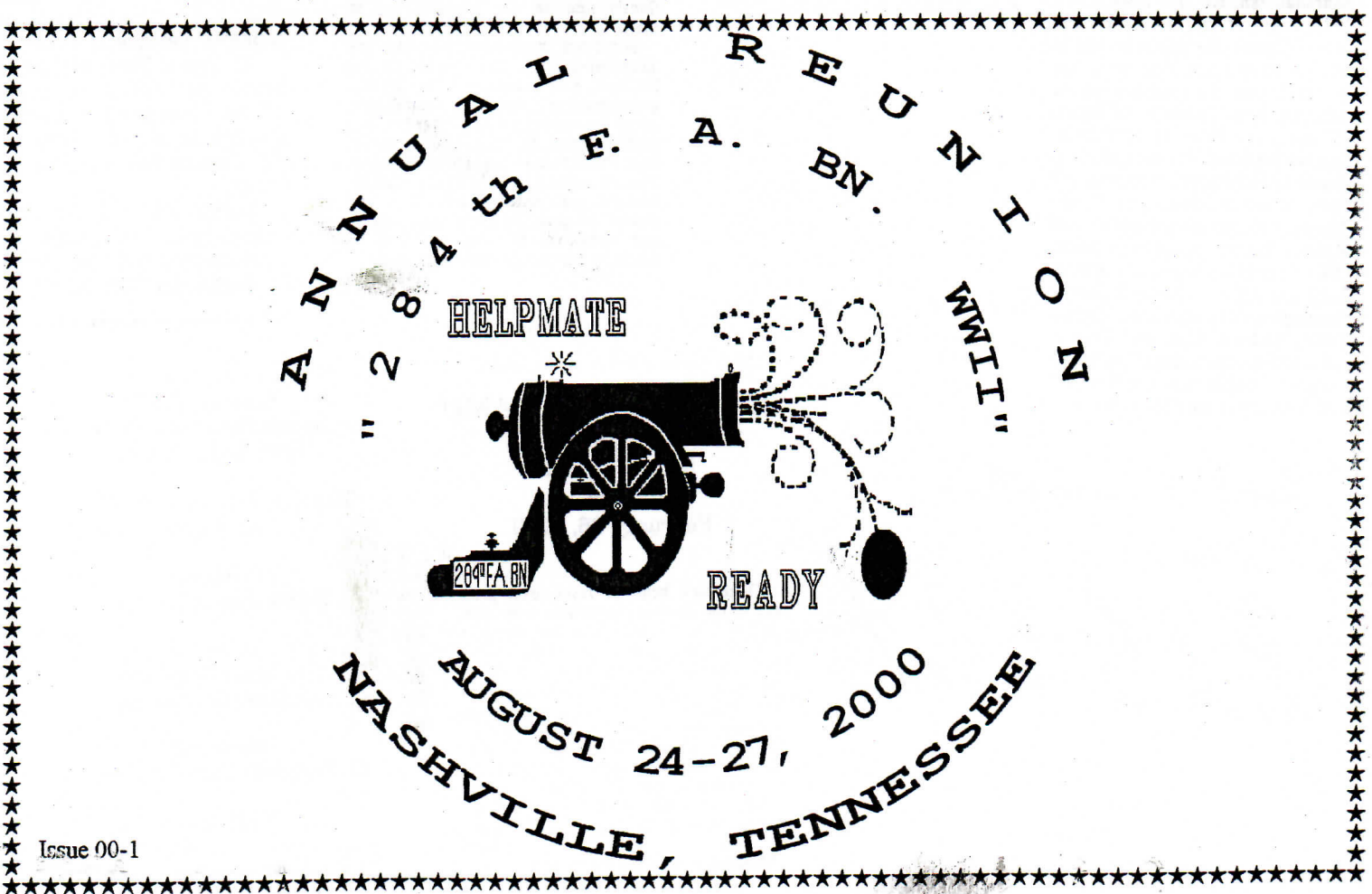
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NASHVILLE, TN.  
AUGUST 24 ~ 27

“HELPMATE”  
284th FA BN WW II



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