

HELMATE BULLETIN

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

OF THE

284TH F. A. BN. WWII

Issue 99-3

May 25

1999

RONNIE'S MESSAGE CENTER JOHN B. SUMMERS 12658 ALSWELL LN. ST LOUIS, MO. 63128-2509
INTERNET LOCATION HPLMATE284@AOL.COM TEL. (314)843-3833

Greetings, Helpmates,

Things went well, and the last bulletin got out just about when planned. I got a late letter, and had to cheat a little, but all's well that ends well, I guess.

More bad news about Pittsburgh. I had told several of the units there to let me know by mail what they could offer for our reunion. I had 3 answers, and all were in the middle \$60 range, almost as if they had conspired before answering. I was disappointed, but that was an expected ending to my 2 days there.

I plan going to Branson early next week to see if I can do some better there. Branson is about 30 miles south of Springfield, Mo., and there are several of the commuter airlines connecting with that city. I will try to get some info on the shuttle possibilities, so that those of you who fly in will be able to get to Branson. I hope to explore all possibilities, so that we can get the best for our reunion. I know there are many shows there which have attraction for older citizens, and the cost of some are rather in our range. Tom Allen has just had a 7 vessel bypass, and he is going to go along to help me get some special deals. All in all, I hope there are more of the accommodations which are in our range of rates. I am shooting for the high 40 to low-mid 50's for the room rate. I hope to be able to find decent arrangements for that.

You know about the best laid plans by now. I was unable to make the trip as planned, because Tom Allen was not able to make the run. His doctor has pinned him down, and wants him to be further into his exercising routine and not to exert himself more than is necessary at this time. I understand, so I just put my trip off for the present, and will go next week. My kids resist having me go by myself, but that is the way this cookie crumbles. I will report as new things develop. I should certainly know

what is going on in a week or so.

But we shall see. More on this later.

On St. Patrick's Day I received a call from Charlie Zimmer. He wondered if anything definite had been settled, and I asked him to be a little patient, and that I was working on the reunion at that time. Things go well with he and Ruth, and they are going to the doctors at a good clip, and all those sorts of things. He was to have some work done on his vision, I believe, and he will report on that later. Always good to hear from the Helpmates.

And I was surprised greatly to get an E-mail from Bud and Jean DeFeo. They have JEBU01 as screen name, and are on AOL.COM. He sends me jokes, and some very pleasant files which are musical, and mobile. He seems to like the medium, so give him a jog, those of you who are on line.

Bob Rosen sent a letter and a donation for the kitty, also. Sumiko is planning more trips to the Orient in April or so, and Bob will take over his spot in the Caribbean during her absence. He went down in Mid January for about 3 wks. Sumiko was supposed to have gone to Japan at that time, but the expected call did not come, and she was in Media when Bob returned.

He recalled a few of the early days when Dick Williams was in B Btry., and how he got hooked up with Lage, Brown, and others whose job descriptions left out the loud guns. He was a machine gunner in the wire section, enjoyed the work, as much as could be expected.

Bob enclosed a kitty donation which will come in handy as the reunion comes near. Thank you much for the letter, and for the kitty fodder enclosed.

Got a nice letter from Florence Axtell with

news of Clarence's death on Feb. 21. He had been ill for some time with emphysema, and for 3 years he had been bothered with this problem, and finally went into heart failure, and died. He had been on oxygen for 2 years, but enjoyed his family, enjoyed going to the reunions he was able to attend. I will send the family a note of sympathy in the name of Helpmate. Florence wishes to remain on the rolls as Clarence's representative, and this will be done.

Got a letter from John Wasilewski after he had gotten over a bout of the flu. He still was not 100%, but he had been able to scan all of the very small negatives, and had gotten many fair to good copies of them. They still are some blurred, because he had to enlarge them many times. He and Virgil Pugh have been in touch, and they are making plans to meet sometime later this spring. I will try to be in their company when this occurs, and I will let you know the results.

John also included in his letter a note from Niel Johnson, the cousin of Wilfred Nelson of our unit. I also received a copy of the history which Niel had written about his cousin's life in the 284th. He had taken much of it from the copy of "Helpmate Ready" which John had made available to him. Thanks John.

And John enclosed a check donation for Miss Kitty, much appreciated. He also noted that Pat Maier's wife had a small stroke, now improving at this time.

There were several changes made in our roster by returned Bulletins. George Ford is no longer at his address, and I have no idea as to how he might be able to be reached. And the Bulletin for Stanley Stuteville was returned with a note that he was no longer in his expected address. If anyone is in touch with either of these Helpmates, advise them that I have no current addresses for them.

And I have a new address for Mrs. Frances Benedict. It is:

7442 Spring Village Dr. #PVT01

Springfield, Va. 22150-4446

I received a call from a resort location in Tenn. concerning our reunions. They are having a "fam" trip to their location in Oct., and I put my name down to attend to get some data

for 2000. We should make that reunion very special, and I think I will start early on it.

I got several E-mails from members of the group with Easter greetings, and new addresses. These included Bud DeFeo whose address I have already given but will repeat - JEBU01@AOL.COM, Mel and Betty Donaldson, DON1BETTY@AOL.COM, and John Wasilewski, JOHNW98765@AOL.COM. I had heard a bit earlier from Moe Sweetgall and Janet about Pittsburgh, and they also wished all happy holidays. Thank you so much for your thoughtfulness.

John Wasilewski sent E-mail greetings, and he thought the pictures were a fine idea, but is a little disappointed in the way they come out in the newsletter. There is no good way for a copy of a copy to show any improvement, and I have found that they copy dark, no matter how light they begin. He is going to try to print out a sheet of the better pictures on his laser printer to see how they turn out, and then I can just include them in the newsletter as they come to me. This makes for a lot of work on John's end, but he thinks he can do it.

I will work with John via internet, and will report of the progress of this labor of love.

I received a letter from George Reiss, a New York attorney. He was in the battalion from Fort Riley days, and left us on Dec. 16 at the time of the Bulge incident with wounds while on duty. He had wondered if the note in the last issue was concerned with the son of Paul Schmidt, his wartime btry. Commander. I called him and assured him that Paul Jr. was indeed the son of Capt. Schmidt, and George had fond memories of the time of birth of Paul's son. He was sorry to hear that Mrs. Rose Schmidt was also dead, and he will try to reach Paul, Jr. in the near future. Paul's address is: **1209 Florida, Box 175**

Floral, Al 36442

He also had a question about Joanne Koss, and I told him that John has been gone for some time, and that his widow is still on our roster. John Koss was his forward observer, and he managed the radio for this crew. The Koss address is:

5630 S. 21st St.

Hales Corners, WI 53130

He also inquired as to the whereabouts of Roy Roeser. Sadly, Roy died some years back, and is represented on our roster by his son, also named Roy. And John Nightingale, who was a long time fireman, I believe, also died a few years ago. His wife, Joan, and several of his daughters still remain in touch with us, and have until recently attended our reunions.

I later made a phone call and caught him at his office. We had a pleasant conversation, and I am so glad that he has contacted us after such a long time. He had gone to early reunions, but had gone to law school after the war, and was not able to keep up with the unit when he finished. Thank you for your letter, your interest, and the kitty donation which you included.

On the 6th or 7th of April I got a call from George Ralcewich telling me that Gib Mitchell died April 6. Gibby had been doing poorly for the past few years, but had enjoyed the visits he had from Al Grisham and Eloise Goben. I received a call from Eloise re Gibby's death. Al had a stroke last month, and lost the sight of 1 eye. Seems to be improving slowly - but is not getting around as much. Thanks for the calls, folks. Al is a tough guy. He will get better.

Bill and Marian Hartley called to get more facts about the reunion. I have nearly finished the work which the project produces, and I am going to put a lot more about it in this issue. It is difficult to do what planning is required over the phones, but that had to be the way Branson happened. I flew to Pittsburgh when that plan was in the works, but will have to motor down for this one. I will get it done, for sure, but just when is unknown. Bill is doing well after one eye surgery, and will get more work done in the near future. Everything else is going well there and they extend greetings to all of the group.

A note from Ruth Williams came in the mail and she wishes me to thank those of the group who called her and expressed sympathy at Dick's death. She was glad that my "stroke" problem was short-lived, and wishes me to be good, and don't do that again.

Ruth enclosed a donation for the kitty, and will be left on the rolls as Dick's representative.

I received a letter and a kitty donation from Jerri just before mailing the last bulletin, and I

want to wish her well with her recent cataract surgery. She feels that is progressing great, and hopes it continues in this manner. She had been to several Moose conventions in Decatur, Il., and will attend another one there in August. She regrets Dick Williams' passing, and best wishes all of our ailing Helpmates. st.

She is glad that Branson will be our next reunion site. There's lots of music there, she tells me. She also told me not to have any more of the strokey attacks. I agree.

How about some belated birthdays?

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

1	MERRILL, IRVING	80
4	HAMEL, DARRELL	77
7	RIPPERT, STEPHEN	84
8	DANNEMAN, HARRY	74
10	MARTIN, PAUL	81
13	ZIELINSKI, JOSEPH	79
15	REISS, GEORGE	78
24	KARIS, HARRY	74

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

2	LAGE, LLOYD	74
3	SUMMERS, JOHN B.	76
8	ROE, EDGAR	78
11	CHMURA, STANLEY	76
11	LEMBO, ANTONIO	76
13	DEFEO, ANTHONY	74
13	STEPANEK, WM.	74
14	PODOLSKY, HARRY	80
14	MIELKE, ROBERT	79
15	KUBASEK, ANTHONY	75
23	DEMONACO, AL	80
23	HARTLEY, WILLIAM	74

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

2	ELLIS, WARREN	79
7	OBECHNY, NORBERT	81
13	LEGGETT, LEONARD	81
13	NELSON, WILFRED	74

20 ENTILE, PATRICK 75
 22 LENKER, LESTER 74

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

3 HAWKINS, DAVID 74
 7 DAWES, DONALD 74
 19 CRISMOND, RAYMOND 74
 23 GRISHAM, ALBERT 76
 23 RALCEWICH, GEORGE 74

MAY BIRTHDAYS

9 STREET, WILLIAM 75
 18 DAMMERELL, ROBERT 76
 28 TAYLOR, HAROLD 81
 31 BELTZ, FRED 88

JUNE BIRTHDAYS

2 BARLOG, RAYMOND 74
 3 MASCHA, JOSEPH 74
 19 SMITH, HARVEY 75
 19 SMITH, HERBERT 75

I will place the memorial card you sent in this place in the newsletter.

In Loving Memory Of
 Clarence E. Axtell

Born
 March 23, 1923
 Empire, Michigan

Entered Into Eternal Life
 February 21, 1999
 Traverse City, Michigan

Services
 Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home
 Traverse City, Michigan
 Friday, February 26, 1999, 11:00 AM

Officiating
 The Rev. Marvin Rosa

Final Resting Place
 Grand Traverse Memorial Gardens
 Traverse City, Michigan

Arrangements By
 Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home

I had earlier reported the death of Clarence Axtell. He died of heart failure after a long bout with emphysema, and had been on oxygen for the past 2 years. He had made some of our earlier reunions, but was unable to catch us on the more recent ones.

Florence sends a check for the kitty in memory of Clarence, and will be kept on the roster in Clarence's place. Thank you for the note, Florence.

Received a letter from Stan and Clara Chmura in the late mail. Stan had an eye operation, and is doing well in both eyes.

Clara had developed shingles, and had had symptoms for about a month with itching, and a bad cough. She also has improved, and will be fine. Thanks for the donation, Stan.

I will put news of my site visit below, then get this issue into the mail.
 As ever JB

REUNION NEWS

A couple of days in Branson is something else. There is just about everything available to tickle your fancy. Shows, all sorts, craft shops, shopping malls, anything which can separate you from your green stuff is there. And it is gracefully displayed. C'Men In!!!

But back to the drawing board. Now I can let you know just why I have been having trouble getting this chore done. About 6 weeks ago I had the unfortunate experience of having a small blood clot block one of the arterioles in my brain, and produce a small, temporary stroke condition. I think you knew that, but what is puzzling me is the fact that the same thing happened about 2 weeks ago, and it blocked one of the arterioles in my right eye. I had no idea what was happening, but specialized tests revealed the fact that just proved that I was doubly blessed, and I had just had another "TIA" of another type. So I was placed on absolute quiet until the doctor released me the other day.

My vision was still tolerable, but was a bit "moth-eaten" in the upper inner quadrant. That meant that my problem was in the lower-outer area, and special tests with fluorescein dye was needed to prove it. And that is just what was found. My vision may remain the same, may improve some, or may return to normal, whatever that is.

So I had to wait until I got the word that I could move before I could move. That, added to the facts that my ride was also having medical problems, put me about 3 weeks behind.

In any event, we rode down to Branson in a driving rain, and got into the small town with no further problems. The sun had come out by then, and the weather turned beautiful to say the least.

We were put up at the Howard Johnson Motel at this point, and introduced to the ass't. manager, who would be working with us. From this base we visited several possible places for our HOME BASE, and none were found to be superior to what we had already seen. After some dickering, we worked out a room rate of \$49.99 (plus tax), and settled on the days we had already been shooting for. This took up all the morning of the 13th, so we set about looking at the local entertainment available. Now this could have been another week or so, if we had done our job right, but we had another 2 days to investigate, and no more.

On the evening of the 12th we set out to view the better sites relayed to us. We went into the Shoji Tabuchi musical show, and it was fabulous. They had Oriental Drums of all sizes in their act, and opened the 2nd part of their show with these. It was awesome, to say the least. Singing Oriental musical compositions being played on their instruments, was an education in itself. The entertainers sang, played, and performed flawlessly for the next 2 hours, and in general thoroughly entertained the audience. Superb, no less. The next noon we were able to go to the Osmond Brothers show, and their supporting ice skating show-people, and were well entertained by still another type entertainment. They performed their old classics, did some newer ones, and carried the audience to another level with the excellence of their offerings.

When we got our tickets for this show I thought "How lucky we were to get front row seats!! But my wiser travel companion smelled a rotten cod in this arrangement, and asked the usher for seats farther back. He found us seats about 15 rows back, and then told us that someone was to be chosen from the audience to help the ventriloquist's act. He left us, and they had to find another guy with less hair than I had to be the lucky one. But the act was entertaining, especially without me, and we considered the day well spent.

On the 13th, we cruised the town, and I became very lost to say the least. We watched the folks load up on the Diesel Railroad Train which took them through the very beautiful area which makes up that part of the Ozark landscape. This activity takes up the better part of a morning or afternoon, and available at about the \$20 level. We also visited some of the boat docks from which roaming steamers depart several times daily. I will have some cost analysis of these activities later, and how one takes part in them.

On Thurs. evening, we were able to take in the "Jim Nabors Show" at the Wayne Newton Theater. This was a splendid show, and the opening act was performed by a pretty lady who had excellent control over her large piano. She played about 45 minutes, old songs and newer, and an intermission was declared before Jim Nabors was on. He does not entertain too much lately (after a liver transplant, and serious illness which caused same) but was in excellent voices, and was entertaining with his true stories of his career. He circled the entire audience during his part, and shook hands with hundreds of the patrons, all the while singing old classics with which he is connected. His part of the show lasted for 1 3/4 hours, and was tastefully produced, and well performed. We left with a very good feeling for this old friend, and I would not hesitate to recommend seeing him if he is on the program in September. He ended his segment by admitting that his dad had always told me he would end up on a "nut farm". He grows Macadamia Nuts in Hawaii.

Eating there was a delight. So many specialty places exist that you should never have to eat the same menu all the while you are there. We over-ate, of course, but that was our fault. The hotel had a free Continental type breakfast with cereal, juice, rolls, muffins, etc. in the AM from 6 - 9, so we got a foot up on things by hitting this spot. There are many establishments within easy reach, but I would not recommend that you walk to visit them. Our rooms were in Building "D", and I got a bit (a lot) out of breath going up to the breakfast the 2nd day. There is a small restaurant on the premises, and our Meeting Banquet will be held right on the property. I will have a menu available later. The prices for this event are livable.

Shopping is a pleasure. There are 4 or 5 LARGE Malls in the area, and we have been able to get some discount brochures which will be available after registration. Tom Allen got him a new pair of Hush Puppy Shoes to replace the ones he had, and thought he got a fine bargain. My steady old Reeboks were fine for me, so I suffered.

This whole area is filled with scenic beauty. It is in the Silver Dollar City area, which will be in full swing at the time we are there. S.D.C. is within easy driving distance, as is the "Shepherd of the Hills" properties. Lakes Taneycomo and Table Rock are in the neighborhood, and may be used in some of your activities.

All in all, the area chosen for the reunion this year is filled with pleasant opportunities for anyone to have a fine vacation. I have just hit the high spots, believe me, and I will tell you more as I think of them. The area is reached most easily by auto. From St. Louis it is an easy 4 or 5 hour drive over I44, then US 65 to Branson. Chicago, and Illinois, Helpmates would connect with I44 by using I55, I70, and with no problems. From the south, get to Nashville, then I24 takes you to I57, I64, and St. Louis. Helpmates from the east would use I64, I70, and various other means to get to Nashville, Lexington, or Cincinnati. Then the trek to St. Louis, and over from there.

Flying in is more difficult. TWA and TWExpress fly into Springfield, as do American Eagle, United Express, and USAirways Express. These airlines may require the Saturday PM stay-over, something we are going to have to address in future reunions. Big Sky Airlines fly from St. Louis and Dallas/Ft. Worth into Harrison Ar, about a 45 minute drive from Branson. The airport has taxi, shuttle, and rental car availability, but that will prove very costly, I fear. I will be going down to Branson on Monday, 13th, and I could take a few of the Helpmates with me, if convenient schedules could be found. Also the same could happen in Springfield, again if convenient schedules were arranged, and save our members a bunch of dough. I would like to get a good attendance at this affair, because of the various fine activities there, and because it always seems better if a good number are present. I would appreciate it if those who are flying in will communicate with me to see what other things I can think of.

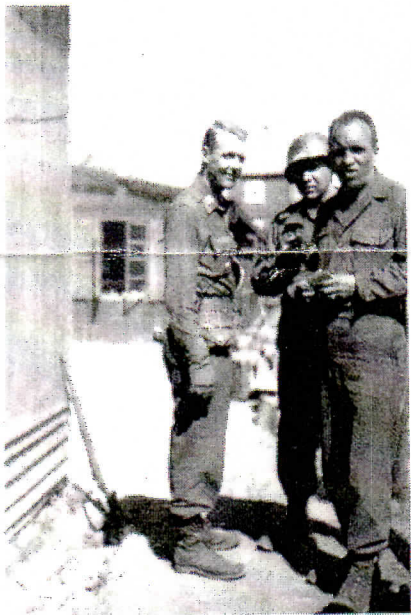
For those of you who are dyed in the wool fishermen, do not forget the great BASS FISHING STORE which is located in Springfield. It is alleged that this is the largest fishing retail outlet in the world, a fact which is publicized, but not provable by me.

So all in all, there will be a lot of action in Branson, the prices are not nearly Las Vegas type for good entertainment, and getting there will not be too difficult, even for our group. I have already heard from several of the members who are delighted with the new location for our last 20th Century Reunion.

I will write more about Branson in future Bulletins, so be prepared to attend.

PS: I have heard from the General that he and Beat will give serious consideration to being in attendance. That would be great for them to join us, and I know that he will if it is at all possible.

I had the pleasant experience of meeting in West Frankfort, Il with our HQ cook, Virgil





VIRGIL PUGH HOLDING 135 SHELL



68463-2828 26

Address Correction Requested

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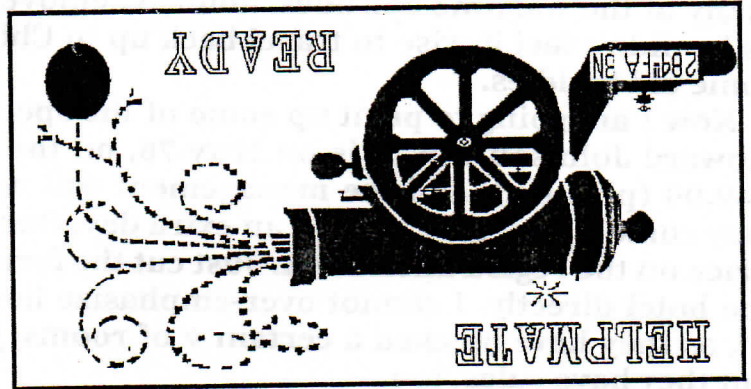
SEPT. 14 - 17

BRANSON, MO.

1999 REUNION

284TH F. A. BN. WWII

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