



HELPMATE BULLETIN

Official Newsletter

of the

284th F. A. Bn. WWII

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Greetings, all, in 2003,

Hope all of you got the presents you wanted in the old year, and hope your new years resolutions are worthy, and supportable.

To finish up the past years greetings, I received a greeting from the John Wasilewski's which I may have reported in the last issue. He tells me that he is preparing to be reappointed, or reelected, and that has been taking up much of his time. He enjoyed the reunion experience, and plans going the next time to New Orleans.

On the 26th, I received a report from Irv and Ginny Merrill. They are doing well, and have attended a family reunion in Chicago. He inquires about Gen. Sanders, and I related to him that I have no recent contact with him.

All seems to be well in Merrillville, their health is good, and they both are in a fitness program which they enjoy.

Bud and Jean DeFeo sent wishes to all, and he hopes to join us in New Orleans this year. He will make a trip to Florida in Feb. I believe, and he always tries to contact the group there if at all possible.

Joe and Flo Zielinski send regards to all. Joe had knee surgery in June, and had knee replacement. He was doing well in therapy, and things look good generally. In late September he tripped on his cane, and fracture of an elbow occurred. It is still healing, but remains much painful. He may have to have surgery on the elbow after the holidays. Joe is hoping for the best.

Martha Ellis greeted all. Nice She sent a nice poem about some family goodies which are important to her. She became a great grandmother this year and does not feel old enough to fill that role.

Our member Paul Martin is in an assisted living facility. I received a note from his daughter,

and he can be called between 10:30 AM and 8:00 PM at 727-939-8384. His daughter will receive any mail for him at 1951 Egret Dr., Palm Harbor, FL 34683. Good luck to Paul.

The west coast bunch met in Tarpon Springs for a lunch meeting on Feb. 1. We celebrated being alive, of course, and also did a thing to celebrate my 80th birthday. We did the same thing last year, but this year only 7 of us could be present. George and Dorothy Ralcewich, Marian and Bill Hartley, Ray and Marge Crismond, and myself were able to answer the bell. But we had a great time, as usual.

George still makes his golf dates, and both he and Dorothy keep their doctor appointments. Dorothy's sister, and George's niece still have medical problems, and they are called on to help them frequently. They were not happy with the cool weather, and have just about crossed off 2003 winter as a loser. They were sorry to hear that the Donaldson's were not likely to be down at all this winter, as one of their children is fighting a health problem at this time.

Bill and Marian are doing well. Bill does not drive at all anymore, and Marian has taken over this chore. Bill is under constant medical care, and Marian also has a few medical things which she is harboring. They keep in touch with their Penn. friends, and stay busy with other chores.

Marge and Ray seem fine. I was in Holiday on 2 occasions this trip, and the two of them were not kind to me in our card games. I went to Bingo with Marge, won ZILCH, but enjoyed the evening listening to Ray call the bad numbers. We had a great time, but didn't break any records, believe me.

I had called George Ford, who stayed just north of New Smyrna Beach, but got no answer.

One of my friends from St. Louis came over from central Florida, and we had a few days of eating and loafing—mostly eating. He has been over for the past few years, and it is nice to see friends anytime.

The rest of the time in Florida, I stayed inside wherever I was. The cold was so hard to handle for the natives, and even worse for the ones who were paying premium prices for the accommodations. I took care of the minor matters on the west coast, visited family and friends, and just vegetated those 5 - 6 weeks.

Got back from Florida on the 5th, and was glad to be home. It is colder here, but my house is insulated, my furnace is new and puts out much heat, and my bed is familiar. Warren Ellis' locate change, and his golf injury to R. shoulder.

In the mail were the greetings which I was able to acknowledge earlier, and a returned Bulletin from George Ford's address in Fl. He had not made it down this year, and this is the reason that I could not reach his phone. Hope this does not mean a problem. Write me, George, and let us know how things go with you.

I had a long discussion with those who were at the luncheon about not hearing anything from the group. I have had to make this bulletin an autobiography of what was happening in my life, and they suggested that I just put out fewer bulletins, hoping to get more support from our members. I am going to try this, and hope that it may encourage you to give me some help with news. There are many things which interest our group, and your input will be most welcome. I will try to get this issue out in early March, and hope for the best.

Winter has resumed it's ugly habits here at this time. Wintry mix is how the weather folks name it, but it is just plain ice—slick ice - to me. The trees look pretty with the icy coating, but the rest of the world is treacherous to get along on. We are supposed to get some snow in the next few days, but there is something about a city which seems to prevent expecta-

tions from developing. I think the tremendous amount of heat rising out of the city keeps the usual stuff from happening. Whatever.

We have had snow for the past 2 days, and have collected about 4", I guess. I just left the internet, and the people on the computer from the east have had 20" to 24", and laced with sleet and high winds. Our snow was very fine, and did not drift greatly, but driving was very hazardous, so I stayed in the warm house, and enjoyed TV and the like. I have difficulty enjoying snow, great difficulty.

Mel and Betty Donaldson contacted me via the quick-mail, but did not leave me any message regarding personal matters. As I had told you, they did not make it to Florida while I was down, and I understood that they were skipping this year because of family health problems. I am hoping that things are settling down up there in Michigan for the Donaldsons.

I had asked my brother to call Joe Molnar in Sebring, and give that rascal my personal regards, and to make sure he is doing OK. An earlier call gave him a message that that number was no longer in service, but it is worth another local try. I will jog brother Dale again, to make sure he calls. More on this later. I have heard from him that Joe did answer the phone, and he is truly in Sebring, but that he seems to be somewhat weak, and so he didn't keep up an extended conversation with Dale. He thanks us for our concern, and will try to keep in touch a little better in the future.

We are having some weather problems here in St. Louis. Much more snow than in the past years, and very cold temperature. We had a beautiful snow storm yesterday AM. Heavy, and large flakes, which stopped after about 5 minutes. No coverage at all, and all melted in half hour or so.

Well, another set of snowy week-ends, and more cold weather. We have had considerably more snow this year than in any year recently. I always liked snow, but increasing age has put increasing loss of agility, so I stay pretty much put when the ice and snow take over. Guess it wouldn't be the real world if we didn't gripe about something. The weather makes it easy.

I still have had no contact with any of the group. Do not even have high hopes, either.

I have a new locate for one of our members. Zelma Rigney tells me that she will be moving into new quarters on April 1, coming up. She will be at:

Riverview Manor, Apt. 501
99 13th St.,
Huntington, WV 25701-1627

She doubts that she will be able to make it to New Orleans, but doesn't rule out future dates. I hope you will be happy in your new digs, Zelma. Keep in touch with us, and try to work out something for New Orleans.

Something unusual has begun around my old home town, Olney, Illinois. One of the former residents asked for, and received memory tidbits from various acquaintances. This has boomeranged, and now there are hundreds of these small past history segments in her collection, and she has put them on the internet in segments. She has sent out 18 of these units, and although there has been some repetition, they are very interesting, and do represent in part, all of our past history. She is putting them on the net, eventually, and sends out 6 or 7 a year, much as I used to be able to do. The segments are very interesting, talk about people I know, and about things which I remember.

Why don't our group do something of the same type? Some of you know about actions which the rest of us are unaware of, and we could add this to our website as an addition to an already nearly complete story. Already this has brought me in contact with one of my classmates, and we have had great conversations over the network, and by phone. He has written the story of his war experiences for his grandchildren to read, and he sent it to me for my opinion. There are facts in the narrative which concern only him, and he put some of his thinking about certain issues which only he could relate.

Give this some thought. After we are gone, hardly anyone will come back and say much about what we went through. I would like to know what could come of an endeavor such as this.

I am going to stop this issue at this point. It seems impossible for significant input to be brought to my attention to expand this much further. As I said earlier, I have tried to find

material which would interest the general readership, but ended up writing whatever I could think of when I was running around the world, and possibly running into some interesting text. Take care of yourselves, and don't volunteer for the upcoming fracas. We have done our part, and did it well. The country has recently made some amends in the way former soldiers have been recognized. I hope that the sacrifices of the Viet Nam, and the Korean soldiers had made will likewise be recognized.

I repeat, care of yourselves, and stay happy, healthy, and honest. Do give some extra thought to making the upcoming reunion one of your priorities, because one of these coming up will be our last.

As ever,

JB

