508th Parachute Infantry Regiment Association



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NEWS LETTER

NOVEMBER 1978

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ISSUE 3

YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN IN DENVER

The air is clean, dry and easy to take. The Coors is also pure and wet and easy to take. Tom Heun and Lewis Burrows did a wonderful job preparing things for us. Tom, B & Serv. Co, has been in the food and beverage business for a long time. His contacts opened a lot of doors and smoothed over any rough spots. Lew, A Co, got us on TV among other things. That was a first for us and really helps in contacting some of our lost gang. When the spot light got on Lew, he did a smooth job of explaining who we were and what we had done in the war.

In addition to renewing our wartime acquaintances and swapping stories, there was a lot to do. There were free buses to downtown Denver. We all drove into the Rockeys one day for sight seeing and a ranch style supper with singing cowboys. There were lots of group trips to places like Pikes Peak, the Garden of the Gods, Coors, the Air Force Academy, etc. We could go to Denver again and have a good time without doing anything a second time.

SAN ANTONIO 1979

Dave Thomas gave a very convincing story on the advantages and pleasures to be found in San Antonio next Sept 14, 15 & 16. We all willingly followed his lead and will meet at the St. Anthony Hotel in downtown San Antonio.

Dave is in charge of the 1979 reunion right in his own stamping grounds. He will do his usual great job of getting things organized and prepared for our visit. He even mentioned something about a side trip into Mexico after the reunion if he can make the right contacts.

General Dave is already lining up all of his Texas buddies to help him make 79 a Texas size reunion we will never forget!

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MASTER ADDRESS LISTING

The new ones dated 7-1-78 are available. That's one of the good things that your dues money finances. Write me, Jim Allaryce, 335 Ardussi Frankenmuth, Mich. 48734, if you want one.

We are now on our way to a 600 member roster. Get out there and find your old buddies so they can be listed.

EUROPEAN TOUR WITH THE 508th P.I.R. ASSOCIATION
82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION

June 2 to June 16, 1978
By: Eileen Foliart

NOTE: Bob and Eileen Foliart are friends of 508th. Bob was in the Pacific in WWII with the Air Force. These notes of their tour with the 508th have an interesting perspective.

June 2, 1978

Took off from Oakland Airport at 11:20 a.m. after meeting the twelve other members from this area. We came down to refuel at Bangor, Maine, for 1½ hours. Everyone collected in the airport bar for talk and drinks. Took off again for Gatwick Airport outside London. Arrived in bright, warm weather - about 80 degrees. Hurry and wait, hurry and wait from this point. Board buses for 50 mile drive to ferry. Supposed to leave at 1:15 p.m. - and - at 4:15 p.m. we leave! Arrive around 6:00 p.m. in Calais, France, after a very smooth crossing. Have a little wait for the buses to pick us up. After finally starting out, we learn that we have about a seven hour drive ahead of us. What a shock in our tired state! We had had snacks and tea on the ferry but had not had dinner! We had a long drive broken only by two "pit" stops and by the lovely French songs that our driver, Lucian, played on the stereo. Finally, at 5:00 a.m., we arrive in Chef du Pont - what a beautiful surprise! There in front of the courthouse was a crowd of townspeople waving and smiling. We had been scheduled to arrive at 8:30 p.m. the previous evening, but the welcome was as warm as if we were only five minutes late. What a really moving sight and one we will never forget. All the tiredness left us at the sight of such sincere warmth and welcome. Our host and hostess hurried us to their two cars (a deluxe Mercedes and a Citroen) as it was raining lightly. Drove about three miles from the town to their home which turned out to be a beautiful chateau. After a soft drink and a croissant, we were assigned to one wing of the chateau. Three couples are staying here and we are given one wing of the chateau for our use - three beautiful bedrooms filled with antiques plus a huge, huge bathroom. Then into bed for two hours sleep - our first in about 40 hours.

June 4, 1978

At 9:15 a.m. we are up and dressed to enjoy a continental breakfast with our host and hostess. It is teaming raining so we can not look around the grounds. Our host raises thoroughbred horses and told us he has had many champions. Drive into town for the dedication of the park that the 508th donated to the town. The rain never dampened the enthusiasm of the townspeople or of our group. The band played away, just ignored the heavy rain. O. B. Hill, the leader of this tour, gave a very heartfelt speech that was translated by a French citizen. After the ceremony, we all walked a short distance through the town to an area where a large tent had been erected for a delicious dinner complete with many courses and much wine and cider. An outdoor barbeque had been erected and huge joints of lamb were being basted. The food was outstanding. The final drink of the dinner was calvedos, a local homemade apple liquor - powerful! Then back on the buses for a tour of the parachute drop sites of June 6, 1944. Then back to town where we were hosted by Henry Renaud at his beautiful, modern (rare in this area) ranch home. Dinner of different sausages, salad and much, much champagne. Then back to our chateau to bed.

June 5, 1978

Up at 8:00 a.m., a quick continental breakfast and then to town to the buses. The young children were waiting for their school bell to ring - they laughed and waved. We drive about 70 kilometers to the U.S. cemetery which is very impressive and sad. 9,386 of our G.I.'s are buried here. We took pictures and walked between the crosses. On the way back, the bus driver dropped us off on the long roadway to our chateau. We found out it is 600 years old and has been in our hostess's family all through the generations. But our beautiful hostess and her husband have no children. We changed clothes

and had a "quail" - glass of wine - with our hosts. Then we and they piled into their Mercedes and Citroen to drive about 45 minutes to Coutenville for a ceremony and champagne; then to a small restaurant for a porto (port wine) and then to Hardy Restaurant for a dinner complete with speeches and singing. This was our party for our hosts. After dinner, we adjourn to a nearby discotheque - the Casino. A few dances and then back to the chateau and to bed at 2:30 a.m.

June 6, 1978

Drive into St. Mere Egliese to the church for Mass. This is the church that was shown in the movie, "The Longest Day." On D-Day a paratrooper by the name of John Steele was caught on one of the uprights of the church tower. One corner of the tower has a parachute hanging and the figure of a paratrooper is dangling from it in memory of Steele. This incident really happened and Steele hung there for three hours after pretending to be dead when he was shot in the foot by a German on the ground. After the Mass, we walked in the heavy rain to the courthouse where the band played and O. B. Hill and other members of the group expressed appreciation for our warm welcome. Then on to a tent erected beside a restaurant where a hugh meal complete with wine and calvedos was served. At the dinner, O. B. Hill presented Madame Renaud with a plaque honoring her for all she had done over the past 34 years to keep the memory of D-Day alive in the minds of the townspeople. She spoke to us in English and is a tremendous person. Later we went back to our chateau as this is our last night here and our hosts are having a dinner party for us. At 8:00 p.m., we gathered in the Chinese salon where the butler served caviar and all kinds of drinks. Members of their families were present. Luckily one woman spoke some English, so we had an interpreter at last. Before this we had been using sign language and body English to converse with our hosts. The dinner was outstanding - a once-in-a-lifetime affair. Beautiful friends, delicious food, many wines, four desserts - wow! Dinner ended at midnight. Then back into the salon for champagne and dancing to the stereo.

June 7, 1978

Off by 9:30 a.m. by bus for Paris. Arrived at a large hotel where we are assigned a tiny room with twin beds and a private bath. Not a chateau but very adequate. Into the buses for a great tour of the sights of Paris while driving to the American Legion for a buffet dinner. On the tour, we made two stops - one at Notre Dame where we had a half hour to walk around and enjoy the beauty. Drove by the Madeliene which is a huge copy of the Parthenon with no windows (glass roof gives light to the inside). Saw the Eiffel Tower, the Arch de Triumphe, outside of the Louvre, the Pigalle area, the Montparnarnasse area high on the hill.

June 8, 1978

Have the day to enjoy Paris and then in the evening we go to a French restaurant and then on to the Follies Bergere. We enjoyed the evening and the Follies which had beautiful costumes and many different acts and scenes; a few were topless but most acts did not include topless dancers. We left before the finale so that we could take a bus tour of the lights of Paris. Arrive back at our hotel at 12:30 a.m.

June 9, 1978

Leave Paris after a continental breakfast in the hotel. We have been fortunate that so many meals are included in the tour. Most of this day was spent on the buses. We now must stay in Bus #1 as we are going to a different hotel in Trois Ponts than the other two buses. It turns out to be a beautiful spot in the country with nothing around - called "Doux Repos" (sweet repose). It is a chalet that is a Winter ski resort. Many Germans vacation here we are told. We have a gorgeous view from our window. Forgot to mention that we had a reception at Stavelot before arriving at our hotel. Tonight we are to attend a dinner at a restaurant high in the mountains. We are served a beautiful buffet dinner. After dinner, O. B. Hill, Don and the French dignitaries present express mutual respect and gratitude.

June 10, 1978

After a great breakfast in our chalet, we board the bus to join the rest of our group who are housed in another area. Then the three buses start out to tour about six battle sites. After the reception in the first town, we get into one of the World War II jeeps and trucks that are accompanying us. These jeeps are owned by the local citizens who

have a very active club that restores the U.S. equipment and clothing plus these jeeps. The jeeps are collector's items now. We got into the jeep thinking we would just go a block or so to the next stop area - but to our surprise, the jeep took off and drove up winding back lanes to find some of the battle sites. It was a cold, damp day - and the wind blowing through the open jeep made it seem like Winter. One of the places we went was Thier du Mont Ridge above Salm Chateau. This ridge had been held by the 508th for about three weeks in December, 1944. The 508th could look down far below to the main road where the Germans were moving their equipment. It was 20 degrees below zero and the snow was waist deep, we were told. The men lived without hot food or any shelter except a fox hole during that time. Today we visit Bastogne, Houfflaize, Theux in Belgium and Malmady in Luxenborg where there is a memorial to 100 American soldiers who were lined up and shot by the Germans. Bastogne was one of the large towns and we stopped at the very modern town hall where there were speeches, champagne and picture taking beside a huge 8' statue of a soldier half carrying a fellow trooper. The statue was made from the trunk of a huge tree. Had a free hour for lunch and then back on the buses for a drive to Theux. This was a very moving experience as when our buses pulled in we found all the townspeople standing in the streets waiting to greet us. We shook hands with many as we walked to the center of the square for heartfelt speeches by our leaders and theirs. Then a parade formed to walk up the street to their memorial for band playing and anthems. Back to the town center for an hour's free time to browse. Then on to the town of Malmady. Walked into a school gym where we saw a table at least 60' long loaded with huge platters of chicken, sliced beef, tomatoes stuffed with tiny shrimp, cucumbers, carrots, etc., everything beautifully prepared. A delicious cold meal complete with red wine. After dinner we moved to the room next door where the townspeople gather to dance to an Alpine band.

June 11, 1978

Leave at 9:00 a.m. for Holland. Stop at a small museum for an hour or so. Another drive and then a stop at the Henri Chapelle American Cemetery and Memorial where General George Patton is buried. It is a beautiful cemetery high on top of a hill, north of Veviers. Also stop later at the Netherland-American Cemetery which is the main cemetery of the Netherlands. Arrived finally at the town of Berg en Dal in Holland. The land here is rolling which surprised us as we expected everything to be below sea level. We are based in a large hotel, very clean with parklike grounds. We can look off to Germany in the distance. Green lawns and a rose garden below our first floor room window. We gather in the large dining room for a good meal. The Hueneken Beer Company presented each of us with a Delft beer mug. After dinner, we are shown some films of the 508th in action in 1944.

June 12, 1978

Continental breakfast in this hotel is not the usual rolls and coffee - the buffet table is spread with cereal, eggs, ham, salami, bread, etc. Instead of taking the tour of the battlefields which is the planned event, we decide to go to the nearest town which is Nimegen. We meet a very friendly town resident at the bus stop who directs us to the local Flea Market which is held each Monday until 1:00 p.m. when the stores open. We were tempted to buy some of the many antiques that were offered for sale, but transportation to the States would be difficult. Have lunch and wander through the stores, then back to the hotel to gather for the evening event. We go by bus to the nearby town of Grosbeek where an outdoor ceremony is held despite the light rain. The band played and O. B. Hill expressed the gratitude we all feel toward these warm, friendly people. A senior citizen retirement home is nearby and we walk there for a musical presentation by the band plus some dance numbers by the majorettes. Three ladies had purchased bouquets of flowers which they presented to three of the American ladies in our group. I was one of the ones that received a bouquet and I found a note attached with the giver's name and address. (After arriving back home I wrote her a letter expressing my gratitude for the honor she did our group). After the musical presentation, we toured a nearby working windmill. It was about five stories tall and we climbed to the top on wooden ladders - not bad going up, but the trip down was a bit more difficult! Great fun!

June 13, 1978

Up early as we leave at 8:30 a.m. by bus for the ferry to England. We cross at a different spot this time and the trip over takes about six hours. We leave from the Hook of Holland and arrive at Harwick in England. Lovely big ferry boat which is much more modern than the one we went over on. Our buses are waiting when we arrive. Our driver tells us it is about a 3½ hour drive to Nottingham. However, we start out before 6:10 p.m. and never reach our hotel in Nottingham until 11:30. We are all exhausted but pleased with our hotel which is the Novotel - very modern.

June 14, 1978

After a big English breakfast, we take a cab to the town of Nottingham. The driver turned out to be a very personable British cab driver who was very proud of his town. He took us by way of the large University of Nottingham, the new 1,000 bed hospital, local park and the local castle. Their shopping center - all under cover - is just as modern as any of ours. This is really our first time to shop - and the last as we leave for home tomorrow. So we have a great time buying bone china, etc. In the evening, we board the buses to return to Nottingham where the Lord Mayor is honoring us with a reception. It is a very posh, very British, very proper affair. Both the Lord Mayor and the Sheriff of Nottingham are wearing their huge seals of office around their necks.

June 15, 1978

Up early as we drive to London today. After arrival, we separate to go to lunch and then return to the buses for a tour of the city. It is raining quite heavily but we still are given quite a tour with only one stop at the Tower of London. Then we return to the hotel where the other contingent will spend the night - they get to stay an extra day. Say good-bye to our friends and then we are off to Gatwick Airport for our return flight.

This has been a tremendous trip - a once-in-a-lifetime experience. We enjoyed the marvelous sights, the great people we met, the delicious food - it was great.

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NEWS BRIEFS OF INTEREST

GAVINS MEMOIRS

General Gavin has written a book of his WW II memoirs. The book, On to Berlin: Battles of an Airborne Commander 1943-46, is coming out through Viking Press in September.

Advance, autographed copies are available in limited numbers through the 82nd Airborne Division War Memorial Museum, Fort Bragg, N.C. 28307. The price is $12.50 plus $1.50 for mailing. Profits from this special sale will go towards the support of the museum.

SCHOLARSHIPS

You may have friends or relatives who can benefit from this news announcement.

Sons of military veterans killed or totally disabled in combat are eligible for special scholarships at Valley Forge Military Junior College, Wayne, Pa.

Those interested should contact Director of Admissions, Valley Forge Military Junior College, Wayne, Pa. 19087

BATTLE OF THE BULGE TOUR

General Westmoreland is the general chairman of a one week tour and reunion of U.S. and German veterans of that conflagration. General Baron Hasso von Manteuffel is the German counterpart. This is an unique reunion and is to be characterized by good-will and comradeship. A banquet in Liege is the high light. There will be welcomes by the mayors of Clervaux, Ettelbruck, Houffalize, Malmady, Spa, Stavelot, St.Vith, and Wiltz.

The dates are December 11-18,197 The price is $399.00 per person from New York.

For details write to David Walst District Manager, Sabena Belgium Worl Airlines, 3535 N. Stemmons Freeway. Dallas, Texas 75247