Hq1 Participation in the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR), WW II Association's 30th & Final Reunion Gainesville, Florida October 17 – 21, 2004

November 3, 2004

Dear Hq1 Folks and Friends:

On October 19, 2004, we participated in the retirement of our beloved Association at Camp Blanding, Florida, the birthplace of our regiment 62 years ago. More than 600 508th PIR veterans and guests witnessed the casing of the regimental standard that we followed in WWII, and over the past 30 years.



Our regimental standard and battle streamers will be preserved and displayed in the Camp Blanding Museum with a summary of our achievements and sacrifices.

Kenneth (Rock) Merritt, President of our Association officiated at the retirement ceremony. The Deputy Commander, Camp Blanding hosted the ceremony, and the President of the Camp Blanding Museum & Historical Associates, Inc. (CBM&HA) accepted the 508th PIR standard and memorabilia for preservation and display in the museum.

As guest speaker, BG Mark T. Kimmitt, United States Central Command conveyed the appreciation of a grateful nation to the men of the 508th for their service and sacrifices on behalf of our country.

Paul Hamblin, Past President 508th PIR Association and Trustee presented an emotional recognition and farewell address. Paul identified the senior officers that supervised creation of the regiment, and acknowledged the dedication, skill and perseverance of the cadre that raised the regiment to maturity. These outstanding officers and noncoms developed a war fighting capable regiment that excelled on the battlefields of Europe. Paul concluded by reciting a poem titled "I 'AM FREE." He dedic-

ated the poem to the memory of our beloved comrades lost on the European battlefields and subsequently.

Norb Studelska, Vice President, 508th PIR Association presented the Association's "Resolution to Retire." The resolution summarized the four years, one month, and four days of outstanding and heroic achievements of the 508th PIR, and the 30 years of camaraderie enjoyed by the association. The resolution was presented to the Camp Blanding Museum officials for preservation and display in the museum.

Subsequently, President Merritt "cased" the regimental standard and battle streamers, and transferred the shrouded assembly to the Camp Blanding Museum officials for preservation and display in the museum.



Rock Merritt Casing the Standard



"Farewell" Beloved Friend!

Rock Merritt concluded the 508th PIR Association part of the ceremony with the presentation of a plaque for display in the museum. The plaque expresses our appreciation to the officers and men of Camp Blanding, and to the CBM&HA for the courtesy, assistance, support and friendship extended to our association over the many years. Rock said "Today … we entrust our memomorabilia and history to the CBM&HA - confident it shall be safeguarded and shared with the American public."

Following the 508th PIR Association retirement ceremony, the 508 PIR Assoc. hosted a barbacue luncheon for the Camp Blanding and CBM&HA officials, and everyone else that attended the ceremony. The remainder of this memorable day was spent at Camp Blanding visiting the museum, and enjoying the memorial park. The park contains a fully restored WW II C-47 aircraft, the 508th PIR monument, and the 1st Sgt. Leonand Funk monument, our Medal of Honor recipient. The memorial park includes

monuments honoring the nine divisions and the many separate regiments and battalions that trained at Camp Blanding.

Effective about 1215 PM, October 19, 2004 at Camp Blanding, Starke, Florida the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment Association ceased to exist. It was retired with dignity and honor, and Its memorabilia and assets were conveyed to the CBM&HA for preservation and display.

Hq 1 Company Business

1. Company Representative and Alternate. When the 508th PIR Association retired, the position of Hq1 Company Representative was disestablished.

Subject to your approval, George & Rock shall continue to function, as ad hoc representatives of Hq1. We shall serve without charter, or remuneration, until the committee appointed by Rock Merritt in March 2004 at Augusta, GA presents its recommendations for the future operations of Hq1.

In the interim, the always dependable Rock Merritt has a plan for a Hq1 "get together" in 2005. **After the first of the year**, Rock will provide the details (i.e., time, place, accommodations, etc.) for the gathering. Now think about 2006!

2. Hq1 Flower Fund. The flower fund balance as of October 30, 2004 is $ 858.81. The last expenditure was a donation of $100.00 to the Camp Blanding Museum in memory of David Jones.

No further donations to the flower fund are requested or will be accepted. The fund will be expended commensurate with the need for flowers or charitable donations. If you suffer the loss of a 508th PIR veteran or spouse please inform either George Stoeckert or Ken. (Rock) Merritt.

3. O.B. Hill Award. Warren Brown was the Hq1 2004 recipient of the O.B. Hill award. This was the last time the Association will sponsor the award.

If in the future anyone believes an exceptional member of Hq1 deserves an O.B. Hill award certificate, advise George Stoeckert or Ken (Rock) Merritt. We shall take whatever action is approppriate.

4. **Memorial Certiicates.** Should we lose a Hq1 veteran or spouse, and the survivors desire a memorial certificate, notify George Stoeckert or Ken (Rock) Merritt.

5. Keep Informed. We all are now dependent upon each other to keep informed. We also are dependent upon Bill Nation who writes the "News from the 508" column in the Static Line magazine. However, wihtout your input, Bill Nation will have nothing to report.

Irrespective of whether you think your "information" is newsworthy, forward it to Bill and let him decide.

Dick O'Donnell operates WWW.508PIR.ORG. It is our best source for computer information. Please provide information to Dick at: Jumpmaster@508PIR.ORG. Unless you provide information to Bill and Dick there will be no Hq1 news!

6. TAPS. Since March 2004 we have lost two of our beloved ladies Sally Merritt in July, and Edna Chitwood in August; and our respected comrade David Jones died in October. May they rest in peace with our prayers.

7. Reunion Attendance Trophy. Hq1 won the 508th PIR Association reunion attendance trophy with 72 members and guests in attendance. Congratulations. The last and only other time we won the award was in 1995 at Cody WY - during the 21st annual reunion. The trophy is now resident in the Camp Blanding Museum amid the 508th PIR memorabilia.

8. Hq1 30th & Final Association Reunion Attendance.

(Guests are listed in parenthesis after their Hq1 member)

Bressler, Joe & Becky
Brown, Warren (Nancy Brown, Leslie Bateman, Cynthia LaFontain, Peter McMormick, and Ruth & Robert Ferris.)
Foster, Alice (Linda Roberts)
Frickel, Bill & Violet (Darlene Campbell)
Garren, Gene (Carol King)
Goudy, Bill & Mabel (William & Lois Andrews)
Hill, Joe & Linda (Robert Combs)
Jacoby, Jake & Elizabeth
Johnson, Johnny & Joyce (Brian Maxwell)
Kennedy, Ken
Kennedy, Ray & Edna
Lowder, Myrtle
Marshall, John & Isobel
Merritt, Ken "Rock" (Jessie and Shelia Johnssey, Jerry, Cheryl and David Merritt)
Murray, Grady & Emma Mae
O'Donnell, Dick & Tsugi
Palmer, Troy
Pearson, Dana {Wilkinson] (Dwayne Pearson, Chad Davis, Brittany Chandler, Donaway, Les and Corey)
Stoeckert, A. Maureen
Stoeckert, George & Shirley
Tharaldson, Pearl (Herschell Hall, Walt & Ollie Johnson)

Walker, Van & Allean (Van Walker Jr.)
Wargo, Mike (Mary Nunnery, Robin Dutton, Lara Willbanks, Janice Wargo, John Wargo, Michael Wargo, Jr.)
Wynne, James T.

Winkler, William Bill attended the retirement ceremony.

The Phantom and his lovely lady. Thanks for the beautiful roses.

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Folks, once again we enjoyed our association with the Company C folks and their guests, we hope that they will join us again in the future.

Folks, thanks for honoring our Association's 30th annual reunion, and more importantly witnessing the retirement of the association, and the dignified casing of out regimental standard. If you missed this special and memorable occasion we are sorry, and we missed you.

We hope that all of you remain well and happy and continue to enjoy the friendships we have shared for over 62 years. God bless you.

You are the "Greatest of the Greatest Generation."

With warm regards, love and respect:

/s/Kenneth (Rock) Merritt
1517 Atwick Drive
Fayetteville, NC 28304-3901
Ph 910 425-5818
E-mail kmerritt2@nc.rr.com

/s/George I. Stoeckert
6153 Roxbury Avenue
Springfield, VA 22152-1625
Ph 7030451-4629
gis757@aol.com