




I  
AT  290  
MESSAGE CENTER



SUMMER EDITION

JULY 2002

#### WHY NO MARCH ISSUE?

I hate to tell you guys this, but I'm running out of ideas from which to compile a meaningful M/C. Have I missed some input I should have used -- or have you really dried up? Really, if you've sent me some copy you thought might fit in with a future M/C and I didn't use it, *please* remind me and I'll search my poorly organized files for it and include it in the very next issue. Meanwhile, just as happened to Rudy before me, it's happened...A circumstance he begged all of us to correct by sending him memoirs of our experiences for him to use for his newsletter. About a third of you responded well to Rudy and later, to me after I took over. The rest, hardly at all. To be a newsletter, we *have* to have news. Consequently, if we don't get a response from this appeal, we may have to resort to a sort of group Christmas card in the future, one issued every year in December with just a picture of Santa Claus!

#### FRANCIS DEVAULT

Rob Smith was in telephone contact with Ruby Daniels December 11, last. Incidentally, Rob and I have decided to begin using "Rob" and "Ray" to identify ourselves because of the confusion that has come from using "RM" and "RC" as we did years ago after we wound up in the same company of the 290<sup>th</sup> and confused Orland Parsons. Ruby told Rob that he too, had participated in rescuing Francis DeVault (or what turned out to be just his remains) at Burtonville on 17 January 1945. Rob asked Ruby to write his recollections of the events and the circumstances then prevailing, inasmuch as he (Ruby) was the Mines Platoon (Tech) Sergeant at the time. John Benfield would have been a squad non-com, possibly a Staff or Buck Sergeant. Ruby said that he had received the same Bronze Star commendation as did Benfield and that Pildner had participated in the rescue too. I think it would be worthwhile to get the story straight even at this late date, because I don't think that the other platoons of the company were ever told of the heroism displayed by these three guys. Though specifically asked for it, neither John Pildner or Ruby have overcome their modesty enough to tell us about it. I wish that one of them would. And soon. How about it, Ruby and John?

#### THE 116<sup>TH</sup> PANZER DIVISION

Al Roxburgh has encouraged me to read a recent translation and perhaps report on Generalmajor Heinz Günther Guderian's book, From Normandy To The Ruhr. This Guderian was the son of Generaloberst Heinz Wilhelm Guderian, the German leader who is credited with devising the blitzkrieg method of using tanks the way the German army came to use them, starting with the invasion of Poland in 1939. The son and author was the 1<sup>st</sup> General Staff Officer of the 116<sup>th</sup> Panzer ("Greyhound") Division from May 1944 throughout most of the campaign in the west in which the 75<sup>th</sup> was involved. The 116<sup>th</sup> was the integrated armored backup for the 560<sup>th</sup> Volksgrenadier Division facing the 290<sup>th</sup> at La Roumiere.

Although I ("Ray") cannot pretend at this point to be a military tactician and use that talent to explain the role of the 116<sup>th</sup>, I thought you might be interested in the two quoted comments regarding the quality of the German troops we were facing. They were made by war correspondent John MacCormac on 27 March 1945 relative to the U.S. 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division's attack on 116<sup>th</sup> PZD's positions. "Last resistance by the Nazis against the 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division....The story of the Ninth Army bridgehead became the chronicle yesterday of the desperate attempt by Field Marshal Albert Kesselring to prevent this breakthrough by throwing the famous 116<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division, *the best Panzer unit of the German army*, toward it...."

On the following day, MacCormac reported: "Also today, on the fifth day of the bridgehead offensive by the Ninth Army, the *feared German 116<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division* continued to carry out its task with unrelenting tenacity. Now today, the tired 30<sup>th</sup>, which fought without let-up since the crossing of the Rhine, opened its ranks to allow armored forces to pass that were to advance against the German Panzers....The 116<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division did justice to its reputation in this sector of the bridgehead, but it had to pay dearly for its determination....But *all in all, the 116<sup>th</sup> fights now as before, exceedingly effectively...*"

### A TIME FOR TRUMPETS

Paul Ellis of K-290, a sustaining friend of the AT Company's M/C, wrote me recently that he had received a second copy of A Time for Trumpets, published in England under the title The Battle of the Bulge, and authored by Charles B. MacDonald who wrote them both. Paul has no need or desire to keep them both, and has a deeply felt desire to honor his old friend, Rudy Gillen's, memory by donating the book within the AntiTank Company - - The two books are identical except for their titles, and Paul wants to donate one of them to whomever within our readership will give it a good home. I've suggested to Paul and he's agreed that he will act as the referee and award the gift to the first requestor. Paul's address is:

Paul B. Ellis, Jr.  
104 Hilton Head Court  
Fort Mill, SC 29715-9758

e-mail [pbellis@fmtc.net](mailto:pbellis@fmtc.net)  
phone: 803 547 4913

To save him a lot letter-writing, and in case there are a number of responses from you, perhaps those who respond but don't receive the book will understand that you haven't been ignored - - Someone equally worthy must have beaten you to it.

### JAY PUCKETT NOW A 75<sup>TH</sup> ASSOCIATE MEMBER

Several of us have been successful in having Jay Puckett accepted as an Associate Member of the 75<sup>th</sup> Association. It should have been easy to do, but it got mired in the Association's bureaucracy. Jay operates a web page mainly commemorating the service of his father, Resol B. Puckett, formerly of the 290<sup>th</sup>'s Company F. Jay has more recently been very active as he began to enter into his site for free viewing by the public, *all* of the memoirs concerning the Ardennes campaign during 24-26+ of December 1944 that Al Roxburgh (CN-289) had begun compiling in September 1990. The compilation of the latter memoirs (his "PKG") had been privately published by Roxburgh for distribution in hard copy to a limited clientele, and thus, its content had become known to only a few over the past six or seven years: Namely, to the more than 13 National Archives to whom they had been submitted, and to the individuals themselves who had contributed their personal remembrances. Electronic publishing of these important documents for the benefit of the 75<sup>th</sup> is costing the Association nothing. Thus, Jay has been donating his time and resources to a project that is gaining recognition of the Division's contributions to WW2 ... something that had been virtually unknown heretofore. You can view the results of Jay's work on this project to date and refresh your own knowledge of those days by visiting <http://www.members.tripod.com/hldnoqtr/75thdivisiondad.html> and on the opening page, selecting the Link called "Remembrances". We are adding Jay to our mailing list so that he will receive our Message Center newsletter on a regular basis.

### THE BRIDGEND (WALES) POW CAMP (No. 198) in 1944- - by Robert & Raymond Smith

The camp referred to here was located on Island Farm, two miles walking distance from Bridgend, South Wales, and a little over 5 miles east of Porthcawl, a town for which many of you will have retained fond memories (both Rob and Bill Sheridan have written of it in past issues). Beginning after April 1944, it began to be used as a POW camp for relatively low ranking German soldiers who were considered docile enough to be contained in a camp that wasn't very secure. By November 1944, security had been somewhat improved and the population now included commissioned German officers as well. These were considerably more arrogant and consequently, significantly more difficult to manage by the British guard detail. Their attitudes dominated the culture of the camp in the period shortly after 1 November 1944 when our Anti Tank Company was moved to and billeted just west of Bridgend, in and around the town of Porthcawl.

Though the camp's security had been much improved prior to the incarceration of these more restless prisoners, it was still quite primitive and at least two escapes eventually did take place. An initial one that *almost* took place was caught before it began on 16 January 1945, due to the vigilance of the experienced Camp Commandment, Lieutenant Colonel Darling. He discovered this first of two tunnels while it was still being dug and had it destroyed.

Two prisoners escaped without the benefit of a tunnel. They used iron bars wrenched from hut windows to make crude but effective wire cutters and snipped their way through the fence. Their escape was made possible by the inadequate and crude security measures employed by the camp at the time: No guard towers and no search lights. The two weren't discovered missing until they were caught at Port Talbot, perhaps seven or eight miles on the other side (north) of Porthcawl.

The second escape was planned through a second tunnel. It was partially successful. Critiques held afterwards revealed that the guard company had consisted of only 150 men and the 90 guards it provided were necessarily dispersed at 10 sentries per mile, or 176 yards per sentry. A pretty thin line.

The tunnel's entrance began beneath one of the prisoners' bunks in "Hut 9". It descended 18 feet to an escape chamber, then went underground laterally for 20 yards, and gradually sloped upwards before emerging at the surface beyond the camp's three lines of perimeter wire. It exited there, opening in the field of an adjacent farm and hidden by a large rock. The escape began on schedule at 10 pm on the tenth of March (well after 10 December when the AT Company had departed its Porthcawl staging area for France). Sixty-seven prisoners emerged from the tunnel by 2:15 the morning of 11 March, but the 67<sup>th</sup> escapee was spotted by a guard and shot in the shoulder. Immediately thereafter, eleven of the 67 were caught before they could go any further.

The resource from which this story was composed was <http://www.islandfarm.fsnet.co.uk/> referred to us by a Welsh acquaintance of Robert Smith. It did not seem to clearly state how long it took to recapture the last of the remaining 56 escapees, but according to the British news media, by March 18 all but three had been recaptured, a few having made it as far as to Southampton and Birmingham. It is believed from the language used to describe the recapture operation, all the escapees had been recaptured by the 31st of March, when the last 1634 Island Farm prisoners were moved from Camp 198 to an unidentified location. At that time the Island Farm facility was renamed "Special Camp Eleven" and set up to receive a contingent of 160 captured German Officers who were either awaiting their own trials or were scheduled to give evidence at Nuremberg. All held the rank of General, Admiral, or Field Marshall.

#### CONCLUSION

That will have to do it for this issue...We've run out of words!

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Ray Smith, Editor

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Rob Smith, Treasurer and Publisher

Remember when?







## AT-290 KIA/WIA and Taps

### **KIA**

Francis T. DeVault	4 <sup>th</sup> Plt 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sqd	17 Jan '45 near Burtonville, Be.
William P. Hulsey	3 <sup>rd</sup> Plt 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sqd	After 25 Dec '44, near Soy, Be.
Wilbur A. Isaacs	1 <sup>st</sup> Plt Sergeant	Date unknown, in Korea
Carl Sieg	1 <sup>st</sup> Plt 1 <sup>st</sup> Sqd	25 Dec '44 friendly fire, Ny, Be.
Lino Silvani	2 <sup>nd</sup> Plt	Aug '44 (M Co, 39 <sup>th</sup> Inf) Ste Lo, Fr.

### **WIA** (probably did not return to AT-290 by war's end)

Russell Hedberg	Hdq Plt Recon Sgt	Details unknown
? Holtzhauser	Unk Plt Unk Sqd	Shrapnel in thigh or arm (at Rhine?)
Fred Marsh	1 <sup>st</sup> Plt 1 <sup>st</sup> Sqd	Easter 1945 - Land mine
Alexander Moir	1 <sup>st</sup> Plt 1 <sup>st</sup> Sqd	Shrapne., left arm - evacuated
Bud (?) Scheidt	3 <sup>rd</sup> Plt jeep drvr	Shrapnel, arm, land mine Colmar Fr.
Niklos Uremovich	1 <sup>st</sup> Plt 1 <sup>st</sup> Sqd	25 Dec '44 Friendly Fire
Donald Yack	4 <sup>th</sup> Plt 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sqd	Feb. '45 at Colmar, Fr.

### **Post-War Deceased**

John F. Benfield	4 <sup>th</sup> Plt Seargeant	17 Apr 1988 - Seattle, WA
Lennie Dale Bell	Hdq Plt Mail clrk	2 Nov 1994 - Lebanon, KS
Bill(y) B. Black	4 <sup>th</sup> Plt 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sqd	18 June 1998 in WV of an aneurism
Charles Blake	3 <sup>rd</sup> Plt Ldr	1995 (reported BB Jan 96)
Robert C. Coldwell	3 <sup>rd</sup> Plt	1986
Paul W. Costinett	At CO, pre-Europe	1987 Los Angeles, CA
Woodrow W. Fisher	At Exec Officer	1960
Lawrence R. Gillen	AT CO in Europe	22 Sep 2000; Maryland-heart failure
Lawrence H. Groover	1 <sup>st</sup> Plt 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sqd	Oct 1984 - Smyrna, GA
William F. Groves	S/Sgt Hdq Supply	1999 - Muncie, IN
Charles Grose	AT Recon Officer	Unknown
Russell Hedberg	Hdq Plt Recon Sgt	Unknown
John Heiterer	AT Company Clerk	12 Jul 1994
Justice Horton	3 <sup>rd</sup> Plt driver	1995
Frank T. Kysar	4 <sup>th</sup> Plt	1992
John D. Lauland, Jr.	3 <sup>rd</sup> Plt 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sqd	18 Sep 1995-Westwego, LA of cancer
Joe Lassiter	Unknown	1977
Michael Malinak	1 <sup>st</sup> Plt 1 <sup>st</sup> Sqd	Unknown
Fred Marsh	1 <sup>st</sup> Plt 1 <sup>st</sup> Sqd	1967
Alexander Moir	1 <sup>st</sup> Plt 1 <sup>st</sup> Sqd	1 Oct 1984-Cleveland, OH
Edward K. Norfleet	1 <sup>st</sup> Plt 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sqd	13 Aug 1989-Venita, OK
Orland H. Parsons	Hdq Plt 1 <sup>st</sup> Sgt	12 Oct 1997-Cincinnati, OH
Lee A. Premazzi	Hdq Plt driver	6 Jan 1997-Portland, OR
Ben G. Premo	4 <sup>th</sup> Plt 1 <sup>st</sup> Sqd	Unknown
Dalton D. Raze	1 <sup>st</sup> Plt Leader	28 Dec 1997-Springfield, VA
William J. Rogers	1 <sup>st</sup> Plt driver	3 June 1999- Springfield, IL - heart
Carol C. Smith	S/Sgt to 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt.	1960
Edward S. Stewart	Hdq Plt Comm Sgt	1991
Willard S. Strawn	4 <sup>th</sup> Plt 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sqd	Circa 1988
James B. Vosters	4 <sup>th</sup> Plt Leader	3 Feb 1997-Miami, FL
John P. Webster	Hq Plt Sgt to 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt.	1970

Note: Please direct all corrections relating to the above information directly to the M/C Editor: Raymond C. Smith 2365 Lakeridge Drive, White Bear Lake, MN 55110-7412 or send e-mail to him at [raysmith111@attbi.com](mailto:raysmith111@attbi.com)

**ADDRESSES AND PHONE NUMBERS**

<u>NAME</u>	<u>TELEPHONE</u>	<u>STREET</u>	<u>CITY</u>	<u>ST</u>	<u>ZIP</u>
<b>Anderson, LeRoy V. (Anja)</b>	210 579 3126	1802 Fantasy Woods Drive	Houston	TX	77094-3464
<i>Berry, Gordon</i>	616 363 6074	1225 3 Mile Road NE	Grand Rapids	MI	49505
<b>Black, Velma (Bill's widow)</b>	none	Infinia at Kensington - 613 N. Main	Kensington	KS	66951
<b>Blake, Jean G.(Charles' widow)</b>	513 984 5589	15 Falling Brook	Cincinnati	OH	45241-3243
<b>Bondaruk, George</b>	203 378 0689	25 Franklin Avenue	Stratford	CT	06497-5239
<b>Boyle, William B. (Ruth)</b>	812 546 4948	P.O. Box 35 (or 250 S Jackson	Hartsville	IN	47244-0035
<b>Bradley, Connie M. (Rudy Gillen's dghtr)</b>		5655 Cedar Grove Road	East New Market	MD	21631
<i>Brown, George A.</i>	508 477 1144	Box 1439	Mashpee	MA	02649-1493
<b>Claypool, Edward L.</b>	903 785 1197	125 23rd ST NW	Paris	TX	75460-3727
<b>Coldwell, Mary (Robert's widow)*</b>		13309 E. 43rd	Independence	MO	64055
<b>Daehler, Ralph H. (Sylvia)</b>	319 652 3737	700 Pershing Road	Masquoketa	IA	52060-2402
<b>Daniels, Rudy [aka "Rubbie"]</b>	404 872 8054	619 Park Drive NE	Atlanta	GA	30306-3659
<b>Denegre, John ( ? )</b>	203 795 4843	283 Merry Circle	Orange	CT	06477-3417
<b>Dionne, Norman R. (Regina)</b>	603-524-2867	9 Sargents Pl. - Lot 56	Gilford	NH	03249-2268
<i>Dole, Robert</i>	913 483 4274	1035 N. Maple Street	Russell	KS	67665
<i>Elbon, Arthur</i>	408 356 5041	Pueblo De Los Gatos, 420 28 Alberts Way	Los Gatos	CA	95032
<b>Ellis, Paul B. (Rosemary) K/290</b>	803 547 4913	104 Hilton Head Court	Fort Mill	SC	29715-9758
<b>Fary, Raymond E. (Irene)</b>	219 836 7974	8254 Madison Avenue	Munster	IN	46321-1627
<b>Files, Ira (Flossie)</b>	501 352 7515	Rt. 1, Box 56	Ivan	AR	71748-0000
<b>Gase Jr., Virgil C. (Seattie)</b>	513 858 1254	998 Hicks Blvd	Fairfield	OH	45014-2853
<b>Graves, Paul C. (Betty)</b>	859 987 3754	19 E. 19th St	Paris	KY	40361-1156
<b>Grimm, Clayford T. [aka Tom] (Lucy)</b>	512 452 2354	1904 Wooten Drive	Austin	TX	78757-7702
<i>Guhl, Paul J. (Betty)</i>	860 536 1626	45 Sequin Drive	Noank	CT	06340
<i>Harter, John (John Benfield's grandson)</i>	727 787-3574	2676 Wildwood Lane	Palm Harbor	FL	34684
<i>Harter, Vicki (John Benfield's dghtr)</i>	253 535-2966	11901 Alaska Street S.	Tacoma	WA	98444
<b>Huchingson, W. Paul (Ed Stewart)</b>	504 469 4581	4153 Loire Drive	Kenner	LA	70065-1747
<b>Ingles, Ernest (Ruth Brown)</b>	517 437 4704	1341 Hudson Road	Hillsdale	MI	49242-9345
<i>Jarrell, Melvin/"Bill" (Buelah)</i>	302 629 3062	Route 1, Box 318 -undelivble 11/99	Seaford	DE	19973
<i>Johns, George Randall</i>	503 236 2274	3728 SE 35th PL	Portland	OR	97202
<b>Kirk, William (Peg)</b>	410 228 7377	110 Choptank Avenue	Cambridge	MD	21613-1625
<b>Kolarczyk, Frank M.</b>	219 397 2778	3731 Elm Street	East Chicago	IN	46312-2225
<b>Krause, Michelle (Bill Groves' dghtr)*</b>	unknown	1208 N Finlandia Ct	Muncie	IN	47304-9093
<b>Lauland, Byron J. (John's son)*</b>	504 348 7651	2776 Colony Ct	Marrero	LA	70072
<b>Lauland, Cary J. (John's son)*</b>	504 689 4286	5026 Trahan St	Marrero	LA	70072-7656
<b>Lauland, Eric J. (John's son)*</b>	504 341 8911	1035 Cedre Dr	Westwego	LA	70094-4533
<i>Lewis, Charlotte (Rudy Gillen's dghtr)</i>	410 228 3272	6033 Corners Wharf Road	Cambridge	MD	21613
<b>Louder, Howard M. (Tuckey) HQ/290</b>	814 696 5774	811 Hedge Street	Hollydaysburg	PA	16648-2259
<b>McElroy, Robert F. (Tommie)</b>	631 669 8251	163 Van Buren Street	W. Babylon	NY	11704-3410
<b>Moir, Janet (Scotty's widow)</b>	440 843 5473	6871 Ames Road - Apt. 119	Parma	OH	44129-5833
<b>Nichols, William C. (Marti)</b>	307 634 4575	1124 Cactus Hill Road	Cheyenne	WY	82001-6121
<b>Parsons, Nina (Orland's widow)</b>	513 741 2882	9622 Crosley Farm #35, 5/1-10/15	Cincinnati	OH	45251-5116
<b>Pildner, John A. (Lynetta M.)</b>	440 998 2721	1806 E. 36th Street	Ashtabula	OH	44004-5804
<b>Premazzi, Deona Louise (Lee's widow)</b>	541 296 6440	1024 Whitman Court	The Dalles	OR	97058-4563
<b>Puckett, Jay R.</b>	913 677 0190	6931 Broadmoor Street	Overland Park	KS	66204
<b>Raze, Grace J. (Dal's widow)*</b>	703 569 4996	5621 Bellington Avenue	Springfield	VA	22151-2702
<i>Rezach, Howard (Janet)</i>	920 684 6148	1314 S. 16th Street	Manitowoc	WI	54220-5612
<b>Rogers, Connie (Bill's widow)</b>	618 457 2211	1203 W. Hill Street	Carbondale	IL	62901-2463
<b>Roxburgh,Alfred S. (Jessie) CN/289</b>	916 485 4226	2719 Laurel Drive	Sacramento	CA	95864-4950
<b>Sheridan, William J. (Peggy)</b>	203 458 9733	5 Paddock Lane	Guilford	CT	06437-2809
<b>Smith, Raymond C. [aka "RC"] (Molly)</b>	651 429 1051	2365 Lakeridge Drive	White Bear Lake	MN	55110-7412
<b>Smith, Robert M. [aka "RM"] (Caroline)</b>	904 739 9198	7061 Old Kings Road South Apt 30	Jacksonville	FL	32217-2910
<b>Snow, Gloria Bell (Lennie Bell's dghtr)*</b>	913 722 6385	5017 Reinhardt Drive	Roland Park	KS	66205
<i>Sutton, Robert L.</i>	812 522 4454	614 North Park - undeliverable 11/99	Seymour	IN	47274
<i>Swift, Edward L. (Ann) A/290</i>	606 744 6594	103 Hampton Avenue	Winchester	KY	40391
<b>Uremovich, Niklos (Katie)</b>	513 753 5887	3678 Bristol Lake	Amelia	OH	45102
<b>Vosters, Jane (Jim's widow)</b>	unknown	Nursing Center E-5, 19301 SW 87th Ave	Miami	FL	33157
<b>Wallace, Lovell R. (Cle)</b>	805 649 2224	130 Sunset Avenue	Oakview	CA	93022-9750
<b>Yack, Donald M.</b>	801 353 4432	Box 241	Neola	UT	84053-0241

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