

The Edge

Special Rockford Photo Edition!!!



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The Official eMagazine
Of the

World War Two Historical Reenacting Society

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From the Editor...

Rockford ended three weeks ago, but I'm still unpacking! Figured I'd take a break from scrounging through dirty OD web gear in the garage and produce this special October issue of The Edge. This month we have an excellent photojournalism project from the GD's own Heinz Thiel. Lest we forget the human price of the war, the 504th's Mike Bigalke wrote a heart-felt article about a paratrooper who never made it home....Remember, I'm always looking for articles, AAR's, equipment reviews, etc. As long as its coherent, I'll publish it!

-Matt Andres

**504th PIR , 82nd A/B Div.
81st QM Company**

mattandres@aol.com

On the cover: American and German armor prepare to go head-to-head at Rockford, September 2011. Photo courtesy Heinz Thiel

Incoming!

- ♦ Did you know the HRS monthly board meeting telecast is the third Thursday of every month??? Why not participate, and keep abreast of the goings on in the HRS? contact vice president Jonathan Stevens for a telephone code.
- ♦ The HRS is in the midst of a mid-term election, for the positions of axis representative; treasurer and secretary. The election is over October 19th. You should have received the ballot via email. However, if you need a paper ballot, feel free to contact me at mattandres@aol.com.
- ♦ The WW2 HRS currently has 1,050 members!

...All Clear!



Honoring The Veterans...

Opening ceremonies at the 2011 Walk Back In Time Event included this 21-gun salute from the members of the HRS' 84th Infantry Division. Photo courtesy LTC Tim Scherrer.

Attending the meeting: David Jameson, Jonathan Stevens, Bryce Seyko, Bill Sheets, Mike Saltsgaver, Dan Overschmidt, Charlie Gallagher, Garrett Swearingen, Ed Godi, Carlos Ramirez, Andrew Garrison, Vito Abbinante, Dan Steele, Rich Russo, Chris Kissinger, Matt Andres, Kay Thompson.

The meeting was opened at 7:04pm

The **minutes** from May and June were read and both were accepted by vote.

Old Business

Regional Events: Colorado Event; Lockport Event –Rich Russo discussed the request for Lockport which was approx \$800. The overall budget was \$3,000. David Jameson wanted to make sure all had seen the request before voting on it. **Rockford** was tabled as there was no information.

New Business

Charters:

Defunct Units: F Co, 502 PIR, 101st Abn – A change of command form was reportedly coming. Bill Sheets would contact them. 12th Army Group WAC – No members were reported for the last two years with no response from the unit commander. A vote was called, seconded, and the unit was removed from the rolls.

New Units: 321st Glider Artillery Battalion – had passed the S&A Committee. A question was asked regarding the firing procedure of the reproduction pack howitzers. James Steele replied that there was no wadding or projectile. A 12 gauge shell was used as a blank. A question regarding the type of wheels on the howitzers was asked and the reply was that the early war version used automotive tires on the gun. They have completed one gun and would commence building two more if their charter were approved. A motion was made to vote on the unit and seconded. The vote was four to approve the charter as probationary.

17th Airborne – had passed the S&A Committee with a very comprehensive charter. Dan Overschmidt reported 8 members and 2 more possible members. A motion was made to vote on the unit and seconded. The vote was four to approve the charter as probationary.

5th Infantry Division – had passed the S&A Committee. The unit commander for the proposed unit was unable to attend the meeting and the discussion was tabled.

B Co. 502 PIR, 101st Abn – This proposed charter had been deadlocked in the S&A Committee. The unit had broken off another unit. One person pointed out the unit was in close proximity to a similar unit. It was noted that the unit would need 5 primary members within one year. A vote was called and seconded. The vote was four to approve the charter as probationary.

July Board Meeting Minutes, Continued

Final Charter Approval: The Hampshire Rgt – had five members and had no outstanding issues. A vote was called and seconded with four for approval of full charter status.

81st Quartermaster Co. – had more than 5 primary members and had no outstanding issues. A vote was called and seconded with four for approval of full charter status.

250th Infanterie Division Azul – did not have 5 primary members. The discussion was tabled and the unit commander would be contacted.

Treasurer Report: Acting Treasurer Jonathan Stevens reported HRS Accounts Business Checking Account: \$10,643.87; the Business Savings account contained \$29,841.02; for a total of \$40,484.88.

Secretary Report: Acting Secretary Jonathan Stevens reported 898 members.

Commonwealth Report: No new information

Allied Report: No new information

Axis Report: no report

Edge: Matt Andres reported he was working on the next issue.

Open Board Positions: Charlie Gallagher – was interested in running for the Treasurer position. He is from Bloomington, IL and was a student with Computer/Business major; Andrew Garrison was interested in running for the Axis Rep. He is a Navy Corpsman at the Great Lakes Naval Base. He has been an HRS member since 2004 except with duty in Afghanistan. He is interested in creating more synergy for the German units and to help better organize the Axis side. Mike Saltsgaver – decided that he would defer to Andrew Garrison on the Axis Rep. position. Kay Thompson reported that she would not seek the Treasurer position since another person was interested in the position. A ballot would be printed in the next Edge and we would try out electronic voting.

Committee Reports: The S&A Committee had reviewed four charters.

General Exemption Number: No new information was available and the discussion was tabled.

Scholarship: A member had submitted an application for scholarship. Not all board members had seen the application so the discussion was tabled.

Open Comment: Chris Kissenger reported the Trimborn Farm event in Wisconsin has raised about \$4,000 for the local historical society.

The meeting was closed at 8:17 pm.



Museum Visit: Ernie Pyle Home & Museum

Last month, while participating in the excellent Kennekuk Park event, I took a slight detour to visit the Ernie Pyle Home and Museum, located in Dana, Indiana. Unlike most of my museum reviews, I will not bother to give you the exact address: if you can find Dana, Indiana, you can find Ernie's house!



The Ernie Pyle House and Museum; the museum is contained in the two Quonset huts in back

When I checked the Indiana State Parks website, it showed that the Ernie Pyle Museum was closed, due to a lack of funds. I traveled down there anyway, figuring that I would at least take a look at the outside of the house. I arrived and found the location—a small two story white house, with two WW2 Quonset huts set behind it. I snuck up to the Quonset huts, figuring I was trespassing (but also figuring Dana was too small to have a police force). As I was peeking in through the glass door, a little elderly lady opened the door, almost knocking me in the face. Where she came from, I do not know, but she moved like a ninja. She explained that she was the caretaker for the museum, and contrary to the website, they were open.



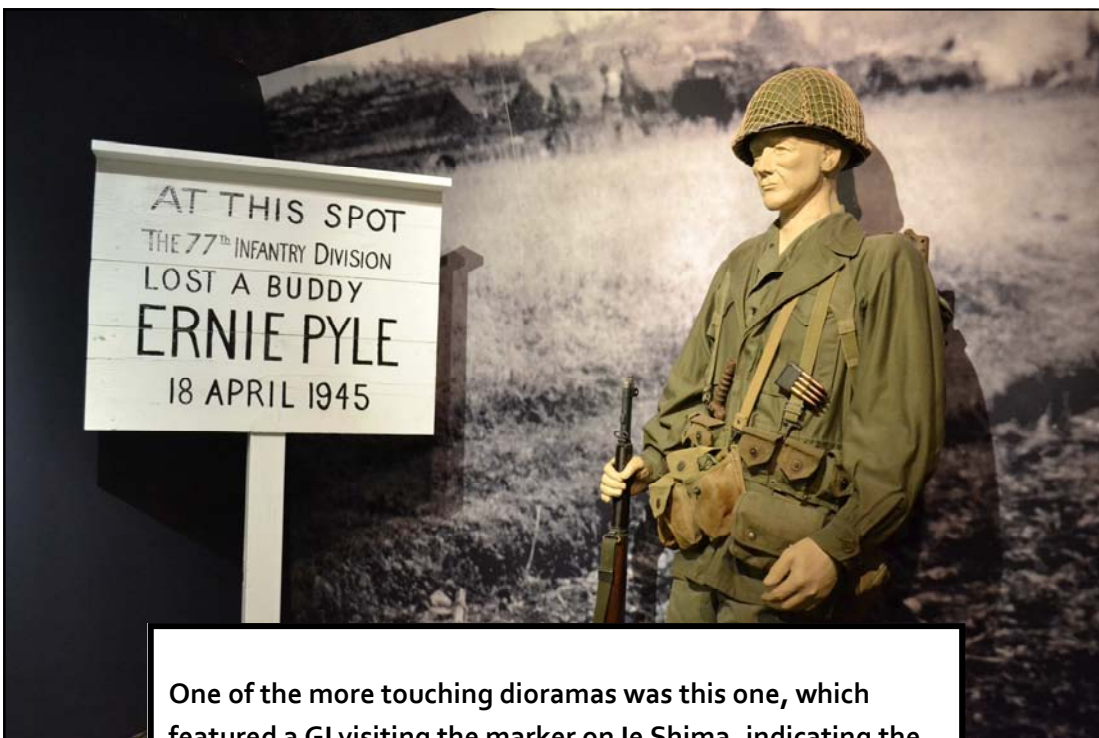
Part of the D-Day exhibit; much of the museum is interactive.

Museum Visit, Continued



A reproduction of Ernie Pyle's jeep, alongside a manikin of Ernie in a bivouac site

The museum itself was cool, and featured diorama exhibits of Ernie Pyle's adventures in Europe and the Pacific. There were also excerpts from his writings—if you'll permit me a moment to editorialize, I'll tell you he was the greatest of the WW2 correspondents...If you get a chance to visit the Ernie Pyle Home and Museum, definitely do it, you won't be sorry!



One of the more touching dioramas was this one, which featured a GI visiting the marker on Ie Shima, indicating the spot where Ernie was killed

Rockford—2011

Once again we at The Edge are proud to present a photojournalism project by 5th Company, Grossdeutschland Division's Heinz Thiel. Heinz was all over Rockford this year, using his photographer's eye for detail and composition to provide some of the best reenacting photos I have ever seen. If you do not see your unit in the following photos, send me an email at mattandres@aol.com and I will forward your request to Heinz. Chances are, Heinz has captured you on film!



Rockford Photos, Continued



Rockford Photos, Continued



Rockford Photos, Continued



Rockford Photos, Continued



Rockford Photos, Continued



Rockford Photos, Continued



Rockford Photos, Continued



Rockford Photos, Continued



Rockford Photos, Continued



Rockford Photos, Continued



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Corporal Lee B. Eastman - 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment

82nd Airborne Division

Regimental Headquarters and Headquarters Company Demolition Platoon.

by Mike Bigalke Company A 504th Parachute Inf. Reg. HRS

Cpl. Lee Eastman was born in Alabama in 1922. His family moved to Georgia when he was a child and from there the family moved to Columbia S. C. Lee enlisted in the U.S. Army on November 17, 1942. His U.S. National Archives records list his place of enlistment as Fort Jackson, Columbia, South Carolina, his home town. After completed basic training Lee volunteered for the paratroopers. Then after completing parachute school was assigned to the Reg. HQ. 504th PIR. Lee's MOS was in demolitions and thus was assigned to the Demo Platoon.

Cpl. Eastman completed all the combat missions with the 504th PIR. Sicily, Italy which was a combat parachute jump on July 9 -11, 1943. Another combat parachute jump on September 13, 1943 at Paestum, Salerno Italy. The 504th then fought in the Naples-Foggia Campaign's between Sept. 14, 1943 through Jan 1, 1944. Then on to Anzio, Italy from Jan. 22, 1944 to March 23, 1944. The 504th was then relieved at Anzio and moved down to the area of Naples, Bagnoli, Italy. Their reward for all the hard fighting in Italy was hot showers and new jump boots. Leaving Italy the 504th arrived in England on April 22, 1944. They then boarded trains for Leicester, England.

The 504th paratroopers settled into what to them was known as their "English Summer". Some time off, refitting of equipment, replacements, English girlfriends and yes more parachute jumps and training interrupted their English summer for sure! Twenty five 504th paratroopers volunteered for Pathfinder duties and jumped into Normandy, France on D-Day June 6, 1944 with the 507th and 508th PIR's.

The 504th PIR next combat mission was a parachute jump into The Netherlands landing in the area of Grave, Holland on Sept. 17, 1944. With their historic assault across the Waal River on Sept. 20th 1944. Also, the battle at Den Heuvel Woods on Sept. 26-28. The 504th PIR left Holland on November 12, 1944 for Sissonne, France arriving on Nov. 15th. Passes issued to Paris, more training, replacements and of course French girl's.

Then the 504th PIR headed into the "Battle of the Bulge" on Dec. 17th 1944. The 504th fought in places like Cheneux , St. Vith, Trois Pons, Basse Bodeux, Bra, Manhay, Belgium. This snowy and cold fighting took place from Dec. 17, 1944 to around Jan. 8, 1945. Then on Jan. 28, 1945 the 504th was back into the fighting in waist deep snow in Germany headed for the famous German Siegfried Line. On Feb. 5, 1945 the 504th had a few days rest at Grand-Halleux, Belgium. Then on Feb. 8, the 504th paratroopers were trucked to Schmidthof, Germany on the edge of the Hurtgen Forest. On Feb. 18, 1945 the 504th was relieved and sent in 40 & 8 boxcars finally arriving in Leon, France. Again, training, equipment, replacements and getting veteran members back from the hospitals. On April 2, 1945 the 504th boarded boxcars again and arrived in Cologne, Germany.

Cpl. Lee Eastman and the battle at Hitdorf, Germany April 6-7 1945:

On April 5, 1945 the 504th Regimental HQ per Col. Tucker sent an attack order to the 1st Battalion to send one company across the Rhine River after midnight on April 6th to seize and hold the German town of Hitdorf, Germany. Division HQ wanted German POW's so they knew what German units they were dealing with. Hitdorf was 9 miles north of Colone, Germany, and was on the east bank of the Rhine River. Chosen for this attack was Company A along with attachments of demolitionist, a light machine gun section, intelligence personal and a artillery liaison. They would assault Hitdorf by crossing the Rhine River in assault boats, coming across in four waves. The river assault took place at 2:30 a.m. on April 6th.

Cpl. Eastman crossed in the fourth wave. Their mission was to clear and defend the area surrounding the Saint Stephanus Catholic Church in the middle of Hitdorf. The church was to be used as the Company A command post. The Command Post section was commanded by Captain John N. Pease, second in command was 1st Lt. Reneau G. Breard and 1st Sgt. Norman Tesch and communications was Sgt. Homer Henry.

The fighting for Hitdorf was vicious between the 504th paratroopers and the Germans. German Panthers and type IV tanks along with German Fallschirmjager (paratroopers) were attacking the 504th non-stop. By 8:30 a.m. Hitdorf was in American hands and Capt. Pease's Company A paratroopers had taken sixty-eight German prisoners. The German Company size counterattacks kept coming. About noon Capt. Pease started sending the German POW's back across the to the west side of the Rhine River. The Germans sent in a two hour Artillery barrage along with more attacking Infantry and Armor after the barrage was over. The Company A paratroopers were now fighting for their lives. Cpl. Eastman was Killed in Action sometime on April 6th while fighting in or around the Saint Stephanus Catholic Church Command Post. As the Company A 504th paratroopers pulled out of Hitdorf in the early morning hours of April 7, 1945 with the help of Company I 504th, PIR Cpl. Eastman's body was left behind. The after action report stated that Company A was hit by at least a battalion of Germans, plus a platoon of tanks and artillery during the fighting at Hitdorf. Company A lost 15 paratroopers Killed in Action, and 46 Company A men were taken POW by the Germans. A count of 85 German POW's were taken with an estimate of 350 or so Germans KIA or WIA at Hitdorf.

Cpl. Eastman was listed as Missing in Action on April 7, 1945. The Germans moved back into Hitdorf after the 504th's withdrawal back across the Rhine River and I think the German grave registrations unit mistakenly picked up Cpl. Eastman body thinking it was of their own KIA's. The Germans moved all their KIA's north for burial. After realizing their mistake they buried Cpl. Eastman in a marked grave in the vicinity of Hilven, Germany, which is 7 miles north of Hitdorf. Both the American and German Grave Registration units were very efficient at getting into battle areas after the battles were over and taking great care of the dead for burial into temporary field graves or cemeteries. Cpl. Eastman's body was found on July 2, 1945 near Hilden, Germany in a field grave. His identification tags were found on his body. Cpl. Eastman was they re-buried in the temporary cemetery Grave 7, Row 1, plot number X at the Margraten Cemetery, The Netherlands. His parents Lee E. and Katherine where notified in July 1945 of Cpl. Eastman's change of status from Missing in Action to Killed in Action on April 7, 1945 at Hitdorf. The U. S. War Department made the notification.

On Dec. 1, 1947 Mr. and Mrs. Eastman received a letter "Request for Disposition of Remains" asking their (The Eastman's) desire and wishes, options and services made available to them by the Government for either burying Lee in a permanent cemetery in Holland or returning Lee home to the U.S. be buried. The Eastman's had 30 day's in which to make this decision about their son Lee's burial. The Quartermaster General of the Army has been entrusted with the sacred responsibility finial burial of the honored dead of WWII. So, Lee and Katherine Eastman decided to bury their son Lee in the American Military Cemetery, Margraten, The Netherlands. Corporal Lee Barber Eastman 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment was buried on December 23, 1948 with full military honors.

Cpl. Eastman had a identical twin brother who also served in an artillery unit during WWII in the ETO. Lee also had an English girlfriend named Doreen (Newson) Kennedy who lived in Leicester, England where the 504th spent their "English Summer" Lee had promised to return to Doreen after the war was over. I have had many conversations by phone with Doreen over the years....and to this day she states " her life would have been so much better if Lee had only returned and married her" she always tells me that "Lee was her one and only true love". Doreen has been to Margraten to visit Lee's grave many times. She has even traveled to the United States to meet the Eastman family including Lee's twin brother. As time marches on and we lose more and more of the WWII generation we must take time to remember this great generation. The mother and father who lost a son, a widow who lost a husband, brothers and sisters of the lost servicemen, family and friends who still to this day like Doreen mourn the lost of a loved one. Cpl. Lee Eastman's story will stay with me forever; killed in action just four weeks before Victory in Europe Day May 8, 1945.

-Mike Bigalke A/504th PIR HRS



Corporal Eastman

UPCOMING EVENTS:

SINYAVIN OFFENSIVE

08 OCTOBER 2011

FORT SCOTT, KANSAS

WWW.250SKICOMPANY.WEBS.COM

MOUNTAIN STATES REGIONAL EVENT

08-09 OCTOBER 2011

FORT CARSON, COLORADO

WWW.WORLDWARTWOHRSCOLORADO.COM

WESTWALL: DEFENSE OF AACHEN

21-23 OCTOBER 2011

FORT CUSTER, MICHIGAN

WWW.WESTWALL2011.EVENTBRITE.COM

OTTAWA VETERANS CELEBRATION

04-06 NOVEMBER

OTTAWA, KANSAS

RAYSHUMATE@YAHOO.COM

WADE HOUSE FALL TACTICAL

4-6 NOVEMBER 2011

GREENBUSH, WISCONSIN

WWW.401GIR.COM

STILLE NACHT

10 DECEMBER 2011

BLASTCAMP, HOBART, INDIANA

WWW.STILLENACT2011.EVENTBRITE.COM