

20th Combat Engineer Association of World War II



March 2012

Lost But Not Forgotten

Dominick A. Funaro (1923-2011)

Dominick A. Funaro (H&S/20th) died June 7, 2011, at the Albany, New York, Medical Center after having an aortic heart valve replaced. A native of Mechanicville, New York, he was born March 9, 1923, and was a 1941 high school graduate. After enlisting in the Army, he was shipped to England in January 1944 where he was assigned to the H&S Company of the *20th Combat Engineer Battalion*. He participated in the D-Day invasion of Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944, and remained with the unit until VE Day on May 8, 1945, in Czechoslovakia. After discharge, he married **Mary Cerri Funaro** on October 5, 1948, and operated the *Riverside Grocery* until 1973. Dominick then worked as a salesman for *Albany Frosted Foods (Sysco)* for 12 years, retiring in 1985. He was a commander of the *American Legion Post*, and treasurer for 25 years of the *Riverside Fire Department*. He also served as a Eucharistic minister for the *Assumption-St. Paul Church* in Mechanicville where his funeral Mass was held. He was interred with military honors on June 13, 2011, at the *Saratoga National Cemetery*. Two years ago in the *Wavy Arrow* we illustrated Dom wearing a World War II cap that his son gave him on Father's Day. Dom's widow, **Mary**, resides at 60 East Street, Mechanicville, NY 12118-1219, and we are sure that she would like to hear from anyone who remembers her beloved **Dom**.

Charles William Blankenship (1923-2012)

Charles W, Blankenship (B/20th) died on January 21, 2012 at his home in Cedartown, Georgia. He was born August 15, 1923, in Rome, Georgia, where he was living when he joined the *20th Combat Engineer Regiment* at the age of 21. He participated in the November 1942 invasion of North Africa, the invasion of Sicily on July 10, 1943, the June 6, 1944, invasion of Omaha Beach in Normandy, the November 1944 bloody battle of the Hurtgen Forest, and on V.E. Day in Czechoslovakia. After the war he was employed by the *Atlanta Gaslight Company*, retiring in 1986 as the Cedartown regional manager. Before moving to Cedartown, Charles served as a deacon at the *Riverside Baptist Church* in Rome and became a charter member of the 20th Engineers Association. After his 1969 marriage to **Genevieve Philips Blankenship**, they started to regularly attend the 20th Reunions where Charles was one of the most frequent winners of the 20th golf tournaments. Then Charles and Gen hosted the 1990 reunion in Marietta, Georgia; participated in the 1993 *20th Engineer European Tour*; and the 2004 Final Reunion. Charles was interred with military honors in *Eastview Cemetery* in Rome, Georgia.

See Next Page for Story About Charles' Twin Brother

Identical Twins of the 20th Engineers

Rarely were twin brothers assigned to the same military unit during World War II. But identical twin brothers were assigned to Company B of the *20th Engineer Combat Regiment* in time to participate in the November 1942 invasion of North Africa. Then on July 5, 1943, the brothers boarded an *LCI (Landing Craft Infantry)* in Bizerte, Tunisia, and five days later the LCI beached on Yellow Beach near Licata, Sicily to support the *3rd Infantry Division*. The twin brothers were photographed together on July 13, 1943, three days after the landing in Sicily. They are **George Wesley Blankenship** on the left side and **Charles William Blankenship** on the right side. **Genevieve Blankenship** writes that these identical twins were never separated until after this photo was taken. As Company B was moving into the island capitol Palermo on July 23, 1943, George became seriously ill which the medics could not deal with. So the Army sent George home with his discharge to obtain better treatment. Charles reported in the July 1951 issue of the *Wavy Arrow* that George remained in poor health for a number of years until he died in Rome, Georgia, in March 1951. As reported on the previous page, Charles remained with the 20th Engineers though V.E. Day on May 7, 1945, and died on January 21, 2012. Both brothers proudly served their country as members of the *20th Combat Engineers*.



More on Mini-Reunions

In the last issue of the *Wavy Arrow*, I reported that **John Homa (H&S/20th)** and his wife, **Irene Homa**, held a small reunion for the 1340th members living in New York City. Irene corrects me by pointing out that small reunions were held in Pennsylvania for veterans who were unable to attend the regular national 20th Combat Engineers reunions. The first was in Philadelphia; the second was in Harrisburg, and the third was in Pittsburgh. Can any of our veterans or widows remember attending any of these mini-Reunions?

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Tales of Those Who Served

This is the title of an 180-page six chapter treatise bound in a three-ring binder recording activities of the 1340th Combat Engineer Battalion from June 7, 1944 (D-Day at Omaha Beach in Normandy) to May 7, 1945 (V.E. Day in Czechoslovakia). The entire treatise was compiled by **Rudolf M. Gergel** of Jefferson Township, Pennsylvania, who describes himself as an "amateur writer and history buff." The text is generated by interviews with **Stephen W. Drevicky** and **Sidney T. Cousans**, both of whom served with C/1340th, plus several dozen articles reprinted from the *Wavy Arrow*; various internet websites; and the *History of the 1340th Engineer Combat Battalion* (Klatovy, Czechoslovakia, 1945). The treatise is illustrated by over 100 half-tones of both American and German soldiers, bridges, camps, fortifications, maps, military equipment, ships, and troops in action, all obtained from a variety of referenced sources. However, the chronological presentation is based on a diary kept by Sidney Cousans in a little booklet he found in France that had been used by a French store selling dairy products. Cousans' diary entries commenced on June 11, 1944, and the last entry is May 1, 1945, in Czechoslovakia. This diary was almost lost when Hurricane Katrina flooded Sidney's apartment, but the water-stained booklet was salvaged and **Wayne Radosta** provided it to Rudy Gergel for this treatise.

The absence of specific information in Cousans' diary during the bloody Hurtgen Forest is supplemented by interviews with both Drevicky and Cousans, and more information is included from an internet version of *Three Battles: Aranville, Altuzzo, and Schmidt* by Charles B. MacDonald and Sidney T. Mathews (Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1952). Specific details for 1340th personnel included in this volume are A Company Commander **Captain Frank P. Bane**; C Company 2nd Lt. **Jack H. Baughn**; C Company Staff Sgt. **Benjamin Arthur Patrick Cipra**; B Company Commander **Captain Thomas Creegan**; C Company Cpl. **Thomas W. Hamlet**; C Company Commander **Captain Ralph E. Lind Jr.**; C Company 1st Lt. **Lumir T. Makulski**; and Battalion Commander Lt. Col. **Truman Setliffe**. The November 9th and 10th delivery of medicines and rations to engineers in the Hurtgen Forest by B Company 2nd Lt. **Joseph Alter** is also described by including a *Wavy Arrow* story.

What Happened to the American POWs?

One of the most interesting and unique stories is Stephen Drevicky's account as a POW. On November 7, 1944, Steve and four other C/1340th members were captured by the German troops in the Hurtgen Forest. They are **Sgt. Joseph Szvetitz**, **Cpl. Emil Wanath**, **Pvt. John Griffith**, and **Pvt. Ray Sutton**. As the Americans were led away, they overheard the German troops suggesting that this would be a good place to get rid of these Americans. Sgt. Szvetitz, who spoke German, waved his finger and said that this was not a wise thing to do. One German replied, "Oh, you speak German?" Szvetitz then told the Germans that his father was from Bavaria, and he had many relatives in Germany. The Americans were then taken by truck to *Camp Limburg 12A* which Steve believes was near Bonn, Germany. Then a large number of prisoners were loaded into a railroad boxcar, 90 men per car with only a single blanket. After three days and nights, the prisoners arrived at *New Brandenburg, Rastauch Camp 12A, Stalag 2A*. Here Steve was allowed to shower, given new clothes made of burlap, and was daily fed a bowl of thin soup and a piece of dry bread. For the next five months, Steve was forced to work six days a week repairing railroad tracks.

On May 1, 1945, the Germans knew the end was near for them and they preferred to surrender to the Americans rather than to the Russians. A caravan of 35 German guards and 75 American prisoners started a three day and night trek towards the American lines. They confiscated a large ox and a wooden cart used to transport Steve and other prisoners who couldn't walk. They finally came to a river with an intact pontoon bridge which they crossed to meet the first American troops. Steve was later flown to *Camp Lucky Strike* in LeHavre, France, which was a temporary processing camp for over 120,000 Allied POWs. Here Steve was joined by John Griffith and met **General Dwight Eisenhower** who was inspecting the camp.

Most useful is the list of the 1340 Engineers who died in action as published in an Appendix of the treatise based on the website of the American Battle Monument Commission. Unlike the *History of the 20th Engineer (Combat) Battalion* (Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, 1945) which lists the 20th Engineers who were killed in action, the *History of the 1340th Engineer Combat Battalion* (Klatovy, Czechoslovakia, 1945) fails to identify any who were killed in action, except for **Pfc. Edward J. Leahey** who was a Medic for the 1340th. The deaths of both **2nd. Lt. Douglas Chambers** and **Pvt. Edward G. Grigaitis** were reported in the *Wavy Arrow*. Several others on the list known to have been wounded in the Hurtgen Forest are identified as having died one or two months after the 1340th withdrew from the Hurtgen Forest. This suggests that they might have spent some time in a hospital before they died. For the record, here is the complete *Role of Honor 1340th Engineers Combat Battalion* with the American Battle Monument Commission's reported date of death and cemetery where buried.

Name	Date of Death	Cemetery
2nd Lt. Douglas A. Chambers	June 7, 1944	Normandy, France
Cpl. Joseph S. Elko	November 9, 1944	Ardennes, Belgium
Pvt. Edward G. Grigaitis	November 7, 1944	Margraten, Holland
Pvt. Walter G. Gryskewicz	December 5, 1944	Chapelle, Belgium
Pfc. Edward J. Leahey	November 8, 1944	Chapelle, Belgium
Pvt. Lawrence R. Macadoo	December 30, 1944	Chapelle, Belgium
Tech 5 Cleon E. Manley	December 5, 1944	Chapelle, Belgium
Tech 5 Albert J. Mazzorana	November 7, 1944	Chapelle, Belgium
Pfc. Michael Pavlovcak	December 5, 1944	Chapelle, Belgium
Sgt. Stanley Polanski	December 2, 1944	Chapelle, Belgium
SSgt. Harris P. Reid	November 9, 1944	Chapelle, Belgium
Tech 5 James R. Thompson	March 12, 1944	Cambridge, England
Pvt. Charles E. Toomey	December 5, 1944	Chapelle, Belgium
Cpl. John P. Wachtler	November 9, 1944	Ardennes, Belgium
2nd Lt. John C. Williams	March 12, 1944	Cambridge, England

Wavy Arrow Contributions

We thank the following for making a contribution to keep the *Wavy Arrow* coming to you.

Sidney T. Cousins, Jr. (C/1340th)	\$35.00
Mary Funaro (Widow of Dominick A. Funaro (H&S/20th))	\$100.00
Eric Stechmann (Grandson of Merrill V. Woods (C/1340th))	\$25.00