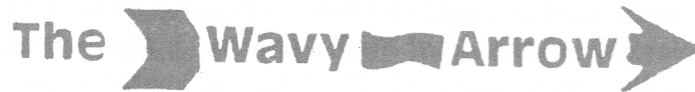


20th Combat Engineer Association of World War II



June 2012

Lost But Not Forgotten

Robert J. Pearson (1915-2012)

We first received an indication that **Robert J. Pearson (B/20th)** was missing when the USPS returned the last *Wavy Arrow* stamped "Unable To Forward." Without any information of known relatives, we contacted the *Post-Standard* newspaper where Pearson was living. Here we found an obituary reporting that World War II veteran of the 20th Engineers Robert J. Pearson died February 12, 2012, at the age of 97. Until then all we knew is that in 2001 Bob visited England and Czechoslovakia; he joined the 20th association in 1992; and he attended 20th reunions with a "guest" in the 90s. We now learn from the newspaper obituary that Bob became a pro-golfer nick-named *Grumps*, raised and raced harness horses, and retired as a paint contractor in Syracuse, New York. Do any veterans remember Bob Pearson?

Peter James Russ (1917-2012)

Peter "Pete" James Russ (C/1340th) died March 7, 2012, age 94, after surviving two different knee replacements. Peter was born October 25, 1917, in Harrisburg, and he joined the 20th Combat Engineer Regiment in time to participate in the November 1942 invasion of North Africa and the July 10, 1943 invasion of Sicily. In England when the 20th Regiment divided into two Battalions, he remained with Company C of the 1340th, was wounded, and was in Czechoslovakia at the end of WWII. Almost immediately after returning home, he married **Anna M. Camplese Russ** in November 1946. Pete then spent 23 years as an electrician with the Central Iron and Steel Mill in Harrisburg and continued as an independent electrician. After his first knee replacement restricted his mobility, he worked part-time for the U.S. Postal Service. A Mass of Christian Burial with military honors was celebrated on March 13th at St. Theresa Catholic Church in New Cumberland, Pennsylvania, followed by interment at Rolling Green Cemetery in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania.

Report on Douglas Pulliam (C/1340th)

Pat Pulliam reports that her husband suffered a stroke on August 2, 2011. He is now suffering from dementia and has been transferred to a health care facility. Doug and your editor took basic training together at Fort Leonard Wood in early 1943; we then traveled together on the *HMS Andes* from New York to Casablanca, and joined the 20th Engineers near Bizerte, Tunisia, as the first replacements. Pat, who resides at 101 Joshua Road, Weatherford, Texas, 76087-6037, promises to keep us informed about Doug.

Russ & Salerno: Just Like Brothers

In the last issue of the *Wavy Arrow*, we described twin brothers of the 20th Engineers. There were also two members of the 1340th Engineers who were just like brothers. They are **Private Peter Russ** who was under the command of **Staff Sergeant James Salerno**. Shown below on the left is a photograph of the two men taken in Belgium during the winter of 1944. Following Pete's death, Jim revealed to his daughter, **Rita Izzo**, that "Pete was a good man who would do anything asked of him. He was more like a brother than just a friend." Both were wounded in action, and both remained in the same platoon until the end of the war in Czechoslovakia. Then Jim returned to New York, while Pete went to Pennsylvania. But this geographical separation did not prevent them from maintaining a brother-like relationship. Pete's widow, **Anna Russ**, tells us that Jim and Pete would frequently telephone each other, and chat for an hour or more.. The adjoining photograph below shows Jim Salerno wearing on his lapel the *French Jubilee of Liberty Medal* which he received last year. Jim is also holding a frame of his other WWII medals, and a WWII portrait photograph of himself.



James Salerno & Peter Russ - 1944



James Salerno - 2011

New Information On the 1340th

As you have read in previous issues of the *Wavy Arrow*, your editor has been trying for years to compile a list for those who died in the Hurtgen Forest. Unlike the *History of the 20th Engineer (Combat) Battalion* (1945) which lists the 20th Engineers who were killed in action, the *History of the 1340th Engineer Combat Battalion* (1945) fails to identify any of the 1340th who were killed in action. When we received a copy of *Tales Who Served* compiled by Rudolf M. Gergel, we were delighted to find a list of the 1340th Engineers who died in action between June 7, 1944, and March 12, 1945. The information, based on the American Battle Monument Commission, was published in the March issue of the *Wavy Arrow*.

Then in early May 2012, **Steven W. Drevicky (C/1340th)** sent your editor a copy of the December 2, 1944, report of 1340th activities during November 1944. Thanks also to Steve, we found the entire document on Internet at <myfatherswar.com>. This report identifies fifteen who were killed in action during the month of November 1944. However, to my amazement only two persons are included on both the Battalion list and on the ABMC list. They are **Pfc. Edward J. Leahey** who was a Medic assigned to the 1340th, and **Pvt. Edward G. Grigaitis** whose death has previously been reported in the *Wavy Arrow*. Two others (**Cpl. Joseph S. Elko** and **Cpl. John P. Wachtler**) are reported as KIA only by the ABMC, but are reported as "Missing in Action" in the December 2, 1944, report of the 1340th Battalion Commander.

It is also likely that five additional members of the 1340th included on the ABMC list as having died during the first week of December 1944, could have been wounded in the Hurtgen Forest and spent some time in a hospital before they died. Or more likely the shipping of their bodies to the cemetery could have been delayed for several weeks. There is no evidence that the 1340th (or 20th) were involved in heavy combat during the first week of December 1944 that could result in casualties. Your editor has therefore included their names on the list below of 1340th members who were killed in action during the month of November 1944.

Listed in December 2, 1944, Report of 1340th Battalion Commander

* Listed on the Website of the American Battle Monument Commission

#Sgt. John Birkenheier	*T/5. Albert J. Mazzorana
#Pfc. Creymond Cook	#Cpl. Louis P. Novelli
#T/5. Jessie W. Davis	*Pfc. Michael Pavlovcak
#T/5. James M. Dempsey	*Sgt. Stanley Polanski
*#Cpl. Joseph S. Elko	*SSgt. Harris P. Reid
#Pvt. Max J. Gaspard	#Pvt. Wilton Rivard
*#Pvt. Edward G. Grigaitis	#Sgt. Frank Sammons
*Pvt. Walter Gyskewicz	#Pvt. Edmund Siok
#Pfc. William C. Hamilton	#Pfc. Hilrie Smith
#Pvt. Frederick G. Hamilton	*Pvt. Charles E. Toomey
#Pvt. Frederick G. Jansen	#Capt. Joseph B. Traywick (Dir. Medical Detachment)
*#Pfc. Edward J. Leahey	*#Cpl. John P. Wachtler
*T/5. Cleon E. Manley	

Continued on Page 4

More About the 1340th (Continued from Page 3)

The December 2, 1944, 1340th Battalion Commanders Report identifies 91 men who were wounded which compares with the list of those who received the Purple Heart as published in the *History of the 1340th Engineer Combat Battalion*. However, more than a dozen names were misspelled suggesting that the report was hastily compiled. The Battalion Report also lists 16 as "missing in action." We now know that at least two were KIA, and that at least six were captured by the Germans. But we still do not know what eventually happened to the following nine who were described as Missing in Action: Pvt. Irvin Cotton; Pfc. Forest Gigandst; Pvt. William Henry; T/4 Adven Koontz; Sgt. Stanley Kraska; T/5 Albert Messorana; S/Sgt. Harris Reid; Pvt. Thomas Ruffy; and Cpl. Emil Wanat.

More About P.O.W.s

Maryellen Eichelbaum, Daughter of Joseph Szvetitz (C/1340) has read with special interest Stephen Devicky's account as a P.O.W. in the March 2012 issue of the *Wavy Arrow*. The story told how the ability of Sgt. Joseph Szveititz to speak German saved the five American GIs from being shot. Maryellen reports that a German soldier told her father that because of his accent, it was possible to determine that his grandparents were from the Burgenland section of Austria and spoke that dialect of German. Maryellen was able to speak with Steve Drevicky to clear-up some questions to confirm that her husband spent time in *XIIA Limburg* (the processing center for enlisted men and NCOs), *IIIB Furstenberg*, and *IIIA Luckenwalde*. Maryellen and her brother Marine Joseph J. Szevititz III are now planning to visit some of the locations where Sgt. Joseph Szvetitz was held as a P.O.W. [Editor's Note: Germans were not the only ones to take POWs in the Hurtgen Forest. The Americans also captured German soldiers, but no records have been found that tell us exactly how many. During the dark of night of November 8, 1944, your editor was assigned the responsibility of taking a German P.O.W. from the heart of the Hurtgen Forest to troops behind the American front line.]

Wavy Arrow Contributions

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

Patrick D. Evans (Son of Owen Evans, B/20th)	\$100.00
Maryellen Eichelbaum (Daughter of Joseph Szvetitz, C/1340th)	\$36.00
Anna M. Russ (Widow of Peter Russ, C/1340th)	\$50.00
Gregory Russ & Joanne Nagle (Children of Peter Russ, C/1340th)	\$50.00

Send Letters, Articles, Photographs, Obituaries, and other News Items for inclusion in future issues of the *Wavy Arrow* to editor George Griffenhagen, 12226 Cathedral Drive, Woodbridge, Virginia 22191-2232. His telephone number is 1-703-966-1739, and his e-mail address is <gbriffenhagen@gmail.com>.