

MUZZLEBLASTS



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE 83RD CHEMICAL MORTAR BATTALION VETERANS ASSOCIATION

Winter 2006



Photos courtesy of the US Army Chemical Corps Museum, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

Thuds & Spuds

Joseph Cannetti —

Anzio 1944, Company A, First Platoon. Being a replacement in the 83rd CMB (November 1943), I never had a chance to train in the use of the 4.2 mortar and ammo transport carts.

My squad was selected to support an Infantry company attacking German positions. We loaded two carts with ammo and a 4.2 mortar and headed to our new position using dirt roads in an effort to remain hidden from German observers.

The dirt roads made it easier to move the carts, which take at least four men for each cart (one or two pushing and two to four pulling). On arrival at our new position, we hastily set up our mortars and were ready to fire. After establishing communications with the

forward observers, targets were found and we started firing.

Two Infantrymen came by and told us the Germans were counter-attacking and were not far behind them. We hastily loaded our carts and started back to our original position. With night coming, we took short cuts across some fields.

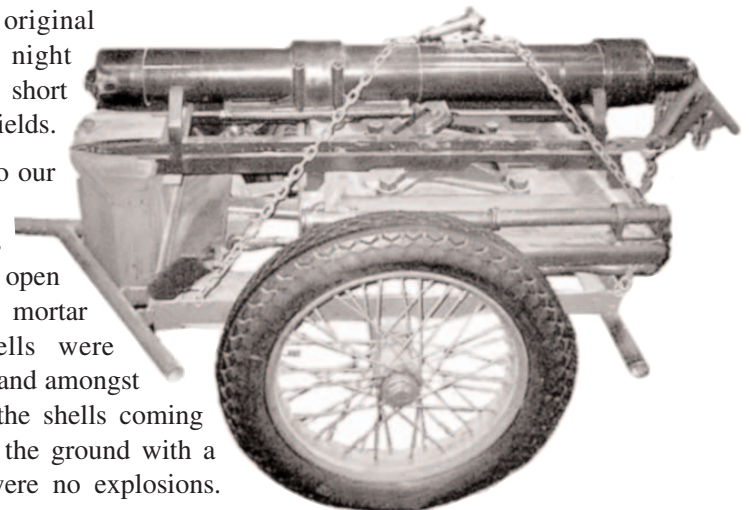
As we got close to our original position, the Germans caught us in an open field and poured mortar fire on us. Shells were falling all around and amongst us. I could hear the shells coming down and hitting the ground with a thud, but there were no explosions.

Luckily we came through that attack with no casualties. I think the German slave labor must have purposely manufactured those rounds so they would not explode.

This was my introduction to using the transport carts, which was backbreaking work, especially going across fields. As a new replacement coming into an established unit, it is sometimes difficult being accepted into the already formed groups, so you sort of live on the fringe. That mission helped me find my niche in the squad and gave me a sense of belonging.

Socially, the squad and platoon functioned great. We shared a Coleman stove for cooking and any time we cooked bacon or pork sausage, we would save the drippings in a German gas mask holder. Then, when we came across a potato field, we would spend all night eating French fried potatoes.

These are the things I remembered and never forgot. □



83rd Doubled in Strength



LTC Eric Brigham
Commanding Officer of the
83rd Chemical Battalion

Since my last column in the previous issue of *Muzzleblasts*, the Battalion has been incredibly busy. As I write, we are in the field conducting live fire exercises to certify platoons in convoy operations, so let me take a quick moment to highlight some of the amazing accomplishments of the Battalion over the last seven months.

Shortly after assuming command, we received numerous companies previously attached to the 142nd Division Combat Support Battalion. These attachment companies doubled our strength and added seven new Guidons. In late August 2005, during a Battalion Field Training Exercise (FTX), Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast. The Battalion went through extensive planning to support displaced civilians. Additionally, in late September, Hurricane Rita rolled through Fort Polk wreaking havoc, and the Battalion spent the next two weeks recovering from that very destructive storm.

Following that challenging time, we deployed two elements to Iraq, re-deployed a newly attached company to Iraq, and recently received orders to deploy two more attached units next fall. In preparation for combat operations, the Battalion has conducted a platoon certification FTX, a squad live fire FTX, and a room clearing live fire FTX. These

were all remarkable activities; and, we are assured our soldiers have attained the maximum competencies and skills in preparation for combat anywhere in the world.

There has also been a recent change of responsibility at the Command Sergeant Major position: CSM Gregory Rodgers replaced CSM Jackeline Fountain just before the Holidays. CSM Rodgers and I look forward to meeting everyone at the next reunion.

As always, the Battalion is ready to "Confront Any Mission." □

— LTC Eric Brigham

Support Our Troops

Gini Lemoine —

One of the most treasured items for soldiers stationed in Iraq is a pre-paid phone card, so that in those few quiet moments available, calls can be made to their spouses, children, and parents to let them know they are safe... at least for the present.

As Association VP, I have agreed to spearhead a drive to collect donations to buy phone card minutes for the current 83rd Chemical Battalion troops participating in the Gulf War.

Please send your donation to me at: 310 Mitchell Drive, Wilmington, DE 19808-1337. In addition, I will gladly accept additional donations in person at the reunion. □

Ed Note: Gini did a wonderful job of getting phone cards, writing materials, and other items to our soldiers during their deployment with LTC Les Smith.



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**83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion
Veterans Association**

53 Camp Avenue
Darien, Connecticut 06820-2708
203-595-9325
bhooover@optonline.net

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**83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion
Veterans Association Officers:**

Bill Hoover, *President*
Gini Lemoine, *Vice President*
Jean Decky, *Secretary*

•
Muzzleblasts Staff:

Publisher: Bill Hoover
Editor: Trisha Bridges
Art Director: Bill Steedle
Illustrator: Sam Kweskin *

•
This Issue's Contributors:

LTC Eric Brigham
Trisha Bridges
Joseph Cannetti
Jean Decky
Ann Hajdinyak
Bill Hoover
Gini Lemoine
Terry Lowry
Mario Ricci
Dolly Sarrio
Lee Steedle

•
* Deceased

www.4point2.org/83cmb.htm

President's Column



Bill Hoover —

It's hard to believe that it is almost time for the 83rd CMB Veterans Association's 31st Reunion. Your officers and their support staff try very hard to find nice, yet affordable, accommodations.

We are pleased to report that we have negotiated a nightly rate of \$99 plus tax (\$109.89) at The Lancaster Host Resort. Keep in mind that our Reunion is from June 8-11, 2006, and this special price provides us a fifty percent reduction in the hotel's peak season rates. Please make your reservations directly with the Resort at www.lancasterhost.com or by calling 1-800-233-0121. Be sure to make your reservation by May 9th and remember to mention that you're with the 83rd CMB to get this special rate. On pages five and six is more information about the hotel and a reservation form for the banquet.

The banquet will be Saturday evening, June 10th and the cost for the banquet is \$31 per meal. Please complete the form at the bottom of page six and mail it to me along with your banquet check. I would also remind you that it's time to send in your 2006 Association dues of \$15. Please send your check payable to the 83rd CMB Veterans Association to me as follows:

Bill Hoover, 53 Camp Avenue, Darien, CT 06820-2708. Call me at

203-595-9325 if you have any questions.

If you have attended any business meetings at the recent reunions, you are aware that our ranks are continually decreasing. Several times over the past few years, we have received donations to honor our veterans (living and deceased). Those donations help ensure that the Association's newsletter and reunions can continue. The latest is from Luanne Murphy in memory of George Tyma, and we thank her.

I look forward to seeing you all in Lancaster. □



The Ruptured Duck

A cloth patch and gold lapel pin depicting an eagle inside a wreath were issued to WWII service personnel who were about to leave the military with an Honorable Discharge.

The insignia, worn on uniforms above the right breast pocket, permitted them to continue to wear their uniform for up to thirty days after they were discharged since, at the time, there was a clothing shortage. This allowed service members to travel in uniform and showed the MP's that they were in transit and not AWOL.

Soldiers thought the eagle looked more like a duck and because they were heading home, the popular expression became, "They took off like a Ruptured Duck."

The Honorable Discharge insignia thus was nicknamed the "Ruptured Duck." □

Non-service Connected VA Pension Available to WWII Veterans

A June 2005 article in Military.Com by Congresswoman Shelley Berkley (D-NV) revealed that only about one in four eligible veterans are receiving benefits from the VA's Non-service Connected Pension Program (NCP).

In order to qualify for the program, veterans must have served during a "period of war," such as World War II, have been discharged under honorable conditions, and have reached the age of 65.

Eligibility for the Pension is based upon need; generally, less than \$80,000 in net assets, excluding a home and one motor vehicle, and an annual income below certain limits as set by Congress; \$10,579 for single, \$13,855 for married, and \$12,929 for a single housebound veteran.

For 2005, the maximum monthly pension benefit for a single veteran was \$846, \$1,109 if married, and \$1,034 for single and housebound. Veterans whose nursing home care is being paid by Medicaid may be eligible for a pension of \$90 per month paid directly to him. The VA will subtract certain income, such as Social Security or retirement benefits, but additional allowances are also made for some medical expenses.

If you believe you qualify for a full or partial Non-service Connected Pension, please call the Department of Veterans Affairs at 1-800-827-1000 for an application. Application forms can be filled out online at www.va.gov by clicking Apply Online, or forms can be printed out, completed and mailed to the VA. □

Ed Note: Thanks to Dolly Sarrio for passing this information along to us.

On the Home Front



National Archives

Ann & John Hajdinyak

*Ann Hajdinyak —
(As told to Trisha Bridges)*

Ann lived in Bethlehem, PA, and during the war years worked for Modern Clothing Company. The factory originally manufactured dress pants and other clothing for men, but when World War II came along, it started making military uniforms.

She met John Hajdinyak in October of 1941, and they married in May of 1942. Late in '42, John was called into the Army, sent to Alabama for training, and then stationed at Camp Blanding, Florida, where Ann was able to join him for five months before he was shipped overseas in May of 1943.

Ann went back to Pennsylvania to live with her parents. Her brother Frank was also in the service. It was the custom at the time to hang a Blue Star banner in your window if you had a family member in the service. Thankfully, both John and Frank safely returned home.

John was wounded twice and received two Purple Hearts. John was aboard the LST 422 that sank at Anzio. He survived six agonizing hours in the frigid waters and was finally rescued.



John Hajdinyak being formally welcomed during the 2005 reunion in Gettysburg.

He was in a glider that crashed in Southern France that killed the pilot and co-pilot. While recovering from his injuries in the hospital, he was not happy with the treatment, personal supplies, and food that he and the other GI's were receiving and made his concerns known; hence, he got the reputation as a "troublemaker." Ann and John wrote many letters to each other while he was overseas. Sometimes John's letters were so heavily censored that that all Ann could read was "Hi, Honey," and "I miss you and love you. John."

Upon his recovery, John and others from the 83rd were scheduled to go into the Replacement Pool even though they requested to go back to the 83rd. John, Vincent De Leon, and another (whose name John cannot recall) left the Replacement Center in search of the 83rd. After making requests to various units for assistance in finding the 83rd and being turned down, this small band of brothers eventually ran into some Black soldiers in the Motor Pool who agreed to help them. Over the course of several days, these kind soldiers

shared their food, shelter and transportation and enabled John and the others to reconnect with the 83rd.

Ann received Baccarat crystal, made in France, from John, which she still has today. Ann knew that John was due back home within a certain time frame, but not the exact day. John came into town on a train, checked into a hotel to clean up after his days of travel, dressed in a clean uniform and took a taxi home and surprised everyone. They were blessed with a son in 1953 and have been happily married for 63 years. □

Ed Note: John and Ann just heard about the 83rd CMB Veterans Association two years ago and attended the 2005 Reunion in Gettysburg. We're pleased to welcome them into our group.



Illustration by Mario Ricci



2006 Reunion of the 83rd CMB

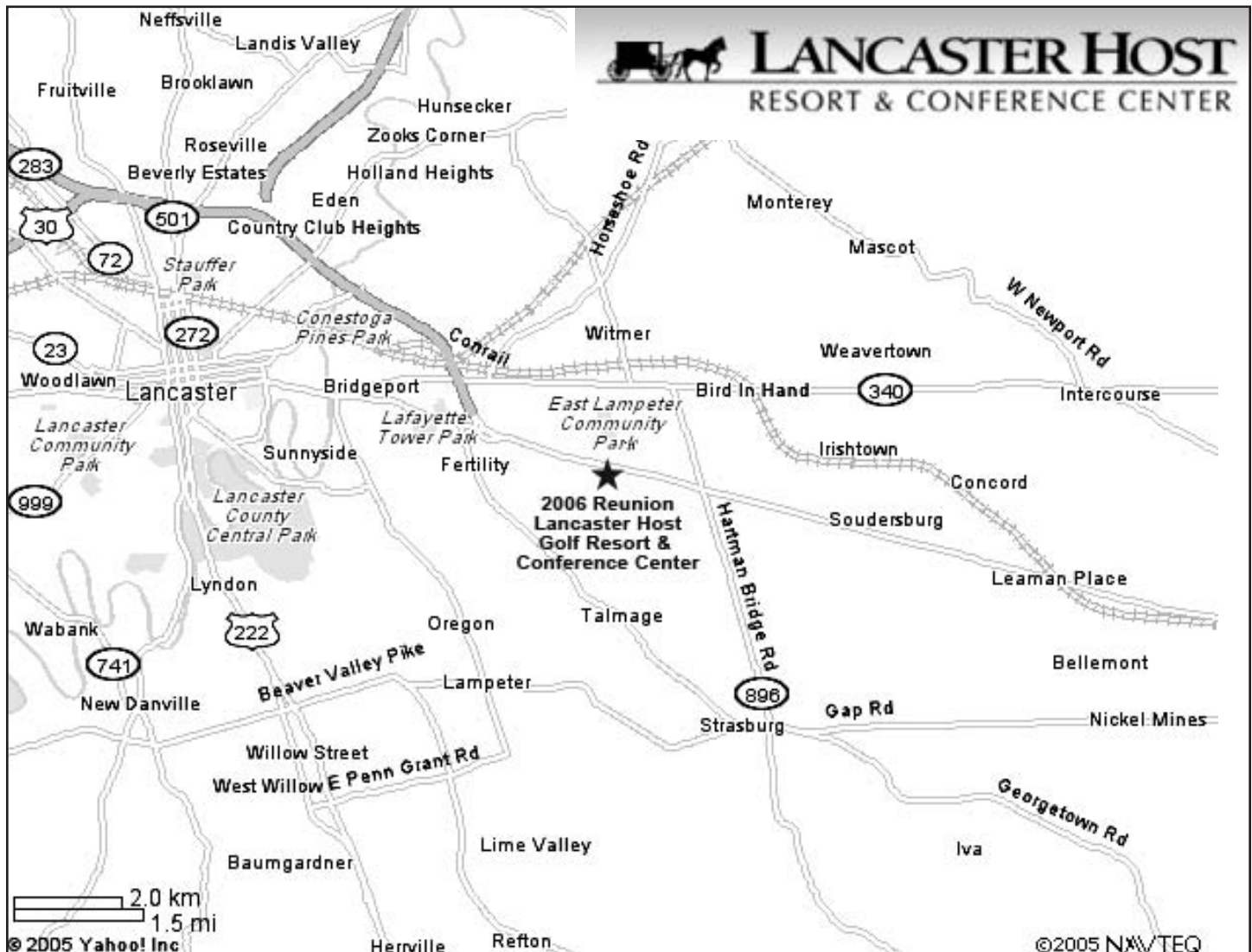
June 8 – 11, 2006, Lancaster, Pennsylvania



2300 Lincoln Highway East (Route 30), Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17602
717-299-5500 / 800-233-0121 / www.lancasterhost.com

In addition to the convenient location, this resort offers an 18-hole championship golf course, indoor/outdoor pools, over 200 outlet stores just a mile away, and a wide variety of eateries for every taste. Plus, it is located in the heart of

Pennsylvania Dutch Country, where you can explore the beautiful countryside and the unique Amish communities. For the adventurous, there is an amusement park right across the street, and many other attractions nearby.



Make Your Reunion Reservation Now!

June 8 – 11, 2006

The Lancaster Host Resort & Conference Center

2300 Lincoln Highway East (Route 30), Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17602

717-299-5500 / 800-233-0121 / www.lancasterhost.com

Important: The reservation deadline for a hotel room and the banquet is May 9.

Attractions abound on this resort property, and within a short drive. There's an 18-hole golf course; indoor and outdoor swimming pools; and tennis, basketball and volleyball courts. The 225-acre property features a 1.9 mile walking/jogging trail. Dutch Wonderland, an amusement park, is right across the street. Also, two large outlet shopping centers are nearby. The US Hot Air Balloon Team offers flights daily departing from the resort.

The Lancaster Host Resort offers Complimentary Shuttle Service to Lancaster Airport and Lancaster Amtrak Station. Lancaster is within one hour of Hershey or Gettysburg; New York is 180 miles; Philadelphia 70 miles; Washington, DC 130 miles; and Pittsburgh 250 miles.

Our room rate is \$109.89 per night, including taxes. If you would like to share a room with someone to help defray the cost, please contact Bill, Gini, or Jean for assistance.

The Banquet is Saturday, June 10. The deadline to receive the CMB rate and to make dinner reservations is May 9th. Please complete the form below (you may make a copy of this page if you wish). Mail with your check payable to **The 83rd CMB** to:

Bill Hoover, 53 Camp Avenue, Darien, CT 06820-2708.

If you have questions, please call him at 203-595-9325.

Please remember to bring door prizes!

Banquet main course selections:

- 1) ***Baked Breast of Chicken*** with an Apple Walnut Dressing Sauce Chardonnay.
- 2) ***Pan Seared Fillet of North Atlantic Salmon*** accented with Cajun Spice and Lemon Creole Sauce.
- 3) ***Roast Sirloin of Beef*** accented with Fresh Herbs and Garlic Burgundy Wine and Wild Mushroom Sauce.

Each of the above dinners also include: Roasted Corn and Potato Chowder Soup, Classic Caesar Salad with Herb Croutons and Parmesan Cheese, and Cranapple Pie with Caramel Topping.

Please copy or cut out this form, complete all requested information and mail with your remittance as indicated above.

Number of Beef Dinners: _____, Number of Chicken Dinners: _____, Number of Salmon Dinners: _____.

Total number of dinners: _____ @ \$31 each = Total check amount enclosed for banquet: \$ _____

In the space below, please ***clearly print*** the names as you would like for them to appear on the name badges.

- Veterans — please also tell us which company (or companies) that you served in during the war.
- Family members — please specify your relationship to the veteran (wife, son, daughter, etc.) and if the veteran is deceased, please indicate: "Deceased", and include the year in which he passed.

Veteran's Name: _____

83rd Company: _____

Guest Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Guest Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Guest Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Guest Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Guest Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Please include any additional names on a copy of this form. *We're looking forward to seeing you in Lancaster!*

No Way to Fly!

Lee Steedle —

Ever wonder why World War II glider troops weren't Frequent Flyers?

Nowadays, tourist class passengers often complain about cramped seats, re-circulated air and lost luggage. No such problems for us enroute to Southern France – we had no reserved seats, but we had our luggage conveniently on our backs.

Easy seating: We simply selected our spot on the wooden pallet floor, then tied ourselves tightly to nearby D-rings with ropes.

When the tow-plane cut us loose we had beaucoup fresh air. One man yanked a long bolt, and the big side door blew away, filling our box-kite like an air brake to slow our incredibly steep descent. Quickly inflated Mae West life vests helped cushion our ribs from the tight ropes and landing shock.

Why aren't we glider troops Frequent Flyers? First Airborne Task Force records show that only 8% of our CG-4 gliders – 27 out of 327 were salvageable after our virtual crash landings.

Maybe that's why no one was selling round-trip tickets for World War II glider flights!



Illustration by Sam Kweskin

A Few Photos Shared From 83rd Vet's Albums



LT James O'Conner, Robert Strock, Red Thompson, Herman Adams.



Charlie Lowry, Willie Tanner, and James Lester at the Brenner Pass tunnel exit in Austria.



Bowman, Boehmer, Wehrheim, Bridge, Cannon, Chamblee, Riddle.



A few men from one 83rd squad, including Seymour, Holstein and Winkler, near the Siegfried Line.



Perry Rice, Paul Cuva, Grady Harper; Italy 1943.

“Before You Go”

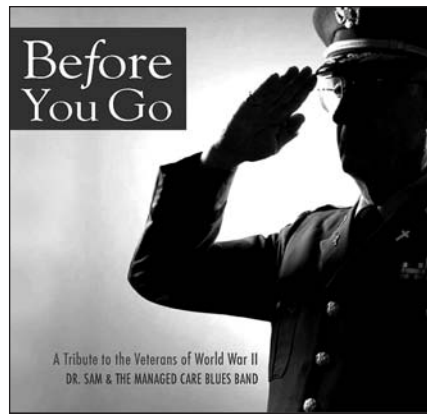
Jean Decky —

Dr. Sam Bierstock, a physician and musician, was leaving an airport parking lot in the early morning hours, when he handed his parking ticket to an elderly man in the collection booth. Upon paying, Dr. Sam wished him a good evening and the man angrily replied, “I took two bullets for this country, and look what I am doing now.”

Dr. Sam took a moment to digest what had just happened then addressed the old gentleman. “Sir”, he said, “I have had a wonderful life in this country, and I want to thank you sincerely for what you did to preserve our way of life in this country.” The man began to cry.

As he drove home, Dr. Sam was haunted by what had just occurred. The next morning he wrote the lyrics to “Before You Go.” Several years later, music by John Melnick was added as well as a visual presentation. The results is a stunningly beautiful CD whose lyrics begin:

*Quietly you’ve all
turned gray
You did your job –
you saved our way
Our life and freedom
you preserved
We’ve thanked you less
than you’ve deserved.
You never boasted,
bragged or asked
For adulation for your past
You did the job you
knew was right
And quietly you cry
at night.
For bodies maimed
and comrades lost
For sights beyond our
furthest thoughts
For what you’ve lived
and felt and seen
For what the cost of
freedom means.*



This CD can be previewed and ordered from Managed Music at www.managedmusic.com, by calling 1-888-426-7529, or by writing to Dr. Sam and the Managed Care Blues Band, 6 N.E. Fisher Lane, Delray Beach, FL 33483.

The CD is available at \$11.95 each plus \$3.50 shipping with \$1.00 for each additional CD mailed to the same address. The CD can be viewed on a computer, but will not play on a DVD player. □

Ed Note: A special thanks to Jean Decky for sharing this moving tribute and information with us.

Preserve & Share the History of the 83rd

Please remember to bring any war photos, journals, diaries, or other artifacts to the reunion.

Once again, there will be a computer and a scanner at the reunion. Any treasured photos or artifacts you bring can be carefully scanned or photographed while you wait and immediately returned to you! The images may find their way into a future issue of *Muzzleblasts*, Terry Lowry’s new book, or our website.

For additional information, please contact Bill Steedle by e-mail at billstedle@hotmail.com, or call him at 631-420-2430 or 631-513-2698.



83rd Reunion Movie

Terry Lowry —

I have located a movie of the 83rd which will be shown at the reunion. It was filmed by Capt. Julius Hulcher of the Medical Detachment of the 83rd – is about an hour long and in color. The movie has scenes from Anzio, Italy, France, Austria, Germany, etc. So far I’ve picked out Lt. Col. William S. Hutchinson, Capt. Ed “Bud” Pike, Capt. Ed Trey, Capt. Robert Edwards, Chaplain George Gaiser, and Hulcher. Included is one scene of an 83rd soldier being awarded a medal. □



Day is Done

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of these beloved friends. Please refer to the membership list for address to send condolences. Your notes and cards are much appreciated by family members.

Bill McFarland June 19, 2005
George DeLucas Aug 29, 2005
William J. Hodgson Nov 1, 2005
Dale Blank Nov 8, 2005
Marjorie Pike Nov 8, 2005
(Widow of Bud Pike)
Earl F. Kann Nov 20, 2005
Alma Vukson. Jan 05, 2006
Jessie Lee Roberts. Feb 10, 2006
(Widow of Harmon Roberts)
James “Marion” Lester . . Feb 20, 2006