



**PRESS RELEASE | March 7, 2024**

Soldier Accounted for from WWII (McCartney, J.)  
Washington –  
The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA)  
announced today that **U.S. Army Pvt. James B. McCartney**, 22, of Ridgeway, Colorado, killed during World War II, was accounted for Sept. 21, 2023.

In early 1945, McCartney was assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 222nd Infantry Regiment, 42nd Infantry Division. On March 1, McCartney was killed in action while his unit was on patrol near Wildenguth, France. The Germans never reported McCartney as a prisoner of war, and his remains were not immediately recovered.

Beginning in 1947, the American Graves Registration Command (AGRC), the organization that searched for and recovered fallen American personnel in the European Theater, searched the area around Wildenguth. None of the investigations uncovered any leads regarding the disposition of McCartney's remains. He was declared non-recoverable on Oct. 8, 1951.

DPAA historians have been conducting on-going research into Soldiers missing from combat around Wildenguth, and found that X-6492, buried in Lorraine American Cemetery, an American Battle Monuments Commission site in St. Avold, France, could be associated with McCartney. X-6492 was disinterred in August 2022 and transferred to the DPAA Laboratory for analysis.

To identify McCartney's remains, scientists from DPAA used dental and anthropological analysis. Additionally, scientists from the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System used mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) and autosomal DNA (auSTR), analysis.

McCartney's name is recorded on the Walls of the Missing at Epinal American Cemetery in Dinozé, France, along with others still missing from WWII. A rosette will be placed next to his name to indicate he has been accounted for.

McCartney will be buried March 30, 2024, in Bakersfield, California.

For family and funeral information, contact the Army Casualty Office at (800) 892-2490

**CAMPAIGNS**

**World War I: Lorraine-Champagne-Aisne-Marne-St. Mihiel-Meuse Argonne**  
**World War II: Central Europe-Rhineland-Alsace-Ardennes**  
**War on Terrorism: Operation Noble Eagle – Operation Iraqi Freedom – Operation Enduring Freedom – Operation Spartan Shield**

**CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE**

Greetings all,  
I hope this finds you well and enjoying the beautiful spring weather. Time has passed quickly since our last Reveille. I think it's because the RDVF has been very busy over these past three months and I expect the same will hold true in the future as we continue to accomplish so many great things.



Great progress continues on the development of our new website and we remain hopeful to launch it in September. Once up and running, it will professionally showcase our history and membership programs. I expect it will evolve over time as we continue to expand our availability of program offerings and research tools to our members. The planning process has been thorough and thoughtful, so we anticipate a very successful launch. Hats off to Myles Beecham and the website committee for their dedication and drive in what continues to be a very complex undertaking. It's also scholarship season again, so please spread the word to your college-aged family members. They can download the application and instructions off our website. We're looking forward to another successful year with a talented pool of applicants. Our mid-year executive board meeting is rapidly approaching. A major topic for this meeting will be the upcoming 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Division's OIF deployment. I know that the reunion committee is actively working this important event. I expect that we will begin sending out "save the date" info in the coming months.

The RDVF recently recognized and honored the return of WWII Pvt. James B. McCartney, B/1-222 Infantry Regiment, 42ID, who was killed in action on March 1st, 1945, during combat patrols to neutralize enemy machine gun emplacements. The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency formally announced last month that Pvt. McCartney, 22, of Ridgeway, Colorado, was accounted for Sept. 21, 2023. His remains were finally returned home, 79 years later and Pvt. McCartney was buried March 30, 2024, in Bakersfield, California. Memorials Chair, Paul Fanning purchased a beautiful Rainbow spray of flowers for the graveside memorial ceremony. By all accounts the ceremony was a moving recognition of Pvt McCartney's selfless service to our nation. It was well attended by the military, veterans' groups and family to include his nephew and namesake, James McCartney. I sent a personal note to James expressing our sincere condolences to the family and our deep appreciation for his uncle's service in WWII. You can see a video of this ceremony on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=313877281418256> or on [www.honoringourfallen.org](http://www.honoringourfallen.org)



McCartney was buried March 30, 2024, in Bakersfield, California. Memorials Chair, Paul Fanning purchased a beautiful Rainbow spray of flowers for the graveside memorial ceremony. By all accounts the ceremony was a moving recognition of Pvt McCartney's selfless service to our nation. It was well attended by the military, veterans' groups and family to include his nephew and namesake, James McCartney. I sent a personal note to James expressing our sincere condolences to the family and our deep appreciation for his uncle's service in WWII. You can see a video of this ceremony on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=313877281418256> or on [www.honoringourfallen.org](http://www.honoringourfallen.org)

Thank you all for the hard work, much of it done quietly behind the scenes, as we continue to perpetuate the history and legacy of the Rainbow Division together.

Until the next Reveille –Rainbow, Never Forget! Gary Yapple, RDVF Chairman

*Photo of the McCartney family at Pvt. McCartney graveside service is by Rod Thornburg/for The Californian; the red, gold and blue of the Rainbow Division floral tribute specially created by All Seasons Florist, Bakersfield, CA can be seen on the right.*

## RAINBOW REVEILLE

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**FILE TO NATIONAL SECRETARY**

Patrick Macklin, contact info above

**Gifts payable to RDVF (see page 8)  
and DUES FOR RDVF MEMBERS**

**(\$25./annually;\$50.LIFE for WWII veterans;  
\$200.LIFE for all others)**

## THE HONOR IN WISDOM

It is not a surprise that many veterans and family members feel at a loss when ending their term of service and find themselves in a civilian cultured environment. The loss comes from the noticeable differences and the conflicting sense of values that the service imparts compared to that of most of America.

The words Duty, Honor, Country are familiar to some these days. When remembered, it is often for being spoken by General Douglas MacArthur in a speech to the cadets and cadre of West Point. The General was speaking to the future leaders of the Army and knew from experience that victory can only be won when words are transformed into deeds. His experiences had shown him wisdom. The General understood that combat actions undertaken by any fighting force are brutal and contrary to many of the higher ideals of our better nature. We might have to be brutal, but it is not what we would choose to be. However, there are circumstances when we must take action. Hopefully when we do so it is with wisdom, a sense of scope and without compromising ourselves beyond our sense of justice. I believe that we know right from wrong and are called to do the hard right rather than the easy wrong.

The process of joining the Army is not for the faint of heart. From the first day, the training is designed to create a force that can repel threats to our nation, fight our battles and work to secure peace. This can only be done with trusted men and women who embody the values and virtues necessary. The transformation from civilian to soldier requires the individual to reassess themselves for the tasks ahead. There is little room for pretense and/or falsehood in combat. We have recently seen the dangers of a hollow military in the Russian invasion of Ukraine where tanks could not function because of graft and parts being sold on the black market. An Army runs on accountability, honesty, selfless service, respect, and hard training to assure the best chances of victory. The battlefield is not a place for selfish behavior or unbridled ambition. There are numerous victims of this type of foolish leadership.

The old saying "You can leave the Army, but the Army never leaves you", expresses why many of our Soldiers have a difficult time readjusting when their time in the military is over. Our civilian culture is often not as accountable as the military, nor does it prize virtue in the same way. The military virtues shared in common define this culture and have allowed military society to function and be healthy. We find that they are not often as apparent in civilian culture. Many parts of American society are excellent, well-formed, and virtuous. Others need awareness, guidance, and education. It has always been so. We are still learning.

To this end, many laws and principles that guide both military and civilian America have their roots in Holy Scripture, a source of wisdom and discernment. These laws and principles are hard won, having gone through years of struggle, growth, and refinement. It is incumbent on us to seek wisdom, knowledge and understanding as well as teach, challenge, and inspire others to do the same.

As a Nation we have made many mistakes and will most likely make many more. However, when mistakes are made we are honorable when we have engaged the spirit of wisdom to be and do better. I pray we never stop this necessary self-evaluation, nor cease to examine our motives and actions. Knowing the why is always more important than the how or where. As our beliefs and actions define us, may they be honorable, worthy of examination and found to be good for all involved. May we always be defined by our honorable actions and thought to be wise.

*Chaplain (Col. Ret) Eric Olsen former 42IN Div. Chaplain*

Most gracious and loving God, we come before you with thankful hearts. By your providence, we live free in this land today. This prayer now, is for those brave souls standing in the gap on behalf of our nation. Please protect these men and women, the guardians of freedom and peace, who serve the great legacy of Rainbow. Let us live as true examples of people who want only the best for those we have the opportunity to help. May we be your hand extended, to a world hungry for peace, joy and love. Amen.

*Associate Chaplain, Earnie Owen, son of Arnold Owen, WWII M/242 42<sup>nd</sup> "Rainbow" Division  
Reprinted from the April 2013 issue of REVEILLE*

## DOG TAGS FIND THEIR WAY HOME

*By Christophe Viller*

### Background



Lt Dallas B. Hartwell served in the Company A, 222<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, 42<sup>nd</sup> Division and went missing in action (MIA) on January 6, 1945 in Gombsheim, France. His name is inscribed on the Wall of the Missing at the Epinal American Cemetery in the Vosges Mountains, France.

On January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1945, Lt Hartwell was part of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Division's counterattack of the German bridge-head in the Offendorf-Gombsheim sector. On the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup> Lt Hartwell was mortally wounded by shrapnel while leading his platoon against a superior enemy force. During the retreat from the sector, he had to be left behind and ever since his status has been listed as MIA.

In the 1990s his dog tags were found. Later contacts with the administration of Casualty Affairs in Alexandria, Virginia revealed no additional information. In 2022, Christophe Viller who had the dog tags asked Eric Schell for help to restart the investigation. Eric had access to some X-files (files of unknown soldiers) and by cross-checking information and examining the terrain came up with a theory.

In May 2023, Eric joined a US delegation accompanying a 42<sup>nd</sup> Division veteran returning to the Dachau Concentration Camp. The veteran was being honored for his participation in the liberation of the camp in 1945. Zachariah Fike, a US Army historian, who organized the tour told Eric about the continuing investigation. With access to several other sources, Zach found the family of Dallas B. Hartwell. At the same time, Zach established contact with Christophe Viller and his family. They decided that the dog tags should be personally returned to the family, not merely sent by mail.

Zachariah contacted Eric and told him about his trip back to the area, scheduled for September 18<sup>th</sup>, with the family of Lt Hartwell's former battalion executive officer. The family of Lieutenant Colonel Donald E. Downard joined his widow Mrs. Elly Cook for a 10-day trip to Europe to follow the wartime path of their father and grandfather. Zachariah Fike and Lt Hartwell's family agreed that the Downard family would bring the dog tags back to the USA. The final presentation of the dog tags would come in a later meeting arranged between the Downard and Hartwell families.

### **Ceremony on September 18, 2023**

In preparation for the ceremony, Antoine Schoen, a volunteer in charge of renovating a number of Maginot Line bunkers, arranged for the opening of the bunker closest to the war-time monument dedication to the 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of September at 6 pm a group gathered for the informal ceremony. Twelve members of the Downard family accompanied Mrs. Elly Cook; Zachariah Fike, US Army historian; US Air Force Lt Kemper, representing the US Consulate; Mrs. Simone Bauer, representing the French town of Kilstett, Antoine Schoen, representing Association "les Gardiens du Rhin"; and Christophe Viller along with Eric Schell, both volunteer historical researchers, attended the ceremony.



The passing of Lt Dallas Hartwell's dog tags to Mrs. Elly Cook was a highlight of the ceremony. The Downard family will return the dog tags to the Hartwell family almost 80 years after their uncle was declared missing in action. Lt Hartwell left behind three sisters and brothers in the US who had hoped to see the return of their brother. The last living sister left a DNA sample before she passed away in December 2022, hoping this could eventually be used to identify their brother.

The historical research done by Eric, Christophe and Zach proved successful for this first step of bringing the families together. Hartwell's family requested that the investigation continue with cross comparison of the X-File and DNA, hoping that this will aid the identification process.

As a final tribute to their ultimate sacrifice, we hope that a commemorative plaque will be erected and dedicated to the memory of Lt Hartwell and his fellow soldiers killed in Gombsheim.

### **Methodology**

Information from primary sources (e.g. company reports, post-battle reports) has been cross-referenced with testimonies of surviving veterans (e.g. Lise Pommois, *Winter Storm*, Turner Publishing 1994). US Army Casualty Affairs (Alexandria VA) as well as the American Battlefield Commission (custodian of US military cemeteries) have assisted with dog tag information. X-files have been very helpful to compare data with other sources as well as MIA files listing dates, locations and units present during operations. Fellow researchers in the US who have access to NARA files provided similar information which we gave to the family for their request to the DPAA to carry-out an identification process of Lt Dallas B. Hartwell.

### **Lieutenant Colonel Downard's background**



LTC Downard's family traveled to Europe to follow in the tracks of their recently departed father and grandfather, accompanied by Zachariah Fike, US Army historian. Donald E. Downard's service in Europe began in Italy in 1944 where he served as a major in the 15<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division. He then joined the 42<sup>nd</sup> "Rainbow" Infantry Division in December 1944 when it arrived in Marseille. Promoted to lieutenant colonel, he became Executive Officer of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 222<sup>nd</sup> Regiment of the 42<sup>nd</sup>. This position put him over Second Lieutenant Hartwell.

On January 5, 1945, troops of the 222<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, already in Alsace, were ordered to move further north to Soultz-sous-Forêt. The battlefield reports recounted that the column of trucks arriving in Hoenheim was diverted to La Wantzenau and Company E was directed to follow the orders of the 232<sup>nd</sup> Regiment's command post in that town. From there, E Company was ordered to join *Task Force Ellis* of the 232<sup>nd</sup> Regiment in Weyersheim in order to participate in the counterattack towards Gombsheim to break the bridgehead held by the Germans since January 4<sup>th</sup>. The American task force launched its assault during the night of 5-6 January with little artillery or armored support. Enemy firepower quickly overwhelmed the attacking companies and they took significant casualties.

On the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup>, Lt Hartwell's platoon broke through to the townhall. He was last seen seriously wounded, organizing the withdrawal of his platoon and had to be left behind near the train station. On the 7<sup>th</sup>, LTC Downard arrived on the scene and found only 13 surviving members of E Company.

LTC Downard served a long career with the US Army, participating in campaigns in both World War II and the Korean War. He was wounded five times before being honorably discharged with distinction in 1957.

#### ***Photo 1***

*2LT Dallas B. Hartwell  
From the Camp Gruber, OK pictorial  
and review book for the 222<sup>nd</sup>  
Infantry Regiment (1944)*

#### ***Photo 2***

*Christophe Viller presenting the dog  
tags to Mrs. Elly Cook along with two  
of her sons and family.*

#### ***Photo 3***

*Mrs. Elly Cook holding Lt Dallas B. Hartwell's dog tags  
Photos 2 and 3 are from Christophe Viller*

#### ***Photo 4***

*Lt. Col. Donald E. Downard (from The Badge, 222<sup>nd</sup> Inf. Newsletter)*



# “I Will Never Leave a Fallen Comrade”

## A Brief Review of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency

By Patrick J. Chaisson, RDVF Historian

All recruits today receive training in what the U.S. Army calls its “Warrior Ethos”, a set of values by which every soldier is expected to live. This Warrior Ethos reads “I will always place the mission first, I will never accept defeat, I will never quit, and I will never leave a fallen comrade.”

“These principles,” explains a 2011 news release, “bind us to those who served before us.”<sup>1</sup>

All Rainbow Division combat veterans know a fighting soldier’s morale increases when that warrior knows he or she will not be abandoned on the battlefield if killed or wounded. The U.S. armed forces display an incredible commitment to treating their injured and recovering their dead in wartime.

Yet it has not always been possible to provide a full accounting of servicemembers who have become captive or gone missing. Soldiers sometimes disappear in the chaos of combat. Not every American prisoner of war is treated humanely.

After World War II, roughly 280,000 U.S. servicemembers who perished in battle or in training were recovered, identified and laid to rest. An additional 74,000 Americans were listed as “missing”, which meant no one was able to locate or identify their remains for proper burial.

By 1973, the number of missing U.S. servicemembers from World War II had decreased to 73,679. That same year, a total of 8,157 individuals from the Korean War were unaccounted for, with an additional 2,641 listed as missing in action during the Vietnam War.<sup>2</sup>



Starting in 1976, the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii took charge of all ongoing recovery and identification operations. This organization later consolidated with an outfit called Joint Task Force-Full Accounting to form

the Joint Prisoner of War/Missing in Action (POW/MIA) Accounting Command (JPAC).

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) was formed on January 30, 2015, when JPAC, the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office, and parts of the U.S. Air Force’s Life Sciences Lab all merged. The DPAA’s mission, as expressed in their public website, “is to provide the fullest possible accounting for our missing personnel to their families and the nation.”<sup>4</sup>

The DPAA deploys teams worldwide to investigate, recover, and identify the remains of American servicemembers listed as missing in action during World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, Libya, and the wars in Iraq.

Often, the search for missing military personnel begins when members of a DPAA Research and Investigation Team study source materials such as personnel files of the deceased, interviews with veterans, unit histories, diaries left by servicemembers, memoirs, photographs, maps, and combat reports. When possible, these researchers travel overseas to interview possible witnesses and examine written records from the Host Nation’s archives and libraries.

When researchers find promising information on a missing servicemember’s location, members of a DPAA Investigative Team – including experts in foreign government negotiations, DNA science, and

archival research – travel throughout Asia, the Pacific and Europe to uncover physical evidence of that MIA. These Investigative Teams also operate across the United States.

If physical evidence of a missing servicemember is discovered, one of DPAA’s two dozen Recovery Teams – including members skilled in underwater and mountain operations – then journeys to the site to begin excavating and recovering his or her remains.



According to the DPAA’s website, each team consists of 10-14 individuals (military and civilian) comprised of a forensic anthropologist, team leader and sergeant, linguist, medic, life support technician, communications technician, forensic photographer, explosive ordnance disposal technician, and mortuary affairs specialists. Recovery teams utilize standard field archaeology methods as directed by the on-site anthropologist.

This excavation process takes time, as do those scientific tests such as DNA analysis and study of the recovered individual’s skeletal remains. The DPAA staff also examines physical evidence, like uniform parts or “dog tags”, to help provide the fullest possible accounting of our nation’s missing military personnel.

In 2022, the remains of an unknown soldier buried at Lorraine American Cemetery in St. Avold, France, were exhumed and transferred to a DPAA Laboratory for examination. Scientists there used dental and anthropological analysis, as well as DNA tests, to confirm they were those of U.S. Army Pvt. James B. McCartney, 22, from Ridgeway, Colorado. McCartney was killed in action on March 1, 1945, while assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 222<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment, 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division.<sup>5</sup>



On September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023, Rainbow Division soldier Pvt. James McCartney was declared “accounted for” by the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office. Private McCartney is one of the 1,575 missing U.S. servicemembers from World War II who have been recovered and identified by DPAA and its predecessor offices since 1973. No longer an unknown, James McCartney now rests for eternity in Bakersfield, California.



**PHOTO One:** In April 2016, U.S. Army Colonel Christopher Forbes visited Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency team members as they participated in a recovery mission in Alsace-Lorraine, France. The team deployed in hopes of

recovering the remains of missing service members from past conflicts. (Image Courtesy DVIDS)

**PHOTO Two:** Audrey Schaefer, left, and Dr. Larkin Kennedy, right, both anthropologists with the DPAA Laboratory located at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, process remains discovered during a search of World War II battlefields. (Image Courtesy DVIDS)

**PHOTO Three:** Lorraine American Military Cemetery, St. Avold, France. For nearly 50 years, Pvt. James B. McCartney of the 42<sup>nd</sup> "Rainbow" Division rested here under the headstone of an unknown soldier. In 2023, his remains were positively identified by American military officials and transferred to California for a proper burial. (Image Courtesy DVIDS)

**PHOTO FOUR:** U.S. Army Graves Registration personnel pause to reflect on a fallen soldier's "supreme sacrifice" somewhere in Europe during World War II. (Image Courtesy National Archives)

## End Notes:

<sup>1</sup>Army G-1 for STAND-TO! Electronic Magazine January 5, 2011:

[https://www.army.mil/article/50082/warrior\\_ethos](https://www.army.mil/article/50082/warrior_ethos).

<sup>2</sup>Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, World War II Accounting:

<https://dpaa-mil.sites.crmforce.mil/dpaaFamWebWWII>

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Department of Defense:

<https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/605362/>

<sup>4</sup>Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency Frequently Asked Questions:

<https://www.dpaa.mil/Resources/FAQs/>

<sup>5</sup>U.S. Department of Defense Agency News Release:

<https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases/PressReleaseArticleView/Article/3699337/soldier-accounted-for-from-wwii-mccartney-j/>

## Living a Life That Matters

Ben Lesser's life began again on April 29, 1945.

That's the day elements of the Rainbow Division entered Dachau concentration camp and liberated thousands of prisoners. Ben was only sixteen years old, and had arrived at Dachau just days before. He was a passenger on that doomed and infamous death train from Buchenwald that had poured a fresh shipment of tortured souls and their flesh and bones into the camp. Most of them were dead on arrival, but just a few emaciated men were able to crawl from the train. Ben and his cousin Isaac were two of them.

Ben had survived the ghetto in Poland, and the camps of Auschwitz, Durnhau, and Buchenwald. By the day he arrived to this fresh yet painfully familiar hell-scape of Dachau, the endless stacks of bodies, the last gasps of dying humans, and the multitude of humans just like him clinging to hopes of survival had become a normal part of his daily life.

What happened on April 29 was not familiar, yet was the most welcome sight accompanied by the sound of four ecstatic syllables under the dense grey sky that day: "Americans!"

Indeed, the Americans had arrived, and word spread through the camp like lightning. The GIs who entered Dachau were greeted by these cries, and by a sight they were not at all prepared for: thousands of skeletal prisoners in drab grey stripes and their desperate gratitude for the men in olive green fatigues.

"They were like gods to us", Ben says when he describes what it was like to see the GIs for the first time. His eyes widen as he says the words with hushed awe.

A pair of those "gods" approached Ben and Isaac and handed them a can of spam with the best of intentions. Unfortunately, this gift was too much for Isaac's malnourished and weak body to digest, and he died in Ben's arms that evening.

16-year-old Ben had watched his family be pistol whipped by Nazis, had been separated from his parents in Poland, and lost other family members including most of his siblings, to the ramp at Auschwitz and the infamous Dr. Mengele. This final loss was too much, and Ben clung to his lifeless cousin Isaac as long as he could before Isaac was taken away to be buried.

Shortly thereafter, Ben fell into a coma that lasted for three months. Upon waking, he was reunited with his sister Lola - the only other surviving member of his immediate family.

This new life that the Rainbow Division helped to usher forth for Ben has been full and never taken for granted. Eventually, he moved to America where he met his soul mate Jean and continued rebuilding his life from the ashes of the horrors in Europe. Together they started a family and founded a successful real estate company. Upon retiring in 1995, Ben found the Zachor Foundation, which strives daily to honor, educate, and remember.



Ben is a living example of heart, survival, resilience, and a commitment to living a life that matters - which just happens to be the title of his memoir about life before, during, and after the Holocaust.



Ben's story, like all stories of triumph over tragedy, offers us perspective on what really does matter, no matter your personal story. Through Ben's courageous re-telling and remembrance of all that he lost, endured, and witnessed, he reminds us of the importance of holding memories with a blend of tenacity and reverence as we strive to build a meaningful future that does not let the past entangle us, hold us down, or define who we are.

To read more about Ben's work and order his book

*Living a Life That Matters:* <https://www.zachorfoundation.org/>

As a war historian, I am dedicated to honoring the stories of the past. Through researching and preserving the stories of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Division for the past six years, I know very well how deeply the stories of the survivors of Dachau are intrinsically woven into the stories of the Rainbow. It's a profound honor to spend time with survivors and veterans and listen to their stories. Like the GIs, the survivors who were there at Dachau on that day so long ago hold a special place in my heart. It was a privilege, in the truest sense of the word, to sit and listen to Ben's stories in his home. <https://www.erinfaithallen.com/>  
*Photos of Erin Faith Allen and Ben Lesser are provided by Erin.*

## RDVF 2024 SCHOLARSHIP NEWS

Last year we were able to award 14 scholarships for both graduate and undergraduate college students. This year we encourage Lifetime members who are family and friends to encourage those they know to apply for the 2024 RDVF scholarship. We are updating the application form to reflect no SAT or ACT requirement anymore which should ease the application process. We encourage you to ask your mentors for letters of recommendation now. Letters of recommendation are one of the items that are a key part of scholarship applications and can hold up the process if you are contacting a teacher or coach during the summer months. Think ahead and look at the scholarship information as you are waiting to hear back from your college choices. The RDVF is proud to offer funds to sponsor students as they work to achieve their educational goals. Send your questions by email to [42idscholars@gmail.com](mailto:42idscholars@gmail.com)

Tammy Moss-Hicks, Scholarship Chair

## NY National Guard senior leader takes command of 42nd Infantry Division



LATHAM, NY, UNITED STATES

02.03.2024

Story by Maj. Jean Kratzer  
New York National Guard

New York Army National Guard Major General Joseph Biehler, a veteran of the Iraq and Afghanistan War, took command of the Troy, New York-based 42nd Infantry Division during a ceremony held on February 3, 2024, at New York National Guard headquarters in Latham, N.Y.

Biehler, a resident of Webster, N.Y., had been serving as the Commanding General of the 53rd Troop Command since 2021.

The 42nd Infantry Division is one of eight National Guard division headquarters.

Biehler replaces Army National Guard Maj. Gen. Thomas Spencer, who is retiring after 37 years of service in the military. Spencer took command of the division in April of 2021.

"Joe was selected based on his leadership style, experience, and how well he takes care of his people, said Major General Ray Shields, the adjutant general of the New York National Guard.

"You have a critical job leading one of the Army's 18 divisions. Keep focusing on our people within the organization, and you will continue to be successful," Shields told Biehler.

In his remarks, Biehler told the Soldiers present that it was a tremendous honor to be selected as commander of a division with the history of the 42nd.

"This is an honorable division with a long history," Biehler said. "Very few have stood where you are right now in this formation. We are a proud, honorable, and small community," he added.

The 42nd Infantry Division, with headquarters in Troy, N.Y., has 20,000 Soldiers assigned to elements in New York, New England, and New Jersey. The 42nd Infantry Division was first organized in World War I by National Guard forces across the United States. The division's first chief-of-staff, Gen. Douglas MacArthur, said the division would stretch across the United States "like a rainbow." Since World War I, the division has been nicknamed "The Rainbow Division," and its patch is a rainbow. The division fought through southern Germany during World War II and liberated the Dachau Concentration Camp. In 2005 the division headquarters and support elements deployed to Iraq. That deployment made it the first National Guard division to see combat since the Korean War.

During the ceremony, the flag, or colors, of the 42nd Infantry Division was transferred from Spencer to Biehler by Shields. This symbolized the transfer of authority for the men and women of the division.

The change of command ceremony also featured the colors of the brigades, which fall under the 42nd Infantry Division for training purposes.

Prior to the ceremony, Biehler was promoted from a one-star brigadier general to the two-star major general rank.

Following the change of command, Spencer was recognized with the award of the Distinguished Service Medal and formally retired from the Army.

"Thank you, everyone, for the past 37 years. It's been a great honor and thank you all for your support; I would never have made it all these years without every one of you," Spencer said.

"I am overwhelmed with a sense of gratitude and humility. We volunteer to serve and take on that obligation freely to serve this country," he said. Biehler was commissioned as an infantry officer in May 1987 and has held positions as a rifle platoon leader, mortar platoon leader, support platoon leader, company commander, battalion supply, operations and executive officer, division liaison officer, battalion commander and commander of the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

He served as the operations officer of the 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment during its deployment to Iraq in 2004 and commanded the battalion as *Task Force Iron* during its deployment to Afghanistan in 2012. Biehler is a graduate of the Infantry Officer Basic Course, Infantry Officer Advanced Course, Combined Arms Staff Service School, Intermediate Level Education, Infantry Pre-Command Course, Army War College, Airborne School, Air Assault School, and Ranger School. Biehler was born in Rochester, New York, and graduated from McQuaid Jesuit High School in 1983. He earned Bachelor of Science degrees in both Accounting and Management from St. John Fisher College in 1987.

Biehler's awards include the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Global War on Terrorism, Basic Parachutist Badge, Air Assault Badge, Ranger Tab, and the Combat Infantryman Badge. He and his wife, Sonya, live in Webster, N.Y., with their twin sons, Thomas, and Andrew. In civilian life, Biehler is the senior finance manager for Rochester's Harris Corporation.

*U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Grace Nechanicky*

## RAINBOW RIFLEMEN

By Robert Spearing, III, G Company, 242<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment, 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry "Rainbow" Division, World War II

**November 23, 1944** It is 10:30 a.m., November 23, 1944. It is Thanksgiving Day, and I am looking up at the gangplank that leads up to the deck of the United States Coast Guard troop transport, the *General William M. Black*. To me, this is like the final thirteen steps of the gallows. Once I mount the gangplank, it's all over. There will be no further reprieves; I will be on my way to the battlefields of Europe, and I do not want to go to war.

Somehow, I can't believe that I have arrived at this moment. All my life, from the first time I was ever able to understand anything about war, I had a haunting premonition that one day I would be sent into battle as an ordinary infantry soldier, and that in battle, I would die.

From the very first time I began to imagine this and how it might feel to die being killed in action, I also began to nurture a counter thought that maybe, just maybe, I might be mistaken that this type of death was inevitable, and that surely something might come about which would turn my supposed destiny around and rescue me from such a macabre fate.

But now, standing on the rough-planked dock (listed as Pier 88, New York City, NY) that overlooks the choppy, gray waters of the Hudson River, clad in my full infantry battle dress: helmet, rifle, bayonet, cartridge belt, combat jacket, OD trousers, combat boots, full field pack with entrenching shovel, gas mask and a 75-lb. duffle bag over my left shoulder, I stare up at the huge, gray hull and superstructure of the ship

that would soon be taking me across the Atlantic, and finally resign myself to the fact that my long dreaded childhood nightmares and fears would soon be realized.

It was a little over an hour ago that my infantry company, commanded by Captain Bernard G. Reiter, had boarded the troop train at Camp Kilmer, New Brunswick, New Jersey. The ride to the Jersey City ferry slip, located just in front of the Colgate-Palmolive Soap Company's huge clock, had been uneventful and very quiet for troops taking their final view of their homeland. In fact, very little was said at all, aside from the necessary orders to assemble platoons and march onto the ferry.

Those of us who could, wormed our way forward to the open forward platform as the ferry (known as the Binghamton – now a floating restaurant on the Jersey side of the Hudson) pulled away from the Jersey City shore and headed across and up the river to take in the sights of the New York waterfront. The magnificent panorama of towering skyscrapers and ships were beautifully etched in the clear, sunny, but chilly November morning and had all of my mostly southern western companions visibly awed. So much so, that I couldn't help but feel a certain twinge of some personal, regional pride even though I, of course, had nothing to do with the sights that they were observing. Knowing that I was a native, there were many questions, and I tried to answer all of them the best way I knew how, but my mind was now preoccupied by something else: what pier was our ferry going to?

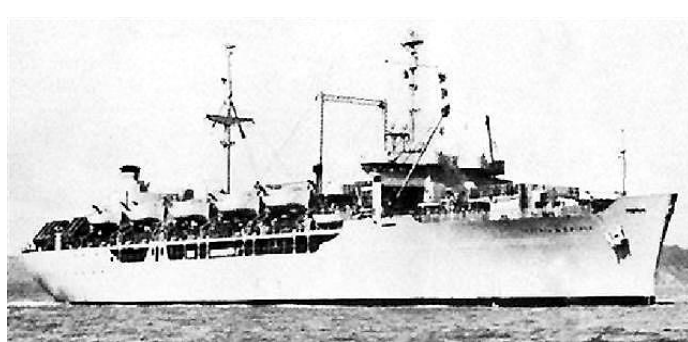
I had been praying that we would be going to Pier 90. This was the permanent N.Y. berth of the British Queen Mary and Elizabeth. I would feel very safe crossing the Atlantic in either one of these ships because both steamed so fast, that it would be just about impossible for a German U-boat (Ger: Unterseeboot, a German submarine) to get within torpedo range. Better yet, in addition to their mechanical ability to outrun and outmaneuver enemy submarines and most other combat vessels, these ships were thoroughly equipped with the most modern and sophisticated radar and sonar devices that forewarned them well in advance of any unidentified or suspicious objects in their path above or below the water's surface. Another important bonus in traveling on a Queen was her monstrous size. A thousand foot waterline assured one of a very comfortable passage overseas. Both ships rocked from side to side but there was none of the bucking that shorter ships experienced.

Although now a resident of Union City, just a few blocks further west of my birthplace, this ferry ride up the Hudson was the final stroll for me through my former front yard. It was just twenty-five years and six months ago that I was born in a two-family brick house at 427 Gregory Avenue, Weehawken Heights, New Jersey. The house sits on the cliffs known as the Palisades, some 300 feet in elevation. It faces and looks down on the river just above the Jersey entrance to the Lincoln Tunnel.

As a child, from the vantage point of a small playground to the north of my house, I could spend long hours looking down from my private aerie at a most beautiful sight, a fantastic lineup of the most famous ocean liners in the world, and I knew them all, such wonderful names: *Normandie, Rex, Bremen, Europa, Queen of Bermuda, Monarch of Bermuda, Berengeria, Mauritania, Gripsholm, Statendam, Rotterdam, Stavangerfjord, Queen Elizabeth, Queen Mary, Ile de France, Conti Di Savoya*. They were all neatly berthed, one after the other, clustered underneath the towering Manhattan skyline like so many huge toys.

Liking ships came naturally to me, as my father was a captain in the Merchant Marine. My grandfather was also a captain of a whaling ship. My Uncle Joe was a captain and several other uncles and relatives were ship's engineers. Sometimes their ships would dock across the river or at the foot of our Palisade in Hoboken. They weren't home often, but when they were, it was always a treat for me, not only because there were always presents, but also lots of talk about ships and shipping. They had all served in World War I in the Naval Reserve – a fact I learned early and heard a great deal about.

We are not going to Pier 90, but it doesn't matter. I can see that neither of the Queens is in. Instead, the ferry nudges into and ties up at Pier 88. Our troop ship is moored starboard side to the pier with her bow facing east, toward the West Side Highway. It doesn't take me long to judge her dimensions. Company G of the 242<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment is in for a very rough passage.



The *General William Murray Black* (named in honor of the former Chief of Army Engineers who was the senior member of the board appointed to raise the Battleship, *USS Maine*) is only 523 feet long and 72 feet wide. She has a displacement of 10,404 tons and a top speed of 17 knots. From my seagoing family background, these marine statistics are just perfect dimensions for a ship that will produce a real seagoing roller coaster ride. It doesn't mean the ship is not seaworthy, far from it, it's built to float like a cork, but did anyone ever see the way a cork floats? There will be plenty of what the French call *mal de mer* (seasick) on this trip, so I'd better make sure I don't select a lower bunk.



Being the advance party, the rest of our 242<sup>nd</sup> Regiment will be coming aboard tomorrow. We are quickly assembled on the dock, lined up in proper boarding order, and then commanded to file aboard giving our names to a Coast Guard officer standing behind a podium at the gangway's foot. Once on the ship's deck, we are met by a Marine noncom (a noncommissioned officer) and directed to an open doorway leading down three flights of steel stairs to a wide-open sleeping compartment filled with four-decked, steel bunks. Looking at this scene, I know from shipboard experience that the deck I am standing on is level with the transport's waterline. One torpedo or mine here, and there would be no survivors. I'd better not give too much thought to this. I got busy settling the squad in, while checking all gear and equipment.

I made sure that it all was properly stored in their bunks. At the same time, I reserved the first upper bunk in the squad compartment for myself. At that moment, I wasn't happy at all to discover that there were no mattresses in any of the bunks to cover the steel slats that formed the bottom of each bunk. I could not understand this development, and upon asking about it, was just told there were none to be issued. I thought the least the ship could have offered was the canvas-type used in most troop transports. As a result, to afford us a little comfort, we were all going to be forced to use some of our extra clothes to make up some sort of a mattress. None of us wanted to break down our carefully stowed 75 pound packs for this, but if we didn't, aside from the trip being especially uncomfortable, we were all about to arrive in Europe with the bunk slats clearly etched on our backs. Oddly enough, none of my squad ever complained.

**PHOTO 1** - *USS General William M. Black* is from Wikipedia.com  
**PHOTO 2** - *Bunks aboard a troop transport ship* is courtesy of the National Archives (National Archives, III-SC-37123)

[REVEILLE editor: we are grateful to Christina Spearing, Robert's daughter, for this opportunity to travel the "Rainbow Trail" through the eyes of her father.

In future issues of REVEILLE and also RAINBOW TRAIL, both newsletters posted online at <rainbowvets.org>, we will continue this WWII Rainbow Division story; next issues, July and August 2024].

## An Excerpt from *PEARL HARBOR & BEYOND*

By Russel C. Fielding, WWII Veteran of  
Anti-Tank Company, 222<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment, 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry  
"Rainbow" Division.

[printed in the April 2015 issue of REVEILLE]

It is hard to imagine how it feels to be freed from a place as horrible as Dachau. A beautiful tribute was written by Nerin E. Gun in his book *The Day of the Americans*, (Fleet Publishing Corporation, 1966). Passages follow: p. 19-20

*"First GI at Dachau, we will never forget those first few seconds...You had come at the risk of your life into an unknown country, for the sake of unknown people, bringing us the most precious thing in the world, the gift of freedom. Today, I know your name. But to me, to all of us, all of us who became brothers in that short instant of liberation, you will always remain the Unknown Soldier, the myth, and it matters not whether today, in your garage in Minnesota or Wyoming, you scarcely remember the episode of that afternoon in the course of an almost endless expedition. Even if you should read these lines, you won't be able to understand what your brief appearance meant to us...But with a simple stroke of your magic wand, unknown GI of that twilight on the last Sunday in April, you changed all that. You made us suddenly understand that the world was still composed of human beings, that there were still men who were ready to give up their lives to save ours, without trying to strike a bargain, without asking anything in return."*

Mr. Gun was wrong about one thing --- no one there can ever forget that day in April 1945.

Book dedication by Nerin W. Gun:  
To the dauntless soldiers  
of the 45<sup>th</sup> Division and the 42<sup>nd</sup> Division  
of the United States Army  
who entered Dachau as liberators, not as conquerors

## WWII RAINBOW MEMORIAL LIST Deaths Reported Since January 2024

<b>GEORGE</b> , Joseph	66 <sup>th</sup> Division and 42 <sup>nd</sup> Division
<b>MASSEY</b> , Davis Ray	F/232 <sup>nd</sup> Infantry
<b>MCCARTNEY</b> , James B.	B/222 <sup>nd</sup> Infantry
<b>PALMERI</b> , Charles "Chuck" J.	L/232 Infantry
<b>RILEY</b> , Calvin E.	G/222 Infantry

Notice of Arlington interment for Tom **Dillingham**, I/242 Infantry  
16 April 2024 Arlington National Cemetery at 9:30 a.m.

### Rainbow Division Veterans Foundation, Inc. Contributions

10 January 2024 – 10 April 2024

#### Scholarship Endowment Fund

- 50. John Walters
- 100. Dr. (Rev.) Patricia Cockrell Wood, for her father,  
Alvin J.W. Cockrell 150<sup>th</sup> F.A. Btry C
- 50. Patricia M. Weiss, for her father,  
Carmine Sacco, H2B/222<sup>nd</sup> Infantry

#### Foundation Operating Fund

- 200. James R. Sanders for  
James W. Sanders, G/242<sup>nd</sup> Infantry

All gifts are gratefully received and acknowledged. If you would like to make a contribution by U.S. mail, please send your gift to the RDVF Treasurer, check payable to RDVF and mailed to:  
Peter P. Riley 22 Almond Tree Lane Warwick, NY 10990 – 2442.