

# HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION

World War II Capitulation of Esslingen, Germany

to

US 100th Infantry Division

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Saving an ancient German City from ruin in World

War II as told by the revered City

Fathers of Esslingen am Neckar and the gallant

men of Company I, 399th Infantry Regiment on

22 April 1945

1 January 2001

# ESSLINGEN ON NECKAR



PUBLISHED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF  
MILITARY GOVERNMENT ESSLINGEN.  
MAJOR JOSEPH I. TAYLOR, M.G.O., CAPTAIN  
L.M. PIEROVICH, D.M.G.O., PUBLIC RELATIONS

The military research documentation [letters and documents] submitted by active members of the 100th ID will become a part of the Esslingen Archives as a historical reference of the US Army actions in the capitulation of the ancient city of Esslingen on 22 April 1945.

Together with the German autobiographies, written by the City Father's, a more complete and vivid account will exist as a research supplement for young German generations to study the origins of their freedom and democracy -- by interfacing with the records of those American soldiers, who were in fact there, and liberated the City of Esslingen in the final phases of World war II.

This document represents an extract of the overall research portfolio and deals primarily with the American role in saving the City of Esslingen from the ravages of war. It does not include the autobiographies of the German City Father's or other historical documents and photographs held in the files of the Stuttgart and Esslingen Archive.

This extract is being furnished those Association members assigned to the "Greyhound" Company and Task Force Olson, who participated in this research by submitting their biographies, documents and private photographs for permanent inclusion in this research.

Courtesy copies of this extract are being furnished these Association members, for their personal use, as a family heritage document of their military service in World War II at Esslingen, Germany. It is not a document to be distributed or released outside of immediate family environments and it must not be circulated or introduced into the public domain.

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## FOREWORD

This extract covers the story of American Infantrymen in the final days of World War II during the capture of Esslingen, Germany, when time stood still for them in what was soon to be, their shining hour, VE Day (Victory in Europe) 8 May 1945. These soldiers of the 100th Infantry Division, were one of many combat units committed to the "Crusade in Europe" by the Supreme Allied Commander and future President of the United States, General Dwight David Eisenhower. As a subordinate combat division of the U.S. Seventh Army, the 100th Infantry Division was a part of a very large American battle force pushing into southern Germany, the Tyrol and Austria, whose drive to end the war quickly could not be halted.

The research of this wartime experience commenced during a Post World War II culture event, held at the Villa Merkel (now the Stadt - City Gallery) in Esslingen on 14 September 1997, with members of the 9th Infantry Division Association and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, which had been hosted by the then Lord Mayor (Oberbuergermeister) Ulrich Bauer, Dr. Peter Kastner, Culture Department (Kultuerreferrat) and Alexander Maier, a Journalist from the Esslinger Zeitung (Newspaper). It was here that a need was expressed to more closely evaluate the extent of the tactical role employed by the first American troop units to enter the city, which had left the town of Esslingen completely intact and undamaged, without any blood shed by its citizens.

Likewise it was also the "Agenda of Reconciliation -Versoehnung" first started by President George Bush, during the many ceremonies commemorating the 50th Anniversary of World War II, which translated the more obscure aspects of the last war into a clearer, modern day perspective. The political atmosphere which had forged the characterization of American troops as "Permanent Occupiers" was at last succumbing to the more subtle comprehension of "Liberators" and "Peacekeepers." Amazingly, it was this new born transformation, in a new Germany, which was re-defining the trans-Atlantic core of today's outstanding German American relationships.

The glory of victory and the agony of defeat, as told in "Twenty Seven Letters" by the remarkable men of America and Germany, who were in Esslingen for the surrender of the city on 22 April 1945, sends a clear and explicit message, *"That if man is to survive in the 21st Century, he must no longer bear allegiance to the Trojans of War."*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To Frank Gurley, Historian of the US 100th Infantry Division Association, who gave us the first input to trace the men of Task Force Olson and to unfold the story of the capitulation of the ancient city of Esslingen by the Greyhounds of Company I, 399th Infantry, 100th Infantry "Century" Division.

Equally so, to Frank Hancock the author of the book "An Improbable Machine Gunner" and former Lt. Bruno Viani, without whose energetic pursuit of the identities of those men who comprised Task Force Olson would never have been possible.

Foremost of all, to the Greyhounds and others, who took the time to write us, sending in their letters and photographs, we hope that we have done justice to your exploits in combat, when in one final moment of time, the finesse of sound tactical judgement spared the ancient city of Esslingen from a devastating end.

To Lord Mayor, Dr. Juergen Zieger of Esslingen, Herr Ulrich Bauer, former Lord Mayor of Esslingen, Dr. Peter Kastner, Kultuerreferat, Frau Iris Sonnenstuhl-Fekete of the Stadtarchiv, Esslingen and Alexander Maier of the Esslinger Newspaper, we hope that the inclusion of the biographies of those US Army veterans, who were present at this historical event will enhance your historical references of this day and bring them into a truer perspective. Since photographs of the capitulation were never made, two collages portray this event were formatted with the generous assistance of Frau Sonnenstuhl-Fekete and added to this documentation.

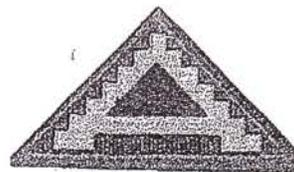
To the citizens of Esslingen, the Greyhounds of the Century Division trust that, as your very first Ambassadors of Freedom, the success of US Army tactics employed on your surrender day, will continue to be self-evident, as Esslingen makes a quantum leap forward into the European Union in the new millennium..

To the different Army Veteran Associations, who so graciously took of their time to guide us through our research, we offer our heart felt thanks. May the story portrayed in "Twenty Seven Letters" signify that even in the very darkest moments of history, there is still hope for the survival of mankind.

Lastly our sincere thanks to Barbara Ballantyne and Ines Best for their expertise displayed in editing this manuscript and equally so for their patience in refining the story of Esslingen with such vivid meaning.



## HISTORY CENTURY DIVISION



### 100TH INFANTRY DIVISION

#### World War II

*Activated:* 15 November 1942. *Overseas:* 6 October 1944. *Campaigns:* Ardennes-Alsace, Rhineland, Central Europe. *Days of combat:* 163. *Distinguished Unit Citations:* 7. *Awards:* MH—3; DSC—9; DSM—1; SS—560; LM—24; DFC—1; SM—23; BSM—5,208; AM—90. *Commanders:* Maj. Gen. Withers A. Burress (November 1942–September 1945), Brig. Gen. Andrew C. Tychsen (September 1945–January 1946). *Returned to U. S.:* 10 January 1946. *Inactivated:* 26 January 1946.

#### Combat Chronicle

The 100th Infantry Division landed at Marseilles, France, 20 October 1944, and sent its first elements into combat at St. Remy in the Vosges Mountains, 1 November 1944. The Division as a whole began the relief of the 45th at Baccarat, 5 November, assuming control of the sector, 9 November. The attack jumped off, 12 November, the Division driving against the German winter line in the Vosges Mountains. The Division took Bertrichamps and Clairrupt, pierced the German line, and seized Raon l'Etape and St. Blaise, 16–26 November. Later in November, elements assisted in holding the Saverne Gap bridgehead while the bulk of the Division went into reserve. In December, the Division went on the offensive in the vicinity of Bitche. Wingen and Lemberg were occupied in fierce fighting, 6–10 December and Reyersweiler fell, 11–13 December. Fort Schiesseck capitulated after a heavy assault, 20 December. With the outbreak of the Von Rundstedt offensive, the Division was ordered to halt the attack and to hold defensive positions, south of Bitche, as part of the Seventh Army mission during the Bulge battle. German counterattacks of 1 and 8–10

January 1945 were repulsed; thereafter the sector was generally quiet and the Division prepared for a resumption of the offensive. On 15 March 1945, the attack jumped off and on 16 March, Bitche fell to the 100th. Taking Neustadt and Ludwigshafen, the Division reached the Rhine, 24 March. Crossing the Rhine, 31 March, it moved south in the wake of the 10th Armored Division and then east across the Neckar River, establishing and enlarging a bridgehead, 4–11 April. Heilbronn fell in house-to-house fighting, 12 April, and the Division resumed its rapid pursuit of the enemy, reaching Stuttgart by 21 April. The 100th was mopping up along the Neckar, southeast of Stuttgart, 23 April, when it was pinched out of VI Corps, and confined its action to patrolling the sector east of Stuttgart. Shifting to Goppingen, 30 April, the Division engaged in occupational duties as the war in Europe ended.

#### Assignments in the ETO\*

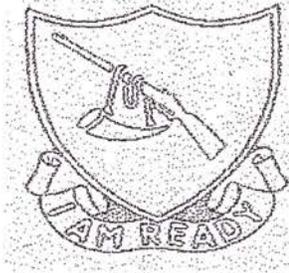
*1 November 1944:* VI Corps, Seventh Army, 6th Army Group. *27 November 1944:* XV Corps. *22 March 1945:* XXI Corps, 25 March 1945: VI Corps; 25 April 1945: Seventh Army, 6th Army Group.

#### General

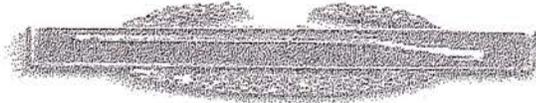
*Nickname:* Century Division. *Slogan:* Success in Battle. *Shoulder patch:* Blue shield on which are superimposed the Arabic numerals "100", the upper half of the number in white and the lower half in gold. *Association:* The Century Association, 100th Infantry Division, 110 Palisade Avenue, Bogota, N. J. (Mr. Robert J. Karch). *Publications:* *100th Infantry Division Pictorial Review*; by unit members; *Albert Love Enterprises*, Atlanta 2, Ga.; 1944. *Story of the Century*; by unit members; *TI&E, ETOUSA*; distributor, The Century Association; 1947.

Source: Army Almanac

# U.S. Army - 399th Infantry Regiment



**Motto: I Am Ready**



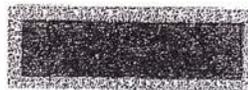
## **Combat Infantry Badge**

**Awarded to American combat soldiers assigned to Infantry Units in World War II**

**Ordered into active military service 15 November 1942, World War II**

**World War II wartime service European Theater of Operations**

**Campaigns Streamers: Ardennes -Alsace, Rhineland and Central Europe**



**PRESIDENTIAL  
UNIT CITATION**

**Presidential Unit Citation (Army) Streamer embroidered RAON L'ETAPE ( 1st Battalion,  
399th Infantry, cited, WD GO 103, 1946)**

**Presidential Unit Citation (Army) Streamer embroidered FOHLENBERG ( 3rd Battalion,  
399th Infantry, cited, DA GO 45, 1952)**

# Historical Documentation

The capitulation of Esslingen to Task Force Olson,  
100<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in World War II

## A Time for Giants

*Dateline: 22 April 1945: Esslingen a city of 60,000 was captured by two platoons of Company I, 399th Infantry Regiment. (Source U. S. 100th Infantry Division Association)*

It was Sunday, the 22nd of April 1945 (1130 hours) Task Force Olson [TF] comprised of 60 soldiers from Company I, 399th Infantry Regiment, [IR] 100th Infantry Division, [ID] who after disarming the German soldiers in the Funker Kaserne, moved into the city square mounted on six tanks, to dictate the terms of a surrender decree (1230 hours) to a delegation of city Functionaires waiting at the Rathaus (City Hall). The American Army had now arrived in full force in the picturesque Schwabian City on the banks of the Neckar River, to save a city from massive destruction, without ever knowing that they had intruded upon a highly cultured civilization which had existed as a "Free Imperial City" for over one thousand years.

## National Archives, Washington, D.C.

*(Blue Battalion Deployment)*

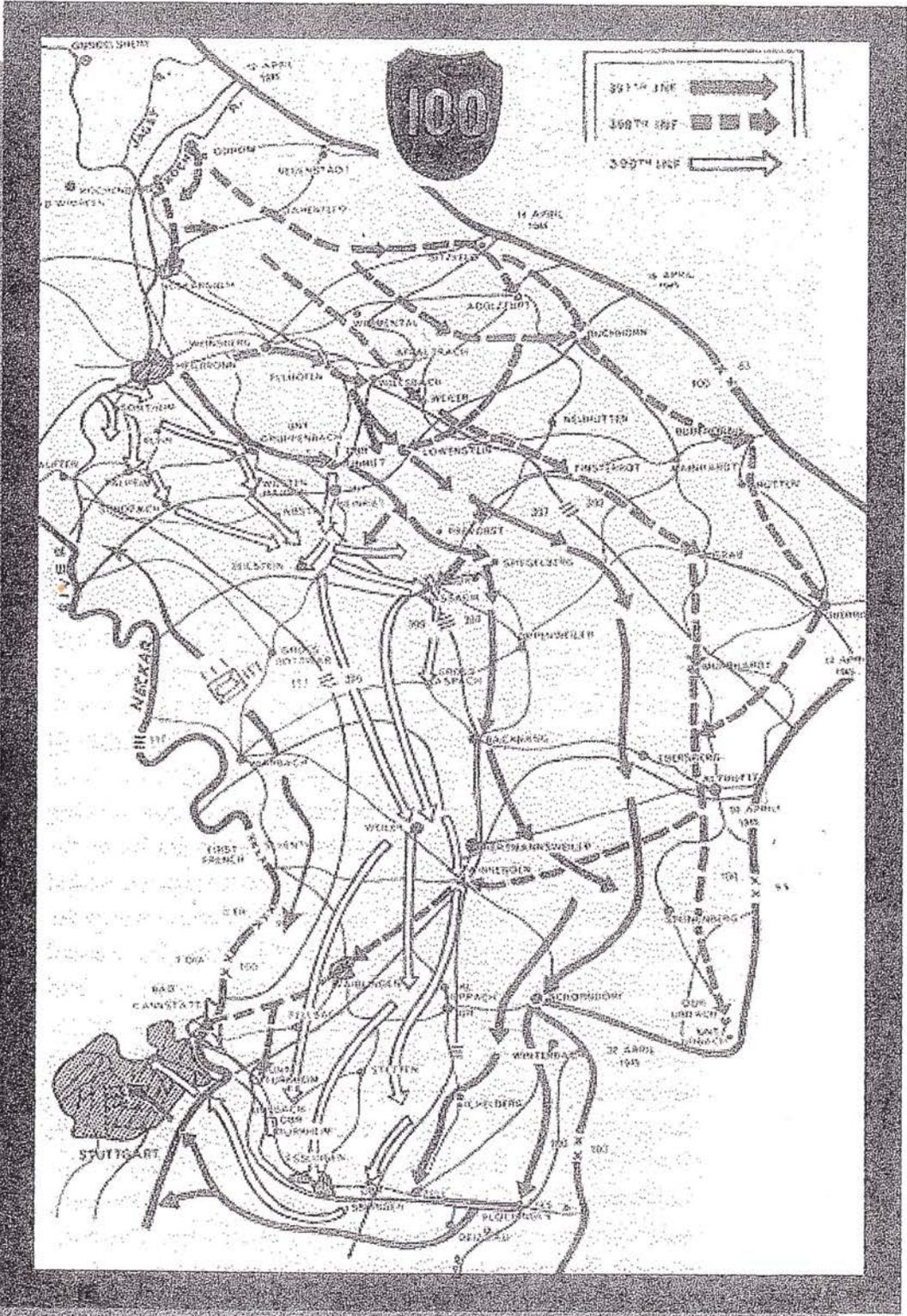
EXTRACTS - S-3 Journal Hq. 3rd (Blue) Battalion, 399th Infantry Regiment, 22 April 1945. 0245 hours: Bn and Cp closed on (163191) Waeldenbronn.  
0800 hours: Mayor of Esslingen came to tell us that the town is clear, ready to surrender.  
0940 hours: Blue 3 lvs to orient CO I Co TF to be sent to 155187 (4 Tanks - 2 TD's, 60 men).  
1250 hours: Report in from Capt Olson: City of Esslingen surrendered uncond.  
Men (German Troops) plus Officers and wpms turned over to Capt Olson. French have crossed Neckar Riv. and cleared S part of the city.

## Personnel in Attendance at the Surrender Ceremony in the City Hall in Esslingen at 1230 hours, 22 April 1945

### UNITED STATES ARMY PERSONNEL

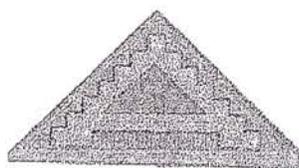
*(Source 100th I.D. Association)*

Lt. Colonel Bernard V. Lentz, Commander, 3rd Battalion, 399th Infantry Regiment.  
Captain Alfred E. Olson, Jr., Commander, Company I, 399th Infantry Regiment.  
1st Lieutenant Henry F. Prysi, Executive Officer, Company I, 399th Infantry Regiment.  
PFC Graham C. Green, Jr., Interpreter, Company I, 399th Infantry Regiment.  
S/Sergeant Glen P. Moser, Squad Leader, Company I, 399th Infantry Regiment.  
A complement of 60 unidentified soldiers from Company I, 399th Infantry Regiment.  
A complement of unidentified soldiers [tankers] from Company A, 781st Tank Battalion.

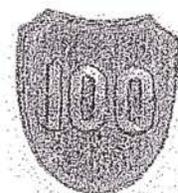


Source: 100th Infantry Division History Book

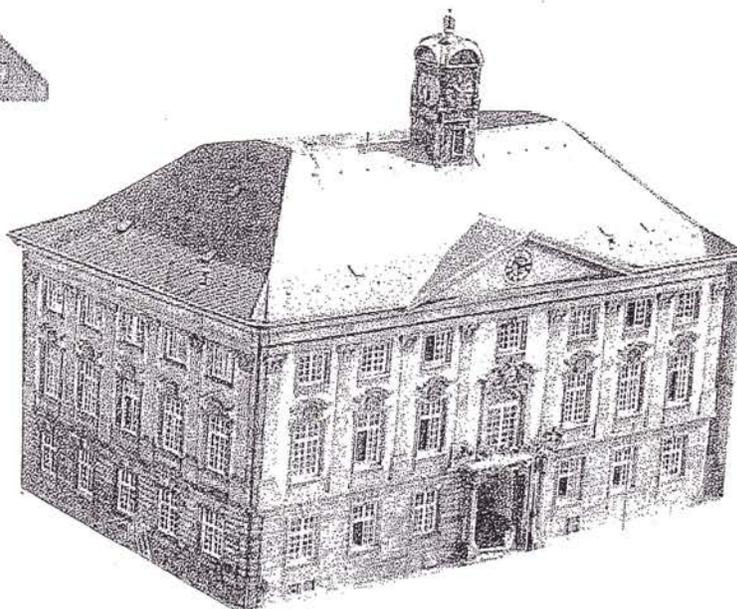
# Finale World War II Stadt Esslingen am Neckar



U.S. 7th Army



U.S. 100th I.D.



City Rathaus Surrender Site 22 April 1945



German Delegation

1. Dr. Klaiber
2. Hr. Gartner
3. Dr. Hacker
4. Hr. Wagner
5. Dr. Landenberger
6. Dr. Mackh
7. Hr. Riedel
8. Hr. Deuschle

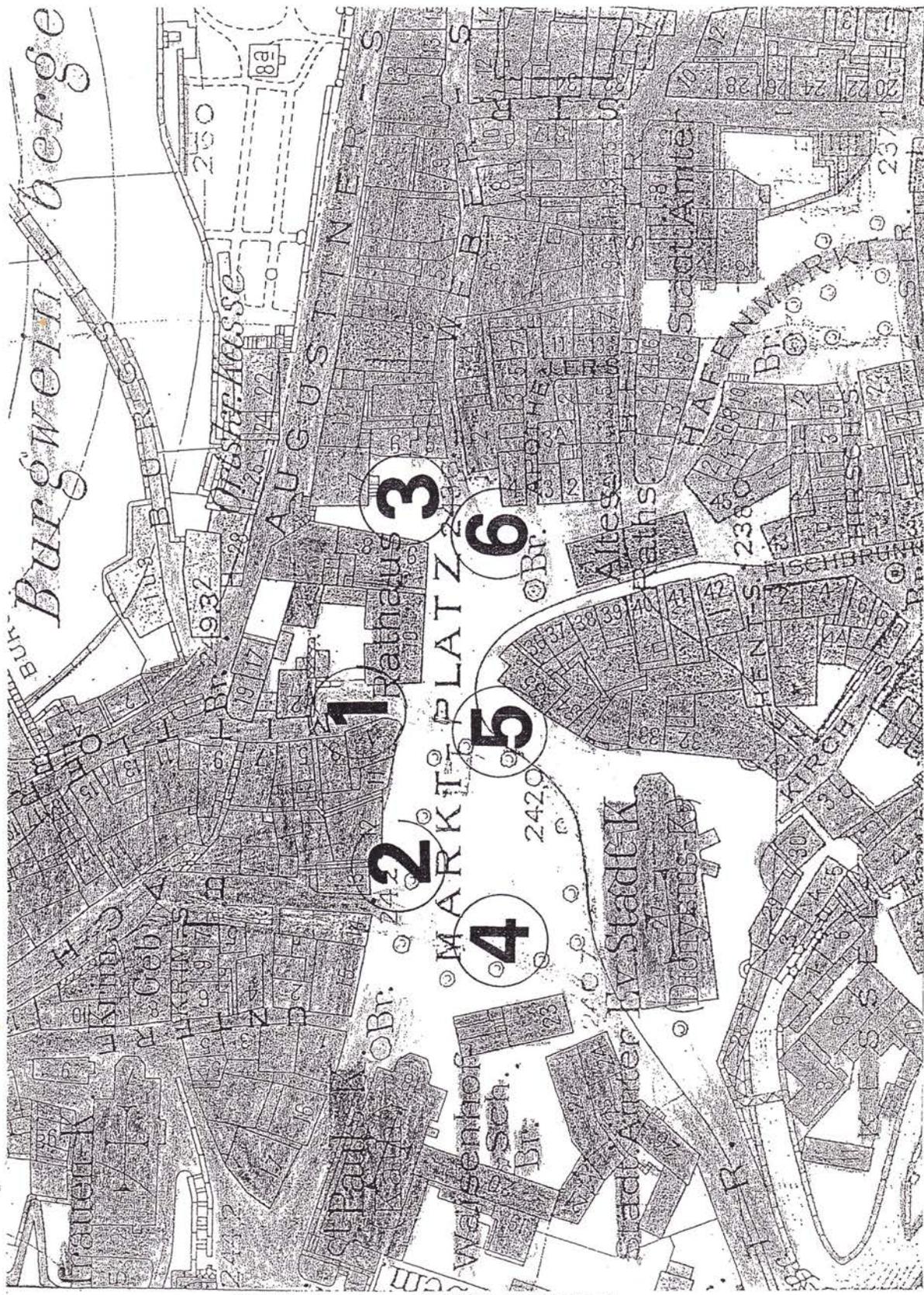
**TASK FORCE OLSON**  
Six U.S. Tanks  
Sixty U.S. Soldiers



American Delegation

1. LTC Lentz
2. CPT. Olson
3. LT. Prysi
4. PFC Green
5. Sgt Moser
6. Others Inf.
7. Others Armored

A NEW ERA BEGINS...



“Task Force Olson” surrender site “Alt Stadt” (Old City), 22 April 1945  
positions of tanks 1 through 6 from Company A, 781st Tank Battalion.

## ESSLINGEN CITY OFFICIALS AND DELEGATES

*(Source: Esslingen Archive, NSDAP - National Socialist German Workers Party)*

Oberbuergermeister (Lord Mayor) Dr. Alfred Klaiber, NSDAP.  
Buergermeister (Mayor) Friedrich Gaerttner, NSDAP Gemeinderat, Architect.  
Stadtkaemmerer (Treasurer) Georg Deuschle, Beamter, Civil Servant.  
Herr Hans-Karl Riedel, Industrialist. Dr. Emil Mackh, Wirtschaftsvertreter - Economist.  
Dr. Fritz Landenberger, Medical Doctor, Ludwig Strauss, Commerce.  
Herr Eugen Wagner, NSDAP, Bataillonsfuehrer des Volkssturms 20, Esslingen.  
Landrat (County Commissioner) Dr. Hans Haecker, Kreisleitung NSDAP, Jurist.

## NSDAP Political & Wehrmacht Resistance Factors Facing the 100th Infantry Division advance at Esslingen on 22 April 1945

*(Source: Esslingen Archive from the Autobiographies of City Father's)*

### *Nero Befehl - Nero Order*

The so called "Nero Order" issued in March 1945, by Adolf Hitler, expressed to a devastating degree where the people of Germany were to be led by their "Fuehrer" and a government caught up in a spiritual darkness and insanity -- meaning that the enemy was to be left nothing other than a scorched earth. The bridges, railroads and public service buildings and even essential factories were to be destroyed, including public service and supply entities.

### *Wehrmacht Defensive Role*

Forces of the German Wehrmacht were deployed in Esslingen to defend the city at all costs, acting under orders to hold the city and keep it out of enemy hands. The area around Esslingen had been fortified with tank traps and artillery emplacements covering many of the approaches leading to the city. The Pionier-Sprengkommandos (Engineer Demolition Experts) assigned the mission of demolishing the city bridges were under the direct control of the Wehrmacht, supported by troops located in the Funker and Becelaere Kasernes. With the colossal failure of the Remagen bridge demolition -- wherein numerous German Officers were severely punished -- these explosive experts intended to make sure that the ancient Pliensau bridge over the Neckar river was in fact destroyed and kept out of enemy hands. All of these defensive measures were devised to collectively repulse an imminent attack on the city by the U.S. Seventh Army, US Sixth Corps and the 100<sup>th</sup> ID, which was expected to cause massive damage to the city.

### *NSDAP Political Stance*

The NSDAP of the City of Esslingen were unyielding in the implementation of the Nero Order by denouncing the City Fathers for their opposition to this announced policy, and the independent efforts to peacefully surrender to the approaching Americans.

Within these firm declarations the survival of Esslingen was now in jeopardy. Despite the overt actions of certain City Fathers, its fate now rested in the circumstances of war, held in the hands of the men in the US 100th I.D. and the rapidly moving US Seventh Army. The NSDAP maintained their political hold on the city to the very end and on the 20th of April 1945, for Hitler's birthday, the following party commentary appeared in the local newspaper for the citizens of Esslingen. Translation: "What he was, so shall he always be: "Our Hitler... Our loyalty to him will be our victory and a new flourishing (Blützeit) beginning for our Germany and all of Europe."

## First Encounters - Friend or Foe - Waeldenbronn

(Source: 100th ID Association and the Esslingen Stadt Archive)

Internally within the ancient walls of Esslingen the NSDAP grip on the city was abruptly disintegrating over the weekend of 20 and 21 April 1945. Consequently a consensus emerged, among an opposition group of prominent city figures, to independently act and save the city from destruction by peacefully surrendering to the Americans first. Facing a frontal assault by the 100th ID, which had overrun nearby Waeldenbronn and tactically isolating the area, capitulation was urgently needed to save the city. With the capture of nearby Nellingen Air Base by the French Army, whose troops were positioned on the south side of the Neckar River, the city of Esslingen was about to be caught in a cross fire by two rapidly advancing Allied Armies.

On the early morning hours of 22 April 1945, two of Esslingen's pre-eminent citizens, made their way through the American lines and were taken by outpost troops of Company I to Captain Olson and Lt. Prysi where they pleaded for a peaceful surrender of their city to save it from devastation. As Task Force (TF) Olson was being organized they were joined by several other distinguished City Fathers, who also succeeded in getting through the American battle lines. Upon the arrival of the Blue Battalion Commander, LTC Lentz, TF Olson, with PFC Green assigned as an interpreter, embarked with the German delegation to formalize the surrender, stopping off en route at the Funker Kaserne to disarm German troops who were gathered there to surrender. Staff Sergeant Moser was among the 60 Infantrymen assigned to TF Olson and was at the City Square with 6 tanks securing the area during the surrender ceremony.

The impressions of the American fighting soldier by members of the surrender delegation on 22 April 1945, were expressed by the City Fathers as "*Well equipped with heavy tanks which could maneuver at high speeds*", -- "*Soldierly appearance, tall, healthy, well dressed Officers and soldiers*" and -- "*Amazing voluntary discipline among the American soldiers whom they could not distinguish from their Officers, because in appearance they all were dressed and looked alike.*" Conversely the German surrender delegation and Functionaires were viewed by certain members of TF Olson as being friendly, dignified, respectful and educated men, who were relieved that a new era embracing democracy was about to begin.

## A City of Hope

(100th ID Association)

Arriving at the City Square the Task Force Infantrymen, supported by 6 tanks, secured the area, surrounding the Rathaus [City Hall]. LTC Lentz, Captain Olson, Lt. Prysi and PFC Green entered the Rathaus under an armed escort together with the surrender delegation to meet with the Lord Mayor, who formally announced the surrender of the city. Guided by General Eisenhower's declarations, LTC Lentz and his soldiers came to Esslingen not as oppressors -- but as victors -- to eradicate the principles of Nazism.

Although there was an aura of defeat among the City Fathers, these distinguished men of Germany recognized that if Esslingen was to rise up from the shadow of its past, it must honor the present demands of war imposed by the victors. Lt. Prysi, with PFC Green acting as interpreter, spelled out the articles of surrender at 1230 hours, 22 April 1945, which were designed to maintain order in the city. S/Sergeant Moser and his squad of infantry soldiers took up positions on the City Square with the tankers, as a reactionary force. PFC Jason Ferguson supported TF Olson in a mopping up operation near the Becelaere Kaserne. Not all soldiers of the "Greyhound" Company made it to Esslingen, some were killed and others wounded en route, as they struggled to make it safely to the end of the war. In an earlier action at the Fohlenberg near Beilstein the 3rd Battalion of the 399th Infantry in a one day battle suffered many soldiers killed and wounded, for which this battalion was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation. S/Sergeant Stephen Chawaga was seriously wounded in this battle for the third time during the war and in reality it is such men who really brought the "Greyhounds" to Esslingen.

With their mission in Esslingen complete the men of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 399th IR prepared to move into the Neckar region toward Stuttgart by crossing the Neckar River, as the US Seventh Army with new replacement divisions, began their drive into southern Germany and Austria. As they looked back at their combat record of 175 days of unrelenting combat in France and Germany, which had taken the lives of so many Greyhounds, they were thankful to an almighty God that the war was now ending for them. Biographies covering the tactical events involving the drive from France into the Neckar Region and the capture of Esslingen were obtained for LTC Lentz (deceased) and Captain Olson (deceased). Biographies for other "Greyhounds" who were found alive, Lt. Prysi, PFC Green, S/Sergeant Moser, PFC Ferguson, PFC Staab, S/Sgt Chawaga, Lt. Viani, Sgt. Hancock, author of "An Improbable Machine Gunner," and Lt. Blair and Sgt. Weins were obtained as shown on the list of American Biographies.

## The Last Day

The intrepid city of Esslingen was now secure from the hostilities of war and the men of Company I could now pause to meditate upon their survival in the serenity of Esslingen, which was more than a welcome sight to the battle weary men of TF Olson and the remaining members of the "Greyhound" Company. Their exposure to this incredible

surrender event, meant that they were at the dawn of a new day, when they could forget the ordeal of combat and remember their fallen comrades -- witnessing in the process -- the final collapse of the German war machine.

To the men of Company I this magnificent city of corridors and canals, bore a misty atmosphere of great national culture, reminiscent of such famous figures of German history, as Goethe, Schiller and Martin Luther. But such dynamics were too bizarre for America's young soldiers, who were exhausted from combat and were in no mood to deal with the rhetoric of German culture. Most of them had been away from their homes in America for several years, living under an umbrella of hope, which brought them through the war and into the haven of Esslingen. Certainly they were not alone in this strange place, for they carried with them the symbol of their nation, the American colors, "Their Flag", whose proud stars and broad stripes, had carried them through the war bringing them one step closer to the far shores of democracy and finally home.

As the first Ambassadors to the city of Esslingen, none of the "Greyhounds" realized that cessation of hostilities would bring on the longest period of peace in Europe, ever known to man, nor could they envision that the art of democracy would drastically alter the course of German history. But America's young enterprising soldiers well knew that the cause of freedom was contagious and could never be denied a new generation of Germans, which would soon be devoted to a miraculous economy; NATO, the Atlantic Alliance and finally the European Union. With the war in Europe ending, the men of Company I now dared to wonder about the price of freedom and even more so the peace that was yet to come.

It is these Veterans of World War II in America's 100th Infantry Division, whose voices now cry out and remind us, that it was they who saved the world for democracy, when the chaotic ideals of an ill-omened Aryan enemy were truly just a hands grasp away. None of the "Greyhounds" thought that their experiences in war or the shadow of an ancient German city would one day endow them with a sense of wisdom about the destiny of mankind ... but it is they who shall convey to the generations of the new millennium, those philosophical words, "There is no safety in war."

## War and Peace

*Dateline: 23 April 1945 - US 100th Infantry Division. "Mopping up along the Neckar, river southeast of Stuttgart, when it was pinched out of VI Corps, and confined it's action to patrolling the section east of Stuttgart. Shifting to Goeppingen, the Division engaged in occupational duties.*

*Dateline: 25 April 1945 - The US 100th Infantry Division was placed in the Seventh Army Reserve after 175 days in unrelenting combat. Their Headquarters was setup at the Villa Reitzenstein, formerly the governor's residence. The 100th Division then became the primary American unit located in the Stuttgart and Esslingen area, following the end of the war.*

Subordinate Units: *100th I.D. - Infantry, 397, 398, and 399, Artillery 373, 374, 375 and 925, Signal 100, Ordnance 800, Quartermaster 100, Reconnaissance 100, Engineer 325, Medical 325 and the 100 the CIC.*

The capitulation of Germany on 8 May 1945, was designated VE Day (Victory in Europe) and the pledge for peace by the men of Company I were now fulfilled in the area surrounding the ancient German city of Esslingen. With Japan still actively engaged in the Pacific War, the final act of returning the troops of the Century Division to the United States, would have to await the age of the atomic bomb and the surrender of Japan, VJ Day (Victory in Japan) 2 September 1945.

## New Horizons

*Dateline: 10 January 1946 - After arriving overseas on 6 October 1944 the 100th Infantry Division returns to the United States, after 175 days in combat during the campaigns of Ardennes-Alsace, Rhineland and Central Europe. It was inactivated on 26 January 1945.*

As demobilization sent troops back to America on a rapid basis, none were happier than the stout hearted men of the US 100th Infantry Division and they took with them their legends of battle, which became their root value, as they rushed back into a society which they had nearly forgotten. But the bond of soldiers are mighty and the men of this great war were soon to be absorbed in a Post World War II culture, which would recognize them as a generation of distinctive and respected Veterans. All of them believed that they were cast into a world conflict by an almighty hand and that freedom is a divine covenant, which must be honored by every man. At the end stage of their military service in Europe they would case their colors - understanding - that while all glory is short lived, they were also forever bound to wonder about the frightful price of freedom and the hope for a peaceful future.

## Then and Now

As non-Europeans involved in World War II -- the United States Army presence was perceived by the German population in a far different light than those troops representing France, Great Britain and Russia. Not only were America's troops outsiders they were religious oriented and equally so respected for their adherence to the terms of the Geneva Convention; but more dynamically -- as children of the great depression -- they were highly sympathetic toward the suffering of the German people, for they well knew the meaning of human deprivation and the pangs of hunger. To the majority of American troops, fraternization rules were therefore clearly something to be circumvented rather than obeyed. It was this broad communion of people from two different cultures, enduring together in a small German city (Esslingen) toward the end of the war, which gave birth to a new nation promulgated upon freedom, democracy and human rights. As citizen soldiers on foreign soil, the American combat soldier hoped for a sudden end to the war and a rapid demobilization with a quick return to his homeland.

During their ensuing lives they would ponder the perpetuity of the peace which they had won as the "Cold War" emerged, bringing on the division of Germany with the erection of the "Wall" and thereby obliging a military presence by the United States into the 21st Century. Little could anyone realize that this historical event was nothing other than a factor of historical evolution, which would come into being in 1989, as this massive barrier to freedom would be torn down, not by governments, but by the people (Das Deutsche Volk) of a reunified Germany. To these grand old Veterans who fostered the cause of democracy in such places as Esslingen, all of this is not surprising and they will applaud the loudest when Germany becomes the lead nation in the European Union in the new millennium, thereby validating this great political success as an instrument of freedom -- forged long ago by young American infantry soldiers in World War II.

### Outcomes - Membership Letters

This documentation does not simply focus upon the actions of a small unit in World War II, nor does it only deal with the stature of an ancient German city. It has more properly evolved from the responses to written inquiry, which brought forth the human revelations of combat in our greatest war by the veterans, who were there and are now in their twilight years; they are only by circumstance the "Greyhounds" of Company I. From those letters sent to the men of Company I, who were active members of the US 100th Infantry Division Association, replies in various form were received from fourteen of them, while the others did not answer for understandable reasons. Only three of the respondents were directly committed to the surrender formalities in the Rathaus on 22 April 1945, while the others were engaged in related tactical operations, but it was the unified tactics of all of them which launched TF Olson on an extraordinary mission that was destined to save a famous ancient city, rather than destroy it. While age precluded the personal interviews of the Greyhounds, former Lt. Prysi was to recount his surrender experiences in person to the people of Esslingen in September 1999.

### Wounded Status and Negative Accounts

Respondents members of the "Greyhounds", Company I, 3rd Battalion, 399th Infantry Regiment, 100th Infantry Division, listed as active members of the 100th Infantry Division Association, who were wounded in France and Germany and had not returned to duty when Esslingen was captured on 22 April 1945:

David Besst, 1810 Huron Trail, Maitland, Florida 32751, wounded January 1945.  
Charles C. Hubbard, 3346 Stratford Lane, Montgomery, Alabama 36111, wounded 1944.  
Robert C. Simmons, 1203 North 7th Street, Clinton, Iowa 52732, wounded early 1945.  
Bruno R. Viani, 71 Kane Avenue, Larchmont, New York 10538, wounded November 1944.  
Glen D. Wobig, P.O. Box 425, Osceola, Nebraska 68651, wounded January 1945.  
Stephen Chawaga, 510 Mercer Road, Merion, Pennsylvania 19066, wounded April 1945.

Respondents -- Active "Greyhound" Members of the 100th Infantry Division Association, who were committed to the action in Esslingen, but could not recall any specific details concerning the surrender and capture of Esslingen on 22 April 1945:

Louis A. LaCroix, 166 Cottage Street, Franklin, Massachusetts 02038.

Robert W. Urdahl, 7072 Susquehanna Drive, Tobyhanna, Pennsylvania 18466.

Stephen J. Platek, 1238 Boston Tnpk, Coventry, Connecticut 06238.

#### Others Respondents:

Jack B. Lang, 865 Emory Shield Road, Murphy, North Carolina, 100th Signal Company, later with the 65th Signal Battalion in Esslingen. Cecil V. Bishop, 2536 Narrows Drive, Condo 17, Tacoma, Washington 98406, 29th Transportation Battalion, Nellingen co-located with an Artillery and Helicopter unit. John Kleperis, Colonel, United States Air Force, Retired, Displaced Person in 1945 at Nuertingen whose mother was a kitchen helper in the 36th (Texas) Division.

## A New Day at Esslingen

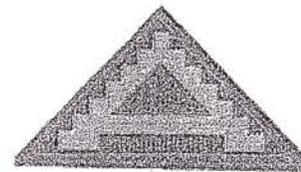
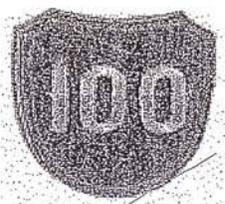
During the period of 27-30 September 1999, LTC Prysi, U.S Army retired, returned to Esslingen at the invitation of the Lord Mayor, Dr. Juergen Zieger and Dr. Peter Kastner, Kultuerreferat, to be honored by the people of Esslingen for saving their city from the destruction of war on the 22nd of April 1945. Traveling in his party were his son Mark, who is a Medical Doctor, his daughter-in-law, Nancy, an anesthesiologist, his second son Scott, who is also a Medical Doctor and an escorting German speaking linguist, Lady Lydia Overton.

The program organized by the city included a visit by LTC Prysi and his family to the site of the surrender event in the Neues Rathaus and later to meet the German press in the Altes Rathaus, where he was to sign the "Golden Book" of the city. A number of German reporters were present, as well as Cindy Elmore from the European Stars and Stripes and Senior Airman, Craig McKee from the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service. At age 83, LTC Prysi struggled to remember the details surrounding the capture of Esslingen, saying to the German Press, that although he could not recall the vineyards or the cobblestone streets of this ancient city, he had never forgotten the ringing of the bells in the Glockenspiel, which commenced to chime just as he was about to sign the "Golden Book." At this very moment he remarked, "They were ringing when we were here at high noon 54 years ago," as he nostalgically looked up at the bells ringing in the medieval Town Hall [Kauf und Steuer Haus]

During this ceremony, Dr. Zieger spoke about the post-war history of the city, while LTC Prysi commented on the state of democracy in Germany, as a member of NATO and the Atlantic Alliance, while signing the Golden Book. At the conclusion of this distinguished and honored event, a luncheon was hosted by the Dr. Zieger and Dr. Kastner at the "Die Burg" an ancient defensive fortress system and tower which overlooks the city.

Following lunch LTC. Prysi and his party toured the city and afterwards met at the Esslinger Zeitung (Newspaper) with a number of Esslingen senior citizens, who were present in the city on 22 April 1945, when Lt. Prysi entered the city with "TF Olson" to formalize the initial capitulation terms to govern the city in a new era of democracy.

As LTC Prysi departed the fair city of Esslingen for the last time, he thought about his fellow officers and men in the "Blue Battalion" and the magnificent "Greyhounds" in "Task Force Olson" who had captured the city of Esslingen intact so long ago. But most of all, in his final glimpse of this ancient city, he could not forget the amazing will and spirit of the revered "City Fathers" who pressed through American battle lines on a sunny day in April 1945, to rescue their beloved city from the ravages of war.



Lord Mayor, Dr. Juergen Zieger,  
Kultuerreferat, Dr. Peter Kastner,  
The People of Esslingen.

It is an honor and a privilege for me to be here representing the "Greyhounds" of Company I, 399th Infantry Regiment, U.S. 100th Infantry Division, World War II.

I would like to thank Dr. Zieger, Dr. Kastner and staff, as well as Mr. Harold D. Simpson and Mr. John P. Myers, for making this historical event possible. More importantly, I would want to commend the German officials, who took part in the surrender on 22 April 1945, for their courage and foresight, by taking the correct action to protect the city of Esslingen, from the destruction caused by war so long ago.

The surrender terms agreed to by the "City Fathers of Esslingen" on 22 April 1945, marked the end of the war and meant survival for Esslingen, whose population had existed here in this ancient setting in the valley of the Neckar, as an Imperial City, for nearly 1,000 years. As a result and in this new age, the City of Esslingen has been cast into the European Union and its democratic visions are now well guarded by NATO and the Atlantic Alliance.

I would like to express my gratitude for having been given a list of the all of the German Officials, who took part in the surrender ceremony. Had it not been for their brave actions to press forward, through our combat lines on Sunday the 22nd of April 1945, offering to give up their city, the magnificent and ancient city of Esslingen may have suffered and entirely different and destructive fate.

On a final note, I would like to thank you for the opportunity and honor to be with you here today in this beautiful city to recall the historical survival of one of Germany's most gracious and magnificent cities.

God Bless the people of Esslingen and God Bless America.

Henry F. Pysi  
Lt. Colonel, US Army Retired  
29 September 1999, Esslingen, Germany

# STARS AND STRIPES

Volume 55, No. 166

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1999

50¢

## German town thanks U.S. vet who helped save it

BY CINDY ELMORE  
Stuttgart bureau

ESSLINGEN, Germany — At 83, with a military career long behind him, Hank Prysi struggled to remember the details of the day he helped save this German city.

He did not remember the cobblestone streets or the 579-year-old Rathaus, although the vineyards on the hillsides looked familiar.

Then the bells of the glockenspiel rang. Those, he remembered, after 54 years.

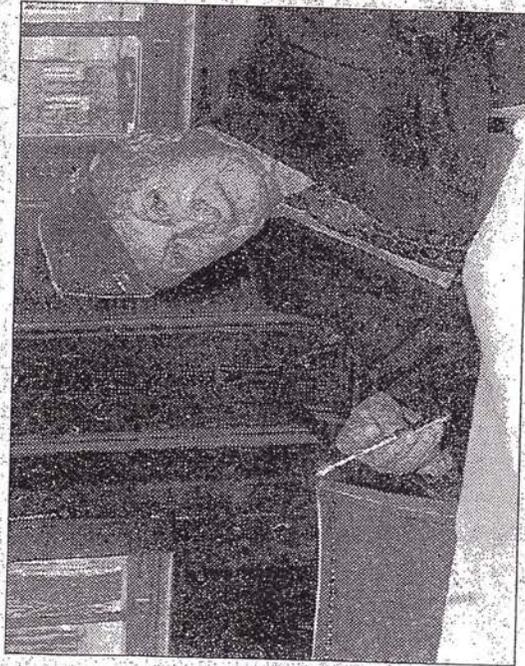
"They were ringing when we were here," he said, looking in the direction of the clock, its bells and hand-carved figures high upon the front of the medieval city hall.

Prysi returned to Esslingen this week to be thanked for playing a role in sparing the 1,200-year-old city from destruction.

He was a young first lieutenant with the 100th Infantry Division as it was fighting its way through Germany in a rush to shut down the Nazi fighting machine toward the end of World War II.

Many cities in the Army's path — such as Stuttgart, just up the Neckar River — were bombed and destroyed.

As the 100th ID closed in on Esslingen, a group of city doctors and businessmen arranged the



CINDY ELMORE/Stars and Stripes

At the end of World War II, Hank Prysi wrote the surrender terms for the city of Esslingen, near Stuttgart, Germany. Prysi, now 83, returned to Esslingen this week, where he was formally thanked by the city.

city's surrender. They put Red Cross bands on their arms and walked to the American front lines to try to safeguard Esslingen from destruction. Then they convinced German soldiers in the city to lay down their arms before the American soldiers could change their minds.

Still, Prysi remembered being skeptical. What if there were an ambush?

During another city surrender not long before Esslingen's, some-

sualties. (Prysi and others) took a chance when they came in," said Harold Simpson, a retired chief warrant officer who tracked down Prysi in Naples, Fla., for the event.

Simpson, a Battle of the Bulge veteran who now lives in Viernheim, Germany, said he learned about the long-forgotten Esslingen surrender and has been researching it for the 100th Infantry Division historical records.

Prysi, however, had forgotten about it until he was found by Simpson.

Not only was the surrender risky for the soldiers, but it was also risky for the Esslingen men who arranged it. Nazi party faithfuls — who had been ordered to burn and destroy their own city if the Americans got close — resisted. But they were outnumbered and fled before being caught, Simpson found in his research.

On April 22, 1945, six Sherman tanks and 60 men stood guard while the surrender was signed in Esslingen. As executive officer for what was called Task Force Olson, Prysi composed the surrender terms and agreement. The soldiers of I Company, 399th Infantry Regiment remained for only a day before being replaced by a provisional military occupational government.

"I think the people of Esslingen knew what would happen if they didn't surrender," Simpson said. "It was teetering on destruction,

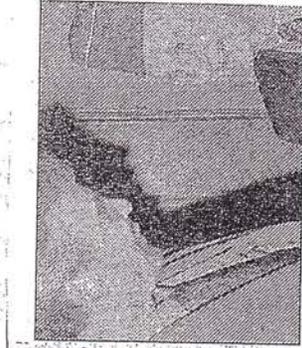
right up until the agreement was signed."

At the Rathaus, Prysi said: "It is nice to come back to a city like this and see what we preserved. Fifty-four years ago, things were different. You had responsibilities to do and you did them. ... You don't realize what the impact of it is. You just reach the next objective."

Simpson said he did not know of any other lieutenant to have dictated the terms of the formal surrender of a large German city.

"It's moments like this in the history of World War II," he said, "that never hit the history books."

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stripes.osd.mil



Hank Prysi is welcomed back to Esslingen. At 83, with a military career behind him, Hank Prysi struggles to remember the details of the day he helped save the German city of Esslingen from destruction. Page

**“ Everything was at sixes and sevens in these morning hours ”**

**Esslingen: more than 50 years after the capitulation of the city to the Americans, the defeated and the liberators meet for a nostalgic look back into time.**

**A reunion is a happy event, even more so when there is an ocean and half a century parting it from the first encounter. Eyewitnesses of the town capitulation on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 1945 and Esslingen citizens met the American liberators in the rooms of the editorial offices of the Esslinger Zeitung.**

“ Welcome by the Swabians ” dashinglly greeted the 86 year old Esslingress Lena Frei her liberators of long ago, “ do you still have a silent love here? ” “ No ” U. S. Officer Harold D. Simpson retaliated wittingly “ I had one here and I took her with me right after our wedding in the St. Paul Cathedral. ”

The fact that this meeting could take place is not solely due to the research work of the U. S. Officers; it was also a great deal of good fortune involved. The rock had begun to roll when two years ago a joint action of the Culture section and the Esslinger Zeitung took place in the Villa Merkel, which had once been the U. S. Army Officers club. This started the search for time witnesses of the German – American friendship in the period directly after the war. Finally the once U. S. Officer Simpson, who had been responsible for the security of the town from the summer of 1946 to 1949 and who today is living in Viernheim, had accomplished to get into contact with Henry F. Prysi. Prysi had been the “ second man ” just behind the Company leader Captain Alfred Olson on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1945 in the Capitulation talks with the Esslingen city representative, at the Esslingen City Hall.

After a Search odyssey, which lasted one year and took him through archives and bibliotheks, Seemingly endless correspondence with authorities and veterans organizations and last but not least through untiring surfing the Internet Simpson had found the Time witness of the capitulation- in sunny Florida, where the 83 year old Prysi lives today.

**Six Tanks moved in**  
[Added: Task Force Olson]

With six tanks, remembered Prysi, the Americans, on that 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 1945 with the sound of the City hall bell, at eleven thirty rolled into the center of the town, to dictate the terms of a formal capitulation to a group of high ranking representatives around Lord Major Klaiber. How the text, for which there was no form available, finally despite a poor interpreter came together is one of the facts that marveled Prysi the most, as he was able to lay his eyes, after all the years on the capitulation document again. “ Everything was at sixes and sevens in those morning hours. I remember quite clearly, that we were very surprised about the discipline of the German Units as they turned in the weapons and were standing in rank and file in the Botenmeistereier ”

The disarming of the City Police went just as swift as did the turnover of the "Funkerkaaserne", where a tank detachment of the Wehrmacht with one Officer and 70 soldiers were stationed.

"Even though the capitulation of the town and the military equipment went without interference, we were pretty scared", Prysi describes the general sentiment among his troops, which had entered Esslingen, coming from Wäldenbronn by way of the Panoramastrasse which today is Müllbergerstrasse. Above all him and his men of the 399<sup>th</sup> U. S. Infantry regiment were afraid of Phosphorous grenades and ambushes. That is why Soldiers and jeeps were sent into town first, before the tanks followed, so that the tanks would be able to block the entranceways in the case of an emergency.

Fear was not only walking along the victors; it was even deeper among the defeated. Ehrhard Grüner had witnessed the Americans entering the town first hand. Six tanks thundered directly by his house in the Ottilienstrasse in the so-called "hospital barred zone" as the greenhorn was putting on his Hitler Jugend Uniform, only to instantly take it off again and to hide the uniform, in fear of being killed.

### **Leading the Victors to the mess hall**

Mistrust and Fear of the victors soon made way for cheerful moments of friendly encounter. Güner remembers meeting an American officer in whose jeep he was allowed to ride to show the hungry liberators the way to the Hirschmann Company, "They have the best mess hall around" a friendly grinning officer explained the mission.

Elisabeth Schaffroth also had only positive experiences to report from these days. The today 89-year-old woman was the proprietor of the "Reichsstadt" Inn at the time. American officers lived under her roof for six years. The entrances in her guestbook, which she had brought to the meeting, show how much they had admired the hospitality of their female innkeeper. "We were like one big family and when the Americans left it was a tearful goodbye" Shaffroth remembers this temporary end of a wonderful German-American Friendship.

Heinrich Götzenberger also has made efforts for this friendship, long after Prysi's men had left, by bringing the German-American Sportsfriendship club into life. "It was a deep gratefulness" explained the ex - member of the board of the Fahrion factory his getting involved in German-American relations. A gratitude, that arose out of the intervention by the Americans against the demontation policy by the French, who had taken over the City for the duration of three months. Götzenberger had been able to explain the benefit of the high precision machines in the Mettingen Reichs-Railway factory to a certain Mayor Anderson. "All machines to the old place" the American officer insisted against the French at a meeting held at the Esslingen City Hall.

The machines, which had already been taken out of the factory into the yard, did not travel to Stuttgart but instead, were subsequently taken back inside the factory." If it was only possible to find Mayor Anderson, that would be a heavenly present for me" Götzenberger addressed Harold Simpson at the end of this nostalgic reunion.

"No Problem", the successful veteran locator replied with a promising grin and for him solving this matter would only be a question of time.

# „Alles ging drunter und drüber in diesen Morgenstunden“

ESSLINGEN: Mehr als 50 Jahre nach der Übergabe der Stadt an die Amerikaner treffen sich Besiegte und Befreier zum nostalgischen Rückblick

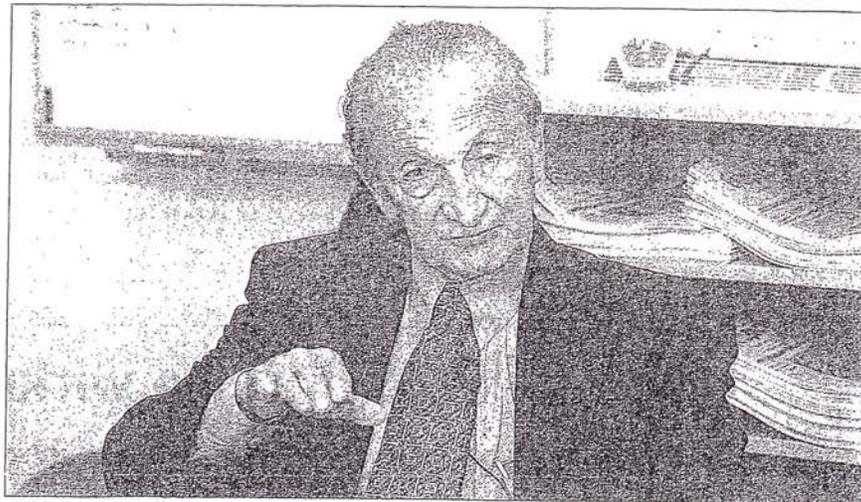
(kra) – Wiedersehen macht Freude, erst recht, wenn ein Ozean und über ein halbes Jahrhundert von der ersten Begegnung trennen. Bei einem Redaktionsgespräch in den Räumen der Eßlinger Zeitung trafen gestern Bürger und Augenzeugen der Übergabe Esslingens am 22. April 1945 mit den amerikanischen Befreier von einst zusammen.

„Willkommen bei den Schwaben“, begrüßte die 86-jährige Esslingerin Lena Frei gestern keck ihre Befreier von einst, „haben Sie noch eine stille Liebe hier?“ „Nein“, schlug US-Offizier Harold D. Simpson die rüstige Dame witzig, „die hatte ich hier – und habe sie sofort mitgenommen, nach unserer Trauung im Münster St. Paul.“ Dass diese Begegnung überhaupt zustande kommen konnte, ist nicht nur dem detektivischen Spürsinn

des US-Offiziers zu verdanken, auch Kommissar Zufall spielte mit. Den Stein ins Rollen gebracht hatte vor zwei Jahren eine gemeinsame Aktion des Kulturreferats und der Eßlinger Zeitung. Im Rahmen eines Ballhausprojekts in der Villa Merkel, dem einstigen Offizierskasino der US-Army, begann die Suche nach Zeitzeugen der deutsch-amerikanischen Freundschaft in der unmittelbaren Nachkriegszeit. Dem einstigen Offizier Simpson, der vom Sommer 1946 bis 1949 für die Sicherheit der Stadt zu sorgen hatte und heute in Viernheim lebt, war es schließlich gelungen, den Kontakt zu Henry F. Prysi herzustellen. Prysi hatte am 22. April 1945 als zweiter Mann hinter dem Kompanieführer Captain Alfred Olson die Übergabeverhandlungen mit Vertretern der Stadt im Rathaus geführt. Nach einer einjährigen Such-Odyssee in Archiven und Bibliotheken, schier endloser Korrespondenz mit Behörden und Veteranen-Organisationen und nicht zuletzt durch unermüdliches Surfen im Internet hatte Simpson den Zeitzeugen der Übergabe ausfindig gemacht – im sonnigen Florida, wo der heute 83-jährige Prysi inzwischen lebt.

## Sechs Panzer rücken ein

Mit sechs Panzern, erinnerte sich Prysi, sind die Amerikaner an jenem 22. April 1945 beim Schlag der Rathausglocke um halb zwölf Uhr morgens ins Zentrum gerollt, um einer Delegation hochrangiger Repräsentanten um Oberbürgermeister Klaiber die Bedingungen einer förmlichen Kapitulation zu diktieren. Wie der Text, für den es kein Formular gab, trotz eines miserablen Dolmetschers letztendlich zustande kam, darüber wunderte sich Prysi am meisten, als er das Übergabedokument nach langer Zeit wieder in Augenschein nehmen konnte. „Alles ging drunter und drüber in diesen Morgenstunden. Ich erinnere mich aber noch sehr genau, dass wir ziemlich überrascht waren von der Disziplin der deutschen Einheiten bei der Abgabe der Waffen, die in Reih und Glied in der Botenmeisterie aufgestellt waren“. Ebenso reibungslos wie die Entwaffnung der Städtischen Polizei verlief auch die Übergabe der Funkerkaserne, in der noch ein Panzerverband der Wehrmacht mit einem Offizier und 70 Soldaten stationiert war. „Obwohl die Übergabe von Stadt und militärischem Gerät reibungslos vonstatten ging, hatten wir mächtig Angst“, beschrieb Prysi die Stimmung seiner Truppe, die von Wäldenbronn aus über die Panoramastraße, die heutige Mülbergerstraße, in Esslingen eingerückt war. Vor allem vor Phosphororganaten und möglichen Hinterhalten hätten er und seine Männer vom 399. US-Infanterie-Regiment sich gefürchtet.



„Wir hatten mächtig Angst“, beschreibt Colonel Henry F. Prysi die Stimmung unter den einrückenden Amerikanern. Nach 50 Jahren kam er zum ersten Mal wieder in die Stadt, deren Kapitulation er am Verhandlungstisch mit erlebte Fotos: Bulgrin

Deshalb seien Soldaten und Jeeps zuerst in die Stadt geschickt worden, ehe die Panzer nachfuhren, um im Notfall die Zufahrtswege zu blockieren.

Angst ging nicht nur bei den Siegern um, sondern erst recht bei den Besiegten. Erhard Grüner hatte als 15-Jähriger den Einzug der Amerikaner hautnah erlebt. Sechs Panzer donnerten direkt an seinem Haus an der Ottilienstraße im sogenannten Lazarett-Sperrbezirk vorbei, als der Grünschnabel eben in seine HJ-Klamotten schlüpfte, um sich ihrer jedoch in Todesangst augenblicklich wieder zu entledigen und sie zu verstecken.

## Die Sieger zur Kantine gelotst

Doch Misstrauen und Angst vor den Siegern wichen rasch heiteren Augenblicken freundschaftlicher Begegnung. Grüner erinnerte sich an ein Zusammentreffen mit einem amerikanischen Offizier, in dessen Jeep der aufgeregte Teenager mitfahren durfte, um den ausgehungerten Befreier geradewegs den Weg zur Kantine zu zeigen – „dort gibt es nämlich die beste Kantine weit und breit“, habe ihm ein freundlich grinsender Offizier die Mission erklärt.

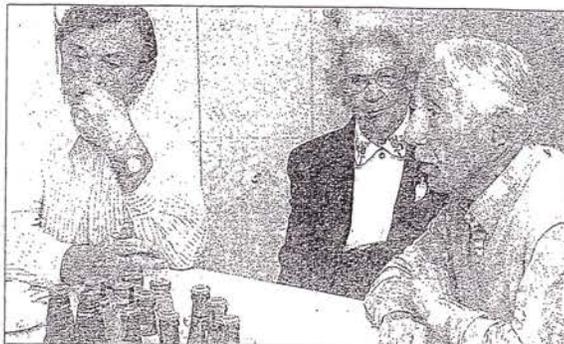
Ausschließlich positive Erfahrungen wusste auch Elisabeth Schaffroth aus jenen Tagen zu berichten. Die heute 89-Jährige war seinerzeit Wirtin der „Reichsstadt“. Sechs Jahre lang wohnten unter ihrem Dach amerikanische Offiziere. Wie sehr sie die Gastfreundschaft ihres weiblichen „Managers“ vor Ort schätzten, zeigen viele rührende Eintragungen in ihrem Gästebuch, das sie gestern den amerikanischen

Besuchern mitgebracht hat. „Wir waren wie eine Großfamilie, und als die Amerikaner schließlich gingen, war es ein Abschied mit Tränen und Wehmut“, schilderte Schaffroth das nur vorläufige Ende einer wunderbaren deutsch-amerikanischen Freundschaft.

Um diese hat sich lange nach dem Abzug von Prysis Mannen auch Heinrich Götzenberger verdient gemacht, der 1962 die deutsch-amerikanische Sportfreundschaft ins Leben rief. „Es war tiefe Dankbarkeit“, begründete das ehemalige Vorstandsmitglied der Firma Fahrion sein Engagement – Dankbarkeit für das energische Einschreiten der Amerikaner gegen die Demontagepolitik der inzwischen eingerückten Franzosen, die für drei Monate das Stadtreiment übernommen hatten. Einen gewissen Major Anderson hatte Götzenberger damals vom Nutzen der hochwertigen Präzisi-

onsmaschinen für das Mettinger Reichsbahn-Ausbesserungswerk überzeugen können. „All machines to the old place – alle Maschinen an den alten Platz!“ habe sich der amerikanische Militär im Esslinger Rathaus gegenüber den Franzosen schließlich durchgesetzt; die bereits in den Hof verbrachten Edel-Maschinen gingen nicht auf den bereit gestellten Lastwagen nach Stuttgart, sondern wurden wieder in die Fabrik geschleppt. „Wenn es gelänge, Major Anderson ausfindig zu machen, wäre das für mich ein Himmelsgeschenk“, wandte sich Götzenberger am Schluss der nostalgischen Gesprächsrunde an Harold Simpson.

„No problem“, signalisierte der erfolgreiche Veteranen-Fahrer mit einem verheißungsvollen Lächeln. Und so dürfte auch die Lösung dieses Falles nur eine Frage der Zeit sein.



Die Angst wich der Freundschaft: Gerhard Grüner, Elisabeth/Schaffroth und Heinrich Götzenberger (von links) erinnern sich an die Übergabe der Stadt

## A Reunion with the Liberators of long ago

A reunion with the liberators of the city of Esslingen took place yesterday in the old City Hall. During the course of a formal city reception Lord Mayor Zieger welcomed Colonel Henry F. Prysi, Colonel Meyers and Colonel Harold Simpson, who had made the contact to Prysi. The 83-year-old Prysi was a member of the American Delegation, which settled the terms of the formal capitulation of the city on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 1945. While Simpson stayed for three year guaranteeing the public security of the town, Prysi remained in town for only three days and had not returned since then. Dr. Zieger highly valued the sense of responsibility the American Army showed by keeping the city's 1000 Building monuments intact. In case of denial of a Capitulation, the city would have been bombarded." It would have been a shame if we would have had to bomb this wonderful city", Prysi, who today resides in Florida, stated as he entered his name into the golden book of the city, impressed by the evolution of the city in the last 50 years.





## Wiedersehen mit den Befreiern von einst

Ein Wiedersehen mit den einstigen Befreiern der Stadt Esslingen gab es gestern im Alten Rathaus. Im Rahmen eines Stadtempfangs begrüßte Oberbürgermeister Zieger Colonel Henry F. Pysi, Colonel Meyers und Colonel Harald Simpson, der den Kontakt zu Pysi hergestellt hatte. Der 83-jährige Pysi war Mitglied der amerikanischen Delegation, die am 22. April 1945 die förmliche Übergabe der Stadt regelte. Während Simpson über drei Jahre hin die öffentliche Sicherheit der Stadt garantieren sollte, ist Pysi damals nur drei Tage in Esslingen geblieben, das

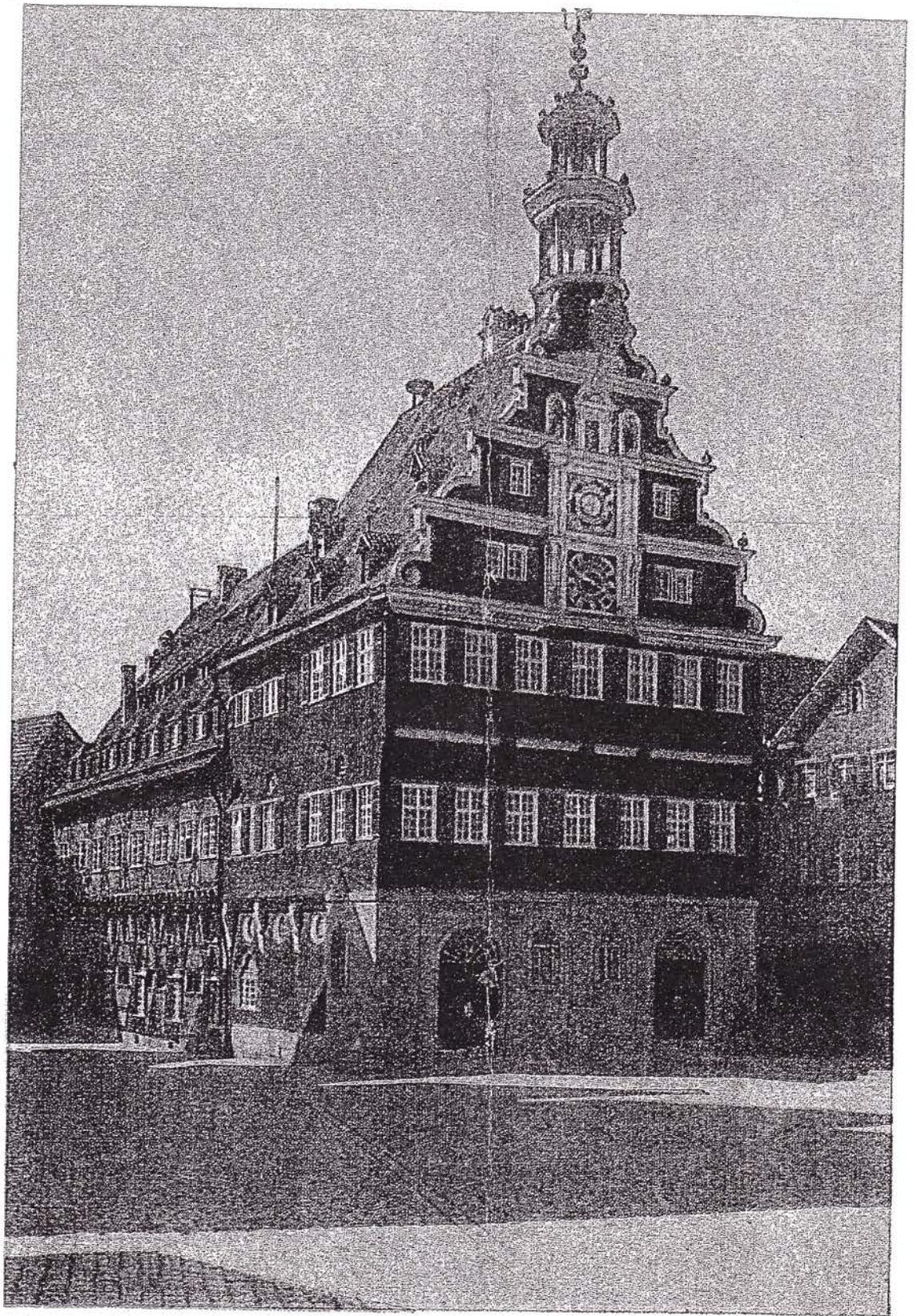
er seitdem nicht wieder gesehen hatte. Zieger würdigte die Verantwortungsbereitschaft der amerikanischen Armee für den Erhalt der Stadt mit ihren 1000 historischen Baudenkmalen, denen im Falle einer Verweigerung der Übergabe ein Bombardement gedroht hätte. „Es wäre eine Schande gewesen, wenn wir diese wunderschöne Stadt damals hätten bombardieren lassen müssen“, zeigte sich der heute in Florida lebende Pysi bei seinem Eintrag ins Goldene Buch der Stadt beeindruckt von Esslingens Entwicklung in den letzten 50 Jahren. Foto: Lahoti



Lt. Col. Henry Prysi at the Altes Rathaus, Esslingen,  
Germany, 22 September 1999, discussing "Task Force Olson"  
with Dr. Zieger and the German Press



Lt. Col. Henry Pysi at the Altes Rathaus, Esslingen, Germany, 22 September 1999, with Dr. Zieger, Lord Mayor of the city of Esslingen.



OLD  
TOWN-HALL  
(ALTES RATHAUS)

## Shades of Glory

Within the NATO structure of the U.S. Army in Germany there are six barracks located in the Heidelberg/Mannheim area, which bear the names of "Century Division" soldiers, who were awarded the Silver Star Medal Posthumously in Germany.

Spinelli Barracks, Feudenheim - named for PFC. Dominic V. Spinelli, 399th Infantry.

Funari Barracks, Kaefertal - named for PFC. Robert C. Funari, 398th Infantry.

Taylor Barracks, Kaefertal - named for PFC. Cecil V. Taylor, 399th Infantry.

Tompkins Barracks, Schwetzingen - named for PFC. George S. Tompkins, 397th Infantry.

Hammonds Barracks, Seckenheim - named for PFC. Robert Hammonds, 397th Infantry.

Sullivan Barracks, Kafertal - named for PFC. George F. Sullivan, 397th Infantry.

In the shadow of the memorials erected for these fallen soldiers, their exploits live on in the minds of America's new NATO warriors, who come here to ponder the sacrifices of those, who gave their all for God and Country so long ago. In the heat of battle, none could know, that their names would one day be enshrined in the history of Germany, as a beacon of the undying spirit of the American fighting man in World War II. Some of today's soldiers will stand here and wonder about the courage of these gallant soldiers, while others will contemplate the amazing will of our nation... but all who pause here shall know, "That if freedom is to live the cause to defend it must never die."

## Installations carry on heroes' names

by Juan R. Meléndez Jr.

A June 23 ceremony rededicated Hammonds Barracks, the former German Loretto Kaserne, to the memory of Pfc. Robert M. Hammonds. Hammonds, 19, was a wireman with the 100th Infantry Div. who lost his life during house-to-house fighting near Heilbronn on April 11, 1945. He was posthumously awarded the Silver Star for his valor that day.

But Hammonds Barracks was not the only installation renamed by the U.S. Army in 1948. In fact, it was one of eight installations in the Heidelberg, Karlsruhe and Mannheim region that were renamed by Hq., European Command General Order No. 78 of Aug. 23.

The posts were all renamed after soldiers who

had been killed or mortally wounded while performing acts of heroism in the area in March and April 1945, acts for which they were later recognized with awards for valor.

What made General Order No. 78 remarkable was that all but one of the soldiers honored belonged to the same unit, the 100th Infantry Div., and—in a world in which it is usually senior commanders who are commemorated—all of them were enlisted soldiers, all but two of them privates first class.

The other installations renamed were:

**Grossdeutschland Kaserne, Heidelberg** – Renamed Campbell Barracks in honor of Staff Sgt. Charles L. Campbell, 14th Infantry Regiment, 71st Infantry Div. Campbell received the

Distinguished Service Cross, the United States' second-highest award for valor. He was killed leading a patrol across the Rhine near Mannheim on March 26.

**Mudra Kaserne, Karlsruhe** – Renamed Gerszewski Barracks after Sgt. Adolph C. Gerszewski, 397th Infantry Regiment, 100th Infantry Div. He received the Silver Star, the third-highest award for valor. He was mortally wounded leading his squad in battle near Heilbronn April 9. Gerszewski Barracks was turned over to the German government a few years ago as part of the drawdown of the Karlsruhe military community.

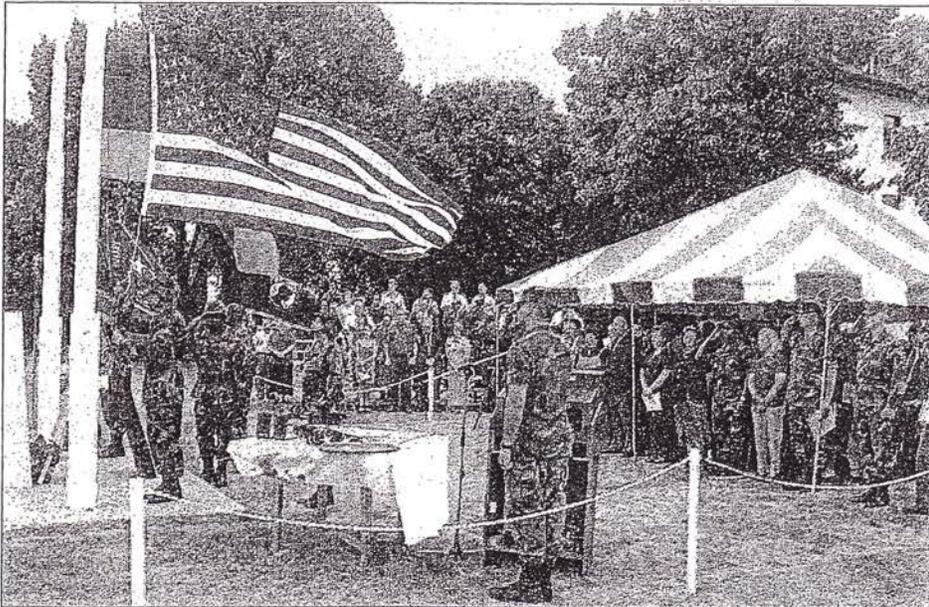
**Flak Kaserne, Mannheim** – Renamed Sullivan Barracks in honor of Pfc. George F. Sullivan, 397th Infantry Regiment, 100th Infantry Div., who was awarded the Silver Star for silencing a machine-gun nest in street fighting near Heilbronn on April 10.

**Gallwitz Kaserne, Mannheim** – Renamed Funari Barracks in honor of Pfc. Robert Funari Jr., 398th Infantry Regiment, 100th Infantry Div., who was awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in action near Heilbronn on April 4 and 5. Badly wounded, he was killed after crawling back to warn his platoon of enemy reinforcements in the area the unit was supposed to attack.

**Panzer Kaserne, Schwetzingen** – Renamed Tompkins Barracks after Pfc. George S. Tompkins Jr., 397th Infantry Regiment, 100th Infantry Div., who was awarded the Silver Star. Tompkins was mortally wounded April 3 while covering the retreat of an American platoon near Heilbronn.

**Pioniere Kaserne, Mannheim** – Renamed Spinelli Barracks after Pfc. Dominic V. Spinelli, 398th Infantry Regiment, 100th Infantry Div., who was awarded the Silver Star. Spinelli, a medic, was killed April 14 near Wilsbach after exposing himself to enemy fire trying to aid four wounded soldiers.

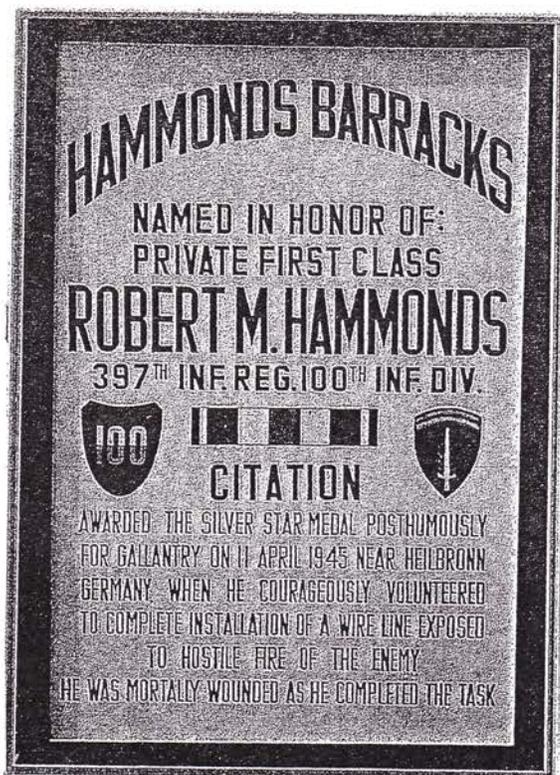
**Scheinwerfer Kaserne, Mannheim** – Renamed Taylor Barracks after Pfc. Cecil V. Taylor, 399th Infantry Regiment, 100th Infantry Div., who was awarded the Silver Star. Although mortally wounded, Taylor remained at his machine gun to help beat off an enemy attack near Beilstein on April 18.



Juan R. Meléndez Jr.

The colors are lowered at the June 23 ceremony honoring Pfc. Robert Hammonds at the post that now bears his name. Hammonds Barracks was one of eight area installations renamed for fallen heroes by the same 1948 order.

Memorial Citations, 100th Infantry Division Barracks  
Heidelberg and Mannheim, Germany cont'd.



Re-Dedication of Hammonds Barracks - Bronze Plaque  
Silver Star Citation 22 June 2000.



# Memorial Citations, 100th Infantry Division Barracks Heidelberg and Mannheim, Germany

**SPINELLI BARRACKS**  
 NAMED IN HONOR OF  
 PRIVATE FIRST CLASS  
**DOMINIC V. SPINELLI**  
 MEDICAL DETACMENT  
 398<sup>TH</sup> INF. REG. 100<sup>TH</sup> DIV.  
  
  
**CITATION**  
 AWARDED THE SILVER STAR MEDAL  
 POSTHUMOUSLY FOR GALLANTRY  
 ON 14 APRIL 1945 NEAR WILSBACH  
 GERMANY WHEN HE GAVE HIS  
 LIFE ATTEMPTING TO RESCUE HIS  
 WOUNDED COMRADES WHILE EXPOSED  
 TO HEAVY FIRE

**TAYLOR BARRACKS**  
 NAMED IN HONOR OF  
 PRIVATE FIRST CLASS  
**CECIL V. TAYLOR**  
 399<sup>TH</sup> INF. REG. 100<sup>TH</sup> INF. DIV.  
  
**CITATION**  
 AWARDED THE SILVER STAR  
 MEDAL POSTHUMOUSLY FOR  
 GALLANTRY ON 18 APRIL 1945  
 NEAR BEILSTEIN GERMANY  
 WHEN THOUGH MORTALLY  
 WOUNDED HE CONTINUED TO  
 FIRE HIS MACHINE GUN  
 DURING AN ENEMY COUNTER  
 ATTACK

**FUNARI BARRACKS**  
 NAMED IN HONOR OF  
 PRIVATE FIRST CLASS  
**ROBERT FUNARI**  
 398<sup>TH</sup> INF. REG. 100<sup>TH</sup> INF. DIV.  
  
**CITATION**  
 PVT. FIRST CLASS FUNARI WAS POSTHUMOUSLY AWARDED A SILVER STAR MEDAL FOR GALLANTRY IN ACTION ON 4 APRIL 1945 IN THE VICINITY OF HEILBRONN/GERMANY.  
 PVT. FUNARI AWARDED MOTORMAN WAS ADVANCING WITH A RIFLE PLATOON ALONG THE EAST BANK OF THE NECKAR RIVER WHEN THEY DREW ENEMY FIRE ON THEIR RIGHT FLANK. THE PLATOON WITHDREW TO REORGANIZE, BUT PVT. FUNARI WHO HAD BEEN WOUNDED WAS FORCED TO REMAIN WHERE HE WAS.  
 NOTICING THE ENEMY MOVING UP ADDITIONAL MEN AND WEAPONS HE BEGAN CRAWLING BACK TO WARN HIS PLATOON. DESPITE THE SERIOUSNESS OF HIS WOUND, PVT. FUNARI ATTAINED A POSITION WITHIN SIGHT OF THE PLATOON JUST AS THEY WERE MOVING TOWARD THE ENEMY, WHILE SIGNALLING THEM TO HOLD BACK THEIR ATTACK. HE WAS KILLED BY SMALL ARMS FIRE.  
 BY HIS GALLANTRY MANY OF THE LIVES OF HIS COMRADES WERE SAVED.

**TOMPKINS BARRACKS**  
 NAMED IN HONOR OF  
 PRIVATE FIRST CLASS  
**GEORGE S. TOMPKINS JR.**  
 397<sup>TH</sup> INF. REG. 100<sup>TH</sup> INF. DIV.  
  
  
**CITATION**  
 AWARDED THE SILVER STAR MEDAL  
 POST HUMOUSLY FOR GALLANTRY  
 3 APRIL 45 NEAR HEILBRONN GERMANY  
 WHEN THOUGH MORTALLY WOUNDED  
 HE REFUSED MEDICAL CARE AND  
 CONTINUED TO FIRE INTO THE ENEMY  
 ENABLING HIS HARASSED COMRADES  
 TO WITHDRAW REGROUP AND RETAKE  
 THE LOST GROUND



Pfc. George F. Sullivan, 398th Infantry  
Regiment, 100th Infantry Division



## American Biographies - Listings and Commentary

1. LTC Lentz, Battalion Commander, deceased, Senior U.S. officer in charge during the surrender ceremony at the Esslingen Rathaus, a lawyer by profession.
2. Captain Olson, Company Commander, founder of "Task Force Olson", deceased, buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.
3. Lt. Prysi, Executive Officer, third Officer in Charge, delegated to write the terms of surrender, retired Lt. Colonel, US Army.
4. PFC Green, Infantry Soldier, German interpreter, citizen soldier, and professional educator.
5. S/Sergeant, Glen P. Moser, Squad Leader, decorated soldier, member of "Task Force Olson", retired chemical engineer.
6. PFC Ferguson, Infantry Soldier, one of the first in Esslingen, active veteran, family man, railroad Engineer retired.
7. PFC Edward W. Staab, citizen soldier, one of Captain Olson's reliable "Greyhounds," who later met the French Army in Stuttgart.
8. S/Sergeant Chawaga, "Greyhound", citizen soldier, decorated with three Purple Heart medals, rescued after being left dying on the battlefield.
9. Lt. Viani, World War II decorated Infantry Officer, wounded in France, an active veteran and retired business man.
10. Sergeant Hancock, author publisher of the amazing book, " An Improbable Machine Gunner" who was among the first troops to enter Esslingen.
11. Lt. Blair, World War II Infantry Officer during the campaigns in Europe and a member of the U.S. Army of Occupation.
12. Sergeant Weins, American infantry soldier in combat actions and later served with the occupation forces in Esslingen in 1945.

Unlike the accurate details provided by the German autobiographies, which were written by the City fathers in 1945/46, [not included] it is the American biographies, which highlight the precarious tactical situation of Esslingen, as it faced the full force of the drive into southern Germany by the U.S. Seventh Army, to destroy the remnants of the German Wehrmacht. It was the consequence of a spontaneous surrender, which tolled the winds of war and saved the city.

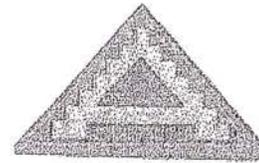


## BIOGRAPHY

LTC Bernard V Lentz  
3rd Battalion Commander  
399th Infantry Regiment  
100th Infantry Division



100th I.D.



Seventh Army

LTC Lentz was the Senior Commander in charge of Task Force Olson and the U.S. Army surrender delegation which came to the Esslingen Rathaus on 22 April 1945 to finalize the terms of capitulation, to save the city from destruction.

He served on active duty for four years during the last war and was awarded the Silver Star Medal for gallantry in action, as well as Bronze Star Medals. He was wounded in action twice and was awarded two Purple Heart Medals. Following the war he served in the reserve and attained the rank of Colonel as a Battalion and Regimental commander. Colonel Lentz was a former President of the 100th Infantry Division Association.

In civilian life he was an outstanding tax lawyer in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and he was a respected civic and community leader. Colonel Lentz died in April 1981 at the age of 68.



Wartime photograph of LTC Bernard V Lentz  
Written by Harold D Simpson of the Veterans of Foreign wars

JOHN W. PELINO  
MARTIN R. LENTZ  
BARRY E. BRESSLER  
RICHARD W. KESSLER  
SALVATORE M. DeBUNDA  
KENNETH J. LEVIN  
LOUIS J. SINATRA  
ROBERT A. HANAMIRIAN  
JEANNE SCHUBERT BARNUM\*\*  
HOWARD A. ROSENTHAL  
VICTORIA PAGE-WOOTEN°  
GARY D. FRY\*  
CRISTINA G. CAVALIERI  
KAREN A. FAHRNER°  
JOSEPH V. SOUTHERN\*  
EDWARD L. CIEMNIECKI\*°  
DEBRA CSIK KERN\*  
PAUL R. FITZMAURICE\*  
JILL M. BELLAK°  
BRUCE S. PAILET°  
PATRICK J. DORAN\*  
RONALD L. DAUGHERTY\*  
JAMES E. MILLER\*  
MICHAEL D. ALLEN  
ERIN B. SANTAMARIA\*  
JAMES C. SHAH\*  
MARK L. RHOADES\*

\* ALSO MEMBER NJ BAR  
° ALSO MEMBER FL BAR  
\* ALSO MEMBER OF NY & CT BARS

LAW OFFICES  
**PELINO & LENTZ**  
A PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION  
ONE LIBERTY PLACE  
THIRTY-SECOND FLOOR  
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215-665-1540  
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OF COUNSEL  
ALBERT W. SCHIFFRIN  
ELLIOT UNTERBERGER  
CAROLYN S. NACHMIAS  
HENRY W. MAXMIN  
(1976-1990)

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HADDONFIELD, NJ 08033-9975  
856-428-9484  
INJ MANAGING ATTORNEY

July 23, 1999

Mr. Harold Simpson  
510<sup>th</sup> Postal Company  
Unit 29729, Box R 213  
APO AE 09028

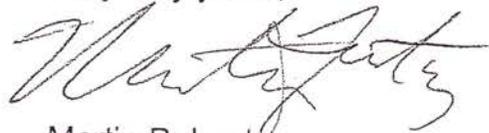
Re: Surrender of Esslingen, Germany - April 22, 1945

Dear Mr. Simpson:

I have been contacted by Bruno Viani in connection with the planned re-enactment of the Esslingen surrender, in which I understand my father played a part. At Mr. Viani's suggestion, I enclose a wartime photo of my father together with a copy of his 1981 obituary which provides some details on his post-war accomplishments.

I do not know yet whether a representative of the Lentz family will attend the re-enactment, but I would appreciate being kept advised of the details as they develop.

Very truly yours,



Martin R. Lentz

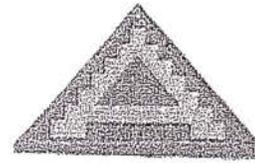
MRL/cdo  
encls.  
cc: Mr. Bruno Viani

## BIOGRAPHY

Captain Alfred E. Olson, Jr.  
Company Commander  
Company I, 399th Infantry Regiment  
100th Infantry Division



100th I.D.



Seventh Army

Alfred E. Olson was commissioned a 2nd Lt. in the U. S. Army at Fort Benning, Georgia on 23 January 1944. His first assignment in the 100th Infantry Division was in Company K, 399th Infantry Regiment, serving as a 1st Lt. along with Lt. Henry Prysi, before their assignment to Company I, 399th Infantry Regiment. He saw action in France and was wounded and decorated at Lemberg and St. Remy, France. His unit the 3rd Battalion, 399th Infantry Regiment was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for action at the Fohlenberg near Beilstein, Germany in April 1945 ( DA GO 45, 1952)

He was one of the first American Officers contacted by the "City Fathers" of Esslingen on 22 April 1945, when they walked through the American lines at Waeldenbronn, offering to surrender the city of Esslingen peacefully. It was Captain Olson's decisive actions as the Commander of Company I, 399th Infantry, which quickly formed "Task Force Olson" and brought on the surrender of German troops in the Funker Kaserne in Esslingen and the subsequent surrender formalities at the City Rathaus of Esslingen. The tactical objective at Esslingen was to capture the City with limited casualties and thereby avoided the bitter fighting incurred at Beilstein [Heilbronn] where the 3rd Battalion lost 130 soldiers killed and wounded in one day. Without a peaceful surrender of Esslingen, the tactical alternative of resorting to heavy artillery and attack aircraft, to reduce the resistance in the city, would have been more tragic and destructive than envisioned by anyone at that decisive moment in time.

Had the surrender appeal of the City fathers been ignored by Captain Olson at Waeldenbronn and had he not taken the tactical risk of entering Esslingen alone with Task Olson, which was isolated behind the Wehrmacht defensive lines, a frontal assault by the 3rd Battalion (Blue Battalion) of the 399th Infantry Regiment, would have certainly evolved with Esslingen being caught in a cross fire with French Army troops, who had occupied the south side of Esslingen on the Neckar river with tanks and artillery, who were firing into the city.

Captain Olson was never a member of the 100th Infantry Division Association. He died on 20 February 1958, while on active duty and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. His decorations include the Silver Star Medal, Oak Leaf Cluster, Bronze Star Medal, Oak Leaf Cluster and the Purple Heart Medal. He also served in the Korean war.

Executed on 15 March 2000 at Mannheim, Germany by Harold D Simpson, Member of the US 9th Infantry Division, 94th Infantry Division, Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, Inc., and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, US Army, Military Community, Mannheim, Germany. Personnel factors and service particulars were furnished by Barbara Baggott, daughter of Capt. Olson



**Captain Alfred E. Olson, Company Commander,  
Company I, 399th Infantry Regiment, US 100th  
Infantry Division, furnished by Barbara Baggott,  
daughter of Capt. Olson.**

Subj: **digest**  
Date: 30.03.00 02:03:55 W. Europe Daylight Time  
From: bbaggott@mindspring.com (Barbara Baggott)  
To: SIMMYSAN@aol.com (H.D. Simpson)

I would be happy for you to include the 2nd picture of my father, Alfred Olson, in the digest. I would very much like to know all I can about his career. One wonderful byproduct of this search is that my own children have become very interested in their heritage especially where their grandfather is concerned.

Thank you for your understanding.  
Barbara Baggott

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have become very interested in their heritage especially where their grandfather
is concerned.</DIV>
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<DIV>Thank you for your understanding.</DIV>
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<DIV>Barbara Baggott</DIV>
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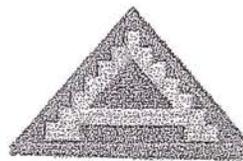


## BIOGRAPHY

Henry F Prysi  
7502 San Gabriel Lane  
Naples, Florida 34109



100th I.D.



Seventh Army

## **“FREEDOM FIRST”**

Henry F Prysi was commissioned an Officer [2nd Lieutenant] in World War II, through Officers Candidate School in the United States. Although these dynamic Lieutenants of our greatest war were at the bottom rung of Officer ranks, they were as Platoon Leaders the essence of war itself, at the apex of battle, fought by the United States Infantry. With a platoon of 36 combat ready infantry soldiers they were the first to confront the enemy, take the high ground and shed their blood, while enduring the agony of fighting for their survival on the very earth they were ordered to destroy and capture. None gave more and none suffered more than they did. In the history of the US Army the most decorated officers of World War II were Lieutenants in the US Infantry and it was they who determined the every day outcome of individual battles. Lt. Prysi was one of these dynamic Americans who wore this rank in the military campaigns of France, which brought him into Esslingen, Germany. It was here where he was to become the only Lieutenant ever known to have dictated the terms of a formal surrender to a large German City. Had it not been for the forthright tactical judgments of Lt. Prysi and the Officers of Company I, 399th Infantry Regiment, 100th Infantry Division, known as the “Greyhounds” the ancient city of Esslingen would have met an entirely different and tragic fate.

Toward the end of the war in April 1945, Lt. Prysi was the Executive Officer under Captain Alfred E Olson Jr., the Commander of Company I. He was a part of the US Seventh Army, as one of those high spirited young Lieutenants, charged with besting the German soldier at his own game, to ensure that the war was won and that democracy prevailed among the people of Germany. On Sunday morning 22 April 1945 at Waeldenbronn, Lt. Prysi was assigned to Task Force [TF] Olson, comprised of 60 infantrymen and six tanks, which had been directed to enter the city of Esslingen to formalize a surrender with the city fathers in the Rathaus located on the city square. Enroute TF Olson undertook another touchy mission, requiring them to disarm the German troops in the Funker Kaserne, who had been ordered to defend the city at all costs. No easy task, for it meant that TF Olson had to breach the perimeter defensive barriers and once within the city, they were isolated and left alone in the foreign hands of a German mayoral surrender delegation. The Battalion Commander, LTC. Lentz accompanied both Captain Olson and Lt. Prysi on this mission, while PFC Green was taken along as the German interpreter. S/Sergeant Moser, with other TF soldiers, were to secure the area and remain on alert with the armored tank force deployed at the square.

At the Funker Kaserne a complement of the original TF were left behind to confiscate weapons and move the German troops on to Regimental POW cages. Arriving at the city square the TF troops and the tanks sealed off the Rathaus area, while the Officers and escorting infantrymen entered the Rathaus to meet the city fathers, who were waiting to formally surrender the city. Following this proclamation, announced by the Lord Mayor Dr. Kleihof, Lt. Prysi, assisted by PFC Green, dictated the terms of the surrender, which

The peaceful capitulation of Esslingen again demonstrated the versatility of American infantry officers, not only for excellence in combat, but more dramatically to also deal with political situations, not normally encountered in the midst of battle. But this fine sense of judgement was a common place trait found among these young American men at war, who held the hallmark rank of Lieutenant in World War II, especially those assigned to the US Infantry. While the surrender of Esslingen was indeed the end of an era, it was a momentous event, which denoted a new beginning brought on by the astute leadership of LTC Lentz, Captain Olson and Lt. Prysi, which quickly shaped the surrender protocol into an instrument of democracy for a new born city.

All of the "Greyhounds" present on this day in Esslingen were marked as witnesses to the survival of a magnificent old city whose civilized population had existed as a -- Free Imperial City -- in the splendid valley of the Neckar, for nearly one thousand years. Were it not for the quick tactical assessments of the officers of TF Olson, the proud city of Esslingen may not have been able to surrender in time to escape the thrust of the Blue Battalions attack on Esslingen, whose troops were backed up with heavy artillery, armored tank units and tactical air support. The use of force remained an open option and teetered on the brink of commitment right up to the very last moment of the surrender ceremony.

In the age of a new century, Esslingen has been cast into the European Union and its democratic visions are well guarded by the Atlantic Alliance, as well as NATO and it is to such men as Lt. Prysi, whom we must pay tribute, for astute decisions made long ago in the heat of battle, which brought life into a model city of a new Germany. For many of our famed veterans of America's greatest war, the new millennium is beyond their life span and Lt. Prysi, now Lt. Colonel Prysi, US Army retired, is bold to say that as a veteran of World War II, the Korea conflict and Vietnam, he can proudly declared that he is one of the unbeatable "Greyhounds" who at age 84 has survived the scars of war, which have plagued this past century. Being retired from military service, he now lives in the sunshine State of Florida. But he has not forgotten the fight for freedom in Germany, knowing that there is no greater honor than being a bearer of the torch of liberty, when he and other great American men of his generation, were confronted with the overwhelming challenges of World War II.

As this new century is about to unfold, Lt. Colonel Prysi does not want to re-live the episodes of combat in Germany, hoping instead that the American Army and the "Greyhounds" of Company I, who were at war in Germany, have left a sense of democratic fortitude with the new German generations. For if, the democracy brought to them by American soldiers is to prevail, as an entity of government, it must first live on in the hearts and minds of everyone -- in the wonderland of Deutschland.

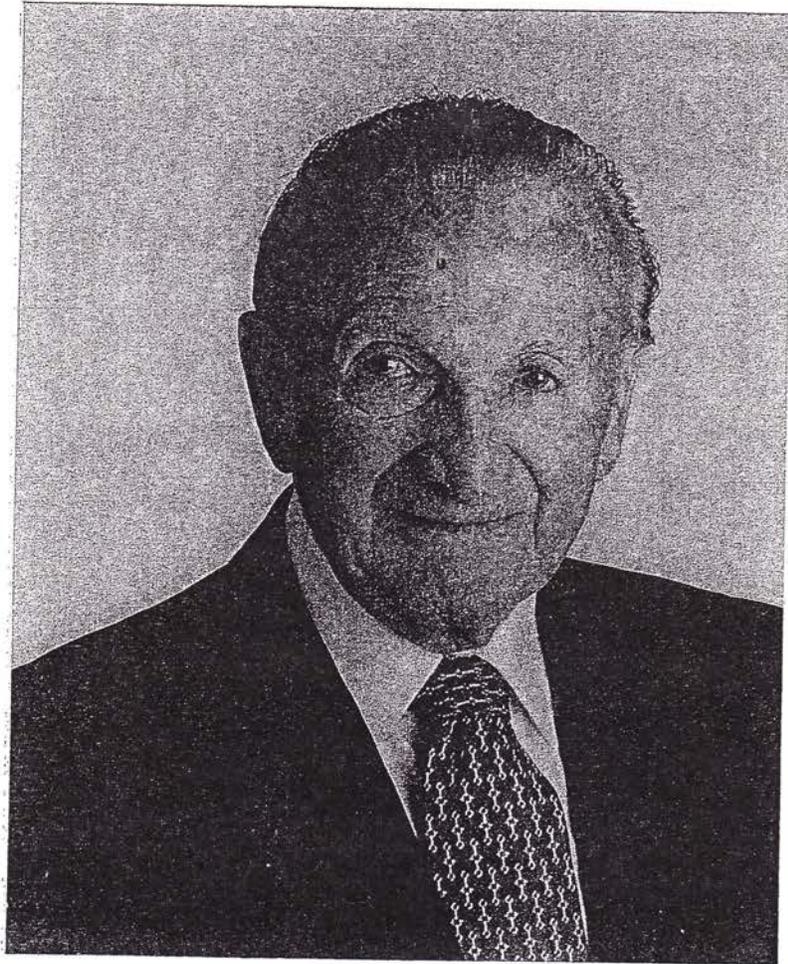
A living account of 1st Lt. Henry F Prysi, as told to and written by Harold D Simpson of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Executed at Naples, Florida on 16 March 1999.



HENRY F. PRYSI  
2nd Lieutenant

*Henry F. Prysi*  
29 September 1999



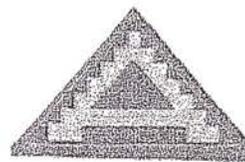
**Lt. Colonel Henry F Pysi, US Army**  
**Retired , 1999, Age 84**

## BIOGRAPHY

Graham C. Green Jr.  
2329 Ava Place, Decatur,  
Georgia, USA 30033



100th I.D.



Seventh Army

### “A CITY OF HOPE”

Graham Green was one of the many citizen soldiers [PFC] serving in World War II with the U.S. 100th “Century” Division during the severe and bitter hostilities of 1944 and 1945, which ended the war on VE Day (Victory Europe) 8 May 1945. In the post World War II era he served in those first difficult days of the Army of Occupation and later on moved on to France, where he eventually returned to the United States in February of 1946. He was an Infantryman assigned to General Dwight D. Eisenhower’s “Crusade in Europe” with Company I, 3rd Battalion, 399th Infantry Regiment, known as the “Greyhounds” a distinguished unit of the US 100th Infantry “Century” Division.

*Dateline: 22 April 1945, Esslingen, a City of 60,000 was captured by two platoons from Company I of the 399th Infantry Regiment. Source, 100th Infantry Division History Book, ISBN 1-56311-324-4, Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 96-61535.*

As the war raced on into the heart of Germany, Graham Green was under the command of Captain Alfred E. Olson Jr., whose unit [Company I] was advancing toward the City of Esslingen on the Neckar, where armed resistance was still being encountered. With the end of the war near the “Greyhounds” were soon to be relieved of their overt combat role and given the more humane task of combat called “Mopping Up” operations.

With the German war machine destroyed, resistance by German Armed Forces was collapsing across all fronts and with the NSDAP on the run, mass surrender of cities as well as Hitler’s Armies, was rapidly evolving everywhere. It was this sort of a new and different tactical situation which greeted Captain Olson and the men of Company I when they entered Stetten and Waeldenbronn [near Esslingen] on 21 and 22 April 1945.

During the early morning hours of 22 April 1945, in the village of Waeldenbronn on the outskirts of Esslingen, a delegation from the Mayor of Esslingen [Dr. Mackh, Hans-Karl Riedel, Dr. Landenberger (who was wearing a Red Cross Arm Band) and Ludwig Strauss] made their way through the American lines and reached Captain Olson, pleading with him to accept their surrender of the city. Graham Green was then designated as the interpreter and ordered to accompany Task Force Olson into the city to interpret the conditions of the surrender, which 1st Lt. Prysi was to formulate with the City Fathers at the Rathaus [City Hall] in Esslingen.

The two platoons of Company I [60 soldiers] and six tanks which were organized as Task Force Olson, proceeded to Esslingen, but were diverted to a German Kaserne [Funker] where a German Officer and his troops were waiting in formation to surrender with their weapons stacked on the ground in the center of the barracks. A large group of soldiers from the Company I, TF were directed to take over the control of this installation, while the rest

In Esslingen with the remaining Infantrymen mounted on the tanks, the town square was quickly secured, permitting LTC Lentz, Captain Olson, 1st Lt., Prysi, himself and the other escort members of the Task Force to enter the City Hall for the surrender ceremony. Graham Green has never forgotten the events of this unique day, recalling that the City officials were all educated and respected men who were extremely cordial and relieved to know that they were entering a new era. They were likewise thankful to have encountered the American Army first, rather than having to surrender to repressive French forces, who were in the immediate area. Lt. Prysi personally set forth the terms of the surrender, specifying confiscation of all arms and ammunition, seizure of automobiles, a strict curfew and other similar public constraints, which was recorded by the City Fathers in a written protocol.

No easy task for Graham Green whose knowledge of the German language was limited to basic German, but this was to be his shining hour, when history stood at his side giving birth to a new city, held in the hands of an extraordinary group of young American soldiers. Following the surrender decree Lt. Prysi and Graham Green prepared an after-action report for Captain Olson, which was to be the end of the war for them at the ancient city of Esslingen. After two weeks in a hospital, Graham Green joined Company I at Kirchheim u. Teck and Bissingen where he accompanied Officers coordinating matters with Mayors and arresting SS soldiers without discharge papers. Upon his departure from Maulbronn, Graham Green was selected to attend the Army American University at Biarritz, France until returning to the United States in February 1946.

Today, at the end of this century, Graham Green reflects upon his own service in Germany with great pride, having been one of those honored American soldiers, who were the first to bring forth a new prognosis of life for a war torn and demoralized nation. All soldiers were not privileged to be combat infantrymen, as Graham Green was, especially near the end of the war, as a mass of defeated people hoped for a new and better beginning. For the Germans of this classic city saw an element of trust, mirrored in the image of soldiers like Graham Green, which accented on the "Wonder of America" giving a forlorn race of people the will to survive in a new democratic society... following the American way of life.

As a Veteran of the great war in Europe Graham Green is a retired Educator, who at age 84, can attest to a long sound life nurtured by a magic moment in time, long ago, in the City of Esslingen where he and others were once heroes, molding the surrender of a fallen ancient city into a new future based upon freedom and democracy. What greater pride might one have -- "Words of Wisdom" -- from Graham Green who can now proudly say, that he too, was a member of that elite "Greyhound" Infantry Company.

While the names of many of the American soldiers and German citizens, involved in this monumental day, are not known to Graham Green, or vice versa any of the others, they are in a sense all alike, bound together forever in the society of man, whose spirit is dedicated to that eternal meaning of righteousness found only in the heart of freedom.

A living account of Graham Green as told to and written by Harold D Simpson of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. His letters and photo's are included.



**Graham Green, Citizen Soldier, World War II**



**Graham Green, Educator Retired  
Age 80- 16 December 1994**

2329 AvaOlace  
Decatur, Ga. 30033  
August 16, 1998

Item co. was in a small village near Esslingen when the mayor and Red Cross leader from Esslingen asked the CO (Capt. Alfred Olsen) to accept surrender of the city.

A lieutenant and two platoons went to the German barracks where an officer had the troops in formation, weapons in piles awaiting us. I was adequate in the German language so I acted as interpreter. After leaving soldiers to take over the installation, the lieutenant and I with a squad went to the Rathouse where the city officials were assembled.

The lieutenant presented the ~~9###~~ terms for surrender (~~#####~~, cars, arms, etc). Then we returned to report the day to the CO, Capt. Olsen.

I went to ~~#####~~ that night, so my information ends here.  
the hospital

100th. Div History

The Story Of the Century

The Battery Press, Inc.  
P.O. Box 3107  
Nashville, Tenn. 37219  
ISBN: #0\_89839 \*0

Sincerely,  
Graham Green  
I Co. 3rd. platoon  
399th Inf.

*Graham Green*

*Please forgive the  
typing*

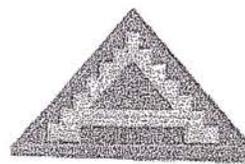
C G Green  
2329 Ava Pl  
Decatur, GA 30033

## BIOGRAPHY

Glen P Moser  
5431 Foxdale Drive  
Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27103



100th I.D.



Seventh Army

### **“THE FIRST AND THE LAST”**

Glen Moser was a citizen soldier in the United States Army, who fought in Europe during World War II, as an American infantryman assigned to the “Queen of Battle” US 100th Infantry “Century” Division. He was a part of the “Crusade in Europe” first proclaimed by the Supreme Allied Commander and future President of the United States, Dwight D Eisenhower in 1945. Glen Moser was a decorated soldier, Bronze Star Medal, for valor while a member of Company I, 399th Infantry Regiment, who were known as the “Greyhounds”. His unit was assigned to a vast American Army battling their way through Northern France, Central Europe and the Rhineland campaigns, demanding an unconditional surrender of the enemy, to bring an end to the war and establish the Army of Occupation as manifested in the Allied Four Power Agreements.

*Dateline: 22 April 1945 Esslingen a City of 60,000 was captured by two platoons from I Company of the 399th Infantry Regiment. Source, 100th Infantry Division History Book, ISBN 1-56311-324-1, Library of Congress Catalog Card 96-61535.*

Glen Moser first saw action as a 19 year old infantryman in the approaches to Strasbourg, France in the Maginot Line at Bitche and Siersthal, France where he was decorated for heroic achievement by his Commander. It was in these actions where Glen Moser first grasped the true role of the “Riflemen” who was always the first to feel the agony of combat, the stench of battle on the front line, where those dreadful realities are so vividly recalled in the US Army vernaculars of KIA (Killed in Action), WIA (Wounded in Action) and ETPH (Entitled to the Purple Heart).

After crossing the Rhine river at Mannheim, Germany, Glen Moser’s unit advance toward the State of Wuerttemberg into an area known as “Schwabenland.” Glen Moser was a Staff Sergeant at Heilbronn and was later committed to the bitter fighting at Beilstein Ridge near the village of Beilstein. Again it was the foot soldier who was the first to take the high ground and move the division forward in their drive to Stuttgart. When Glen Moser’s unit reached the outskirts of Esslingen they experienced some light resistance at Stetten with the Volksstrum, who unsuccessfully fired an abortive anti-tank device at the tanks which they were riding on. But the push into Esslingen could not be halted and Glen Moser and the “Greyhounds” of the 1st Platoon were among the first soldiers to enter Esslingen, as a part of Task Force Olson, unaware that an ancient city from the middle age awaited them. Once within the Esslingen perimeter, Glen Moser and his Squad of Infantrymen could not pause to recuperate, for they were about to be caught up in a plan by their Commander, Captain Olson, to bring the surrender of Esslingen to an abrupt end and move on with his troops across the Neckar river the next day.

While the surrender was being finalized in the City Hall [Rathaus], Glen Moser and his squad of soldiers were on standby alert, as a reactionary force, along with six tanks, which had also entered the city square taking up positions as a part of Task Force Olson. Little could Glen Moser and his men know that they were marked as witnesses to a historic event, involving a fallen City, which one day would arise above its' past to find a just place in the society of the new emerging cities in the European Union at year 2000.

With the mission of Esslingen now complete, Glen Moser wondered if the events of Esslingen would be their last action in combat. As his squad moved on toward Stuttgart, their dream of peace became a reality, when the Division was ordered into the Seventh Army reserve after 175 days of unrelenting combat. Now that VE [Victory in Europe] Day, 8 May 1945, was just around the corner, Glen Moser and his fellow riflemen had fulfilled their last pledge of "Victory for God and Country" needing only to wait for the age of the atomic bomb and the capitulation of Japan [2 September 1945] to see the end of the war and once again the beloved shores of America.

Glen Moser is now 73 years of age and has lived a highly successful life as a retired Chemical Engineer from the R. J. Reynolds Company. He is a family man living with his wife Wanda in North Carolina and is proud to have two fine stepsons and one grandson. As the new millennium nears, Glen Moser well remembers the city of Esslingen with its picturesque square and magnificent clock located in the tower of the "Neues Rathaus" knowing that on this auspicious day - 22 April 1945 - he and his fellow soldiers of the "Greyhound" Company did a remarkable thing for mankind by saving an ancient German city from a frontal assault by the 100th Infantry Division and the consequence of certain mass destruction.

From the wisdom of age, first cast on the battlefields of a great war in Europe, Glen Moser now begs the next generation to at last comprehend that freedom is every man's cause to defend and as we leave this Century, marked by the awful conflict of man, to at last realize that if man is to survive he must comprehend that war has no sane limits.

To those who made the ultimate sacrifice and who lie in hallowed places "Lest We Forget" lives on in the heart and mind of Glen Moser, who in the twilight of his years may now proudly declare that by an act of fate alone, he is an honored survivor of the magnificent "Greyhounds."

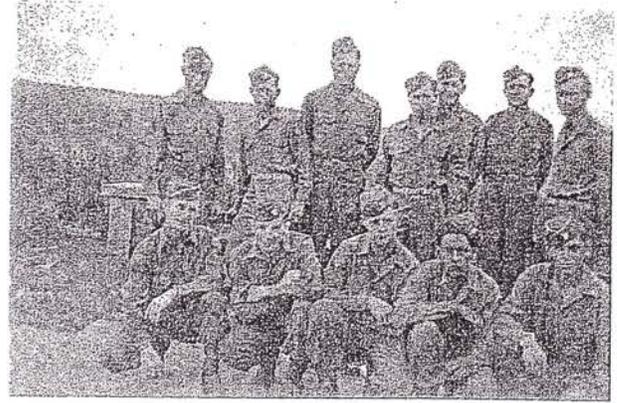
His letters and photos are appended.

A living account of Glen Moser as told to and written by Harold D Simpson of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

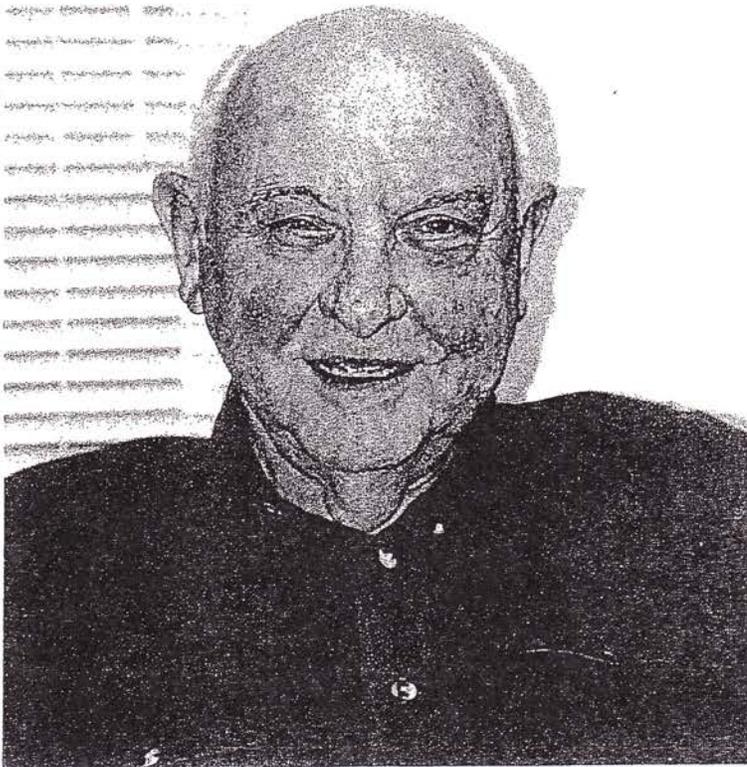
Executed at Winston-Salem, North Carolina on 16 September 1998.



**S/Sgt Glen P Moser, Citizen Soldier,  
World War II**



**Above: S/sgt Glen P Moser  
and his Squad of Soldiers  
taken in the summer of 1945  
at Maulbronn.**



**Glen P Moser, Retired Engineer, Veteran,  
100th I.D. Association, Age 74**

**Front Row - Left to right Kneeling:**

**PFC Fredrick Kenney,  
PFC Richard E Yahner,  
PFC Robert W Hudson,  
PFC Victor Espino,  
PFC David A Cardona.**

**Back row - Left to Right Standing:**

**Sgt. Kenneth A Fark,  
PFC Donald J Howard,  
PFC Jack M Hill,  
PFC Edward E Degarimore,  
PFC Cecil R Hoalt,  
PFC George C Calder,  
S/Sgt. Glen P Moser.**

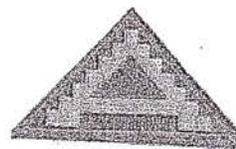


## BIOGRAPHY

Jason A. Ferguson  
1501 North C Street  
Wellington, Kansas, 67152



100th I.D.



Seventh Army

### **"FOLLOW ME"**

Jason Ferguson was an Infantry soldier serving in the US 100th Infantry Division during World War II in Europe and was assigned to Company I, 399th Infantry Regiment, commanded by Captain Alfred Olson Jr., known as the "Greyhounds". He was a part of the US Seventh Army, whose troops were engaged in the campaigns of Northern France, Rhineland and Central Europe during the -- Crusade in Europe -- as declared by the Allied Supreme Commander and future President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Following the bitter fighting in the Maginot Line at the Citadel of Bitche in France, his unit moved across the Rhine at Mannheim, Germany, where they deployed into the State of Wuerttemberg. Jason Ferguson saw action in the heavy fighting in the battle at Heilbronn and later on was involved in the capture Esslingen. Toward the end of April 1945, he moved onto Stuttgart, where the 100th Infantry Division was placed in the Seventh Army Reserve on the 25th of April 1945, just before the war ended on 8 May 1945.

*Dateline: 22 April 1945, Esslingen a City of 60,000 was captured by two Platoons from I Company of the 399th Infantry Regiment. Source, 100th Infantry Division History Book, ISBN 1-563-11-324-4, Library of Congress Catalog Number 96-61535.*

As Company I advanced on and entered Esslingen on 22 April 1945, Jason Ferguson was in the Machine Gun section in the Fourth Platoon. As they entered Esslingen, they occupied a number of houses on a hill located on the edge of the city, to control the German troops, who were surrendering and coming down the hill from a German Kaserne with their hands raised in the air, as they were moved onto Prisoner of War (POW) holding areas. The mission of clearing the city of resistance and formalizing the surrender of the city lasted one day and one night and the next day Jason Ferguson and the men in his platoon moved across the Neckar in the direction of Stuttgart. Following the formal surrender of Esslingen, Jason Ferguson and his fellow soldiers of Company I, 399th Infantry Regiment, 100th Infantry Division, settled in and around the City of Stuttgart, to await VE Day (Victory in Europe) on 8 May 1945. With the war in Europe at an end the staging phase of the Division to fight in Japan was suddenly terminated when the atomic bomb was dropped on Japan -- bringing on VJ Day (Victory Japan) on 2 September 1945.

*Dateline: 23 April 1945, Mopping up along the Neckar southeast of Stuttgart the Division was pinched out of VI Corps and confined its action to patrolling the section east of Stuttgart. Shifting to Goepingen, 30 April 1945, the Division engaged in occupation duties as the war ended. Source, Chronicles of Infantry, Armored and Airborne Divisions.*

Not only was Jason Ferguson committed to the hostilities in 1944/1945 with the US 100th

of 1946, when he was released from military service and returned to his home in the United States to resume a new life -- always remembering -- that he was honored to have served his country during the great war in Europe. As a veteran of the United States Army, Jason Ferguson has proudly carried on the patriotic traditions of those who served in combat in World War II, by being an active member of the US 100th Infantry Division Association.

As a line infantry soldier Jason Ferguson understood the war and combat largely in the simplistic terms of -- "Following The Man Ahead Of You" -- truer words have never been spoken in the renowned tradition of the US Infantry whose motto of "Follow Me" is a symbol to those soldiers who decide the outcome of battle by fighting on the ground. As with many of his fellow soldiers, Jason Ferguson was proud to have worn that distinctive insignia of the United States Infantry, those Cross Rifles and Blue Braid, which in the European war, cast the foot soldier a step ahead and above his contemporaries in other combat arms.

Jason Ferguson is a retired Railroad Engineer and is 78 years old. He lives with his wife Neva and proudly claims 3 sons, 10 grand-children and 10 great-children. He and most of his family members reside in Wellington, Kansas where he has lived in the same home for 50 years -- which he purchased under a Veterans Administration Loan mortgage [G.I. Loan] based upon his military service as an Infantryman in the US Army in World War II.

As the year 2000 approaches he looks back upon the Army service reverently, knowing well that his contribution to the cause of freedom was worth the fight, not just for the victory at hand, but to instill in a defeated people the American principals of democracy essential to peaceful coexistence in an aggregate of new world nations as society moves forward into the 21st Century.

As a member of the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Jason Ferguson has not forgotten his fallen comrades either, nor that faithful expression of "Lest we Forget" for those who made the ultimate sacrifice and he too is proud to say that he served among them, those valiant "Greyhounds" of Company I, 399th Infantry Regiment of the US 100th Infantry Division.

A living account of Jason Ferguson as told to and written by Harold D Simpson of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. His letters and photo's are appended.

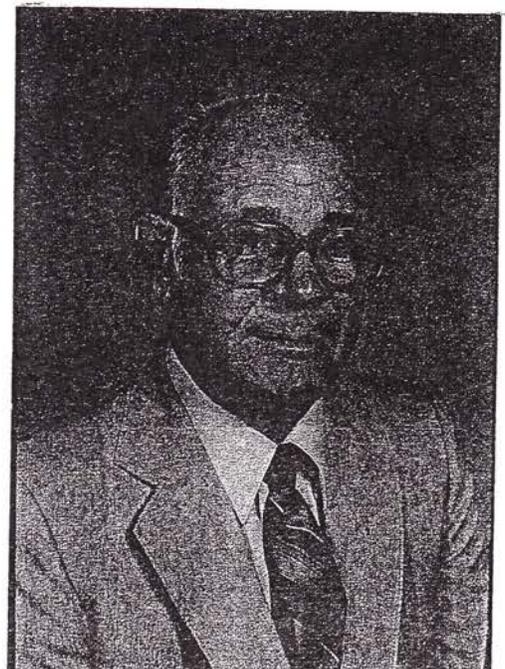
Executed at Wellington, Kansas on 2 October 1998.



**Above: Jason A Ferguson, 1945,  
Giessen, Germany, US Army of  
Occupation.**

**Left: Jason A Ferguson, 1944,  
World War II, Citizen soldier**

**Right: Jason A Ferguson, Retired,  
Railroad Engineer - age 78- Member  
of the American Legion, Veterans of  
Foreign Wars and member of the US  
100th Infantry Division Association**



Harold Simpson

8-30-98

Dear Sir:

I am sorry that I have taken so long to answer your letter, but really can't tell you much, as you know, in the Army, as you well know, you follow the man a head of you. I was in the machine gun section of the fourth platoon, when we entered Esslingen, we took over some houses at the edge of the city up on a hill, I was left to stay and guard this house, and the rest of the platoon went house to house through the city, while I was at this house a lot of German's layed down their weapons and came down the hill past me with their hand's in the air, all I did was motioned for them to <sup>keep</sup> going down the hill, if I remember right we just stayed that one night in Esslingen. Like I said it's been a long time ago and I am 78 yrs old.

I will try to answer your questions on the sheet provided. I hope this is some help to you

Sincerely yours

(PFC) Jason A. Ferguson  
1501 NORTH C ST.

WELLINGTON

KANSAS

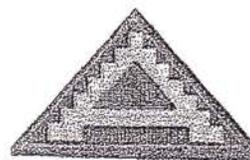
1998

## BIOGRAPHY

Edward W Staab, Jr.  
410 SE 2nd Avenue  
Pompano Beach, Florida  
33060-8074



100th I.D.



Seventh Army

Edward W Staab was involved in the action at Esslingen but he was not in Task Force Olson. His letter follows on this page and a commentary may be seen on page two.

1<sup>ST</sup> PLATOON LEADER: TEC SGT ARNOLD STEVENS

HAROLD D. SIMPSON

DEAR SIR:

AT 50 YEARS PLUS, MY RECOLLECTION OF THE EVENTS OF LATE APRIL 1945 ARE AS FOLLOWS: I REMEMBER WALKING THROUGH A TUNNEL INTO THE CITY OF STUTTGART & MEETING THE FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION SOMEWHERE IN THE CENTER OF THE CITY. AS I RECALL, WE STAYED IN STUTTGART FOR A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME & THEN MOVED ON TO KIRCHEIM WHERE WE REMAINED FOR A PERIOD OF TIME & THEN WE WERE SHIFTED TO THE FARMING VILLAGE OF BISSINGEN. WE CELEBRATED V-E DAY IN BISSINGEN & AFTER A TIME WE SHIFTED TO ANOTHER FARMING VILLAGE WHOSE NAME I DO NOT REMEMBER. TOWARD THE END OF JUNE - EARLY JULY, I WAS TRANSFERRED OUT OF THE 100<sup>TH</sup> DIV. TO THE UNIVERSITY OF SHRIVENHAM, WHICH WAS LOCATED NEAR THE CITY OF SWINDEN, ENGLAND.

I DO NOT RECALL ESSLINGEN WHAT-SO-EVER. I DON'T THINK I WAS IN THIS CITY.

Sincerely

A

Edward W Staab was one of the "Greyhounds" of Company I, 399th Infantry Regiment and he was in the 1st Platoon, which along with the 2nd Platoon, were the first troops to arrive in and capture the city of Esslingen on 22 April 1945, during the drive by the U.S. Seventh Army into the Neckar region and the envelopment of the city of Stuttgart. Although he cannot recall being in Esslingen, it was the soldiers of these two platoons, which disarmed the German troops in the Funker Kaserne and who moved on with the armored columns of Task Force Olson to the city Rathaus, where the terms of a formal surrender were formalized with the City Fathers, by the American officers in charge of Task Force Olson.

Following the engagement at Esslingen Edward W Staab and the rest of his "Greyhound" comrades moved forward across the Neckar and into the city of Stuttgart where the "First Encounter" with troops of the II French Corps of the French First Army took place in the center of the city, in what was to be the final days of the war.

With the Army of Occupation firmly in place Edward W Staab was one of those select soldiers who were transferred from their wartime combat units for educational purposes and was transferred to the University of Shrivenham in England.

After completion of his military duty in England, Edward W Staab returned to the United States and was separated from the United States Army. Receiving an Honorable Discharge he went on to civilian life and became a part of that amazing Post World War II society, which comprises the "Greatest Generation" of the 20th Century.

A living account of Edward W Staab as told to and written by Harold D Simpson of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

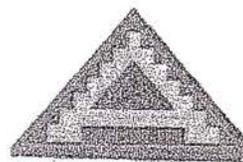
Executed at Pompano Beach, Florida in 1998.

## BIOGRAPHY

Stephen Chawaga  
510 Mercer Road  
Merion, Pennsylvania, USA 19066



100th I.D.



Seventh Army

### **“ONE OF MANY”**

Stephen Chawaga was a decorated American citizen soldier drafted into the service of his country in World War II. As an Infantry soldier in Company I, 399th Infantry Regiment, 100th Infantry Division, known as the “Greyhounds” he was engaged in the bitter fighting in France and Germany in the winter of 1944 and 1945, during the Seventh Army campaigns of Northern France, Rhineland and Central Europe. He and the men in his platoon, including all of the other “Greyhounds” were dedicated to the cause of freedom and typified the consummate image of the American fighting man in World War II, proclaimed in General Eisenhower’s “Crusade in Europe.”

Although many members of his platoon had survived the bitter winter engagements of the 100th Infantry Division throughout France and still managed to be a part of the fighting force which later reached Esslingen, Germany -- S/Sergeant Stephen Chawaga was not destined to be among the “Greyhounds” which captured Esslingen. For he was seriously wounded and left dying on the battlefield in the crucial fighting at Beilstein [near Heilbronn] Germany on 18 April 1945. But fate in war cannot be chosen and Stephen Chawaga was on this day at Beilstein to become the honored holder of a third Purple Heart Medal, awarded to those who shed their blood on the battlefield for their country and equally so for the sake of their fellow soldiers. His first and second Purple Heart Medals were awarded during combat in France, battling a tenacious German soldier intent upon keeping America’s soldiers from reaching German soil. His last Purple Heart Medal was awarded in the fight for the Fohlenberg near Beilstein, close to Heilbronn, in the State of Wuerttemberg, where his unit lost 130 soldiers killed or wounded in one day. For this action his unit the [3rd Battalion, 399th Infantry] was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation.

Stephen Chawaga has never forgotten the battle at Beilstein on “Grapevine Hill” which is now a renowned wine growing region, leaving the past history of war to the superb tastes of today’s prestigious German wine called “Trollinger”... some say that the deep red color of the Beilstein “Trollinger” is forever tinted with the blood of the “Greyhounds”. But the experience of combat is a bond among soldiers and cannot be forgotten. In keeping with this tradition, Stephen Chawaga met another Greyhound soldier named Robert Lovre, who saved his life at Beilstein and whom he honored during a reunion held on 1 July 1993. Although Robert Lovre is now deceased, his name will be recorded in the archives of the ancient city of Esslingen, which had existed for over one thousand years and now with freedom at its side, will soon become a member of the European Union in year 2000. Not all of the Greyhounds reached Esslingen, but several who were there on that historic day [22 April 1945] were Robert Lovre and two others from the 3rd Platoon, named Charles Benda and Alfred Chestnut. They all now bear one common distinction. held by all of the

greatness, found only in soldiers, by saving a ancient city from total destruction.

Stephen Chawaga was a casualty recuperating from his wounds on VE Day (Victory in Europe) on 8 May 1945 and could not be physically be present at the capture of the "Imperial City of Esslingen" on 22 April 1945. Irrespective of his convalescence during these last days of the war, he too is encased forever in the annuals of the United States Army, plus the splendid history of the US 100th Infantry Division -- and now the Esslingen Archives, as being among those dedicated American soldiers, who stood tall when it truly counted, bringing humanity and reason back into the world of a defeated German nation.

Stephen Chawaga submitted two letters dated 17 August 1998 and 8 February 1999, outlining his background and listing other members of his units with photographs taken at Siersthal, France in March of 1945. He is an active member of the US 100th Infantry Division Association and as we near the end of this century he is a distinguished part of that segment of American society which is comprised of honorable Veterans from the greatest war ever fought on foreign soil in the history of our great nation.

Stephen Chawaga's combat history commenced at Siersthal, France with a life size statue of a Madonna which he encountered standing in front of a church, which he photographed with the men in his platoon. Before his unit moved on into battle toward Germany, he touched the Madonna's hand and silently prayed for her to keep him and his men out of harms way -- not knowing whether she would survive the devastation of war either. Many years later [1988] Stephen Chawaga returned to Siersthal, with his son, in search of the Madonna, which they found intact in different area and in a final act of reverence he again touched the Madonna's hand and again silently prayed, thanking her for the divinity of seeing him through the war alive -- with three Purple Hearts Medals and a comrade named Robert Lovre!

His spectacular photographs including the one of the Madonna, appearing as a mystic shimmering white vision of eternity, are appended along with his letters, as cited above.

A living account of Stephen Chawaga as told to and written by Harold D Simpson of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW).

Executed at Merion, Pennsylvania on 5 March 1999.



**S/Sergeant Stephen Chawaga in 1945 with the  
Madonna at Siersthal, France**



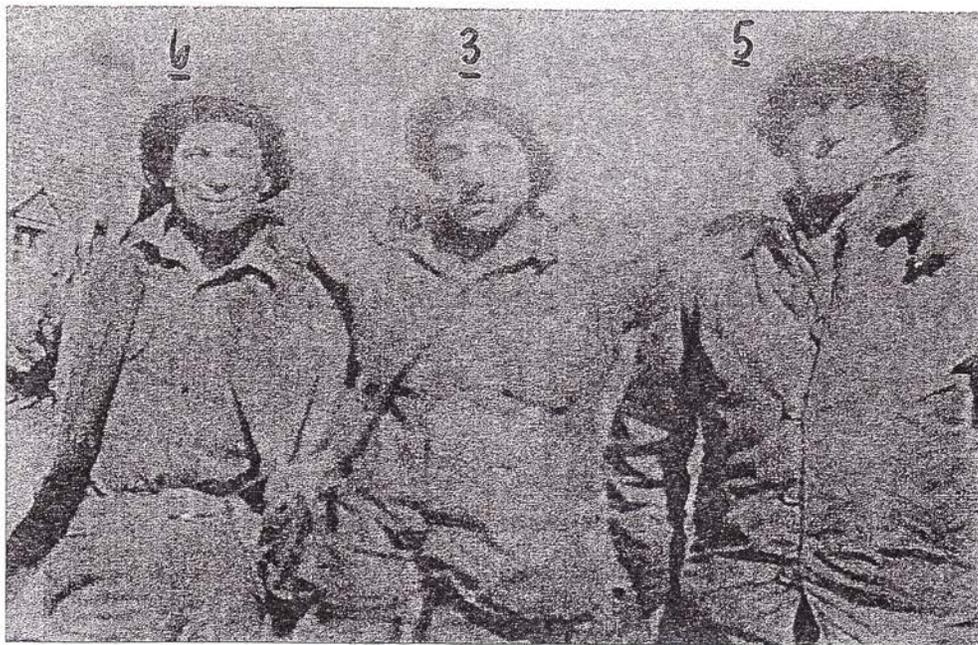
**Stephen Chawaga, Citizen Soldier and Veteran  
Photograph 1999 -- Age 77**



**The American Soldier at the Citadel of Bitche**  
 3rd Platoon, Company I, 399th Infantry Regiment, Siersthal, France 1945  
 8 Sorensen, 7 Seger, 4 Sekerek, 2 Lovre, 1 Chawaga - 2.4.7.8 were in Esslingen



**Siersthal, France**  
 2 Lovre, 6 Tolley, 7 Seger, 3 Greer, 1 Chawaga, 8 Sorensen and the Madonna



**6 S/Sergeant Tolley, 3 T/Sergeant Greer, 5 S/Sergeant Kedzierski**



**10 Pfc Chestnut, 1 S/Sergeant Chawaga, 4 Pfc Sekerek**



**Pfc Benda, 1 S/Sergeant Chawaga, 8 Pfc Sorensen, 7 Pfc Seger**

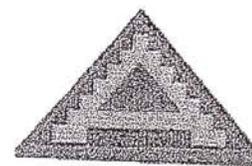


## BIOGRAPHY

Bruno Viani  
71 Kane Avenue  
Larchmont, New York  
10358



100th I.D.



Seventh Army

Bruno Viani was one of those young dynamic WW II Lieutenants who served in Company I, 399th Infantry Regiment, 100th Infantry Division, who was in charge of leading America's prime fighting element into battle, the "U.S. Infantry Platoon". He was the Leader of the 2nd Platoon, when he was wounded on 6 November 1945, during the bitter combat at St Remy, France. While the seriousness of his wounds kept him from staying in the division until it reached Esslingen, it is men like Bruno Viani who literally moved the U.S. Seventh Army forward onto German soil where the terms of an unconditional surrender with Nazi Germany would finally be concluded. For his service to his country and the wounds which he received on the battlefield, a grateful nation awarded him the much cherished "Purple Heart Medal".

Bruno Viani was a citizen soldier, brought into the military service in the very early days of the war, who believed in the fight for freedom and the sacrifices of war, which would never let it die. Following his recuperation from the wounds incurred in action at France, he returned to civilian life and a world which he could hardly remember. But the staunch soldiers of the Century Division were men of great fiber and they quickly integrated themselves into a new society of peace, where as veterans, they were destined to become the "Greatest Generation" of the 20th Century. Although his name is listed in the annals of American military history, it will now be added to the Esslingen Archives, as a member of the "Greyhounds", who in an act of human consolation at the end of a terrible war, once saved an ancient German city from total destruction.

Bruno Viani was of great assistance in pursuing the identity of soldiers and officers, who were a part of Task Force Olson, which ventured forward into Esslingen to formulate a formal surrender before the winds of war forced them to attack and destroy it. He searched out and found 1st Lt. Henry F Prysi alive, former Executive Officer of Company I, who had been directed by Captain Alfred E Olson to dictate the terms of a formal surrender to the City Fathers of Esslingen on 22 April 1945. Equally so he was of great help in prompting the contacts with Frank Hancock, whose remarkable book "An Improbable Machine Gunner" created the first insight of the capture of Esslingen and surfaced a unique historical story of a World War II military action, which had never been revealed or told before.

A living account of Bruno Viani as told to Harold D Simpson of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. His Platoon Roster and photographs are attached.

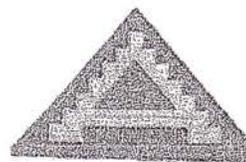
Executed at Larchmont, New York on 14 June 1999.

# AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Bruno Viani  
71 Kane Avenue,  
Larchmont, New York  
10358



100th I.D.



Seventh Army

In October 1940, Bruno Viani was a private in the 27th Infantry Division, which was based in Fort McClellan, Alabama. During the next twelve month, he rose to the rank of Staff Sergeant. Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the 27th Division was dispatched to the Hawaiian Islands and assumed defensive positions on the island of Maui.

In September 1942, Sergeant Viani returned to the United States mainland following his acceptance into the Infantry Officers Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia. In February 1943, Bruno Viani was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant and was subsequently assigned as a Training Officer to Infantry Replacement Centers at Camp Wheeler, Georgia and Camp Blanding, Florida.

In the spring of 1944, Lieutenant Viani was assigned as a Platoon Leader to M Company of the 399th Regiment, 100th Infantry Division. Shortly thereafter, he was transferred to the I Company "Greyhounds" which was under the command of Captain Travis Hopkins. In October 1944, the 100th Division embarked for Marseille, in preparation for its role in opening a second front in France.

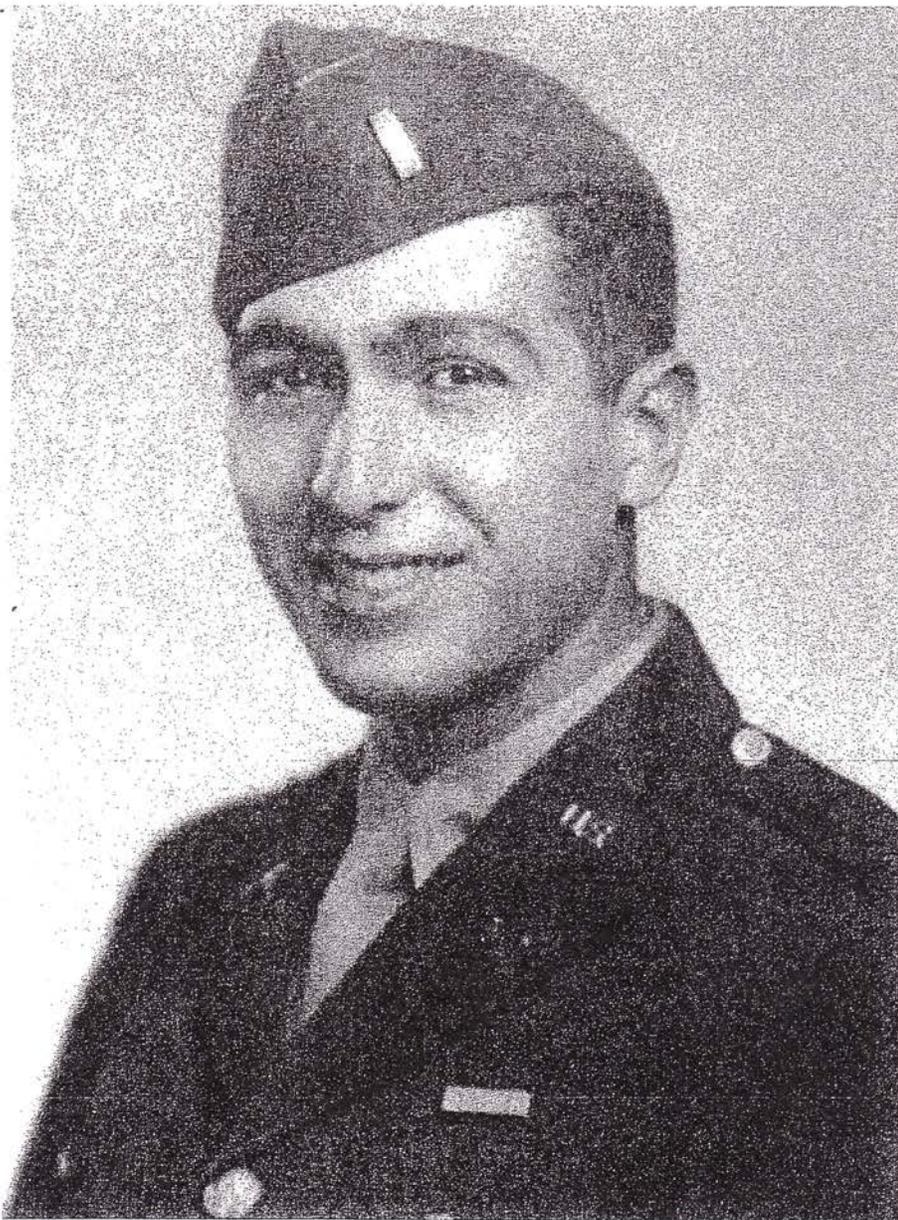
Lieutenant Viani saw action in the early days of the Vosges Mountains campaign and was wounded on November 6, 1944 during the attack on the village of St. Remy. Following medical treatment in France, Lieutenant Viani was returned to the United States and completed his recovery at Halloran General Hospital on Staten Island in New York City.

Upon being discharged with the rank of Captain, Bruno began a career in sales that lasted for fifty years. Bruno and his wife, the former Evelyn Rosasco, have been married for forty nine years and have two sons and a daughter and four grandchildren.

A native of Greenwich Village in New York City, Bruno has been a member for fifty years in American Legion Post 1212 and has served as Post Commander. In addition, he has long been involved in local civic and charitable affairs and helped for many years to raise funds for the work of the Children's Aid Society in Greenwich Village.

Bruno retired in 1997 and has recently renewed his membership in the 100th Infantry Division Association. Bruno and Evelyn have resided for the past twenty years in the village of Larchmont, which is located just north of New York City.

Written by Bruno Viani in 1999.



**Below:  
Bruno Viani,  
Veteran World War II**

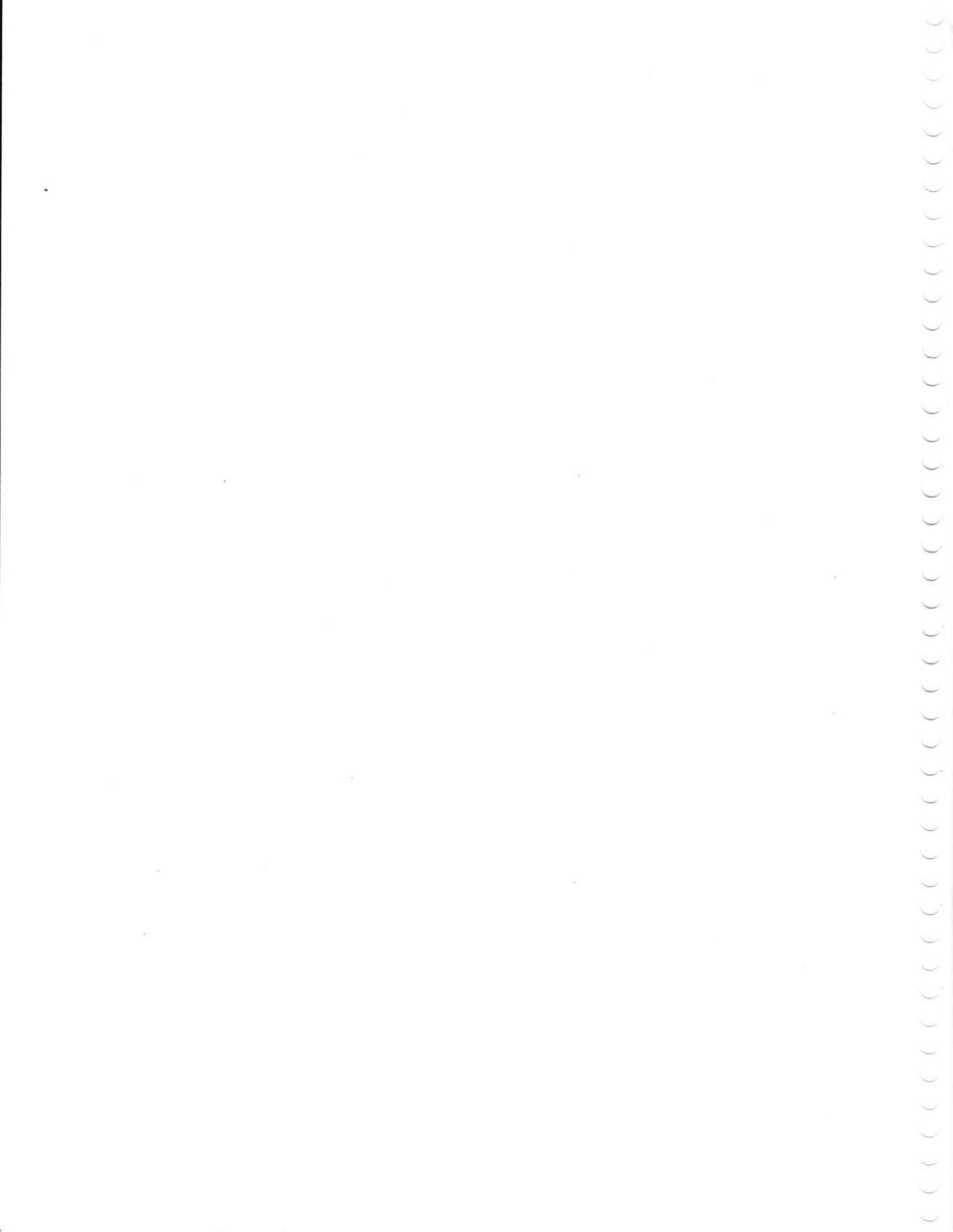
**Present day photograph  
taken in June 1999**

**Above:**

**Lt. Bruno Viani,  
I Company, 399th Infantry Regiment,  
U.S. 100th Infantry Division.**

**World War II photograph taken in  
February 1943.**



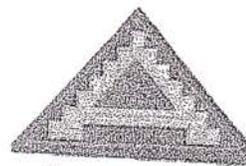


## BIOGRAPHY

Frank Hancock  
105 Malor Circle  
Madison, Alabama, USA 35758-1977



100th I.D.



Seventh Army

### **"THE LAST SHOT"**

Frank Hancock was one of our loyal American men drafted into the military service of his country in World War II and he was a member of M Company, the Heavy Weapons Company of the 3rd Battalion, 399th Infantry Regiment, U.S. 100th Infantry Division, a select combat unit under the command of the U.S. Seventh Army. Although this was his principal assignment, as a Machine Gunner, he was frequently attached to different Companies in the Battalion. On 22 April 1945, he was with Company I, who were the first American soldiers to enter Esslingen. He was a part of America's fighting force in Europe engaged in the campaigns of Northern France, Rhineland and Central Europe serving under such distinguished Generals as Eisenhower, Patch, Bradley, Clark and Patton -- when the world simply knew him by the vernacular of "Yank" or "G.I. Joe." But Frank Hancock was not only an excellent soldier, he also possessed a keen sense for journalism and is the author of a Post World War II book titled "An Improbable Machine Gunner" an outstanding account of his military service in the war as he experienced it.

Frank Hancock's baptism of fire took place during the bitter fighting in Northern France where he was wounded in 1944, later returning to his unit in January 1945, for the final push into the State of Wuerttemberg in Southern Germany [Heilbronn, Esslingen and Stuttgart] thereby witnessing the collapse of the German war machine as the war ended for him on 8 May 1945 - VE (Victory in Europe) Day at Stuttgart, Germany.

Following the Rhine river crossing at Mannheim, Germany and the heavy fighting at Heilbronn the 3rd Battalion, 399th Infantry Regiment was poised to move into the Neckar region and on Sunday the 22nd of April 1945, Company I was to lead the drive to capture Esslingen, in face of a rapid moving French Army, which had moved into Nellingen and the Pliensauvorstadt on the south side of the Neckar River. In this action Frank Hancock was assigned to Company I and entered the city of Esslingen riding on a tank belonging to a supporting Armored unit. In Stetten fighting broke out with the Volksstrum firing a Panzerfaust at one of their lead tanks requiring the Infantrymen of Company I to kill the civilian who had fired it -- but the push into Esslingen could not be halted and the city of Esslingen was now facing a frontal assault by the 100th Infantry Division supported by armored tank units and attack aircraft. Frank Hancock recalls sitting on his tank listening to this man dying along side the road in the darkness and he wondered -- who he is was commenting that "What he did was suicide, but he was a brave man acting in the defense of his town." After the Infantry cleared the road to Esslingen -- to avoid another ambush -- they rolled on through the dark silent night toward the Neckar. Had the winds of war been more aggressive on this day, Esslingen might not have survived this day undamaged.

Once within Esslingen he and his fellow soldiers were ordered into bivouac that night and the next day they advanced into Stuttgart where...

Europe) Day 8 May 1945 and VJ ( Victory Japan) Day 2 September 1945, followed by Occupation Duty and finally the mass demobilization of troops which would return the Century Division to the United Sates in January 1946.

As one of those superb young American conscripts who fought in European with the US 100th Infantry Division, he is the holder of the Purple Heart and Bronze Star medals, an honor possessed by few. He is a retired Engineer and has lead a most productive life, proud to have served his country in the fight for freedom in the great war in Europe. As a member of the 100th Infantry Division Association he has not forgotten his country or his fellow Veteran's who today comprise what is the greater part of our dynamic American society.

His most outstanding book, "An Improbable Machine Gunner" has been autographed and given to the Esslingen Stadtarchiv as a historical reference of the American wartime experience, which brought American soldiers to Germany and into Esslingen. More importantly his book will serve as a reference for future German generations to study the American soldier of World War II and to better understand their origins of freedom and democracy.

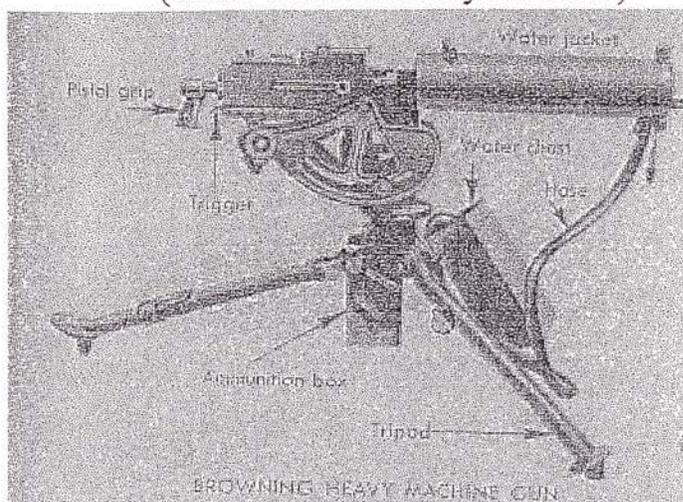
In his personal notes Frank Hancock wrote: Keith Bonn's Book (When the Odds Were Even) made the point that the Wehrmacht has been held up by Historians as the Premier Army of the World, but in the Saar and Vosges we matched them + held them -- where weather and forests eliminated our air advantage. The Germans did an efficient and disciplined job -- matched by American initiative and by our overwhelming logistics -- both sides showed incredible courage.

His brochure and photograph are appended.

A living account of Frank Hancock as told to and written by Harold D Simpson of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Executed at Madison, Alabama on 17 August 1998.

## "AN IMPROBABLE MACHINE GUNNER" (of the 100th Infantry Division)



Walk with me from a newspaper route in Baltimore to the Ft. McClellan hills; stand formations in the quadrangles of The Citadel. Hike in the sandy woods of Ft. Bragg. Convoy with me to Marseilles. Then read of our Battles of the Vosges, the Rhineland and Central Europe - our Occupation of Germany - recuperation - and post war careers.

THE FIRST EDITION SOLD OUT ! Veterans said: "I could not put it down until I finished it. It brought back many memories and left me very emotional." A widow wrote: "He never talked about it. Now we know what he went through. Send copies to my children."

THE SECOND EDITION adds new materials from other veterans.

Dick Christian wrote from the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University: "I read your book twice. It is a work of art. ... as a (retired) dean in the country's number one journalism school, I have some appreciation for words and writing. You are an excellent writer."

The GI Journal (Nov./Dec. '97) included a favorable review: "This is exactly the kind of book we need more of..." (They suggested a price: \$12)

Get your *autographed* copy from the author:

**Frank Hancock      105 MALOR CIRCLE  
MADISON AL 35758-1977**

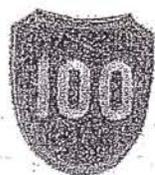
**Phone: 256-772-3647 or email F2HANCOCK@AOL.com**

Call, or - "e-mail" - or come by and get a copy and a cup of coffee.  
We accept, but do not require help with printing (\$8) and mailing (\$2) costs.  
(Overseas: please add \$2 surface, \$5 air mail)

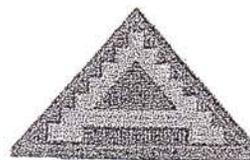


## BIOGRAPHY

George A Blair Jr.  
Ragged Mountain Fish and Game Club  
Potter Place - P.O. Box 62  
Andover, New Hampshire 03216



100th I.D.



Seventh Army

George Blair submitted a written letter concerning his unit which was based in Esslingen at the end of the war including subsequent deployments in other cities located within the State of Wuerttemberg. Included with this letter was a summary "FINALE" of the last days of combat for the 100th Infantry Division, which is added hereto.

Letter of George Blair responding to a notice in the TROA Magazine.

"Your inquiry in the May, 1999 issue of The Retired Officer Association Magazine ( pp 76, 77) has caught my eye, and I am pleased to respond however useful that may be.

The Anti-Tank Company, 399th Infantry, 100th Infantry Division (of which I was Executive Officer) was housed in Esslingen, Germany from 22 April - 30 April 1945. I remember the place well. The 100th being in the 7th Army Reserve, was finally out of combat and our duties were essentially those of policing the streets, searching for weapons, etc.

You may note from the enclosed that the 100th was the right flank division of the U.S. Forces in Europe, indeed a distinction which was held by one or more of our gun squads on more than one occasion.

On 30 April the company was moved to Kirchheim unter Teck to wait out VE Day and eventually on to the Pforzheim area for occupation duties which took up the rest of our stay in Europe until our movement back to CONUS in February 1946.

I am interested in the reason for your inquiry. Perhaps you are writing a book? In any case I'm sending a copy of this letter and your inquiry to the 100th Infantry Division Association Historian, Mr. Frank Gurley, 1626 Romannens, (Fribourg) Switzerland".

George A Blair submitted copies of letters from Headquarters VI Corps, Headquarter XV Corps and Headquarters Sixth Army Group commending the 100th Infantry Division for their action at Roan L'Etape, the Maginot Line, the Hardt Mountains and in clearing the approaches to the Siegfried Line and capturing the fortress town of Bitche, including the Citadel which had never been reduced before in military history. The men of the Century Division were cited for their splendid combat record in these regions and for their brilliant leadership and aggressive fighting spirit.

## FINALE

After nine days of heavy fighting in Heilbronn, the 100th pushed quickly out of Heilbronn to the east and south to deny a disorganized enemy time for regrouping and reorganizing. The operation was to be the Finale for the 100th Division in the European Theater of Operations.

A trap was forming 30 miles to the south as the II French Corps of the First French Army battled its way into Stuttgart from the west and the south. Meeting disorganized resistance, the 103rd Division on the left sped down to the Fils River east of Stuttgart in the vicinity of Goepfingen. Starting 13 April, the Division swung its weight to the left of the sector and drove day and night through the most difficult terrain to reach the Fils River east of Stuttgart and close the trap on thousands of disorganized German soldiers. In this twelve day fireball campaign 5,648 prisoners were captured.

Placed in the Army reserve on 25 April the Division minus CT 398 occupied Stuttgart on 26 April and prepared to relieve French units there. On 30 April the Division moved from Stuttgart and assembled in the Eislingen - Waiblingen - Kirchheim area, in the Seventh Army Reserve.

A living account of George A Blair as told to Harold D Simpson of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Executed at Andover, New Hampshire in 1998.

## BIOGRAPHY

Robert Weins  
6319 W Chestnut Avenue  
Littleton, Colorado  
80128-5811



100th I.D.



Seventh Army

Robert Weins submitted a written letter outlining the actions of his unit, Company L of the 398th Infantry Regiment, which saw action in the tactical drive into the Neckar region on 22 April 1945. Although he did not enter Esslingen on this day it was the combined actions of all soldiers in the 100th Infantry Division, which contributed to the surrender of Esslingen. Robert Weins returned to Esslingen in May 1945, as a member of the Occupation force and his descriptions of American troops living in a small German city, among people of another culture right after the war are set forth in this letter.

Letter Robert Weins, dated 12 October 1998.

“I understand from Frank Hancock that you are seeking information about who took Esslingen am Neckar and who occupied it. I was in Co L, 398th Infantry Regiment, 100th Infantry Division -- Frank was in the 399th Infantry. Co L and the rest of the 3rd Battalion, 398th finished the war almost straight west of Ulm. In late May or early June we moved to Esslingen. We were there, at least, until October. At that time those of us who had under 65 points were sent to other units as the 100th was going home.

In Esslingen Co L was housed in the Fachhochschule fuer Technik. Co L was based there the entire time in Esslingen. Our Company bar was located near the corner of Kiesstrasse and Obertor Strasse. I was there in 1991 and this area had been razed. We visited the school and met the Proctor who gave me a medal embossed on one side with the Esslingen school and on the other side with the sister school in Goepingen. The Proctor did not know that American troops had used his school for a barracks.

In the school building itself, as you enter through the main door the room to your immediate left was used as our CP or orderly room. The CO's office was on the second floor. The large room facing you as you enter was our mess hall. My Platoon, the weapons platoon, was located on the top floor. I have several pictures of troops in and around the building and other parts of the town.

Third Battalion's CP was located on Ritterstrasse between our quarters on one end and the Champagne factory. Sixth Corps headquarters was located in Esslingen. I don't know where the other 3rd Bn companies were located but think they were all in Esslingen or close by.

We spent a lot of time on the beach. There was a dam or a power plant not too far from the beach. Most of us in the company were 19 or 20. So of course we were always looking for girls. The fraternization ban had been lifted by that time. I remember one young girl of 16-18, her parents owned a laundry or cleaning establishment on the side streets near the Market Place.

In his written questionnaire Robert Weins described the dispersement of troops in the city. He noted on his visit in 1991 that the area around the Technical Schule had been razed -- urban renewal. He commented that all of the troops thought that Esslingen was a great town. He said, 3rd Bn Hqs was between us and the town center and Platz. Officer's quarters about a block away. What seemed to be a YMCA was not actually a Y. It was a place with an indoor pool, showers and a sauna - no indoor track of BB floor [Merkelschen Bad]. In his outline of the city Robert Weins noted the location of certain facilities in the center of the city in relation to the Champagne factory [Kessler].

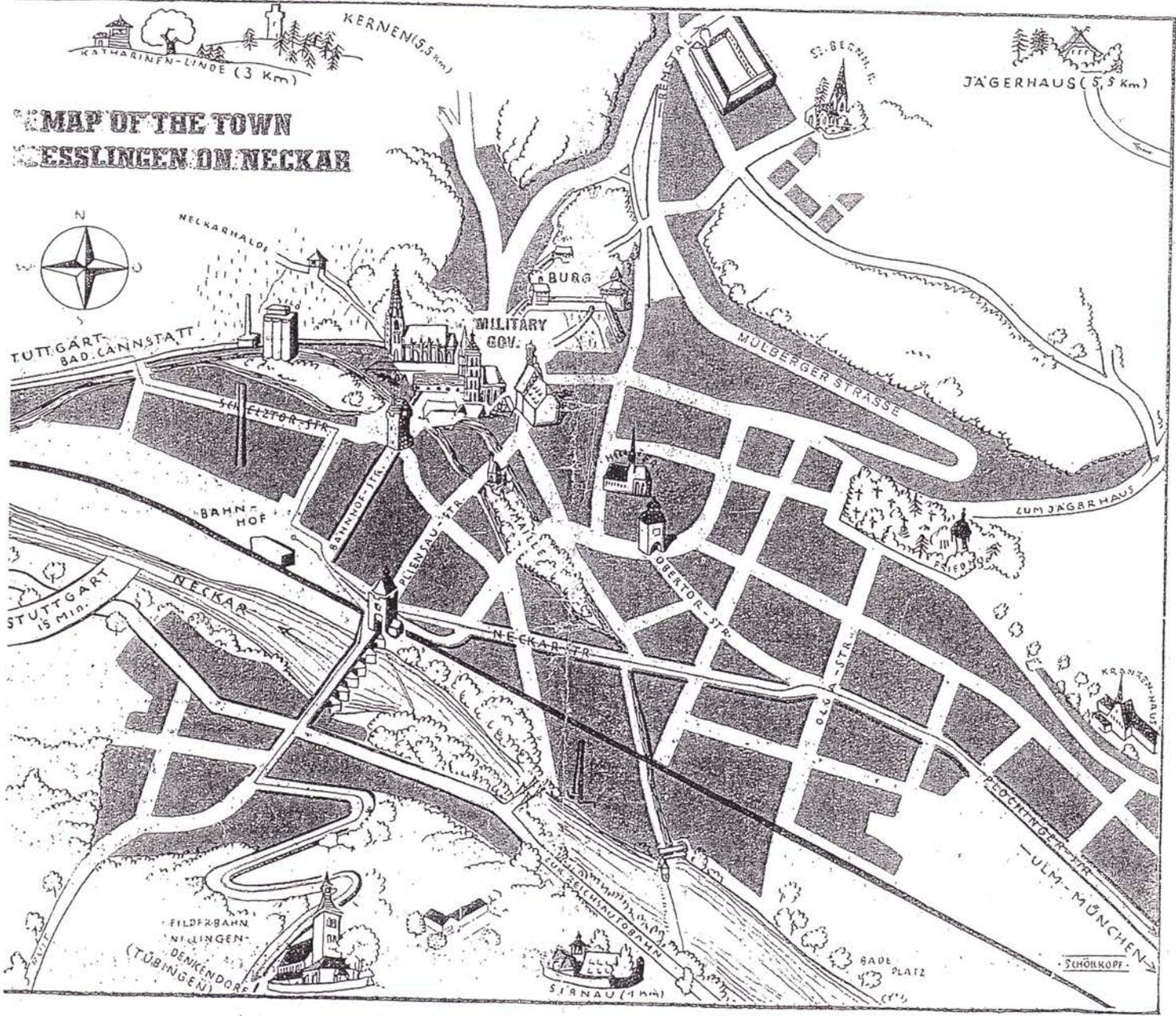
A living account of Robert Weins as told to Harold D Simpson of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

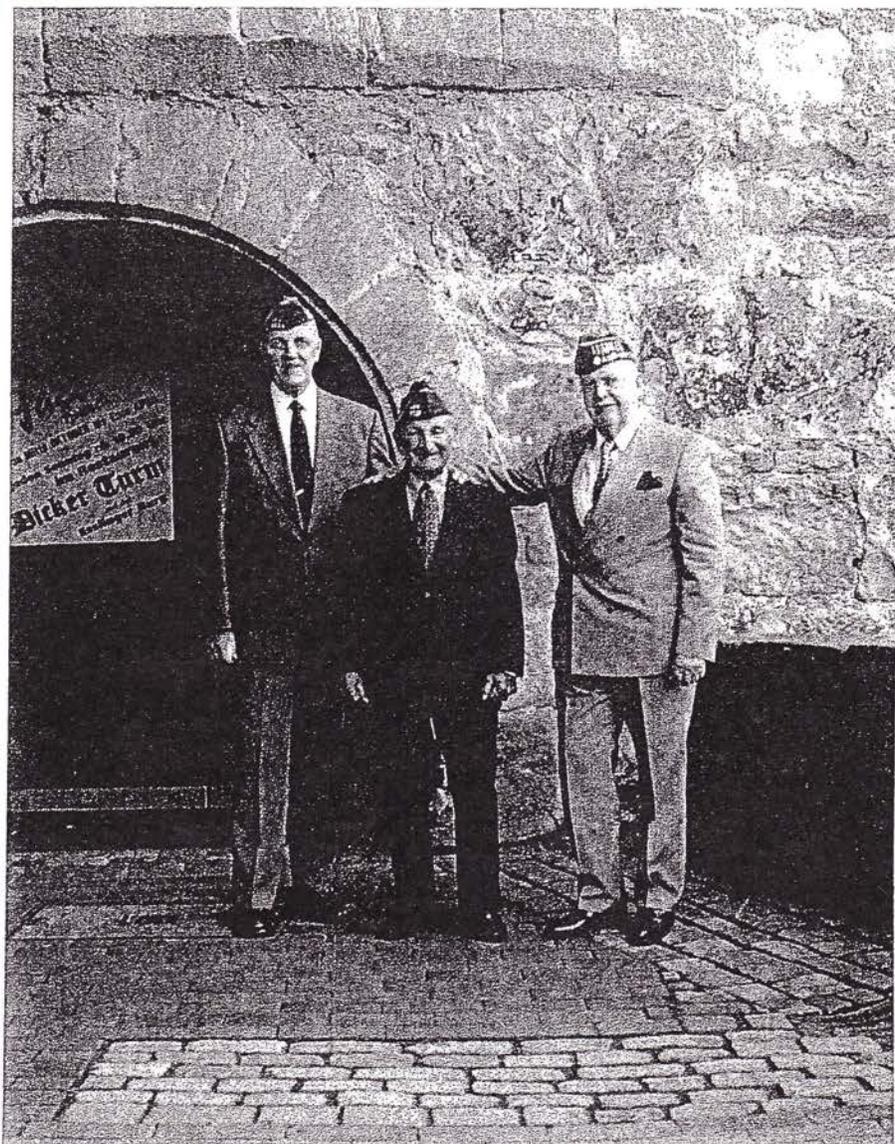
Executed at Littleton, Colorado on 12 October 1998.



NEW TOWN-HALL  
MILITARY GOVERNMENT  
(NEUES RATHAUS)

# MAP OF THE TOWN WESSLINGEN ON NECKAR





Esslinger Burg (Fortress) 29 September 1999  
L - R. J. P. Myers, H. Pysi, H. D. Simpson



## EPILOGUE

What the men involved in the Esslingen experience did, after the end of the war, is the more noble side of this story. With democracy at their door step, those city fathers, who struggled for a peaceful surrender of the city, were soon to see the effects of a new political era, brought on by the creativity of the Marshal Plan, the emergence of the mighty Deutsche Mark [1948] and a surging power house economy. The post war recovery of their nation remains as one of the most phenomenal economic accomplishments of this last Century, in a Europe which had been plagued by two devastating World Wars. Dr. Landenberger became the Mayor of Esslingen and the lead political figure in the creation of a new city, based upon the concepts of freedom and human rights for its citizens. He must be remembered as a city father of great renown for his "par excellence" dedication and diplomacy, which moved Esslingen forward into its present day status, as one of the most dynamic cities in State of Baden Wuerttemberg. The other city fathers, who demanded a peaceful surrender of the city, became a part of a new energetic industrial nation, which rebuilt Germany into a colossal market oriented society in heart of the crossroads of Europe.

The American men, those non-European citizen soldiers of the United States Army, who brought democracy to a defeated nation, expected at wars end to quickly return to their homeland, where they would be integrated into a post-war society, recognizing them as the Veterans of World War II and the "Greatest Generation" of the 20th Century. These citizen soldiers were young men, who came from all walks of life and believed that the cause of freedom was worth the fight for world freedom. Some of them went on to be leaders in private industry, while others occupied key governmental positions and a select few remained in the military service as professional soldiers. The majority of these men from America's greatest war, kept up their loyalties to their nation, by becoming members of the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the many other active Associations of military units, which fought in World War II. In this sense they continued to serve by consensus, with their voices of leverage, fighting to protect the rights and benefits of all soldiers, whomever they may be. No generation of America's soldiers has sacrificed as much and none have given more than the veterans of World War II.

While the city fathers were obliged to live on facing the reality of advancing political change in their own home town, America's soldiers, now safely back in America, were no longer confronted with the culture and history of Germany. It was not until later years, when nostalgia would drive some of them back to this mystic place called Esslingen, where long ago they once served with such great compassion and understanding. Although Esslingen is now beyond the life span of most of these men, it was not so for former Lt. Henry F Prysi, (now Lt. Col. US Army Retired) the writer of the surrender protocol, who returned to Esslingen in September 1999, at the invitation of the Lord Mayor, Dr. Juergen Zieger to be honored by the citizens of Esslingen. In this conclusion to the Esslingen story, it is the righteousness and conscious mind of such men as these, which give us all hope for a better world, without the tragedy of another great world war.

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