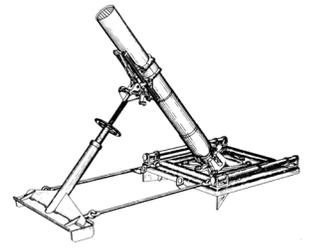
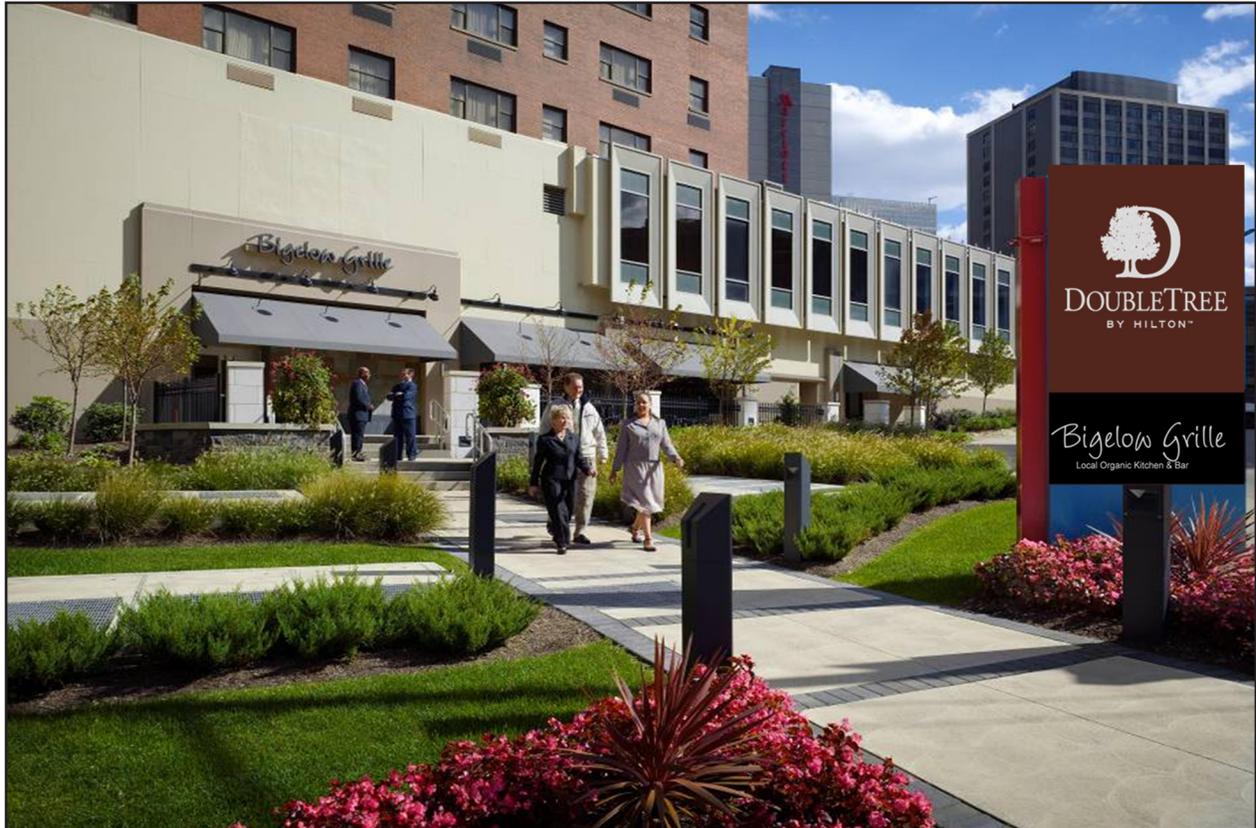


# MUZZLEBLASTS



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE 83<sup>RD</sup> CHEMICAL MORTAR BATTALION VETERANS ASSOCIATION



The Hilton DoubleTree Inn and Suites in Pittsburgh.

## Pittsburgh 2014 reunion was so much fun we are doing it again: June 25-28, 2015!

*Marsha Henry Goff* —

Sandy Babich has been hard at work planning a second reunion in Pittsburgh at the hotel that served us so well last time. Members attending overwhelmingly voted to hold the 2015 reunion there.

Sandy's father, Steve Vukson, was the only veteran able to attend the 2014 reunion, however, we expect at least two and perhaps more veterans to be

healthy enough — God willing — to attend the 2015 reunion.

Sandy provided us with what may have been the best raffle



Sandy collected some great raffle prizes

ever! She solicited her friends and co-workers to donate items and the lovely sunflower afghan Ray won was made by one of them. The raffle is important because, except for 83rd CMB members' generous donations, proceeds from the raffle provide the only money we raise to pay for the printing of *Muzzleblasts* and the postage to mail it.

Pittsburgh is a beautiful city

— *Continued on page 3*

# A Message from our 83rd CMB Vice President

*Sandy Babich* —



It is amazing that the year has flown by so quickly since our last reunion. It is time for all of us to have another fun-filled reunion

with our friends and relatives the week of June 25th through June 28th. Discounted rooms are available and if you miss the deadline, please contact me and I will assist in helping you with your room. Please make your banquet reservation with Marsha ASAP. Ray and Marsha head to Pittsburgh all the way from Kansas so placing an early reservation is helpful.

Please note that the banquet this year is Saturday, June 27th. This is sure to be a time of many laughs, reminiscing and memory making. June was available and seems to be a better month for attendees. I sincerely hope it works for you!

This is truly a gathering of special people and bonds that we have made over the years. The reunions give us new information each year about our 83rd soldiers by sharing stories and pictures in the hospitality room which we will have again this year. Terry Lowry will be setting up some wonderful displays for all of us to enjoy.

The hospitality room will be open on Thursday evening, June 25th at 6:30 p.m. and then on Friday and Saturday from 9:30 a.m. till Midnight except during the banquet. There is a pool for all and children's meals which can be taken out and are extremely reasonable.

Please mark your calendar and join us in Pittsburgh. I will

have tour information for all of you and maps Also, the hotel provides free shuttle service for a 25 mile perimeter and last year they were so accommodating with the shuttle. The trolley across the street is free to all Seniors. You can check the hotel out online with all of its amenities. When you check in, please make sure that you ask for your "Welcome Bag" filled with information. There is so much to see and do for all ages and the Pirates are playing during the time of our reunion if you wish to enjoy a baseball game at our beautiful stadium.

Let us all join together in celebrating our 83rd soldiers who can attend the reunion and those who cannot and for all who served that are forever in our memories and their spouses.

Thank you to all who assisted me and made donations last year for the hospitality room and the successful raffle. The profits are used only to keep the MZB going to families so that we can all stay in touch.

I wish to especially thank Marsha Goff for "getting the word out" regarding all of the details of the reunions in Pittsburgh in the MZB and for all of the MZB releases so professionally written by her that we have all enjoyed.

Please call me or email me your suggestions for this upcoming event. We have 4 generations of families of our wonderful 83rd heroes attending the reunions so let us celebrate them this June in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania!

I am truly looking forward to seeing you. My Dad, Stephen Vukson would like me to extend to all 83rd families a warm invitation from him.



## MUZZLEBLASTS

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Marsha Henry Goff  
Dennis Scovill  
Steve Vukson

\*Deceased

Continued from page 1 —

with lots to do and see. Of course, if you would rather, you can hang out in the hospitality room and visit with old friends or make new ones.

We encourage you to bring photos if you wish. Ed Trey's WW II photos, which his son Ted brought last year, proved very

also arranged a reduced rate for parking at the hotel

You won't need to drive your car once you arrive unless you choose to do so because the hotel has a complimentary shuttle that will take you a reasonable distance. You can also hop on a bus/trolley that is free for seniors.

The cost for the meal is \$49



This photo of Pittsburgh (city of rivers) shows five bridges spanning the river

popular as children of veterans discovered photos of their fathers.

The registration form, not an insert as usual, is on page 7 of this *Muzzleblasts*. We are doing this to save money on printing and postage. Just copy or cut out the form; you may pick up another copy of this issue at the reunion.

You may make a room reservation by calling Hilton DoubleTree Inn & Suites at 1-412-281-5800. You may always cancel if you cannot attend. Room rates this year are \$128/night plus taxes. Mention the code WWV or tell them you are with the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion to get that reduced rate. Sandy has

because Sandy plans to raise \$430 dollars to offset the original much higher cost. The food was absolutely delicious last year, the best I can remember at any banquet held at a hotel. To be fair, the buffet provided by the 83rd CBRN at Fort Stewart in 2013 was equally excellent.

Baseball fans will be pleased that the Pirates are playing at home the week of our reunion. We learned last year that the incline ride high above the city is also free for seniors. The above photo was taken by me from an overlook at the top of the incline.

If you are a veteran able to travel, we'd love to see you at

your reunion. If you are a family member, you might be surprised at what you may learn about your father's/grandfather's/uncle's service with the 83rd.

Terry Lowry has indicated that he plans to attend and bring his excellent display of 83rd and WW II artifacts. As historian for the 83rd, Terry's knowledge makes his brain a good one to pick. His book, *Bastard Battalion*, is a comprehensive history of the 83rd CMB and your veteran is listed and likely pictured in it.

We hope to see you at the reunion. We guarantee you won't regret the experience!

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*Heartfelt Thanks to  
our Generous Donors*

*Ray & Mausha Goff  
Ken & Jenelle Hopkins  
Joel Kveskin  
(in honor of his father  
Sam Kveskin)  
Betty Riddle  
Lee Stedle  
Larry Strickler  
Joyce Thompson*

As our ranks thin and there are fewer people to pay dues, donations become increasingly more important. Your \$15 annual dues and/or donations pay for the printing and mailing of *Muzzleblasts*. Unless you are an 83rd CMB veteran, in order to receive a mailing of *Muzzleblasts*, you need to be a dues-paying member of the 83rd CMB or make a contribution in the amount of \$15 or more. *Muzzleblasts* is available free online. We thank you for your support.



# Anzio and the Fall of Rome

Stephen W. Vukson—



The town of Pozzuoli is located about 15 miles south of Naples and it was the staging area for the amphibious invasion which was kept a secret until January 22, 1944 when the ships were on their way to Anzio with Companies A and B and also thirty men and seven officers from Headquarters.

It was invasion day and we were on deck watching the rockets loaded with steel and explosives clear the beaches. It was 1:00 a.m. when the first wave consisting of Ranger Battalions and Infantry Divisions hit the beaches. In the second wave were Companies A and B. Simurda, Adamson and I went in a short time later on an amphibious duck. The beach was cleared except for some small arms fire in the area.

We decided to take a tour of the town and we ran into Bell and Davison at this beautiful house and in the garage we located bags of potatoes which we decided to make home fries since one of the men had a can of bacon and we used the grease for frying. Lt. Col. Hutchinson and another officer paid us a visit and the two of them enjoyed breakfast consisting of the bacon and home fries. After breakfast, all of us went to the sea and into a church which was used as headquarters and our sleeping quarters for one night. The Germans were shelling the beach as Simurda and I were trying to make some repairs on a duck. Simurda did all of the welding for the Battalion.

The following day the six of us including Lt. Fenton took quarters in this modern house

in the upper end of town. The shelling continued all night as it did the previous night

We left the house the next day and moved to the front lines where our mortars fired a number of rounds before they moved to another location. The Germans hit us with a heavy concentration of shells. We moved again to another area where I stayed until leaving Anzio except for a short move to the Cisterna area. The block where we stayed the previous day in town was bombed.

We dug our fox holes but that wasn't sufficient because the Germans who started to drop the anti-personnel bombs which are a cluster of small bombs that explode when hitting the ground so we had to build a bunker with logs and soil. We lived underground. There were two of us sleeping in the bunker. Bombing took place every evening with the personnel and the heavy bombs. The large bombs whistled and it seemed as if everyone was coming at us. This one evening the personnel bombs came close to our area and my raincoat by the bunker was shredded, a trailer load of tires were punctured and the parts truck had a few flat tires. The bunker was a life saver.

The battle for the Anzio Beachhead had settled into a situation of two opposing forces sitting and glaring at each other and exchanging artillery shellings and plane attacks.

I was ordered to draw rations for the battalion in addition to my regular duties with motor parts and supplies. My driver and I made the dangerous runs into Anzio on a daily basis and were caught in a number of air raids in town.

The balance of the 83rd came

into Anzio four days later and their ship hit a mine. Sadly, the explosion killed 303 men and there were 188 survivors. We lost 52 trucks and jeeps plus mortars and supplies.

The German railway gun (Anzio Express) which fired a 550 pound shell would sound like a train going overhead with an extra booster charge at halfway.

G2 Intelligence notified us to move into the Cisterna area since the Germans were going to make a move there. Two Ranger Battalions were completely annihilated at Cisterna except for a few that survived. Our Motor Pool was in the open plain and we had a good view from a distance when our bombers were bombing the front lines.

With the Rangers gone, the Germans decided on a counter offensive to push us into the sea or surrender but with their four day drive they gained 1000 yards and thankfully the Navy and the Air Force bombarded their front lines. It sounded like the end of the world.

Lt. Colonel Hutchinson and Captain Burford arrived at Anzio with a list of five men to return to Pozzuoli and I was on that list. This was the best news for me since coming to Anzio about a month and a half previously. I was to replace Laundre as Motor Pool parts and supplies in which I was his assistant. Laundre was replacing the battalion supply Sergeant lost on LST 422. Lt. Fenton, Motor Officer requested that I remain at Anzio, but Lt. Colonel Hutchinson's orders prevailed due to the large amount of parts and tools to be ordered. Captain Burford and the five of us went to the harbor but the sea

— Continued on page 6

# Stories from Claude Scovill

*Dennis Scovill—*

Some of my earliest memories are of listening to my father, Claude Scovill, telling war stories with his friends. Being such a young boy, I did not understand the significance of these stories and didn't remember much about what was said. As time passed and his life became more complicated, this kind of story just became a thing of the past.

After many, many years a couple of events brought back some of Claude's war memories and instilled a new interest from me. The first event was his receipt of a letter from a man in France named Florent Georges who was looking for the owner of a Bible that he had found among his deceased father's possessions. It turned out to be the Bible that was issued to most soldiers during World War II, complete with a letter from President Roosevelt. Claude shared this information with my wife Nancy and me, and asked for help in communicating with Mr. Georges. With our better understanding of email and the help of a friend who is a retired French teacher, we helped to coordinate the return of the Bible 60 years after Claude lost it.

The second event was a letter received by my wife's family. This letter was from another Frenchman named Dominique Lecomte who was looking for my deceased father-in-law. Mr. Lecomte was doing research for a book about the crew of a B-17 bomber that was shot down north of Paris. His family had helped the pilot who had escaped through the French Resistance along with three other crew members, including my father-in-law. This second event triggered a series of

trips to France for Nancy and me, to meet people who were involved in this escape and to help our new French friend with his research.

During these trips to France, the story of Claude's Bible was retold and often mentioned in newspapers along with the the story of the B-17 crew. We twice met with Mr. Georges, and he gave us a tour of the nearby areas where the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion traveled, camped, and



Claude Scovill in 1945

fought a battle. He also took us to the Epinal American Cemetery where five men from the 83rd CMB are buried.

Many French people gave us mementos for Claude to show appreciation to a "liberator." After each trip we would meet with Claude for a show-and-tell about our adventures, and present his gifts. These discussions about WW II obviously triggered a lot of memories for him, and he began to share them with me. I am sharing a few of these stories with you:

## Landing in France

Claude joined the 83rd CMB after the battle at Anzio, and was assigned as a truck driver for Company A. When the allies were preparing for the invasion of southern France, he got in line with his truck to be loaded on a ship that would transport them from Italy to France. He was the last truck in line, and unfortunately when it was his turn to load he was told that the ship was full and he was sent to another ship where he had to spend his time at sea with strangers.

When they finally landed in France, he drove his truck onto the beach and asked someone directing the landing where he could find the 83rd CMB, but that man had no idea. While he was trying to get some some information about where he should go, the Germans started launching shells at the beach. All unloading was stopped and Claude was ordered to drive inland immediately. So there he was, a young man who had just arrived in a hostile land, driving into the dark without headlights and under enemy fire, with no idea of where to go or what to expect.

After driving some distance Claude finally came upon some US Army trucks. He was relieved that he could at least spend the night with other US troops, and be able wait until daylight to start looking for his battalion He parked his truck and walked to the house where he could hear soldiers talking. When he went into the house, he found it was all his friends from Company A! It was a miracle reunion for Claude.

*Continued in the next MZB—*

## Day is Done



**W i l m a  
S. Fisher** nee  
Stoeckel, age 89,  
of Warsaw, IN  
and formerly of  
Calumet City  
IL, passed away

peacefully on Friday, January 9,  
2015.

Beloved wife of the late James  
Fisher, Sr. Loving mother of Anna  
(Charles) Kruse, the late Joyce  
(Rodd) Rasmussen, Catherine  
(Sam Gladstein) Fisher, and  
James (Nancy) Fisher, Jr. Proud  
grandmother of 12. Dearest  
great-grandmother of 3 and 2  
to arrive soon. Cherished sister  
of the late Chester (late Barbara)  
Stoeckel, the late Bertram (late  
Virginia) Stoeckel, and the late  
Ronald (late Betty Ann) Stoeckel.  
Fond aunt of numerous nieces  
and nephews.

Wilma was born in Linton,  
Indiana in 1925 and moved  
to Calumet City, IL with her  
husband in 1951. She worked for  
many years with the Hammond  
School Corporation as a Special  
Education Teacher. She was  
an active member of Hoover-  
Schrum PTA, Hoover-Schrum  
Band Parents, Girl Scouts, Little  
Calumet Flood Commission,  
and a member of the Immanuel  
United Church of Christ. Wilma  
was a surrogate grandmother  
to over a hundred children and  
touched each one's life in a  
special way. She was loved by  
many and will be missed by even  
more.

---

*And, if God choose, I shall  
but love thee better after death.*  
— Elizabeth Barrett Browning

## Letters to Wilma

**Jim Fisher** —



*Editor's Note:  
Another of Jim's  
Fisher's WW II  
letters to his wife  
Wilma.*

Sicily  
Aug. 31, 1943  
Dear Wilma,

I'm hoping for a letter from  
you today. Maybe it will help if I  
write you one.

Just got in yesterday from  
guard duty on a railroad tunnel  
some distance from our company  
area so I haven't heard the last few  
mail calls. We had a nice place to  
guard—plenty of friendly Italians  
about who would get us anything  
we ask. Our big trouble was that  
there were too many about. One  
persistent visitor was an Italian  
who had lived in New York for  
44 years and was caught here  
by the war when he returned  
for business reasons. This fellow  
cussed Mussolini about once a  
minute. He visited us about six  
times a day. A medical student  
came around quite a few times  
trying to learn English which he  
could read and write fairly well.

You have heard the Italian  
fruit-vendor's chants, haven't  
you? We hear that all day long:  
"Marsala, aqua melon, uovas—" Every  
so often someone comes  
along with a new chant and we  
have to chase out and find what  
he has. By the way, Marsala is a  
variety of wine and uovas are  
eggs. They sell a lot of grapes  
here but I haven't been able to  
differentiate between the Italian  
words for eggs and grapes.

Just received a letter of yours  
dated June 11th. I've received  
later ones but that is the way our  
mail comes. Not as bad though  
as the soldier you spoke of who  
never received letters for months  
and then received 75 letters.

This place seems almost  
deserted now. Everyone except  
my platoon is cleaning up and  
guarding various places about  
the countryside. We are taking  
our turn guarding the camp. I  
suppose we'll go out again in a  
day or so.

I've been rambling along here  
a long time, saying nothing but  
thinking a lot—of you of course.  
Good luck in your new duties.

Love,  
Jim

---

*Continued from page 4 —*

was too rough to board the ship  
for Possuoli. We came back to the  
bunker and left the next day.

It was May 31 when the sixty  
of us left Pozzuoli for Anzio and  
arrived there five days before  
Rome was liberated by the Allies.  
It took about three and a half  
months of battle to go thirty five  
miles from Anzio to Rome. The  
83rd ended up sixty miles north  
of Rome at Tarquinia. A few of

us visited the Vatican and had  
an audience with Pope Pius XII  
and Laundre was one of the men  
in our group. It was at Tarquinia  
that Laundre and I received our  
promotions.

About 7,000 Americans died  
on the beaches of Sicily, Italy  
and on the mountains of Monte  
Casino during WW II. They never  
returned home and are buried  
at Nettuno, Italy. May they be  
blessed and rest in eternal peace.

To save costs of printing and extra postage, we are including the registration sheet in Muzzleblasts. Please copy or cut out the sheet and return with your payment for the banquet. There will be extra copies of this issue at the reunion.

## 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion Veterans' Association Reunion June 25-28, 2015

Hilton DoubleTree Inn & Suites  
One Bigelow Square, Pittsburgh, PA  
Phone: 1-412-281-5800

Room rates \$128 + tax for two queen beds (parking \$17 Mon-Thur; \$15 Fri-Sat-Sun) desk will make sure this discounted rate is applied. Mention code WWV to get these rates. Reservations must be made by Monday, June 8, 2015

Banquet, Saturday, June 27, 2015, DoubleTree Latrobe Room (can be accessed from the front entrance - no steps!)

5:00 pm          Photos and social hour  
6:00 pm          Buffet dinner — \$49 per person (call or email Sandy for children and/or vegetarian meals)

Please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ dinners @ \$49 each          \_\_\_\_\_

Annual dues of \$15 or donation of          \_\_\_\_\_

Total    \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Mail payment to          83rd CMB  
   c/o Ray Goff  
   1877 N 1000 Road  
   Lawrence, KS 66046-9225

Please provide the following information for name tags. Use additional sheet if necessary for additional names.

| Attendee | Veteran's Name | Relationship to Veteran |
|----------|----------------|-------------------------|
| _____    | _____          | _____                   |
| _____    | _____          | _____                   |
| _____    | _____          | _____                   |
| _____    | _____          | _____                   |
| _____    | _____          | _____                   |
| _____    | _____          | _____                   |

Hope to see you there!

For questions, call Sandy (Work Direct Line, Mon-Fri 412-666-6535; Home 412-372-2954 until 11:00 pm) or email [sandybabich29@gmail.com](mailto:sandybabich29@gmail.com).

To send raffle items (gift cards are welcome) please bring to reunion or mail to:  
Sandy Babich, 514 Zone Street, Trafford, PA 15085

83rd CMB Veterans Association  
c/o Marsha Henry Goff  
1877 N 1000 Road  
Lawrence, KS 66046-9225



## 83rd CMB Photos of Previous Reunions + Austria



WW II Memorial in Washington, DC



Everyone's old buddy  
Ed Trey



Perry Rice



Fabien, 83rd CMB reinactor, and his dad



Steve Vukson and Vince DeLeon



John and Edie McEvoy with  
daughter Pat Nuzum



My dad captioned this photo  
"Making snowballs in June"