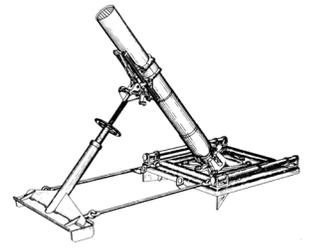


MUZZLEBLASTS



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE 83RD CHEMICAL MORTAR BATTALION VETERANS ASSOCIATION



PHOTO COURTESY OF KEN MAUDER

Group photo of most attending the 2015 83rd CMB Reunion in Pittsburgh (11 in photo were Steve's family) . .

The 2015 Pittsburgh 83rd CMB Reunion was bittersweet because it was the last

Marsha Henry Goff –

Sandy Babich and her father, Steve Vukson pulled out all the stops for the last reunion of the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion.

The raffle was one of our best ever because Sandy has a knack for persuading generous people whom she knows or works with into contributing items, as well as cash, to defray reunion costs. And she is not shy about hitting up businesses for contributions.

The writing has been on the wall for some time that the reunions could not continue.

Attendance diminished as time took its toll and Steve Vukson was the only veteran able to attend the last two reunions. He missed interacting with other veterans, those wonderful men with whom he shared so many memories of WW II.

During a brief business meeting at the banquet, it was decided that the 2015 reunion would be the last. Vice president Sandy Babich was elected president and Tom Bunker, who has served the 83rd so well as president, was elected vice

president.

I personally was hoping we might have one more reunion in 2022 to celebrate Steve's 100th birthday. I really thought he would make it. Sadly, he did not and Ted Trey, who looks more like his father every year, said it best when speaking of Steve's death: "As we sit here on earth shedding tears and remembering our fathers and the greatness that they brought to our families and this country, I can only think that there are a group of men

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A Message from our 83rd CMB President

Sandy Babich —



I am writing this column today with pride to be a member of such a special and unique group of people.

With my dad Stephen Vukson's passing on August 6, none of us could have imagined that this year's reunion in Pittsburgh would be his last reunion.

I am quite sure that there is a reunion in Heaven with all of his 83rd CMB buddies, your fathers, spouses and grandfathers sharing their stories. They are all our special heroes.

The reunion this summer I feel was an incredible gift. So many were able to attend and Dad visited one on one with all of you for many days.

Dad constantly spoke of the reunion afterwards and all of you and was thrilled that we might meet again in a few years.

Some of you he met for the first time at this reunion and he said he felt like he had always known you. Then there were all of you that travel every year to the reunion and have become dearest friends over the years. The 83rd is such a special group of individuals.

This year it seemed that the Hospitality Room was always filled during the day as well as evenings. I have many pictures that I will share and our illustrious editor Marsha will print in the MZB.

Sitting back and watching the "crowd" in the room, there were so many conversations happening as well as the sound

of laughter often. I looked at Dad and saw him chatting and smiling constantly. He of course was the last to go to bed and did not want the evenings to end.

The banquet was a great gathering of fellowship and then moved to the Hospitality Room. As always, thank you for your great donations and for purchasing so many raffle tickets so that we can keep the MZB published.

With Marsha volunteering her time and talents, we can keep submitting articles to her to keep this publication going to our 83rd families.

On a very personal note, my dad was a remarkable man in every way. Dad's smile as well as his laughter was contagious. My days are so different now, but so many wonderful memories are in my heart. Love for our parents is an emotion that will never go away. It truly is a special love that will never fade.

The compassion and comfort our family has received from you all has helped immensely. Your calls, letters and cards as well as so many emails provide great comfort. With heartfelt appreciation, I sincerely thank you for your kindness.

May God grant to all of you and your families many blessed, happy and healthy years!

Sandy



MUZZLEBLASTS

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in Heaven that are smiling and rejoicing (and most likely sharing a scotch) in the fact that another great friend has rejoined their outfit."

Ted again brought a large display of his father's war memorabilia which was greatly enjoyed by attendees.

Lee Steedle, eloquent as always, also communicated his feelings about Steve: "Steve Vukson's funeral this Monday was a sad time for all of us. It's somehow fitting that Steve continued to be the last of our WW II veterans to attend our Reunions — he was so dedicated to preserving memories of our 83rd in World War II, and he was one of our few original Camp Gordon men — surviving and writing about the toughest times, like our Anzio Beachhead's early days. Sgt. Vukson earned his stripes!

The huge scrapbooks Steve compiled and shared with us in our reunion hospitality rooms were remarkable in their detail. He always wanted to remind us of the things we'd endured and lived through. Did you know that Steve bought about a dozen copies of Terry Lowry's *Bastard*

Battalion to distribute among his extended family?"

I, too, have been amazed at the effort Steve put into his scrapbooks. He made one for each member of his family.

But what I remember most about Steve is his sweet nature and good heart. He once told me that he and Sandy had never exchanged a harsh word. Knowing both of them, I believe it.

I have pledged to continue producing *Muzzleblasts* as long as funds hold out. Sandy plans to have another raffle just for her Pittsburgh friends who want to support WW II veterans. The money she raises will go for printing and mailing *Muzzleblasts* so we should be OK for a while.

The business in my city that prints *Muzzleblasts* is owned by a woman whose father was a WW II veteran. She gives us full-color for less than what black and white would cost at any other printing business. It is her way of saying thank you to 83rd CMB veterans.

And producing the newsletter is my way of saying thanks to all of you who sacrificed so much for our freedom. I will never forget how much freedom costs.

*Heartfelt Thanks to
our Generous Donors*

Sandy & Ron Babich

Clovis Bidwell

Elizabeth & Paul Daly

Bill Hoover

Gini Lemoine

Mary Agnes Marasko

Yvonne Mouison

Emma Lou Morocco

Deanna Marcellus &

Laurie Hope in honor of

Katherine M. Powell

Bill & Diane Rearden

Dennis Scovill

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 or widow, 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.

Are you an 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion Veteran?

If you are, thank you very much. We owe you a debt we can never repay. What we do want to do is ensure that you receive *Muzzleblasts*. To keep publishing longer, we are limiting our mailing list to veterans, widows of veterans and those other members of the organization who pay their dues of \$15 or make a contribution of that amount or more to the 83rd CMB. The problem is that I have not had the pleasure of knowing all of the men on the mailing list who are veterans. No need to reply to this message if you know I know you. If I have not spoken or corresponded with you individually, please let me know you are a WW II veteran or the widow of one by contacting me at Marsha Henry Goff, 1877 N 1000 Road, Lawrence, KS 66046 or 785-843-2577 or mhgink@netscape.net. Of course, MZB is always free to read online. Thanks!

What are the odds?

Dolly Sarrio—



Editor Note: Dolly Sarrio recently made contact with Jimmie Wheeler a long-lost 83rd CMB veteran. She posted about their

face-to-face visit on her blog: www.hibiscushouseblogspot.com.

I am at a loss for words. Yes I know that is hard to believe, but it's true. Do you believe there are things in life that happen and even you can't explain them? I believe that things happen for a reason, we may not know the reasons but they are there. I personally believe that God puts us where we are to be and in His own time.

I guess I need to give you a little history. A year ago someone named Susie contacted me on Facebook. She said she had been searching for Carl Johnson and was he my dad? I said yes and then she proceeded to tell me that her 90 something father in law had been searching for my dad for years. She said he had even made a trip back to South Carolina and couldn't find him. She told me that he had served with my dad in WWII in the same unit and they had even survived a shipwreck together among other things! She had seen my website page on Military.com

Daddy didn't tell us much and I have found that is the way with most WWII Heroes. They are a proud but humble bunch who always will tell you that they just did what they had to do. They indeed did do and in fact went above and beyond the call of duty. I hate that we are losing them almost daily, because they are as they say "The Greatest

Generation"! The pride, respect and honor they have for our country is a very rare thing to find in present day. There are still a lot of us left though because if I have it others do too!

You can imagine my excitement and surprise to hear from them and about them. I had to set this in motion and I just had to find a way to get to Texas to meet this man! We talked off and on for the entire year on the phone and I grew to love this family as my own. They are all very special people indeed.

I have some of my new Hero Mr. Wheeler on tape and will go through his account of this shipwreck and sinking to post at a later date. All I wanted to do was just sit on the stool in front of this man and look at him. I so admire him.

This touched me to no end. He said that he and daddy had one leaky life vest between the two of them. They took turns wearing it and blowing it up the entire time, which was a very long time. until they were rescued. Then they were taken to the hospital. In a few days daddy was off to Anzio and Mr. Wheeler a short time later for some fierce fighting.

The story behind this picture is just so good! These two were in France and had come to an area that the Germans had already gone through and ransacked. They found these hats, canes etc and tried them on clowning around. It wasn't too long before their commander arrived, had a few choice words and then said to them, "PUT those HATS Back Where You Found Them and GET TO WORK!" Mr. Wheeler told me they went around to the back of that truck and acted like they were putting them up but then

ran back to the truck and threw them in. That commander was none other than George S. Patton.

Can you tell he is a pistol,



Jimmie Wheeler in his top hat taken on Christmas 2010

so much fun and the new 90 something. Sharp as a tack and full of life. He and his wife Nita welcomed us into their home I should say they all welcomed us into their homes. The entire family was so very nice. We felt from the first moment that we had found a new family. This is our family now. We truly love them. I guess they are lucky they live all the way in Texas because I'd be aggravating them daily!

Mr. Wheeler has led a very interesting life, yes he has. He worked for Howard Hughes over 20 years in the oil business. He told many interesting stories about that. He and his wife Nita have traveled the world and done extraordinary things.

Guess I found my words! I'm so happy to have met this man who shared so much with my daddy and now has shared it with me. I do feel now that he and his family are now mine.



Voices: My dad was a fitting member of the Greatest Generation

Susan Miller—

Editor Note: Susan Miller, an editor/writer for USA TODAY wrote this beautiful tribute about her father, Dan Miller. The article was first published in USA Today on May 8, 2015.

Eight weeks from Friday, the 70th anniversary of V-E (Victory in Europe) Day, my father will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Burials at Arlington — the flag-draped casket, three-rifle volley, a sole bugler playing Taps — are stirring tributes to veterans in a tranquil space that is steeped in history.

My father, a veteran of World War II, didn't think he deserved to be buried there.

The unassuming men of that war, now known as the Greatest Generation, were ordinary Americans of extraordinary character. On May 8, 1945, millions poured into the streets around the world to celebrate the end of the war in Europe.

Now, the vets are slipping from our memory. Sixteen million Americans served in World War II. The remaining 1 million are dying at a rate of 492 a day, estimates the National World War II Museum.

I am one of the lucky ones because I finally learned my dad's story.

My father, like many others, never wanted to talk about the war. I would hear bits and pieces but knew to tread lightly. My mother once told me he threw out his Purple Heart. I was astounded: Why? Because he didn't think he deserved it, she said.

It wasn't until 2004, when I went with my parents to the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., that I told

him how important it was for us to learn specifics about his service. Quietly, he went to his computer, did some research and presented me with a summary of his battalion's role in the war. My dad was in Company D of the Army's 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion. He was involved in many dicey campaigns from Gela, Sicily, to Vietri-sul-Mare, Italy, to the beachhead at Anzio.

One of his most dramatic recollections was how he survived the sinking of LST 422, a landing ship tanker, when it hit a mine en route to Anzio on Jan. 26, 1944. With flames racing everywhere and white phosphorus exploding throughout the deck, men began jumping into the icy waters below in the black of night. He took off his shoes, inflated his life preserver and was ready to take the plunge — until the metal snap on the life preserver's buckle broke in two.

It was a moment that saved his life. With no preserver, he took cover on the ship with some British sailors behind the metal shield of an anti-aircraft gun. Eventually, a Navy minesweeper made its way closer and he jumped from the burning LST to the sweeper. The memories of the dead floating face down in the water were forever etched in his mind. That night, 303 men died; 188 survived. The survivors earned a Purple Heart.

I soon discovered that the 83rd had a veterans group. I broached the subject of attending a reunion and was answered with a resolute "No." I kept pressing, and he relented. "I'll do this for you," he said.

The reunions were amazing. Grown children of veterans

who had died without sharing their story would attend in hopes of gleaning any morsel of information about their dads' service. Current members of the 83rd treated the vets like rock stars, asking for their autographs.

When my mom passed away in 2011, she was eligible to be buried at Arlington as a wife of a veteran. The war coursed through her life, too; it was fitting. That was when my dad told me firmly that he didn't think he deserved to be buried there. I stood my ground; he gave in: "I'll do this for you."

A few months before he died, we visited my mother's grave. He looked around at the crisp, white headstones engraved with commendations. "Whatever you do, you better not put that I got a Purple Heart on my gravestone," he said.

He was 94 years old; it was 70 years later — and he was still old-school at its finest.

When we lay my dad to rest on the peaceful ground at Arlington, his Purple Heart will be engraved on his marker, along with an inscription: A good and humble man.

We'll do that for him.



Dan Miller at Anzio Beachhead

A few words from Tom

Tom Bunker



For those of you who don't know, Marcia and I missed this year's reunion in Pittsburgh. We had our reservation and were looking forward to it. We planned on visiting friends in CA and AZ before we came to the reunion. Unfortunately, I took a bad fall from a bicycle and fractured 6 ribs and my clavicle on my left side. I was unable to continue our trip and had to return to Costa Rica to start the recovery process. I'm doing much better now and can move around okay. I still have shoulder pain, which I expect will continue to get better in the next few weeks.

Fortunately, Sandy Babich had planned the reunion and we were able to telecommute to the hospitality room thanks to the efforts of Paul Daly. Once again, Steve Vukson was the reliable attendee he has been through the years. Unfortunately, no other vets were able to make it. We seem to have reached the point where age has thinned the ranks and made it difficult for the surviving vets to travel. A business meeting was held and it was decided that no reunion would be planned for next year. The future of the group is uncertain at this time. Marsha Goff has volunteered to continue Muzzleblast and we thank her for all of her work as publisher and co-treasurer of the group.

Marcia and I started attending reunions in 2003 when she convinced me to go to Baltimore. I really didn't know anyone or anything about the 83rd CMB. I had a terrific time, met a lot of

great people, and learned a lot. After that trip, I looked forward to attending every year. Reunions were pretty large back then, with many vets, wives, and family members attending. Pop Hoover was the oldest vet and his son Bill was the president. Gini Lemoine was the VP. Bill and Gini had been in charge for many years and were very experienced at planning great reunions.

We attended two more years until 2007 in Fredericksburg, VA. Bill announced that he had a new job which would require a lot of travel and prevent him from being president. Gini also was ready to step down as VP. There was serious talk about ending reunions at that time. Since nobody was interested in becoming president, I volunteered and ran unopposed. I wasn't at all sure what I was doing and had never planned any kind of reunion, banquet, or other large event. I just felt that I could do something to keep this great association together.

I was quite nervous about the 2008 reunion I planned in Baltimore. Things went very well, if I do say so myself. It was well attended and included a visit to Edgewood Arsenal where it all began and the Aberdeen Proving Grounds. We were hosted by the the current 83rd CBRN and given tours. The vets and the active Army soldiers were able to spend time together. A tour of the Proving Grounds included the Ordnance Museum. "The Anzio Express" German artillery and train car was on display and some of the men remembered being shelled by it on the beach.

That experience gave me more confidence that I could continue in the president's position and

since I always ran unopposed, I did continue. In the following years we visited Gettysburg twice, Baltimore again, Fort Stewart, GA and Frederick, MD. Over those years we have visited the WWII memorial, Army Heritage Museum, and President Eisenhower's farm. We have hosted and been hosted by the 83rd CBRN, including a visit to their home at Fort Stewart. We have been visited by French WWII reenactors and Marcia and I and the Daly's have attended remembrances in Southern France.

I don't know what the future holds for our group, but I want to take this opportunity to tell you how much this group has meant to me. I am forever grateful for the support and trust shown to me by so many through the years. I have met so many wonderful people, visited so many interesting places, and learned so much. The reunions have become like family reunions to me. Thank you so much.

*We'll meet again. Don't know where.
Don't know when. But we'll meet
again some sunny day."*
—popular WWII era song



Marcia and Tom with Fabien in France



Katherine M. Powell, 92, of Brighton Township, PA, passed away, Sunday April 12, 2015.

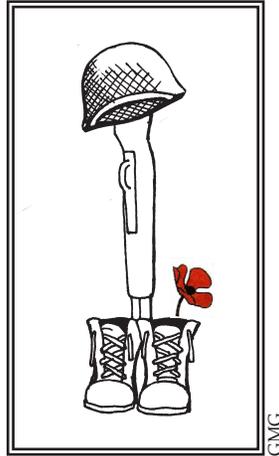
Through the years, Katherine enjoyed a variety of interests and pastimes which included bowling, bingo and playing the card game 500 with her friends. She loved the outdoors and nature, and could be found mowing her lawn, tending the garden or feeding the birds and wildlife. In addition to her parents, Katherine was preceded in death by her husband of nearly 60 years, Lawrence Powell, a WW II veteran who served with the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion, and passed in 2006. Among her survivors are two daughters and sons-in-law, Deanna (Pete) Marcellus, New Brighton, Laurie (Greg) Hope, Pleasant Hills; a grandson; a step-granddaughter; and four great-grandchildren.



Stephen W. Vukson, 93, went to be with his Lord on August 6, 2015. He was preceded

in death by his wife Alma, the love of his life to whom he was married for 55 years. He was the loving dad of Sandy (Ron) Babich, Terri Vukson, and Debi (Ken) Mauder; special grandfather of seven; great-grandfather of six; and great-great-grandfather of one. Mr. Vukson was regarded as a member of the greatest generation. He proudly served his country in the Army during WW II with numerous medals in the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign. He held the highest honor in the Army:

Day is Done



Sleep soldiers! Still in honored rest your truth and valor wearing. The bravest are the tenderest. The loving are the daring.
— Bayard Taylor

Order of the Dragon. In 2013, he was honored by Art Rooney and the Steelers at Heinz Field as the US Army WW II Veteran. He was a dedicated family man and parishioner at St. Regis Trafford. Gardening, camping and vacationing with his family were his favorite pastimes. Among his other accomplishments were: 51 years as President of CFU Lodge 541 Sv. Vid, ten years as President of the Golden Triangle Tamburitzans, CFU National Officer on the board of trustees and in 2014 and 2015 he headed up the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion reunion in Pittsburgh. He will be greatly missed.



Please help us by notifying us of the deaths of 83rd CMB veterans and their families. You may contact Marsha Henry Goff at mhgink@netscape.net, 785-843-2577 or 1877 N 1000 Rd, Lawrence, KS 66046.

Letter home from Anzio Beachhead

L. Lew Henry



April 9, 1944
Anzio Beachhead

... War cannot be described; only those who have experienced combat can have any conception of the term; many soldiers who are overseas, many of whom are in jobs in such cities as Algiers, Oran, Naples, or others, do not know what it is; they are only in jobs that have taken them away from home and entail none of conflict's unpleasantness. To the combat soldier who lives in holes like animals, whose existence is characterized only by the barest minimum of the necessities of life, and who has for almost a year and a half suffered day after day from heat or cold, in desert or in icy, muddy mountains, going without sleep, or bathing, or changing clothes for days, weeks and months, life has been crystalized into the expression of one desire — to return home!

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



83rd CMB Photos of Previous Reunions + Austria



Steve Vukson poses with some of the many scrapbooks of his WW II service that he made for each member of his family



View from Goffs' hotel window showing the highways of Pittsburgh



Ray Goff prepares to ride the Ducks!



Kenzie, Liam and Ollie
Steve's beloved great-grandchildren



Steve Vukson and Wyatt Turan in the Hospitality Room



Paul and Elizabeth Daly are pictured in the Hospitality Room at the hotel