

MUZZLEBLASTS



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE 83RD CHEMICAL MORTAR BATTALION VETERANS ASSOCIATION



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JT TAUNTON, JR.

JT Taunton at the World War II Memorial in Washington D.C.

Making Memories

JT Taunton, Jr. —

Being of the opinion that our WW II veterans have not been honored nearly enough for their service and sacrifice, Dad and I were quickly captured by the news media attention given to the first "Honor Flights." And when one was organized near-by, we quickly applied to be included.

So.....very early in the morning on April 23, 2010, we



JT and JT, Jr. pose in front of the Korean War Memorial as part of their Honor Flight tour

boarded local Church buses, donated for transporting us from Opelika, Alabama to Columbus, Georgia, and our

day began full of anticipation, and a little excitement.

There were 25 veterans in our local group, each accompanied by a "guardian" (a family member or friend), each veteran wearing his blue t-shirt, and each guardian wearing their yellow t-shirts provided by the organizers for identification purposes. These men had grown up together, went to school

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Things you need (and will want) to know

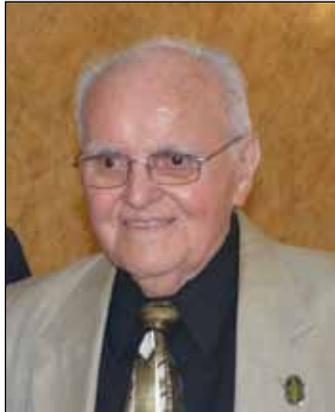
Our 83rd CMB president **Sandy Babich** and her husband, **Ron**, have had health issues recently. She intends to write a special article about her father, Steve Vukson. I know that it will be a loving tribute to a wonderful man when time allows her to write it. Our best wishes to Sandy and Ron for speedy recoveries.

Pat McEvoy Nuzum continues to make amazing strides after her transplant surgery. She is thrilled to be driving again after eye surgery to remove cataracts caused by the heavy doses of Prednisone necessary to control her Graft versus Host disease which commonly occurs after transplants.

Tom Bunker is sailing the ocean blue for an indefinite period. As far as I know, he is the only one who is able to place a PDF of *Muzzleblasts* on the Yahoo 83rd CMB page. If I find I can place it there, I will. But I will also place it — as well as archived issues of all the *Muzzleblasts* I have produced — on the WW II page of my website: www.jestforgrins.com.

I have written much about World War II, hence the WW II webpage. Recently, I was commissioned to write a magazine article about veterans who have gone on Honor Flights. That gave me the idea to ask **JT Tauton, Jr.** if his dad had taken an Honor Flight. With his father's collaboration, JT, Jr. wrote a wonderful article for *Muzzleblasts* about their flight. I love serendipity! —MHG

Remembering Steve Vukson



A very special thanks

Bill Hoover's generous contribution to *Muzzleblasts* is in remembrance of the friendship Steve and Bill's dad, Pop Hoover, shared.

Bill's contribution paid for the printing of this issue of *Muzzleblasts* and also the next.

Thank you so much, Bill!

*Heartfelt Thanks
to our
Generous Donors*

*John Beasley
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Bill Hoover
Betty Riddle
Joyce Thompson*



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together, worshipped together, enlisted together, and, therefore, knew each other well. The tone on our bus was one of friendly comradery as old friendships were renewed and old times revisited.

Just witnessing these men enjoy each other was well worth the trip already, but soon we arrived at the airport in Columbus, and were warmly greeted by the event organizers. Patriotic music played, banners were hung, breakfast snacks and coffee were served, and we met veterans from Columbus and the surrounding area with whom we would be travelling. Now we were a party 179 strong!

Everything was well organized — “just like being in the Army” some said. But we were quickly boarded on our waiting jet, and our 179 passengers departed Columbus Regional destined for Baltimore International at 7:40 AM. Our flight to Baltimore seemed very short due to all the friendly chatter, and the now heightened expectations of our day.

The first big surprise of our day came as we entered the terminal in Baltimore: we were greeted by a large group, with music and applause — it was quite a shock. The highlight, though, was the two perfect rows of uniformed personnel from every Service branch, facing each other, and between them the welcoming path for our veterans. Each veteran received a warm handshake, a “thanks for your service”, and an occasional pat on the shoulder or back, from every uniformed person forming those lines. What a touching reception!

Then, four buses were boarded for our trip to the WW II Memorial in Washington, DC. Lunch was served aboard the buses.

The WW II Memorial is quite a tribute to all those men and women who fought for our country during the war. To all veterans and members of their families who have not visited this Memorial, I encourage you to do so. The remembrance and recognition emanating from that place cannot be described with words — it must be experienced.

There is a pillar for each state with the state’s name engraved thereon. The overall size is staggering. There’s a section dedicated to each major theater of operations during the war. At each of these sections there are engraved quotes from the respective Generals, and President Truman’s words of tribute occupy a special place.

Dad quickly found the section dedicated to locations where the 83rd saw action. Engraved there were names like North Africa, Sicily, Salerno, Rome, and on and on. He lingered there as I’m sure the memories came flooding back, and I caught him there, alone, with a couple of quick pictures which I will always cherish.



JT receives a stranger’s kiss in appreciation for his World War II service

It was here, too, that an attractive young lady appeared, approached Dad, reached up and kissed him on the cheek, and said “just my way of thanking you for all you did for all of us in WW II.” Dad was clearly shocked!

Congressmen from Alabama and Georgia found us, addressed the veterans, read proclamations, and personally greeted all they could reach. (The printed proclamations were later delivered to each veteran along with a United States flag, each having flown above the White House.) The abiding feeling now was one of accepted appreciation for their collective accomplishment.

Next, we travelled to the Korean War Memorial and to the Viet Nam Memorial Wall. Both were reminders, once again, of the sacrifices made to preserve our freedom. Touching the names of close friends and classmates on that Viet Nam Wall was something I personally will never forget.



Arlington National Cemetery reminds us of the ultimate sacrifice so many made for our freedom

Then, on to Arlington National Cemetery, where the orderly rows and rows of white crosses created a somber scene in the eyes and minds of all in our group. Our veterans had to be thinking of lost friends, and how

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easily it could have been them out there in that field. Arlington reminds us all of the many who gave the ultimate sacrifice. What a beautiful and peaceful scene!



In winter's chill and summer's heat, Marines watch over the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

Next, was the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier where we witnessed the "Changing of the Guard" – a spectacular ceremony! We learned about the dedication of the Marines who guard the Tomb, making that walk every day, regardless of weather.



JT stands in front of the Iwo Jima Memorial which depicts the placing of the American flag on Mount Suribachi

Our last stop was the Iwo Jima Memorial which held great significance for the Marines in our group. Veterans from our

group were selected to participate with active-duty Marines in a wreath-laying ceremony here. I developed cold chills watching our old veterans stand at attention and salute as the tribute was made. What must have been going through their minds at that point!

The return flight home was delayed a couple of hours by the illness of one member of the group, but no complaining – only positive reflections on a wonderful day.

One of the highlights of the entire day was "mail call" during the return trip. Each veteran had his name called, much like during the war, and mail was individually distributed to each – cards, letters, and drawings from family members, friends, and elementary school children. What a bright, happy time this was as each veteran had several items to read, review, and ponder.

Because we were running about two hours late and the clock was approaching midnight, we all pictured a deserted Columbus Regional Airport for our return. Boy, were we ever wrong! There were hundreds of people there for the sole purpose of "welcoming the boys back home." There was music, laughter, and obvious appreciation. Once again there were active duty personnel (Ft. Benning) on hand to personally thank each veteran for their service. And the celebration didn't seem to want to end.

Dad and I have always been close. We've done many things together. But our Honor Flight was a real "memory maker" – a memory we share, and will both carry with us forever.

Sweet Memory of Pozzouli

William Gagliardi—

When I joined the 83rd, we were encamped outside the little town of Pozzouli. After a while, we were given passes to the town. Upon going to town with a buddy of mine, we took a chance and went up in one of the off-limit streets. We went past a bakery shop and looked in the window. There was a display of fancy Italian pastries made with white flour and sugar, which the Italians normally don't have. They have only the dark, unbleached flour. So we proceeded to go into the store for some goodies.

When we entered the store, the girl behind the counter kept staring at me. She told me not to leave and went to the room behind the counter to get some other members of her family. As they were all staring at me, in the little Italian that I could speak, I asked her why they were staring at me. She answered me with tears in her eyes. She said, "When you walked in the door, I thought I saw the ghost of my brother who had been in the Italian Navy and had been killed when his ship was sunk in battle."

I must have been his double.

After becoming friendly, I asked her where they go the white flour and sugar to make the fancy pastries and she said, "From the black market truck drivers."

Editor's Note: Lee Steedle, who with his son Bill, has been contacting 83rd CMB veterans, recruited this story for Muzzleblasts. Look for several more stories as a result of their efforts.



On the Homefront: They also served

Marsha Henry Goff—

While my father, Lt. L. Lew Henry, served overseas in the Rangers and 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion during World War II, my mother also served and suffered. I am not implying that what wives and girlfriends of soldiers suffered compared in any way to what their husbands and boyfriends endured; after all those on the Homefront were not being shot at, nor did they witness the violent deaths of their friends.

When my father sailed for North Africa in January of 1943, he left my mother to care alone for three daughters, a four-year-old, a three-year-old and a baby of eight months. We moved from Lawrence to Sabetha, Kansas, more than 400 miles from my mother's family in Oklahoma. I was an adult before I understood why we settled in Sabetha near Dad's parents. He was an only child (my mother was the youngest of 12) and, in the event he did not return home, my parents wanted to ensure that Grandma and Grandpa were not alone.

For almost three years, my parents did not hear each other's voices. Mail to and from those on the front lines was sporadic. Mom wrote Dad a letter every night, posting it the next morning, but in one of Dad's letters home, he wrote he had not received mail for three weeks. Even I wrote him in a kindergarten scrawl when he was recovering from a wound suffered in Sicily:

NOV. 15, 1943
DEAREST DADDY:
I GOT YOUR SWEET LETTER
YESTERDAY. THANK YOU, DADDY.
HOW IS YOUR GASH COMING
ALONG? I SURE FEEL SORRY FOR
YOU! PLEASE BE CAREFUL!

IN SCHOOL TODAY WE HAD A
PLAY AND I WAS GOLDINLOCKS.
YOU SEE, DADDY, MOMMY KEEPS
MY HAIR IN LONG BLONDE CURLS
AND I LOOK LIKE GOLDINLOCKS
WHEN ARE YOU COMING
HOME? PLEASE COME HOME AS
SOON AS YOU CAN. WRITE AGAIN
SOON, HONEY DADDY.

YOUR LOVING LITTLE GIRL,
POOCHIE
I LOVE YOU.

During the period that Dad was away, Mother suffered an



Mom, Dad and me

impacted wisdom tooth and a stomach ulcer. My sisters and I managed to have chicken pox, pinkeye and whooping cough, and gave the last disease to our mother.

But Mom's worst suffering came when she received a telegram from the Secretary of War regretting to inform her that her husband was seriously wounded in action. The telegram came on my birthday and I still remember her sprawled on the bed and sobbing. She didn't know if Dad was still alive or if he'd lost a limb.

Two days after my birthday, she received a letter from Dad explaining that his injury wasn't so serious after all. Her letter to him follows:

February 25, 1945
My darling:

At last I am able to write a sensible letter as I received yours of the 11th of February today. To say we were worried is putting it mildly. As far as I'm concerned our birthdays are the jinxes. You were wounded on my birthday and I received the telegram on Marsha's birthday. I was just getting ready to frost her cake when Mom called — while I was talking with her she was called to the door by Mr. Stine. He was looking for Genevieve H. and he told Mom it wasn't too bad, but it wasn't good. I knew immediately it was something concerning you and I was in mental agony for at least half an hour (length of time for him to walk out) and even then I wasn't much relieved. Only today, after I received your letter, did I feel much better. Now, I'm still anxiously awaiting more word! Mom and Dad wanted us to come down there and stay so we spent last night and the greater part of today with them. The telephone here and down there rang constantly — as you can see someone saw to it that everyone in town was informed. Your guess is as good as mine!

The second page of Mom's letter is missing, but she does a good job of describing what it felt like to get that telegram. When you think of the hundreds of thousands of telegrams that notified wives and parents of the injuries and deaths of their husbands and sons, the suffering is staggering. My husband Ray lost a cousin and an uncle in World War II. In Lawrence, the man who delivered the telegrams to their next of kin was a retired Methodist preacher.

Ray's cousin, Roy, much older than he, had just been married a few months when the plane on which was a tail-gunner went

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The Parade that Wasn't

Lee Steedle



Our old Company D 83rd veterans will always remember August 15th, 1944

— the day we landed by glider in Southern France. Unforgettable!

Official First Airborne Task Force records show that



only 8% of our CB-4 gliders – 26 of the 327 participating in that D-Day assault – were salvageable after our virtual crash landings.

The moment the C-47 tow planes cut us loose, our glider pilots saw the danger. Germans had forced civilian laborers to construct glider traps made of poles, wires, and stone piles, in all the fields below us. Making a quick decision, our own excellent pilot chose to crash us into another glider that had landed a few seconds before us, tearing off the other's

right wing and our own left wing, spinning us around, but halting our momentum before we'd have hit an immovable glider trap. His skill saved us. Men from both gliders tumbled out unhurt.

Not all were so fortunate. Others, including our Platoon Leader Perry Rice, lay on the ground, severely injured. We had arrived to secure a strategic crossroads spot, twelve miles inland. Four long days later, the sea-borne troops reached us, finally enabling our injured and wounded men to be evacuated.

We had landed in fields surrounding the small village of LeMuy, and in much less than an hour we'd assembled our personnel, mortars and ammo, and were moving to give fire support to paratroopers

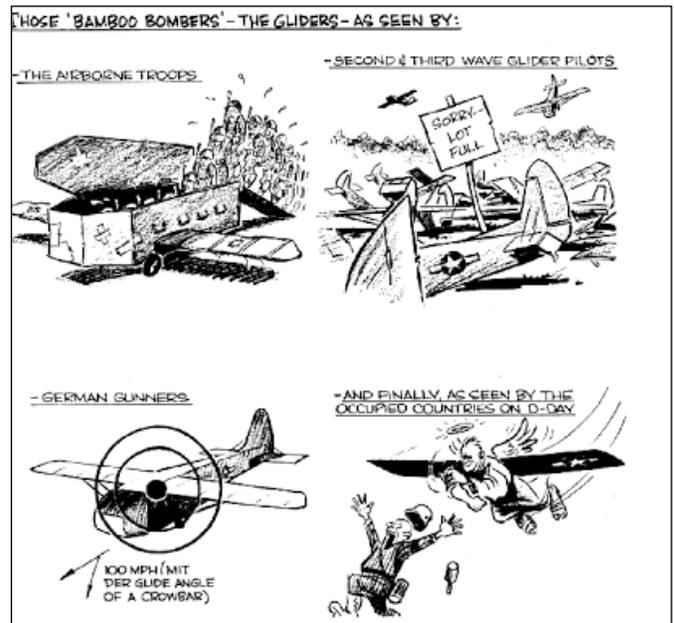
attacking a low hill above us.

As we crossed a road edging LeMuy, we were astonished to see their vestmented village priest leading a large procession of people on the road ahead of us. I wondered how in the world he could have assembled a hundred people

into a parade, immediately after our arrival. I marveled about how well organized they all must have been, to welcome and celebrate their liberators so quickly.

Only much later did I realize what a coincidence of time that had been. The locals hadn't set out to welcome our bunch of disheveled, armed Americans dropping from their sky. They weren't celebrating their liberators, and it was definitely not our parade. What we'd seen was a rite then common to many French villages – a religious procession marking the August 15th Roman Catholic Feast of the Assumption.

But happily, immediately after we airborne troops routed the occupying Germans, the locals enthusiastically celebrated us – not with a parade, but even better – with beaucoup kisses from their women, and with plenty of good wine.





G A R R E T T , Karl Frederick Sr., passed from this life on May 21, 2015. He was born in Richmond, Va.

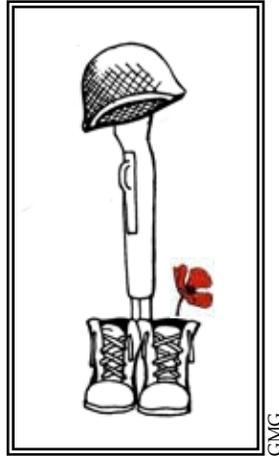
on September 16, 1920 to parents, Arthur Lanyon and Louise Williams Garrett. He was preceded in death by his wife of 68 years, Ann Pavey Garrett. He is survived by brother, Norman Garrett; son, Karl Garrett and his wife, Vivian Wilson; daughter, Amanda Pommerenke and her husband, Roger Pommerenke; grandson, Robert Pommerenke. Mr. Garrett graduated from John Marshall High School and furthered his education at the University of Richmond, majoring in business. He was a WW II veteran who served in North Africa, Italy, France and Germany with the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion. He earned a Purple Heart at the Abbey of Monte Cassino. He was retired from the purchasing department of E.I. DuPont. Mr. Garrett is remembered for his quiet strength, his quick sense of humor, his kind and caring ways and the great love he shared with family and friends.



FURRIS, Nick, 90, of Baden, PA, passed away on September 13, 2011. He was born February 26, 1921, in

McKindley, WV, a son of Nikoli and Julianna Czbulich Furis. An Ambridge High School graduate of the class of 1941, he worked at Armco Steel in the finishing cutting department for 42 years. He was a United States Army veteran having served overseas in World War II in Africa, Sicily, and Naples, Italy, in radio

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

communications, with the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion. He was the recipient of three Bronze Stars and a Purple Heart. He is survived by his daughter Carol, son-in-law Albert Vincent, and three granddaughters. Preceding him in death were his wife, Ann, to whom he was married to for 56 years. He was a loving father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, proud of his garden with tomatoes, strawberries started from seeds, and the big red delicious apple tree and all his homemade apple pies.



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.

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down in the Bermuda Triangle. Because he had several younger siblings, his wife gave his parents the death benefit she received. I met her late in her life and told her that was a very generous thing to do. She replied simply, "We hadn't been married long. I was working and his parents had all those young children to raise."

There are many untold stories of the Homefront. I hope to feature more of them in future issues of *Muzzleblasts*.



I WANT YOUR STORY!

Are you a veteran with a story to tell? It can be dramatic or humorous. We want to hear it.

Are you a wife who can tell about your experiences on the Homefront?

Or the child of a veteran who can relate some of the stories your father told you about the war or your mother related about rationing or air raids? (Yes, they had air raids in the U.S.)

Please send your stories to Marsha at 1877 N 1000 Road Lawrence, KS 66046 or mhgink@netscape.net

83rd CMB Veterans Association
c/o Marsha Henry Goff
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83rd CMB photos of some of our veterans and families



2012 Reunion of the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion



Steve Vukson honored by Pittsburgh Steelers



Ed Trey's last reunion



Dan Miller, Steve Vukson, Ed Trey & Lee Steedle — 2012 Reunion



Dan Miller signs an autograph for an 83rd CBRN soldier



Steve Vukson honored at Military Ball hosted by 83rd CBRN