

Spring 2024



TOUGH 'OMBRE TIMES

NEWSLETTER OF THE 90TH DIVISION ASSOCIATION

Message from the President Col [R] Sandy Westbrook

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Dear Members and friends,

2024 promises to be an exciting year for our Association! This year marks the 80th Anniversary of D-Day, and that means that there will be special ceremonies in June in both France and the U.S. to commemorate this milestone. If any of you are planning to attend ceremonies in Europe this summer, I hope you will share your story and pictures with the Association upon your return. Of course we appreciate and say “thank you” to our friends in Europe who have never forgotten the sacrifices made by our Tough Ombres in WW II, and who continue to honor them in a multitude of ways. As you all know, we have lost many of our WW II veterans over recent years, and that makes remembrance ceremonies even more important. You can be assured that the 90th Division Association will continue to honor their legacy and will pass on their stories to future generations so that their accomplishments are never forgotten.

Another important event in 2024 is the upcoming 90th Division Association reunion! It will be held on Friday, October 25 and Saturday, October 26 at the Sheraton Hotel Downtown in Fort Worth, Texas. We had a fantastic reunion in 2022 and hope that many of you will make plans to attend this important event. Details regarding hotel reservations and registration for reunion events will be sent out to all members in March. It will be a very special weekend!

Finally, I want to remind our members that the National Army Museum of the United States is now open for visitors. The museum celebrates over 245 years of Army history and honors our nation’s soldiers past, present and future. Admission to the museum is free and there is no need to book in advance. The museum is located at 1775 Liberty Drive, Fort Belvoir, VA. Find out more online at: thenmusa.org or by calling 1-800-506-2672. There is a special plaque dedicated to the 90th Division located in the museum which was purchased with donations in honor of the Tough Ombres.

See you in Fort Worth!

COL (R) Sandy Westbrook

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Message from the Executive Director Nancy Rasmusson



Hello Friends!

I am looking forward to spending time with you in October, in downtown Fort Worth, Texas at our upcoming reunion (Sheraton Downtown Hotel, October 25 – 26.) In November, 2022, following our reunion in San Antonio, the Executive Committee decided to hold reunions in alternating years. The reason was primarily due to the overall expense of hosting the event. As hotel and catering costs have increased in recent years, we wanted to make sure that members and their families could attend the reunions. The 2022 reunion was very successful, with over 100 people in attendance, and we hope to break that attendance record this year! [Hotel reservation and reunion registration details will be sent to all members in March.](#) Put the date on your calendars! You won't want to miss it.

In other news, the Association continues to support our Tough Ombres in a variety of ways. In recent years, more and more of those who contact me are descendants of Tough Ombres, who want to know more about their family member's record of service. Of course our Association historians, Norm Richards, Tyler Alberts and French historian, Christian Levaufre, are of great help to these families, and I'm excited that several of these recent contacts have gone on to become member of our Association.

With the upheaval going on in the world today, it is more important than ever that we continue to share the legacy of the Tough Ombres and their role in securing the freedoms we enjoy today!

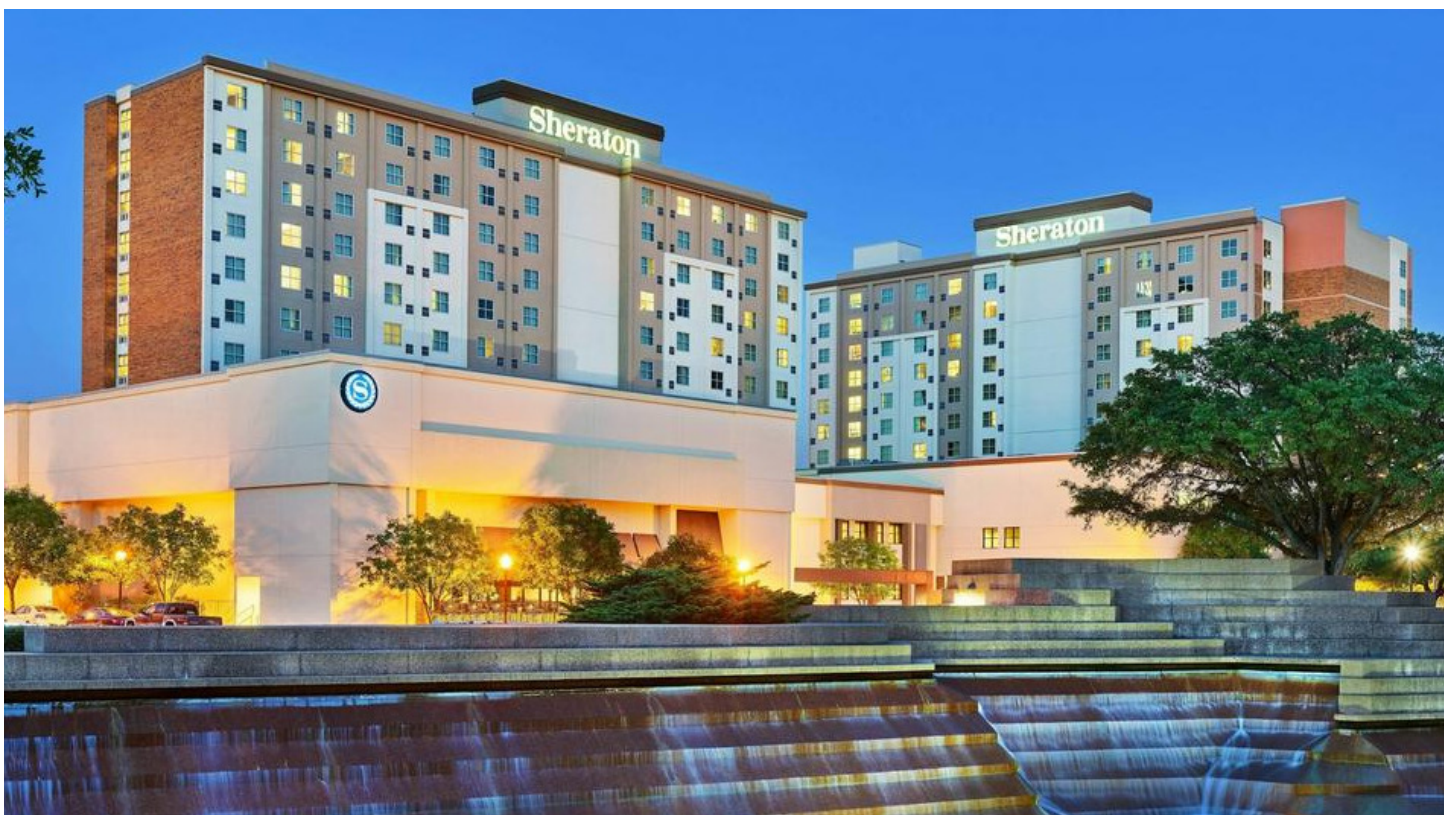
Nancy

Save the Date! 103rd 90th Association Reunion

Sheraton Downtown Hotel
1701 Commerce Street
Fort Worth, Texas 76102
October 25 - 26, 2024

Reserve Rooms Now by Calling 817-335-7000
Use Group Code QTDQ7WD for special room rates.

Urgent: The Association has reserved a block of rooms for Friday and Saturday nights only! Reserving additional days at the special rate pre or post reunion is an option on a “first come, first served” basis. However, the hotel reports that the hotel is sold out for Tuesday, Oct. 22 and Wednesday, Oct. 23. If you want to reserve additional nights (Thursday, Oct. 24 or Sunday, Oct. 26) make your room reservations asap. If you have trouble adding Thursday or Sunday to your reservation, call the number and ask for the “in house reservation desk.”



Happy Birthday!

Two WW II veterans and Association members will be celebrating important milestones this year!

Stan Spillar (357 Med Det) will turn 100 in March. His family will be holding a special celebration in Stan's honor on Saturday, March 30, from 12:00 noon to 3:00 pm at the American Legion, 6144 W. Dempster Street, Morton Grove, IL 60053. Cards would be appreciated and may be sent to Stan's daughter, Jan Rabbit, at 2308 Brentwood Road, Northbrook, IL 60062. For more information, contact Jan at 847-431-4222.

John Hospodar, Jr. (90/SIG) will celebrate his 100th birthday on June 11, 2024. His daughter, Sharon Major, is requesting birthday cards be sent to John. His address is Brightview Devon, 301 E. Conestoga, Apt. #428, Devon, PA 19087.

Please let these veterans know that you are celebrating with them by send a card or note!

If you know of other WW II veterans who are celebrating milestone birthdays in 2024, please let us know by contacting Nancy Rasmusson at nanrasmusson@gmail.com or by calling 970-227-2744.

Approaching the 80th anniversary of D-Day, taking a look back at the 60th anniversary of D-Day ceremonies, in which Stan Spillar participated.

This article was originally published June 7, 2004.

OMAHA BEACH, France -- On the 60th anniversary of history's greatest seaborne invasion, the presidents of the United States and France joined throngs of veterans in a solemn ceremony Sunday atop a bluff where 9,387 Americans lay beneath white marble crosses and Stars of David.

President Bush and French President Jacques Chirac have been at odds over the invasion of Iraq, but they had no trouble agreeing on the historic importance of D-Day, June 6, 1944, which began an 11-month Allied campaign to reclaim Northern Europe and defeat Adolf Hitler.

Chirac, in French fashion, talked in grand, eloquent terms, saying: "I speak for every French man and woman in expressing our nation's eternal gratitude and unpayable debt ... France knows full well just how much it owes to the United States of America. America is an eternal ally."

Bush, in American fashion, was plainer, blunter. He quoted from the Bible: "Greater love hath no man than this: that he lay down his life for his friends." He mentioned the common items -- socks, shoes, helmets -- that dead men had left on Omaha Beach.

He added: "America honors all the liberators who fought here in the noblest of causes. And America would do it again for our friends."

Following the American Cemetery ceremony, Bush and Chirac joined 22 world leaders representing 16 nations

at Arromanches. Britain's Queen Elizabeth II and Prime Minister Tony Blair, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Australian Prime Minister John Howard were among the heads of state who watched more than 1,300 sharply dressed soldiers march in review.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder attended the event, marking the first time Germany has participated in D-Day ceremonies.

For veterans, Sunday's ceremonies capped a period of national, even international, acclamation that began May 29 with the dedication of the National World War II Memorial in Washington. There was a sense, with the veterans mostly in their 80s, that time is running out to honor the 3.8 million who remain from among 16.1 million who served.



Britain's Queen Elizabeth II, in purple, watches D-Day veterans march on June 06, 2004 in the Square in Arromanches, France, as part of the 60th anniversary of the Normandy landings.

"I had to come one last time to see the beach," said Scott Hott, 82, a semi-retired contractor from Doylestown, Pa.

"What does this means to me? It makes me happy: I'm still alive," he said.

Six decades after D-Day, France and the United States remain allies in NATO, and the United States continues to have 219,000 troops under its European Command. With so many current U.S. soldiers in the crowd Sunday, there was a keen sense that American lives are again being lost in war.

The Army's 4th Infantry Division was among those that attacked the Normandy coast on D-Day, landing at Utah Beach. Walking among the veterans and shaking their hands Sunday was Maj. Gen. Raymond Odierno, the current division commander.

Odierno, who lost 53 of his 4th Division soldiers in a yearlong tour of duty in Iraq, spent several minutes talking to Robert K. Reese, 80, a retired banker from Prairie Village, Kan., and a veteran of the Battle of the Bulge in 1945. The old soldier was thrilled that the tall man in green with two stars on his shoulders wanted to hear his story.

Odierno said later that he could hardly believe that men had climbed the bluff against machine gun and mortar fire. "When you come here and you look at this place -- what it took to just cross over the beach -- it's absolutely incredible the bravery these men had," he said.

Several veterans posed for pictures and shook hands with actor Tom Hanks and director Steven Spielberg, the creative forces behind the HBO series "Band of Brothers" and the film "Saving Private Ryan." But mostly, the men sought out old buddies and recounted what happened to them.

Robert Lankow, 79, was a Navy deck hand on D-Day. He recalled being too busy to be scared. “There was so much going on and you had a job to do,” said Lankow, of Grafton, Wis.

The Army fired a 21-gun salute. Taps was played, along with the national anthems of the United States and France. A trio of jets flew overhead. A small flotilla of warships lay sleek and silent in the hazy blue of the English Channel.

Afterward, as the crowd scattered to board buses, Stanley Spillar, 80, a retired dental technician from Skokie, Ill., joined a friend from the 90th Infantry Division in kneeling to photograph the grave of a soldier from their outfit.

Neither had known the soldier, but they felt a connection to him.

“Here is this young man dead, and here we are alive 60 years later,” Spillar said.

This is who he was: Nick Slobodian, of Michigan, private first class, killed June 14, 1944.

To learn more about Stan Spillar and hear an interview with him conducted in 2007, go to the following website: <https://www.loc.gov/item/afc2001001.56096/>.

The following is a previous interview with John Hospodar conducted by the Deborah Hospital Foundation in about 2017

September 1943. During the height of World War II, 18-year-old John Hospodar heard the call to duty and voluntarily enlisted in the Army Signal Corps. John entered the Army at Fort Dix, New Jersey, then was shipped to Fort Crowder in Missouri for boot camp and Army radio school, where he was taught critical

skills of establishing lines of communications in combat areas. On June 7, 1944, less than eight months after enlisting, John was packed shoulder to shoulder on an amphibious landing craft in the English Channel, motoring toward the beaches of Normandy, France to participate in one of the largest military operations ever conducted. It was here that he was assigned to the 90th Signal Corp, 90th Infantry Division, as part of General George Patton’s Third Army. “It was the day after D-Day when we landed on Utah Beach in the early evening and we couldn’t





believe our eyes,” John recalls. “Once we were on shore we then had to make our way up the hill way across the beach. We were advised by our paratroopers to sit tight, as the Germans were just beyond the bluff. Nightfall set in quickly and soon after, German planes repeatedly buzzed the beach, dropping flares. These flares made the night as bright as day. Once they had clear vision they started bombing the beach. That’s when we dove for the biggest ditches we could find. Crammed into a hole with a bunch of guys and bombs exploding all around our position, we knew training was officially over and this was the real deal!” After the bombings and during a continuous fight, John and his team were able to

advance over the hill and establish their communications center.

The Army Signal Corps managed communications and information systems to support the combined armed forces. John was assigned to a communications truck with three other men. “The Germans were always able to easily detect our signal truck, so the other soldiers never wanted us anywhere near them,” he chuckled. “So we would try to position the truck at the base of large hills in the opposite direction from where the Germans were aiming their artillery shells so that they couldn’t hit us.” Sleeping under the truck, in barns or ditches for nearly a year, John’s trek took him from the coast of France all the way to Czechoslovakia. “It wasn’t until the war started to wind down, did we get a chance to stay in some hotels with beds. That was a real treat. I even saw General Patton once during the war-and, yes, he was wearing his famous ivory-handled revolvers!”

The accomplishments of the Third Army during this campaign were astonishing:

- Liberated or captured 81,522 square miles of territory
- Liberated or captured an estimated 12,000 cities, towns, and communities
- Liberated the Flossenborg concentration camp in Flossenborg, Germany
- Enemy losses estimated at 1,280,688 captured, 144,500 killed and 386,200 wounded

After the war, John returned home and embarked on a 37-year career as an executive at Campbell’s Soup in Camden, married Rita - his wife of 67 years - and created an army of his own. The Hospodars currently are blessed with four adult children, three grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

In 1943, the country and the world needed assistance and John willingly and selflessly did what was necessary. As a result, many lives were saved.

In 2010, John needed to have his life saved and Deborah Heart and Lung Center was there for him. Dr. Lynn McGrath, Deborah’s legendary cardiothoracic surgeon, performed open heart surgery on John, providing him with these seven (and counting) additional healthy years with his family. Because of Deborah’s 95-year philosophy of providing world-class specialty healthcare while never issuing a bil I to a patient, the Hospodars have become loyal supporters of the Deborah Hospital Foundation and regularly attend donor luncheons. Due to past support from generous community-minded individuals, Deborah was here when John and his family needed us. The lesson is simple: You Give. People Live.

Deborah Hospital Foundation proudly recognizes the Hospodars for their longtime support and also for Mr. Hospodar’s brave service to our country. Thank you, John!



Gold Star Heroes

As you may know, several of the members of our Association are representing a Tough Ombre who was killed in action. At the 2022 reunion, two stories were shared by new members to our Association telling the story of their family member's service. Ron Norman of San Antonio, told the story of his great uncle, James Derby Galleger who was killed in action in WW I. Ryland Howard shared the story of his father, Ryland Howard III, killed in action in WW II before Ryland was born. Both of these stories had a significant impact on our attendees. I am hopeful we can continue the trend in the upcoming reunion by sharing the stories of the Gold Star families.

Recently, David Van Hoose submitted the following account of his great uncle's service in WW II. 1st Lt. John Jackson Howard, 357th Infantry Regiment, Company I, was killed in action on June 10, 1944 by mortar fire; along with company commander Captain Buck Shaw and 1st Sergeant Clyde Dowdy. Lt. Howard was the first officer of the 90th Division to be killed in combat and was one of seventeen men killed that day.

I invite those of you who represent a veteran killed in action to write the story of their service. You may email them to me at nanrasmusson@gmail.com to be included in upcoming newsletters. These brave Tough Ombres made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their country, and deserve to be remembered with reverence and honor.

John Jackson Howard

Born: 2 Dec 1916

Died: d. 10 Jun 1944

Parents: Allen G. Howard and
Susan J. "Susie" Wireman

Grandparents: Jackson and Susannah (Allen) Howard;
John T. and Nancy (Allen) Wireman

Branch of Service: Army

Date of Entry:

Date of Discharge:

From David Keith VanHoose

1st Lt John Jackson Howard serviced with the 90th Infantry Division "Tough Ombres", 357th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Battalion; I Company as the Company Executive Officer during the invasion of Normandy, June 1944.

1st Lt Howard trained with the 357th at Camp Barkeley, Texas from March 1942 to December 1943, this included: Basic Training; Motorized Training; Maneuvers at Camp Bowie, Texas; Regimental Combat Team and Divisional Unit Training; Army Maneuvers near Leesville, Louisiana; Desert Warfare Training at Camp Granite, California.

With the training completed the 90th Infantry Division, along with 1st Lt Howard moved to Fort Dix, New Jersey to prepare for movement orders to Europe.

On March 23, 1944 the 90th Infantry Division sailed from New York aboard the H.M.T. Dominion Monarch an ex British liner converted to a troopship for an eleven day crossing of the Atlantic ocean. On April 4, 1944 the first troops of the 90th debarked at the Dock Terminal in Liverpool Harbor. The American Red Cross were waiting for them with hot coffee and doughnuts. From Liverpool Harbor the 90th moved to Camp Kinlett Park, located in Shropshire county the West Midlands region of England.

The 357th Infantry Regiment along with 90th Infantry Division were at Camp Kinlett Park the whole month of April 1944. During their stay at Camp Kinlet the 90th continued training daily. Highlights included Lt Howard along with the 153 officers of the 357th hearing speeches from Major General Collins, commanding VII Corps; Lieutenant General Patton, commanding Third U.S. Army; Major General Middleton, commanding VIII Corps; and Lieutenant General Bradley, commanding First U.S. Army.

From May 14, 1944 to June 3, 1944 the 357th Infantry Regiment moved to Race Course Camp, Chepstow, Monmouthshire, Wales to continue their intensive training while making final preparations for the coming invasion.. In August of 2007 at the annual 90th Divisional reunion I met John B. Phillips and his son Alun in Pittsburgh, PA. John was a six year old child when the 90th sailed from the shores of his country; while talking with him he told me about his memories of seeing some of the 90th activities while they trained near his home, Wales.

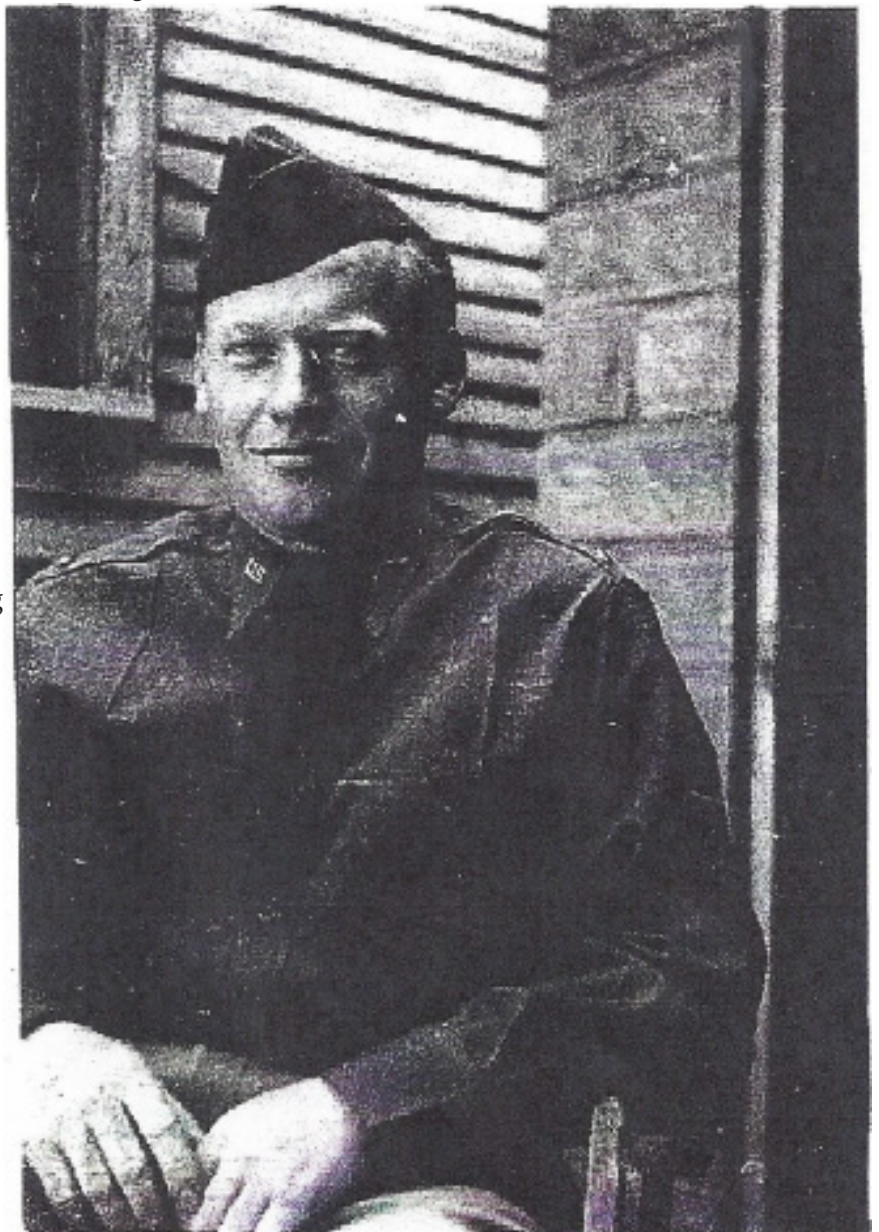


Lt. John Jackson Howard

June 4, 1944 the 3rd Battalion of the 357th Infantry Regiment moved on foot from Race Course Camp to the train station at Chepstow. The unit then traveled thirty miles to Cardiff, Wales where they began embarkation. Lt. Howard along with the men of I company boarded the SS Bienville for the channel crossing. Once all the units were aboard the SS Bienville, along with the SS Explorer, SS Charles Morgan and the SS Clara Barton sailed into Bristol Channel where they anchor until the early in the morning of June 6, 1944. The morning of June 6th at 2am the ships started their crossing of the channel arriving June 8th in the vicinity of Loutres France dropping anchor off Utah Beach on the Cotentin Peninsula at 9:30am.

Shortly after arriving Lt Howard boarded his assigned LCVP (Landing Craft Vehicle, Personnel) which he commanded during the trip ashore with 36 other men from the 3rd platoon, I company. In October of 2006 I started talking Doug White the son of Pvt Ernest R. White a member of 3rd platoon, I company. Doug showed his father a picture of Lt Howard that was taken at Fort Dix, after seeing the picture Doug's father stated that he knew Lt Howard very well, that he was a soft spoken man. didn't say much, never spoke harshly to the men or talk down to them. Ernest White, then when on to tell a story that Doug remembers hearing dozens of times over the years, but until October of 2006 he didn't know that his father was talking about Lt Howard. Ernest White then Pvt White said that Lt. Howard was in charge of the LCVP that carried him to Utah beach the morning of June 8, 1944; he also said that once all the men were aboard Lt. Howard said, 'Well, men this is the nitty gritty. We're all together now, but we won't all come back together.' None of the men of the 3rd platoon said a word. Pvt. Ernest White, never saw Lt. Howard again after wading ashore on Utah beach.

June 9, 1944 the 357th received orders to pass through elements of the 82nd Airborne Division in the vicinity of Amfreville, France. The Regiment was to seize and secure the crossings of the Douve River, west of St. Columbe until relieved by the Division Engineers. At 12:30am the morning of June 10, 1944 the 357th moved from its assembly area with the 3rd Battalion leading the column of march. The 82nd Airborne Division disposition were some what altered from those reported on June 9th, and the passage of the lines was not accomplished until 5:45am. The 357th then resumed the attack against the 91st German Infantry Division, the 3rd Battalion moved forward against very light resistance until 12:40pm when the 2nd Battalion was held up. At 9:30pm the 357th launched a coordinated attack in the direction of Les Landes from Amfreville, France; with the 3rd Battalion and the 1st Battalion on line from left right. Early advances were stopped by heavy enemy fire and the battalions were forced back.



Lt. John Jackson Howard

In the book *Battalion Surgeon* by William M. McConahey, M.D. copyright 1966, 1998; published by the Doctors Mayo Society the author writes the following about the 90th Division's baptism of fire. After establishing an aid station near the center of Amfreville Lt McConahey, M.D. heard the following exchange over the radio, "They're shooting the hell out of us!"; "Lieutenant Howard has been killed!"; "The Heinies are counterattacking, and will soon retake this town."

Lt. John Jackson Howard, was killed June 10, 1944 by mortar fire; wounded by the same shell blast that killed Lt. Howard was the company commander Captain Buck Shaw and 1st Sergeant Clyde Dowdy. Lt. Howard was the first officer of the 90th Division to be killed in combat and was one of seventeen men killed June 10, 1944. Lt. Howard was buried June 19, 1944 in VII Corps Cemetery #1, St. Mere Eglise, Normandy in grave number 159, row number eight, plot one between Pvt. T. Rodgers and Cpl. C. Coffey of the 82nd Airborne

Division. The following personal effects were found on Lt. Howard's body: His wallet with his Kentucky Motor Vehicle Operator's license; Employees Identification Card C&O Rail Road; and his WD Immunization register. Also found were his 1st Lt Bar, Pen, Bracelet, Knife, 150 Francs and a Cig lighter. In December 1947 Lt. Howard was disinterred and transferred to John Steen Funeral Home, Ashland Kentucky and then buried at Rose Hill Cemetery Ashland, KY; May 1948.



Lt. John Jackson Howard
Rose Hill Cemetery, Ashland, KY



Left: Lt. John Jackson Howard as a young student

Lt. John Jackson Howard
1916-1944
Son of Allen G. Howard and Susie Wireman
Grandson of
Jackson Howard and Susannah Allen
John T. Wireman and Nancy Allen
Great Grandson of
John E. Howard and Susannah Shepherd
Joseph Allen and Rebecca Wireman
Morgan Wireman and Sally Allen
John Allen and Nancy Jane Click



Invitation for US veterans and their families



Dear Veterans and families of the 5th, 90th, 95th Infantry Division and the 10th Armored.

Seventy-five years ago saw the beginning of the greatest story of the 20th century. It is a story that would lead to the liberation of France and a large part of Europe, all of which would finally escape Nazi dictatorship.

As it did in 2004, 2010, 2014 and 2019, the Association “Moselle River 1944” has decided again in 2024 to pay homage to the greatest generation, those who crossed the Atlantic to free the homeland of Lafayette.

We will welcome our liberators from Friday November 8 to Wednesday November 13, 2024, inclusive in order to commemorate with them the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the Thionville region and the crossing of the Moselle.

Arrivals can be made from Thursday November 7 and departures from Thursday November 14.

Our commemoration project is supported by the French government and has obtained the support of the largest cities of the region as well as that of the President of the Regional Council of the Great-Est. The accommodation costs will be the responsibility of the families, but the Association Moselle River 1944 will bear the cost of transportation and of meals during the commemoration.

The opening ceremony will take place on Friday, November 8. Commemoration events will take place the same day, until Wednesday, November 13 inclusive.

Participants who wish to return home directly following the events can plan their return trip the morning of Thursday, November 14.

The Association Moselle River 1944 is very happy that the city of Metz has decided to commemorate Sunday November 19th.

So that we can best organize your stay here and plan for the various events, we need to know as soon as possible which families are interested in attending this last homage to our liberating veterans. Veterans and their families may register through their veterans' association, through our representatives in the US, or directly with the Association by filling out an on-line form available on our website which may be found here –

<https://www.moselleriver1944.org/en/invitation.html>.

Participants will make their room reservation directly with the Best Western Prestige hotel in Thionville, or B&B hotel Thionville center train station using another downloadable form on the same web page mentioned above.

We hope that we will be able to welcome you here this November so that we may thank you for the magnificent gift of liberty that you gave us in November 1944.

With deepest gratitude,

Pascal Moretti

President, Association "Moselle River 1944"

Sad News from Pascal Moretti

My dear friends,

It is with immense sadness that I come to announce to you that our friend, Jacky Kleiser, founding member of the Moselle River 1944 association, passed away last night at the age of 86.

He was the conduit of our history by writing several books on the occupation and liberation of our region.

We will remember him as a faithful friend with his master's apron at the old school of Metzervisse.

The association will pay tribute to him on Friday February 23 during the annual general meeting.

Rest in peace my friend.

Sincerely,

Pascal

Call of Taps

We have received word from family members of the passing of the following member of the Association family:

Cletus Swihart
357

05 January, 2024

St. Joseph, MO

Cards can be sent to the Swihart family at the following address:

Gale Swihart
9300 Swarmer Dr.
Lenexa, KS 66219