

COMPANY I POOPSHEET

June 2002

LORI NOVOTNI (great neice of Edward R. Sowder) - 1366 Carriage Hill Lane #44
Phone (513) 895-0941 Hamilton, OH 45013

I received your name from Mark Bando. I had emailed him about his website, and also about my great uncle who served in WWII. He told me that you were in the same Company as him, and that I should talk to you.

My great uncle was Edward R. Sowder. He was in Company I of the 502nd Parachute Regiment. He was killed at Carentan, France, on June 11, 1944. Although he died many years before I was born, we always heard my grandparents talk about him as we were growing up. I recently came into possession of all of my grandparents papers, and among them, were numerous things of Ed. I have his Purple Heart, telegrams and letters from him, as well as Army correspondence. I have many photographs, some of which I have copied and sent to you today. Unfortunately, only a few were marked with the names of who they are. I am sending the photos to Mark Bando as well.

Did you, by chance know my uncle? I would be greatly interested in talking with you, if you have the time. Perhaps you'll recognize someone in the photos. I have many others, which I think are of the Parachute training facility in Fort Benning, and then some taken in England.

Mark told me that you have a Reunion with other men from the Company once a year. Where is that held? I live outside of Cincinnati, so maybe I could attend the next one and share what I have. I look forward to talking with you.

EDITOR'S NOTE: I phoned Lori after I received her letter, and I was so pleased to finally be in touch Sowder's family member. I sent her copies of our Company I Awards accumulation and Cassette tapes.

Lori asked, "Did you by chance know my uncle Edward Sowder?" I certainly did know Edward Sowder. We were in the same squad and we lived in the same barracks together, and I have a couple of strong remembrances about him, and here they are. We often played tricks on one another. While we were in Fort Bragg we were obliged to stand "Reveille" every morning at 6.30am, after which we were expected to be fully clothed and go to the Mess Hall for breakfast. Sowder never was an early riser. He stayed in bed until the last minute. When he heard everyone running out of the barracks for "Reveille", he jumped out of bed, clothed himself with his overcoat and jump boots, nothing else, and stood "Reveille" with the rest of us. In the dark at 6.30am nobody knew the difference, except those of us who watched him lay out his overcoat and jump boots the night before. One night someone nailed Sowder's jump boots to the floor. He was unhappy about that trick for a long time.

In England we lived in Quonset Huts, and we slept in double decker bunks. I slept on the bottom and Sowder slept on top. One night it was Sowder's turn to go to town on a pass. He was known to drink more than his share of beer, like most of us. When he returned to the barracks it was dark, and the lights were out. I was awake and I could hear him getting ready for bed. Most of us covered our beds with our canvass "Shelter Half." I was expecting him to climb into his upper bunk. Instead I began to hear urine splattering on the "Shelter Half" covering on my bed. When I yelled at him, he calmly stepped outside the door and finished urinating in the grass.

Lori would greatly appreciate information that any of you might have on how Edward Sowder died on June 11, 1944. I was wounded June 10, 1944 about 10.30pm on the Carentan causeway by those 2 enemy airplanes. I presume Sowder was killed a few hours later. Let us know what you might know.

DO YOU KNOW?

The world consumption of toilet paper equals 72,000 acres of trees per day.

2

ARTHUR and RUTH KENNEDY --16505 La Cantera Pkwy#921 - San Antonio, TX 78256

It has been quite some time since I last corresponded with you. I just received the March 2002 Poopsheet and I wish for you to give Mabel Howell our deepest and sincere condolence on the death of Jim. Jim and Mabel wrote to me and my wife Ruth on many occasions, generally after each of the Snowbird Reunions that he and Mabel attended.

As you have frequently stated in the Poopsheets, most of us who have been able to enjoy fairly good health are eighty years old or better. Ruth and I have never been able to attend any of the Snowbird Reunions due to my health

Because of our many moves through our military service, I am not able to locate most of my certificates that we received as members of the 101st Airborne. Ruth and I are trying to put things together to pass on to my son and grandson. If you still have copies of the Citation for the Award of the French Croix de Guerre with Palm, the Citation for the Award of the Belgian Fourragere 1940, the Citation for the Award of the Belgian Croix de Guerre 1940 with Palm, the Citation for the Award of the Dutch Orange Lanyard, and a set of the Sterling Miniature Paratroopers Wings and 101st Insignia Pins.

In closing, our prayers are offered for both Marie and you. Enclosed is a donation to help with Poopsheet expenses.

EDITOR'S NOTE: I am happy to send the requested items to Art and Ruth.

WILFRED and EVA MATTE - 125 Larkspur St. - Springfield, MA 01108
Phone (413) 733-5948

Would you please send one each of the items available from our Company I accumulation. Hope your wife is improving. Enclosed is an expense donation.

EDITOR'S NOTE: I am happy to send the requested items to Matte.

CHARLES and MARILYN OLSON - 201 Grant St. Ph4 - Sewickley, PA 15143
Phone (412) 749-0290

It was great to see everyone at the Snowbird Reunion. Enclosed are a few pictures taken at the Reunion. We are still in Florida and will be here until the first of May, and then back north to Sewickley, Pa. We both send our best wishes to you and Marie. Take care until we see you again.

MRS. DAVID (ANN) BONFIGLIO - 36 Clarendon St. - Watertown, MA 02472
Phone (617) 926-0469

I was saddened to read about the death of Jim Howell. He was very special to Dave and I and the boys. He visited us when he was an FBI man and my young son David was so impressed by this fine gentleman, as is anyone who had the honor of knowing him. He will be greatly missed.

I hope you and yours are doing well, and that God's grace keeps shining upon you all. Enclosed is a donation for the Poopsheet in memory of James K. Howell.

DON and PAT O'NEILL - 2312 Elfin Way - Sarasota, FL 34231
Phone (941) 923-0145

We were real saddened to read of Jim Howell's death. He wrote to us a lot and always sent us pictures of the Reunions. We will surely miss him. I had been with the 23rd Infantry in Japan, same as Jim. I left them in 1949 on emergency leave.

On our homefront, Pat's cancer has returned (both lungs). The lesions are inoperative so she's on medication. I have to go in the hospital for by-pass surgery (a return bout) next month.

Our prayer list gets longer. Marie has been on it a long time, and we continue to include her. Please keep us in your thoughts and prayers. Also please send a set of the Paratroopers Wings and 101st Insignia pins. Enclosed is a donation to help with expenses.

EDITOR'S NOTE: I am happy to send the requested item to Don and Pat.

BATTLE OF THE BULGE MEMORIAL DEDICATED IN ORLANDO

On December 16, 1999, the 55th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, a beautiful statue was dedicated in Orlando, Florida to all those who fought in this historic Battle and came home, and those who were left over there.

The monument features a six foot bronze GI atop a bronze pedestal bearing a large plaque and 33 patches honoring the Airborne, Infantry, and Armored Divisions that fought in the Battle. The pedestal is set in the center of a large white star. Overall circumference of the base is 34 feet.

Flags representing the USA, Luxembourg and Belgium are in the perimeter, along with attractive shrubs. The statue is illuminated by five floodlights set in each point of the star. Two lights are beamed upward on each flag.

Over 1200 persons attended the highly emotional ceremonies, that included 200 school children. Key note speaker was Brig. Gen. William E. Carlson. His outstanding tribute to the American soldiers who stood in their foxholes and turned back Hitler's hoards has been hailed as one of the finest tributes ever delivered at a WWII ceremony.

The memorial monument was designed, constructed and dedicated in one year at a cost of approximately \$90,000. Funding came from individual veterans, veteran organizations, local firms and citizens. Local, state and federal governments were not called on for financial support.

Looking ahead, the Committee will be holding periodic ceremonies at the monument site (Veterans Day, etc.), and going out to area schools to lecture to history classes on this, one of the largest battles ever fought by the United States Armed Forces.

Tourists, and especially Battle of Bulge Veterans, will want to have their picture taken alongside the GI statue just as many have in Luxembourg.

WHAT I LEARNED FROM MY FATHER

My father will be turning 85 soon. He is one of the Greatest Generation, a World War II Veteran the likes of which are disappearing at the rate of eleven hundred a day. As Fathers Day approaches, I have thought a lot about the legacy that he is leaving me. It has been an odyssey so enduring and compelling that it's been a prevailing theme for much of my life, a quest for history.

My father was a paratrooper in the famed 101st Airborne Division, fighting in some of the most famous and dramatic battles of the war. He was one of the first soldiers' on French soil at D-Day, jumping behind enemy lines in the predawn, ahead of the invasion fleet. A few months later, his unit parachuted into Holland, again behind enemy lines, in the ill-fated attempt to seize the bridges leading into Germany. After 72 days of continuous combat, the 101st Airborne was sent to a region in Northern France to rest and refit. Within weeks, however, my father and his comrades were rushed, unprepared, to the town of Bastogne, Belgium, a critical road junction to Hitler's last great offensive of the war, the Battle of the Bulge. The drama played out there is legendary. Poorly equipped and out numbered ten-to-one, the airborne were troops quickly surrounded and ordered to surrender. Defying the ultimatum, they fought on until Gen. George Patton's Third Army broke through to relieve the beleaguered troopers on Christmas Day, 1944.

Near the end of the war, my father was one of the first troops to capture Hitler's mountain retreat in the Bavarian Alps. Items of property seized there have been passed on to me.

My early interest in these exploits began with my father's old uniform hanging in the back of a closet. The patches and medals that adorned it captivated me at age 9 and so began the questions. The stories that followed stirred my imagination, and the seed had been planted. I became a student of the era and for years pored over dry, archival accounts of the conflict. Eventually I went abroad. Armed with maps, I walked with the ghosts of battle in

countless locales all over Europe.

I once huddled with veterans on the windswept beaches of Normandy, shedding tears with those aged warriors who came back one last time to revisit the horrors of D-Day." I wandered lost and wet in the Ardennes Forest, I putting my discomfort aside to imagine the bitter cold and the fierce fighting that was the Battle of the Bulge. I had the good fortune to encounter a former British paratrooper in Holland. Following him around for days as he recounted the heroism and the slaughter of the British 1st Airborne Division at Arnhem, the infamous Bridge Too Far. In a twist of fate, my new friend had his son with him. We shared the same name, and were the same age. My father had been in the same battle, only a few miles away.

In Russia I walked the hallowed ground in the city formerly known as Stalingrad, that meat grinder Volga River whose four-month battle was witness to some of the most savage fighting in the history of warfare. I spent time retracing the origins of the Nazi movement in southern Germany. At the Dachau concentration camp, I stood for the longest time at the entrance gates, staring at the sinister inscription emblazoned in iron: "Arbeit Macht Frei" (Work Makes You Free). I made the pilgrimage to locate and canvass my father's drop zones, to retrace his steps and talk with the locals who are forever grateful to the brave Americans who liberated them.

I have tasted history at the source, and it is a flavor that many will never know. My father started me on an extraordinary journey that is still in motion, one that has helped me to understand at least some of this complex world in which we live - lessons learned and lessons lost.

So this Father's Day, I am going to forgo the obligatory Hallmark greeting and offer up the sentiments expressed here instead.

Thanks for the trip, Dad.

First In The 101ST.

**Author: John Fitzgerald.
Col. Robert G. Cole's Runner.**

(Taken from the Internet)

On June 6th, during the height of World War II, the largest invasion force ever conceived by man was launched against the shores of Normandy, France. A critical part of the plan was the dropping of sufficient airborne forces behind the beaches to insure the success of the landings. Lt. Colonel Robert G. Cole, commanding the 3rd Battalion of the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, received our nations highest award, The Medal of Honor for his actions during this period.

"Lt. Colonel Robert G. Cole, United States Army, for gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his own life, above and beyond the call of duty on June 11th, 1944, in France. Lt. Colonel Cole led his Battalion in attack against a strongly defended and heavily fortified enemy position." This data is extracted from the official records of the United States Government. "With utter disregard for his own safety and completely ignoring the enemy fire, he rose to his feet in front of his Battalion and with drawn pistol shouted for his men to follow him in the assault. His heroic and valiant action resulted in the complete establishment of our bridgehead across the Douve River, enabling a linkup of American Forces moving inland from Omaha and Utah Beaches." The data concludes. "The cool fearlessness, personal bravery and outstanding leadership displayed by Lt. Colonel Cole reflects great credit upon himself and are worthy of the highest praise in the military service.

It is my belief that the data of history should not lose its "heartbeat" in becoming information. If too much time passes, we will be left with only the record and lose the essence. This is the story of the first paratrooper in the 101st Airborne Division to be awarded The Medal Of Honor. It is my hope that in telling it, the heartbeat will remain with the history to become part of and add to the Divisions already rich heritage.

In the winter of 1942, I was stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina with the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division. I had just returned from three days A.W.O.L. and found myself in deep trouble. The irresistible charms of my new girl friend had proven too much for me. I made the sad mistake of going home for Christmas without the benefit of a pass. Discipline in the airborne units was ironclad at that time. With much browbeating and great amounts of degradation, I was banished from my assignment with the machine gun platoon. On this occasion the only thing missing were the drums. The last thing the lieutenant said as he stood in front of the formation was "Fitzgerald, I doubt if anyone could make a soldier out of you." This is how I became the only person available when the battalion commander requested a trooper be sent to headquarters to act as his runner for a few days. Little did I realize then that the few days would turn into a few years. Then, Major Robert G. Cole our new battalion commander had graduated from West Point (Class of 1939). He was about six feet tall with rugged features, a ramrod stance and was gifted with a strong commanding voice. I was a high school dropout from New York City and had just passed the physical for airborne training by the skin of my teeth. It would be generous to say we had little in common.

Upon reporting to him the first day, he greeted me with a salutation that would become his hallmark. "Pull in that beer rotted gut dumbjohn, where the hell do you think you are in some ginmill?" I had a twenty-eight inch waist at the time and could not escape the feeling that life would be going down hill from that moment on.

In the early days of the airborne unit, the instructors had little experience and no precedents to guide them. The standing order for all training was, "Run them until they drop, the ones remaining will become good paratroopers." Twenty and twenty-five mile marches were common. Daily exercise was usually preceded by a five-mile run. The easiest part of airborne training had to be the parachute jumps. It was the only time we ever went anywhere other than by walking or running.

The 101st Airborne Division by any standard gave an excellent accounting of itself during World War II. A private best summed up their spirit during their darkest hour at Bastogne, Belgium. The 101st was completely surrounded by elements of seven German divisions. Someone asked a private what he thought of the situations. He replied, "The poor bastards, they have us surrounded." The roots of the Screaming Eagle's performance can be traced back to the hills of Tennessee, the bogs of England and the sandy, pine studded training area at Fort Bragg. With each grueling march, with each practice maneuver, officers and enlisted men came to know each other a little better, to trust each other a little more. The hardships, the physical agony, sharing the constant risk involved in airborne training, all combined to form the ancestors of a spirit that was being born.

General William C. Lee, father of the American airborne forces, had given our commanders a single edict. "You can lick any ten men, you are the best. Keep saying it until you truly believe it." The difficult part was to maintain this spirit in training and somehow keep it out of the local beer halls. Probably the worst job in the army at that time was being a M.P. stationed in Fayetteville, North Carolina, a small town located a short distance from Fort Bragg. There were nightly battles between 101st Airborne, tankers from General George Patton's Second Armored Division, stationed in the area and the 82nd Airborne. The local stockades were worked to capacity to insure cooling off periods.

Until today I firmly believe all of our First Sergeants were chosen on the basis of their ability to lick any man in the company. The officers had the more difficult task of leading by example. In my opinion, no one was better at this than Lt. Col. Robert G. Cole. To become an outstanding officer in the 502nd was not an easy task. Without knowing it at the time, we were to produce a host of future generals, including J.H. Michaelis, Patrick Cassidy and Steve Chappuis to name a few.

Lt. Col. Cole had the rare combination of courage, integrity, a sense of humor and lastly a deep understanding and concern for the men under his command. His concern for his men was probably his strongest attribute. He could push you to just short of the breaking point, and then get a little bit more. When there was nothing left, his sense of humor would take over. During the charge at Carentan, where he received his C.M.H., there had been a foul-up when the attack began. The word to advance had not been passed throughout the companies. He found himself in the middle of an open field with only a few men following. While firing his forty-five-caliber pistol to urge them on, he yelled, "I don't know who the hell I'm shooting at but I have to do something." Despite their desperate situation the few men around him broke into laughter.

My primary job was to act as his runner while we were on problems and maneuvers. Some incredible things happened while carrying out this simple assignment. I have rich memories of the time we shared together. At the beginning I was very lucky. We would make a night jump and land in the middle of nowhere. The colonel would send me to locate one of the companies who had not checked into our assembly area. I would pick a direction and run off in the darkness. My plan was to complete a circle. By sheer chance, I would usually make contact about half way around the circle and return to the company.

Some of most important things I've learned from him were the intangibles that are so necessary in the making of a good soldier. Discipline, loyalty, fortitude and concern for others. He could have a very short

fuse when it came to incompetence, especially when it concerned the officers. One of the less enviable duties I had was acting as his "interpreter". During the 1943 Tennessee maneuvers we were assigned to take a hill as our objective. The colonel felt one of the companies was not contributing enough to the attack. He yelled to me, "Go tell Captain so and so to stick that mathematical mind of his up his ass and get his machine guns forward." I would find the captain and relay the colonel's message. "Sir the colonel suggests that you move your guns forward to a more favorable position. Perhaps it would be best to do it on the double."

Although he could read a compass better than anyone I knew, we would still become lost on occasion. He would turn to me with a half grin and say, "Fitzgerald, you are the only soldier I know who could become lost between his barracks and the P.X."

As considerate as he was about the men under his command, he had no peer in the whole regiment when it came to chewing you out if you had it coming. He always expected a little bit more from people who worked directly with him. During a particular inspection in ranks, I knew he would be the inspecting officer. I spent days preparing. My boots looked like mirrors. All my clothes were perfectly pressed and my rifle was spotless. I did not want him to find anything wrong. When the colonel came to my front, I snapped the rifle bolt open and let go of the piece as fast as possible. It was a perfect handover. He checked the rifle inside and out, looked me over very carefully from top to bottom and returned the rifle. I had it made. Just as he moved to the next man, he said something complimentary to me. I turned my eyes toward him. This was his last shot and I fell for it. Then came the roar like thunder. "Dumbjohn, haven't you learned yet to keep your eyes to the front at all times while you are at attention."

One rainy day near Carentan, France, we were checking an area we would soon be moving into. The patches of hedgerows made all the terrain look similar. After scouting the position we ended up in front of our own lines. Realizing our mistake we headed back. As we neared an outpost we came to a sentry and walked up to him. The colonel asked the sentry, "Why didn't you challenge us?" The private replied, "I knew it was you sir." Colonel Cole exploded. He stood in the rain for a full five minutes and in no uncertain terms expounded on the importance of challenging everyone out to our front. When he had finished and began to leave, the colonel removed his raincoat and gave it to the private. He instructed him to return it when he came off duty. Somehow he always maintained his ability to swear and to care at the same time.

One of the things I particularly remember about him was that he would back you up whenever possible. One night in England we were engaged in some final maneuvers just prior to D-Day. It was the first time we would be working with tanks. I was to meet the tanks at a road intersection and guide them to an area the colonel had indicated on a map. Without too much trouble I met the tank commander. After finding suitable terrain that the tanks could move on, we started out together into the pitch-black night. With a few educated guesses I managed to find the spot the colonel had shown me on the map. During the time we were together, the tank commander who was a lieutenant had been addressing me as "Sir". I can only guess that he thought the colonel had sent an officer out to meet him. As time wore on it became too awkward to tell him differently. When dawn started to break, I decided it was a good time to get the hell out of there before he spotted my P.F.C. stripe. I excused myself and left. Later on during the day, the tank commander showed up at our Command Post. He was reviewing the problem with Colonel Cole. During their conversation, he mentioned the good job the "Captain" had done in guiding him into his area the night before. Colonel Cole was just about to say "What captain?" when he saw me frantically jabbing my finger at my chest. He picked it up right away and said to the lieutenant, "Oh him, he's one of my best men."

On our jump into Normandy on D-Day I had the number three spot in our plane load. The colonel was

first, followed by the battalion surgeon, then myself. Though we jumped together, we became separated on the ground. I spent the next eighteen days with the 82nd Airborne Division and was carried as "missing in action" by the 101st. During this period the colonel had received a false report that someone had seen my body. They had reported me dead. I was told later that he was visibly shaken for quite awhile after receiving the news. Because of the confusion resulting from the night drop, men from the 82nd Airborne were fighting with the 101st and a number of 101st men were with the 82nd. This was cleared up after several weeks when all troops were ordered to return to their original outfits. When I finally reached our company and reported to Colonel Cole, he said "Fitzgerald, if I wasn't so damn glad to see you, I'd shoot you." In preparation for the jump, one of my responsibilities was to see that all of his equipment was in order. He had asked me to strap some tape around his forty-five pistol holster so that he would not lose the gun while jumping. Evidently I became carried away with my task. Shortly after he landed he had the drop on a couple of Germans. He reached for his forty-five. It took him several minutes to unwind the tape while the Germans made their escape.

Throughout the hundreds of miles we marched together, there would be times when we would be close to exhaustion. During the periods allowed for rest, he would walk up and down the column. He would persuade someone here, joke with another, encourage some and correct others. If it were a twenty mile march, we would cover thirty by the time it ended.

He made it a practice to never take food in the field until everyone was fed, nor would he sleep until he felt all were secure. The day before he was killed in Holland, he shared a can of grapefruit with Robert Doran, his radio operator and myself. He had carried it all the way from England. This and other acts of kindness, were common to his character.

On September 17, 1944, the 101st Airborne Division made its second combat jump behind enemy lines in Holland. On the first day, it looked like a picnic. Dutch civilians on bicycles and on foot were all around the landing zone. Many gave us gifts of flowers, apples and other fruits. Later in the evening, we ate a home cooked meal prepared for the Headquarters group by one of the Dutch families. That night we headed for a small town called Best. We were marching in column formation when we came under fire from a group of Germans. A flare went off and everyone hit the ground. Fortunately for us, the Germans did not realize they had a whole battalion spread out on an exposed dike and the firing soon stopped. It was the first indication of things to come.

We arrived in a wooded area near Best at dawn and established our Command Post. Company H of the 3rd Battalion had as one of its missions the capture of a bridge over the Wilhelmina Canal. Before this battle was over, it would take almost the entire division plus the help of some English armored units to capture a bridge that had already been destroyed by the enemy.

September 18, 1944 was one of the darkest days for the 3rd Battalion of the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment. The battalion had unknowingly come across a very large group of the enemy who were trying to make their escape back to Germany by train. They were part of the armies retreating across Belgium and France. At the town of Best, they were ordered to stop and fight when their commanders became aware of the Allied Airborne landings. The Germans had heavy concentrations of artillery and overwhelming small-arms firepower. The enemy was also using 20mm. anti aircraft cannons to defoliate the section of the woods we were occupying. Fire was so intense that the trees began to burn. Casualties were mounting all around us. Colonel Cole decided that the only option left to him was to call for air support. When our P-47 fighters arrived, all hell broke lose as they started to strafe the area. He was becoming increasingly concerned for the safety of his men. He ordered and supervised the setting off of orange smoke bombs to our front. (Orange smoke indicated to the pilots that friendly troops were near their target area.) As the planes continued their havoc, his concern increased. He decided to go into an open field to lay out a group

of orange panels as an additional precaution. Just before he started toward the field, he sent me to locate a jeep that was a short distance away. It was loaded with ammunition. We had been waiting for it's arrival, as our supply of ammo was almost out. I was only gone a few minutes. When I returned, I saw a group of men standing near the edge of the field. As I came closer, I saw the colonel's body on the ground. Kneeling down beside him, I looked up at the Battalion Surgeon and asked, "Why don't you do something for him?" He replied, "I'm sorry John but there is nothing I can do for him now." He had been shot by a sniper hidden in a house about a hundred yards from the field. We knew we had lost so much more than a Battalion Commander that day. I remember carrying the message to Major Stopka, second in command, telling him that he was in charge of the battalion. That is almost all I remember of the next several days.

Lt. Col. Cole never knew he was awarded the nation's highest honor, but even that could not surpass the honor his men gave him. We were to go on to Bastogne and on into history but from that day forward there was an unspoken void throughout the battalion that would never be filled.

As I grow older, I sometimes think back to my days with the 101st and I remember the machine gun platoon and the lieutenant who said, "Fitzgerald, I doubt if anyone could make a soldier out of you." Today I know, there was one man who could.

SUSIE BAKER NALL (daughter of Champ Baker) - 1180 Lake Dr. - Woodworth, LA
email: xandq16@aol.com 71485

I am Champ Baker's daughter, Susie Nall. I am writing to tell you I have enjoyed recent issues of the Company I Poopsheet, due in part to Betty Taylor-Hill, who has become a friend to those who served with her brother, Lester Taylor, and a friend to me. She has inspired me to type all my father's letters from WWII that he sent to his mother, and thank goodness she saved. They were given to me by aunt, my father's sister. This is a project I undertake quite soon. I will be glad to share anything you may be interested in.

I am also writing to let you know some news of interest...particularly to any pro football fans out there. My son, Craig Nall, who is Champ Baker's grandson, was drafted on April 21 in the fifth round by the Green Bay Packers! He is 6'3", so gets his height from his grandfather! He attended LSU, but graduated from Northwestern State University in Louisiana on May 10. Through the years of high school football and college, I so often wished my dad were still alive, because he loved sports, particularly football, and I wish he could be here to cheer on his grandson, now an NFL player! If there are any Company I football fans in Wisconsin, I hope you get to meet Craig some day... just tell him you served with his grandfather...he would love to talk to you. He is currently in Green Bay working out prior to the minicamp which begins June 3. He will permanently move up there in late July.

I would like some of the items that you have listed in the Company I Accumulation - Company I picture taken at Fort Bragg in 1943 with roster of names - Company I Holland Invasion Roster - Sterling miniature Paratrooper Wings and 101st combination pins - Copy of the Citation of a Qualified Paratrooper from Fort Benning - Copy of a picture of a fully equipped Paratrooper ready to make a Combat Jump.

Thank you so much. My mother, Astrid, shares the Poopsheet with me and I do enjoy it. Please accept my donation to help defray expenses.

My nephew, Champ L. Baker III, just graduated from medical school, and will be in Pittsburgh, PA doing his residency. He is quite interested in his grandfather's war experiences.

EDITOR'S NOTE: I am happy to send the requested items to Susie, Champs kid.

9

BOB and STELLE MOLSBERRY - 368 Glenwood Pines Ct. - Grass Valley, CA 95945
Phone (530) 273-1698

As you know, Bob has Parkinson's, as does your wife Marie. We took Bob to the doctor March 18. He was hospitalized with a blood clot on his lungs. It was touch and go for awhile. He has not eaten anything by mouth since, and he is delirious, and the medication for Parkinson's does not come in a liquid form, so that has been a problem. We thought we would lose him, and all of a sudden he began to get better, although he will never eat food by mouth again. They gave him his medication with a small amount of applesauce and it has made a world of difference. He surprised the doctors and nurses by being immediately ambulatory. He even called the Golf Club and said he would be back and wanted me to keep his dues paid. So as it goes now he will be on Caumadin to make sure the clot is gone, and he will be fed with a tube, nose to stomach. He is coming home tomorrow and as soon as they can get him off of Caumadin for awhile, will then put a tube in his stomach through which he will be fed. They said he could live quite a few more years that way as long as all of his other faculties are as strong as they are now. And it will be much more comfortable for him than the present procedure. I hope Marie is comfortable and we do not forsake our loved ones. My prayers are for all Company I people and families. A visiting nurse will come and help us to get adjusted to Bob's feeding process

Bob often recalls when Ed Tyree was hit and killed by a German 88 shell. The only way he was identified was by his Bowie Knife which he always carried. He was killed on Jan. 3, 1945. Just 6 days later Bob was hit by shell fragments, in particular his left arm that shattered his wrist. He wandered through the woods to another outfit's aide station and did not remember much else until he was on an icy cold train headed out of Bastogne. Some very good orthopedic surgeons repaired his wrist from bones from his leg at Torney Hospital in Palm Springs, Calif. Manual Gesulga was wounded the next day after Bob. Company I listed Bob as missing in action for 3 days until word came about him. Also someone sent me his "Goodby Letter" by mistake. Luckily I knew he was on his way home when it came or at least I thought he was.

MRS. RALPH (PETRA) CASAS - 601 Lance Dr. - Barstow, CA 92311
Phone (760) 256-1338

Just dropping a note to say that I was saddened to read in the March Pooosheet of the death of Jim Howell. He was always so good about sending us pictures taken at the Snowbird Reunions. I am enclosing a donation to the Pooosheet in his memory. My thoughts and prayers are with Mabel at this dire time in her life, and with you and Marie, and I wish all a holy Easter.

LYNN DAMMANN - 4713 Spring Meadow #8 - Midland, TX 79705
Phone (915) 570-5292

I am writing on behalf of my father, Walter G. Presley, to request the following items: - Company I picture taken at Fort Bragg - Roster of names in the above picture - Copy of the Citation for the French Croix de Guerre - Copy of the Citation for the Belgian Fourragere - Copy of the Citation for the Belgian Croix de Guerre - Copy of the Award of the Presidential Unit Citation to the 502nd - Copy of the Citation for the Award of the Dutch Orange Lanyard - Copy of the Presidential Unit Citation Award to the 101st - Sterling Miniature Paratroopers Wings and 101st combination Pin - Copy of the Citation of a Qualified Paratrooper - Cassette tape of the "D-Day Jump June 6, 1944" - Copy of 8x11 picture of a fully equipped Paratrooper.

I am enclosing a donation to be used for postage for the above items, and one for the Pooosheet in memory of Jim Howell. Dad and I both enjoy reading the Pooosheet very much. Dad is doing well; he still attends lodge meetings regularly and looks forward to the high school football season.

We were saddened to read of Jim Howell's death. Having lost my mother to lung cancer three years ago, our hearts go out to Mrs. Howell. My dad shared Mr. Howell's memoirs of the war with our family. With my dad's stories, his own memoirs, and Mr. Howells memoirs, I feel like I know all these brave men.
EDITOR'S NOTE: I am happy to send the requested items to Walter's daughter.

My name is Darrin Swan. My wife's grandfather is Verle G. Kerr, who died about 8 years ago. He was a member of Company I, 502nd Parachute Regiment, 101st Airborne during WWII. He is my one and only hero. God rest his soul.

Last week I was home on leave in Iowa and I visited his gravesite and I talked with him for about a half hour or so, about a lot of things.

The reason I write is when I returned to Granny's house that day I received the mail from the postman and in the stack of letters was your Company I Poopsheet. I am very impressed that after all these years you are keeping the spirit alive, and I thank you for that. I have had so many unanswered questions of Grandpa that I just need to know of my hero. If you could please send me any information that you have on him, i.e. Dates of deployments, number of jumps non-combat and combat, where he jumped when he was wounded, and rosters, anything that might help me answer my questions. Do you know of anybody who can tell me where and when and how he was wounded?

Enclosed is a donation to help with expenses of the Poopsheet.

EDITOR'S NOTE: I am happy to send the following items to Darrin and Gina. Cassette tape of "D-Day Jump June 6, 1944" - Paratroopers Wings and 101st insignia pin - pre-Normandy Invasion Roster - Copy of Citation of the French Croix de Guerre - Belgian Fourragere 1940 Citation - Belgian Croix de Guerre 1940 Citation - Presidential Unit Citation to the 502nd - Pamphlet on how to receive your medals - 8 1/2" picture of a fully equipped Paratrooper ready to make a Combat Jump - Citation of a Qualified Paratrooper - Listing of the men who served in Company I.

In reply to your question, "Do you know of anybody who can tell me where and when and how Verle Kerr was wounded?" The answer is yes... Me.

First I must tell you that I believe every soldier's recollection of the same military action is often different. In other words other's recollections may be different than mine, even though we were in the same action.

The following are MY recollections, and not necessarily anybody else's. As we flew across the English Channel I looked out of the window of the plane and I could see the coast of France. It was 1.15AM June 6, 1944. Not long after that the red light came on at the door of the plane, which was our signal to stand up in the isle of the plane and prepare to jump. We were approaching our drop zone. When the green light came on, we bailed out of the plane as fast as we could. When my Parachute opened, "Wow, what a reception party." We had jumped right in the middle of what looked like the greatest of all 4th of July Celebrations. Anti-aircraft shells, tracer machinegun bullets, and every one of them looked like they were headed straight for me. This is the only time I ever had an intimate conversation with my Parachute. I said "hurry on, let's get the hell down out of here." I landed in water up to my chest. It took me 1/2 hour to get out of my Parachute. I helped Paul McKenna out of his chute, he landed in water up to his neck. We then joined with a squad of our men consisting of Lt. Jack Dulaney, Reino Hill, Paul Cooney, Verle Kerr, Paul McKenna, and myself, and a few others I can't remember, and proceeded toward our primary mission, which was to destroy a battery of 4 huge coastal guns, the destruction of which was imperative for a successful landing by our beach forces, due to start landing at 6.30AM. As we proceeded toward our objective an enemy machinegun fired on us from about 25 or 30 yards. We immediately jumped into the ditch on the side of the road, and the machine gunner raked the ditch with fire. Soon Lt. Dulaney whispered the order to crawl backward out of the ditch. As I tried to crawl backward my feet kept bumping into Verle Kerr who was behind me, and he wasn't moving. I asked him if he was wounded. He said he was shot but he believed he could crawl out. Out of the ditch I could see that Verle was shot in the jaw. The bullet went in one side of his jaw and out the other. Because Lt. Dulaney didn't believe that Verle would be able to keep up with us, because of his wound, we bandaged him, and decided to hide him in a clump of bushes, and return for him at daylight. One of the bullets passed through Lt. Dulaney's arm, but he was able to stay with us. That was the last time I saw Verle. I presumed he was evacuated and sent to a military hospital in England. I did talk with Verle on the phone about 25 years ago.

/

A LATER MESSAGE FROM CHARLES AND MARILYN OLSON: We just returned home on May 6 after spending 5 months in Florida. It was great seeing our Company I buddies and ladies at the Snowbird Reunion. I have somehow lost most of my Company I accumulations, - awards papers etc. Would you please replace them with whatever you have left, so I can complete my scrapbook.

EDITOR'S NOTE: I am happy to send the requested items to Charles and Marilyn.

MRS. NEAL (BETTY) BURKETT - P.O. Box 1295 - Andover, OH 44003
Phone (440) 293-7015

While Neal was alive he frequently spoke with you on the phone, and I always joined in the conversation. Healthwise I am in pretty good shape. Our children live varying distances from here, but I have good friends here who are a lot like family. You and Marie continue to be in my prayers. I always look forward to receiving the Company I Poopsheet.

SUSAN (PARIPOVICH) RUSSELL - 2479 El Paseo Circle - Las Vegas, NV 89121
Phone (702) 732-4205

I am a sister of Dan Paripovich of Company I 502nd Parachute Regiment. Dan died some years ago. For some time I have had the yearning to be in touch with my brother's Paratrooper buddies, but I have only recently learned of your address. I would very much like to hear from some of Dan's buddies who would have some stories to share about Dan. Dan was very proud of his service with Company I 502nd Parachute Regiment.

BOB HARTZELL - 313 Wentz St. - Tiffin, OH 44883
Phone (419) 447-0448

As you have undoubtedly noticed in our Poopsheet, that more and more family members of our deceased Company I men are hungrily seeking wartime information about their loved one. Even after 60 years all of us can remember stories and activities, at least about a few of our buddies that would bring much pleasure to their family members. Please don't take these stories and pleasant memories to the grave with you. Share them while we still have time with the family members to whom it will mean so much. Share them either directly or through the Company I Poopsheet.

My wife Marie, occasionally seems to be a little better. She still has Alzheimers and Parkinsons diseases, she cannot talk or walk or chew her food and she sleeps a lot. All of her food is pureed, and is spoon fed to her. I still visit with her every day, and our daughters are there to feed her with the evening meal, if she is alert enough. The nurses put her in a wheel chair for me and I push her around the halls of the nursing home, and we frequently visit with other residents in their rooms. I can some times see by the expressions on her face that she enjoys this. Please continue to keep her and all our ailing Company I people in your prayers.

COMPANY I TREASURY REPORT

Since our last Treasury Report in March we received \$205.00 in donations, we received \$1.07 interest on our money in the bank, we had a balance of \$825.30, leaving us a balance of \$1031.37.

Our expenses since our last Treasury Report are, \$132.61 for reproducing our March Poopsheet, \$68.00 postage this Poopsheet, \$5.00 for address labels this Poopsheet, a total expense of \$205.61. Leaving us a balance of \$825.76.

Yours in the 101st

Bob

Robert J. Hartzell
313 Wentz St.
Tiffin, OH 44883
Phone (419) 447-0448