

# **'Thundering Herd'**

## ***Newsletter of the 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division Association***



Ardennes, Rhineland,  
Central Europe

**Fall/Winter – 2022 - 2023**

**Vol. X No. 6**

**Welcome to the 8th Armored Division Association Newsletter**

**The 'Thundering Herd'**

**Fall/Winter – 2022/2023 Edition**

**Merry Christmas – Happy Holidays – Happy New Year**

Hello to everyone in the 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division Association, families, and friends.

We wish you ALL very Happy Holidays: Merry Christmas – Happy Hanukkah – Happy New Year!

Hopefully, you are along with me looking forward to **our joint 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division Association & Battle of the Bulge Association Reunion July 28 – August 1, 2023 in New Orleans at the National WWII**. Details to be announced.

Go to the Battle of the Bulge Association website:

**<https://battleofthebulge.org/>**

Dear Members & Friends,

The life blood of any organization are the dues and funding received for expenses, etc.

It is time to send in your **DUES for 2023**

Individual Member - \$20

Family - \$35

Please send check made out to ***8th Armored Division Association***

Send to

8th Armored Division Association

2345 E. Dauphin St

Philadelphia, PA 19125

Use the E-Mail address: [8thArmoredDivision@gmail.com](mailto:8thArmoredDivision@gmail.com)

PLEASE! We need some help! Can anyone volunteer (with a FREE membership) to help with our Newsletter – The Thundering Herd’ as co-editor???

I have been trying to put together 2 issues a year, but with my schedule, I am finding it hard to keep up. I will continue to assist but need HELP. e-mail me at:

[awaski01@gmail.com](mailto:awaski01@gmail.com)

To communicate further, we also feature a ‘Facebook’ account and ask all interested to enroll in order to stay in contact and share comments and information: New Association ‘Facebook’ page  
<http://www.facebook.com/groups/269231523148647/>

We are in need of volunteers to assist with the following:

- \* Future Reunions - a volunteer committee to work on the details of a potential annual reunion/Association meeting where yearly business and elections and planning can be conducted.

- \* Newsletter – help and contribute articles and reports to the semi-annual newsletter – the ‘Thundering Herd’

We need articles, photos and stories for the ‘Thundering Herd’ newsletter. Please help us by sending in stories, photos and recollections of the veterans and your family members who served!

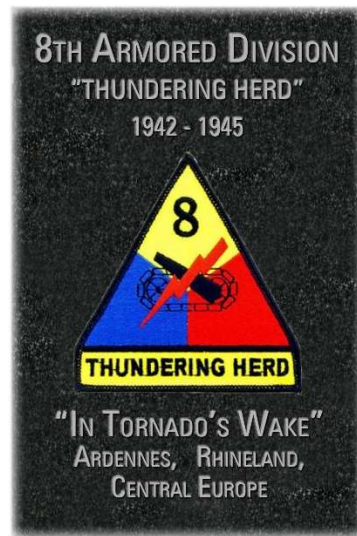
Many THANKS!

**The Commemorative Memorials to Honor the Veterans and service of the 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division**

GOOD news!

Our Commemorative Stone for the 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division was placed at the Army History and Education Center (AHEC) at the Army War College, Carlisle, on Saturday, June 26, 2022. A large crowd was present at the dedication.

Below is a photo of the Commemorative Stone to honor the veterans and service in the 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division. Also the Memorial at the Museum of the Army, Ft Belvoir, VA.



T/5 Al Ricci, left. Unk, right, dog Tanto, at 8th Armored Memorial in Pilsen. 88-Hq.

1. Army War College (AHEC) at Carlisle, PA
2. Memorial at the Museum of the Army, Ft Belvoir, VA
3. 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division Memorial in Pilsen, Czechoslovakia - 1945

## 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division Merchandise

We still have 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division caps:  
Gratis to 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division veterans  
\$20 to all others (includes postage & handling)

8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division Challenge Coins  
\$5 per piece

8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division shoulder patches  
\$10 a piece

8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division License plates  
\$20 apiece (includes postage & handling)

8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division Decals  
\$5 a piece



## In Memoriam

### **PFC Donald E. Camp** **80th Tank Battalion - medic**

Killed in an auto accident in Czechoslovakia in June 21, 1945.

Buried: Calvary Cemetery, Johnson City, Broome County, New York

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/86931029/donald-e-camp>

### **Corpl. Ralph Fiorio** **Co A, 18<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion**

Ralph A. Fiorio, 97, died peacefully on Monday, September 26, 2022 at Putnam Ridge Nursing and Rehab Center in Brewster NY.

Born in Peekskill, NY on February 18, 1925, he was the son of Samuel Edward and Angelina (Varesi) Fiorio. He was a true hero who served in WWII in the Army

from March 1943 to January 1946. He served in the 8th Armored Division and was very proud to serve his country. He was wounded in the Battle of the Bulge and was honored with a Purple Heart.

On July 30th, 1949 in Brooklyn, NY, Ralph married the love of his life, Mary Joan (McCann), who pre-deceased him on February 13, 2015.

He is survived by his seven wonderful children and their spouses, Deacon James (Mary Beth) Fiorio of Poughkeepsie, Brian Fiorio of New Windsor, Ralph (Karen) Fiorio of Highland, Marianne Braccini of North Fort Myers, FL, Regina (Bill) Neff of Milford, DE, Dan (Maggie) Fiorio of Lewes, DE, and Eileen (Doug) Greene of Bethel, CT; his 11 grandchildren, Marc Fiorio (Catina Leon), Allison (Frank) Chimera, Rob Fiorio, Patricia Williams, Mark Harris, Kristen Neff, Daniel Fiorio Jr., Paul Neff, Justin Greene, Dana Fiorio and Megan Greene; and his seven great-grandchildren, Ronan Chimera, Jake Williams, Brynn Fiorio, Lila Williams, Cora Chimera, Caroline Bea Harris and Audrey Elle Harris.

He attended Peekskill High School and left after his junior year to voluntarily enlist in the US Army (before he received his draft notice). He attended the Chicago Institute of Technology 1947-1948, employed at Imperial Radio 1948-1950, the VA Hospital, Montrose NY 1950-1953, and worked at IBM from 1953-1987. He belonged to the Elks, VFW, American Legion, Disabled War Veterans, Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, Military Order of the Purple Heart and Wounded Warriors. Our Dad was always our Hero in so many ways. We only recently learned that after he was wounded in battle, he went back into the burning tank to pull out another injured soldier.

Ralph loved his family tremendously. He was so proud of each and every one of us. Some of his hobbies were reading, bowling, golf and cooking. His passion for cooking was a true art and you could feel all of the love with each meal. He always would say that the secret to a long life was garlic, olive oil, and family.

He was known and loved by so many and everyone who met him, adored him. He treated everyone like family, and always enjoyed being in your company. He was extremely knowledgeable about so many topics and could talk for hours on end sharing his wealth of information. He even wrote his own memoirs (with historical pictures included) from birth to 1946. In one excerpt, he wrote, "Ironically, I was in and out of a war and yet not old enough to vote. I have no regrets, and I would do it all over again."

He was truly the epitome of "The Greatest Generation". The world was definitely a brighter place while he was in it, for all that were fortunate enough to know him. We miss you tremendously, and we all "love you very, very damn much".

<https://www.tributearchive.com/obituaries/26015137/Ralph-Fiorio>



Memorial Langenstein-Zwieberge 2022  
Concentration Camp - Langenstein-Zwieberge 2022  
was liberated by elements of the 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division and is  
now a memorial site.  
Holiday newsletter and greetings

Dear Friends,  
the enclosed letter informs you about our remembrance work in Langenstein.  
Hoping that you are doing well, we wish you a pleasant festive season at the end of  
this year and hope to see you again very soon!

The Memorial's staff  
Dr Nicolas Bertrand, Gesine Daifi and Franziska Dieck

Stiftung Gedenkstätten Sachsen-Anhalt  
Gedenkstätte für die Opfer des KZ Langenstein-Zwieberge  
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Facebook [www.facebook.com/gdlangenstein](https://www.facebook.com/gdlangenstein)

Twitter: [https://twitter.com/langenstein\\_zb](https://twitter.com/langenstein_zb)

Newsletters

<https://suche.sachsen-anhalt.de/?q=Rundbrief+2022>

Gedenkstätte für die Opfer des Konzentrationslagers Langenstein-Zwieberge  
requested to participate in 8th Armored Division Association. Until they're  
approved, they won't be able to post or comment in the group.

[https://www.facebook.com/groups/269231523148647/participant\\_requests/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/269231523148647/participant_requests/)

Headquarters Company – Armored Divisions

Looking at what the WWII individual Soldier equipment layout was.

“An Armored Group was a command and control headquarters equivalent to the headquarters of an armored division Combat Command during World War II. Most armored groups served in the European Theater of Operations (ETO). Typically, an armored group was attached to each American corps in the ETO. As organized under the 2 October 1943 Table of Organization, the armored group consisted of a headquarters and a headquarters company totaling 15 officers, 1 warrant officer, and 81 enlisted men. Without any significant organization changes, the total strength was increased to 17 officers, 1 warrant officer, and 88 enlisted men when the table of organization was updated on 11 November 1944. The headquarters consisted of the commander, normally a full colonel, a lieutenant colonel as executive officer, and the group staff of six officers. “The headquarters company consisted of Headquarters, Maintenance, Administrative Mess and Supply, Liaison, and Staff sections along with a tank platoon consisting of one lieutenant and nine enlisted men and included 3 light tanks, normally M5 Stuarts. Additionally, the group was authorized 2 attached chaplains, and 2 medical officers with 2 enlisted dental technicians.

“The mission of an armored group was to supervise independent tank battalions within a corps area. However, those separate tank battalions were normally attached to an Infantry division. Therefore, the armored group headquarters did not end up being in the chain of command or administration for the tank battalions which were nominally assigned to it. The corps commander would use the ‘surplus’ group commander and staff as a special staff section for armor. The group’s vehicles were used for liaison and to supplement communications with the combat units. The armored groups were frequently assigned contingency or emergency missions as a task force headquarters. However, the troops required for such missions were only assigned or attached on order, and therefore the task force was rarely actually activated or employed. Two notable exceptions were the 3rd Armored Group as it assaulted the Siegfried Line in western Germany from 17 to 30 September 1944, and the 17th Armored Group, which was formed of units assigned or attached to the 76th Infantry Division for an attack across the Kyll River in Germany from 4 to 9 March 1945.

“Because the armored group was largely superfluous to the combat mission, the group headquarters was sometimes tasked for other purposes. These included the operation of corps rest centers and rear area defenses, administering provisional

military government, and supervising special equipment schools such as mine exploders and flame thrower tanks. By the fall of 1944, it was acknowledged that American armored divisions lacked sufficient personnel to operate their Combat Command Reserve headquarters as full combat commands, while at the same time the armored groups were underutilized. “On 28 October 1944, the headquarters of 3rd Armored Group was split, with a small section of about 30 men attached to the corps staff. The remainder of the group was attached to the 5th Armored Division. By war’s end, this practice had become the norm in the ETO. Based on experiences in both the European and Pacific theaters, the Army recognized that retention of armored groups was no longer justified, and the unit type was eliminated.”

A new book is now out entitled, *Immortal Valor – The Black Medal of Honor Winners of WWII*, which features a photo of 12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division veteran Eddie Carter [D/56] on the cover. The book tells the story of the seven African American soldiers serving during World War II who were ultimately awarded the Medal of Honor. The write up on Amazon provides the following information: “In 1945, when Congress began reviewing the record of the most conspicuous acts of courage by American soldiers during World War II, they recommended awarding the Medal of Honor to 432 recipients. Despite the fact that more than one million African Americans served, not a single black soldier received the Medal of Honor. The omission remained on the record for over four decades. But recent historical investigations have brought to light some of the extraordinary acts of valor performed by black soldiers during the war. Men like Vernon Baker, who single-handedly eliminated three enemy machineguns, an observation post, and a German dugout. Or Sergeant Reuben Rivers, who spearheaded his tank unit’s advance against fierce German resistance for three days despite being grievously wounded. Meanwhile Lieutenant Charles Thomas led his platoon to capture a strategically vital village on the Siegfried Line in 1944 despite losing half his men and suffering a number of wounds himself. “Ultimately, in 1993 a U.S. Army commission determined that seven men, including Baker, Rivers and Thomas, had been denied the Army’s highest award simply due to racial discrimination. In 1997, more than 50 years after the war, President Clinton finally awarded the Medal of Honor to these seven heroes, sadly all but one of them posthumously.” I look forward to reading the book, especially the part about Sgt. Carter. I do have one pet peeve with the title. I know that colloquially military people are acknowledged as having ‘won’ awards and, although that term appears even in official Army publications, it



bothers me very much. Medals are not presented by lottery, hopefully. When a service member performs his or her duty in an exemplary or heroic manner, they are presented awards in recognition of that service.

Thanks to Robert Scherer

Hellcat News – February 2022

## **What killed the most tanks in World War 2? What was the most effective tank in World War 2?**

**Racking up the most kills as a group: StuG III.**

It had a low silhouette, it had a good gun. It had a decent frontal armor (in 1942–43, but 80mm was becoming weak in 1944 and 45). Still, it was a very effective ambush weapon (not exactly a tank, but it was used like a tank). It is said that some 20,000 tanks were destroyed by 10,000 StuGs.



**The tank that won the war: Russian T-34.**

It took the brunt of the war almost by itself. We (Americans) like to talk about Shermans being the war winner. It was from our own perspective. But if I'm honest, America fought a war in Europe from June 1944 until May 1945. Hard as it was, it was less than 1 year. Russians were fighting 4 times longer (and on their own soil).

About 50,000 were made during the war. By the time they were in Berlin, only several thousand remained. But at the same time, most German armors were destroyed by the Russian hands. They were willing to lose more tanks of their own. (To be fair, they lost a lot of tanks at the beginning).

So, the tank that destroyed most German tanks and won the war, the backbone of Allied tank force, was T-34. (Even though AT guns claimed more German tanks, Russia couldn't have won without T34)



### **[3] The best individual kill ratio: Tiger I.**

Because of the timing, Tiger I enjoyed had superiority for about a full year during 1943. Russians still had weaker 76mm gun, and Tiger's 88mm could knock out T34s from long distance while 100mm frontal armor was difficult to penetrate for Russian gunners. So tank commanders like Otto Caruis (standing next to the bow gun below)) ended up destroying 68 tanks.



He wasn't unique. Germans liked their tanks fast. Tiger was very fast for a heavy tank. (45km/h on road. M26 Pershing that came out few years later was about the same weight. But it could only do 30km/h on road). The speed allowed Germans to move Tigers along the front (somebody wrote that Tigers were like a fire brigade extinguishing fires here and there). If available, Tigers were called in to take care of the heavy engagements.

Perhaps because of that, Kurt Knispel had 168 victories mostly in a Tiger I. Michael Wittman had about 135 in Tiger I also. The combat kill ratio is often quoted as 1:10 or even 1:12. But there were other losses like mechanical problems and destroyed by crews, etc. The real ratio would have been about 1:5.

So, Tiger I racked up most individual victory ratios.

### **Effective Infantry tank: Sherman.**

I would categorize Sherman in 1944 as an "infantry tank." Tank destroyer doctrine also made it clear that Sherman was not to go head to head with enemy tanks. Russia didn't have the luxury of having infantry tanks. They had to go tank to tank quite often.



Western allies, however, had strong artillery and air support. Under that cover, Shermans cleared out bunkers and machinegun nests. It moved with infantry. In 1 year, about 4,400 American Shermans were lost (plus 2700 more for British Shermans). 7000 total is almost as much as the entire production of Panzer IVs (8500). But compared to 83,000 Russian tank losses during the war (including small tanks like BT tanks), that was relatively small.

While it was not a strong tank killer, Western allies couldn't have done without Shermans. (On the east, Russia also used about 3600 Shermans.) The goal was not to make the best dualist tank. It was to win the war, and Shermans did. (And from 1945, 76mm showed up so Shermans could engage tanks properly also, but 76mm only made up 25% by the end of the war.)

So I'd say most Sherman tanks were effective infantry tanks while operating within the umbrella of air and artillery covers. German veterans wrote how unfair Americans were. *"They see us, instead of fighting, they pummel us with jabo (ground attack aircraft) and artillery."* (I'm paraphrasing)

So depending on how one categorize the "effectiveness," that's how I would categorize.

[https://historicalbattles.quora.com/https-www-quora-com-What-killed-the-most-tanks-in-World-War-2-What-was-the-most-effective-tank-in-World-War-2-answer-M-1?ch=15&oid=59779035&share=468583e6&srid=ufLLU4&target\\_type=post](https://historicalbattles.quora.com/https-www-quora-com-What-killed-the-most-tanks-in-World-War-2-What-was-the-most-effective-tank-in-World-War-2-answer-M-1?ch=15&oid=59779035&share=468583e6&srid=ufLLU4&target_type=post)

A unique tracked vehicle of WWII the 'Vigor'

That vehicle is the Vickers Vigor bulldozer. I saw an article about a bulldozer with tank type tracks and an aircraft engine. I could not verify one with an aircraft engine, but the following is what I found out. The Vickers VR180 Vigor was a British crawler tractor, built from 1951 to 1958 by Vickers-Armstrongs. Since the 1920s, the company gained substantial experience in the design and construction of tanks and continuous track vehicles. After the war they developed a civilian crawler tractor that could be sold for use in peacetime reconstruction work. It was notable for the unusual sophistication of its chassis. The Vickers Vigor crawler was built at the Scotswood, Newcastle-upon-Tyne works. 1949 prototype at Vickers' Elswick Works. The tractor's most distinctive feature was its running gear: four full height roadwheels also acting as rear drive sprocket, front idler and track return rollers. This was the same layout as the Tetrarch light tank, which Vickers-Armstrongs had developed in the 1930s. In common with tanks of this period, but in contrast to crawler tractors, the suspension had considerable articulation and permitted high speeds. The Vigor was capable of nearly 10 mph, while the comparable Caterpillar D8 could only reach 5 mph. The four roadwheels were linked as two bogies on each side. Pairs of bogies on opposite sides were linked by an articulated beam with a center tilt pivot. This suspension required a flexible track, developed by Vickers, with rubber sealing washers between the moving



parts. Wear to the rubber in service could make the track floppy, a drawback to the design. Together with the sophisticated suspension articulation, if not well-maintained, the Vigor was prone to throwing tracks when run at speed. The vehicle chassis was fabricated in two pieces, mainly from large iron or steel castings. The nose of early models was distinctively solid and sloped, while other makers had a vertical radiator grille. Later models, after experience in Australia, also gained a lightweight steel grille for better ventilation. The chassis unbolted relatively quickly, two hours being cited, into front (engine) and rear (transmission) components. The engine was a Rolls-Royce C6SFL 12.17l six-cylinder supercharged diesel. This engine was more powerful than other tractors of this age and weight, with 190 hp at the engine and 150 drawbar hp. However, the fuel consumption was high, at 9.8 gallons per hour at full speed. The transmission was initially a three-speed manual and high-low-reverse splitter gearbox with a relatively small Borg & Beck 18 inch single plate dry clutch. This small clutch plate had a reputation for early failure if worked hard. An improvement from mid-production was the option of a Rolls-Royce hydraulic torque converter, the same converters Rolls-Royce was supplying with the same engines for the new British Rail DMU fleet. A full range of accessories were offered: front dozer blades with cable or hydraulic lifts, rear ripper blades for breaking virgin bush as farmland in Australia, and a rear logging winch of 30,000 to 50,000 lb-ft pull. Production of the VR180 ran from 1952 to 1958, with approximately 1,500 built. The design continued until 1961 as the Vickers VR110 Vikon with a smaller 142 hp C4SFL four-cylinder engine. Around 20 Vikon were built, most going to New Zealand. As for most capital equipment of the early 1950s, the main market was in the Commonwealth. The UK home market could not afford it, particularly with the Austerity Purchase Tax of the time, while the U.S. market preferred domestic products, such as the Caterpillar. Many Vigors went to Australia where rough ground capability was appreciated, even though the purchase cost was considerably more than the popular option of war-surplus tanks with turret and roof armor cut away. A major UK seller was Jack Olding of Hatfield, who relinquished their pre-war Caterpillar dealership in favor of Vickers. Vigors were also used by the Royal Engineers..

Thanks to Tom Stevens  
12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division Association  
'Hellcat' newsletter October 2022

## What is an Armored Signal Company?

What exactly is an Armored Signal Company? If some of you were like me, you knew the 152nd handled communications for the Division, but weren't sure what that entailed. According to the 1942 Armored Force field manual, "The armored signal company is an organic part of the armored division, and performs all signal activities for which the signal corps is properly responsible within the division." Again, pretty generic description, but we are starting to narrow it down. The manual goes on to state, "In addition to individual equipment issued to personnel, the armored signal company is authorized signal equipment, supplies, and motor transportation in sufficient quantities to permit it to accomplish all normal missions." So we know what they are tasked with and a general idea of how they were equipped, but what does that look like? While visiting the 12th Armored Division Memorial Museum this past July, I found a plaque displaying how each unit in the 12th was organized. There is also a page on the Museum's website that shows the same information. The 152nd's plaque showed a combined strength on paper of 294 men. It shows 20 half-tracks, 21 trucks, and 22 jeeps; 63 vehicles total. I can imagine the unit made quite an impression when all those men and vehicles were moving together. The plaque shows the company's three main sections, Headquarters, Operations, and Transmission. The headquarters section included a section for the Division's Signal officer (Major William J. Cure [SG]), plus three men in one halftrack. The Headquarters platoon had a strength of 57 men, one half-track, four trucks, and two jeeps. A Division signal/supply section and a radio repair section finished the Headquarters section, with 24 men, two half-tracks, eight trucks, and one jeep. The Operations platoon is shown in two sections, a message center section and a wire section. The message section had 58 men, two half-tracks, and fourteen jeeps, while the wire section was organized with 59 men, two half-tracks, three trucks, and five jeeps. The final and largest part of the Signal Company was shown as the Radio platoon. It was organized into three groups, the first being a Headquarters section of 12 men in one half-track. The second group was the High Power radio section; 30 men were organized into six groups of five, each mounted in a truck. The last section on the plaque was the Medium Power radio section. Its organization was shown to be ten groups of five men mounted in half-tracks. I hope everyone got something from this overall of the 152nd organization, at least how it was organized on paper. Over the following months, if the interest is there, I'd like to explore each section in detail, including the vehicles and equipment used. As always, please reach out with any questions, concerns,



stories you may have, or anything you want to share. I look forward to next month's column, until then, I hope everyone stays safe and has a great month.

Thanks to Matt Schabaker  
12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division Association  
'Hellcat' newsletter October 2022

From Honorary member Jaroslav Kulhanek, of Czechia (Czech Republic)

A friend from the next town sent me interesting photos.

It is an American bridge across a small river that is still operational today.

We was built it in the summer of 1945 or later as part of UNRRA aid.

If the bridge was built in the summer of 1945, it is possible that it was built by the **53rd Armored Engineers of the 8th Armored Division.**

**The bridge is about 10 km away from us, but I didn't know about it at all.**





## The Story of the Medal of Honor

The Medal of Honor (MOH) is the United States Armed Forces' highest military decoration and is awarded to American Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen, Guardians and Coast Guardsmen who have distinguished themselves by acts of valor. The medal is normally awarded by the President of the United States, but as it is presented "in the name of the United States Congress," It is sometimes erroneously referred to as the 'Congressional Medal of Honor'. There are three distinct variants of the medal: one for the Department of the Army, awarded to Soldiers; one for the Department of the Navy, awarded to Sailors, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen; and one for the Department of the Air Force, awarded to Airmen and Guardians. The Medal of Honor was introduced for the Department of the Navy in 1861, soon followed by the Department of the Army's version in 1862. The Department of the Air Force used the Department of the Army's version until they received their own distinctive version in 1965. The Medal of Honor is the oldest continuously issued combat decoration of the United States Armed Forces. The President typically presents the Medal of Honor at a formal ceremony intended to represent the gratitude of the American people, with posthumous presentations made to the primary next of kin. According to the Medal of Honor

Historical Society of the United States, there have been 3,530 Medals of Honor awarded to 3,511 individuals since the decoration's creation, with over 40% awarded for actions during the American Civil War. In 1990, Congress designated March 25 annually as 'National Medal of Honor Day'. During the first year of the Civil War (1861-1865), a proposal for a battlefield decoration for valor was submitted to Lieutenant General Winfield Scott, the Commanding General of the United States Army, by Lieutenant Colonel Edward D. Townsend, an assistant adjutant at the Department of War and Scott's chief of staff. Scott, however, was strictly against medals being awarded, which was the European tradition. After Scott retired in October 1861, Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, adopted the idea of a decoration to recognize and honor distinguished naval service. On Dec. 9, 1861, Iowa Senator James W. Grimes, Chairman on the Committee on Naval Affairs, submitted Bill S.82 during the Second Session of the 37th Congress, "An Act to further promote the Efficiency of the Navy." On Feb. 15, 1862, Senator Henry Wilson, the chairman of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs and the Militia, introduced a resolution for a Medal of Honor for the Army. The resolution (37th Congress, Second Session; Resolution No. 52), was approved by Congress and signed into law on July 12, 1862 ("A Resolution to provide for the Presentation of 'Medals of Honor' to the Enlisted Men of the Army and Volunteer Forces who have distinguished, or may distinguish, themselves in Battle during the present Rebellion"). On March 3, 1863, Congress made the Medal of Honor a permanent decoration, and it was authorized for officers of the Army. On March 25, the Secretary of War presented the first Medals of Honor to six U.S. Army volunteers in his office. A separate Coast Guard Medal of Honor was authorized in 1963, but had not yet been designed or awarded. A separate design for a version of the medal for the Department of the Air Force was created in 1956, authorized in 1960, and officially adopted on April 14, 1965. Previously, airmen of the U.S. Air Force received the Army's version of the medal. Department of the Department of the Department of the Army Medal of Honor Navy Medal of Honor Air Force Medal of Honor The Department of the Army's version is described by the Institute of Heraldry as "a gold five-pointed star, each point tipped with trefoils, 1½ inches wide, surrounded by a green laurel wreath and suspended from a gold bar inscribed VALOR, surmounted by an eagle. In the center of the star, Minerva's head surrounded by the words UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. On each ray of the star is a green oak leaf. On the reverse is a bar engraved THE CONGRESS TO with a space for engraving the name of the recipient. The pendant and suspension bar are made of gilding metal, with the eye, jump rings, and suspension ring made



of red brass. The finish on the pendant and suspension bar is hard enameled, gold plated, and rose gold plated, with polished highlights.” The Department of the Navy’s version is described as “a five-pointed bronze star, tipped with trefoils containing a crown of laurel and oak. In the center is Minerva, personifying the United States, standing with her left hand resting on fasces and her right hand holding a shield emblazoned with the shield from the coat of arms of the United States. She repulses Discord, represented by snakes (originally, she was repulsing the snakes of secession). The medal is suspended from the flukes of an anchor. It is made of solid red brass, oxidized and buffed.” The Department of the Air Force version is described as “within a wreath of green laurel, a gold five-pointed star, one point down, tipped with trefoils and each point containing a crown of laurel and oak on a green background. Centered on the star, an annulet of 34 stars is a representation of the head of the Statue of Liberty. The star is suspended from a bar inscribed with the word VALOR above an adaptation of Jupiter’s thunderbolt from the Department of the Air Force’s seal. The pendant is made of gilding metal. The connecting bar, hinge, and pin are made of bronze. The finish on the pendant and suspension bar is hard enameled, gold plated, and rose gold plated, with buffed relief.” By service branch the number of medals awarded: Army 2451 Navy 749 Marines 299 Air Force 18 Coast Guard 1 Of the Army medals awarded, 1522 were awarded during the Civil war. Again, have a Happy New Year and don’t forget the ZOOM meeting on January 8 at 4 pm EST.



US Army Medal of Honor - US Navy Medal of Honor (Also US Marine Corps & Coast Guard)  
US Air Force Medal of Honor

Thanks to Tom Stevens, 12<sup>th</sup> Armored Division Association  
From: Hell Cat News January 2023

### Book Review

Review of Rick Atkinson's Trilogy, The Liberation Volume 3. The guns at Last Light, Western Europe June 1944 - May 1945.

Rick Atkinson's magisterial study of America's role in World War II Volume 3. The guns at Last Light, Western Europe June 1944 - May 1945. includes the participation of the 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division from January 1, 1945 – the end of the War.

Review of Rick Atkinson's Trilogy, The Liberation Volume 3. The guns at Last Light, Western Europe June 1944 - May 1945. We all know the story. The final battle to liberate Western Europe and its hundreds of millions of people being held against their will by the boot of Nazi dominance. In this final book of the Trilogy, Mr. Atkinson is at his best. Riveting accounts of the preparation for D-Day, he brings clarity to the monumental task of assembling the world's largest invasion force in history, all the while maintaining strictest secrecy on an island nation. The author now digs deep in the command and control structure of the Allied forces, which by now has been shaped to a sharp point by the cold forge of hardship, destruction, death, mistakes, poor planning and frankly, plain dumb bad luck! The chapters of the invasion of Normandy are brought to life in a way that brings the reader right into the battle. The terrified eyes of a young rifleman, the screams of the wounded, the murmurs of the dying, the overwhelming incomprehensible level of noise, the shriek of artillery, and that single deadly 'splat' of a rifle's bullet take the reader right onto the beaches. As you read you will be able to visualize, and perhaps even somehow magically hear the words on the pages. I know I could! The chapter on the beaches of Normandy takes you on a journey that may be one of the most poignant in any book I've read on this operation. So much in fact, I would recommend you read it twice. From there, of course, the narrative shifts into the battle for the Normandy peninsula. There he writes about the deadly 'bocage' of the Normandy countryside. Here he tells with skill and empathy the stories of the, by now, very war-weary leadership. The 1st lieutenants who by now had led countless men into battle and chaos, others who had yet to fire their weapon in combat. The sergeants who, as in all wars, bear the brunt of just making things work, are by now, in some cases, on their third or fourth campaign. The general officers, manning desks and command centers amidst a flurry of intelligence, in bunkers sometimes yards from the actual fighting, sending orders that by their very nature could send men to victory, or death. Mr. Atkinson's words will take you there. The campaign to re-take Europe included a number of notable, famous, and in some cases, regrettable actions that defined the history of Western Europe forever. The Liberation of Paris, and suddenly the world was alive with hope again! Operation Market Garden, the battle to take early advantage of bridge

crossings in Holland using paratroops, that proved that even by now with all the fighting and training, airborne invasions were costly and not always effective in meeting their goal. The push to get to the Rhine where the mighty Allied forces were once again met with disdain by one of the coldest winters on record in Europe. The Battle of the Bulge where Allied Intelligence was put to the test when caught by surprise by a desperate German breakout, but yet answered the perennial German question with, "Here is General Patton!" Here is when, with all of the bright light of victory shining on rapidly advancing Allied soldiers, they found themselves stumbling into some of the darkest pits of despair and depravity as the very first troops discovered the horrors of the concentration camps. Mr. Atkinson's words provide a concise and very readable account of those terrible discoveries, and yet he weaves a narrative of shock, empathy and personal insights by the soldiers of what they discovered. There are letters from soldiers to home who vainly try to describe with words what they saw, something that mankind had yet to even assign words to, but yet somehow filled them with firm resolve for the final battles ahead. The final push to the first Allied Rhine crossings (my own shout-out to the 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division here) were in late March 1945, and by then the Soviet forces were across the Dnieper River in Ukraine and headed towards Germany, now taking territory in tens of miles per day. In short, Germany was on the run! Although there were countless clashes ahead, Mr. Atkinson now provides intriguing near prescient insight into the final days of the war. These last few chapters focus mainly on the political aspects of ending this global conflict. Do we now fight the war to defeat Germany, or do we fight the war to beat the Soviets to Berlin? The answers to those and other similar questions are now deeply entrenched into history, and the consequences of those decisions by Allied leadership led to the Berlin wall, the Berlin airlift, millions of displaced Germans and Europeans, starvation, reprisals, and even the Nuremburg Trials. Mr. Atkinson's book will give you access to the thoughts and minds of the leadership and their decisions. As I was reading these last pages, I was struck by how often I found myself thinking or even saying aloud, "wait, what?" as revelations flowed from the pages! I reference now the very beginning of this review where I explained that I had read numerous books, magazines and documents regarding this conflagration, we now call the Second World War. Mr. Atkinson's Trilogy changed my views on many aspects of the Second World War, and yet at the same time took me deeper into the World War narrative than ever before. So, grab a cup of coffee, maybe a snack, prop up those feet and open up the Rick Atkinson Trilogy series. You will not be disappointed. Rick Atkinson is Pulitzer Prize



winning, multiple award winning, New York Times Bestseller, prolific author, specializing in detailed, insightful books on history of all facets. Published by the Henry Holt and Co. publishers, this Trilogy series and all of Mr. Atkinson's books are available in multiple online bookstore outlets.

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