

SERVING ALL OF BREVARD COUNTY FLORIDA

Volume V Issue III

March 2021

From the editor

This month we welcome another sponsor, C. Wilcox Real Estate, brokered by Carol Wilcox. Her husband Dennis is a member of Florida Chapter 1.

You can visit her office in Palm Bay, at 6255 Minton Road, NE or phone her at (321) 258-4542.

The 'buzz' around the county is, what school is next in Rolling Thunder's quest to raise a POW*MIA flag as all 83 public schools in the district? The community response has been amazing, as we gather more participants at each ceremony. We began by raising this honored flag at the District School Board Office in December 2020, and our first individual school was Manatee Elementary School in Viera, on Thursday February 11, 2021. Our plan is to raise all of the flags by May 15, 2021 (or before the end of the school year).

There is no cost to the school district for the flags or the ceremony. Our volunteer teams have set a schedule and the school board staff organizes the schools participation. The flags we present are not free to us however... So any and all contributions are appreciated.

In late January, the family of SSgt Ralph E. Casey requested a funeral escort by Chapter 1 to the National Cemetery in Scottsmeer for their veteran, Casey. We were told this veteran was also a former POW, and without hesitation, we said we would be honored to. The following month, Mrs. Sigrid Casey was a guest our monthly membership meeting and presented the Chapter with a donation. We are grateful for her generosity, but we do escorts to honor our veterans - without compensation - it's what we do.

SSGT Casey's story surrounding his capture, was a pivotal moment in the war in Europe in 1945. His story begins on Page 6. His video can be found:

https://stream-media.loc.gov/vhp/video/afc2001001_106468_mv0001001_640x480_800.mp4



THE MAJOR FUNCTION OF ROLLING THUNDER ® INC. IS TO PUBLICIZE THE POW/MIA ISSUE: TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC THAT MANY AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR WERE LEFT BEHIND AFTER ALL PREVIOUS WARS, AND TO HELP CORRECT THE PAST AND TO PROTECT FUTURE VETERANS FROM BEING LEFT BEHIND SHOULD THEY BECOME PRISONERS OF WAR-MISSING IN ACTION. WE ARE ALSO COMMITTED TO HELPING AMERICAN VETERANS FROM ALL WARS.

POW * MIA - YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN



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A Note From The President:

To all the membership of Rolling Thunder, I just want to say I am so proud of all of you who are working so hard to accomplish our mission.

We are so blessed to live in a county that cares about the 82 thousand soldiers left behind from all wars. Rolling Thunder demands full accountability for these hero's and closure for their families.

The talk of the town is our High Schools JROTC, Educators, and City officials are taking part or attending our flag ceremonies.

Starting with the elementary schools - the look in their eyes already tells the story!

To educate and publicize our cause really has come to light in Brevard county.

JJ

March 2021

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Do you have something you'd like to share with our world-wide readers? If so, just send a note to the editor (TheMissionEditor@cfl.rr.com) along with a picture or two, and we'll be happy to include it in an upcoming issue.

Best wishes to the following members who have birthday's this month:

Bill Johnson	03/01
Kathy Barberi	03/02
Carol Connolly	03/07
Riley Shortt	03/17
Robyn Barker	03/28
Carl Miller	03/31

From the Chaplin:

Last month I wrote an article concerning all the unrest in our country today. In the article I wrote: "Two hundred forty-five years ago, our forefathers started an experiment in Democracy." Shortly after I wrote this article, I received a response: "*Chip, with all due respect, our nation is a "republic" not a democracy, there is an important difference.*" Of course, this piqued my curiosity.

After a little research on Google and several other search engines, this is what I discovered: The word "republic" — deriving from the Latin phrase "res public a" or "the people's concern" — suggests a measure of popular involvement in government. And at least for their age, at time of our Revolution, the belief that the least

least for their age, at the time of our Revolution, the belief that the only legitimate form of government was one in which public authority derived entirely from the people. Democracy is an inclusive political system in which all groups can participate, and all voices are heard. It is where transparent and accountable politicians work together in the interests of their citizens. Government by the people; a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system.

The first republics date back to before the birth of Christ. Here are just a few:

Mahajanapada	c. 600 - c. 345 BC	A clan confederacy of two oligarchic republics and other states (kingdoms) in ancient India
Licchavis	c. 600 - c. 345 BC	One of the eight confederate clans of the Vaji Clan. The city of Vaishali was the republic's capital.
Mahajanapada	509-27 BC	
Roman Republic	508-322 BC	
Classical Athens		Various Greek city-states under Classical Athenian influence.

Republics of the 20th Century include Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR); the Republic of Vietnam. Neither of which had any form of democracy within its government. Finally, I must admit that my good friend is correct. Our Nation is a Republic. However, without democracy, we could have not had the success that our Nation has enjoyed. The United States is a representative democracy. This means that our government is elected by citizens. Here, citizens vote for their government officials. These officials represent the citizens' ideas and concerns in government. Voting is one way to participate in our democracy. Citizens can also contact their officials when they want to support or change a law. Voting in in election and contacting our elected officials are two ways that Americans can participate in their democracy. Based upon my research, our country was formed as a Republic experimenting with Democracy. The combination of both has formed a perfect union. Our pledge to our Republic

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:2-3*

WELCOME HOME

When one American is not worth the effort to be found, we as Americans have lost.

The Army estimates that over 7,500 service members who died during the Korean War remain unidentified to this day. Of those 7,500, 867 are buried as "Unknowns" at the National Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii. It is the job of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency to identify these fallen heroes. On March 2, 2021, they identified one very special soldier.

Chaplain (Capt.) Emil J. Kapaun was a member of the 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division. His unit was one of the first to cross the border into North Korea during the Korean War. On November 1, 1950, Kapaun and his comrades were attacked by Chinese Communist Forces near Unsan. Though the troopers fought bravely, the Chinese soldiers outnumbered them. As the surrounded Americans fought bravely, Kapaun made his way across the lines to provide medical aid to the wounded and last rites to the dying. His command ordered a retreat, but Kapaun refused to leave any soldiers behind.

Hand-to-hand combat ensued as the Chinese forces overran the Americans who stayed behind. Kapaun spotted a wounded Chinese officer and negotiated with him for the safe surrender of the survivors. He was taken prisoner with more than a dozen other soldiers. As the Americans were marched away from the battlefield, Kapaun spotted a Chinese soldier standing over a wounded American, ready to execute him. Kapaun pushed the Chinese soldier aside, picked up the wounded soldier, and carried him.

Kapaun and the other POWs were taken to the Old Pyoktong prison camp on the Yalu River's south bank in North Korea. The chaplain continued to care for his fellow soldiers. He stole food for

them, said mass in the camp, and shared the clothes off his own back to keep them warm during the freezing Korean winter. On May 23, 1951, Kapaun died in captivity of exhaustion and possible heart failure.

Though he never made it back to America during his life, Kapaun's bravery and dedication to his fellow soldiers has earned recognition. His story was brought to the attention of the Vatican and Pope John Paul II declared him a Servant of God, the first step toward sainthood, in 1993. The Father Kapaun Guild continues to lobby for his canonization. In November 2015, the Catholic Church began the lengthy review of more than 8,000 pages of documentation in support of Kapaun's sainthood.

On April 11, 2013, President Obama posthumously awarded Kapaun the Medal of Honor. "This is the valor we honor today: An American soldier who didn't fire a gun, but who wielded the mightiest weapon of all – a love so pure that he was willing to die so they might live," the President said. Remember the wounded soldier that Kapaun saved from a Chinese soldier and carried to safety? His name is Sgt. First Class Herbert Miller. 63 years after that event, Miller was in attendance at Kapaun's Medal of Honor ceremony at the White House.

Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun's story is one of service, sacrifice, and dedication. His identification reaffirms the Army's commitment in the Soldier's Creed to never leave a fallen comrade. DPAA continues to work tirelessly to identify every single unknown casualty and honor them with the respect that they deserve.



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THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

March 2021

The name March comes from the Roman god of war, Mars. For many years, March, was the beginning of spring, was also the start of the New Year. Britain used March 25th as the beginning of their New Year until 1752. Each year, March and June end on the same day of the week.

March 1, 1932 - The 20-month-old son of aviation pioneer Charles A. Lindbergh was kidnapped from his home in Hopewell, New Jersey. The Lindbergh's then paid a \$50,000 ransom. However, on May 12, the boy's body was found in a wooded area a few miles from the house.

March 4, 1830 - Former President John Quincy Adams returned to Congress as a representative from Massachusetts. He was the first ex-president ever to return to the House and served eight consecutive terms.

March 5, 1868 - The U.S. Senate convened as a court to hear charges against President Andrew Johnson during impeachment proceedings. The House of Representatives had already voted to impeach the President. The vote followed bitter opposition by the Radical Republicans in Congress to Johnson's reconstruction policies in the South. However, the effort to remove him failed in the Senate by just one vote and he remained in office.

March 9, 1864 - Ulysses S. Grant was commissioned as a Lieutenant General and became commander of the Union armies.

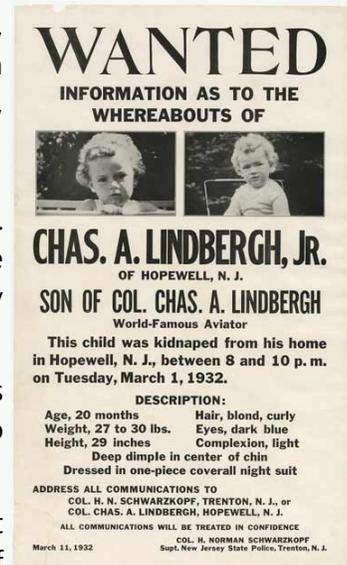
March 11, 1918 - The 'Spanish' influenza first reached America as 107 soldiers become sick at Fort Riley, Kansas. One quarter of the U.S. population eventually became ill from the deadly virus, resulting in 500,000 deaths. The death toll worldwide approached 22 million by the end of 1920.

March 12, 1888 - The Great Blizzard of '88 struck the northeastern U.S. The storm lasted 36 hours with snowfall totaling over 40 inches in New York City where over 400 persons died from the surprise storm.

March 18, 1974 - The five-month-old Arab oil embargo against the U.S. was lifted. The embargo was in retaliation for American support of Israel during the Yom Kipper War of 1973 in which Egypt and Syria suffered a crushing defeat. In the U.S., the resulting embargo had caused long lines at gas stations as prices soared 300 percent amid shortages and a government ban on Sunday gas sales.

March 19, 2003 - The United States launched an attack against Iraq to topple dictator Saddam Hussein from power. The attack commenced with aerial strikes against military sites, followed the next day by an invasion of southern Iraq by U.S. and British ground troops. The troops made rapid progress northward and conquered the country's capital, Baghdad, just 21 days later, ending the rule of Saddam.

March 23, 1775 - Patrick Henry ignited the American Revolution with a speech before the Virginia convention in Richmond, stating, "I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!"



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FEATURED STORY

The Missing Battalion

The standard American armored division in early 1945 numbered 10,937 officers and men, 195 medium tanks, 18 105mm self-propelled howitzers, and several other armored vehicles within the supporting recovery, engineer, medical, and service units. But the bulk of the division's fighting power rested in the three tank battalions and three armored infantry battalions, which were usually paired under one of three (A, B, and R or Reserve) combat commands. In all, the U.S. Army fielded 16

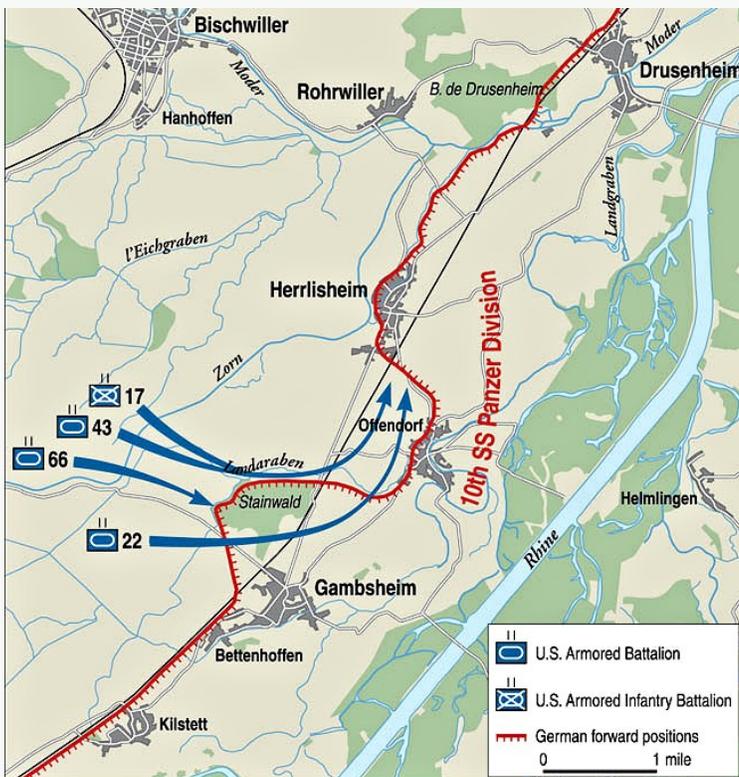
corridor between the river and a canal, then attack and seize Offendorf.

By late morning, the battalion was advancing slowly, held up by fire from unlocated anti-tank guns. Fog covered the surrounding fields and visibility was very poor. By early afternoon, the Battalion Commander called for air support. Under sustained enemy anti-tank fire, the battalion was forced to withdraw, as tank casualties were mounting.

They moved north to a pre-determined position to reorganize and await orders. They then bivouacked in the same area that night. Casualties during day's action were: 1 Officer killed, 3 wounded; 3 EM killed, 20 wounded; 7 – 75mm tanks knocked out; 5 – 76mm tanks knocked out, and approximately 80 POW's were taken.

Then on January 17, 1945, the 43rd Tank Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Nicholas Novesel, organic to the 12th Armored ("Hellcats") Division's Combat Command A, joined with the 17th Armored Infantry Battalion to push German forces out of the town of Herrlisheim in France's Alsace region. Shortly after the battalion entered the town, some garbled but seemingly desperate messages were received by Combat Command A from Colonel Novesel. Neither Novesel nor his battalion was ever heard from again.

It was a cold and foggy morning, and it started off with the 12th Armored Division's 43rd Tank Battalion preparing to renew its previous day's unsuccessful assault on German positions in and around the town of Herrlisheim. A dozen of the battalion's Sherman's had been knocked out and 11 others damaged the previous day, leaving only 29 tanks operational. Lt. Col. Novesel, had a bad sense about attacking Herrlisheim again. He told another officer, "Meyer, I think we're not coming back from this one." Novesel's premonition would prove all too accurate for many of his men.



armored divisions during the war, all of which served in the European or Mediterranean Theaters.

On January 16, 1945, a Battalion designated Force 1, encroached into an area east of Bernolsheim, and made an approach march to attack positions at Weyersheim, and Offendorf. Force 1 was comprised of the 43rd Tank Battalion (and supporting engineer and tank recovery elements), together with the 17th Armored Infantry Battalion. They were to move from attack positions via a route south of the Zorn River through a

At 1200 hours, Lt Col Novosel radioed that "things were "getting hot here", and that yesterday's action was a circus compared to what they were in today. Some garbled messages came in later, but no one could understand them or determine where the battalion was located. One message from the battalion operations officer reported incoming German antitank fire. The last message from the battalion commander reported the unit's location as east of Herrlisheim, and a short time later a brief message was received reporting that the battalion commander's tank had been knocked out. Nothing else was ever heard from the 43rd Tank Battalion. Some 29 American medium tanks and their crews had simply vanished.



Lt Col Novosel - January 1945

Offendorf and then snaked south along the Rhine to Gambsheim. A railroad line also ran along the eastern edge of Herrlisheim, roughly paralleling both the D-468 and the Zorn River. Where the railroad embankment provided cover for antitank guns.

Trying to extend the tenuous bridgehead east of the Zorn, the combat command ran into heavy artillery, mortar and small-arms fire. After several hours of slugging it out, CCB pulled back to the Zorn.



Two Sherman's negotiate a snowy road while heading into battle near Herrlisheim



Camouflaged with bedsheets,, two GIs man their .30-caliber machine gun in the woods north of Herrlisheim.

For the 2nd attack on Herrlisheim, the 23rd Tank Battalion was pulled from Combat Command B (CCB), and given to CC A. In exchange, CCB got Company C of the 17th Armored Infantry Battalion. CCB's objective was a point just north of Herrlisheim where the D-468 road and the rail line crossed. Once again, the Americans' attack stalled, almost before it started. (The D-468 was a two-lane road, connecting Gambsheim, Herrlisheim, and Drusenheim. Another road ran southwest from Bischwiller through Rohrwiler and la Breymuehl, joining the D-468 just north of Herrlisheim. A small secondary road connected Herrlisheim and

At dawn, meanwhile, both the 17th and the 43rd Tank Battallion started moving across the northern edge of the Steinwald toward the D-468 and then the rail line leading north into Herrlisheim. Although their movement was partially screened by heavy ground fog, the 43rd Tank Battalion still lost four tanks to fire before it reached the southern outskirts of the town. At 07:40, Novosel radioed that he was preparing to enter Herrlisheim.

At 08:50, the 43rd Tank Battalion's Operations Officer reported taking German anti-tank fire from inside the town. Shortly after that, German Major Ernst Tetsch, the Commander of the 1st Battalion, 10th SS Panzer Regiment, 10th SS Panzer Division, advanced with several Panther

FEATURED STORY *(continued)*

tanks from Offendorf toward Herrlisheim. Running into American fire from the town, he lost one tank and his 3rd Company Commander, who was wounded. Faced with an uncertain situation in very limited visibility, Tetsch withdrew to his regimental assembly area in Offendorf.

Late that morning, the U.S. 23rd Tank Battalion Commander, Major Edwards, entered Herrlisheim to determine the situation in the town. Although the 43rd was still in radio contact with CC A at that point, Edwards could find no trace of them in the fog. Shortly after, Edwards sent his 20 tanks into Herrlisheim and quickly joined in the fighting inside the town as they tried to support the 17th Armored Infantry.

Early that afternoon, 1st Lt. Erwin Bachmann, Tetsch's battalion adjutant, rode into Herrlisheim on a motorcycle accompanied by two Panthers from the 2nd Battalion's 3rd Company. Bachmann set up the two tanks supported by Panzerfaust anti-tank weapons at a crossroads inside the town. He then ambushed and knocked out several Sherman's, captured some 60 GIs and freed 20 German prisoners. Bachmann's force also captured intact four Sherman's and their crews, which he sent back to Offendorf under guard. Bachmann then moved his small force to the northern edge of Herrlisheim, where he knocked out two more Sherman's.



Lt Erwin Bachmann

Bachmann radioed his situation to his regimental headquarters in Offendorf, requesting additional tanks. At about 16:00 hours, the Germans launched a strong attack out of the frozen mist enshrouding Offendorf. Six Panthers attacked across the railway embankment into the flank of Company A, 17th Armored



Empty foxholes and destroyed American and German vehicles litter the battlefield around Herrlisheim. This aerial photo was taken a day after the fighting in the area ceased.

Infantry Battalion. That attack pushed the 23rd Tank Battalion's surviving tanks out of Herrlisheim. A few hours later, all of the 17th's survivors huddled in the dark in a single position on the southern edge of the town. There still was no trace of the 43rd.

As dawn broke on January 18, the 12th Armored still had no idea what had happened to the 43rd Tank Battalion. Later that morning an artillery observer flying over Herrlisheim reported spotting several destroyed Sherman's in the eastern section of the town. Flying just to the east of Herrlisheim, he reported five more. Then in a field on the southeast edge of town, he saw between 10 and 15 Sherman's deployed in a circular defensive perimeter. Some were still painted white; others were scorched black.

Intelligence reports later added to solving the mystery of the lost battalion. Information received after the battle revealed that the attack of Combat Command A had unexpectedly run into the counterattack of the 10th SS Panzer Division, which had been ordered to enlarge the bridgehead. That evening German radio announced that an American lieutenant colonel

and 300 of his men had been taken prisoner at Herrlisheim, and that 50 American tanks had been captured or destroyed. The General and his staff could only speculate that the 43rd Tank Battalion had run into a well-planned German ambush and had been annihilated.

destroyed tanks were identified. Contrary to the German report, the bodies of the battalion commander and many of his men were also identified. The report went on to state that it appeared from tracks and other indicators that perhaps four American tanks had been captured intact and removed by the Germans.

On the night of January 18, a German radio broadcast reported the capture of an American battalion commander and 300 of his men at Herrlisheim as well as the destruction or capture of 50 tanks ... those of the 23rd and 43rd.

Although wounded 17 times during the battle, Lt Col Novosel, unlike many of his troops, survived, and spent the rest of the war recuperating in a German POW camp. Most of the 43rd Tank Battalion's armor was destroyed and most of the troops either killed or captured.

PFC Ralph E. Casey was one of those captured. He was a tank gunner on one of those Sherman's that went 'missing' on the 17th of January, 1945. Casey was assigned to the 36th Armored Regiment, 4th Armored Division, 43rd Tank Battalion, 12th Armored Division (and if you know what this means, enlighten me, because I haven't a clue). He was born on March 20, 1924 in Hardy, KY, and joined the Army on August 7, 1940. He was stationed at Ft Knox KY, Pine Camp, NY, Ft Campbell, KY, and Camp Barkley, TX.

Now SGT, Casey joined in the combat zone in France on December 6, 1944. During the battle of Herrlisheim, Bas-Rhine, he and his tank crew were captured, and taken to Stalag 5A, located on the southern outskirts of Ludwigsburg, Germany.

On Easter Sunday, April 1, 1945 the Stalag

The 10 SS-Panzer-Division "Fruindsberg" reported ten former Russian M4A2 on 15. March, 1945. By 15 April one was left operational.



Obersturmführer Erwin Bachmann, 10. SS-Panzer-Regiment, attacked Herrlisheim France, 17. January 1945; "The two Panzer crews cooperated in first-rate fashion". He captured 12 M4A3 from 43rd Tank Battalion. Bachmann also took 60 prisoners and released 20 German POW. "I had the American tank drivers drive the Shermans to Offendorf, accompanied by one of the rearmed German soldiers."

Beute Panzer Kompanie 281 of 281. Infanterie Division reported five Sherman tanks on 1. September 1944.



United States

227

January 17, 1945, Lt Bachmann (I. / SS. Panzer-Regiment 10) captured 12 M4A3 75 W of the U.S. 43rd Tank Battalion.

In late February 1945, more information on the lost battalion was found. The 12th Armored Division's graves registration report dated February 23 indicates that the 43rd Tank Battalion tanks that were found knocked out in the town had been hit by panzerfausts—infantry-held antitank weapons—while the tanks on the eastern edge of the town had been devastated by high-velocity cannons. The investigators found many German antitank positions indicating that both 75mm and 88mm antitank guns had been positioned just outside the town. The conclusion was drawn that the battalion had entered the town, been struck by infantry armed with antitank weapons, and had then withdrawn to the outskirts of the town, where it encountered a barrage of antitank fire. Some 28

FEATURED STORY *(continued)*

was evacuated, and the prisoners were forced marched along southern Germany and ended up at Stalag IXB, a POW camp south-east of the town of Bad Orb in Hesse, Germany. The camp was liberated 20 days later by elements of a British Armored Division.

Casey returned to the states in May 1945, and after a two-month furlough, he was assigned to a Military Police unit in Fort Campbell, KY until



Aerial view of Stalag IXB a month after Casey was liberated



SIR: ① 21 OCT 2000
MERRITT IS. FLA.
DURING THE BATTLE FOR HERRALLSHEIM, ON 17 JAN 1945,
THIS VIEW IS LOOKING EAST ON STREET "RUE DU GENERAL
REIBEL". THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN BY THE U.S. ARMY
SIGNAL CORPS—SOME TIME IN FEB. 1945.
I CAN VERIFY THAT THIS WAS MY TANK (IN THE BACK-
GROUND ON THE RIGHT. TANK WAS MINE, B-13 OF THE
"B" CO. 43RD TANK BN. 12TH ARMORED DIVISION.
NOTE: YOU MAY MODIFY, DELETE, REARRANGE THE
WORDING, ETC—AS YOU DESIRE—RALPH E. CASEY
"B" CO, 43RD TANK BN.

Casey's 'verified' destroyed Sherman Tank

his discharge from the Army on October 16th, at Ft. Campbell, KY as a Staff Sergeant.

In 1950, Casey joined the Air Force, and went on to become an air traffic controller working at Cape Canaveral and later at an Air Force missile tracking station in the Bahamas.



The liberation of Stalag IXB

Stalag IXB was located in Bad Orb approximately 30 miles northwest of Frankfurt. The camp held French, Italian, Serbian, Russian, and American P.O.W.s. Conditions in this camp were terrible, and Stalag IXB ranks as one of the worst German camps that held Americans P.O.W.'s



Ralph Casey (left), is escorted by Jim Whidden, former director of staff for the Air Force Technical Applications Center, Patrick AFB, Fla., during a Space Coast Honor Flight. Whidden served as Casey's guardian to visit the memorials in Washington, D.C. Casey with Sen. Bob Dole (right).

Field Title	Value	Meaning
SERIAL NUMBER	15054093	15054093
NAME	CASEY RALPH E	
GRADE, ALPHA	PFC	Private First Class
GRADE CODE	7	Second Lieutenant or Nurse or Dietitian or Physical therapy aide or Private First Class or Ensign or Second Class, Seaman
SERVICE CODE	1	ARMY
ARM OR SERVICE	INF	Infantry
ARM OR SERVICE CODE	10	INF: INFANTRY
DATE REPORT: DAY (DD)	17	17
DATE REPORT: MONTH (MM)	01	01
DATE REPORT: YEAR (Y)	5	1945
RACIAL GROUP CODE	1	WHITE
STATE OF RESIDENCE		
TYPE OF ORGANIZATION	22G	Armored/Armored Tank Battalion
PARENT UNIT NUMBER	0043	0043
PARENT UNIT TYPE	12	Platoon/Air/Bulk Air
AREA	76	European Theatre: France
LATEST REPORT DATE: DAY (DD)	28	28
LATEST REPORT DATE: MONTH (MM)	02	02
LATEST REPORT DATE: YEAR (Y)	6	1946

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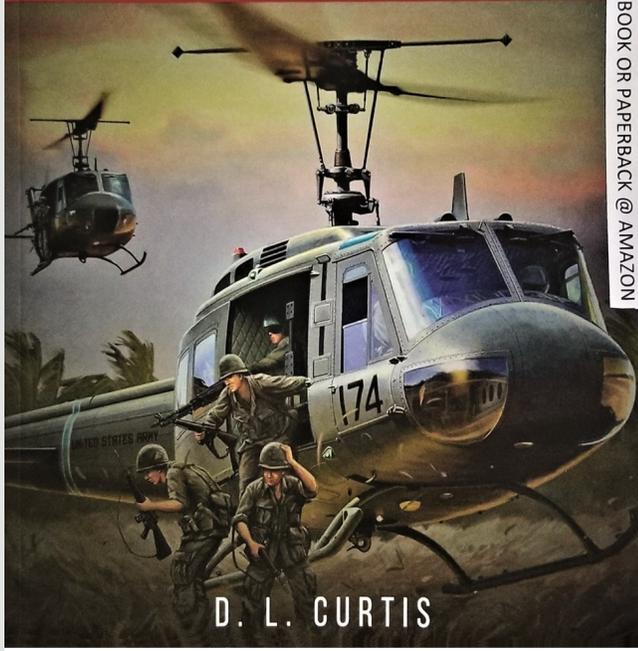


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