

20th Combat Engineer Association of World War II

The Wavy Arrow

October 2003

The Hurricane Isabel Reunion

Despite Hurricane Isabel, the 56th Reunion of the 20th Combat Engineer Association of World War II was held September 18-21 at the Radisson Prince Charles Hotel in Fayetteville, North Carolina. As you will see from the following list of attendees and those who were unable to make it, we had a reduction of attendance by one-third. Even so, those that were able to make it had a glorious time that we will describe later in this issue.

Attendance at the 56th Reunion

Carl A. Brenot (A/20th) with Cathy and Michael Duell
George Griffenhagen (B/1340th) and Joan Griffenhagen
Francis P. Knorr (A/20th) with Janet and Jerry Reis
Joseph Kenneth Noon (B/20th) with Edith Noon
W. Carl Scott (A/20th) with Willyne F. Scott
Ben C. Scronce (A/20th) with Jean Scronce and Keko Hoover
Truman H. Setliffe (Commander/1340th)
George Spivey (A/20th) with Juanita Spivey
William L. Waldrep (A/20th) with Jim and Libby Waldrep
Emanuel J. Wasinger (A/1340th) with Lucille Griele
and Anna Marie Iven

Guests from Fort Bragg at the Dinner

Colonel Daniel G. Grey, Commander, 20th Engineer Brigade
Major Christian O'Rourke, 27th Engineer Battalion
Sergeant Robert Bradley and Specialist Tod Hook

Forced to Cancel Because of Hurricane Isabel

Henry Roscoe Flowers (B/20th) with Gloria Flowers Norris
and Raquel Johnson
Roy A. Hays (Officer) with Grace S. Hays
Harry E. Moulder (644Topo1171 Gp) with Betty M. Moulder
Douglas Pulliam (C/1340th) with Pat Pulliam
Henry Linton Smith (Officer)

From the Museum to the Fort Bragg Presentation

Those who visited the Airborne Museum were greeted by Al Arvarer, who served in the First Division and remembered the 20th Engineers who landed with him on Normandy. Ron Wilson took the group on personal a tour of the Museum; when they stopped at the exhibit on the 82nd Airborne drop in Sicily, Ron explained that the 82nd Airborne were the first to land troops in Sicily the night of July 10-11, 1943. However, he was corrected by the veterans who confirmed that they were already on the ground when 23 planes were shot down by the U.S. Navy in the belief that they were Germans continuing a bombing raid. The 20th had landed at Licata on the morning of July 10th. The Museum was so interesting that some of the veterans returned during the weekend for a second visit.

The highlight of the weekend was a presentation at the annual dinner made by Major Christian O'Rourke of the 27th Engineer Battalion, accompanied by Colonel Daniel G. Grey, Commander, 20th Engineer Brigade, plus Sergeant Robert Bradley and Specialist Tod Hook. After the audio-visual presentation, the Fort Bragg guests answered questions about their experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq. See a summary of the presentation later in this issue.

Final Reunion Set for 2004

The annual meeting of the veterans decided that, with fewer and fewer of our veterans able to attend, we have come to the end of the road for our annual Reunions. The final Reunion will be held in August 2004 in the Washington, DC. area, that will feature a special visit to the World War II Memorial that will officially open on the Mall on May 27th, 2004. It was decided that a private visit to this long overdue tribute to the veterans of World War II would be much more appropriate than trying to arrange for a visit during the dedication ceremonies where thousands of people will congregate during the Memorial Day weekend. After, our final Reunion in August 2004, the *Wavy Arrow* will continue to maintain communications with the members of the 20th Combat Engineers Association of WWII. Start planning now for our final Reunion, and watch for further details in the *Wavy Arrow*, including exact dates.

Wavy Arrow Contributions

Many thanks to the following for having made a contribution since the publication of the special Reuion issue included with this October 2003 issue the *Wavy Arrow*.

J. T. Harrell (A/20th)	\$25.00
Michael L. Langheim (in memory of Vernie R. Langheim, B/1340th)	\$25.00
William L. Waldrep (A/20th)	\$20.00
Emanuel J. Wasinger (A/1340th)	\$25.00

J. T. Harrell (A/20th) writes: "I have a hard time getting about in my wheel chair, which is why I was unable to attend the Reunion. I sure miss seeing everyone, especially the guys in Company A of the 20th. I want to express my appreciation to those who have been responsible for getting the Reunions together each year. It is a pleasure to receiving the *Wavy Arrow*, and I look forward to each issue."

Experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq

Major Christian O'Rourke

Thank you for inviting me to share with you some of the experiences the 20th Engineer Brigade had in Afghanistan and Iraq. Company C of the 27th Engineer Battalion deployed to Afghanistan to clear mines in Kandahar and at the Bagram Airbase near Kabul. Afghanistan remains one of the most heavily mined countries in the world. When the soldiers first arrived, mines were cleared in the same fashion engineers have cleared mines for decades, with a mine detector. However, in time we commenced using advanced types of mine-detecting equipment that recognizes both metal and changes in ground density. We also use bull dozers that protect the soldier from mine strikes. The Hydrane Mine Flail we use consists of an axle of spinning chains to beat the ground thus detonating any mines in its path.

Airfields are critical to the movement of personnel, equipment, and supplies. Engineers from the 30th Engineer Battalion constructed and maintained airstrips in Afghanistan, and work with the infantry in locating caves and ammunition caches. These sites were cleared and then destroyed to prevent further use. Engineers from the brigade also built base camps and forward operating bases. In May 2003, the 27th Engineer Battalion cleared an area that was used to build a gymnasium facility for the soldiers.

Units of the brigade are also deployed in Iraq. Prior to the beginning of the ground war, a squad moved into Iraq to provide mobility support to a rocket unit so they could move within firing range of Baghdad. A platoon of the 27th Engineer Battalion supported the U.S. Army Rangers as they conducted a raid on an airfield in northwestern Iraq. The topographic unit deployed in Kuwait provides map production and imagery support to military operations.

The 37th Engineer Battalion was deployed with the 101st Airborne Division to maintain and repair airfields and helicopter landing zones in and around Mosul. They repaired 21 large bomb craters in a concrete runway and apron to return the airstrip to functionality. This airfield damage repair mission took some two-and-a-half months and was completed July 2003. The 27th Engineer Battalion was deployed in the area around Tikrit to support the 82nd Airborne Division.

Other construction projects include working on the construction of a four-lane ring-road around Baghdad; reconnoitering over ten bridges and 500 miles of routes; as well as collecting, inventorying and destroying thousands of Iraqi munitions including mortars, artillery shells, mines, rocket-propelled grenades, and many other munitions. This provided an opportunity for the engineers to put their demolitions training to good use. One unit also upgraded a demolished palace that now serves as the battalion's command post in Iraq.

Finally, engineers are used in civil-military operations helping the local population with clean-up and repair of local buildings and facilities. The engineers continue to be a critical asset for military operations by ensuring that key facilities and lines of communication are maintained so supplies and equipment continue to move freely supporting military operations. Thank you for inviting me to this wonderful event; we will be pleased to answer your questions.

The Roarin' 20th Engineers

Lyrics written by Jerry Goodman (Officer) after he attended his first Reunion held in Atlanta in 1949. It is sung to the tune of *I'm a Ramblin Wreck from Georgia Tech*.

Chorus:

Oh, we're the Roarin' 20th, the 20th Engineers.
We started off in Africa and dug fox holes for years;
While we were clearing minefields, the Goums were clipping ears.
Oh, we're the Big Red Wavy Arrow 20th Engineers.

First Verse

We left our mark in Africa, in Sicily, and in France;
The roads and bridges that we built wherever we had the chance.
The Calvados was dynamite; the Pilsner beer was queer;
We worked and drank just twice as much as any good engineer.

Second Verse

When things got tough in Hurtgen and the 20th was bled,
The General said "Kill Germans," and our old man saw red.
Who plugged the hole for infantry with blood, sweat, and tears?
The pick-and-shovel fightin' men -- the 20th Engineers.

Third Verse

Now lots of guys will brag about how they helped win the war.
The Air Force say they bombed like Hell; the Marines say they did more.
But who in Hell hit the beach in France and pinned back Hitler's ears?
The good ole U.S. Army with the 20th Engineers.

Fourth Verse

So gather round you Air Force men, you Navy, and Marines;
And all you politicians with all your silly schemes.
No atom bombs or H-bombs will win in future years
'Cause you'll never find another Roarin' 20th Engineers.

For additional information, see the enclosed Special Issue of the *Wavy Arrow* that was distributed to those attending the 2003 Reunion.

Send items for inclusion in future issues of the *Wavy Arrow* to editor George Griffenhagen, 2501 Drexel Street, Vienna, VA 22180. Photographs are especially welcome if you can identify the people in the picture, and the date and location when the photo was taken.