

## **Tech Sergeant D. Zane Schlemmer**

At my eighteenth birthday, October 13, 1942, I was a student at Northwestern University at Evanston, Illinois pursuing a work/study college program. On November 7, 1942, I enlisted in the United States Army volunteering for paratroop duty for several reasons. I wanted the challenge of jumping out of an airplane in flight; I wanted the jump boots, the parachute wings, and the jump pay which was \$50.00 per month in addition to the regular basic pay, which would help finance my hopefully later college tuition costs; and finally, being an American citizen of third generation German descent, I felt I had to make a statement as to my obligation to America.

Upon enlistment in Chicago, Illinois, at halftime of a professional football game at Wrigley Field, I was railed, with several other recruits, to Camp Blanding, Florida, where the newly formed 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment was being organized and mobilized. There I was assigned to the 81mm Mortar Platoon of Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion where I remained for my total World War II experience.

After basic training at Camp Blanding and paratroop jump school at Fort Benning, Georgia, we further trained at Camp Mackall, North Carolina along with maneuvers in South Carolina and Tennessee prior to shipping overseas from Camp Shanks, New York to Camp Cronmore near Port Stewart, Northern Ireland in early January 1944. I was then serving as a Mortar Platoon Section Leader and Forward Observer with the rank of Sergeant.

In mid-March 1944, we sailed and railed to Nottingham, England for our new tent base camp at Wollaton Park. From there, as part of the 82nd Airborne Division, we commenced our D-Day jump operation into Normandy, France in the pre-dawn hours of June 6, 1944, as well as our Market Garden jump operation near Nijmegen, Holland on September 17, 1944. I was wounded by American artillery fire on July 3, 1944 going up Hill 131 in Normandy and was evacuated to England. In late August 1944, I talked myself out of the English hospital just in time for the Holland jump with my arm still bandaged.

Mid-December 1944 found us at a base camp in Sissonne, France, where we were alerted and trucked to Werbomont, Belgium for our Battle of the Bulge actions. I was again slightly wounded on the left knee by German artillery fire on the January 7, 1945 advance and retaking of the Thier-du-Mont ridge. Subsequently, following closing the Ardennes operation, we were trucked to the Huertgen Forest front to advance to and defend the Roer River area. I was then promoted to the position of Platoon Sergeant and was promoted to Tech Sergeant.

After release from the 82nd Airborne Division, the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment went to a Chartres, France airfield where we were on alert to jump on any prisoner-of-war compounds in Germany, as required. VE Day found us still there at the Chartres airfield, uncommitted.

Shortly thereafter, I was part of the advance party to Frankfurt, Germany for occupational duty at SHAEF Headquarters as General Dwight D. Eisenhower's honor guard, from where I returned to the United States for discharge from the Army on November 7, 1945, at which time I enlisted in the Army Inactive Reserve.

Returning to Northwestern University, I graduated in August 1949 with a degree in Business Administration with an Accounting Major. I then joined Motorola, Inc. as Assistant Comptroller and later was sent to Phoenix, Arizona as Chief Accountant for their new Motorola Research and Development Laboratory doing projects for the Atomic Energy Commission at Sandia, New Mexico. Following marriage and with family pending, I was recalled to active duty from the Inactive Reserve for the Korean Conflict

in November 1950. Because of my college degree and electronic administrative background, I was reclassified as an Enlisted Specialist to then become the Sergeant Major of the Ordnance Corps Research and Development Division, Guided Missile School at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Maryland until I returned to civilian life after my one-year recall.

Returning to civilian life after my Korean Conflict recall, I specialized in business financial administration and, as Corporate Officer in the fields of electronics, distribution, heavy manufacturing, residential construction, and finally, in Hawaiian real estate development (27 years) until my semi-retirement in 1998.

#### Awards and Honors

Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart Medal with oak leaf cluster, Parachute Wings with two bronze stars, Combat Infantry Badge, Presidential Unit Citation, Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, American Campaign Medal, Europe-Africa Campaign Medal with arrowhead and four bronze battle stars, WWII Victory Medal, WWII Occupation Medal, French Fourragere, Belgian Fourragere, and the Militaire Willems Orde Degree of Knight from Holland.

In 1977, the French people of Picauville, Normandy, France created a permanent bronze plaque at the field in which I landed on June 6, 1944 and also named the adjoining road "Rue Zane Schlemmer" in my honor.

For well over two decades, I tried to suppress and ignore any and all thoughts of my wartime experiences. Then I suddenly realized that they were history and that nothing could be changed. So I made my first return visit to Normandy, Holland, Belgium, Germany, and England in June 1974. This was the finest therapy possible and I have made at least seven additional return visits.

I have donated for display most of my wartime memorabilia to the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment Museum at Wollaton Park, England, and the National D-Day Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana.