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**NEWSLETTER OF THE
602 T.D. BN. ASSN., INC.**

"PANTHER TRACKS"

**VOLUME 19, NO. 3
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BONJOUR OLD "AMIGOS" OF THE 602ND. Another reunion (the 10th) of the 602nd Tank Destroyer Battalion Association, Inc. has come and gone. Again the hospitality room where people could just sit and visit with old buddies, comrades, and friends was the central focus and attention for the 33 men and 8 widows who attended. With spouses, children, and grandchildren, banquet settings were needed for 116 persons. A number of comrades did not attend because of health and cost factors. A tour was included in the base price of the reunion registration fee, and some persons who were not interested in a tour but just wanted to visit did not come, for they did not want to pay for something in which they were not interested. At past reunions, all tours were optional as they need to be at all future reunions. Some attendees enjoyed one or more tours, but a considerable number were much disappointed (to say the least) when advertised portions of one or more tours failed to materialize.

All present appreciated the efforts of Joe Kaiser, Otto Bergstresser, and Ed Walloch in serving as a Color Guard at the Memorial Service. The group was appreciative and impressed by the excellent presentation "We Are Survivors" rendered by Leonard H. (Bud) Bornemann. For those present as well as others who could not be with us, his remarks are reproduced below. We appreciated the willingness of Hank and Susan Hendel to host the reunion in Nashville and all the efforts they made to make the arrangements for it. Reunion attendees enjoyed the hearty buffet breakfasts each morning which were included in the price of the room, but hardly anyone took advantage of the daily evening perk of four free drinks of any kind served in the bar/lounge area. People preferred to visit in the hospitality room with the other 602ers rather than to sit around strangers in the hotel bar/lounge area.

Increasingly, sons and daughters of the 602nd T.D. Bn. men are becoming Associate members by indicating a desire to our Secretary Treasurer, John DeKenipp and forwarding a year's dues of only Ten Dollars. Associate members are welcome and encouraged. Each receives a copy of Panther Tracks and all other mailings from the Association, and they are welcome at the reunions.

Get ready for the next, and perhaps the last, reunion in year 2000 to be held in San Antonio, TX, the site of Ft. Sam Houston and the birthplace of the 602nd Tank Destroyer Battalion in 1941. The reunion will be dedicated to Colonel Peter J. Kopcsak, our Commander who untiringly and unselfishly devoted an important portion of his military career to the organization and preparation of the 602nd T.D. Bn. for effective combat readiness and performance. Already our new President, Warren Ables, and his great secretary (Aileen) have their eyes on a nice near Riverfront location ideal for the turn-of-the-century reunion in San Antonio.

THE PRESIDENT SEZ

A little more than two months ago, I returned home from a great 602nd T.D. Bn. Reunion in Nashville, TN. A good job was done by Henry and Susan Hendel; our appreciation to both of them.

I have agreed to serve as President for the next two years. I always have felt honored when the organization calls on me. I will try to do my best as I have in the past. The reunion in year 2000 will be held in San Antonio. After spending two days in looking and asking questions, the ball started rolling. We hope to finalize a great reunion plan very soon. We hope everyone will start now to get involved in contacting 602nd friends and members. We need to work for a big attendance at this next reunion. I will be doing my part, so I hope everyone will do theirs. Sincerely, **Warren Ables, President**



Warren Ables—1998-2000 President
602nd T.D. Bn. Assn., Inc.



Aileen and Warren—Our Year 2000
Reunion hosts.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!!!

At the Executive Board's meeting in Nashville on September 2, 1998, it was found that the Battalion's treasury is rapidly going downhill. If the trend continues, we will hit the bottom, which is zero. Past Association President, Bud Bornemann recognized this important problem and says, "There are a number of reasons that point to this problem.

1. We are losing dues paying members through death.
2. A number of our members carried on the mailing roster have not paid dues up-to-date.
3. Expenses are going up. As an example: The cost of printing and distributing our newsletter, PANTHER TRACKS, is in excess of \$4,000.00 for the time period between reunions (two years).
4. As you know, widows do not pay dues. We do not want to change this policy. We want them to remain "dues free," and they are most welcome to attend the reunions.
5. Reunions are planned to be break-even events. However, there are many other expenses involved which do not go into the computing of costs. These costs come out of our treasury.

There is much time and expense expended on your behalf by the officers of the Association for which they receive no remuneration. We would like to point out that in this stage of life, "Time" is the most valuable thing we have. Money can be spent, lost, or gambled away, but you can always get more. But time, once it is spent, it is gone forever. We greatly appreciate these valuable assets our officers are contributing to the Association.

What this all boils down to is this. If the 602nd Tank Destroyer Battalion Association is to remain solvent, We are going to need your Financial Help. Some former 602ers are receiving Panther Tracks but are not paying dues; please pay. It costs the Association money for every person whose name is on the mailing roster.

Donations from those who are able to afford them are most welcome. If you itemize your Federal Income Taxes, your donation will be tax deductible. The Association qualifies as a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization. If you find it in your heart to pay your dues of only \$10.00 or make a donation, make your check payable to the 602nd Tank Destroyer Battalion Association, and send it to John DeKenipp at the address below.

We old warriors have survived much worse than this crisis. Let's not fail this time. Keep the Association alive."

John F. DeKenipp, Treasurer
602nd Tank Destroyer Battalion Association
6560 Monterey Loma Court
Las Vegas, NV 89115-7056

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

To Comrades, Widows and Associates: In the past few years, some of the 602nd comrades would not have been able to attend the reunions had it not been for their children's support. They chose to bring their parents to the reunions. They were thoughtful, and we were grateful. The organization has decided the children should have the opportunity to become members of the organization as Associates if they so choose. We hope they make this choice.

I am asking each comrade and widow to pass this information on to their children. They would be honoring their "Dear Ol Dads" who contributed to making this country a better and safer place for all of us. Give this your thought. The annual dues of only \$10.00 will entitle each Associate member to be listed in the T.D. Roster. The listing of their names will honor the living comrades as well as the deceased. We are proud of the widows of this organization that are giving the same support we are asking of the children. Thank you! **Warren Ables, President.**

REUNION MEMORIAL SERVICE

At 10 a.m. 4 September, 1998 at the 602nd Tank Destroyer Battalion Reunion Leonard H. (Bud) Bornemann led the Memorial Service. After the Color Guard had presented and posted colors followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation by Chaplain Louis Barbato, group singing of the hymn "Stand Up for Jesus" was led by Nancy Cain. When the group was seated, Bud Bornemann delivered the following words:

"One of the prime reasons we are gathered here this morning is to remember those who made the supreme sacrifice by giving their lives in battle while we served our country in Europe. It might be well to reflect briefly on the magnitude of the conflict in which we were involved.

This was truly a world War. Fighting took place over all the world, in the air, on land, and at sea. All because a few insane men wanted to rule the world. As a result, 25 of our men in the 602nd were killed in action, 168 were awarded purple hearts for their wounds, and two were taken prisoners of war. You see, freedom is not free. We have paid a high price for the liberty we and our children enjoy today.

At this time, we who survived, find ourselves grateful that we are again allowed to come together and honor those of the 602nd Tank Destroyer Battalion who were killed in Europe. As I read their names, may we have reverent silence as we remember these brave men who made the ultimate sacrifice. (Each of the 25 names were intoned.)

I would like to quote a few appropriate lines of a poem that appeared in our program at the Hot Springs Reunion.

The pride of victory, the sadness of loss we who remain, remembering the cost, so their total commitment will not be in vain, let us always strive to call them by name.

Early on, when we began our reunions, we also read the names of the deceased since V.E. Day. As of August of this year, 537 men have died since World War Two. The total list, except for the last four names I read, appears in your new Roster. In the interest of time, I am going to read only the names of those who have passed away since our last reunion in Hot Springs in October 1996. (The 40 names were read of those who died in the last two years.)

May we now observe a moment of silence while we offer our private prayers for these men and our loved ones who have gone on to their greater rewards (after 30 seconds, Taps were played).

Thank you. We will now sing "America the Beautiful." (After song is completed, thank you.)

Nearly 57 years ago, on a quiet Sunday morning, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. December 7, 1941 was a day President Franklin Delano Roosevelt said would live in infamy. It was a day that would change the lives of many of us and that of the entire world. Soon, many of us would leave our jobs and families and march off to war. Others were sacrificing on the home front. Women were taking the jobs of men; kids tended Victory gardens; factories and shipyards were built; and, everyone bought War Bonds. This country had never seen such a combined effort as this before. Oh yes, there was meat rationing, shoe rationing, gas rationing, and all kinds of other rationing, but we survived.

Webster's dictionary states a survivor is one who continues to live after a time or event. I think we all qualify for that definition. Now I want each of you to look to the left of you, look to the right of you and look around this room. You are all survivors.

Now let us go back a few years in time. When the 602nd Tank Destroyer Battalion was formed, new men were added to bring it up to strength; many of us endured 13 weeks of strenuous basic training, including close order drill in snow up to our knees. But, we survived.

In the fall of 1943, there was a shortage in the labor force in North Dakota. Many of the transient workers who followed the crop harvests and native sons were now in defense work or in the military service. The 602nd was called in to fill the gap and help harvest a bumper crop of wheat. It was a much different job from what many of us were used to doing, but we survived; and, our country was assured they would have bread to eat for another year.

The Battalion participated in the Watersmeet maneuvers in Northern Michigan. We were sleeping in the open in 30 degrees below zero weather; and, would you believe it, it would warm up to zero by noon. But we survived. I wonder if some of those left behind at Camp McCoy were sleeping with their windows open.

We loaded our M-10 tanks on flat cars and shipped them to Tennessee. Here we participated in the Tennessee Maneuvers and later found a home at Camp Forrest Tennessee. We field tested the T-70 tank that later became the M-18 Hellcat, the vehicle we took into combat.

We endured the Fort Dix additional training, our Port of Embarkation stay at Camp Kilmer and, we can't forget our trip across the Atlantic aboard the luxury liner the S. S. Bergensfjord. We slept in hammocks or on tables, and we had boiled liver for breakfast. Through all of this, we survived.

Our stay in England was a short one. It was only long enough to draw our equipment and supplies. On August 25, 1944, we landed on Omaha Beach and joined General George Patton's Third Army for a mad dash across France. NOW! We would put all the training and experience we had to the test. The bullets, the mortar shells, the artillery, and bombs were real, and many of us can tell stories of how we survived. Here are but a few.

Pete Kopcsak was put in charge of a task force to establish a bridgehead on the east side of the Seille River and proceeded to the east as far as possible. Pete accomplished his mission, but in the process was wounded by a piece of shrapnel that became lodged in his right ankle. We are happy to say, Pete is with us today.

Bert Oliver can't be with us today, but he sent a story that I very well remember. We had pulled into an area to bed down for the night. It looked to be secure, and for the first time in a long time, we were going to enjoy a comfortable night's sleep. We found some straw, put up our pup tents, and were comfortably nestled down in our bedrolls when the Germans opened fire with what appeared to be an artillery barrage or mortar fire. Bert ran through the area hollering "march order," and we responded rather quickly. One shell hit so close to Bert, it left him standing in the smoke. As it all turned out, we got the men and vehicles moved out of the area. Not a person was injured, and not a vehicle was damaged. We all survived. I must say I am glad we moved. When I retrieved my pup tent the next morning, it was full of holes. Bert gave thanks to his Guardian Angel for bringing us through this experience.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the Battle of the Bulge, a time when some of our Watersmeet experience would help us fight the cold as well as the enemy. General Patton had made a boast to General Eisenhower that he could get relief to the bulge in 24 hours. Well, he picked the right ones to do it. I am proud to say, the 602nd made good that boast by making an overnight march of 150 miles to take positions in the bulge near Bastogne, Belgium.

Jim McCarthy, commander of the lead M-18 tells us this story. We had taken up a defensive position and were firing at any target of opportunity when some stragglers from the Infantry came through our position. They told us to keep up the good work, you're knocking them down up there.

Reuben Simpson was not quite so lucky. He was hit by some shrapnel and had to be evacuated. He spent two months in a hospital in England before rejoining the 602nd, and Reuben can be counted as one of us. A survivor.

Bert Oliver tells us another story. Two new replacement officers were assigned to the Battalion, namely Evans (Mac) Bush and Clinton Hearn. Bert was to make them familiar with combat conditions before assigning them to Platoon Leader positions. He decided to take them out to where one of the first platoon's destroyers was located. Bert decided he would drive the jeep to prevent overcrowding in a three-man vehicle. They had no sooner reached their destination when the Germans opened up with an artillery barrage. Bert and his replacements took refuge in a shell hole. When the barrage lifted, Bert found his jeep had suffered a direct hit, and the only thing left was his clipboard. Several of the tank crew were wounded, but they all survived. On their walk back to the C.P., Clinton Hearn was heard to say, "You know, a man could get killed up here."

We all have memories of the past, and there are many stories to tell. We as survivors, have an obligation to tell our stories to our children, their children, and the world. They must not forget the many who fought and died, and those who sacrificed so much. Because of these men, we enjoy the freedoms we have today.

Now look around this room again. You are all survivors. Through the grace of God you have survived. God goes by many names. You can call Him your Guardian Angel, or whatever you wish, but the fact remains, he is one God, and He must have heard your prayers for you are here today as a survivor, and He has been at your side through these many years. For this, we all give thanks.

We are happy to see this gathering of survivors here this morning. As a memento to this occasion, we are going to award a plaque to the oldest survivor present. Now I ask all those of 80 years or more to stand. Less than 81 sit down. Less than 82 sit down, etc. (Pete Kopcsak claimed the plaque on age 86.)

The closing song, "Let There Be Peace on Earth" was sung followed by a Benediction by Chaplain Barbato. The Color Guard led by Joe Kaiser with flag bearers Harold Garrison and Otto Bergstresser retired the colors. After thanking Alice Nell Parnell and her daughter Peggy Dickerson who played the piano, members of the color Guard, Nancy Cain for leading the singing, Chaplain Louis Barbato, Hank and Susan Hendel for making reunion arrangements, and wife Marge Bornemann for her encouragement, Bud adjourned the service saying, "Have a safe trip home. May God be with you till we meet again."

SCENES FROM YESTERYEAR

Thanks to members and associate members who loaned us pictures long enough to process for printing. If you enjoy seeing old pictures of old people when they were young and beautiful, please let us have your pictures with the name or names of persons in the picture written in pencil on the back along with your name. Your pictures help round out and in some cases establish further our history of events in WW II. Your pictures will be returned to you after they have been processed.



Paul Hummer (Recon. Co.) opens the show. He said the only thing real was the buffalo.



Leland "Lee" Reynolds and Anthony "Tony" Rogovsky take time out.



Robert "Bob" Courtney watches Bert Oliver (C Co.) get his goat.



Lt. Graham and Rudolph "Rudy" Kash.



J.B. Taylor, Donald Scherdin, and Bert Oliver in front of Co. C Old Faithful.



C Co. resting: Harry Goolsby, Howard Stehwein, Matthew Keck, Bob Courtney, Bert Oliver, Johnnie Parker, and Raymond Brown.



Leland D. Reynolds stands proudly by the Co. C sign.



Harold V. Bowerly, John A. Mureen, Cruze Camarillo, Robert G. Sadlo, Haskell Bishop, Donald J. Mitchell, and Marcel S. Kupa at War's end.



Just after war's end are Matthew Keck, Bob Courtney, Walter J. Pavlak (on M-18), Elvin Beeson, Bill Barnett (driver) and Lt. Robert Graham.



Joseph Amedere and Maurice D. Broyles horse around for the camera.



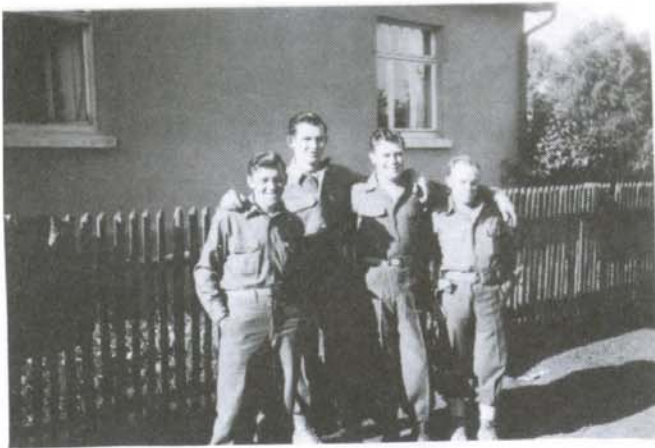
Robert J. McGill ducks from camera showing drying bed blankets.



Hugh C. Miles, Florian M. Kurkul, and Leonard A. Fleig looked happy.



Lt. Harry W. Arnold caught holding down a German fence.



Walter J. Pavlak, William T. Hendrix, Elvin G. Beeson and Thomas P. Braidwood pose.



Snow clouded this cold picture during Battle of the Bulge for: Back—Robert G. Sadlo, Austin, Harold V. Bowerly, Robert Courtney, and James N. Robertson. Bottom—Cruze Camarillo, Paul Schlegelmilch, and Harry Goolsby.



Leonard A. Fleig, Fred Prothe, Robert C. Burt, William C. Vickers from Recon. Co. pose.



Kenneth B. Hall, Cris J. "Pappy" Solon, Charles J. Martello pose with Dr. Nino Peleterri.



Manuel Trigo looks lonely on a deserted street.



Lt. Henry Altergott at Camp Forrest, 1941, with the 131st Infantry getting a bead on things.

ANOTHER SIDE OF LIFE AS WE SAW IT



Ever wonder what happened behind the barn?



We helped to save it all for them!



Contentment at its peak



Making hay while the sun shines—women take notice.



Mission Accomplished! Next stop—The barn next to the kitchen.



Hungry people in Zwickau waiting for a garbage can for something to eat.

A SENTIMENTAL ODYSSEY

On 20 October, 1998 Ray Young flew Detroit-Amsterdam-Luxembourg City and met Dewey Wilburn whose plane from Dallas-Gatwick Airport near London-Luxembourg City had arrived 15 minutes earlier. After picking up a reserved rental car, they went immediately to the Luxembourg American Military Cemetery at Hamm (commonly referred to as the Hamm Cemetery). The cemetery location is approximately 5 kilometers from the Airport Terminal and just south of it. There tracks of Dean Hart, Lodi Valencich, and possibly other 602ers were followed to a well kept and beautifully maintained burial ground where lie 5,076 American military personnel, many of whom died during the Battle of the Bulge, including one woman—a nurse.

The cemetery was originally established on 29 December, 1944 by the U.S. 3rd Army under General George S. Patton. That was the day that the 11th Armored Division reached positions near Bastogne that had been occupied by the 602nd T.D. Bn eight days earlier as well as the town of Libramont where B Company had held forth since 21 December keeping the town out of German hands. When the 11th Armored Division arrived, the 602nd T.D. Bn. (less Company C) was attached to them. On Christmas Eve about one year later in 1945, three days after General Patton died in Heidelberg, Germany of a broken neck received in a car wreck, he was buried in the Hamm Cemetery with his former troops, including Kenneth F. Brown and Philip V. Pratt of the 602nd T.D. Bn.



After visiting former buddies in the cemetery and making contacts with a couple of persons in Luxembourg with whom Young had written communications, they were escorted around the countryside to revisit some of the battle fields where Company C had its hardest fighting. It was in these killing fields that Company C won the Presidential Citation for its action.

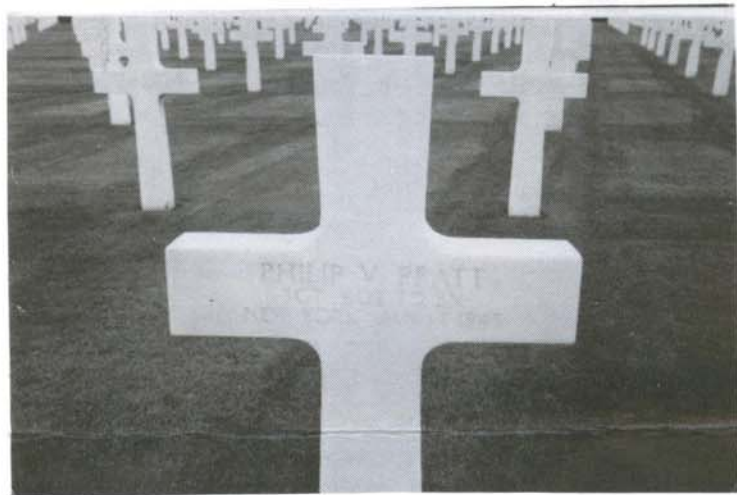
Then Young and Wilburn drove to Bastogne and over some of the little roads that were covered with snow when last seen in 1944. Several forward gun positions were found near Sibret where the 1st Platoon of Company A had repelled repeated German attempts to traverse the road. From the hotel window on the square in the middle of Bastogne could be seen the following:



Bust of General McAuliff ("Nuts")



Knocked out 4th Armored Division Tank (Note the T.D. insignia.)



Grave of Sgt. Philip V. Pratt.



Grave of S/Sgt. Kenneth F. Brown

Names and locations of 602nd T.D. Bn. men who still sleep in Europe today are as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Cemetery</u>	<u>Plot/Row/Grave No.</u>
Banaka, Leslie C.	Henri-Chapelle	E 16 44
Brown, Kenneth F.	Luxembourg	H 12 50
Farina, John A.	Lorraine	C 4 49
Hamill, Clyde E. Jr.	Lorraine	J 42 23
Houk, Andrew F.	Lorraine	C 3 45
Pratt, Philip V.	Luxembourg	E 9 49
Roebuck, William K.	Lorraine	J 34 23
Rykowski, John W.	Epinal	A 11 70

PERSONALS

Address and/or telephone number changes since the August issue of *Panther Tracks* are included in this section. Please, if you move, send us a card provided by your post-office or a letter indicating your old and new address—and telephone number if it has changed. If your area code or zip number changes, please let us know. Together, we have to put up with unfortunate blunders by the post-office. During the past several months we have had at least two cases in point. In one instance, a copy of the last newsletter, sent out before the reunion, came back marked "Moved—No Forwarding Address." On the way back from the reunion, I went a few miles off the Interstate to the town near where the member lives and from which the newsletter had been returned. Our member still lives in the same house he has lived in since WW II. It turns out that about a year ago the P.O. had changed his address from a box number on a rural route to a street number, and could have given us the correct address, but didn't. In another worse case, an April newsletter sent to one of our dear widows had been returned from

the address she has had for many years marked, "Forwarding Address Expired." It turns out that, after having received no information about the reunion because all mail came back, she learned about the reunion from another 602er and came to the reunion. Meanwhile her name had been taken off the roster, and all the while she had been temporarily away visiting in another part of the country. We strive to keep on top of all the changes that need to be made, but if someone doesn't tell us, there is no way we can do it. So, if you have any change at all in address or telephone number, let us know.

Address/Telephone Changes: The address for Raymond C. Cutshall is 4007 N. Blanton Rd., Scottsburg, IN 47170-9147; Robert J. McGill's new address is 3837 Kentland Dr., Roanoke, VA 24018 (telephone: 540-989-0117); the address of Lena Roberts is 19 Greybitch Dr., Apt. #G11, Augusta, ME 04330 (telephone: 207-623-8331); Francisco B. and Carmen Saenz now live at 7011 W. Medill Avenue, Chicago, IL 60707-2915 (telephone: 773-622-3814); telephone numbers have been changed for the following to the new one given: George and Regina Freckmann—(732)381-4885; Julia Lamaster—(940)325-1273.

Associate Members: We are happy to have as a new Associate Member Richard L. Reynolds, 183 Picard Rd., Voorheesville, NY 12186.

Nice Happenings and Communications: Over the past several years, Ray Young has stopped in the Ft. Wayne, IN area to visit with two lovely brave people, Robert M. and Violet Arnett (B Co.). It may be like a tale out of school, but the right time to visit them is around meal time for a really sumptuous tasty meal al la Violet. It has never been the purpose of the visits, but somehow the timing has worked out that way, and they are gracious hosts. Bob has been bravely and successfully struggling with the ravages of both Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases. He is happy to see any of his old friends and Army buddies. A black and white picture doesn't do justice to the colorful roses and other bright flowers in the background shown below in his yard.



Bob and Violet Arnett enjoy some fresh air outside their home.



Bob Arnett, B Co., at home in Indiana September 1998.

A note from Bob Ake began, "How goes everything young man?" I'm still looking for that "young man" and haven't found him around these parts yet. Perhaps that was a figure of speech and we are all after all still young men. He expressed regrets for not getting to the reunion, but some of us can understand his plight when he said he had rounded the 9th hole to continue to the 10th when he felt sharp pains in his chest. He finished the 12th and decided to rest on a bench while he asked his partners to go on and finish and he would walk to the clubhouse. When he walked into the clubhouse they called the paramedics and took him to the hospital where a doctor detected Angina Pectoris and told him that while he did not have a heart attack, he had been trying to have one. He said "Howdy" to all his friends and that he will be expecting to attend the next reunion. (Bob we will all be looking for you in San Antonio.)

Morton Reisbeck said he was age 85 and in fairly good health. He is living in a home away from home. He said, "I consider myself pretty lucky."

Henry and Dorothy Altergott sent their regards to all and speak often of the many memories they hold of past reunions. Henry said that "the ailments and problems that come, whether you want them or not, have caught up with us."

Thanks to Terry Amedere and all the other thoughtful persons who contributed pictures for this issue of the newsletter.

TAPS

Since the August, 1998 issue of Panther Tracks, friends and/or relatives have notified us that the following men are deceased: Dale **Grandlienard** (Co. C), Delmer T. **Hogue, Sr.** (Co. B), Jesse **James** (Co. B), Stanley H. **Spalding** (Recon. Co.), Gustav F. **Weit** (Recon. Co.), and Albert J. **Zinsmeister** (Co. C).

THE CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Our Chaplain, Louis Barbato, provides the following words for our consideration:

Lord, thank you for a wonderful reunion. Hank and Susan did a great job. Our members, families, and guests had a good time. We missed our members who were ill and couldn't make the reunion. Colonel Kopcsak made it even though he had physical problems. Lord, watch over him and all our sick; watch over all our widows and widowers who lost their loved ones. And, please give them the strength to carry on. Our next reunion is the year 2000, so watch over all our members and loved ones. May all our faithful departed and loved ones rest in peace. Lord, we love you. Amen.

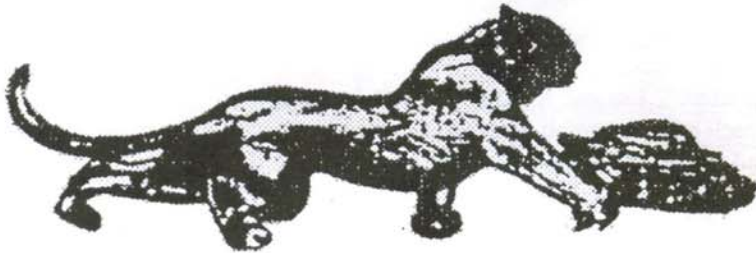
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(ADDRESS CORRECTION AND FORWARDING REQUESTED)

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