John Schaffner remembers the Battle of the Bulge marking the action’s 75th Anniversary

Editor’s Note: As we enjoy the warmth and hospitality of the holiday season, one cannot help but remember those young American boys in Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany 75 years ago. Their holiday season was one of violence and bitter cold. This year we remember the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, the last major German offensive of World War II.

Among those American soldiers battling courageously to hold off the German onslaught was our own MDMHS member, John Schaffner. The following are excerpts from John’s post-war diary about his experience in one of the important actions that delayed the German advance and helped to assure the ultimate Allied victory.

I passed my 18th birthday on 11 August 1942. The war in Europe was in full swing with the Nazi armies taking victories everywhere they went. The U.S. had officially declared war on the Axis powers after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor 7 December 1941.

The world was having big troubles. All American "boys" between the ages of 18 and 45 were ordered by an Act of Congress to register for the draft. There were few shirkers. It became a matter of pride to be "in" some branch of the service.

Some of my classmates quit school in their senior year to enlist. February 1943, I graduated from high school (Baltimore City College) and immediately became eligible for the call.

On 7 March 1943, at about quarter to seven in the morning, I kissed my Mom goodbye, and with my little suitcase, walked three blocks with my Dad to the street-car line. We had a short conversation about taking care of myself, a quick hug and a brave "so-long." He was going off to work and I walked another three blocks. I reported to my local draft board and was selected to serve.

We draftees were then put on a bus, driven to downtown Baltimore and ushered into the Fifth Regiment Armory to be subjected to all kinds of physical and psychological examination. As I recall, we were stripped down to our socks and a doctor probed, poked and squeezed all sorts of places. Then we were asked all kinds of questions to find out if our head was on straight. The only one that I remember was, "Do you like girls?" Of course, I said, "Yes." That was it. I was in.

Then somebody asked me what branch of the service I preferred. I said, "Navy." (Some of my friends had gone in the Navy and that was the only reason that I requested Navy.) He said, "No, we have too many in the Navy." I said, "How about the Air Corps?" He said, "No, you need to wear glasses. I have to put you in the Army." Then he took my papers and stamped them with "LIMITED SERVICE", (whatever that meant.)

When all of that business was finally over, we were "sworn in." We were then read "The Articles of War" (by a PFC) and made to realize that any disobedience from then on would incur punishment that nobody could possibly recover from. As I recall, the penalty for any and every infraction was, "DEATH or (Continued on page 4)
Round Table ends year with Clara Barton visit

The Curtis B. Vickery Round Table Holiday Christmas party was especially fun and entertaining this year. In addition to wonderful desserts by Adrienne Hills and scrumptious dishes from Mission BBQ, Clara Barton paid us a visit. Actually, it was Mary Ann Jung, award winning actress and Smithsonian scholar, playing the role of America’s number one nurse and founder of the Red Cross.

We learned that proper ladies of her time were supposed to be quiet, get married, have children and stay home. Miss Barton would have none of that. She defied society’s norms and risked her life to help others, thus becoming a true heroine. A passionate and moving public speaker, Clara, through Mary Ann, dramatically related how she became the first woman to work for the Federal Government, its first female department head, and America’s first ambassador.

But this was not necessarily a one-person show. There was audience participation as well with memorable performances by a Reb who looked a lot like George Rich and a Yank portrayed by newsletter publisher, Will Mund, making his acting debut.

The audience also played the role of naysayers and believers, in order to discover how Clara was able to beat the odds and succeed as she did during the Civil War.

Essentially, she brought the female presence onto the battlefield. There were not enough men to serve as nurses and consequently, women had to fill the ever-expanding breach that grew as the casualties soared during this bloody war. Clara was the leader and survived the dangers of Antietam where she was almost hit by a stray bullet.

After the war she struggled to get America to sign the Geneva Convention. Although the powers in Washington thought that there was no need to incorporate “rules of warfare,” Clara realized that she must modify these rules when she established the American Red Cross. Consequently, by adding disaster recovery and humanitarian aid she was able to attain Congressional approval.

As we discovered, there are few better role models than Clara Barton who still inspires us to “Never give up!”

Upcoming Round Table Meetings:

March 19 Cory Pfarr, author of “Longstreet at Gettysburg: A Critical Reassessment,” will be our speaker. Mr. Pfarr’s publication is the first book-length analysis of Lieutenant General James Longstreet’s actions at Gettysburg. After the war, and especially after Robert E. Lee’s death, his contemporaries, as well as many historians roundly criticized Longstreet in the succeeding decades. He was vilified and blamed for the defeat.

Although his critics accentuated his stubbornness and sluggishness during the greatest battle fought on American soil, Mr. Pfarr’s meticulous research disproves these critical theories. This is a fascinating study to “set the record straight” and view Longstreet’s actions at Gettysburg in a much different light.

April 16 One of our favorite speakers, member Joe Balkoski, 29th Division Historian, will return to present “The Road to D-Day,” emphasizing some of the little-known stories of the early stages of D-Day planning, such as the Tehran conference and FDR’s appointment of Eisenhower. As the preeminent authority on D-Day, Joe will dig deep into his knowledge base to present these unique and compelling stories that ultimately shaped the largest amphibious invasion in history.

May 21 Another member and favorite speaker, David Ginsburg, will provide a presentation on General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck who was one of the most spectacular generals in the history of guerrilla warfare - and perhaps one of the most unknown. His eastern African campaign in WWI was designed with one purpose - to tie down as many allied troops as he could for as long as he could. Four years later, he was undefeated and left 300,000 allied troops frustrated across the continent.

June 18 Many know about the bloodiest day in US military history – the battle fought along Antietam Creek near the town of Sharpsburg and the precursor, the Battle of South Mountain. Certainly, this battle fought on Maryland soil was a critical turning point in the Civil War in 1862.

However, less well known was a battle fought near Frederick in 1864 along the Monocacy River about 50 miles north of the District of Columbia. A hastily formed “army” under the leadership of General Lew Wallace, better known as the author of Ben Hur, met a veteran Rebel corps under the leadership of Jubal Early. Frank Armiger is the speaker and he will tell us much more about the significance of the Battle of the Monocacy.

Frank Armiger, Editor

MDMHS News

On 9 November, the Maryland Military Historical Society in conjunction with the Maryland Four Centuries Project hosted a program that focused on the Maryland Military in the Revolutionary War in the Reckord Lounge at the Fifth Regiment Armory. The well-received and well-attended program featured Patrick O’Donnell, author of “Washington’s Immortals,” as the keynote speaker.

In addition, John Beakes, noted biographer of Maryland’s Revolutionary War leaders, provided an interesting presentation titled “From Farm Boys & Clerks into Magnificent Military Leaders.” Rounding out the lecture part of the program, Dr. Glenn Williams, Senior Historian, US Army Center of Military History, provided an enlightening talk titled ‘The Old Line State & the Beginning of the US Army’ that focused on the southern campaigns culminating in the Siege of Yorktown.

The final part of the program featured Joe Balkoski facilitating a stimulating panel discussion with the three speakers and Vince Vaise of the National Park Service; formerly head NPS Ranger at Fort McHenry.

The MDMHS plans to continue working with the Maryland Four Centuries Program headed by husband and wife, Burt Kummerow and Dr. Mary Blair, on future programs that focus on Maryland military history in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries as we move toward the ultimate celebration of the four hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Maryland Colony in 1634.

Four panels from the “In Freedom’s Name”

(Continued on page 3)
Creating Division Spirit: The Origin of the 29th Division Insignia

By Alexander A. Falbo-Wild

In 1917, the US Army faced fighting a war with new technology, tactics, and organisation. For centuries, regiments had been the predominant tactical formation for European countries which later informed the Continental Army structure. But this was displaced in favour of the division at the start of the 20th century. Divisions existed in the American Civil War. But the scope and character of the fighting meant that the division would become the organisational building block for conducting future operations.¹

At 28,000 strong, a US Army division in the Great War was twice that of its average German, French, or British counterpart. Yet, it was small enough to be identifiable: a corpus of soldiers able to bond through shared campaign experiences and collective victories. Even before the doughboys exchanged the first shots against their German opponents across no man's land, “it was soon realized that a divisional spirit or esprit must be encouraged.”² And the Maryland National Guard would play an important role in the creation of that new esprit and identity.

The 29th Division would ultimately be brought together for training at Camp McClellan, Alabama. It was here that the famous divisional emblem was proposed by Maj. James A. Ulio, the division adjutant. Smart in both appearance and intellect, he was drawn to the fact that the 29th was nick-named the “Blue and Gray division” based on its composition of former northern and southern state units.

The Civil War was only fifty years past and there was pride in the accomplishment of forging these units together. “Moreover,” as the divisional history notes, “these men were trained in a southern camp named in honor of a Federal General, and were commanded by an officer [General Charles G. Morton] of the United States Army from the State of Maine.” Major Ulio thus chose the monad or yin-yang, the Korean symbol of life, with blue and gray occupying its colored tear shapes.

Often confused with the taijitu symbol, which features two additional small circles in those shapes and popularised in the 1960s, the yin-yang represented not just a balance between good and evil, but also a Chinese philosophical conception of dualism between complementary qualities.

The design was sent to the War Department and approved in December 1917 for use, not on shoulder sleeves, but the divisional property and transport. A practice already widely used by European divisions (especially on the Western Front). It was the first of the American divisions to do so. The idea for wearing the emblem on the shoulder would take another year to materialize. Many division commanders – including General Morton – were sent to the Western Front in early 1918 for orientation on the terrain, operations, and technologies they would soon engage.

During that time, General Charles J. Bailey leading the 81st Division, was struck by the appearance of division markings on not only division property, but of the particularly British practice of division flashes and identification schemes on uniforms and helmets. Gen. Bailey eventually persuaded General Pershing on the merits of easy identification in “handling small units in the present methods of advance in open warfare” and as a means that “would promote good fellowship” where “the insignia brings individuals together that would not otherwise know or care for one another.”³

On 21 October 1918, as the 29th Division finished grappling with Austrians and Germans for the shattered Meuse-Argonne Heights, Pershing’s H.Q. formally approved the 29th’s emblem for the upper left shoulder.⁴ So began the custom of wearing the coveted Blue and Gray on the sleeve, where the tradition is slapped on the left arm of those joining its ranks today.

⁴ Ford, 87.
WORSE." We boarded a bus, and were driven to Fort G.G. Meade, Maryland.

I, along with a whole trainload of 18-year-old draftees, joined the 106th Infantry Division at Ft. Jackson, S.C. in March 1943. I was assigned to "A" Battery, 589th Field Artillery Battalion and placed in the "Instrument" section under S/Sgt. Clyde Kirkman. My particular job was "Scout", MOS 761. This was probably the "luck of the draw". There were too many names beginning with "S" in our section. I doubt that much effort was put into the initial placement of personnel, especially in an infantry division.

Editor's Note: In November 1944, the 589th FAB embarked for England. By this time John had been transferred to Battery "B," and that's a story for another day. On 3 December, they embarked for France and arrived in Rouen on 6 December. The unit immediately transported to Germany and took over the positions of the 15th FAB of the 2nd Division allowing those troops to attain some much needed rest. This was supposed to be one of the quietest sectors of the Allied lines.

Unfortunately, for John and the rest of the 589th exactly one week later on the 16th the Germans assaulted their lines in a pincer movement initiating the largest US battle in Europe that is forever known as "The Battle of the Bulge." The weight of the German attack overwhelmed the 106th Infantry as John and elements of the 589th retreated to St. Vith in Belgium.

Baraque de Fraiture

On 19 Dec 1944, at 1100 the battalion moved to Salcmchateau and was ordered to bivouac for reorganization. While the bivouac was being reconnoitered tanks were reported near Baraque de Fraiture (Parker's Crossroads) and the unit was moved there to repel the attack.

In the afternoon, what was remaining of the 589th FABn arrived at the crossroads at Baraque de Fraiture to establish some kind of blocking force against the German advance. Whether or not there was any intelligent planning involved in this move I really don't know. I had the feeling that nobody knew anything, and that we would resist here in this place as long as possible and hope to get help before we were blown away. There were approximately 100 men and three 105mm howitzers to set up the defense at this time.

The weather was cold, wet and foggy with some snow already on the ground.

Visibility was variable, clearing from maybe fifty yards to two or three hundred on occasion. I didn't even know who was in charge of the rag tag group that I was with until I saw Major Elliott Goldstein out in the open, verbally bombasting the enemy (where ever they were) with all the curse words he could think of, and at the top of his booming voice.

I thought at the moment that he won't be around too long if there are any Germans out there to hear him. Apparently there were none, he drew no fire. I was taking cover behind the rear wheel of one of our trucks at the time and felt rather naked.

The three howitzers were ordered into position to defend the cross-roads and I was told to go out "there" and dig in and look for an attack from "that" direction, still having no idea of the situation. Most of the night was spent in the foxhole. All was quiet on the front line.

When I was relieved during the night to get some rest, I tried to find a dry place in the stone barn to lie down. The floor was deep in muck, but the hayrack on the wall was full of dry hay so I accepted that as a good place to sleep. Pushing the cows aside, I climbed into the hay. I guess that the cows just didn't understand, because they kept pulling the hay out from under me until I became the next course on their menu. Anyway, it wasn't long until I was outside in another hole in the ground.

Next morning, 20 December, at the crossroads, the weather remained miserable, cold, wet and foggy with a little more snow for good measure. If the enemy was around, he was keeping it a secret. The day went very slowly. (This kind of time is usually spent getting your hole just a bit deeper, you never know how deep is going to be deep enough.) Now and then one of our guys would pop off a few rounds at something, real or imagined.

The Battalion, on order from the CG, DivArty, was to prepare to move closer to Vielsalm to draw equipment and supplies but that never happened. Some men and supplies were sent to us from Vielsalm. The enemy was reported in Samree by an observer and firing data was computed using a 1:50,000 scale map and a safety pin for measuring AA firing plot. Two rounds were fired for adjustment and then two volleys fired for effect. The observer reported, "Mission accomplished."

We were joined by some people of the 203rd AAA, 7th Armored Division, equipped with three M-16 half-tracks mounted with a brace of four .50 caliber machine guns and a M8 Scout Car with a 37mm cannon. I thought at the time, I'd hate to be in front of that quad-50 when it went off. Little did I know at the time that I would be. This weapon was positioned to fire directly down the road to Houffalize. We were also joined by a platoon of the 87th Recon Squadron. Plans were made for coordination of fire from all weapons, outposts were manned and telephone communications installed.

Later in the evening, Captain Brown sent me, with another "B" Battery G.I., Ken Sewell, to a foxhole in the ditch at the side of the road to Houffalize, about a couple hundred yards out from the crossroads (hard to remember the distance exactly). We were the outpost and had a field telephone hookup to Captain A.C. Brown's CP. Captain Brown told us to just sit tight and report any movement we observed.

There was a "daisy chain" of mines strung across the road a few yards ahead of our position to stop any vehicles. The darkness was made even deeper by the thick fog that night, with a silence to match. Now and then a pine tree would drop some snow or make a noise. I think my eyelids and ears were set on "Full Open".

So, here we sat in this hole in the ground, just waiting and watching, until about midnight, when we could hear strange noises in the fog. It was very dark and our visibility was extremely limited, but we were able to discern what was making the strange noise as about a dozen Germans soldiers riding on bicycles came into view.

They stopped in the road when they came on the mines. Being unaware of our presence, not 10 yards away, they stood there in front of us, in the middle of the road, probably talking over what to do next. We could hear the language was not English and they were wearing "square" helmets.

Sewell and I were in big trouble. This was a first for us, to be this close to the enemy. Thinking that there was too many for us to take on with a carbine, I took the telephone and whispered our situation to Captain Brown. His orders were to, "Keep your head down and when you hear me fire my .45 the first time we will sweep the road with the AAA quad 50's. When that stops, I'll fire my .45 again and then we will hold fire while you two come out of your hole and return to the CP. Make it quick!"
And that's the way it happened. That German patrol never knew what hit them. On hearing the .45 the second time, Ken and I left our hole, and keeping low, ran back toward our perimeter. I was running so hard that my helmet bounced off my head and went rolling out into the darkness. I thought, "to hell with it", and never slowed down to retrieve it. I lost sight of Ken and honestly don't remember ever seeing him again. (I heard many years later that he was captured along with Bernard Strohmier, John Gatens and others after the Germans took the crossroads.)

By calling out the password "Coleman," I got safely past our perimeter defense and was then shot at (and missed) by somebody at the howitzer position as I approached it. After a blast of good old American obscenities they allowed me through and I reported to Captain Brown. (The official book says that there was an eighty-man patrol from the 560th Volksgrenadier Division and the 2nd Panzer Division out there that night. Maybe the rest of them were back in the fog somewhere.)

The next morning, 21 Dec., the Germans attacked again. They were repulsed after about four hours of fighting. Six German dead were left on the field and fourteen prisoners were taken, six of them wounded. Other Germans withdrew taking some wounded with them.

Interrogation revealed that there was an 80-man patrol from a Volksgrenadier Division led by an officer of the 2nd SS Panzer Division. Their mission was to “feel out our defenses.” Although tanks had been heard during the night none participated in the attack.

At noon a message was received from CG DivArty to withdraw to the vicinity of Bra for reorganization. However the battalion could not withdraw until additional troops had come in to reinforce the few that would be left.

Prisoners were evacuated to Vielsalm and preparations were made to bury the dead when the Germans attacked again about 1530 from the east and approached to about 300 yards before being detected. At the same time the Germans set up a roadblock of wrecked American vehicles about 800 yards to the east.

I was sent forward to have a look around in the edge of the woods and found several dead German soldiers in the snow. I was not at all comfortable with that, and was happy to have not found any live ones. The enemy had apparently pulled back after we had cut down their advance group the night before.

All that day was spent digging and improving our defensive perimeter. We were given some “warming time”, off and on, inside the stone building being used as a CP. At one point, I was detailed to guard two German prisoners that were brought in. I never learned the circumstances of their capture. One, an officer, spoke good English and warned us that the German Army was coming through us and would kill anyone in the way and push the rest into the English Channel, so, we could save everybody a lot of trouble by surrendering to him right then and there. Right.

Another attack was repulsed about 1700 by the timely arrival of Sherman tanks from the 3rd Armored Division. Late in the afternoon several tanks were heard approaching our position. Thankfully, they were ours. They rolled out in the open and fired their big guns into the German positions and I thought, no problem now, with all this help the day is saved. It got quiet again. And then the tanks left. Looked like we would be hung out to dry, but it did stop the enemy attack for a while. Thanks, tankers. Too bad you couldn’t stay for dinner.

There were some American stragglers in and out during the day. A few stayed. Some left. I really didn’t know what was going on, or who they were. I was mostly out of touch, occupying a foxhole. Apparently, there was still one of the roads open to our forces to the west.

At one point a Sherman tank came along and was set up in front of our CP and fired a few rounds across the field and into the forest at some distant soldiers running from tree to tree for cover. I supposed that they were enemy, too far off to see for sure. I doubt that any were hit at that distance in any case.

It was expected that the Germans would attack about 0530. A preparation of artillery and machine gun fire laid down by us was to simulate a counter-attack by our troops. Unfortunately, a company of the 325 GIR, 82nd AB Division sent to reinforce us was scared off by the noise and did not arrive before noon.

They were sent to dig in with our men to reinforce the line. They were met by a barrage of mortar fire and driven back. About 15 casualties were evacuated. The 589th was to withdraw but instead stayed in position. Additional enemy was moving closer but due to poor visibility was unable to affect any gains.

That night, after the initial attack, I recall being in my foxhole, waiting for the Germans to come at us again. The realization came to me that I was involved in a real risky business. The area was lighted by the flames of a store of fuel drums burning throughout most of the rest of the night and reflecting eerily on the snow covered ground.

The only sounds were that of the fire and the crying for help from the
wounded enemy who were lying out there just out of view. I stayed in the foxhole all night and never did discover what finally happened to them; apparently their people abandoned them. Later, I heard that one of our medics went out and checked on them and did what he could.

Over the years I continue to feel some responsibility for their fate, since it was me who called for the fire on them when they first approached the crossroads. Responsible, yes; sorry, no. It was them or me.

A lot of things go through your mind when you think that it is your time to die and I can clearly remember, laying in that cold hole in the ground that could shortly be my grave, thinking that I had not even experienced being "in love" yet. I definitely did not want to die in this strange place. I prayed to God, Jesus, and every other deity that I could think of, for help. In later years I heard the expression that, "there were no atheists in foxholes". You can believe that.

Very early, in the dark, the next morning (22nd Dec.), the Germans attacked again and we were subjected to small arms and mortar fire off and on all day. At one point, mortar rounds were landing real close to my hole and, I was feeling very exposed with no helmet to crawl into. I could hear the mortar fragments and bullets smacking into the ground around my foxhole. Most of the mortar rounds were falling farther in toward the buildings. I saw one hit the roof of Captain Brown's CP. It must have been during this time that Major Parker was wounded by a fragment. I'm not sure about that since I didn't actually witness it. Major Goldstein then assumed command of the defense of the crossroads.

There was a G.I. in a foxhole next to mine who would not fire his weapon. When I called to him to fire, he just looked at me. I didn't know him and don't know his fate either. I could not understand why he was not willing to help himself (and the rest of us). I have read since that this is not an unusual occurrence. There are always a certain number who will not squeeze that trigger, even when their life is threatened.

After dark, I was moved in closer to the CP and dug another hole along with a G.I. named Randy Pierson. One of our guys made a run from hole to hole tossing everybody something to eat. I caught a box of "wet-or-dry" cereal and ate it dry. (It is the only thing that I recall eating the whole time we were in this place except for one chocolate "D" bar.)

The two of us spent the night in the hole. One of us would sleep an hour and the other keep watch and then we would alternate. This was the only kind of rest that anybody got. We had dug our hole reasonably deep and then further fortified it with some fence rails that we criss-crossed in front of it. I was sure that we would be attacked that night.

I had 30 rounds of carbine ammunition remaining and a knife that I placed on the ground where I could reach it. I prayed that it would not be necessary. It got very cold that night and the enemy did not attack. It was another very long night.

Once in a great while I get asked, "How do you take care of your (personal) business when you get the urge at a time like this?" Well, to answer that, I can tell you that you pick a time like this, when everything is quiet and dark, get out of the foxhole and let it go, as quickly and quietly as possible where ever you think the enemy might step in it. If you are under fire, you just do it in the foxhole and then throw it out (in the direction of the enemy, of course).

At the time, the weather was our worst enemy, but then in the morning things changed and weather took second place.

23rd Dec. It seems that the Germans had come closer each time our perimeter got smaller, and were ready to end it. The sequence of events on this day I cannot accurately recall but I was in and out of foxholes and, on occasion, running into the shelter of the stone building for a warm-up (or thaw-out). The fog would roll in and out giving us limited visibility. I would fire at anything I saw moving around in range of my hole.

This weather was tough on us, but I think it was to our advantage from a defensive point of view. I'm sure our enemy was not able to determine exactly what he had to overcome to take the crossroads. Whenever he came into view we would drive him back into the fog. Our ammunition was running out. I had one clip of carbine rounds and could find no more.

Word had come around that, when the ammo ran out and the Germans came, it would be every man for himself, escape if you could, otherwise a surrenderer was prudent. I never heard this as an order directly from an officer but it did not take a genius to assess our situation. We were apparently surrounded, but the Germans were taking the easiest route, the hard surface roads. That left the fields open.

Late afternoon, probably after 1600, the final assault came. Mortars, small arms, and fire from tanks. I was in the stone building, sitting on the floor with my back to the wall. Harold Kuizema was with me. This room must have been a kitchen at one time because I recall a wood burning cook stove and a G.I., who I don't know, trying to heat something at it.

Something big hit that wall behind us and exploded it right over our heads into the room. It must have hit high or it would have gotten the both of us. As it was, it filled the room with debris and dust. That was all the motivation we needed to leave there. To wait for another one never crossed my mind. We (Harold and me) went to the front door. They were coming and we were going. It was that simple.

Surrendering never crossed my mind. Some of our people were going to the cellar. I didn't like that idea. So, once outside, I crawled to the road and the ditch. There were some cattle milling about on the road, and much smoke, so I got up and ran through the cattle to the ditch on the far side and once again dropped down to avoid the German fire.

On this side of the road was a snow covered field, very open, but it was "away" from the attack, so that's the direction that I took. Not far into the field there was an explosion and Harold went down. As I got to him, I saw two G.I.'s approaching from the other direction. It was apparent that Harold was not going any farther on his own so between the three of us we moved him the remaining distance to the shelter of the woods and into the company of a patrol of infantrymen from the 82nd Airborne Division.

When we reached the shelter of the woods and I looked back at the crossroads, the whole sky seemed to be lighted by the flames from the burning building and vehicles. Harold, having rather severe wounds, was evacuated and I received permission to tag along with these 82nd AB Div. G.I.'s, which I did until late sometime the next day (24th) when I was able to locate some 106th Division people.

There were some vehicles from the 589th with this group that were not with us at Parker's Crossroads and one was loaded with duffel bags - mine was with them. Another miracle, clean underwear and socks. (I still have that same duffle bag.)

By John Schaffner

Editor's Note: John continued to serve in Europe through the remainder of the war and was discharged in November 1945, returning to his hometown, Baltimore, Maryland.
WASHINGTON – A team of retired military officers and historians announced today their plans to ask Congress to award General Norman Daniel “Dutch” Cota with the Congressional Medal of Honor. He received the Distinguished Service Cross in July 1944 for his battlefield heroism on Omaha Beach, D-Day, 6 June 1944. Many in the military community firmly believe that the gallantry and intrepidity exhibited by Cota in the largest and most complex Amphibious Assault in history rises to the level for the award of the Nation’s highest military honor, the Congressional Medal of Honor.

“We will call on President Trump and the U.S. Army to formally recognize General Cota’s physical actions, tactical decisions, battle command, and valor which literally reversed the first hour of limited progress and progressively assured success by the forces under his authority especially on 6 and 7 June 1944,” said Maj. Gen. Carroll Childers. “Heroes like Cota are once-in-a-generation, and he deserves fair consideration for the nation’s highest military honor for his actions on Omaha Beach. We invite anyone with information about BG Cota’s actions on D-Day to reach out to Team Cota on our Facebook page – www.facebook.com/CotaMOH – and help us discover additional new, substantive, and relevant material evidence that was not known at the time of the award of the DSC in July 1944. Such evidence may be in the form of letters home from soldiers, extracts from notable literary sources, or simply identifying a surviving soldier from the 116th Infantry of the 29th Infantry Division, attached units such as Armor or Engineers, the 5th Ranger Infantry Battalion (RIB), or in some instances the 2nd RIB.

Team Cota has the support of the 29th Division Association, the 29 ID historian Joe Balkoski, and many current and former Division Commanders of the 29th Infantry Division, and others who are beginning to join us, who are gathering information, documentation, letters, photos, or eyewitness accounts to support the materials already gathered from the U.S. Army related archives in the initial application to upgrade the DSC to the Medal of Honor, posthumously to Cota.

“Upon examination of the totality of Cota’s Omaha Beach actions during the D-Day operation,” said Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum (Ret.), “one can strongly make a direct parallel with Col. Joshua Chamberlain’s actions at Gettysburg... Neither Gettysburg, nor Omaha Beach, would have had the successful outcomes now recorded in our military history, if it were not for their personal presence and actions that day.”

Widely regarded as a tough and inspiring frontline general, Cota is one of the most overlooked of Allied military leaders during World War 2. At 51, he was the oldest soldier and the highest-ranking officer on Omaha Beach on D-Day, according to the U.S. Army. His command of assigned troops through enemy fire earned him the honor of leading U.S. Army troops down the Champs Elysees in the parade celebrating the liberation of Paris.

Residents of Borscheid, Luxembourg, honored Cota by naming “Norman Cota Square” in his honor. His rallying cry to inspire troops, “If you are Rangers, then get up there and lead the way,” is one of several versions of Cota utterings said to be the basis for the U.S. Army Ranger’s motto “Rangers lead the way.”

Born in Chelsea, Mass., in 1893, Cota spent his life in service of his country. He attended the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., where he befriended many of the nation’s future military leaders, including Dwight Eisenhower who was two years ahead of him. During World War 1, he rose from 2nd Lieutenant to Major in 18 months. He passed away in 1971, and is buried at the USMA.

“After 75 years, we know there are fewer and fewer surviving eyewitnesses to General Cota’s battlefield heroism,” said Childers. “We need the public’s help in identifying and locating these unique and brave men, so we can contact them and document their knowledge of Cota’s gallantry and intrepidity.

Contact:
Carroll D. Childers, MG (USA Ret.)
540-842-4937
Ranger6816@gmail.com
APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP MARYLAND MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

Full Name: ____________________________________________________________
   (Last)                                                        (First)                                                    (Middle)

Mailing Address: ________________________________________________________
   (Number and Street)                        (City, State, Zip)

E-Mail Address: ______________________________ Telephone Number: ________________

MILITARY SERVICE, if any

Branch _______ Active _______ Retired _______ Former _______ Regular _______ NG _______ Reserve ______

LEVEL OF MEMBERSHIP

Individual Membership ($25) _____ Family Membership ($50) _____
Supporting Membership ($250) ____ Benefactor Membership ($500) ____

Select level of membership and mail with check payable to: Maryland Military Historical Society, Inc. or MDMHS and mail to: William Mund, 441 Chalfonte Drive, Baltimore, MD 21228-4017.

All contributions are eligible for income tax relief as charitable donations and can be so noted in writing, if requested

MUSEUM HOURS

Our museum is open Tuesday through Friday, 9am to 3pm by appointment only.
Please contact First Lieutenant Mary Lyons at 410-576-1496, to schedule a visit to our museum.
Visit our website at: www.marylandmilitaryhistory.org