



Freedom's Voice

The Monthly Newsletter of the
Military History Center

112 N. Main ST
Broken Arrow, OK 74012
<http://www.okmhc.org/>



"Promoting Patriotism through the Preservation of Military History"

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Important Date

March 16 – Vietnam Veterans Day

The MHC will host its annual Vietnam Veterans Day observance on March 16. The February newsletter will contain detailed information. In the meantime, please mark your calendars, and plan to attend this important, patriotic event.



The Last Charge by John Solie depicts 1LT Edwin Ramsey leading troopers of the 26th Cavalry "Philippine Scouts" Regiment on Bataan in the last mounted charge of U.S. cavalry, seventy-five years ago this month – January 16, 1942. (Story on page six)



45th Commander-in-Chief



Donald Trump and Michael Pence laying a wreath at Arlington National Cemetery

On January 20, Donald John Trump was inaugurated as the forty-fifth President of the United States and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States.

President Trump was born in the Jamaica neighborhood of the Borough of Queens, New York City, on June 14, 1946. His high school education was at New York Military Academy. Young Donald had disciplinary problems, so his father sent him there to "shape him up". Apparently he succeeded, as Trump graduated as cadet captain and captain of the baseball team. After NYMA, Trump attended Fordham University in New York City for two years and then transferred to the University of Pennsylvania's Warton School of Business from which he graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in economics. After graduation, he joined his father's real estate business. The senior Trump gave his son control of the business in 1971, and Donald Trump was on his way. He developed the company into an exceptionally successful, international real estate development business.

Trump is the first U.S. president without either prior government or military experience. He is the seventh President elected from New York state.

MHC Christmas Party

The MHC held its annual staff Christmas party in the Center's Research Library on Thursday, December 9.

Meet the Docents



(L.-R.) Ken Collins, Mitch Reed, Jim Reib, Dennis Hoch, Barry Holcomb, Lynn Burgess, Greg Baile, Dakota Roberson, Tim Decocq, Harold Hayes and Sandy Winfield.

and, the Volunteers



(L.-R.) Nancy Brian, Jean Baile, MHC Executive Assistant (employee), Susan Virdell and Claudia Price



The MHC Board of Directors selected Docent Dennis Hoch as the 2016 Volunteer of the Year. The MHC is proud of all of its volunteers and docents, who are also volunteers, and grateful for their loyalty and hard work. It would not be possible to operate the MHC without them.



MHC Annual History Project Night



Zoe Woodman, Oneta Ridge Middle School history student, with her mother and MHC Docent, Harold Hayes



Ms. Heather Goodenough, Broken Arrow Schools Social Studies Instructional Specialist, her sons, Maddox and Tucker, a Childers Middle School history student – Ms. Goodenough is the driving force behind History Project Night. This year it was on Tuesday, December 13.



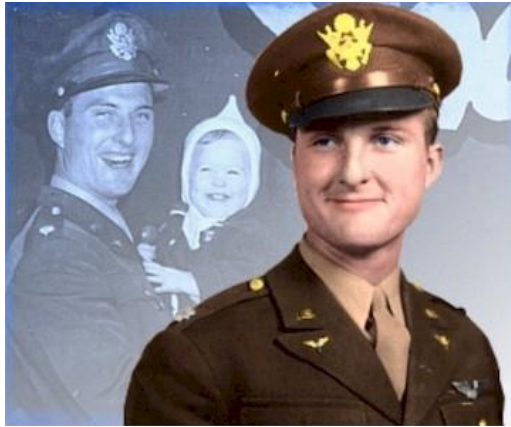
Mitch Reed, MHC Docent and President of Ernest Childers Chapter of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, arranged with the City of Broken Arrow for the placement of this sign at the MHC. It's a special reserved parking space for combat wounded, who are qualified for a handicap parking space. It is the first such sign in Broken Arrow. Others are expected to follow at other sites within the city.

Support the Military History Center

We believe the MHC provides a valuable service to the local community, especially to veterans and students, by "Promoting Patriotism through the Preservation of Military History". We ask for your financial support to help the MHC continue our educational endeavors, such as History Project Night, and to help our ongoing mission of promoting patriotism and honoring our veterans for the sacrifices they have made, and are making, to keep America free.

For more information, please contact the Military History Center at (918) 794-2712 to learn how you can be a financial supporter, or click on the link below to go to the MHC website at www.okmhc.org/donate/.

Monetary donations, as well as gifts in kind, are tax deductible, subject to IRS regulations.



In this composite photograph, Lt. Colonel Bob Vance is posing with his one-year-old daughter, Sharon, next to his B-24 Liberator bomber, which he named for her: *The Sharon D*.

Leon Robert Vance, Jr., called Bob by family and friends, was born at Enid, Oklahoma, on August 11, 1916. He attended the University of Oklahoma for two years before entering the United States Military Academy in 1935. While still a cadet, he underwent flight training at Mitchell Field on Long Island. After graduation from West Point, he was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant of infantry, but his first orders sent him to Spartan School of Aeronautics in Tulsa for further pilot training. He received his wings at Kelly Air Force Base, Texas on June 21, 1940.

Vance's rise in rank was meteoric. By September 1943, he was a Lieutenant Colonel. So far, Vance had spent his career in the United States in training commands, but he yearned for combat. In December 1943, he was assigned to the 489th Bomb Group, Eighth Air Force, as Deputy Commander. He was tasked with preparing the Group's B-24 pilots and crews for action in support of the D-Day landings. On May 30, 1944, Vance got his wish for combat. He was assigned as the 489th's Group Leader for a raid on Oldenberg, Germany. It would turn out to be his only mission in *The Sharon D*.

On June 5, Vance led his Group on a mission to Wimereaux, in the Pas-de-Calais area of France. As Group Leader, he would ride, not fly, the bomber, *Missouri Sue*. On the initial bomb run over the target, the bombs failed to release. *Missouri Sue* was the lead bomber on whose mark all other bombers would drop their loads. If *Missouri Sue's* bombs didn't fall, the mission would be a total failure. Vance ordered Captain Louis Masure to go around for another run. The Germans were now fully alert and ready. On the second bomb run, *Missouri Sue* was hit multiple times by anti-aircraft fire, heavily damaging her and killing and wounding some of the crew, but all but one bomb was successfully released. Vance was seriously wounded and Captain Masure was killed; three engines were knocked out, and explosions began to wrack the bomber. Vance took the controls and struggled to keep *Missouri Sue* in the air. He ordered the crew to bail out, but he believed that one of the crewmen was too badly wounded to bail out. He decided to ditch in the English Channel. The bomber hit hard, trapping Vance inside as water filled the aircraft, but an explosion threw him free. He was pulled from the water by a British air-sea rescue team. He later learned that two of the crew had jumped with the seriously wounded man.

After nearly two months of treatment in England, Vance was ordered back to the United States for further treatment. The C-54, in which he was riding, disappeared with all aboard, on July 26, 1944. It was presumed to have crashed into the Atlantic between Iceland and Newfoundland. The recommendation for the Medal of Honor for the Wimereaux mission was confirmed on January 4, 1945, but his widow requested that the award ceremony be delayed until the Medal could be presented to their daughter. On October 11, 1946, Major General James P. Hodges, commander of the 2nd Bomb Division when Vance was assigned to it, made the presentation to four-year-old Sharon Vance at Enid Air Force Base. The base was renamed Vance Air Force Base on July 7, 1949.

Vance's military residence of record is New York, so he is accredited to that state in Medal of Honor records, but he is indeed a true Oklahoma hero.



Vance (second from the left, standing) with the crew of *The Sharon D*



Four-year-old Sharon Vance receiving her father's Medal of Honor





Bataan Death March Survivor

Phillip William Coon was born in Creek County, Oklahoma on May 28, 1919. On December 7, 1941, he was serving with the 12th Infantry "Philippine" Division. The following day, the Japanese attack on the Philippines began. Manila fell within a month, and the American and Filipino defenders of Luzon were forced to retreat to the Bataan Peninsula. For the next three months, U.S. and Filipino forces held out despite a lack of food, medicine and naval and air support. On April 9, 1942, with his forces crippled by starvation and disease, Major General Edward King, Jr. surrendered his command of approximately 75,000 troops. Thus, began the infamous Bataan Death March.

On November 19, 1944, Staff Sergeant Ruben Rivers was a tank commander in the 761st Tank Battalion, the "Black Panthers", an all-black unit (commanded by white officers) of Third Army. On that day, the 761st was approaching the Siegfried Line near Guebling in eastern France. Rivers had been severely wounded three days earlier in action near Vic-sur-Seille, for which he was later awarded a Silver Star. He refused evacuation, going so far as refusing morphine and disobeying a direct order from his company commander to evacuate.

On November 19, near the town of Bougaktroff, the Black Panthers encountered a well-positioned German anti-tank unit, which delivered extremely heavy fire. Rivers ordered the other tanks to withdraw while he remained with his tank to provide covering fire. With his position fully exposed, the Germans directed their fire at him, hitting his tank with two high-explosive shells killing Rivers and wounding the crew.

The next day, his company commander, Captain David J. Williams, submitted a recommendation for the Medal of Honor for Rivers. At the time, the Army wasn't awarding Medals of Honor to black soldiers, and the recommendation went nowhere. Over the years, Captain Williams continued to press for the Medal for SSGT Rivers. It was finally approved, and on January 13, 1997, President Bill Clinton presented SSGT Rivers' Medal of Honor to Ms. Grace Woodfork, one of his sisters. David Williams was in attendance at the ceremony. SSGT Rivers' Medal of Honor citation:

"... for extraordinary heroism in action during the period 15-19 November 1944, toward Guebling, France. Though severely wounded in the leg, Sergeant Rivers refused medical treatment and evacuation, took command of another tank, and advanced with his company in Guebling the next day. Repeatedly refusing evacuation, Sergeant Rivers continued to direct his tank's fire at enemy positions through the morning of 19 November 1944. At dawn, Company A's tanks began to advance towards Bougaktroff, but were stopped by enemy fire. Sergeant Rivers, joined by another tank, opened fire on the enemy tanks, covering company A as they withdrew. While doing so, Sergeant Rivers' tank was hit, killing him and wounding the crew. Staff Sergeant Rivers' fighting spirit and daring leadership were an inspiration to his unit and exemplify the highest traditions of military service."

Ruben Rivers was born at Tecumseh, Oklahoma, on October 31, 1918. When the United States entered World War II, Rivers and two of his brothers joined the Army. SSGT Rivers is buried in the Lorraine American Cemetery and Memorial, located just outside Saint-Avold, Département de la Moselle, France.



Retired Maj. General Rita Aragon, Oklahoma Secretary of Military and Veterans' Affairs, presents 94-year-old, World War II veteran Phillip Coon of Sapulpa, Oklahoma with a Bronze Star, POW Medal, World War II Victory Medal and Combat Infantryman's Badge at a ceremony at Tulsa International Airport. Mr. Coon's son, Michael, a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan, is standing behind his father. Because of some unknown bureaucratic foul-up, the awards were not timely presented.

CPL Coon survived the Death March, wherein an estimated 21,000 American and Filipino soldiers perished, mostly murdered. He also survived three years of imprisonment in the Philippines and Japan, while enduring the worst conditions and brutality imaginable. He died on June 23, 2014, at age ninety-five, a year after receiving his World War II awards. He is buried in Fort Gibson National Cemetery.

Museum Hours and Admission Fee

Tuesday – Friday: 10:00 – 4:00; Saturday: 10:00 – 2:00
Closed Sunday and Monday and major Federal holidays

Adults – \$5.00

Members and Children under 18 – Free

For more information, call (918) 794-2712

www.okmhc.org

Horse Soldier to Guerilla Commander

The U.S. Army's last charge by horse cavalry occurred seventy-five years ago, on January 16, 1942, on the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines. It was tiny as cavalry charges go. Twenty-seven men of G Troop of the 26th Cavalry "Philippine Scouts" Regiment led by Lieutenant Ed Ramsey. The cavalymen (Filipinos except for Ramsey) were heavily outnumbered, but their audacious attack surprised the Japanese, who broke and ran. Ramsey and his men held their position for five hours under heavy fire before reinforcements arrived. Ramsey was awarded a Silver Star for this action.



Edwin Ramsey – 1937
OMA Cadet Captain



1LT Ramsey – 1941
Fort Stotsenberg, Philippines

Edwin Price Ramsey was born May 9, 1917, at Carlyle, Illinois. When he was two years old, his family moved to El Dorado, Kansas and ten years later to Wichita. He attended Oklahoma Military Academy (now Rogers State University) in Claremore, Oklahoma, from which he graduated in 1937. He was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Army Reserve. He enrolled at the University of Oklahoma but left in 1940 to go to California to be with his sister, a pilot, who had been severely injured in an airplane accident. After a year helping his sister recover, he entered the regular Army.

Ramsey was posted to the 11th Cavalry in California. He readily jumped at the opportunity, when volunteers were requested for the 26th Cavalry in the Philippines. After Bataan fell, Ramsey, along with his friend, Captain Joseph Barker, escaped into the jungles of Luzon where they joined the Luzon Guerilla Force, commanded by Lt. Colonel Claude Thorp. Thorp had been the Provost Marshall at Fort Stotsenberg. Thorp's guerilla group operated from Manila northwest to Lingayen Gulf – East Luzon Guerilla Area (ELGA). Thorp was captured in 1943 and killed by the Japanese while in captivity. Barker took his place, but like Thorp was captured and subsequently killed. Both men endured horrific torture for about a year, but neither divulged information about their guerilla operations.

Before Thorp's capture, he had recommended that Ramsey be jumped two ranks to Major, and Barker to Lt. Colonel, to which General Douglas MacArthur had concurred. After Barker's capture, Ramsey assumed command of the ELGA, which eventually grew to 40,000 men and women. In the beginning, the guerillas conducted low level sabotage and attacks on isolated Japanese patrols and outposts. They tried to be careful to conduct

their activities in such a way as to minimize Japanese retaliation on civilians.

Beginning in 1943, MacArthur ordered the Philippine guerilla units to concentrate on intelligence gathering for his anticipated re-conquest. In 1944, with the Leyte landings imminent, he ordered Ramsey to go all out with sabotage and other guerilla actions in order to maximize disruption within Japanese lines.

The ELGA guerillas were an important, if not the most important, factor in Japanese General Yamashita's decision not to defend Manila or the expected Lingayen Gulf landings. Instead, he chose to withdraw and establish a defensive line in the mountains of northeast Luzon. He realized that he would have 40,000 guerillas at his back if he defended the beaches.

After liberation of the Philippines in 1945, General MacArthur personally presented Ramsey a Distinguished Service Cross and promoted him to Lieutenant Colonel for his guerilla leadership. MacArthur credited Ramsey and his guerillas critical to the successful operation to retake Luzon. Ramsey's health was almost destroyed during the war. At liberation, he was down to ninety-three pounds and suffered from malaria, dysentery and acute malnutrition. Shortly after liberation, he suffered two nervous breakdowns. MacArthur ordered him to a hospital in the United States. His recovery lasted almost a year. Lt. Colonel Ramsey was medically discharged in 1946.

After his discharge, Ramsey returned to the University of Oklahoma, where he obtained a law degree. He got a job with Hughes Aircraft Corporation and subsequently served as a vice president in its Far East Division, headquartered in Japan. He later headed electronics and consulting firms in Taiwan and the Philippines. When he retired, he settled in California. In 2005, he published his wartime memoirs, *Lt. Ramsey's War, Horse Soldier to Guerilla Commander*, with author, Stephen J. Rivele.

Colonel Ramsey died in Los Angeles on March 7, 2013, age ninety-five, a remarkable feat considering his condition at the end of the war. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.



LTC Edwin Ramsey – 1945

A documentary film of LTC Ramsey premiered November 13, 2016, at the Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. The film is entitled "Never Surrender: The Ed Ramsey Story." The film's producers plan to enter the film in the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (Oscar nominations) in three categories: Documentary, Original Score and Original Song. The film will be premiered in Oklahoma on Friday, June 9 at the 2017 OMA Reunion in the Will Rogers Auditorium on the Rogers State University campus.

45th Infantry “Thunderbird” Division in World War II



Thunderbirds marching through Caltanissetta, Sicily.

Caltanissetta, Sicily – July 1943



157th Infantry Regiment (Colorado National Guard)
Reipertswiller, Germany – January 1945



Men of the 179th Infantry Regiment (Oklahoma National Guard) look
for German snipers at Caiazzo, Italy – October 1943



Soldiers of the 157th Infantry Regiment rescue a young Polish
Jewish boy, named Mieczyslaw, who survived the “Dachau
death train”, Dachau – April 29, 1945



The Thunderbirds going ashore at Anzio – January 22, 1944



Division Color Guard preparing for the victory parade
Munich – May 1945

This Month's Featured Exhibit



45th Infantry Division/Brigade Exhibit



45th Infantry Brigade Combat Team conducting a ceremony prior to deployment to Afghanistan – February 2011

During World War II, the 45th Infantry Division was awarded one unit award – French Croix de Guerre with Palm – and eight campaign streamers: Sicily, Naples-Foggia, Anzio, Rome, Southern France, Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace and Central Europe.

For service in Korea, the Division was awarded one unit decoration – Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation – and four campaign streamers: Second Korean Winter, Korea, Summer-Fall 1952, Third Korean Winter and Korea, Summer 1953.



“Lest We Forget”



Cambridge American Cemetery – Cambridgeshire, England

Cambridge American Cemetery, also known as Maddingly American Cemetery for a nearby town, was established in 1943 as a temporary cemetery on 30.5 acres donated by the University of Cambridge. After the war, it was selected as the only permanent American WWII military cemetery in the British Isles. About forty-two per cent of those temporarily interred in England and Northern Ireland during the war were reinterred at Cambridge Cemetery. The cemetery contains 3,809 headstones, with the remains of 3,812 servicemen, mostly airmen who died over Europe and sailors from North Atlantic convoys. Besides personnel of the United States armed forces, there are also buried eighteen members of the British Commonwealth armed services, who were American citizens serving chiefly in the Royal Air Force and Air Transport Auxiliary. The inscribed Wall of the Missing records the names of 5,127 missing servicemen, most of whom died in the Battle of the Atlantic or in the strategic air bombardment of northwest Europe. (wikipedia.com) Among the names on the Wall of the Missing are those of Captain Richard D. McMinn of Buffalo, Oklahoma, whose fighter plane crashed into the North Sea off England on April 15, 1943, Leon Robert Vance, Jr., Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. and Glenn Miller. The latter three were lost in aircraft mishaps over water.

Freedom is not free.



THANK YOU