



# 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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### United States Armed Services Days of Observance

The month of June has several Armed Services Days of Observance. We believe the two most important are Army Day on June 13 and Flag Day on June 14.



First flag of the United States – June 14, 1777

### July 15 – Military Trivia Evening

Calling all teachers, students and history types. The MHC will host its third annual Military Trivia Evening on Saturday, July 15 at the Armed Forces Reserve Center located at 26401 E. 101<sup>st</sup> Street, Broken Arrow. Doors will open at 5:00; the Trivia Contest will begin at 6:00.

If you think you know military history and want to test your knowledge against others, here's your opportunity. Participants will be organized into teams of eight. Even if your team doesn't win, it's a lot of fun. For information, call the MHC at 918-794-2712. Come out, have some fun, learn more about military history, and support the MHC. Participant entry fee is \$25.

### Flag Day at the MHC

On Saturday, June 10, the MHC held its annual Flag Day celebration. There was a good turnout of local veterans and their families. Broken Arrow Mayor, Craig Thurmond, City Manager, Michael Spurgeon, and other city officials were also in attendance. The weather was a little windy, but otherwise pleasant. Dr. Clarence Oliver, retired Broken Arrow Superintendent of Schools, Korean War veteran and long-time supporter of the MHC, served as Master of Ceremonies.



Dr. Clarence Oliver

As has been the custom at all previous Flag Day ceremonies, the flags in the Memorial Flag Plaza were lowered prior to the event. As part of the ceremony, all the flags are raised, one at a time, beginning with the National Flag. The service flags are raised accompanied by the particular service's anthem. The service flags are raised beginning with the Army flag and followed by the other services in order of their founding.



Raising the National Flag – left to right: Willard Parish, Lynn Burgess and Jon Johnson, all Vietnam War combat veterans



Flag raisers standing by to raise the service flags

The service flag raisers: Harold Hayes, Junior Nipps (Army); Dennis Hoch, Ken Collins, DeCocq (Navy); Craig Roberts, Tom Tejada (Marine Corps); Elvin Hardwick, Bill Conrad (Air Force); Woody Woods (Medal of Honor); Mark Howell, Mitch Reed (Army National Guard); Don Hughes, George Banasky (Air National Guard); Clarence Oliver, Paul Roberts (45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division/Brigade) Except for Elvin Hardwick, a Broken Arrow High School JROTC Cadet, all the flag raisers are military veterans, from World War II to Afghanistan.



Miss Ella Phillips, a ninth-grade student at Regent Preparatory School in Tulsa, singing the National Anthem



MHC Docent, Ken Collins, accompanied on guitar by Docent Dennis Hoch, reciting a poem dedicated to the American flag



Representative Mike Ritze (Oklahoma House District 80) featured speaker at the Flag Day ceremony

The MHC is grateful to all the volunteers who made this event a success: those who prepared the Flag Plaza and those who participated in the ceremonies. We especially thank everyone who gave up a couple of hours of their Saturday to come out and pay tribute to our flag.

## Quilt of Valor Presentation

The Tulsa Chapter of Quilts of Valor presented a Quilt of Valor to Vietnam War veteran Jon Johnson, Co. C, 1<sup>st</sup> BN, 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry "First Team" Division (Air Mobile). SGT Johnson participated in the Battle of Landing Zone X-Ray in the Ia Drang Valley of South Vietnam – November 14-15, 1965.



Quilt of Valor members, Pat Morris and Lisa Rollins, present SGT Jon Johnson with a Quilt of Valor



SGT Jon Johnson and his wife, Mary



SGT Johnson and SP4 Willard Parish served in the same battalion but in different companies at Landing Zone X-Ray. They fought only yards apart, but had never met until the Flag Day Ceremony

## Book Signing

The MHC hosted a book signing prior to the Flag Day Ceremony. Mr. Charles Sasser, Oklahoma author of numerous books, both fiction and non-fiction, presented several of his titles at the book signing. The focus was one of his more recent books, *Blood in the Hills*, co-authored by Mr. Robert Maras, whose experiences as a Marine Corps PFC during the Khe Sanh hill fighting, are told in the book. The book signing was a great success. Mr. Sasser sold almost all of the books he brought. His books can be found online at Amazon and Barnes & Noble.



Charles Sasser on the left with Vietnam War combat veterans, Craig Roberts and Willard Parish

## This Month's Featured Exhibit



During World War II, the Office of War Information's Bureau of Graphics oversaw the production of over 200,000 different designs of propaganda posters. Unlike most other nations at war, American propaganda posters mostly carried positive themes to encourage support for the war. These themes included conservation, production, recruiting, home efforts and secrecy. The posters were usually placed in areas without paid advertisements, such as post offices, railroad stations, schools, restaurants and retail stores.

The OWI held design competitions among artists, which allowed for an increased number of designs from which to choose. The artists designed the posters at no cost to the government.

Of the three posters shown above, the two on the right reminded Americans of the need for caution in their conversations, suggesting that loose talk about matters concerning the war effort could cost another soldier his life or even the loss of a ship. ("Loose lips sink ships.") The poster on the far left shows the arm of an enemy soldier thrusting a bayonet through a Bible, meant to show Americans that they were fighting for their civilization and freedoms.

Stephen Adelson donated these three posters to the MHC.

### Support the Military History Center

We believe the MHC provides a valuable service to the local community, especially to veterans and students. We ask for your financial support to help the MHC continue its mission of "Promoting Patriotism through the Preservation of Military History" and to recognize the sacrifices made by our veterans to keep America safe and free.

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

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

## Battle of Midway

Seventy-five years ago, this month, on June 4-7, 1942, the United States Navy engaged a powerful Japanese fleet that included four aircraft carriers, north of Midway Island. The much smaller American battle fleet included three aircraft carriers: *Hornet*, *Enterprise* and *Yorktown*, the latter having been patched up after taking a beating a month earlier in the Coral Sea. On June 4, Navy fliers sank two of the Japanese aircraft carriers within fifteen minutes, and mortally wounded a third, which the Japanese scuttled the next day. Late in the afternoon of June 4, Navy fliers heavily damaged the fourth Japanese carrier, which was also scuttled the following day. The Japanese, in turn, sank *Yorktown*, first heavily damaging her with aerial attacks and finally finishing her with a submarine torpedo attack, while she was under tow to Pearl Harbor.

Just six months after the December 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor, the American victory at Midway proved to be the turning point of the war in the Pacific.



*The Famous Four Minutes* by R.G. Smith depicts the scene moments after Lieutenant Commander Richard H. Best and his wingman successfully bombed the aircraft carrier, *Akagi*, flagship of the Japanese fleet. Another aircraft carrier is burning in the distance. The Japanese scuttled *Akagi* the following morning.

### 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](http://www.okmhc.org)



Staff Sergeant John R. Crews was serving with Co. F, 253<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment, 63<sup>rd</sup> Infantry "Blood and Fire" Division near Lobenbacherhof, Germany, on April 8, 1945. "His company came under heavy enemy machinegun and automatic rifle fire. Storming a well dug-in position single handedly, he killed two of the machinegun crew at pointblank range with his M1 rifle. Although badly wounded from enemy crossfire, he charged the remaining enemy positions, and with accurate rifle fire, forced seven enemy soldiers to surrender and the other defenders to flee". For his display of "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty", SSGT Crews was awarded the Medal of Honor.

John R. Crews was born at Golden (McCurtain County), Oklahoma, on March 8, 1923. He joined the Army at Bowlegs in December 1942. He served as a military policeman before entering combat in Europe, in December 1944. After the war, he settled in Oklahoma City and earned a bachelor's degree from Oklahoma City University. He retired as a supervisor of a meat-products company in Oklahoma City. John R. Crews died in Oklahoma City, on September 25, 1999. He is buried in Resthaven Gardens Cemetery in Oklahoma City.

In addition to the Medal of Honor, Crews' other combat awards include a Silver Star, two Bronze Stars, Purple Heart and Combat Infantryman's Badge



At a triple awards ceremony on June 10, 1948, President Truman presented the Medal of Honor to Commander Jackson Charles Pharris, USN (Ret); Pharmacist's Mate First Class Francis Junior Pierce, USN; and Staff Sergeant John R. Crews, U.S. Army, on the right.



On October 8, 1951, SFC Tony Kenneth Burris was serving in Company L, 3<sup>rd</sup> BN, 38<sup>th</sup> Infantry "Rock of the Marne" Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry "Indianhead" Division near Mundung-ni, Korea.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division entered Korea at Pusan on July 23, 1950. The Division took up positions on the Naktong River to help defend the Pusan Perimeter, where it engaged in desperate fighting. The 2ID was the first division to break out of the Perimeter. It helped drive the North Koreans all the way back to the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. After the United Nations approved advancement into North Korea, the 2ID led Eighth Army's drive up the west side of the Korean Peninsula. It was within fifty miles of the Yalu River when the Chinese struck. The Division was surrounded by overwhelming numbers of Chinese soldiers and had to fight its way through a six-mile-long roadblock the men called "the gauntlet". During the retreat south, the 2ID lost a third of its men. The 38<sup>th</sup> Infantry was decimated.

We don't know when Burris joined the 38<sup>th</sup>, but almost certainly, it was after the retreat. On February 12, 1951, he was seriously wounded during the Battle of Hoengsong. After his recovery, he returned to his unit. By now, Burris was a Sergeant First Class. Someone apparently recognized leadership qualities in him, along with the acute shortage of NCOs, and jumped him five ranks. During the battle for Heartbreak Ridge, he "distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and outstanding courage above and beyond the call of duty. On 8 October, when his company encountered intense fire from an entrenched hostile force, SFC Burris charged forward alone, throwing grenades into the position and destroying approximately 15 of the enemy. On the following day, spearheading a renewed assault on enemy positions on the next ridge, he was wounded by machine gun fire but continued the assault, reaching the crest of the ridge ahead of his unit and sustaining a second wound. Calling for a 57mm recoilless rifle team, he deliberately exposed himself to draw hostile fire and reveal the enemy position. The enemy machine gun emplacement was destroyed. The company then moved forward and prepared to assault other positions on the ridge line. SFC Burris, refusing evacuation and submitting only to emergency treatment, joined the unit in its renewed attack, but fire from a hostile emplacement halted the advance. SFC Burris rose to his feet, charged forward and destroyed the first emplacement with his heavy machine gun and crew of six men. Moving out to the next emplacement, and throwing his last grenade, which destroyed this position, he fell mortally wounded by enemy fire. Inspired by his consummate gallantry, his comrades renewed a

## Heartbreak Ridge

spirited assault, which overran enemy positions and secured Hill 605, a strategic position in the battle for Heartbreak Ridge. SFC Burris' indomitable fighting spirit, outstanding heroism, and gallant self-sacrifice reflect the highest glory upon himself, the infantry and the U.S. Army". (Medal of Honor Citation)

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General of the Army Omar N. Bradley, presented SFC Burris's family his Medal of Honor, on May 9, 1952. Burris was awarded a Silver Star for a previous heroic act, probably during the Battle of Hoengsong.

Tony Burris was born at Blanchard (Grady County), Oklahoma, on May 30, 1929. He volunteered for the Army in July 1950, and after sixteen weeks of basic and advanced training, he was sent to Korea and the 38<sup>th</sup> Infantry. He was interred with full military honors in Blanchard Cemetery, on February 11, 1952. SFC Burris was inducted into the Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame in 2013.



SFC Tony K. Burris Memorial – Blanchard Oklahoma

The Memorial and the surrounding flag plaza were dedicated on September 15, 2007. The Choctaw Nation, Pioneer Telephone Company and private donors provided the funding. Kingfisher, Oklahoma sculptor, John Gooden, created the life-size statue. Tony Burris is the only member of the Choctaw Nation ever to have received the Medal of Honor

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We cannot know all the Oklahomans who fought in the battle for Heartbreak Ridge. One other whom we do know is Thomas Henry Heath, born February 24, 1918, at Tonkawa in Kay County. He graduated from Tonkawa High School in 1938 and from Northern Oklahoma Junior College in 1940. He served in Europe in World War II as an enlisted man. After the war, he settled in Macon, Georgia, remained in the Army Reserve and graduated Officer Candidate School. He was commissioned a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the Army Reserve.

After the Korean War began, he was recalled to active duty and sent to Korea, in November 1950. By then he was a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant. He was assigned to 2<sup>nd</sup> BN, 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry "Tomahawk" Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, where he commanded Company G. He was seriously wounded during the Battle of Chipyeong-ni on February 17, 1951. After recovering from his wounds, like Tony Burris, he chose to return to his unit. He died on Heartbreak Ridge, September 21, 1951. 1LT Heath was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.



The Battle of Heartbreak Ridge was fought between September 13 and October 15, 1951. It was among the first of many subsequent battles fought in the hills of Korea, a few miles north of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. The area of Heartbreak Ridge is now within the Republic of Korea.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division and its three UN attached battalions – one each from France, Netherlands and Thailand – suffered over 3,700 casualties – killed, wounded and missing. The Chinese and North Koreans lost an estimated 25,000.

## RAF Eagle Squadrons

Before the United States officially entered World War II, on December 7, 1941, hundreds of young American men made application to join the British Royal Air Force (RAF) or the Canadian Royal Air Force (CRAF). Others tried to make their way to Finland or France in an effort to join those air forces. Some were motivated by their desires to fight Nazism, and in the case of Finland, to fight communists. (None actually it made to Finland.) Mostly, they were motivated by the thought of adventure and the opportunity to fly the fastest and most powerful single engine aircraft available to them – British Hurricanes and Spitfires.

Most of the men adapted well to the RAF and to England and English customs. A few didn't and were sent home. Several died in training accidents while learning to handle the powerful aircraft and because of weather or navigation errors. The English treated the young Americans as special. The men were not allowed to pay at pubs or restaurants and regularly received free theater and cinema (movie) tickets.

By the time most of them reached England, the Battle of Britain and the bombing Blitz were over. The first men were organized into Number 71 Squadron, which the British dubbed Eagle Squadron, in recognition of America's national symbol. Two other squadrons were later organized – Numbers 121 and 133 – also called Eagle Squadrons. Their missions included raids over German occupied France and Belgium and as convoy cover in the North Sea and the Atlantic approaches to Great Britain.

Royal Air Force Eagle Squadron badges are left to right: Number 71 Squadron, Number 121 Squadron, Number 133 Squadron.



After the United States entered the war, most of the Eagles were eventually inducted into the U.S. Army Air Force. On September 26, 1942, the Eagle squadrons ceased to exist. Altogether, 244 Americans, including eight Oklahomans, served in the Eagle Squadrons.

Gilmore Cecil "Danny" Daniel joined the CRAF on July 20, 1940, and later qualified as an RAF pilot, on February 21, 1941. He first flew in regular RAF squadrons, where he was credited with two kills and two probables. When the Eagles were formed, he was assigned to Number 71 Squadron, but ultimately served in all three Eagle squadrons. He was shot down over the English Channel on October 13, 1941. His life raft washed ashore near Calais, where he was captured. He was the first American captured by the Germans in World War II.

The Germans sent Flight Officer Daniel to Stalag Luft III near Sagan in eastern Germany (now Zagen in Poland). This was the

camp from which the "Great Escape" occurred. Daniel was not one of the escapees, but undoubtedly participated in the preparations for the escape.

In 1949, he joined the USAF as an enlisted man. He was later commissioned an officer and flew with the 319<sup>th</sup> Fighter Interceptor Squadron in the Korea War. In 1958, he flew cover for marines landing in Lebanon. Daniel served in Vietnam in a staff position. He retired from the Air Force in 1969 as a Major. During his service with the RAF, he was awarded a UK Distinguished Service Order. In the USAF, he was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross during the Korean War and Bronze Star for ground action in Vietnam.

Gilmore Cecil Daniel was born on November 30, 1917, in Tulsa County. He attended Oklahoma Military Academy and Spartan School of Aeronautics. He lived in Tulsa the last twenty years of his life, where he died on April 9, 1992. He is buried in Osage Gardens Cemetery at Skiatook.



Gilmore C. Daniel



Paul M. Ellington



Richard McMinn

At age twenty, Paul Milton Ellington was the youngest of the Oklahoma Eagles. He was born in Tulsa on May 31, 1920. He flew in Number 121 Squadron and later in the USAAF's 335<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron. While on a bomber escort mission on March 4, 1944, his P-51 Mustang experienced engine failure over Holland. Captain Ellington was forced to bail out and was captured. His decorations include a U.S. Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster.

After the war, Ellington returned to Tulsa and a career with Texaco. He died at Slidell, Louisiana, on June 29, 2001. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Richard D. McMinn was born at Buffalo in Harper County, Oklahoma on September 24, 1919. In the RAF, he was assigned to Number 71 Squadron. He transferred to the USAAF in September 1942. Over Ostend, Belgium on April 15, 1943, Captain McMinn's aircraft was either severely damaged, or he was badly wounded, or both. He tried to fly the fighter back to base, but crashed in the North Sea, twenty miles east of Felixstowe, England. His body was never recovered. His name is engraved on the Tablets of the Missing in Cambridge American Cemetery, Cambridgeshire, England.

Gilbert O. Halsey was born at Chickasha, Oklahoma, on November 10, 1910. He attended the University of Oklahoma for one year before attending Spartan School of Aeronautics in Tulsa. He enlisted in the Royal Air Force on May 1, 1941. At age thirty on enlistment, he was the oldest of the Oklahoma Eagles. He transferred to the Army Air Force on September 16, 1942. On January 24, 1944, he assumed command of an Air Force fighter squadron in England. As a major in the U.S. Army Air Force, he participated in the first flight in which the USAAF

used drop tanks, allowing fighters to penetrate deep into Germany. He was the holder of the U.S. Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters and the UK Distinguished Flying Cross.

After the war, Halsey worked for several oil companies, finally flying for Sinclair Oil Company. He died of disease at a Sinclair camp near Diara, Ethiopia on September 2, 1955. He is buried in Rose Hill Cemetery in Chickasha.



Gilbert Halsey (center) and two other Eagles viewing a plaque of appreciation presented to their Squadron by the Duchess of Kent.

Gene P. Neville was born September 28, 1917, at Adair in Mayes County, Oklahoma. He was initially assigned to Number 133 Squadron, but by his last mission on September 26, 1942, he had transferred to the USAAF's 336<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron of the 4<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group, Eighth Air Force. On a bungled mission to bomb a German airfield near Morlaix, France, he was shot down by anti-aircraft fire near Guingamp on the Brest Peninsula. He is buried in Brittany American Cemetery in Normandy.

Edwin Ezell Orbison was born in Jackson County, Oklahoma in 1918. On February 9, 1941, he was flying with a British squadron over the North Sea to observe how to shoot down German planes. He got involved in a dogfight and became disoriented in heavy cloud cover. As his Hurricane spun toward the sea, Orbison bailed out, but didn't survive. His body was recovered and buried in a small cemetery in the village of Kirton-in-Lindsey, Lincolnshire in northeast England. He was the first American Eagle killed as result of action in combat.



Gene Neville and his Spitfire



Edwin Orbison in his Hurricane

William Corbett "Bill" Slade, Jr. was born September 6, 1915, in rural Lamar County, Texas. His family lived in Montgomery County, Arkansas and Norphlet, Arkansas before set-

ting in Braman (Kay County), Oklahoma. He was assigned to Number 133 Squadron as a pilot officer and gunnery instructor.

After the war, he settled in New Mexico and a career with Southwestern Public Service Company. He died at Roswell, New Mexico, on June 27, 2016, at age 100, the last of the Oklahoma Eagles. He is buried in South Park Cemetery in Roswell.

Edwin D. "Jesse" Taylor was born at Durant, Oklahoma on January 20, 1918. He was initially assigned to Number 121 Squadron but was later transferred to Number 133. After the war, he went on to a career in the U.S. Air Force, retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel. After retirement, he settled in southern California. Colonel Taylor died on September 23, 2003. He is buried in Riverside National Cemetery, Riverside, California.



William C. Slade, Jr.



Major Edwin Taylor, USAAF

The pilots of the Eagle Squadrons who served in the RAF in 1941-42 were well known in the United States, as their exploits were published in major newspapers, national magazines and especially their hometown newspapers. Once they were incorporated into the USAAF, they became just other American combat pilots and soon faded from memory. Seventy-plus years after the end of World War II, they are almost entirely unknown.

The Eagles in the RAF, were collectively no better or worse pilots than any typical squadron of RAF pilots, but to the British people, they were very special young men who had come to help save them during their darkest time of the war. One of the Oklahoma Eagles died in the service of the United Kingdom. Two others died flying for the United States.



Eagle Squadron Monument – Grosvenor Square Gardens – London

## Soldier of World War I



PFC Jesse Owen Anderson – 1918

Jesse Owen Anderson was born in Franklin County, Arkansas, on August 12, 1893. After being drafted into the Army, he reported to Camp Pike at Little Rock, Arkansas for orientation and training. At some point, he was transferred to the 137<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment (Kansas National Guard), which was assigned to the Army's 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, on August 5, 1917. (In the above photograph, PFC Anderson is wearing the World War I shoulder sleeve insignia of the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.)

The 35<sup>th</sup> Division, including the 137<sup>th</sup> Infantry, arrived at Le Harve, France, on May 11, 1918. At the beginning of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive on September 26, the 35<sup>th</sup> Division opened with a six-hour artillery barrage on a heavily defended hill on its front. The 137<sup>th</sup> took the hill their first attempt. Their trial by fire had begun and would last for six days and six nights, with little or no food, only snatches of sleep, and an uninterrupted rain of shells, gas and bullets from German infantry, artillery and warplanes. The 137<sup>th</sup> Infantry took every objective assigned it, but in the taking, suffered casualties of nearly 1,300 men out of the 2,800 men engaged. The 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division relieved the 35<sup>th</sup> Division on October 1. After resting in the rear for ten days, the 35<sup>th</sup> moved to the Verdun area. The Division remained in the fighting until November 9, when it was relieved. The war ended two days later.

Anderson married Miss Mervie Turner in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, in 1920. They moved to Tulsa just prior to World War II, and both went to work at the Douglas Aircraft bomber plant. Jesse Anderson died in Tulsa, on July 13, 1973. He is buried in Memorial Park Cemetery in Tulsa. He is a true hero of whom every Oklahoman and American can be proud and thankful.

His grandson, Donnie Anderson, donated to the MHC several of PFC Anderson's personal World War I articles and an Italian bayonet that he somehow acquired, perhaps off a dead German. We thank Mr. Anderson for his gifts and the opportunity to learn about his heroic grandfather.

## Soldier of World War II



PVT Jackson Burgoyne Stelle – 1944

Jackson Burgoyne Stelle was born at Fairland (Ottawa County) Oklahoma, on June 8, 1925. He entered the Army on September 22, 1943. After basic training, he was assigned to the 394<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 99<sup>th</sup> Infantry "Checkerboard" Division.

During his six months or so of combat, Stelle rose quickly in rank, to Tech Sergeant. He was a squad leader responsible for a machine-gun crew. The 99<sup>th</sup> arrived in England on October 10, 1944, where it was billeted in Dorsetshire. Four weeks later, it moved over to France. The 394<sup>th</sup> first saw action in the Ardennes Forest of Belgium, in what would later be called the Battle of the Bulge. After the Bulge, the 99<sup>th</sup> moved to the west bank of the Rhine, then crossed the river at Remagen. They rapidly moved east, until they were at the southeast sector of the Ruhr Pocket on April 5. After reduction of the Ruhr Pocket, the 99<sup>th</sup> moved south. On May 3-4, the Division liberated two slave labor camps and Mühldorf, a sub-camp of Dachau.

After the war, Stelle worked in construction in the Long Beach, California area. In 1971, he returned to Oklahoma, settling in Miami, not far from his boyhood home. Jackson Stelle died at Miami, Oklahoma, on April 6, 2012. He is buried in Fairland Cemetery.

Below is a collection of SGT Stelle's World War II memorabilia, which along with the above photograph and other artifacts, were donated by his son, Scott. We thank him for giving us the opportunity to learn about another American hero.



The knife was made by a German POW who gave it to SGT Stelle.

# United States Army



Valley Forge, Pennsylvania – 1777-78



Bastogne, Belgium (the Bulge) – 1944



Gettysburg, Pennsylvania – 1863



Hoengsong, South Korea – 1951



Argonne Forest, France – 1918

For 242 years, since June 13, 1775, the United States Army has been defending the nation and its interests, world-wide – from the War of Independence to the War on Terror.



Landing Zone X-Ray, Ia Drang Valley, Vietnam – 1965



# *“Lest We Forget”*



**Brittany American Cemetery – St. James, France**

Brittany American Cemetery lies among the hedgerows in rolling farm country at Saint-James, Normandy, France near the north-eastern edge of Brittany. The 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division liberated the cemetery site on August 2, 1944. A temporary military cemetery was established there three days later. It contains the remains of 4,410 World War II American soldiers, most of whom lost their lives in the Normandy and Brittany campaigns that followed the June 6, 1944, D-Day landings and the battle for a foothold in France. Among the graves is that of Eagle Squadron Flying Officer and USAAF 2LT Gene P. Neville of Oklahoma City. He was shot down on September 26, 1942, near Guingamp on the Brest Peninsula of France. Along the retaining wall of the memorial terrace are inscribed the names of 498 of the missing. Rosettes mark the names of soldiers whose remains have since been found and identified.

*Freedom is not free.*



**THANK YOU**