



The Bugle Call



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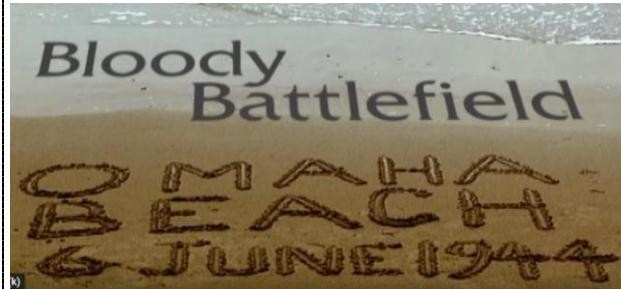
June, 2019, Volume 9, Num 6

Warminster, Pennsylvania

*Ann's Choice Residents and Guests are invited to attend Veterans Group Programs and Events-
(Meetings are open to ALL with no charge)*

NEXT MEETING: June 18, 2019 at 7:30 pm, Ann's Choice PAC

At the June meeting we will remember the D-Day invasion 75 years ago with a video showing clips from June 6, 1944 and interviews with participants at Omaha Beach. The program video is narrated by Stephen E. Ambrose, Professor of History at the University of New Orleans.



Elections for Veterans Group board members will be held at the meeting on Tuesday, June 18. This year, the elections will be for secretary, treasurer, and directors from each clubhouse. Current officers are shown at the far left. Volunteering to serve on the board keeps our group active in our community. Contact Mary Hurly at 215-420-7472 for more information.

All members are encouraged to wear their Veterans Group shirts to the meeting.

Share Your Story

Did you serve during World War II? Do you have any letters you wrote to family back home which describe what you were doing during the war? Would you be able to spend fifteen to thirty minutes talking about your recollections of those times?

If you answered 'yes' to any of those questions, please contact the newsletter editor, John Hodges, at (215) 323-4969 or at BC-412..

Veterans Group Meeting on Tuesday, September 17

After the summer, the Veterans Group will meet in the Ann's Choice PAC on Tuesday evening, September 17, at 7:30 pm. Details about the program will be in the September newsletter.

Program Committee Volunteers

The Veterans Group Board is seeking a few volunteers to help plan the monthly programs during the year. We have a program at each Veterans Group meeting in January through April, June, September and October. We have resources and contacts from previous meetings which can be used again for future meetings. And new ideas for program topics are always welcome. Contact Gordon Larson (215-672-3137) or Mary Hurly (215-420-7472).

Volunteer and Service Opportunities

There is a continuing need for help with the program to drive veterans to the Horsham VA Center. Volunteers do not have to be veterans themselves in order to assist veterans getting to their appointments. Call Judy Wright at 215-674-2328 for information about the program or to schedule a ride.



Volunteers, who do not need to be veterans, are also needed to help with the Deployable Flags Program to line our streets with flags. For more information or to volunteer call Jerry Wright at 215-674-2328.

Volunteer and Service Opportunities

Volunteers are also needed at meetings to help residents with mobility devices. For more information or to volunteer for this service call Russ Neiger at 610-930-3077.

Veterans History Project

Staff Sergeant Preston Earl Bagent

This article includes a small fraction of the material from the Veterans History Project of the American Folklife Center (Library of Congress). The Veterans History Project collects, preserves, and makes accessible the personal accounts of American war veterans so that future generations may hear directly from veterans and better understand the realities of war. These accounts are personal narratives (both audio and video), correspondence to friends and family, and visual materials (photographs, drawing and scrapbooks).

<http://www.loc.gov/vets/>

These two letters are just part of a collection of 17 letters plus other documents from a young soldier who went ashore at Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944. The letters have been transcribed as they were written.



Preston Bagent in camp at Omaha Beach, France [1944]

War: World War II, 1939-1945
Branch: Army
Unit: 149th Engineer Combat Battalion
Service Locations: Camp McCain, Mississippi; Camp Pickett, Virginia; Normandy, France; Belgium; Germany; European Theater
Rank: Staff Sergeant

A native of St. Louis, MO, Staff Sergeant Preston Earl Bagent worked as a draftsman and artist before joining the Army in 1943. The military made good use of his engineering skills, assigning him to the newly-created 149th Engineer Combat Battalion. After his transfer overseas and training in England, he got his "first taste of combat" on June 6, 1944. Bagent later documented his harrowing journey from his landing craft to Omaha Beach in an evocative series of drawings and letters to his wife. Following D-Day, his unit traveled from France to Belgium, Holland, and Germany, fixing roads and building bridges.

This first letter to his wife, Carol, is dated June 24, 1944 after some censorship restrictions were lifted.

24 – June – 1944

Darling

Here is the latest poop from your scoop. Today is Sunday, I went to church with Lt. Olin. It was held on the hillside overlooking the beach. It was a very nice service and the portable organ added a lot to it.

This is another thing I now am allowed to tell you. April the first of this year Bryant, Elliston, Kail, Lt. Hart and I were told the target area and pledged to secrecy. We then started on a paper machete model of the Normandy beaches. It was a very accurate model made with the aid of aerial photos and a few maps. Every house, field and hedgerow was just as accurate as we could possibly interpret it. It was quite a large scale 1" = 81'. It was very interesting work but not easy. It also gave us the added advantage of knowing this area just like a book before ever stepping foot on it. I think it helped the men a great deal. We were given some very nice compliments on it by everyone up and including a two-star general. It was very interesting to compare the place as it actually is to our model. We even went so far as to pick out German Headquarters from the photos and we got a big kick out of it when we found out that we were right.

It was very hard to keep that secret as many of the fellow suspected as much, because we worked in a building under armed guard, and tried to pump us.

Things are fine here and at a later date if censorship permits I will describe the way in which we are living here. It isn't half bad, really. We have our own mess hall and shower and are making a real home for ourselves in France.

It is incredibly dusty here and a shower per day is a necessity.

Received your V-mails of 12 & 13. This is another request for a box.

Your rugged Romeo
Pres



Unidentified soldiers in the chow line at Omaha Beach mess hall. (taken by colleague Lt. Harold Atkins)

continued on page 3

"SSgt Preston Earl Bagent" continued from page 2

This next letter was written almost a year later after V-E Day when censorship restrictions had been significantly relaxed. It is part of his account of landing at Omaha Beach.

18 – May - 1945

Darling –

First I want to tell you that I received two packages from you yesterday. They were the box of candy and the box containing sardines, sap cheezits, etc. They were very good and I appreciate them very much but hereafter don't send any soap. We get so much soap and shaving cream that we throw it away. It was alright in France, Belgium and Holland because we gave it to the civilians in payment for our laundry but we can't give anything to these people. I will use the soap but don't send anymore.

Now to continue with the diary –

We loaded up at Weymouth. It was a long and irritating wait of several days before we took off. Some of the boats moved out the night of the 4th but turned back. The big day was scheduled for June 5th. Once we shoved off we were read a little message from Gen Eisenhower. We wondered what was in store for us. It was to be our first taste of combat. For the first time in my life I wasn't seasick. After an uneventful voyage the big moment came.

The call went out to get into your gear. Some of us went on deck and there it was, the coast of Normandy. From the distance and at first glance it looked peaceful enough although the navy was shelling the coast.

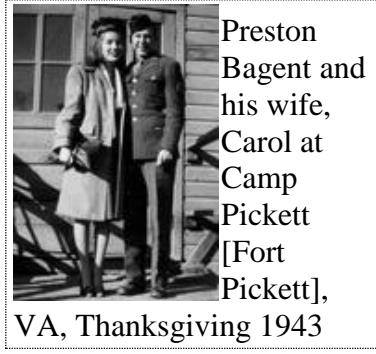
The good old "Texas" was out there with fire belching from her guns. Then came the signal to move in. We all came up on deck. We could now see the fury of the battle of the beach. Our LCI went through the mined obstacle and was beached some distance from the shore. The landing ramp was to be lowered but it wouldn't work. I don't know if we hit a mine or what. Another LCI came in abreast of us. Evidently didn't see the mined obstacle for they only missed it by inches. We shouted frantically to attract his attention but he couldn't hear it. The mine was within 10 feet of where I was standing if he had

of hit it I would have been a dead duck.

We were too far out to wade in so it looked like we had to swim and me with at least 100 lbs on my back. The first few men jumped overboard and somehow they made shore (I think) but they lost all of their equipment. An LCVP (small landing craft) operator saw our plight and came to our rescue. We dashed ashore and as a machine gun burst overhead I hit the sand. I looked to my left at the man laying next to me and I found he was dead. He had a neat little bullet hole right thru his forehead. He had been dead for some time. It was my first taste of combat. We wanted to know where the infantry was and they told us they were right there on the beach with us. I am not going to go into details because I could never explain it all and it is too gruesome. I could see that I couldn't accomplish my mission so I helped the medics evacuate some of the wounded. The medics were really busy but at that some of the men lay for 24 hours without medical attention. The dead lay on the beach for three days before any attempt could be made to bury them. I was really busy digging foxholes that day. As soon as I would dig one for myself they started putting wounded men in there so I had to move. Late that evening we got off the beach and dug in on the side of the hill. All that night we waited for the counterattack that never came. One explanation was that Rommel did think we could continue without a large port and expected the main attack to hit Cherbourg.

It also happened that instead of hitting a lightly defended coast as we suspected, the night before the attack a whole division moved into the area for practice maneuvers. Well honey I guess I will have to forget about "d" day and say goodnight until tomorrow.

Love
Pres



The letters on the web site span January 1944 through December 1945. To read his other letters to his wife in St. Louis go to web site for the Veterans History Project <http://www.loc.gov/vets/>.

VAMM Concert



Chapel featuring Veterans Assn. of Military Musicians. The doors will open at 6:45 pm, and there will be no tickets. Freewill donations will be accepted. More details are in the June Annagram.

Memorial Flags on Campus



The Memorial Flags flown in front of the clubhouses are donated by families of veterans who have passed away. They are put up and taken down by Veterans Group and community volunteers for patriotic holidays during the year.

The Veterans Group appreciates the support and assistance from the

Ann's Choice Grounds Crew for getting the flag poles out of storage and then collecting them afterwards.

Another group of volunteers placed hundreds of smaller flags along the campus drives for our enjoyment between Memorial Day and July Fourth.

The flag is the symbol of our country and its people; it should be treated with respect and honor. Members of the armed services and veterans are asked to stand at attention and salute when their flag is passing in a parade or being hoisted or lowered; civilians should place their right hand over their heart. In the United States, no other flag should be placed above the American flag or, if they are to be placed on the same level, to the right of the American flag.

These are two web sites to find more information on proper flag etiquette

- <http://www.usflag.org/flagetiquette.html>
- <https://www.almanac.com/content/american-flag-etiquette-rules-and-guidelines>

On July 3 at 7:30 pm there will be a free concert in the

Veterans Group Movie Program

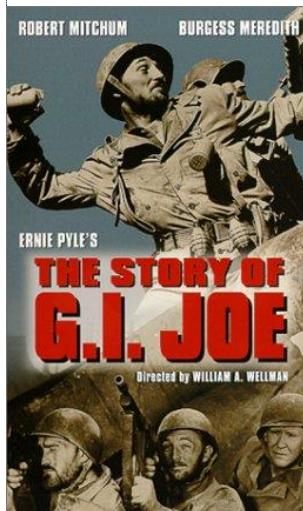
On **Tuesday** evening, **July 16**, the Veterans Group will be showing the classic movie *The African Queen* at 7:00 pm. There will be a pre-show starting at 6:45 pm.



This romantic drama is set in German Eastern Africa during World War I. A gin-swilling riverboat captain is cajoled and persuaded by a strait-laced missionary to use his boat to attack an enemy warship.

Join Charlie Allnutt and Rose Sayer as they make their way down the treacherous Ulanga River to Lake Victoria and freedom.

Only the German warship Louisa is in the way.



And on **Tuesday** evening , **August 20**, the Veterans Group will be showing *The Story of G. I. Joe*

War correspondent Ernie Pyle joins Company C, 18th Infantry as this American army unit fights its way across North Africa in World War II. He comes to know the soldiers and finds much human-interest material for his readers back in the States. Later, he catches up with the unit in Italy and

accompanies it through the battles of San Vittorio and Cassino.

Each movie will conclude in plenty of time to catch the 9:00 pm shuttle.

A suggested donation of \$3 is requested to help support Veterans Group projects, such as lining campus drives with US flags for patriotic holidays.

Discounts for Veterans

Many area merchants have discount programs for veterans and service members. Bucks County Dept. of Veterans Affairs issues a Bucks County Veterans Discount Card ID valid at many local merchants. For more information, go to <http://www.buckscounty.org/government/CommunityServices/MilitaryAffairs>.