

OUR MOTTO -- "THE 80TH ONLY MOVES FORWARD"

Major General Horace L. McBride, Commanding

WORLD WAR I

Made up largely of men from the "Blue Ridge" states of Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia, the 80th Infantry Division was organized in September 1917.

Landing in France on May 9, 1918, it was destined to play a vital role in the overthrow of the German Imperial Army.

Side by side with the British Tommies, the Blue Ridge Doughboys fought in the Artois Sector and also participated with them in the great Somme Offensive.

The 80th Division was assigned to the newly created American First Army and took part in the reduction of the St. Mihiel Salient late in August 1918.

The outstanding accomplishment of the 80th in World War I was to come in the decisive German defeat during the Battle of the Meuse-Argonne, in October-November 1918. Three times the spearheading 80th Division was called upon and three times it responded by seizing its objective. Smashing day attacks were followed by night assaults, as the Blue Ridge men surged forward. The German line buckled, then collapsed.

Due in a large part to the success of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive in reaching vital German communication centers, the Imperial Army was forced to capitulate. The Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918.

The Division is justly proud of its record of having captured two Germans and one machine gun for each man wounded. Thorough training and excellent leadership had paid off.

Numbered among the many distinguished veterans of the 80th from the First World War are General Joseph "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell, whose historic retreat through Burma is one of the epics of this war; Major General Patrick Hurley, former Secretary of War; and Presidential Secretary Steve Early.

Little wonder that the 80th was rated the best National Army of World War I.

WORLD WAR II

The Blue Ridge Division was reactivated at Camp Forrest, Tennessee, on July 15, 1942. Vigorous basic and advanced training were completed by the following spring.

Led by its commander, Major General Horace L. McBride, the 80th participated in Tennessee Maneuvers in the summer of 1943. Then after three months of training at Camp Phillips, Kansas, the Division was given its final hardening during the strenuous California-Arizona Desert Maneuvers.

After a short stay at Fort Dix, New Jersey, and later Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, the division sailed for England July 1, 1944.

On August 3, 1944, less than one month after landing on the British Isles, the Blue Ridge Infantrymen found themselves on the soil of France ready to combat the enemies of the United Nations.

After liberating Evron, Sille le Guillaume, Alencon, La Lacelle, and scores of other towns during General Patton's Third Army break-through at Avranches, the 80th Division attacked north, seized Argentan and helped liquidate the German Seventh Army trapped in the Falaise Gap.

The Blue Ridgers next moved south of Paris and spearheaded the Allied Drive across France. The Seine, Aube, Marne and Meuse Rivers were crossed and hundreds of towns, including Chalons sur Marne, St. Mihiel and Commercy, were freed in our triumphal pursuit of the fleeing Nazis.

On September 4th, our Division established the first bridgehead across the Moselle River at Toul. Continuing our push, the 80th paced the Allied Advance through the important Saar Basin and seized St. Avold, a key mining and communication center.

When General von Rundstedt crashed through the Luxembourg defenses, our troops, within 36 hours, made a 150 mile motorized dash, formed a defense line and saved the City of Luxembourg.

Going over to an offensive, the 80th continued north and caught the surprised German convoys pouring west to reinforce the German salient. The resulting slaughter of Nazis seriously disrupted the enemy plans.

Next a force of the 80th joined the 4th Armored Division in rescuing the American force at Bastogne.

This last feat was well described in the New York Times newspaper of December 30:

"Lieutenant Colonel Harry E. Brown, a Fourth Armored staff officer, highly praised the seasoned Eightieth Infantry, which fought into the Bastogne garrison's relief". "Eightieth's doughboys really did themselves proud", he declared, "you can't say too much for them".

Having captured almost 12,000 prisoners and destroyed over 125 tanks since our arrival in France a few months ago, the 80th Blue Ridge Infantrymen are proud of their record of never having failed to take an objective, never retreating from a position once taken and of having become a pile-driving spearhead for General Patton's Third Army.

WE BLUE RIDGERS ARE PROUD TO WELCOME YOU AS A REINFORCEMENT INTO OUR RANKS. WITH THAT SHOULDER PATCH ON YOUR UNIFORM YOU ARE NOW ONE OF US. REMEMBER OUR MOTTO - "THE 80TH ONLY MOVES FORWARD"!

"PASSED BY ETO CENSOR FOR MAILING HOME"