

WILLIAM EDGAR EVANS

Born June 29, 1921 in Kingston, Pennsylvania. Graduated from Kingston High School in June of 1941. Moved to Washington, D.C. and entered the Army on February 14th, 1942 at Fort Meade, Maryland. Was sent to the 3rd Armored Division for training at Camp Polk, Louisiana. Later was transferred to Company B, 48th Armored Infantry Bn, 7th Armored Division. Was a mail clerk for Company B and machine gunner. Was with Company B for training at Camp Polk, Camp Coxcomb and Fort Benning. Went overseas with the division on the Queen Mary and stayed with the division all thru France, Belgium, Holland and Germany.

Major Battles Involved In

The Mozelle River Crossing

Battle of Canals

The Defense of St Vith

Battle of the Bulge

The Reduction of Ruhr Pocket

Mission To Contact The Russians

The War From A Tank

Action at Samree

Was with the 7th Armored Division in the Army of Occupation. Left the Division in Germany to enter Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C. with a bleeding ulcer. The doctor at Walter Reed asked him if he was ever scared. He asked the doctor if he was crazy and said yes he was, for all the time spent overseas. Was discharged on December 11, 1945. Medals received as follows:

European Theater Medal with Four Campaign Stars

American Campaign Metal

Army of Occupation Medal

World War 11 Victory Medal

Belgium Fourragere

Bronze Star

The Greatest of the Great Generation Medal

Combat Infantry Badge

Was married to Virginia Pierce on November 18, 1945 at the Walter Reed Chapel in Washington D.C.

In 1947 they moved to Wilson, N.C. They have two children, Cheryl and William E 11(Billy). They have four grandchildren, three by Cheryl, Craig, Lindsey and Brandon Herring. One by Billy, William E Evans 111.

Joined the Post Office in January of 1952 and retired in 1978. Went to work at Regency Athletic Club from 1979 to 1996. Diagnosed with Alzheimers in June of 1996 and died in October of 1997.

His patriotism still strong after 50 years



Whenever Bill Evans wants to reflect on his military career, all he has to do is look through the mass of snapshots, guide books and souvenirs he obtained while visiting Europe with his buddies on the 7th Armored Division 50th Anniversary Tour.

(Photo by Keith Barnes)

Armored division vet returns overseas to reminisce with his wartime buddies

By Beth Bass

Daily Times Staff Writer

Bill Evans knows how lucky he is.

Lucky to have missed Pearl Harbor by only a few weeks when he enlisted Feb. 14, 1942, and the Normandy invasion on D-Day when his company landed in England just three days after the 1944 conflict.

Lucky to have survived almost three years on the battlefields to come home and recount the stories of American soldiers' bravery.

And grateful for the chance to gather with some of his 7th Armored Division buddies to reminisce.

Since 1946, reunions have been held annually, Evans said. From the first at Fort Mead, Md., to subsequent gatherings in cities from Williamsburg, Va., and Nashville, Tenn., to Indianapolis and San Francisco, Evans said the visits have given him a chance to see the country he fought for many years ago.

But this year's event was extra special, deepening his feelings of gratitude toward the true American spirit.

In October, Evans and 148 members, family and friends of the division ventured back to Europe to celebrate the 50th anniversary of their service. The group has taken two previous trips abroad, but this was Evans' first trip back.

Evans and the company departed the United States Oct. 9, arriving in Paris the next day. Awaiting them, as a result of efforts by Galaxy Tours of Wayne, Pa., was a 13-day excursion that Evans admits stirred deep nostalgia in their hearts and minds.

"Many of the places that I knew about when I left there, well, there's nothing there now," said Evans, who enlisted at 19, reveling in the nationwide patriotic aftermath of the Japanese attack on



Evans feels right at home in the military jeep he and his tour group found while touring Europe.

(Photo courtesy of Bill Evans)

Pearl Harbor.

"I was where I felt I needed to be when I enlisted," Evans recalled.

After his military stint, Evans and his wife, Wilson native Virginia Pierce, returned to settle in her hometown. Evans retired from his work with the U.S. Postal Service in 1958. 1978

But even after all these years, his face still bursts with pride when he is asked about his military years.

And Evans said that pride was obviously shared by all the tour participants as they headed out on their anniversary excursion.

The participants toured Paris, visiting the readily known tourist attractions — the Eiffel Tower, Sacre Coeur, Notre Dame Cathedral and the Louvre.

One of Evans' favorite stops with the group was the Parfums Guerlain Factory in Paris, where they toured the site and received special gifts of perfume from factory officials.

Other nostalgic excursions were made to Reims to see the still-intact Surrender Room where the Germans conceded almost 50 years ago, and to the American Military Cemetery in St. Avold, the first of several sites where Evans said flowers and wreaths were placed in memory of fallen buddies.

Verdun offered its infamous World War I sites, including the Ossuaire — built with pennies collected by American schoolchildren after World War II — and the Trench of the Bayonets.

Time in Arlon and nearby Overloon allowed them to participate in a liberation program with British veterans and their families, including the arrival of the Torch of Liberty from Normandy.

Evans said the group attended a morning church service in Venray with wreath ceremonies at the British War Cemetery before heading off to Maastricht's Malmedy Massacre site and St. Vith, Belgium, for ceremonies at the division's monument.

"Getting back to St. Vith was important to me," Evans said. "Like I said, I know what was there when I left so many years ago, and now everything has changed so much."

Evans said he did recognize, however, the 7th Armored Division Monument built in honor and memory of soldiers from the division, some of them his buddies, some of them just acquaintances — but all a part of the force who proudly fought for America.

"The trip was something else," Evans said, adding this third overseas excursion will be the last of its magnitude for the group. Members will, however, continue to meet for annual weekend outings.

"It definitely brought back a lot of memories of people and times, good and bad," Evans said.

And he knows he's lucky to have had the chance to reminisce.