

Re: Request for information about Harry Severance's World War II service and experiences.

HARRY W. SEVERANCE -- Major, 70th Infantry Division, 275th Headquarters Battalion

Drafted in 1941, Harry reported to Camp Croft, Spartanburg, SC, and from there was sent to Officers Training School at Ft. Benning, GA.

After graduation, he was sent to Camp Adair, OR, and then to Ft. Leonard Wood, MO, before being deployed for overseas service in France, Belgium and Germany.

As a member of the 7th Army, he saw action in the Battle of the Bulge which is now considered to be the major turning point of the war in Europe.

He was among those entering Berlin shortly after its capture, and spoke often about extensive destruction he encountered, and of the despair of the German citizens, but also of their amazing resolve to rebuild their city and their lives.

One personal anecdote he was fond of recalling was a chance meeting in Germany with Duke's noted football coach Wallace Wade. He said they enjoyed reminiscing about the "good old days" of Duke football, and the historic occasion when the New Years Day Rose Bowl football game was played at Duke instead of in Pasadena, Calif., because of the wartime blackout on the West Coast.

He received a Purple Heart and two Bronze Star medals while in the field, and after 4½ years of service was discharged in 1946.

Dear John,

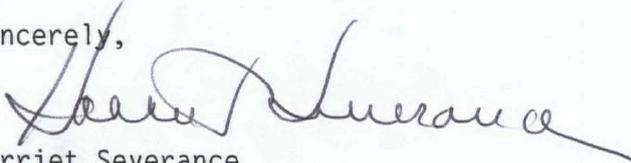
Enclosing Harry's and my world war II service records. Sorry to be so late getting around to this, but have been sidetracked a number of times while trying to get something down on paper.

Wasn't sure just how much material you wanted, but with the service records I included a few personal observations and experiences which you can use if applicable.

Was detailed in describing the ARC club in Rome because not many people either then or now have ever had a clear picture of just what the ARC Club Service was all about. I think the perception was that we were all driving around in trucks handing out coffee and doughnuts. Not so, as you can see by my report.

If you need anything else, let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Harriet Severance". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and address.

Harriet Severance
1300 Brookside Dr.
Wilson, NC 27896

Re: Request for information about Harriet Severance's World War II service

HARRIET PRIPPS SEVERANCE -- American Red Cross Overseas Club Service - Rome, Italy

After being recruited for the ARC Overseas Club Service, I spent 3 months training in Washington, DC, and was then assigned to Rome, Italy, as Program Director for an enlisted men's leave-area recreational facility near the foot of the famous Spanish Stairs. The club was housed in the Palazzo Ruspoli, a 50-room palace owned by the family of Prince Ruspoli who had been declared a Fascist sympathizer, making the property subject to confiscation for use by the Allied forces.

The one-block square structure was comprised of a three-story residence complete with a ballroom and a movie/live performance theater. It was converted for use by the Red Cross, and was the largest service men's club in the MTO (Mediterranean Theater of Operations), which made it an ideal venue for not only G.I. recreational purposes, but also touring USO troupes, visiting dignitaries, and receptions for entertainment and sports celebrities.

My job was to plan and coordinate all recreational activities for 10/7 weekly schedule. Because the club was located in such an historic city, traffic was heavy at all times. Among the many activities provided were weekly dances with live bands, current movies, game rooms, a library and classical music room, snack bars, billiards room, etc. We also arranged tours of the city, and a weekly luncheon at the U.S. Ambassador's residence for those G.I.s who were interested in participating. It proved to be a very challenging but rewarding experience for me.

One memorable morning in May 1945, it was business as usual until we heard a loud roar overhead, and rushed outside to witness the awesome sight of wave after wave of Flying Fortresses (B-29 bombers) from air bases at Bari and Foggia on the Adriatic coast, flying directly over the city on the way to support a major ground offensive just getting underway in Northern Italy. That very significant event proved to be the onset of the final battle of the war in Italy, a decisive action that resulted in the Italian surrender.

The club remained open until March of 1946 to serve occupation troops. I returned to the States in April, 1946.

Former corporal remembers major who had him 'busted'

The following is a reminiscence by Wilson resident Harry Severance, who served in Europe in World War II.

By Harry Severance

I had been home from World War II for several years, when I made a business trip to New York City. After completing my business, I returned to Pennsylvania Station to catch my train back to Wilson.

While walking through the terminal, I suddenly remembered that my wife had told me to buy a certain brand of socks from a certain New York department store. I was angry at myself for having forgotten, and so I looked around the terminal to find a clothing store.

I saw one, looked at my watch, and hurried inside. A man was standing in the front door, and when I asked him where the socks were he said, "Go straight down this line and you will find them."

I walked hurriedly down the line of counters, and as I approached the end I noticed a clerk who was leaning against the counter looking at me. I stopped hurriedly, looked down into the showcase where the socks were, and said, "I'll take a pair of these and a pair of these," while pointing to the socks I wanted. The young man never responded and just kept looking at me. I really didn't think he heard me, so I repeated my request in a much louder voice.

He never moved, and just continued to stare at me. I was hasty with him and said, "Do you work

here?" and he, continuing to look at me, nodded his head in the affirmative. I then looked at my watch "to make a point with him" and said, "I must catch a train in just a few minutes, so please give me my socks."

With that statement he said his first words to me, and they were, "Is your name Severance?" As one can well imagine, with a name like Severance, it is very difficult for even friends to remember how to pronounce my name, and here in a city of some 9 million people a complete stranger asks me if my name is Severance.

I turned my attention back to this young stranger, and replied, "Yes, my name is Severance."

He then began to question me as follows:

"Were you the Severance in the 70th Infantry Division when we were fighting in Germany?" My answer was yes.

"Were you a major for the 275th regiment in this division?" My answer was yes.

He then said, "Major, you don't remember me?" and I said, "No, I don't."

He then said: "Major Severance, I was Corporal Brown in the 275th until you busted me to Private Brown. Now, Major, I have been waiting 10 years for you to come in this store to tell you to buy your damn socks from somebody else!"

I enjoyed this scene so much that I really didn't care whether I missed my train or not ... but I just made it back to Wilson.

- 5 Jan
- 6 Feb
- 7 Feb
- 8 Mar
- 9 Apr
- 10 Apr
- 11 May
- 12 May
- 13 June 4-6
- 14 Aug
- 15 May 3
- 16 Nov. 1
- 17 Nov. 2
- 18 Jan. 3
- 19 Mar. 2
- 20 Apr. 2
- 21 June 1
- 22 June 19-20
- 23 July 21
- 24 Sept. 15
- 25 Oct. 20
- 26 Oct. 23-26