The Mighty
Bruin
Battalion
UCLA Army
ROTC

Loyalty • Duty • Respect • Selfless Service • Honor • Integrity • Personal Courage
FROM THE CHAIR

Hooah from the Mighty Bruin Battalion! It is great to be a part of the Bruin Team. My wife Sandy and I arrived from Fort Campbell, Kentucky, on the 9th of June. We received a fantastic welcome from LTC Talcott and the Battalion. Many thanks for all who assisted us in the transition. As we prepare for classes and the fall semester, let me just say how proud I am of all of you who have made the decision to serve. Our country needs you, and I can tell you as a veteran straight from Afghanistan, that our soldiers are performing brilliantly under very tough conditions. What carries them through safely and successfully everyday is good leadership. Motivated, determined, and strong leaders ensure that soldiers return home from the warfront safely and with honor. We are training all of you to be our Army’s future leaders, and I know you are up to the task.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate all of you who completed the Leadership Development Accession’s Course (LDAC) at Fort Lewis, Washington. You have competed with all of your fellow cadets across Cadet Command (over 5000 in all), and you performed great. Special recognition goes to our RECONDO achievers: Cadets Coyle, Matson, Ng, and Tuquero. Congratulations are also in order for Cadet Wolf (MS II) who completed Air Assault School at Fort Knox and Cadets Peoples (MSIII), Matson (MSIII), and Howard (MSII) who completed the Airborne Course at Fort Benning.

In addition to LDAC, we had Cadets Kilfoyle, Wang, Tran, and Evans successfully complete the Leadership Training Course (LTC) at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Their efforts at LTC have enabled them to validate the ROTC Basic Course (MS I and MS II courses), and now they are new members of our MS III (MS 10) class. Please welcome them to the team as they have proven themselves tough enough to join the Battalion this fall.

Our ROTC Alumni have been very busy this summer organizing its own association. I anticipate much integration in the future with our Alumni as they teach and mentor us from past military experiences. Please make them feel welcome, and never hesitate to talk to them and ask lots of questions. A special event that is coming this fall in particular is the annual Alumni ROTC tailgate (UCLA/Oregon State Football game) during the Veteran’s Day Weekend activities. The Alumni are very much a part of the Bruin Battalion and the University, and they are eager for you to become members upon your commission.

MSG Nissen is our new Senior Military Instructor. He and I are very excited to continue the great work that LTC Talcott and MSG Cook began two years ago, taking a Battalion of 54 cadets to a Battalion of 90 strong today. I look forward to many great learning opportunities with you this school year! Go Mighty Bruins, Leaders MADE HERE!
FROM THE SMI

Hello from MSG Nissen and the Bruin Battalion! Being a Los Angeles native, it is a dream come true for me to be assigned to the best university in the world! My wife, Sandra, and children, Brett, Brooke and Jason arrived mid-July and have been getting settled in over the last 45 days. I am now preparing for a very successful year. I want to personally congratulate all of you who have made the commitment to take on ROTC and later serve in the U.S. Army. It is an honor for me to be a part of your success and I will do everything I can to help all of you become the best Cadets and eventually Officers you can possibly be.

As you begin the new year I want everyone to set short, mid, and long term goals and keep them. When you are in a stressful or difficult time, reflect back on those goals and remind yourself that the moment you are in is only temporary, but commitment to an objective is permanent. If you are a family member, remind your loved one how important their decision is and how much you support them. Never quit and strive to be the best and to make this program better than it was last year.

Major Kramer, the Professor of Military Science, and I are very excited about being here. My office is always open and I will help you in any way I can. Our primary focus is taking care of our Cadets by mentorship, guidance, experience, and training.

We are looking forward to a great year!
Hooah!

Mark B. Nissen
Master Sergeant, United States Army
Senior Military Instructor

TABLE OF CONTENTS

From the Chair  page 2
From the SMI  page 4
2LT Spotlight: 2008 Spring Commissioning  page 6
Alumni Reunion: Class of 1978  page 11
Remembering 1LT Drew Laird  page 12
The Firing Range: Share Our Best (Photo) Shots  page 14
Congratulations! Recognition of Cadets and Alumni  page 15
Cadre Roster Updates  page 16
Summer Youth Employment Program Interns  page 17
Upcoming Events  page 18
ROTC Alumni Association Update  page 19
Alumni Story: A Very Small Piece of the Battle of the Bulge, part 7  page 20
On 15 June, the Bruin Battalion class of 2008 commissioned before a standing room only crowd of over 300 family, friends and honored guests.

The ceremony took place on the terrace of Covel Commons on a typically beautiful Southern California afternoon and included the presentation of the 2LT Mark J. Daily Selfless Service Award. This year’s award was presented to Jason A. Henke, who as Battalion Commander, exemplified service to others in many ways, including battling tirelessly through L.A. traffic between CSUN and UCLA to support cadet activities at both detachments.

Major General John S. Harrel, commander of the 40th Infantry Division (Mechanized), California Army National Guard, gave the commissioning address, giving the new Second Lieutenants advice and encouragement as they take on their new responsibilities as officers in the United States Army.

In attendance were a number of special guests including the family of 2LT Mark J. Daily, Dr. Berky Nelson of the UCLA Center for Student Programming, former Professor of Military Science COL Richard Littlestone as well as several alumni, including a contingent from the class of 1978.

SECOND LIEUTENANT ARIEL ALCAZAR ALCAIDE
2LT Alcaide will serve in Armor as an active duty officer. He will train at Fort Knox, Kentucky before being stationed at Fort Drum, New York. 2LT Alcaide is a graduate of CSUN with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Mathematics.

SECOND LIEUTENANT JOSE LUIS ARELLANO
2LT Arellano will serve in Military Intelligence as a U.S. Army Reserve officer. He will train at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. 2LT Arellano is a graduate of the University of Phoenix with a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice Administration.

SECOND LIEUTENANT KRISTOFFER BACHMANN
2LT Bachmann will serve in the Corps of Engineers as a California Army National Guard officer. He will train at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. 2LT Bachmann is a graduate of UCLA with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History.

SECOND LIEUTENANT MICHAEL AJAY CALEGARI
2LT Calegari will serve in the Military Police as a U.S. Army Reserve officer. He will train at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, before starting his 3-year active duty tour (duty station not determined yet). 2LT Calegari is a graduate of CSUN with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History.

SECOND LIEUTENANT TAMARA JOY DEJESUS
2LT DeJesus will serve in Signal Corps as an active duty officer. She will train at Fort Gordon, Georgia, before being stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. 2LT DeJesus is a graduate of UCLA with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History.

SECOND LIEUTENANT CYRUS RAYMOND HARREL
2LT Harrel will serve in Armor as a California Army National Guard officer. He will train at Fort Knox, Kentucky. 2LT Harrel is a graduate of UCLA with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History.

SECOND LIEUTENANT JASON ALLEN HENKE
2LT Henke will serve in the Military Police as an active duty officer. He will train at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, with his duty station to be determined. 2LT Henke is a graduate of CSUN with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science.

SECOND LIEUTENANT CHARLES KIM HUYNH
2LT Huynh will serve in Military Intelligence as a California Army National Guard officer. He will train at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. 2LT Huynh is a graduate of UCLA with a Bachelor of Science degree in Economics.
SECOND LIEUTENANT JEFFERY ALLEN JOHNSON (DMG)
2LT Johnson will serve in the Medical Service Corps as an active duty officer. He will train at Fort Sam Houston, Texas before being stationed in Germany. 2LT Johnson is a graduate of CSUN with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History.

SECOND LIEUTENANT JASON YOUNG KIM
2LT Kim will serve in the Corps of Engineers as an active duty officer. He will train at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, before being stationed at Fort Hood, Texas. 2LT Kim is a graduate of UCLA with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics.

SECOND LIEUTENANT SAMEMMANUEL KIZITO
2LT Kizito will serve in Military Intelligence as a California Army National Guard officer. He will train at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. 2LT Kizito is a graduate of CSUN with a Master of Public Administration degree.

SECOND LIEUTENANT JORDAN SCOTT RITENOUR (DMG)
2LT Ritenour will serve in Infantry as an active duty officer. He will train at Fort Benning, Georgia, before beginning his active duty tour. 2LT Ritenour is a graduate of UCLA with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and a Minor in Arabic and Islamic Studies.

SECOND LIEUTENANT JOSE ROSALES
2LT Rosales will serve in the Corps of Engineers as a California Army National Guard officer. He will train at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. 2LT Rosales is a graduate of CSUN with a Bachelor of Science degree in Manufacturing Systems Engineering and Management.

SECOND LIEUTENANT CHRISTOPHER NOLAN TROXELL
2LT Troxell will serve in the Medical Service Corps as a California Army National Guard officer. He will train at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. 2LT Troxell is a graduate of CSUN with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History.

SECOND LIEUTENANT JAIME JOAQUIN WING
2LT Um will serve in Military Intelligence as a U.S. Army Reserve officer. He will train at Fort Huachuca, Arizona before beginning his active duty tour. 2LT Wing is a graduate of UCLA with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science.

SECOND LIEUTENANT JAY YOON
2LT Yoon will serve in the Chaplain Corps as an active duty officer. 2LT Yoon will attend the Talbot School of Theology at Biola University in preparation for his chaplain duties. 2LT Yoon is a graduate of UCLA with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History.

Cadets Jason Kim, Samemmanuel Kizito, Jordan Ritenour, Jose Rosales, Christopher Traxell, Jamie Wing, Jay Yoon and Evan Ching take their seats as cadet commander Jason Henke addresses the guests.
We are also pleased to announce the following summer commissionings after successful completion of the Leader Development and Assessment Course (“camp”):

SECOND LIEUTENANT COLIN HENSLEY
2LT Hensley will serve as an active duty officer, branch and duty station to be determined. 2LT Hensley is a graduate of CSUN with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Geography.

SECOND LIEUTENANT VICTOR MANUEL ROBLES-CLAUDIO
2LT Robles will serve as an active duty officer, branch and duty station to be determined. 2LT Robles is a graduate of California State University, Los Angeles with a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice.

On our cover: Cadets Ariel Alcaide, Jose Arellano, Kristoffer Bachmann, Michael Calegari, Tamara DeJesus, Cyrus Harrel, Jason Henke and Charles Huyth are all eager and ready for the 2008 Spring Commissioning Ceremony to begin.

Good Times: Class of 1978 Celebrates 30 Year Reunion

Thirty years ago, twenty-three Lieutenants were commissioned through UCLA’s Army ROTC program. On Saturday, 14 June 2008, the class of 1978 celebrated its 30 year reunion. LTC (Ret) Nelson Galindo and his wife Cindy hosted a spectacular gala at their home in Downey, CA. More than 30 guests, including ROTC graduates and cadre members, past and present, enjoyed a luau buffet, accompanied by music from the 70’s. The Bruin Battalion alumni reminisced about their cadet days and reconnected with good friends.

A highlight of the gathering was a slideshow, with over 300 images from 1974 to 1978. It was a wonderful trip down memory lane. The class of 1978 always had esprit de corps and still maintains a special camaraderie today.

By Donna Earles, 1978


Front row: LTC Barry Maxwell, MAJ Terry Lee (cadre), LTC Celt Shira, COL Donna (Dolan) Earles, Sayuri Griffin, COL Doug Humphries, COL Matthew Horn.
For the last 12 years of my life, I count it a privilege to have been called Drew Laird’s friend. Looking back at his incredible life, I realize how much of a blessing it was that we crossed paths so many times in our journey through high school, college and beyond. I met Drew during our High School years in Denver, Colorado. Our fathers were pastors at the same church.

From the outset of our friendship, it was clear to me that he was a driven individual, who gave one hundred percent at everything he attempted. How appropriate that Drew’s birthday is Patriot Day, September 11th.

Answering the call of duty to serve his country, Drew enrolled in the Bruin Battalion in 2002. Both Drew and I attended The Master’s College (Santa Clarita) together; I was always inspired by Drew’s drive for excellence. As fellow cadets and cadre surely remember, when the monthly APFT was given at Drake Stadium, Cadet Laird would continue to run laps around the track after completing his 2 miles (he was usually first), encouraging fellow cadets to keep running hard, to be the best they could be.

Cadet Laird continued his drive for excellence while commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in Aviation, which sent him to Fort Rucker, Alabama for flight school in 2004. As providence would have it, I was stationed at Fort Rucker with the Engineers during this time. It was an incredible blessing for my wife Elizabeth and me to live across the street from Drew and his wife, Natalie.

Drew was a friend who would drop everything to help another in need, and loved living life. Many times we had a blast water skiing on the lake at Fort Rucker, or hitting the beach at Panama City Beach, FL.

In May of 2005, he earned his wings on the UH-60A Blackhawk helicopter. Serving in the Colorado Air National Guard, LT Laird deployed to Iraq with C Co, 2-135th GSAB in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, from August 2006 to August 2007. During his tour of duty, Drew flew medevac missions which required him to land in extremely dangerous areas in order to save the lives of wounded American Soldiers, Iraqi soldiers, and Iraqi civilians who were victims of terrorist attacks. Not surprisingly, Drew had ambitions to join the Navy SEALs. He was training for this next goal when his tragic death occurred on May 27, 2008.

Drew Alan Laird was a patriot, American hero, father, husband, brother, son, and faithful friend. Since Drew’s departure, the Army and our country are a lesser place, yet they’ve both benefited so much from his example of selfless service, devotion, and love. Those who knew Drew best know he passionately loved and served God, his wife Natalie, his sons Caeden and Ethan, his family, friends, country, and fellow Soldiers. Proverbs 18:24 reads “…there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” This is the friend I knew Drew to be. You are missed, Drew.

Tim Wycoff
CPT, EN
555th EN BDE
Fort Lewis, WA
UCLA Army ROTC Class of 2002
Alpha Company Pie Fundraiser

Cadets at UCLA held a rather unusual fundraiser this spring when they sold the opportunity to pie cadre members and fellow cadets. Rumor has it that a long-distance pie was even sent by LTC Talcott’s own mother!

Above: LTC Chris Talcott prepares to take a pie in the face from CDT Edesha Basa. CDTs Carols Adame and Sarah Yance stand ready to finish the job with back up whipped cream.

Below left: SFC Gasaway post-pie.

Below right: CDT Andrew Kreitz delivers a pie to fellow cadet, Bryce Matson.

Congratulations!

Brawny AND Brainy

We are very proud of the following cadets who were all named to their schools’ Dean’s Honor List for their academic excellence this past Spring Quarter:

Ariel Alcaide
Kristoffer Bachmann
Hazel Barican
Chase Kilfoyle
Jordan Ritenour
Tairen Truong
Maia Trotta
Bridgette Tuquero
Alexander Um

A Little Birdy Told Us …

It’s time to break out the Champaign and raise a toast to:

2LT John Abraham (’07) and his new bride, Kathlene. Congratulations newlyweds!

2LT Roy Yoo (’07) for graduating from the Los Angeles Police Academy. Officer Yoo has been assigned to the Downtown Los Angeles area so please don’t speed on your way to Dodger games!

CPT Casey Miner (current cadre), who has been promoted … hold the jokes please when you call and ask for Major Miner!

MAJ Ariel Axelrod (cadre ’03-’06) and his wife Robyn on the birth of their daughter Mackenzie. She takes after her mom … she’s a real cutie!

CPT Robert Likins (Bruin BN friend) who received his MBA from UCLA Anderson this June!

Send Us Your Updates

Email updates for yourself or your classmates to vksanelli@ucla.edu and we’ll share them in our next issue.
Cadre Roster Updates

This summer has brought big changes to the senior leadership of the Department of Military Science as we transition in both a new Professor of Military Science (PMS) and a new Senior Military Instructor (SMI). Please join us in welcoming MAJ Kramer and MSG Nissen!

MAJOR DAVID R. KRAMER

MAJ Kramer is a graduate of the United States Military Academy with a degree in Mathematics. He also holds a Master of Science degree in Administration (Leadership) from Central Michigan University and a graduate of the Aviation Officer Advanced Course at Fort Rucker and the Combined Arms Service Staff School at Fort Leavenworth. An aviation officer, MAJ Kramer has flown the AH-1F Cobra, Apache AH-64A and AH-64D Longbow. In his most recent assignment, he served as S-3 Operations Officer, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade and was deployed to Afghanistan. His previous assignments include deployments to Iraq, Bosnia and Korea.

MASTER SERGEANT MARK B. NISSEN

MSG Nissen is a native Californian who first enlisted in the Army in 1981 as a motor transport operator. After a three year break, MSG Nissen enlisted again as an infantryman in 1987. His Army career has taken him all over the United States with assignments in Texas, Hawaii, Colorado, Kentucky, Oklahoma and South Carolina, as well as multiple assignments in South Korea and a deployment to Egypt. UCLA is MSG Nissen’s first assignment back in his home state of California. Prior to coming to UCLA, MSG Nissen served as the First Sergeant Course and Battle Staff NCO Course Chief for the U.S. Army at the Sergeants Major Academy.

Meanwhile, Back at the Office ...

This summer, our department sponsored two interns through UCLA’s Summer Youth Employment Program. The program, which is funded by the City of Los Angeles, aims to provide work experience to L.A. teens. During the five-week program, our interns spent time organizing and inventorying everything from our military science library and historical archives to classroom materials like textbooks, maps and field manuals. Read on to learn a little more about them:

Adrian Jacobo

My name is Adrian Jacobo. I recently graduated from Belmont High School. I have four brother’s and one sister. My favorite thing to do in my spare time is play basketball. I like to hang out with my friends and just have fun.

This summer has been a new experience for me, simply because I have been working in the Military Science Department here at UCLA. I have had the opportunity to learn more about the military and the chances it gives people that decide to join in. I have been learning new things that I know will help me with my future jobs. As for the future I am going to be attending college and working as well. The future is bright and hopefully I get what I fight for.

Reggie Glosson

This summer, the UCLA Battalion has two interns. One of the interns is me, Reggie Glosson. I am working as an intern through UCLA’s Community Based Learning program. I have completed my sophomore year at University High School, and will return to complete my junior year.

I currently resides in Los Angeles with my family. My favorite hobby is experimenting in the kitchen. I love cooking. I hope that in the future, I will be able to take a trip to France and take a few culinary classes.

After this summer ends I will go back to University High to successfully complete my junior year. I look forward to graduation and plan to go to college to study genetics and eventually become a clinical geneticist.
Save the Date!
Calendar of Upcoming Events

CSUN Orientation 20-22 Aug
UCLA Orientation 22-24 Sep
Fall FTX (Camp Hunter Liggett) 24-26 Oct
Veterans Memorial Ceremony 7 Nov
Annual Alumni Tailgate 8 Nov
Blood Bowl 6 Dec
Woman Veteran of the Year 28 Feb
Spring FTX 17-19 Apr
Awards Ceremony 23 Apr
2009 Commissioning 14 Jun

Veterans & Armed Forces Appreciation Days

UCLA Athletics invites all veterans and active military personnel to enjoy complimentary admission to the following athletic events:

Women’s Soccer vs New Mexico Sunday, September 21 1:30 pm Drake Stadium
Women’s Voleyball vs USC Friday, November 28 4:00 pm Pauley Pavilion

Veterans and active military get FREE admission for themselves and up to 3 guests. Simply arrive the day of the event in uniform or show military or veteran ID. For questions or additional information, call UCLA Athletics at (310) 206-7916.

Alumni Association Update

Over the summer, a small band of Army and Air Force (they’re looking for a few Navy reps if you know anyone!) ROTC alumni have been meeting to lay the groundwork for what will become the UCLA ROTC Alumni Association (URAA), an officially recognized alumni support group for UCLA’s ROTC programs.

Currently, these pioneers are working through the approval process to gain official recognition. By-laws have been drafted and work on the required annual application is pending feedback from the University. In the meantime, there is still a great deal of effort needed to complete various tasks such as compiling alumni contact lists for Navy and Air Force, preparing to support UCLA’s Veterans weekend programs in November and working with the three ROTCs to brainstorm ideas to facilitate alumni interaction.

Special thanks to:

Mr. Lewis Blumberg
LTC (Ret.) Nelson Galindo
COL Patrick Assayag
COL (Ret.) Richard Littlestone
Judge Joel Rudof

If you’d like to be part of the founding of something truly special, please join these gentlemen and contribute your time and talents. Contact Mr. Lewis Blumberg at blumdevcorp@yahoo.com or Victoria Sanelli at the Army ROTC office (contact info at the back of this newsletter).

Official PT T-shirts!

Support the cadets and show your Bruin Battalion pride! Purchase an official PT t-shirt for just $22.50 each ($20, plus $2.50 shipping). Funds raised will be used for the cadets’ student group activities.

Send your check made out to Bruin Battalion, to Attn: T-shirt Fundraiser, 120S Student Activities Center, Box 951609, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1609. Be sure to specify size (S-M-L-XL) and version (UCLA Bruins or CSUN Matadors).
This is the seventh and final chapter of World War II veteran and UCLA ROTC alumnus, Thomas D. Boyd III’s story of his part in the Battle of the Bulge.

Previously, Lieutenant Boyd’s regiment found itself surrounded by the German’s and cut off without supplies. Rather than wait to surrender, Boyd of 3rd Platoon and 1st Lt. Harry O’Neil of 1st Platoon decided to make their way back to American lines on their own. Navigating through woods and fields, they find themselves cold and wet and trying to avoid German soldiers.

*****

“If you’re Americans y’all send one man forward.”

“You’re damn right I’ll send one man forward. Brother, am I glad to see you.” And I stepped forward, both hands out, into the front end of a halftrack which had a 50-caliber machine gun laid across the hood, pointing at my chest, and a guy behind it wrapped in a blanket. GI. We were home.

I showed him my ID card (he had a little flashlight) and he looked me over and said I could bring in anybody behind me, one at a time. I realized there was another guy a few feet behind him. I called to O’Neil to come on up, it was okay, and the second guy took us into the house. They gave us water and a couple of K-rations, and sat us down in front of the fireplace. As soon as I sat down I could feel my feet swollen and painful, and I pulled off my boots. My feet immediately started swelling, and from then on I was a litter case. O’Neil had the same problem, but not as bad, plus a bullet gouge on one wrist. He could walk into the next room to be interviewed by the S-2 of this 7th Armored tank battalion. This was their HQ. They’d been fighting around on all sides of the town, it was Neuendorf, and the roads had all been cut and they were surrounded there but still fighting. We were supposed to get some sleep and then go with the rag-tag crew of infantry stragglers from our own division and some others who had drifted in to support the tanks. We were the only officers, so they’d make us platoon leaders. But then the medics looked at our feet and consigned us to litters.

“My feet immediately started swelling …”

We were to be evacuated by ambulance to Vielsalm after daylight, but the roads were cut and we had to stay until late afternoon when the roads were opened. We were evacuated to Vielsalm, then to Liege. There O’Neil and I were separated. I was sent on a train to Paris and an evac station at Le Bourget and flown to a hospital in England. They were clearing all the medical evacuation pipelines to England to prepare for casualties.

I stayed overnight in an evac hospital to Paris, sharing the room with a young lieutenant tank officer who had stopped an 88 shell — with his ankle. Seems the round had penetrated the turret armor, the track, his gunner, and bounced off his boot at the ankle, which was broken. He had been in a lead tank in Patton’s drive into Bastogne.

The next two nights I was in another evac station at Le Bourget airport, then into a DC-3 hospital flight to England and to a field hospital on the outskirts of Cheltenham.

The officer’s ward was in a series of big tents attached to a rambling spread of Quonsets. I felt embarrassed. There were guys all around me who were really wounded, I mean hit by stuff. Except for the major who complained to the nurses that he couldn’t sleep because he kept hearing incoming artillery. He was hospitalized for a broken foot. Seems he’d pulled a laden file drawer out too far, and dropped it.

After a few weeks my swollen, discolored feet returned to normal, patches of frostbite healed and I was sent on to a Rest-and-Recuperation hotel in Cirencester. Tough duty. Lots of local girls who flocked to our parties to dance with the Yank officers.

From there I was sent back through the pipeline to a Repple Depot (replacement center) in a former hat factory in northern France (where we had lots of steam heat) and eventually to our Division headquarters west of Malmedy. We had offices in a battered building overlooking the field were the Kraut tank outfit, part of Joachim Peiper’s column, shot down more than a hundred men of the 285th Field Artillery Observation Battalion. Captured men. Prisoners. Disarmed. I arrived in time to see the last of the bodies dug out of the snow. It was a crossroads called Baugnez.

I hung around Division HQ, carried as a “casual officer,” or “liaison officer,” or some such do-nothing title attached to HQ under the eyes of Captain Melvin Swank, our lanky Personnel Officer. I asked when I could get a Combat Infantry Badge. I at least wanted that evidence that I wasn’t a rear-echelon type. Swank said I’d get mine when his men got
theirs. They had picked up rifles and joined the defense of Division HQ at St. Vith, with cooks and motor pool mechanics and anybody else they could find. Sure enough, much later the orders came out of 6th Army HQ at Heidelberg, and I was there with all the clerks. They all earned it.

Subsequently I was assigned as new commander of C Company, which existed only in memory until we survivors and a new bunch of officers joined it. Of my four new platoon leaders, two were newly retrained lieutenants from Quartermaster and two were from a Quartermaster harbor tug company. All had gone through the six-week infantry familiarization course, but beyond that didn’t know much of infantry life. A fine quartet of “retreads.” One was very amusing, but a drunk. One night in a subsequent bivouac, he set fire to the pup-tent he inhabited, and it burned down around him as he sat serene, like Buddha, unmoving, unscathed, and obviously divinely-protected.

Then the whole group was trucked to a French army training camp, Coetquidan, where we received a gang of new noncoms (new to us, many were vets returning from hospitals) from First Sergeant on down. Then we received enlisted replacements of the lower ranks, either fresh out of basic training or six-week retreads, like the officers, from other parts of the army.

Here occurred a little vignette of America at war. We officers received our monthly “liquor ration” from Quartermaster. (The same thoughtful outfit who had delivered my footlocker to my front-line command post, where I had left it in a slit-trench, the day before the Bulge hit.) In fact, we got two months’ rations, each getting a bottle of whiskey of some kind, plus liqueurs, brandy, wines, enough to set up a bar. Which we decided to do: give it all to the 1st Sergeant to dole out to the men. He gave the job to the Supply Sergeant. The latter was a teetotaler, had never touched a drop. Not knowing how to distribute the stuff, he opened every bottle, poured it all into a big kitchen pot. The rest of us were appalled, but we found out too late. Everybody got a canteen-cup full. This was about 10am. By noon, our company bivouac was deathly silent. All the men were either drowsy, drunk, sick or passed out. Luckily no higher brass was around.

By evening recovery had started. There was a lingering aftertaste of Benedictine.

We resumed somewhat normal stature and began unit training. After some time, I don’t remember how long, we had a ceremonial parade and were “reconstituted,” and issued new guidons.

Our next assignment as a division was to relieve the remnants of the 66th Division (many had been lost when their transport ship was sunk en route to the Continent) around the base of the Bretagne Peninsula, where were located Germany navy submarine bases supported by a brigade of infantry.

Here Lt. O’Neil rejoined us, and I was retained as company Executive Officer. Later I heard that our men and officers had been released and returned safely, with one exception that I’ll tell you about.

We received the surrender of German forces in the redoubt. We set up a card table under a spreading oak tree on the road that went into the St. Nazaire airport, with telephone lines connecting our rear headquarters to the Germans in St. Nazaire. They staffed it with a rotation of English-speaking German officers. One navy officer looked exactly like Rudy Valee. I remember one brigadier German officer told us that we should join our two sides and attack Russia. He assured us that Russia was our next enemy. The Red Cross took over and brought out the Germans. We pulled back our outpost and left it up to them.

Later O’Neil was singled out for rotation home. He had enough “rotation points” to qualify. He had a Purple Heart and thus five points more than I. I was left with the company and we returned to a camp near Heidelberg and resumed training. Here I was replaced as company CO by a more senior officer and sent up to regimental staff as Assistant S-3. Later the entire division, except for me and some other more junior officers who did not have enough points, was designated to return to the states and prepare training for the Pacific. I was transferred to a succession of odd jobs: first, with the 100th Division and then the separate 159th Infantry Regiment, pulling guard duty on positions in Germany.

I accepted an extended six-month tour of duty in return for 30 days at home. At the end of that tour in November 1946 I came back to Los Angeles.

I had the home address of my former Platoon Sergeant, Romeo Rossi, in Detroit. We exchanged letters and then Christmas cards until his death in 1997.

It was he who mentioned in a note in 1987 that he had...
been to a 106th Division reunion. I didn’t know there was such a thing. Nobody else had mentioned it. I had never joined a veterans organization, so never saw an announcement in one of their magazines.

I think I deliberately avoided the “professional veteran” scene. Some of the publicized clamoring for “veterans’ rights” offended me. After all, I had been able to graduate from Stanford University, thanks to the G.I. Bill, and I didn’t feel the government owed me anything more, so I opted out.

And, I was embarrassed. I had gone off and left my platoon (even though under orders), and I later heard that Sgt. Steve Koczak, one of the four men I had led up to the top of the knoll outside Schonberg, had died on the march of POWs into Germany. I knew that if I had been able to find them, we could have come out safely together. On the other hand, Colonel Matthews had said O’Neil and I had better get started as the surrender message had already gone to the Krauts, so I didn’t have more time to search for them. Still, I was uneasy about it, and still am. So, I had been comfortable leaving the whole mess in the past. It wasn’t something to be proud of. Our outfit had failed to contribute much. I had done nothing even faintly heroic; I had merely saved my own ass from POW camp. True, O’Neil and I had brought to 7th Armored the news of the 422nd situation, but it was hardly a “Message to Garcia” kind of performance.

Still when I heard about the Division Association, I did join it. The thought of making my peace with it, and seeing those guys again, was appealing, and I was able to carry something I still treasure. A couple of years later, at the reunion in Huntsville, Alabama, I found Colonel Matthews at the banquet table. He was ailing, and in a wheelchair, and I walked up to him and handed him the same now mud-stained and wrinkled map he had handed me on top of the knoll at Schonberg, and said, “Thank you, Sir, for the use of your map. I’m sorry to be so long in returning it.” He about fell out of his chair.

I think this is a good place to finally end my Bulge story.

Special thanks to Mr. Robert O’Neill ’47 for sending us this story and to Mrs. Jeanne Boyd for permission to reprint her husband’s story here.