

Melvin O. Rasmussen



World War 2 Chronicle
April 1944 - April 1946



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Foreword

My father was a quiet man, generally speaking, unless someone who had an understanding of guns or war got into a conversation with him, then he would elaborate at length. Since it was not in my purview, I was fairly dismissive of his involvement in the military. When my son joined the U. S. Army, the history surrounding my father's WWII service and what he experienced became much more relevant and poignant. Obviously, it was important to the next generation, so time to take a serious look at it.

My father, the subject of this writing, passed away November 16, 2019 at the age of 97. My children had the opportunity to know him into their early 30's. Nevertheless, due to his quiet nature, none of us really knew or understood what he went through during the Battle of the Bulge. Once, I took it on myself to write and ask him about his military life, and he responded with a handwritten letter with dates and times; a document I treasure. This and other military documents are the source of information for this treatise.

As is common of that generation, my father did his duty, came home, and rarely spoke of it. He lived a humble life as a servant leader, doing what he loved, which was serving his family and those around him with the skills he had obtained in college. He was a Civil Engineer in the Civil Service and skilled in construction, painting, plumbing, and welding. Whether a large project or household task, he took it on with the same attitude; washing dishes was one of his cherished chores until the very end.

My purpose in compiling research and writing this narrative of his service was done for my family in an effort to know more about my father's history and how impactful his generation really was to the freedom and security we have as a nation. Additionally, it is helpful for future generations to understand the meaning of "quiet hero." Sometimes we think the things we do has little or no value. We never know the impact that our life has on our family, future generations, or our country. Certainly, this is true of my father—he just served anyway no matter what was required of him.

Jean L. Bons
November 20, 2019

I. Pre-War History

Melvin O'Lee Rasmussen was born to Rudolph Henry Rasmussen and Nancy Jane Owen on April 3, 1922 in Snake River, Washington. Melvin had 10 siblings, Erma, Beulah, Betty, Lawrence, Elmer, and Owen AND _____. According to Melvin's discharge paperwork, he enlisted as a Private on August 27, 1942 in the U.S. Army during his attendance at Washington State University. According to Melvin, this was his second choice only to the Navy which denied his application due to red green vision deficiency. Later that school year, in 1943, he decided to take agricultural furlough to help his father while four other brothers were in service. That summer he received notice that all furloughed students would be activated into service. He was activated on September 1, 1943. After three months of basic training in Fort Lewis, Washinton he was promoted to Private First Class.

During his in-processing, he took an assessment known as the Army General Classification Test (AGCT), in which he received greater than a 110 score. This qualified him for Officer Candidate School. However, he was more interest in pursuing a degree in Engineering. A newly approved program known as the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) was approved in 1942 and he was selected to attend Stanford University, since he was 20 years of age with a year of college education.



This program was said to involve advanced training in several areas of study and profession. Before he was able to finish his degree, the Army canceled the program and returned many to their units or overseas to serve in the war efforts. Melvin was sent to Camp Roberts, California to join the 71st Infantry Division in maneuver training against the 89th ID. While assigned to the 71st ID he was with Bravo Company, 5th Infantry Regiment. He and his fellow brothers in arms of the 71st ID were sent to Fort Benning, Georgia for additional combat training.

In 1944, soon after returning from a leave of absence, he was reassigned to join the 75th ID at Camp Breckenridge, Kentucky. He was given the responsibility of a rifleman.

II. War History

October of 1945, 75th ID Melvin was given orders to join the efforts in Europe. His regiment was sent to Porthcawl, Wales for a month and then sent to Birmingham, England. Soon after they were sent to La Harve, France where they lived in shelter tents for a few weeks _____. At this time, he was a member of B Co, 290th Infantry Regiment, 75th Infantry Division, 9th Army, 12th Army Group.

The Battle for the Ardennes, better known as the Battle of the Bulge, was a major Allied victory during World War II. The Ardennes is an area of Eastern France & Western Belgium covered in a dense forest of fir trees and characterized by mountainous terrain, deep valleys and steep hills. It was here, from December 24, 1944 to January 24, 1945, that the 75th Division, 290th Infantry Regiment entered its first battle. This was a baptism by fire, if you will, for the 75th Division, which had only been formed and activated April 15, 1943 at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. The combat chronicle of the 75th cites its first entrance into battle on December 24, 1944. The Battle for the Ardennes was put together in a two-phase plan; phase one being the defensive phase and phase 2 required taking the town of St. Vith, crossing the Salm river and capturing the town of Vielsalm in order to envelop the Germans.⁵ For the Ardennes offensive, the 75th Infantry Division was attached to the 1st Army, 12th Army group.⁶

For the start of the Salm River offensive, all three Battalions of the 290th Regiment were held in Division Reserve near the town of Base Bodeux, Belgium as the 289th & 291st regiments fought along the banks of the Salm River. It was on January 16th that Jack got his first taste of battle. The 1st Battalion was sent to the sector along the Salm River, west of the village of Vielsalm and ordered to hold and defend this sector. By the end of January 17th, the Allies had achieved their objective, but the fighting in the Ardennes was not over. With that objective completed, the 75th marched on and the 290th Infantry Regiment was given permission to enter and clear the village of Vielsalm, Belgium at 2:00 pm. The 1st Battalion was the first to enter the town and were then further directed northeast to take the Belgian towns of Ville du Bois, Petit Their and Neuville. Facing little resistance, they moved on to secure the crossroads at Puteaux, France.⁹

On January 18th, at the crossroads of Puteaux, the 2nd Battalion of the 290th Infantry Regiment was relieved by the 2nd Battalion of the 291st Infantry Regiment when all hell broke loose. Out of nowhere, the crossroads were inundated with rifle and machine gun fire compounded with mortar, artillery and tank fire by the defending Nazis. One American tank destroyer, attached to the 290th, was destroyed, which started a fire in

the ammunition cache. The allies came out on top of this skirmish, with the 75th Division destroying one Nazi tank and capturing 144 Nazi soldiers. After this action, the 290th was found defending the area of Burtonville. The Battalions dug in preparing for an attack the following morning; but to their shock, Nazi snipers took up positions in the woods. By the next morning, as the 290th was readying for their attack, German snipers opened up on their positions fortified with 60-70 Nazi soldiers and five tanks scattering the regiment. The 290th regrouped and were able to repulse the German attack. The following day, January 20th, the 290th was sent to finish off the Germans at Ferme Des Flamands, the last toe hold of the Nazis in the Grand Bois area of France. The 290th was unable to defeat this incursion due to the Nazis breaking the contact between the attacking regiments (290th & 289th) in the early morning of January 21st, 1945.¹⁰

On January 22nd, the 75th Division, accompanied by the 30th & 84th Divisions, started their final leg of the Ardennes Offensive campaign. This objective targeted the Belgian town of Braunlauf and the villages of Maldingen and Aldringen. The 290th Infantry got orders that they would attack at 8:00 am; and in doing so, they overcame heavy Nazi resistance with ease. Thanks to the accurate shooting of the 750th Tank Battalion, attached to the 75th at this time, several Nazi machine gun nests were eliminated. At 1:35 pm, B Company of the 290th Infantry Regiment, supported by C Company of the 750th Tank Battalion, attacked and seized the town of Commanster, Belgium.

The 289th Regiment arrived on January 23rd and relieved the elements of the 290th, sending them back for rest and rehabilitation at Rencheux, Belgium where they stayed in Division Reserve during the rest of the fighting. The 75th achieved their objectives of capturing the town of Braunlauf and the villages of Maldingen & Aldringen by the 24th of January, signaling the end of the Ardennes Campaign and the Allied victory of the Battle of the Bulge.¹¹

The 75th Infantry Division suffered the greatest losses during the month of January 1945, with the bloodiest day being January 15th, 1945. All told, the 75th lost 398 soldiers during January of 1945 with 76 of those casualties happening on January 15th. The 290th Regiment lost a total of 116 soldiers during January of 1945 with their heaviest losses happening on January 20th with a total of 37 lost.¹²

At the conclusion of the Ardennes offensive, the 75th (which had been “green troops” when they entered combat) learned that their commanding officer, Major General Fay J. Prickett was moving up the ranks. Maj. General Prickett wrote of the 75th, “*I look with confidence to the future of this great fighting division and am sure that its history will be enriched with victory.*” Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Britain, declared in the House of Commons at the end of the Battle of the Bulge that, “*this would ever be a famous American victory, and the eyes of the world would long gaze at the heroic men who had fallen there.*”¹³ This bloody introduction to war is what earned the 75th Infantry Division the title, “Bulgebusters”.¹⁴

location secret through the war). Soldiers with the MOS of clerk/typist spent their remaining peacetime occupation days working with Soldiers to make adjustments to their ASR point totals in an effort to get home faster.⁵² Jack spent the rest of the war at Camp Pall Mall working with GI's and

doing Army administrative work.⁵⁴ By March of 1946, it was Jack's turn to come home; he had a final ASR of 45 points.

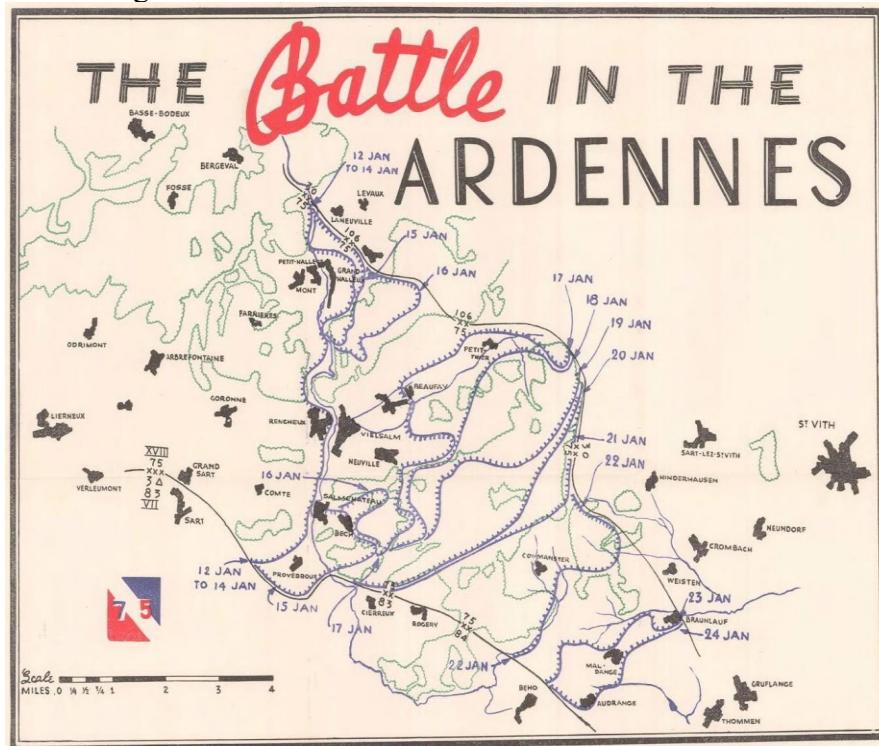
Jack boarded the *S.S. Elgin Victory* on March 14th, 1946 and stepped back on American soil at the Port of Embarkation in New York on March 26th. Jack was then transported to Camp Kilmer for processing of returning troops⁵⁵ before being sent to Fort McCoy, Wisconsin where he was honorably discharged from the US Army on April 8th, 1946.⁵⁶

Though the regiment had been in combat for a relatively short period of time (comparatively), the contribution the 290th Infantry Regiment had made to the halting of German attempts to prolong the war and the final routing of Nazi forces who had proposed to hold the line at all costs could not be dismissed lightly. The 290th Infantry fought gallantly and with distinction in each of their three campaigns. The efforts of the 290th Infantry adding a triumphant chapter to the fighting record compiled by Allied military units during World War II.⁵⁷

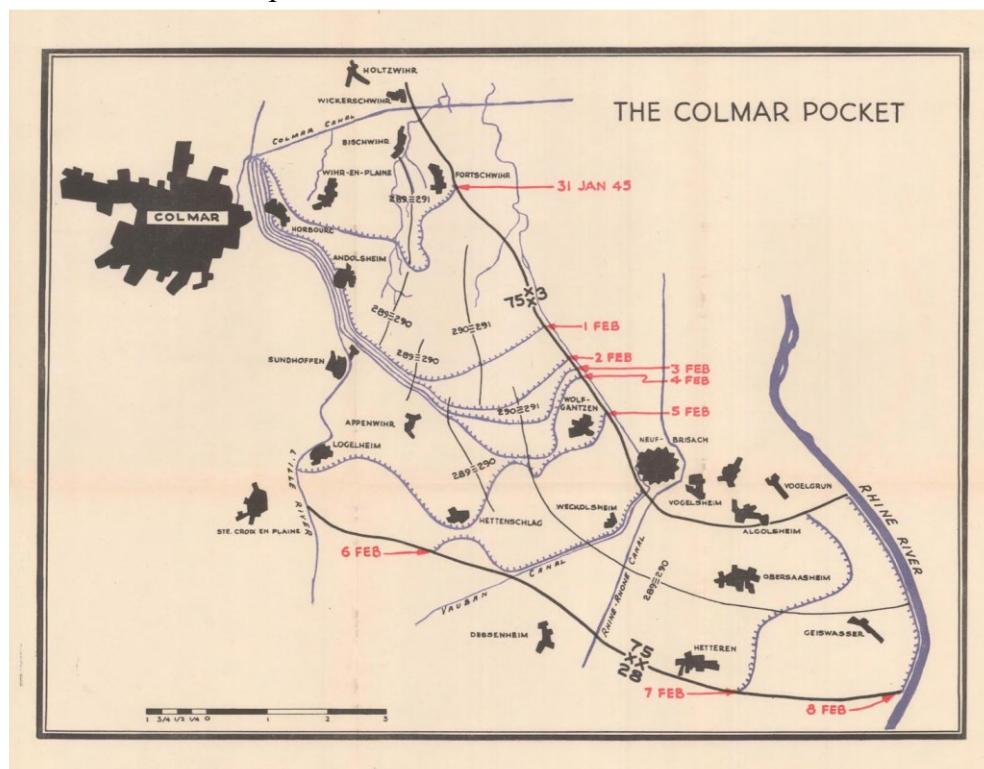
Melvin married Joan Cannon, of Franklin County, Washington and had two daughters; Jean and Joyan. Jack worked as a file clerk stateside and was a loving husband and father. Jack passed away from Arteriosclerotic heart disease on September 9th, 1975 and is buried at St Mary's Cemetery in Evergreen Park, Illinois.

III. Campaign Maps

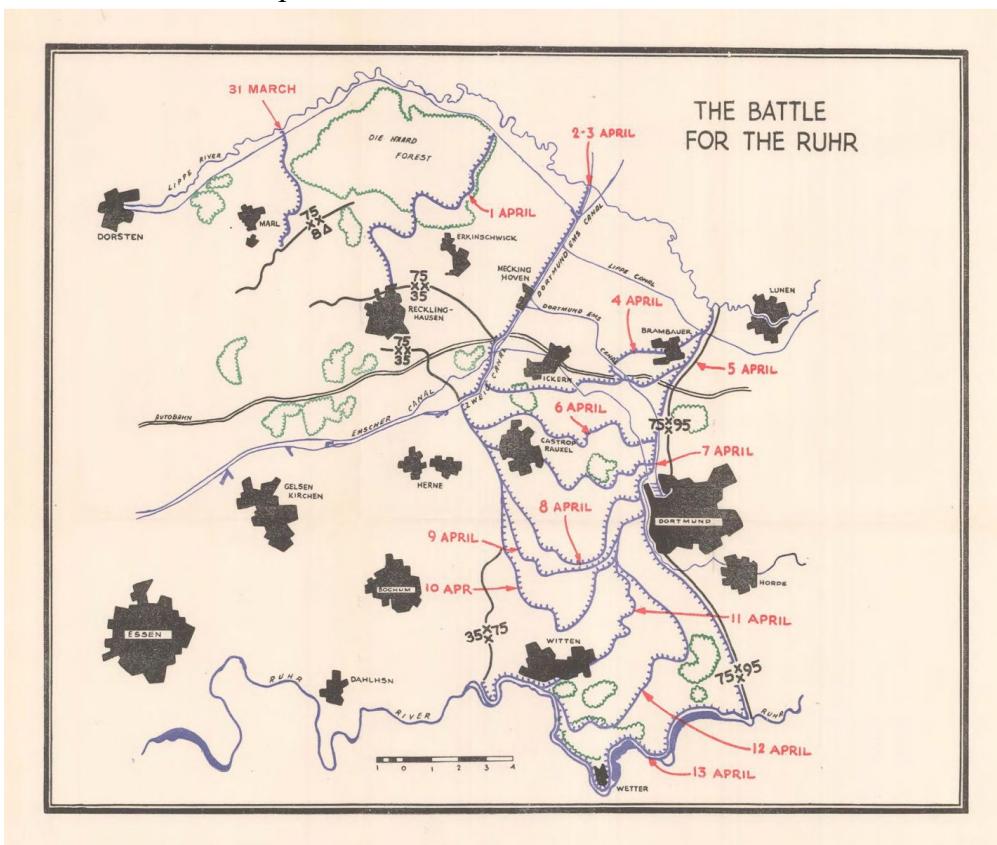
a. Battle of the Bulge



b. The Colmar Pocket Map



c. The Battle for Ruhr Map



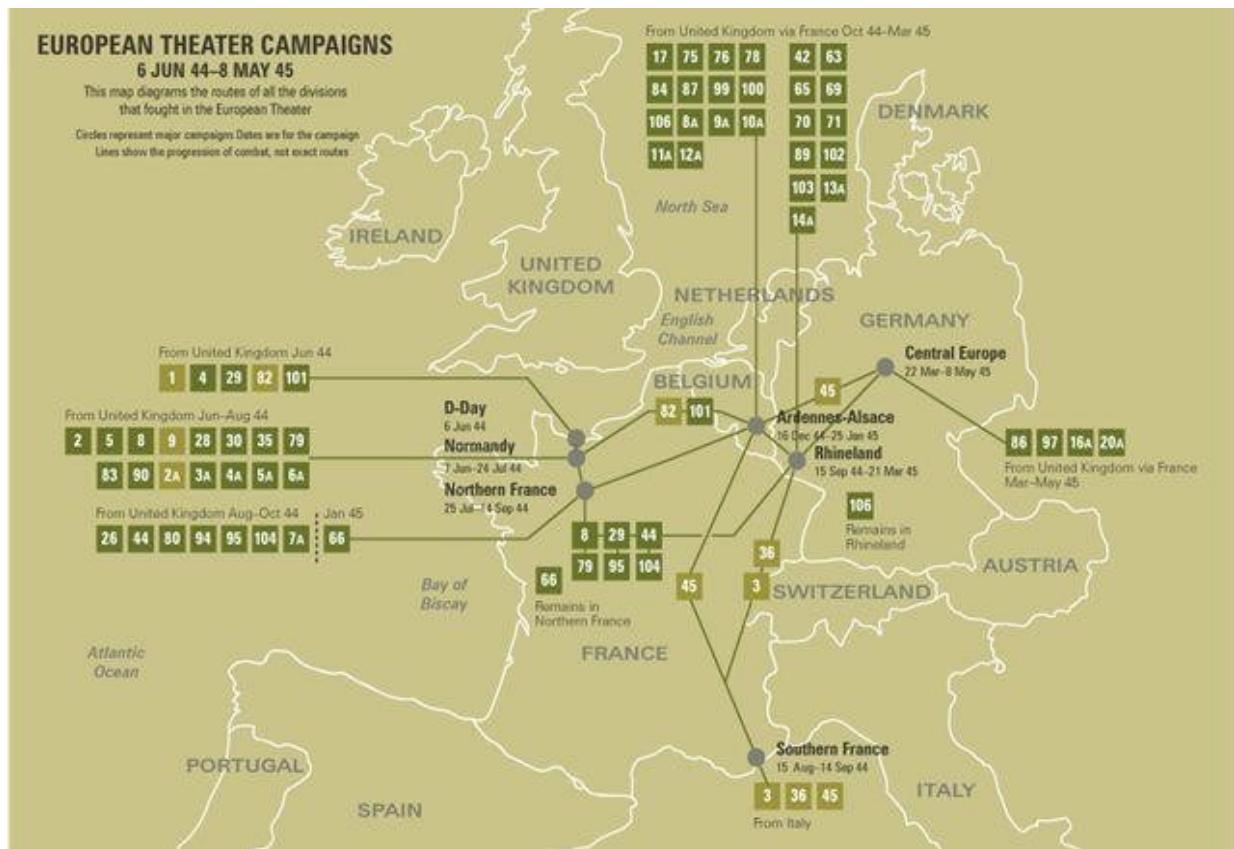
IV. Logistics During Service

71th Division - 5th Infantry Regiment – UNK BN - B Company

Date	Campaign	City/Village/Locale	Country
08/1942	Enlistment	Pullman, WA	U.S.A.
09/1943	Activated	Fort Lewis, WA	U.S.A.
1943	Basic Training	Fort Lewis, WA	U.S.A.
1944	Additional Combat Training	Camp Roberts, CA	U.S.A.
1944	71 st ID Reassignment	Fort Benning, GA	U.S.A.

75th Division - 290th Infantry Regiment – 1st Battalion - B Company

1944	Reassignment	Camp Breckenridge, KY	U.S.A.
10/1944	Deployment	Porthcawl	Wales
11/1944	Deployment	Birmingham	England
12/1944	Deployment	La Harve	France
04/1945	Deployment	Verveirs	Belgium
06/1945	Deployment	Cape Verde	Germany
06/1945	75 th ID Reassignment	Rheims	France
06/1945	MOS Reassignment	Verdun	France
03/1946	Redeployment	New York, NY	U.S.A.
03/1946	Discharge	Fort Lewis, WA	U.S.A.



V. Profile

Birth : 04/03/1922

Death : 11/16/2019

Enlistment Date: 08/27/1942 – Fort Lewis, WA

Army Serial #: 19 118 884

MOS: Rifleman (745) & Supply Clerk (835)

Separation/Discharge Date: 03/24/1946 – Fort Lewis, WA (Discharge papers read: HONORABLE)

Time in Military Service: 1yr | 1mo | 29days (OCONUS) | 1yr | 4mo | 25days (CONUS)

Reason for Separation: Convenience for Gov't RR 1-1 (Demobilization) AR 615-365
15DEC44

To War Departure Date: 10/22/1944 (U.S.A.) →

Arrival Date: 11/01/1944 (EAME)

To Home Departure Date: 03/07/1946 (EAME) →

Arrival Date: 03/07/1946 (USA)

Service School Attended: ASTP Stanford University (Palo Alto, CA)

Military Qualifications



Expert



Clasp (rifle)



VI. Decorations/Citations/Honors

Bronze Star

Awarded for heroic achievement,
heroic service, meritorious
achievement, or meritorious service in
a combat zone.

Purple Heart Award

Awarded for being wounded in
combat 01/09/45

Good Conduct Medal (1945)

Given for serving 3 years of service or
1 year of service during war

American Theatre Service Medal
(also known as American Campaign
Medal)

Awarded for U.S. military service in
the American Theater for at least 30
days outside the U.S. or 1 year inside
the U.S. between December 7, 1941,
and March 2, 1946.

European African Middle Eastern
Service Medal

In recognition of military service
performed in the European Theater (to
include North Africa and the Middle
East) during the years of the WWII.

Honorable Discharge Lapel
Button

Known as “The Ruptured Duck”



VII. Military Occupational Assignments (MOS)

Months	Grade	M.O.S.	Description
3	Private	Infantry Basic Training (521)	<p>This classification used to designate enlisted men in the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Personnel who are undergoing basic training. (2) Personnel who have completed basic training and are undergoing unit training, but are not yet qualified for an MOS. (3) Personnel who have proved unqualified in an MOS previously held and are reassigned for training in another specialty. <p>Enlisted men classified under this number will be constantly observed and tested to determine their potentialities, and this knowledge will be utilized to develop these individuals into military occupational specialists</p> <p>Loads, aims, and fires a rifle to destroy enemy personnel and to assist in capturing and holding enemy positions.</p> <p>Places fire upon designated targets or distributes fire upon portions of enemy line, changing position as situation demands.</p>
20	Private First Class	Rifleman (745)	<p>Must be able to use hand weapons, including rifle, automatic rifle, rocket launcher, rifle grenade launcher, bayonet, trench knife, and hand grenades.</p> <p>Must be trained in taking advantage of camouflage, cover and concealment, entrenching, recognition and following of arm and hand signals, and recognition of enemy personnel, vehicles, and aircraft.</p> <p>Must be familiar with hand-to-hand fighting techniques. Must understand methods of defense against enemy weapons.</p>
4	Private First Class	Supply Clerk (835)	<p>Served in a large bakery shop in France. Assisted the supply sergeant in requisitioning, stocking and distributing supplies of flour and other baking ingredients. Also made up requisitions for clothing for the company and all the cleaning supplies for 2 large bakeries. Made estimate of requirements to keep stock up to operational level. Bakeries produced 60,000 pounds of bread a day.</p>

VIII. Units & Assignments

U. S. Regular Army: 71st Infantry Division - 5th Infantry Regiment - B Co Activated 15 July 1943 • Entered Combat 26 January 1945 • Days of Combat 62 • Casualties 1,114



Lineage of the 5th Infantry Division:

- Constituted 24 December 1942 in the Army of the United States as the 290th Infantry and assigned to the 75th Infantry Division
- Activated 21 August 1943 at
- Inactivated 12 March 1943 at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey

The 71th Infantry Division Chronicle:

The 75th Infantry Division arrived in England, 22 November 1944; the Headquarters Company having arrived on 2 November. After a brief training program, the Division landed at Le Havre and Rouen, 13 December, and bivouacked at Yvetot on the 14th. When the Von Rundstedt offensive broke in the Ardennes, the 75th was rushed to the front and entered defensive combat, 23 December, alongside the Ourthe River, advanced to the Aisne and entered Grandmenil, 5 January 1945. The Division relieved the 82d A/B Division along the Salm River, 8 January, and strengthened its defensive positions until 17 January when it attacked, taking Vielsalm and other towns in the area.

Shifting to the Seventh Army area in Alsace-Lorraine, the 75th crossed the Colmar Canal, 1 February, and took part in the liberation of Colmar and in the determined fighting between the Rhine River and the Vosges Mountains. It crossed the Rhine Canal and reached the Rhine, 7 February. After a brief rest at Luneville, it returned to combat, relieving the 6th British Airborne Division on a 24-mile defensive front along the Maas River, near Roermond, Holland, 21 February. From 13 to 23 March, the 75th patrolled a sector along the west bank of the Rhine from Wesel to Homburg and probed Nazi defenses at night.

On 24 March, elements crossed the Rhine in the wake of the 30th and 79th Divisions. Pursuance of the Germans continued as the 75th cleared the Haard Forest, 1 April, crossed the Dortmund-Ems Canal on the 4th, and cleared the approaches to Dortmund, which fell to the 95th Division, 13 April. After taking Herdecke, 13 April, the Division moved to Brambauer for rest and rehabilitation, then took over security and military government duties in the Westphalia area of Germany. The 75th began demobilizing and going back home in November of 1945, based on ASR score.

Total Battle Deaths 1,114	KIA 243	Wounded 843	MIA/POW 28
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U. S. Regular Army: 75th Infantry Division - 290th Infantry Regiment - Company B
 Activated 15 Apr 1943 • Entered Combat 24 Dec 1944 • Days of Combat 94 • Casualties 4,324



Lineage of the 290th Infantry Regiment:

- Constituted 24 December 1942 in the Army of the United States as the 290th Infantry and assigned to the 75th Infantry Division
- Activated 15 April 1943 at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri
- Inactivated 18 November 1945 at Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia

The 75th Infantry Division Chronicle:

The 75th Infantry Division arrived in England, 22 November 1944; the Headquarters Company having arrived on 2 November. After a brief training program, the Division landed at Le Havre and Rouen, 13 December, and bivouacked at Yvetot on the 14th. When the Von Rundstedt offensive broke in the Ardennes, the 75th was rushed to the front and entered defensive combat, 23 December, alongside the Ourthe River, advanced to the Aisne and entered Grandmenil, 5 January 1945. The Division relieved the 82d A/B Division along the Salm River, 8 January, and strengthened its defensive positions until 17 January when it attacked, taking Vielsalm and other towns in the area.

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Total Battle Deaths 932	KIA 817	Wounded 3,314	Missing 77
Captured 116	Total Casualties 4,324	75th's Bloodiest Day 1/15/45	75th's Bloodiest Month January 1945

XII. Endnotes & Image Credits

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ENLISTED RECORD AND REPORT OF SEPARATION
HONORABLE DISCHARGE

H				RON	
1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL RASMUSSEN MELVIN O		2. ARMY SERIAL NO. 19 118 884		3. GRADE PFC	
4. ARM OR SERVICE INF		5. COMPONENT AUS			
6. ORGANIZATION CO B 290TH INF REGT		7. DATE OF SEPARATION 24 MAR 46		8. PLACE OF SEPARATION SEPARATION CENTER FORT LEWIS WASH	
9. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES BOX 15 SNAKE RIVER FRANKLIN CO WASH		10. DATE OF BIRTH 3 APR 22		11. PLACE OF BIRTH SNAKE RIVER WASH	
12. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE SOUGHT SEE 9		13. COLOR EYES 14. COLOR HAIR HAZEL BROWN		15. HEIGHT 16. WEIGHT 17. NO. DEPEND. 5'11" 175 lbs. 0	
18. RACE W/ NEGRO OTHER (specify) X		19. MARITAL STATUS SINGLE MARRIED OTHER (specify) X NO		21. CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND NO. STUDENT COLLEGE X-02	
MILITARY HISTORY					
22. DATE OF INDUCTION 27 AUG 42		23. DATE OF ENLISTMENT 1 SEP 43		24. DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE FORT LEWIS WASHINGTON	
25. REGISTERED X NO		26. LOCAL S.S. BOARD NO. 1		27. COUNTY AND STATE FRANKLIN CO WASH SEE 9	
28. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE					
30. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY AND NO. SUPPLY CLERK 835		31. MILITARY QUALIFICATION AND DATE (I.O., infantry, aviation and marksmanship badges, etc.) COMBAT INFANTRYMAN RIFLE M-1 EXPERT			
32. BATTLES AND CAMPAIGNS ARDENNES RHINELAND CENTRAL EUROPE					
33. DECORATIONS AND CITATIONS AMERICAN THEATRE SERVICE MEDAL EUROPEAN AFRICAN MIDDLE EASTERN SERVICE MEDAL GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL PURPLE HEART VICTORY MEDAL					
34. WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION EUROPEAN 19 JAN 45					
35. LATEST IMMUNIZATION DATES SMALLPOX 10-44 TYPHOID 10-44 TETANUS 10-44 OTHER (specify) 2-45 TYPH		36. SERVICE OUTSIDE CONTINENTAL U.S. AND RETURN DATE OF DEPARTURE 22 OCT 44 DESTINATION EAME DATE OF ARRIVAL 1 NOV 44			
37. TOTAL LENGTH OF SERVICE CONTINENTAL SERVICE YEARS 1 MONTHS 1 DAYS 29 FOREIGN SERVICE YEARS 1 MONTHS 4 DAYS 25		38. HIGHEST GRADE HELD PFC			
39. PRIOR SERVICE NONE		40. REASON AND AUTHORITY FOR SEPARATION CONVENIENCE OF GOVERNMENT RR 1-1 (DEMOBILIZATION) AR 615-365 15 DEC 44			
41. SERVICE SCHOOLS ATTENDED ASTP STANFORD U PALO ALTO CALIF		42. EDUCATION (Years) Grammar 8 High School 4 College 1			
PAY DATA					
43. LONGEVITY FOR PAY PURPOSES YEARS 3 MONTHS 6 DAYS 28		44. MUSTERING OUT PAY TOTAL \$ 300 THIS PAYMENT \$ 100 None		45. SOLDIER DEPOSITS \$ 14.65	
46. TRAVEL PAY \$ 168.27		47. TOTAL AMOUNT, NAME OF DISBURSING OFFICER WALTER S BURK MAJOR FD			
IMPORTANT IF PREMIUM IS NOT PAID WHEN DUE OR WITHIN "THIRTY-ONE DAYS THEREAFTER, INSURANCE WILL LAPSE. MAKE CHECKS OR MONEY ORDERS PAYABLE TO THE TREASURER OF THE U. S. AND FORWARD TO COLLECTIONS SUBDIVISION, VETERANS ADMINISTRATION, WASHINGTON 25, D. C.					
48. KIND OF INSURANCE Nat. Serv. U.S. Govt. None X		49. HOW PAID Allotment Direct to V. A. X		50. Effective Date of Allotment Discontinuance 31 Mar 46	
51. Date of Next Premium Due (One month after 50)		52. PREMIUM DUE EACH MONTH \$ 6.50		53. INTENTION OF VETERAN TO Continue X Continue Only Discontinue \$	
54. RIGHT THUMB PRINT		55. REMARKS (This space for completion of above items or entry of other items specified in W. D. Directives) LAPEL BUTTON ISSUED ASR SCORE (2 SEP 45) 50 INACTIVE SERVICE ERC 27 AUG 42 TO 31 AUG 43			
56. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED Melvin O. Rasmussen		57. PERSONNEL OFFICER (Type name, grade and organization - signature) C C MC CLEMENT 2ND LT WAC CC Mc Clement			

WD AGO FORM 53-55
1 November 1944

This form supersedes all previous editions of WD AGO Forms 53 and 55 for enlisted persons entitled to an Honorable Discharge, which will not be used after receipt of this revision.

Army of the United States



SEPARATION QUALIFICATION RECORD

SAVE THIS FORM. IT WILL NOT BE REPLACED IF LOST

This record of job assignments and special training received in the Army is furnished to the soldier when he leaves the service. In its preparation, information is taken from available Army records and supplemented by personal interview. The information about civilian education and work experience is based on the individual's own statements. The veteran may present this document to former employers, prospective employers, representatives of schools or colleges, or use it in any other way that may prove beneficial to him.

1. LAST NAME—FIRST NAME—MIDDLE INITIAL

RASMUSSEN MELVIN O

2. ARMY SERIAL NO.

19 118 884

3. GRADE

Pfc

4. SOCIAL SECURITY NO.

None

5. PERMANENT MAILING ADDRESS (Street, City, County, State)

Box 15, Snake River
Franklin County, Washington

6. DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE

1 Sep 43

7. DATE OF SEPARATION

24 Mar 46

8. DATE OF BIRTH

3 Apr 22

9. PLACE OF SEPARATION

Fort Lewis, Washington

MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS

10. MONTHS	11. GRADE	12. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY
3	Pvt	Basic Trng 521
20	Pfc	Rifleman 745
4	Pfc	Supply clerk 835

SUMMARY OF MILITARY OCCUPATIONS

13. TITLE—DESCRIPTION—RELATED CIVILIAN OCCUPATION

SUPPLY CLERK: Served in a large bakery shop in France. Assisted the supply sergeant in requisitioning, stocking and distributing supplies of flour and other baking ingredients. Also made up requisitions for clothing for the company and all the cleaning supplies for 2 large bakeries. Made estimate of requirements to keep stock up to operational level. Bakeries produced 60,000 pounds of bread a day.

WD AGO FORM
JUL 1945 100

This form supersedes WD AGO Form 100, 15 July 1944, which will not be used.

16-45815-1

ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES



Honorable Discharge

This is to certify that

MELVIN O RASMUSSEN 19 118 884 PRIVATE FIRST CLASS
CO B 290TH INF REGT

ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES

is hereby Honorably Discharged from the military service of the United States of America.

This certificate is awarded as a testimonial of Honest and Faithful Service to this country.

Given at SEPARATION CENTER FORT LEWIS WASHINGTON

Date 24 MARCH 1946

J Willard Wagner
J WILLARD WAGNER
LIEUTENANT COLONEL AGD

X. Memoirs

Service in World War II

Herlin O. Rasmussen

While attending W.S.U. the Dean of Men published notice all ^{male} students who were subject to the draft could sign up to Enlisted Reserve Program. Signing up to the program delayed going into the service immediately. I had finished my first semester at W.S.U.

Signing up placed you in a reserve status which allowed continuation as a student. It also gave a choice of the branch of service. In August of 1942 father took me to Pullman to check on the program. I had a complete physical examination. I desired to sign up for Navy preference. The Navy found I was ~~color~~ red-green color blind. I could go in the navy if I went in today. I turned the choice down so I could continue at W.S.U.

I was attending the second semester when another option came. I could go home the next semester on an agricultural furlough in the E.R.C. I went home and worked for my father as four other brothers were already in the service. About July 1943 I received notice that all who were in the E.R.C. were going to be called up to go into the service.

A notice was received to report to Fort Lewis to enter Army service. Again I received a physical examination for the Army wanted to know why the Navy turned me down. Among tests I received was an Army General Classification test. I had a score of 110 or better which made me eligible for an education program or Officer Candidate School.

After finishing basic training I was to go on for additional college work. ~~Fort Lewis~~ sent to Fort Bragg, Ga.

I was sent to Stanford Univ. for schooling. The army hoped ASTP could furnish engineering students to support in a very short time. The courses were too tough. I resigned from the student program. Before the quarter was over Army Headquarters cancelled the program. Over 50% were sent back to units they came from or to units preparing to go overseas.

An interesting building was the Herbert Hoover Memorial Library. Besides being a president before F. D. Roosevelt, he had ~~been~~ served in a special company in World War I. He helped in distribution of food and other supplies to our country and European allies. The building held records and honors he received for his service in W.W.I. A large tower over ten stories crowned the Library.

At the end of the University quarter, those separated were sent to Camp Roberts ⁱⁿ California. The ~~camp~~ location was near two small towns; King City and Jolon (Holton), California.

Those separated from Stanford Univ. were sent here. The 71st Infantry Division had held maneuvers against the 89th Infantry Division. A large group of soldiers were sent as overseas replacements from these two divisions. Soon after the 71st Division had finished separating men for assignment overseas, those who were in the holding unit were sent as replacements to the 71st Inf. Division. The division had three Infantry regiments. I was sent to Company B, 5th Infantry Regiment. The Division had the 55th, 14th, and 66th Infantry regiments.

Shortly thereafter, the Division was sent to Fort Benning, Ga. There we had arms training, rifle, mortars, artillery, and other training.

In July 1944, I had 30 day furlough plus travel time. A short time later I was reassigned to go to the 75th Inf. Div. at Camp Breckinridge, Kentucky. The 75th had the 289th, 290th, and 291st Infantry Regiments. I was assigned as a rifleman to Co. B in the 290th Infantry Regiment.

I have two pamphlets published for the 75th Division which describes some of our effort in

the "Battle of The Bulge" mainly in Belgium.

The division was sent to Europe in October

1945. The 290th Infantry Regiment was sent to

~~Portsmouth~~, Wales. We were stationed there one month

before being sent to the continent. The regiment was sent to Birmingham, England and took a transport ship to Le Havre, France. We lived in shelter tents for a few weeks. In December we had moved on railroad box cars referred to 40 and eight. They could move 40 men or eight horses and equipment.

Later, we were moved by semi trucks and trailers closer to the front lines. At another point of time we were located with the 3rd and 4th Armored divisions. We were in the Ninth Army.

During this time, I saw the first dead American soldier. The Regimental Commander sent down an order to dig the hole deeper for more protection from artillery shells. Another provision was to make the foxhole in shape of a Y for three men, one could rest, two could share time observing for the enemy, four hours on, eight hours off, rotating.

At Christmas, ~~we~~ our division suffered a counter attack. The second and third battalion suffered their first large amount of casualties.

19th

The ~~nineteen~~^{rest} of January 1945, I was wounded by a piece of shrapnel in the mid thigh. The first aid man bandaged the wound and sent me back to a farmhouse ~~to wait~~ for an ambulance. This happened about 9:00 am. Other wounded waited at the farm house. About three ~~and~~^{one} hour ~~and~~^{an} jeep prepared to transport wounded took us to an aid station. I believe it was in an aid station the shrapnel was removed.

With the rush of injuries, I was placed on a hospital train. Nurses and doctors gave us good care ~~during the ride~~ to Paris. In Paris, I was in the 94th Army Hospital. From there, I was sent to Birmingham, England. When the wound was healed over, I was sent to a convalescent center. Here we had marching and physical exercises.

I was given a weeks convalescent furlough. I spent four and one half days in London. I was able to see the house of commons, the royal palace, famous landmarks, and thoroughly enjoy myself.

About April 6th I was on a troop ship back to the continent. The troopship took us to La Havre. From La Havre we went to Verneuil, Belgium. There was an outbreak of Amoebic dysentery. After suffering (diarrhea) I was sent to a hospital near Liege, Belgium. For two weeks I had chicken a la King and the required sulfa tablets. After the two weeks we were sent to another redeployment camp in Verneuil, Belgium.

I was able to celebrate V.E (Victory in Europe day) in Verneuil.

Early in June I was in Verde, Germany Company B, 290th Inf., 75th Inf. Division.

Early in June the whole 75th division was sent to near Rheims, France. The division was broken up into about 17 redeployment camps. These camps were named after American Cities - Camp New York, Camp Chicago, Camp Pittsburg, Camp Cleveland, etc.

The first battalion of the 290th Inf. Regt was assigned Camp Cleveland.

Soldiers from other bases in Europe who were priority for discharge were sent here for confirmation of records. Points were earned for being in a war, battles, wounds, family size, length of service, and other items. The high point numbers were shipped home for discharge. A middle group was assigned in Europe, the lowest group could be assigned to a unit going to S.E. Asia,

I was in the middle group and assigned to a Quartermaster Bakery located at Verdun, France. I was assigned to assist the supply sergeant and jeep driver. About once a week, I drove to Rheims to turn in a bakery report. The bakery baked over 40,000 pounds of bread per day. American military operated the bakery, but German Prisoners of War worked in the bakery. Prisoners of War who worked received over 3,000 calories of rations per day in three meals. Those who didn't work receive slightly over 2,000 calories. Some of the P.O.W.s could speak English which helped them in the work they were assigned.

The bakery moved to Metz before I was sent home for discharge.

Early in March of 1946, I was told to prepare for return to the states and discharge. I prepared my duffle bag and a few other items to take home,

It was a beautiful sight to see the statue of Liberty. The four day train ride took me to Seattle and Fort Lewis. I was discharged on Mar. 26, 1946.

The most important things I consider that I learned from service was 1. Education - completion of a college degree.

2. Veterans loan on our first home at 1208
~~at 110th Street~~^{5th} Tacoma,

3. Civil service preference; a 25 years of Federal service.

4. Compensation for a war wound and other medical problems resulted in a 10% VA disability.

5. The war wound in the thigh and hearing loss resulted in the award for 10% VA disability award with compensation, as well as help with pharmaceutical supplies, and help with needed surgery.