

# Veterans of WWII - Members of Post 16



By: Bobby Ricketts

Post 16 undoubtedly had a large number of WWII veterans in the membership in the years following the end of the war in 1945. As time marches forward we have unfortunately lost the majority of them. I wasn't born until 26 years after the war ended, but I have a deep respect for these veterans. I am quite aware that if not for their fortitude and sacrifice, I may have never been born. My respect is equal for our veterans of the current war, Korean War, Cold War, Vietnam War, and Desert Storm (For which I am a member of); however I feel it's necessary at this time to tell the story of as many living WWII Veterans in our Post as possible. This burden will certainly shift to our great Korean War and Vietnam War Veterans in the future. In our future newsletters I will be interviewing Mr. Bill Brown, Pop Whitten, Hervy Snowden, and others. I'm also accumulating pictures and the history of all of our veterans for the history archive of Post 16. That is certainly a work in progress, but I would like to eventually put it all together for everyone to see. If you're interested in talking with me please either leave a note for me in the new Social Club or email me at [post16editor@verizon.net](mailto:post16editor@verizon.net)

## Ray Franz

- 91 year-old Ray Franz was a senior in college on December 7, 1941, when America was attacked by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor. Ray says, "It was the end of the semester my buddy and I went to St. Louis to enlist in the marines. They took him and rejected me because I was so near sighted. I tried to get in the Navy's V-7 program so I could finish college, but they rejected me for the same reason. I was 21 when I was drafted into the service at Peoria IL on October 30, 1942 and entered the army at Scott's Airforce Base where I was sent to the 96th Infantry at Camp Adair Oregon. After basic training I was made acting Platoon Sgt. of the weapons platoon and learned the basics of 60 mm mortars. I was promoted to S/Sgt and sent on cadre to the 69th Division Co. L 272 Infantry in Camp Shelby, Mississippi. By this time the draft boards were scraping the bottom of the barrel and many of the recruits were sent back home as unfit for service."

Ray continued, "The saying, "never volunteer for anything" was something I forgot when the call came for volunteers for the new Motor Messenger Companies that were being formed. Since I was a secretarial major in college, I figured I would fit in there, so I volunteered. I was sent to Camp Crowder in MO and six weeks later I was on my way overseas to the ETO (European Theater of Operations) on the SS Brazil, a converted luxury liner. The weather was sunny and pleasant for our "cruise."

Ray was stationed in foggy, damp London for a short time when the German V-1 Rockets (AKA - buzz bombs) were flying overhead. He said they sounded like an old Model T's engine. The saying from the British was, "If you hear them you are safe, it's the ones you don't hear that will get you.." Ray says that was because the motor would shut off and the bomb would glide to earth, destroying whatever it hit.

Ray continued to talk about his experience: "I was in the ETO from August 11, 1944 to December 12, 1945. I was in charge of Detachment C, stationed with the 12th Army Group at Maastricht, Holland. Our job was to take messages to other Army groups; including the British. Jeeps and command cars were used, with the exception of air couriers; which was the job I got and I didn't relish the trip to Orly Field in Paris in a Piper Cub. I ask the Lt. why I had to go along, as the pilot could do that. He said I had to sign for the pouch and get a signature in Paris. Both trips I made 'hedge hopping' in the Cub were without incident. Great way to see the destruction from the war, including downed airplanes.

We entered Germany through Aachen, a town that was an entry point for our troops. It looked as though there was nothing left standing that could be used as a shelter.

Ray's detachment was in Gütersloh, Germany at the end of the war in 1945 and was sent to Nuremberg where he stayed until he had enough points to return home. His detachment spent a great time in Nuremberg where they stayed in a *Gasthaus* (small German hotel) complete with maid service, meals, and the works. On December 14, 1945 Ray was on his way home on a well-used Liberty ship where he met a college friend for whose wedding he was the best man. Ray explained that it was a scary, rough trip as they ran into the storm that almost wrecked the carrier Enterprise. While onboard, Ray volunteered for KP for Christmas dinner. He said it was the only time he did KP.

Ray Franz was discharged on New Year's Eve 1945 and on his way home to Belleville, IL.

His WWII Service Ribbon had 3 battle stars for Ardennes, Rhineland and Central Europe campaigns. (The *European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal* was initially issued as a ribbon [Known as the "EAME Ribbon"] to those serving active duty after December 7, 1941. It wasn't until 1947 that a full-size Medal was issued. Service Stars were worn on the ribbon, and later the medal; one for each service in 1 of 19 Campaigns or 'Blanket Campaigns'. Ray said, "It didn't take me long to get into my civvies, finish college and enter a 38-year teaching career. It was my pleasure and honor to serve on Post 16's Honor Guard from 2003 to 2010." **Editor's note: Ray's son Lynn Franz is the webmaster for [www.amlegionvapist6.org](http://www.amlegionvapist6.org)**



The European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal & Ribbon w/ 3 Stars



Ray Franz in Germany, March 1945



Ray Franz and fellow soldiers in the 12th Army Group at Maastricht, Holland

Ray Franz served with dignity and honor in Post 16's Uniform Group from 2003-2010. He served as a rifleman, bugler, and chaplain.