



Freedom's Voice

The Monthly Newsletter of the
Military History Center

112 N. Main ST
Broken Arrow, OK 74012
<http://www.okmhc.org/>



"Promoting Patriotism through the Preservation of Military History"

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March 15 – Vietnam Veterans Day

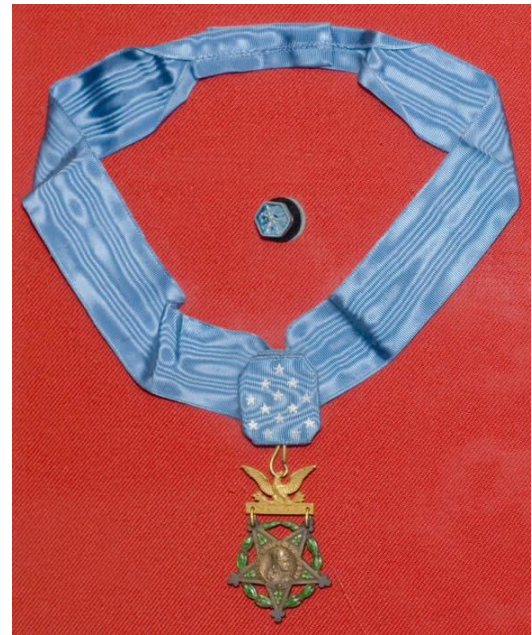
The MHC will host its annual Vietnam Veterans Appreciation Day on Thursday, March 15.

The program will be presented in the activities auditorium of Broken Arrow's First Methodist Church, 112 E. College ST, beginning at 7:00 p.m. The featured speaker will be Vietnam War veteran, Major Jack O'Conner (USAF, Retired). Miss Oklahoma City University, Maggie Bond, will entertain with selected patriotic songs. We will honor Broken Arrow's Vietnam War servicemen killed in action and their families.

Admission to the program and to the MHC, for that day, is free. Please mark your calendars for this special, patriotic day, come out and visit the MHC and pay tribute to our Vietnam veterans.



MHC to Display Medal of Honor



LT. General Mark Clark, Commander of Fifth Army, presented this Medal of Honor to CPL Paul B. Huff at a ceremony in the field near Carano, Italy, on May 26, 1944.

The Military History Center is privileged and honored by the opportunity to display CPL Paul Huff's Medal of Honor. MHC Board Secretary, Peter Plank, has made arrangements with CSMG Tracy Huff (U.S. Army Retired) for a short loan of the Medal. The MHC will be able to display the Medal of Honor for about sixty days. As soon as an appropriate display setting is developed, the MHC will announce the opening of the display. This will be something everyone will want to see.

Museum Hours and Admission Fee

Tuesday – Friday: 10:00 – 4:00; Saturday: 10:00 – 2:00
Closed Sunday and Monday and major Federal holidays

Adults – \$5.00

Members and Children under 18 – Free

For more information, call (918) 794-2712

www.okmhc.org

Paul B. Huff

Paul Bert Huff was born at Cleveland, Tennessee, on June 23, 1918. He was drafted into the Army on June 27, 1941. He was sent to Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, for induction. At some point, he volunteered for paratrooper training. On February 8, 1944, he was a Corporal and a squad leader in Co. A, 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, attached to Fifth Army on the Anzio beachhead. On that day, near Carano, CPL Huff performed the feats of heroism that gained him the Medal of Honor. He was the first paratrooper to receive the decoration. He went on to a career in the Army, later serving in Vietnam.

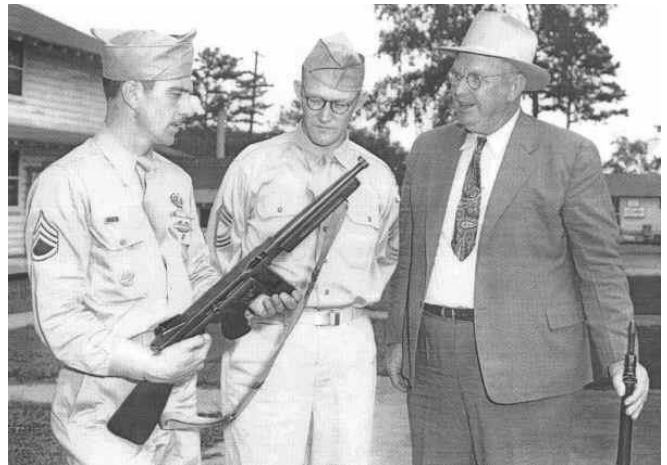


CPL Huff, on the left, and SGT Alton W. Knappenberger received Medals of Honor in a joint ceremony on May 26, 1944. General Clark is on the right

CPL Huff's Medal of Honor Citation: *"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at risk of life above and beyond the call of duty, in action on 8 February 1944, near Carano, Italy. Cpl. Huff volunteered to lead a 6-man patrol with the mission of determining the location and strength of an enemy unit which was delivering fire on the exposed right flank of his company. The terrain over which he had to travel consisted of exposed, rolling ground, affording the enemy excellent visibility. As the patrol advanced, its members were subjected to small arms and machinegun fire and a concentration of mortar fire, shells bursting within 5 to 10 yards of them and bullets striking the ground at their feet. Moving ahead of his patrol, Cpl. Huff drew fire from 3 enemy machineguns and a 20mm. weapon. Realizing the danger confronting his patrol, he advanced alone under deadly fire through a minefield and arrived at a point within 75 yards of the nearest machinegun position. Under direct fire from the rear machinegun, he crawled the remaining 75 yards to the closest emplacement, killed the crew with his submachine gun and destroyed the gun. During this act he fired from a kneeling position which drew fire from other positions, enabling him to estimate correctly the strength and location of the enemy. Still under concentrated fire, he returned to his patrol and led his men to safety. As a result of the information he gained, a patrol in strength sent out that afternoon, 1 group under the leadership of Cpl. Huff, succeeded in routing an enemy company of 125 men, killing 27 Germans and capturing 21 others, with a loss of only 3 patrol members. Cpl. Huff's intrepid leadership and daring combat skill reflect the finest traditions of the American infantryman."*



SMG Huff (left) speaking with SMG Walter T. Sabalauski during an operation by the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division near Duc Pho, South Vietnam – July 1967.



SSG Huff shows a submachine gun, such as the one he used in 1944, to his friend, World War I Medal of Honor recipient SGT Alvin York. The two men lived only about sixty miles apart and became close friends.

Huff retired in 1970 as Third Army Command Sergeant Major. He died at Clarksville, Tennessee, on September 21, 1994. He is buried in Hillcrest Memorial Gardens at Cleveland, Tennessee.



CPL Huff – May 1944



CSGM Huff – ca. 1970

Recent MHC Tours



Residents of Brookdale Senior Living Center visit the MHC
Friday, January 26.

On Saturday, February 10, ten scouts and their supervisors from Boy Scout Troop 217 of St. Mark's Catholic Church, Norman, Oklahoma, toured the MHC.



Docent Dennis Franchini displaying the flag of the 1st Cherokee Mounted Rifles (CSA) in the Civil War Exhibit



Docent Michael Tarman at the World War I Exhibit



Docent Michael Tarman discussing artifacts
in the World War II Exhibit



Volunteer Earl Laney demonstrating a take-off, short flight and landing
at Tulsa International Airport on the MHC flight simulator



Group photo of the boy scouts, their supervisors and MHC docents

Any group interested in a museum tour, please contact the MHC at (918) 794-2712. To properly accommodate the tour, we have to schedule it.

Happy 77th Birthday to the USO



Oklahoma has USO facilities at Oklahoma City and Ft. Sill.

The United Services Organization (USO) was founded on February 4, 1941. Beginning in World War II, and continuing to this day, the USO has provided a wide range of services in support of military service members and their families. The USO is probably best known for the shows it produces to entertain troops in war zones. Some photographic examples follow.



One of the longest and most beloved USO performers was Bob Hope, shown here with Gale Robbins – Fritzlar, Germany – July 26, 1945. His first USO show was in Alaska in 1942. His last show was in 1990 in Bahrain.



Marilyn Monroe entertains the 1st Marine Division – Korea, 1954



Bob Hope and Ann-Margaret entertain the 9th Infantry Division at Long Binh, South Vietnam – December 22, 1968



COL Gary Patton, Chief of Staff, 25th Infantry "Tropic Lightning" Division, presents Carrie Underwood with a gift for her performance at Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Tikrit, Iraq, December 15, 2006.



Toby Keith – Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan – April 27, 2012

This Month's Featured Artifacts

The following photographs are samples of a large collection of original photographs that have never been published. Similar photographs can be found in the public domain on the internet, but not the exact photographs in the collection, and for some, not even similar ones. The German photographs were taken in 1934-35 by a German firm (or individual photographer) apparently under contract to the *New York Times*. The photographs of Japan seem to have been taken by U.S. Army Air Force personnel in 1945. The MHC is grateful to Mr. Larry Zezima, proprietor of B.A. Gold Buyers, for his generosity in giving the MHC this extraordinary collection.



The funeral of Field Marshall/President Paul von Hindenburg at the Tannenberg Memorial in East Prussia – August 8, 1934



Hitler opening the Frankfurt am Main-Heidelberg motor way (autobahn) near Darmstadt – May 19, 1935. Contrary to popular myth, the autobahn system was not Hitler's idea. Construction of the first segment of the autobahn (Cologne-Bonn) began in 1929 and was dedicated by Cologne Mayor Konrad Adenauer (later the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany) on August 6, 1932. When Hitler assumed power as Chancellor of Germany in 1933, he took the program over claiming it for his own. General Eisenhower was so impressed with the autobahn system that it became his inspiration for the U.S. interstate highway system.



The two photographs above show the destruction caused by extensive firebombing of Tokyo. The top photograph shows the Japanese Parliament building and complex, constructed of stone or concrete and steel, which allowed it to survive the firebombing; whereas, the surrounding wooden structures, prevalent in Japanese cities, burned to the ground.



Hiroshima destroyed by the first atomic bomb – August 6, 1945

Oklahoma Military Family



Willard E. Battenfield – Honolulu, Hawaii – date unknown
He is wearing the rank insignia of a Torpedoman's Mate
(Petty Officer 2nd Class - Torpedoman 2nd Class).

Willard Elvas Battenfield was born on October 31, 1921, at Barnsdall (Osage County), Oklahoma. He joined the Navy on April 3, 1940. He was sent to San Diego and assigned to the destroyer, *USS Winslow*, for basic training. *Winslow* was later ordered to Pearl Harbor. From there, Battenfield was sent to torpedo school at Newport, Rhode Island. By the time he finished school and returned to Pearl Harbor, *Winslow* had been ordered to South America for submarine patrol. Battenfield was assigned to another destroyer, *USS Ralph Talbot*.

On the Sunday morning, December 7, 1941, Battenfield was eating breakfast in his quarters, when he and his crewmates heard a boom and went outside to see what it was. They saw nine Japanese planes flying from Barbers Point. He had been attending machinegun school, and the marine instructors had a .50 caliber machinegun set up and began firing at the planes over the harbor. The sailor trainees loaded and belted ammunition for the marines. It was soft-nose target ammunition, thus somewhat ineffective, still the marines shot down two of the enemy planes.

On Tuesday following the attack, *Ralph Talbot* took on fuel and supplies and sailed for Samoa to rendezvous with Admiral William Halsey's aircraft carrier task force. Halsey was determined to strike a blow at the Japanese. He had devised a plan to raid their bases in the Marshall and Gilbert islands. The raid began on February 1. It included off-shore bombardment and attacks by aircraft from the carriers, *Enterprise* and *Yorktown*. The raid did little damage, but it was a morale booster and

showed the Japanese the United States was still in the game. It was also the nation's first offensive action of World War II.

Upon his return to Pearl Harbor, Battenfield learned he had been accepted for submarine school. After graduating from submarine school at New London, Connecticut, he was posted to the newly commissioned submarine, *USS Pogy*¹. *Pogy* was built at Manitowoc, Wisconsin, and commissioned on January 10, 1943. She was shipped by rail to the Mississippi River, where she was loaded on a river barge for New Orleans. Once in the water, she steamed to the Panama Canal Zone. She arrived on February 21, and the crew began several weeks of training in the oceans on both sides of the Canal.

After completing the training around Panama, *Pogy* steamed to Pearl Harbor. While en route, Battenfield took the examinations for Torpedoman 2nd Class and Petty Officer 2nd Class. He easily passed both examinations and was rated on April 1. *Pogy* arrived at Pearl Harbor four days later. On April 15, she set out on her first war patrol.



USS Pogy on Lake Michigan – 1943

Battenfield had begun keeping a journal, while *Pogy* was on the barge about 100 miles upriver from New Orleans. His journal ends after *Pogy's* sixth war patrol. It was against regulations to keep a journal or diary on a submarine, so he left it at home, when he returned from leave.

Pogy made ten war patrols in the Pacific Theater, sinking a total of sixteen Japanese vessels. She earned eight Battle Stars and a Navy Unit Commendation. On her fourth patrol, *Pogy* sank a 6,081-ton submarine tender and a 5,000-ton transport loaded with troops. The twenty-seven depth charges dropped on her after sinking the transport caused serious damage that ended the patrol after just twenty-eight days.

During the course of the war, *Pogy* expended 126 torpedoes while sinking four Japanese naval ships, thirteen merchant ships, four merchant sampans and damaged four additional Japanese ships. She served 495 days at sea, including about 150 days submerged. During her ten war patrols, she was depth-charged on numerous occasions, but except for the massive depth charge attack received on her fourth patrol, she es-

¹ During World War II, the U.S. Navy named its submarines for fish. *Pogy*, also called mossbunker, menhaden or bunker, is related to her-ring. Pogies are used mostly as bait to catch larger fish, such as tuna.

caped all of them with only minor damage. *Pogy* was struck from the Naval Register in 1958.

Willard Battenfield was honorably discharged from the Navy at the Naval Personnel Separation Center in Norman, Oklahoma, on April 4, 1946. He had served six years and two days, and left the Navy as a Torpedoman 1st Class/Petty Officer 1st Class (a rank equivalent to an Army Staff Sergeant). During his time in the Navy, Battenfield served on ships and submarines other than those herein noted, including the submarine, USS *Batfish*. He was one of the Oklahoma submariners responsible for bringing *Batfish* to Muskogee War Memorial Park. (See the December 2017 newsletter for the story of *Batfish*.)

As well as being a Pearl Harbor survivor, Battenfield had a notable war record. As submariners would put it, Petty Officer First Class Willard Elvas "Bat" Battenfield departed on eternal patrol on March 14, 2009. He is buried in Veterans Field of Honor in Floral Haven Memorial Gardens in Broken Arrow.



* * * * *

While Willard Battenfield was serving in the Navy, his brother-in-law (his wife's brother) was serving in the Army Air Force. Lloyd George Dickson was born at Barnsdall on June 28, 1922. He joined the Air Force on September 1, 1942. He was trained as a radio operator. After training, he was assigned to the 528th Bomb Squadron, 380th Bomb Group (H), stationed at Lowry Field, Colorado. The 380th flew B-24 Liberators.

On February 12, 1943, while flying over New Mexico, Dickson's bomber suffered engine failure that resulted in a stall/spin condition. The pilot was unable to recover, and the B-24 crashed eight miles northwest of Roswell, according to the incident report – five miles from Roswell according to the Associated Press. Only the flight engineer was able to get out of the doomed bomber.

SGT Lloyd George Dickson's body was returned to his family and buried in Ethel Reece Cemetery at Barnsdall.



* * * * *

Willard Battenfield's father-in-law, Ossie Kenton Dickson, was a soldier of World War I. He was born near Grove in the Cherokee Nation, Indian Territory, on March 24, 1896. He was inducted into the Army on August 26, 1918. After the signing of the Armistice that ended the war on November 11, the Army immediately began downsizing. With less than three months of service, PVT Dickson was discharged as a member of Co. D, 439th Reserve Labor Battalion of the Quartermaster Corps at Fort Sill on December 18, 1918.

After the war, Ossie Dickson settled in the Barnsdall area of Osage County. We know nothing of what he did after the war. He died at Barnsdall on October 25, 1955. He is also buried in Ethel Reece Cemetery at Barnsdall.



The three men written about in this article are respectively, father, uncle and grandfather of Gary Battenfield of Broken Arrow. The MHC is thankful for Mr. Battenfield's donation of his family's wartime artifacts and memorabilia. We are grateful for the opportunity to share the stories of his patriotic ancestors with our readers.

Support the Military History Center

We believe the MHC provides a valuable service to the Oklahoma, especially to veterans and students, by "Promoting Patriotism through the Preservation of Military History". We ask for your financial support to help the MHC continue our educational endeavors and to help our ongoing mission of promoting patriotism and honoring our veterans for the sacrifices they have made, and are making, to keep America free.

For more information, please contact the Military History Center at (918) 794-2712 to learn how you can be a financial supporter, or click on the link below to go to the MHC website at www.okmhc.org/donate/.

Monetary donations, as well as gifts in kind, are tax deductible, subject to IRS regulations.

Marshall - Gilbert Islands Raids

In the First World War, Japan had fought opportunistically on the side of the British and French. The sole interest of the Japanese was to acquire the German trading concessions in China and Germany's central Pacific island possessions. One of the island groups, which Japan occupied was the Marshall Islands. After the League of Nations was set up, it gave Japan a League of Nations Mandate over the islands. Japan treated them as colonies and proceeded to fortify the important ones.

Five weeks after Pearl Harbor, the United States Navy undertook raids on Japanese installations in the Marshall Islands. Vice Admiral William F. Halsey, Jr. commanded the task force designated to raid the Marshall Islands. The task force was centered on the aircraft carrier, *USS Enterprise*, his flagship. The raid began on February 1, 1942, seventy-six years ago this month. Aircraft from *Enterprise* attacked Japanese installations on Kwajalein, Wotje and Taroa. At the same time, cruisers and destroyers bombarded Wotje and Taroa.

One of Halsey's task force destroyers was *USS Ralph Talbot*, with Torpedoman Second Class Willard Battenfield aboard. *Ralph Talbot's* job was to screen *Enterprise*. She did not engage in the raid on the islands. *Ralph Talbot* was named for Medal of Honor recipient, 2LT Ralph Talbot of South Weymouth, Massachusetts, a U.S. Marine Corps aviator killed October 25, 1918, when his aircraft crashed on takeoff in France. He received the Medal of Honor for "exceptionally meritorious service and extraordinary heroism" in aerial combat over Belgium on October 18, while posted to the 1st Marine Aviation Force. Talbot was the first Marine Corps aviator to receive the Medal of Honor.



USS Ralph Talbot (DD-390) off Honolulu – ca. 1943

The Gilbert Islands were a British possession, with the main island group being Tarawa Atoll. The Japanese occupied the Gilberts as part of their initial offensive that started the Pacific war. At the time of the raid, they had been able to complete little in the way of installations in the Gilbert Islands. Rear Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher commanded the task force responsible for attacking the Gilbert Islands. His task force was centered on the aircraft carrier, *USS Yorktown*, his flagship. While Halsey's task force was attacking the Marshall Islands, aircraft

and surface ships from Fletcher's task force attacked Jaluit, Mili and Makin in the Gilbert Islands.



SBD-2 Dauntless dive bombers loaded with bombs prepare to take off from *Enterprise* on February 1, 1942.

The raids were the war's first offensive operation by the United States. The raiders caught the Japanese by surprise but did little damage. That wasn't their purpose, as the Americans didn't have the means to do much damage. The purpose of the raids was to show the Japanese that the United States was capable of striking back after Pearl Harbor and other early Japanese successes. Even though the raiders inflicted only modest damage, the raids had a couple of positive effects. Foremost, they provided valuable experience in carrier air operations, which the airmen and sailors had not previously had. The raids also had a positive effect on morale, although nothing like the morale boost received from the Doolittle Raid on mainland Japan two and a half months later. United States Marines wrested the most important islands in the Marshalls and Gilberts from the Japanese by bloody combat in 1943-44.



USS Yorktown – February 1942 *Yorktown* received fatal torpedo damage during the Battle of Midway and sank on June 7, 1942.

“Lest We Forget”



North Africa American Cemetery and Memorial – Carthage, Tunisia

North Africa American Cemetery and Memorial is located near the town of Carthage, Tunisia, near the site of the ancient city of the same name, about ten miles from Tunis. The cemetery of twenty-seven acres contains the graves of 2,841 American servicemen. Inscribed on the Wall of the Missing are the names of 3,724 missing in action and presumed dead, including sailors and airmen lost at sea. Rosettes mark the names of remains recovered and identified since the cemetery was created. Most of the cemetery's interred lost their lives in World War II during fighting in North Africa and in World War II military activities ranging from North Africa to the Persian Gulf.

Freedom is not free.

