

20th Combat Engineer Association

of World War II



November 2009

Lost But Not Forgotten

Irwin M. Jurs (F/20th; C/1340th) died April 21, 2009, with pneumonia and heart failure according to his widow, Betty M. Jurs. In 2004, Irwin wrote "I will not be able to attend the Final Reunion because I had a stroke. It affected my eyes, and I can no longer drive. We have moved from New York, and now are living full time at 1050 Geneva Way, Grand Island, Florida 32735. Have a good time at the Reunion, and give my regards to all, especially the boys of C Company, 1340th." Betty concluded her report on Irwin's death, "We had a wonderful life with so many good memories, and he enjoyed me reading the *Wavy Arrow* to him."

George N. Spivey (A/20th) died October 1, 2009, at the age of 90 years, after a brief stay in the Portsmouth, Virginia hospital. He served as a sergeant with A Company of the 20th from North Africa to Czechoslovakia and ended his working career as a claims supervisor for Allstate Insurance Company. A grave side service with military honors was held at Greenlawn Memorial Gardens in Chesapeake. Spivey hosted 20th Reunions in 1962, 1969, 1980, and 1987; and he attended the 2004 final Reunion accompanied by his wife, Juanita Spivey, and two daughters, Janet Shaw and Susan Cohen, all three of whom survive George Spivey.

Peter M. Tarsi (B/20th) died October 11, 2009, in Lafayette Hill, Pennsylvania, at the age of 90 years. According to his widow, "his death came after a short illness." One of Peter's last letters to the editor of the *Wavy Arrow* expressed how much he enjoyed reading "all of the experiences we went through," and added, "Company B of the 20th Engineers was "an outfit of which I will always be proud." He made frequent contributions to support the publication and mailing of the *Wavy Arrow*.

Status of Another Veteran

Thomas M. Cooksey, Jr. (H&S Company, 1340th). This 84-year old veteran, is now suffering from Alzheimer, according to a letter received from Tracy Blair, 3360 Kirklees Road, Winston Salem, NC 27104. "I have been trying to help my mother to find out more about my dad's military experience. I have learned that he was wounded during one of the five campaigns in which he fought. I came across a recent issue of the *Wavy Arrow* and this has proven to be a great resource. I am looking for anyone who might remember my father." **Editor's Comment:** Thomas Cooksey joined the 20th in January 1944 in England, participated in the Normandy invasion, and remained with the 1340th through VE Day. I would guess that he was wounded in the Hurtgen Forest between November 2 and November 10, 1944.

20th Engineers at Fort Hood

Editor Griffenhagen visited the current 20th Engineer Battalion at Fort Hood in Texas (before the November 5th massacre; see next page). He was invited by 20th commander Lt. Col. Peter B. Andrysiak, Jr. to "share WWII experiences and enrich the minds of the soldiers of the 20th for their upcoming deployment to Afghanistan." The 20th is now a component of the 36th Engineer Brigade that also embraces the 2nd, 8th, 11th, 62nd, and 92nd Engineer Battalions. Griffenhagen as well as a second WWII veteran and several veterans of the Korean and Vietnam conflicts and Desert Storm were designated as Alumni of the 36th Engineer Brigade that was created in 2006 at Fort Hood.

The "Rugged Leader Conference" held October 27-29, 2009, at the nearby Shilo Inn included a brief history of the six battalions and an "Alumni Panel" where the six veterans reviewed their respective experiences and answered questions posed by several hundred current soldiers of the brigade on "lessons learned." The visit also included the Fort Hood engineer barracks and the 20th motor pool to see the current equipment that engineers are using. Equipment included the M104 Wolverine Assault Bridge that creates a bridge much faster and easier than erecting a Bailey Bridge, and the Buffalo (Mine Protected Clearance Vehicle) that is a vast improvement over the hand-held mine detector of WWII. The conference concluded with a "Rugged Leader Ball" at Club Hood featuring a "Grog Ceremony. During this ritual, each battalion added their favorite ingredient such as "sand from Arabia," potent alcoholic liquors, and even "broken glass goblets." The 20th Engineers added Pilsner that was employed to celebrate VE Day for WWII in Pilsen, Czechoslovakia.

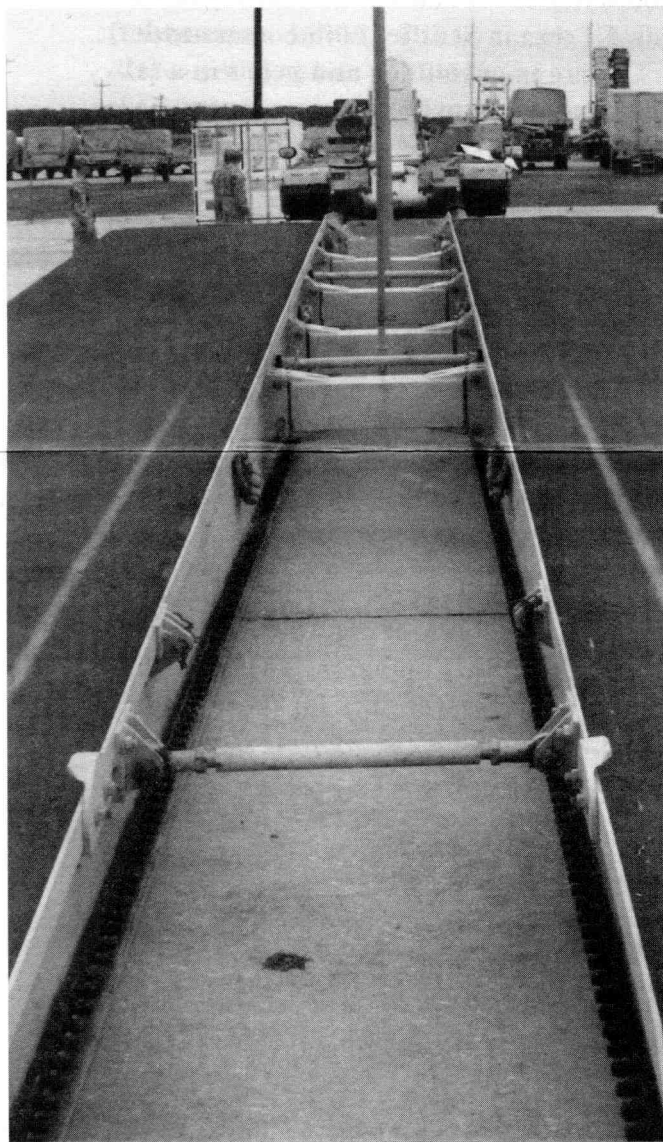


Colonel Kent D. Savre, 36th Engineer Brigade commander, welcomes George Griffenhagen



Staff Sergeant Atkinson describes the Buffalo that detects and enables I.D.s

M104 Wolverine Assault Bridge



Two men operating an M104 Wolverine Assault Bridge can launch an 85 foot long bridge in about five minutes that will permit the support of an Abrams Tank. The photo above shows the launching of a bridge, while the photo on the left pictures the full bridge laying on the ground.

We also saw an M1079 Light-Medium Tactical Vehicle that replaces the 2-1/2 ton GMC truck we used during WWII. However, because of frequent sniper fire, the transport of troops in Afghanistan often use the armored Huskie that replaces the WWII Half-Track.

Fort Hood Massacre

The 20th Engineers suffered the most casualties of any unit - four killed and eleven wounded - when an Army psychiatrist opened fire on fellow soldiers at Fort Hood on November 5, 2009. In preparing for the forthcoming deployment to Afghanistan, the 510th Engineer Company of the 20th Engineer Battalion was at the Soldier Readiness Processing Center in Fort Hood when the killings commenced. Those of the 20th Engineers killed include Pfc. Aaron Nemelka (19) of Utah, Pfc. Michael Pearson (22) of Illinois, Spec. Kham Xiong (23) of Minnesota, and Spec. Frederick Greene (29) of Tennessee. Our heart felt sympathy is extended to the comrades, relatives, and friends of these 20th Engineers who were ready to risk their lives in Afghanistan, little knowing that they might die even before their departure.

20th Regimental Adjutant Reports

Bernard McDonnell (20th Regimental Adjutant) writes: "I can't begin to tell you how much I enjoyed the May issue of the *Wavy Arrow*. I called Truman Setliffe (1340th commander) and we must have talked for an hour. A while back I broke my shoulder and pelvis in a fall. Now Set has had a fall in which he broke his shoulder. Our talks covered many events where we were involved such as how Col. Eugene Mead Caffey, commander of the 20th Engineer Combat Regiment in North Africa, bypassed other more senior staff by having all orders verified by Truman Setliffe. Baptist chaplain Alton E. Carpenter was wrong by writing in *World War II Diary of a Combat Chaplain* when he wrote that Col. Caffey had requested a Catholic chaplain. There was only handful of Catholics in the regiment and it is absurd that Col. Caffey requested a Catholic chaplain. **Editor's Note:** While in England in April 1944, Chappie was assigned an assistant chaplain, Father Winn, to hold Mass for the Catholics of the 20th Engineers. See a photo of Chappie and Father Winn in France in 1944 on page 133 of this WWII diary edited by Chappie's daughter, Anne Eiland (see below).

Chappie WWII Diary

Anne Eiland writes, "I have had many letters and e-mails from people who have purchased *Chappie World War II Dairy of a Combat Chaplain* and want to obtain copies to share with family and friends who have an interest in WWII and the 20th Engineers. Therefore, my publisher has authorized me to make available for a limited time free gifts for those readers who want to purchase a copy of *Chappie* during the holiday season. People wanting to purchase the book as a gift can now 'Buy one, and get one free.' This offer is only available through direct mail purchase and not from Amazon.com or local book stores. Anyone interested in taking advantage of this special offer are urged to go to <www.chappie> for more information.

Wavy Arrow Contributions

We thank the following for having made a contribution to keep the *Wavy Arrow* coming to you on a regular basis. Please consider one if you haven't made a contribution recently.

Elizabeth Doherty (Widow of Henry R. Doherty, Officer)	\$50.00
Betty Jurs (Widow of Irwin Jurs, F/20; C/1340)	\$25.00
Joseph H. Kleinfeld (H&S 20th; H&S 1340th)	\$20.00
Charles C. Libby (H&S 20th Band)	\$50.00
Bernard McDonnell (20th (20th Regimental Adjutant)	\$50.00
Steve Poulos (B/20th)	\$25.00
Ruby P. Toomey (Widow of W. Glenn Toomey, A/20th)	\$25.00

Send Contributions, Letters, Articles, Photographs, Obituaries, and other News Items for inclusion in future issues of the *Wavy Arrow* to editor George Griffenhagen, 2501 Drexel Street, Vienna, VA 22180.