

Merry Christmas – Happy Holidays – Happy New Year

Winter 2020 – 2021 Edition

Hello to everyone in the 8th Armored Division Association, families, and friends. Hopefully, things with the COVID-19 virus are quieting down now and with a potential vaccine, and we can all start to get back to a more normal life.

Hopefully, you are along with me looking forward to our 8th Armored Division Association Reunion on May 14 – 15 – 16, 2021 with our Reunion Dinner at our Hotel (Westin Dulles) on Friday evening; followed by our tour to the new Museum of the Army at Ft Belvoir, Va. And dedication of the memorial to the veterans of the 8th Armored Division there, as well as historic sites in and around Washington, D.C.

The Reunion is rescheduled from our planned Reunion in 2020 which was postponed due to covid. The new itinerary is included on this newsletter. Please consider attending. 8th Armored Division veterans are FREE (after checking in at the hotel) All else is gratis for them as a small gesture of gratitude for their gallant service in WWII. They will participate in the dedication of the Memorial; and also in laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers at Arlington. We need YOU!

It is time to send in your DUES for 2021

Individual Member - \$20 Family - \$35

Please send check made out to

8th Armored Division Association

Send to

8th Armored Division Association

2345 E. Dauphin St Philadelphia, PA 19125

Use the E-Mail address: 8thArmoredDivision@gmail.com

To communicate further, we also feature a ‘Facebook’ account and ask all interested to enroll in order to stay in contact and share comments and information: New Association ‘Facebook’ page

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/269231523148647/>

visit to the Museum of the Army at Ft. Belvoir, Dedication of our 8th Armored Division Memorial; etc.

Saturday, May 15, 2021 full breakfast buffet at the hotel Full-Day Excursion via coach to Washington, D.C. Memorials & Museums; Wreath Laying at Arlington Cemetery and back to Ft. Belvoir to tour the new Museum of the Army and Dedicate the Memorial for the 8th Armored Division; Buffet dinner at the Museum. Return to hotel.

Sunday, May 16, 2021 full breakfast buffet at the hotel Check out by 11:00am and return home

Deadline to reserve: April 19, 2021

Please complete the registration form and either e-mail or send via mail to:

Andy Waskie

8thArmoredDivision@gmail.com or Mail to

8th Armored Division Association

2345 E. Dauphin St.

Philadelphia, PA 19125

Make check payable to ***'8th Armored Division Association'***

Name _____

Address _____

Tel. _____ E-Mail _____

If an 8th Armored Division veteran:

unit _____

Wife or _____

guest(s) _____

Total number in party _____

Arrival date & time _____

Departure Date & time _____

Nights at the hotel _____

After reservation at the Hotel, 8th Armored Division Veterans are GRATIS and do not pay for dinner, visits, transportation, etc.

8th Armored Division Association
2345 E. Dauphin St. Philadelphia, PA 19125

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3. Contact Andy Waskie to confirm registration for the Dinner & Reunion Meeting on Friday, May 14, 2021 at 6:30pm and Saturday tour to D.C. and Museum of the Army. Hotel will be paid by the individual. 8th Armored Division veterans are FREE after arrival and registration at the Hotel. Handicap rooms are available upon request.

In the vicinity there are: Shopping Centers; Bar-restaurants; historic sites, etc. The Hotel is approximately 5 miles from Dulles airport. Come and explore all that awaits you in Virginia and get to know some of the personalities that influenced what occurred here for a truly remarkable and meaningful experience.

Duration: 3 Days/2 Nights

8thArmoredDivision@gmail.com

Andy Waskie 215-423-3930

In Memoriam

Lester Driscoll, Sergeant 36th Tank Battalion, Service Co.

<http://www.8th-armored.org/rosters/36svc-rst.htm>

Died of natural causes on April 3, 2020 at 96 years.

Reported by his daughter Eileen Burchsted

Lester Allan Driscoll, 96 (1923 – 2020)

WWII soldier with the 8th Armored Division in Europe and longtime

Westerleigh resident, was ballroom dancer in his leisure

Lester A. Driscoll passed peacefully on April 3, 2020.

He was a native Staten Islander, born on Oct. 20, 1923 to Joseph and Marian Driscoll. Les was a graduate of McKee HS. Upon graduating, he was employed by Bethlehem Steel in their shipbuilding division. He left to join the US Army in 1943 and served in the 8th Armored Division, 36th Tank Battalion Service Co. in Europe. He returned home in 1946 when he rejoined Bethlehem Steel. He worked there until his retirement in 1982.

After returning from the war, he married Marianne Euler. They were married for 61 years when Marianne passed in 2007. He lived in many locations throughout the North Shore, the longest was in lower Westerleigh, where he resided until 2015 when he moved to Sunrise Senior Living. He was very

Armored Division and his interview has been recorded in the Library of Congress. After the war, he served in Germany in the Army of Occupation and was a lieutenant in Army Intelligence.

For his heroism, Berkson was named a Knight of the French Legion of Honor by President Sarkozy of France "as a sign of France's infinite gratitude and appreciation for your personal and precious contribution to the United States decisive role in the liberation of our country during World War II." He has been given the rank of Chevalier created by Napoleon in 1812 to "acknowledge services rendered to France by persons of great merit." Berkson additionally was recognized with a ceremony by the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center and presented with an American flag that flew over the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. In 1950, Berkson moved to Miami, FL where he and a friend founded the Miami Airconditioning and Heating company. He also co-founded Thermal Industries of Florida and invented a refrigerant leak detector still in use today. In 1960, at the age of 44, he sold his company to Westinghouse Corporation and retired.

In his retirement, he became actively involved in the real estate business as an investor, real estate broker, and appraiser. He also became Chairman and President of the South Shore Hospital and Medical Center in Miami Beach, Florida, affiliated with the University of Miami.

Berkson still found time to coach an Optimist Club basketball team, with one player being famous actor, Andy Garcia. Marshall also played the drums and was a member of the Local Musician's Union 655, performing with his Dixieland combo for various charities, universities, and civic clubs.

He was awarded by Mayor Sy Gelber as an Honorary Citizen of the City of Miami Beach, received a key to the City of Miami Beach in 1986, and March 17, 1994 was named Marshall Berkson Day. For his 90th birthday, he was awarded with another key to the City of Miami Beach, a Centennial coin, and the proclamation of February 9, 2015 as Marshall Berkson Day by Mayor Philip Levine.

Marshall Berkson was married for 41 years to Lyla Feldman Berkson before her death in 1993. He is survived by his three beloved children: Ellen Ecker (Barry Neumann), Robert Berkson (Ann), and Lori Stoll (Jon, deceased); seven grandchildren: Lisa Ecker, Amy Ecker Dodd (Andrew), Matthew Berkson, Michael Berkson (Dina), L.J., Jack and Liana Stoll; great-grandchildren: Lyla Dodd, Miles Berkson; significant other, Lynda Fromkin; and extended family: Jesse Stoll, and Lauren (Chip) and daughter, Sydney

award-winning web site that is an awesome tool for research into the history of the 'Thundering Herd'.

Okay also served as an officer of the Association and as President Emeritus in the 2011 reorganization.

Without his sage wisdom and firm hand, the Association would not be what it is today.

We share your grief at the loss of yet another warrior hero of the 8th Armored Division who served and sacrificed in WWII to defend the nation and preserve liberty.

May Okey Taylor rest in eternal peace and his family find comfort at this trying time.

From son Bradley Taylor:

Dad was laid to rest at 5pm, September 15, 2020. It was a beautiful ceremony, and an outstanding cemetery.



Okey Taylor Burial on September 15, 2020 at family cemetery in Clendenin, WVA



Pfc Okey E. Taylor, 58-C

Okey Taylor 58-C in 1945 (1924 – 2020)

Dr. Elmer Richard Umbenhauer 7th Armored Infantry Battalion, 8th Armored Division (1924 – 2020)

Dr. Elmer Richard Umbenhauer, 94, of Cape May Court House, NJ passed away after a brief illness on May 18, 2020 at Cape Regional Medical Center, Cape May

Kazoo and following Philadelphia sports, especially the Phillies. He was an avid walker and loved walking with his beloved Grand dog Joey.

He is survived by two sons; Richard A. (Elizabeth) of Vista, CA, Todd H. of Souderton, PA, his daughter Lisa Jane (Steven) Novsak of Cape May Court House, and four grandchildren, Sarah (Michael) Scorzetti and Seth Umbenhauer of Souderton, Lauren Novsak of Baltimore, MD and Maribeth Novsak of Cape May Court House, and his one-year old great-grandson David Michael Scorzetti. He had one niece, the late Patricia (Emmett) Venette of Milford, DE, and two nephews, Jay Umbenhauer of Leesport, PA and Dave (Marilyn) Ney of Harrisburg, PA, and great nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his wife of 60 years, June Marie (Hertzog) Umbenhauer, two brothers, Harry (KIA in WWII) and Albert, and a sister, Myrtle (Umbenhauer) Ney.

Plans for a Memorial Service will be announced at a later date. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be sent to The WWII National Museum 945 Magazine St, New Orleans, LA 70130 or a charity of your choice.

<https://www.radzieta.com/obituaries/Elmer-Richard-Umbenhauer?obId=13941425#/obituaryInfo>



Dr. Elmer Umbenhauer – 7th Armored Infantry Battalion Co. B

Douglas Paul Ciemniecki (1961 – 2020)

A devoted member of the 8th Armored Division Association Family

Douglas Paul Ciemniecki, 58, of Englishtown, passed away Saturday, August 29, 2020 at home surrounded by his loving family. He was born in Plainfield and raised in Kenilworth, NJ. Douglas was an electrician and building maintenance

Died – September 17, 2020 at 96 years. May he rest in peace with his comrades, family and friends.

September 17, 2020, we lost another member of the "greatest generation," our comrade and 8th Armored Division veteran, Donald Wolff. He was a few weeks shy of 97 years of age. His mind was sharp but his body was tired.

Special father, grandfather, great grandfather and friend, he served our country with pride in World War II. He fought in the Battle of the Bulge and helped liberate several concentration camps as a tank driver in General Patton's 3rd Army. He served with the 80th Tank Battalion of the 8th Armored Division.

One of his favorite memories was being accompanied by his grandson, Cory, who also served in the Army, on the 2 day tour to Washington, D.C. as part of Honor Flight Arizona. The organization flies WWII veterans to the nation's capital to visit "their" memorial and thank them for their service and sacrifice on behalf a grateful nation.

Don was born in Cedar Falls, Iowa, November of 1923. After WWII ended, he met his future bride, Bonnie Lee, on a blind date. They were married six months later in 1949. Both decided they'd endured too many cold Iowa winters and chose to make their home in Phoenix, Arizona in 1952.

His profession as a custom homebuilder kept him busy well into his 80's. He loved building but more important were the lifelong relationships he made with his clients - building many of them more than one home. He estimates he built around 2000 homes throughout the valley - and as he'd say, "all are still standing!"

He raised his two daughters to know how to use a hammer and a saw along with the rest of the toolbox! He taught both girls to drive in one day in an old Ford truck with a gear shift on the steering column. They learned the hard way that most of his advice was right all along!

He had a sweet tooth and loved telling stories about his Danish upbringing and the delicious desserts he'd grown up with in Cedar Falls. In later years, he spent many an hour perusing the aisles at Ceretta's Candy Company.

In the last 5 years he made many new friends at his residence at the Beatitudes. Breakfast with "the group" was usually a two-hour affair with what he called "laughter and lies!" He loved to talk...boy did he love to talk...and loved those most, who liked to listen!

He is preceded in death by his wife, Bonnie who passed in 2017.

Don is survived by his daughter and son in law, Toni & Stephen Gautereaux of San Diego, California and daughter Suzanne Wolff & Thom Khaler of Phoenix, Arizona.

Makowski, Sandra Marocchi and her husband Jeff, Peter Rensch, Jr. and his fiancé Ava Himsel, Charles Lentini, Jr., Steven Pell, Kristin Monroe and Paris Monroe. Cherished great grandfather of five great grandchildren. Peter had a great love of horses and was an avid western horseback rider and loved to cook, garden, read and loved to watch the westerns. Funeral from Costa Memorial Home Boulevard and Central Ave. Hasbrouck Heights on Saturday, August 22nd at 9 AM. Funeral Liturgy from Corpus Christi R.C. Church at 10 AM. Entombment following at Gate of Heaven Mausoleum, East Hanover, N.J..

To send condolences, please visit CostaMemorialHome.com



Peter Lentini 49-B

GORDON EDWARD BILLHEIMER, age 96 of Montgomery (WVA) died November 5, 2020 in Powellton, WV. Gordon was an M.P. in the 8th Armored Division M.P. Company of Division HQ

He practiced as an attorney and member of the West Virginia State Bar for over 60 years. Known as friends as "Powerhouse". Gordon was born June 14, 1924 in Stonewall Jackson's former home in Lexington, Virginia to Ida Conner Billheimer and Ira Granville Billheimer. In 1936 the family moved to Montgomery, WV for work during the Great Depression. In 1940 at age 15 Gordon graduated from Montgomery High School where he was a cheerleader. He attended West Virginia Institute of Technology until entering military service during WWII where as a **military policeman in the 8th Armored Division** he was engaged in European Theater combat actions, including the drive of the Moselle Saar Salient, crossing of the Rhine River and attach on the Ruhr Valley, clearing of the Hartz Mountains, and liberation of a portion of the Nazi Langenstein-Zwieberge Sub Camp of

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, services are postponed until a time to be announced.

Memorial contributions can be made to the City of Montgomery Street light beautification project, 321 4th Ave., Montgomery, WV 25136, or Montgomery Public Library, 507 Ferry Street, Montgomery, WV 25136.

O'Dell Funeral Home, Montgomery is in charge of arrangements. Expressions of sympathy can be sent at www.odellfuneralhome.com



Gordon Billheimer – MP Company

Lowell J Mock (1924 – 2020) aged 96

Pvt. HQ Company, 8th Armored Division. He served as president of the 8th Armored Division Association!

Ridgeville, IN - Lowell James Mock, 96, of Ridgeville, IN passed away Monday, November 23, 2020 at Randolph Nursing and Rehabilitation Center of Winchester, IN. He was born August 5, 1924 in Ridgeville, IN the son of Charles and Irene (Baker) Mock. He was a 1942 graduate of Jefferson High School, Deerfield, IN. Following graduation, Lowell was drafted and Honorably served in the US Army in HQ Company 8th Armored Division, known as the 'Thundering Herd'. As a tank driver, he fought through France, the Battle of the Bulge and fought throughout Germany. He received the Good Conduct Medal, the American Theatre Medal, the European American Medal for Excellence, three Bronze Stars for bravery and the WWII Victory Medal, as well as being nominated for the Purple

GoFundMe Memorial Donations

https://www.gofundme.com/f/memorial-plaque-honors-8th-armored?utm_medium=email&utm_source=product&utm_campaign=p_email%2B4803-donation-alert-v5

The **8th Armored Division** and its veterans served gallantly in WWII in the European Theater. They were engaged in combat in the Battle of the Bulge; Netherlands, Rhineland, Central Germany and Pilsen in Czechoslovakia losing hundreds killed in action and thousands wounded and injured in service.

They acquired the nickname - the '[Thundering Herd](#)'. Many of the dead of the Division rest in Margraten Military Cemetery in the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg.

The **8th Armored Division Association** is composed of the aging survivors of the Division, their descendants and friends who desire to commemorate the service of the men of the 'Thundering Herd' with a memorial bronze plaque to be placed in a prominent location in the new Museum of the US Army at Ft Belvoir, VA.

The Association has commissioned a noted sculptor of military works, Andrew Chernak to create an appropriate representation of the service of the unit in battle. We hope to have the funds raised by the end of 2018, and plan on a 2019 placement and dedication.

This memorial will cost \$14,000. We are appealing to the public and those who support the US military and its veterans to advance the effort by donating to the cause.

The Association is planning a wide ranging campaign to obtain the funds for the memorial. We encourage all supporters of the WWII 'Fighters for Freedom', veterans and friends of the 8th Armored Division to make a donation.

The Association has a 501c3 designation and any donation will be tax deductible. Please be generous!

Please make the check out to:

8th Armored Division Association

Mail to:

8th Armored Division Association

2345 E. Dauphin St.

Philadelphia, PA 19125

Thank you!

Andy Waskie, President

8th Armored Division Association



Updates

- **NOVEMBER 13, 2018** by Andy Waskie, Organizer

Thank you! Carl Jackson, Jr. honored his father Harold C. Jackson who served honorably with the 8th Armored Division!

- **JULY 23, 2018** by Andy Waskie, Organizer

THANK YOU! to ALL Donors to the campaign to fund a Memorial Plaque to commemorate the service of the veterans of the 8th Armored Division in WWII European Theater of Operations (EPO)!

- **FEBRUARY 21, 2017** by Andy Waskie, Organizer

In honor of my Dad, M/Sgt Emil M. Haak, who proudly served with The Thundering Herd; HQ CO., 78th Med. Bn.

J. Marc Overhage donated **\$100**

In honor of my father Joseph A "Kip" Overhage

Jody Cockrell donated **\$50**

In honor of my father, Allen W. Cockrell, Jr. who served in the 8th Armored Division, 49th AIB, company C.

Tom Bell donated \$2500 in honor of his father Bell, George Bell Troop B, 88th Cavalry Recon Battalion

Elwood Vanderslice has donated funds in honor of his father – Elwood Vanderslice, Sr. 58-B

Charles Lentini has donated \$100 in honor of his father – Peter Lentini 49-B

Handguns used during WWII.

Hello to everyone in the 8th Armored Division, families and friends. Hopefully things with the COVID-19 virus are quieting down some and we can all start to get back to a more normal life. I was recently reading an article from an old magazine issue of WWII History.

While military side arms are generally associated with noncommissioned officers (NCOs) and officers, the use of handguns was much more widespread in World War II. Many soldiers carried handguns in addition to their main small arms, and this was especially true of machine gunners, paratroopers, military police and generally any enlisted man who felt the need for a little extra firepower. As with the other small arms of World War II, most handguns were distinctive and unique to each respective nation. As a result, the handguns of the era have become quite iconic. From the Colt M1911A1 to the German Luger P08, the guns had unique character of a bygone era.

Here is a look at some of the most famous and iconic side arms of World War II: **Colt M1911A1** (USA) “Often known simply as the ‘.45’, the M1911 was actually a holdover from World War I. This single-action, semiautomatic handgun was magazine-fed and recoil-operated. As noted by its famous moniker, it fired the .45 ACP (automatic Colt pistol) cartridge. “The pistol was actually designed by

Walther P38 (Germany) “The Walther P38 first entered tests in 1938, when it was accepted as the replacement for the Luger, but it didn’t enter widespread production until 1939. It was originally meant to fully replace the older P08 by 1942, but wartime production never reached full capacity. The P38 relied on the standard 9x19mm Parabellum bullet, but other versions were produced in 7.65x22mm and even .22 Long Rifle, while experimental .45 ACP and .38 Super versions were also produced in very limited numbers. Originally the handgun was fitted with walnut grips, but as the war continued these were replaced with Bakelite grips. “Perhaps because of the reputation of the Luger, the Walther P38 was typically overlooked by American souvenir hunters, and even gun collectors for many years. However, the handgun has become more popular with collectors today. It also remains in service with German police units today, proving that the P38 was a reliable and worthy successor to the Luger. Paying respect on Memorial Day. Victorious – What next?

Walther PP and PPK (Germany) “The name Walther PPK probably sounds familiar, as it is the handgun used by the fictional superspy James Bond. But the gun actually pre-dates the Ian Fleming novels, and certainly the Bond movies. The Walther PP does not mean ‘Pocket Pistol’ as is sometimes noted, but rather ‘Polizeipistole’, as in Police Pistol, while the PPK was ‘Polizeipistole Kriminalmodell’, meaning Police Pistol Detective Model, and issued to plainclothes detectives. It is also worth noting that while the gun was used by Nazi German officials, the PP was first released in 1929 and the PPK in 1931, before the Nazi government came to power. “Both versions are credited with being the world’s first truly successful double action semi-automatic pistols, and hence the action was widely copied, it was used in the later Walther P38. While the handguns were widely used throughout the war and it was a PPK that was used by Adolf Hitler when the dictator took his own life. Both versions remained in use after the war and have seen numerous improvements. The PPK/E is the latest version produced and it entered production in 2000.

Webley Revolver (Great Britain) “To say that the British were not exactly ready for World War II is a true understatement, and it shows in the nation’s small arms development. This of course included the side arms, and the British made do with the basic Webley revolver that was first introduced in 1887, and which actually remained in use until 1963, “This top-break revolver features an automatic extraction system that helped with the reloading. The first version of the handgun, the Webley Mk I, was adopted in 1887, while the Mk IV saw widespread use in the

lived with it. While on board the aircraft carrier USS Cabot, he wrote some reports indicating that the naval crew had an easier life compared to the infantry in Europe, for which he was criticized by fellow correspondents. Pyle, who had been a member of the U.S. Naval Reserve, conceded that his heart was with the servicemen in Europe, but continued to do his job. He persevered. After covering the assault on Okinawa, the largest amphibious operation in the Pacific during the war, he landed on Ie Shima (now renamed Iejima), a small island north of Okinawa, with the 305th Infantry Regiment, 77th Inf Div on 17 April 1945. He had had premonitions of his death, and the next day he was killed by Japanese machine gun fire. In tribute to their friend, the men of the 77th Infantry Division erected a monument that still stands at the site of his death with the inscription: "At this spot the 77th Infantry Division lost a buddy, Ernie Pyle, 18 April 1945." General Eisenhower, echoing the sentiment of the men serving in the Pacific theater, said: "The GIs in Europe – and that means all of us – have lost one of our best and most understanding friends." President Roosevelt had died six days before Ernie, so recognition from the Commander-in-Chief came from President Harry Truman who said of Pyle, "No man in this war has so well told the story of the American fighting man as American fighting men wanted it told. He deserves the gratitude of all his countrymen." Thanks Ernie, and thank you, David, for bringing us this story.

Thanks to Robert Scherer
Hellcat Newsletter 12th Armored Division
August 202

**The 8th Armored Division in the Battle The Ruhr Pocket
(CCA = Combat Command A; CCB = Combat Command B; CCR = Combat Command R
[R = Reserve])**

The success of the Rhine crossing operations by Allied forces encircled approximately 430,000 German soldiers of Army Group B comprising 21 divisions of the Wehrmacht, trapping them in an area that came to be known as the Ruhr Pocket. The Twelfth Army Group was tasked with reducing the pocket.

On 3 April 8 turned 180 degrees in response to orders into the Ruhr Pocket and CCR attacked west toward Recklinghausen. CCR captured the towns of Stripe and Nordorf, and continued through Vollinghausen, Oberhagen, and Ebbinghausen before stopping for the night in front of Horne. The next day CCA attacked Erwitte. The US 9th Air Force continued to provide close air support as the division continued into the Ruhr Pocket through heavy fighting in the Lippstadt area.

Award of Bronze Star Medal to 2nd Lt. Elwin J. Brown

Forward Observer, 405th Armored Field Artillery, 8th Armored Division

Under the provisions of AR 600-45, 23rd September 1945 as amended, the Bronze Star Medal is awarded to

Second Lieutenant Elwin J Brown (then Sergeant 02016434)

Field artillery, United States Army

For meritorious achievement in connection with military operations against the enemy in Germany from 28 March 1945 to 14 April 1945.

As crew chief for a forward observer, Lieutenant Brown was constantly under small arms, mortar, and artillery fire.

When the forward observer was wounded, he immediately took command and directed artillery fire in support of tanks and infantry in a superior manner.

On one occasion, although pinned down by intense fire, he placed smoke on the enemy, enabling the infantry as well as himself to withdraw.

When his radio was knocked out, he established alternate communication by exposing himself to intense enemy fire .

His courage and devotion to duty, reflect great credit on himself and the armed forces of the United States.

Lieutenant Elwin entered military service from Maine.

He served in the 405th Armored Field Artillery Battalion of the 8th Armored Division in the ETO in WWII.

Thanks to Stephen Brown, son of Lt. Elwin Brown

- If possible, include pictures. Example of Page Setup: (First and Last Name) (Date) (Veteran's Relation to you), (Veteran's Name), (Veteran's Unit and Company)

Example - My Grandpa, John Smith, HQ/8th Armored Division

Submit all articles to:

Andy Waskie

8thArmoredDivision@gmail.com

- With your permission your article will be printed in the 'Thundering Herd' newsletter.
- You can write about your relative/loved one, living or deceased OR about any 8th Armored Division veteran

THANK YOU in advance for your efforts to preserve the history of the 8th Armored Division!