

# 'Thundering Herd'

Newsletter of the 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division Association



Ardennes, Rhineland, Central Europe

**Summer - 2012 - Vol. I No.2**

Veterans of the 8th Armored Division, Members of the Association,  
Descendants, Family and Friends,

As I sit here preparing this newsletter, I just realized it has been 70 years since the 8th Armored was first activated on April 1, 1942. That is literally a lifetime ago but this Association is dedicated to preserving the memories of that life for the future generations to come.

Up Coming Events:

WWII Reunion featuring the 8th Armored Division Association on Saturday and Sunday September 15 and 16, 2012 as a part of the Starr Tours Gettysburg World War II Reunion Weekend. On Saturday, there will be a tour of Gettysburg National Park with an expert guide. As a side note, the great grandfather of one member of the 8th Armored fought with the 110th Pennsylvania at Gettysburg. If anyone else has ancestors who were there, let us know. Sunday we will be at the annual World War II living history weekend at the Eisenhower National Historic Site featuring an "authentic" recreation of army camps from WWII. Those of you who were really there are free to tell the rest of us what it was really like.

Were you ever really that clean? Were your fellow soldiers really that old?

To reserve a spot on the Reunion Excursion, contact:

Starr Tours, 2531 East State St. Ext., Trenton, NJ 08619.

It is easy to contact them by telephone at 800-782-7703 or 609-587-0626 or e-mail at [info@starrtours.com](mailto:info@starrtours.com). Be sure to ask for the WWII Reunion Starr Tour. Mention Andy Waskie. In fact mention him several times.

The Hotel booking can be done by contacting: Jessica Grillone, Sales Manager, Holiday Inn Northeast, 3499 Street Rd., Bensalem, Pa 19020.

Be sure to get the Starr Tour rate as it will save you \$30 a night.

New Pilsen CZ July 4th, 1945 parade photos by Charles Gordon 2/18/12.

This is my first (actually his second to be published. Editor) article for the 8th Armored Division Association newsletter. My late father was 2nd Lieutenant Harold Gordon who was a platoon leader in 36th Tank Battalion (M24 tanks). He was born in Pensacola Florida in 1922 and was a CPA there for 50 years after the war. He passed in 1998.

We are very fortunate to have just received nine new tank photos from the June 45 post war Pilsen, Czechoslovakia parade from Dan Parmley (Phoenix Arizona). Dan got them from a contact at the Czech Republic archives and the approval to use them in the 8th Armored Division Association website (<http://www.8th-armored.org/>). Dan is also a collector who is also restoring an actual 8 Armored Division M24 tank which will be another story.

The nine new June 45 photo's were posted by Okey Taylor recently and can be seen by going to the 8th ADA website picture section and look for the Pilsen CZ parade link. The new photos are the nine last photos in the parade group and again they are all tank photos too.

For this article I picked the 3 tank photos below because they show three kinds of 8th Armored tanks (Sherman, Pershing, and a M24). The tank photo's below are clear enough to read the letters/numbers on the front of the turrets showing battalion, company, and tank number (which also allows you figure out the platoon number). The Sherman tank in photo one you can see it's a 18th Tank Battalion and is tank number A12 (Company A and tank number 12) which I assume is platoon 3. You can also see "Apache" printed on the side of the barrel and the Indian head on the left side of the tank too. Photo two is a M26 Pershing from 18th and is tank number A3. The M24 tank or photo three at the bottom is tank D17 from 36th Tank Battalion. You can't read the 36D on the M24 photo below but it can be seen in a second photo on the website. Since we know the company/tank numbers for the CZ plzen 1945 122 three photos below perhaps

someone reading this article could ID crew members or knows someone who could (and their names could be added to the photos).

This must have been a great day of celebration for the 8th Armored troops for whom the war had just ended the previous month. The large and deep crowds of locals shown in the 3rd photo seem to be enjoying themselves waving to the M24 Tank commander (Tank D17/36D) who is saluting back. I also assume my father, who was over another platoon in 36D, would have known the tank commander in this photo.

However the real celebration for 8th Armored troops could not start until VJ day in August 45. I remember my father saying they were still on hold the summer of '45 and the occupation duty in Czechoslovakia was a time to relax and regroup.

However they were also told large numbers of them (front line troops in Europe) could be deployed to the Pacific starting in late 1945. At the time (late summer of 45) planning had already started for invading Japan.

Note the new tank photos of the M26 Pershing and M24 tanks are rare because they were deployed late in the war. Photos of Sherman's or the main US tank in WW2 are much more common.

Photo 1 – Sherman tank of the 18th Tank Battalion, Company A, Tank No. A12

Foto1945\_065

8thAD-D17

Photo 2 – M26 Pershing tank of the 18th Tank Battalion, tank number A3

Photo 3 – M24 Tank from the 36th Tank Battalion

36d\_p17

Finding Neunkirche

by Charles Gordon May 2012

The longest 8th Armored research project I have done over the last few years was trying to locate the factory below. In my father's (Lt Harold Gordon 36D) post war scrap book the photo below was listed as a bombed German factory near Kassel.

After years of looking at many German factory photos in the area (pre and post war) I was not able to find any photos that resembled this plant. I had assumed this photo was taken in March 45 when the 8th Armored was in Paderborn to the Northeast (Battle of the Ruhr Pocket) or Northeim in May 45 to the Northwest when the war ended. Most WW2 Army Air Force bomb damage photos of German cities and factories have never been released or are still classified. After numerous requests from area German historians (military and industrial) I was finally located the site with help from a German industrial researcher.

## Document2

The factory below, which was completely destroyed by the US Army Air force, was the very large Neunkirchen Iron Works which was south of Kassel. I was able to get a copy of a bomb damage Army Air force photo and you can see it's an exact match. My father's photo was from a photo group called a 40 and 8 trip or a 8th Armored troop train trip in July or August 45 from somewhere in Czechoslovakia to Le Havre France after the war ended. These were primitive box cars and the 40 and 8 meant 40 men or 8 livestock. This photo was taken from the large overpass a very short distance from the train station so it was a scheduled stop. The overpass can be seen in the photo below and most of the factory site in front of the overpass is now a very large parking lot.

## Then and - Now

No one will ever know how many American lives were saved by this very large iron and steel factory being destroyed. Now here comes the most interesting part of this article. Note the very large and fat tank in the back row is now one of the few remaining parts of the factory still standing. To show you how much times have changed since WW2 this large surviving tank is now part of a very well known American restaurant chain. It's a Hooters serving something uniquely American or Chicken/Hot Wings. This is even more interesting to me since the company I work is an industrial supplier for Hooters. So after spending a few years trying to locate this factory my father photographed in 1945 I was very pleasantly surprised to have also located the Neunkirchen Germany Hooters.

hooters\_g

It is a Hooters. Wonder what the GIs of back then would have thought about that?

Regarding Marvin Bruner

HQ Troop, 88th Cavalry Recon. Battalion

A note to the 8th Armored Division Association:

Marvin Bruner was a loyal soldier serving in World War II and his attachment to the 8th Armored Division with the 88th Cavalry Rec. Mechanized Unit, and in the Headquarters Troop overseas in Europe, and discharged December 12, 1945 at Camp Chaffee, Arkansas.

We often tried to get in touch with those he served with, but were not successful.

Your list of Emails is great, but no names with them to know if any were with Marvin. As I remembered, Marvin was with the 8th Armored after the war; for while he was at Camp Polk, Louisiana at the time the unit went overseas.

I just completed some copies of his army life and pictures and sent them to Okey Taylor for the 8th Armored Division archives.

We had a wonderful life together before Marvin's death on April 24, 2008.

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I tried hard to find some of Marvin's service friends after his death as I compiled the books of Marvin's WW11 army life for his grandsons, and sent some of it on to Mr. Taylor.

Good Luck in keeping the 8th Armored Division Association going.

This is a friend through Marvin C. Bruner reaching out to all of you.

Eunice Bruner, wife of Marvin Bruner

He was a great person, who is missed so much every day by all who knew and loved him.

(If any one has any memories of Marvin Bruner please send them to us at the 8th Armored Division Association. We will pass them on to Mrs. Bruner. Editor)

#### Miscellaneous Comments

On a personal note, this past weekend we heard a roar from the sky and looked up to see a B29 fly overhead. This is Fifi, an aircraft of the Commemorative Air Force. She is based at the Cavanaugh Museum in Addison (Dallas) Texas.

Guest Editor – Richard Miller