



Cannon Company, 411th Infantry Regiment, 103d Infantry Division (Cactus)



PFC FREDERIC A. BRILL

Frederic Brill was born in Chicago, Illinois on September 18, 1920. He lived in Chicago until he was drafted into the Army on December 4, 1942. Prior to his Army service, he worked as a drill press operator. After Frederic's induction, he entered active duty at Camp Grant, Illinois. From Camp Grant, he was assigned to Cannon Company, 411th Infantry Regiment, 103d Infantry Division (Cactus). The 103d, activated November 15, 1942 and assigned to Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, began receiving filler personnel on December 4, 1942. The newly inducted soldiers would undergo their basic training as an entire Division at Camp Claiborne. The final test for the men of the 103d was the Louisiana Maneuvers, lasting from August 8 until November 14, 1943. It was reported by those who participated in those maneuvers that Army Chief of Staff, General George Marshall, hit the nail on the head with his statement, "a soldier's life could be uncomfortable." However, the men of the Cactus Division were firmly convinced that General Marshall had never marched 30 miles under a hot Louisiana summer sun and still fight an enemy. The men of the 103d did it and were prepared. The summer of 1943 was one of the hottest on record for the Camp Claiborne area. It was this level of training that would prepare Private Brill and his buddies to undertake one of the most rigorous missions during World War II; fight a well defended enemy through the Vosges Mountains during one of the coldest winters on record.

After Camp Claiborne, it was off to Camp Howze, Texas. Private Brill's advanced training ended September 15, 1944 and the unit shipped out for Camp Shanks, New York where they would board ships for Europe. Private Brill landed in Marseille, France on October 20, 1944 and he received his baptism of fire November 15, 1944 at Saint Die des Vosges, France, where elements of the 103d met heavy resistance, yet routed the Germans who fled Saint Die, leaving the town in flames. The next six months consisted of intense fighting from Southern France, through Germany, and into Austria, where the war ended May 9, 1945.

It was in Landsberg, Germany where the real horror of what the Germans had done during their years of terror was uncovered by the 103d Infantry Division. The men of the Cactus Division uncovered six concentration camps where thousands of victims of the Germans had died. Those first on site noted there were bodies of German victims all over the camp. In one camp alone, there were 300 dead and 600 starving prisoners wandering aimlessly around the camp, nearly dead from over five years of forced labor.

Private First Class Frederic Brill was discharged November 19, 1946 at Camp Campbell, Kentucky. His decorations include the Combat Infantryman's Badge, Bronze Star, Good Conduct Medal, American Campaign Medal, European – African – Middle East Campaign Medal with 3 Battle Stars, and World War II Victory Medal. Frederic Anton Brill passed away August 14, 2001 and is buried at Arlington Cemetery, Melrose Park, Illinois.

