

## PFC CHARLES W. HEARD – (KIA)

410<sup>th</sup>, I-Company, 2nd Platoon



**Charles Willis Heard** was born in June 4, 1923 to Emin and Una Heard of Bowie, Texas. He entered active duty in 1943 and in 1944 was assigned to Company I, 410<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division in Camp Howze, Texas. PFC Heard was killed in action January 12, 1945 near Kerbach, France.

As the grandson of Samuel Heard, part owner of Matthew, Heard and Caty Hardware Store, Charles, known as Willis to his family, helped out with the family business. During high school Charles played in the high school band, ran track and was a member of the Bowie High School Jackrabbit's basketball team. He was an officer of the Class of 1940 and an avid amateur photographer. In the February 1945 Bowie News article reporting his death, the reporter wrote, "Charles was one of the most highly regarded young men in Bowie."

After graduating from high school, Charles enrolled in Tarleton College in Stephenville, Texas. Like many other college students during the war, Charles volunteered for the Army's Enlisted Reserve Corps on December 11, 1942. The ERC program allowed college students to delay entry onto active duty while completing their studies. In 1943 he attended college at Texas Tech. However, in early 1943 the Army canceled the ERC program and Charlie Heard and the other ERC reservists were called to active duty. In May 1943 Charles reported for active duty with the U.S. Army. He was placed in the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) and sent to Texas A & I to study engineering for Uncle Sam.

In early 1944, the Army drastically reduced the number of ASTP participants. The Army needed infantrymen more than engineers. On short order, thousands of ASTP students, including Charles, traded lectures and textbooks for M1's and hand grenades. Charles was ordered to Camp Howze Texas where he joined Company I, 410<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division.

Camp Howze was located not far from Charles' hometown of Bowie, Texas. During his training Charles would often bring buddies home with him on weekend passes during the time he was stationed there.

By July 5, 1944 Private Charles Heard was promoted to PFC along with 24 other I Company soldiers.

PFC Charles W. Heard, along with the 103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division departed Camp Howze, Texas September 24, 1944 bound for Europe. By November 11, 1944 Charles, a rifleman with 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon Company I, was on the front line taking fire from the Germans.