

In the most recent issue of this newsletter, we told the story of the two Cactusmen from Chicago, both in the same platoon, and one is killed-in-action, and the other marries the widow, and they have three more children along with one daughter of Dennis Zaboith, the Company G 411th Infantry soldier killed in France in December of 1944. The two half-sisters came to the Cincinnati reunion to search for any Cactusmen who may have known either Jim Cunnally or Dennis Zaboith. While the experience at the Cincinnati reunion proved to be very rewarding to the daughters of the two men, they did not meet a “real” buddy of the two men until Edward Condreva of Tinley Park, IL responded to the request we had in that newsletter. Ed proved to be “ideal” in the sense he knew both men and was in fact a close “buddy” of James Cunnally. It also was convenient, as the three individuals lived within 50 miles of each other, and were able to meet together at Ed’s house in Tinley Park. The meeting lasted two hours and proved to be very rewarding to both Diane (Zaboith) Hellend and Pat (Cunnally) Lofthouse and was followed by lunch. They also decided to meet again at the Nashville reunion. What a great ending, but that is what this Association is all about !

FINDING OUR FATHERS

August 20, 2008
Patricia Lofthouse

We came in search of our fathers, my sister and I. Technically, I should call Diane my half-sister, but we’ve never felt that way. My dad, James Cunnally, was the only father she ever knew. Her own was killed in action on December 15, 1944, in the Vosges Mountains on the Climb to Climbach in France. The Germans hailed bullets from the hill above and Dennis Zaboith was hit in the leg. My father pulled him by his side and immediately sent a signal to the medics because he was the Radio Man of Company G, 2nd Battalion. He asked them to have a blood transfusion ready, but when he looked over at his buddy from Chicago -- the one with a beautiful wife and new baby daughter waiting for him at home – he saw in his friend’s eyes a vacant stare that told him he would not be returning to them. He died in my father’s arms.

My dad had to lay his friend down and resume firing his Browning Automatic but he soon paused to throw up. He cried every night for the next six weeks.

For my sister’s birthday, I had sent for a DVD I had seen advertised about the Cactus Division, the 103rd Infantry in which our fathers served. We knew it was their unit because we saw it inscribed on her father’s tombstone in Irving Park Cemetery in

Chicago. Our mother, Lorraine, brought her late husband's body home in 1949 when our government offered free transport of all of the GIs' bodies. My sister even remembers the cold and rainy funeral at his gravesite although she was just 6 years old.

My father was there. He had returned from the war in 1946, stopping first at the neighborhood tavern in his uniform when he got off the bus from his release through New York and then Camp McCoy, Wisconsin. The bar owner offered him a free drink. This was the only thank you he ever received.

He had liberated a concentration camp in April. The German 19th Army surrendered to the 103rd Division on May 5 at Innsbruck, Austria, but my dad didn't have enough points to leave Europe when the war ended there. He stayed to relocate Russian and German POWs. During the height of the Cold War, he casually mentioned how the Germans had warned him to be careful of the Russians – that we would be at war with them in ten years.

He had written out mother to tell her what had happened that night of December 15th and then called on her to deliver his late friend's personal effects. He had met her once when both soldiers were on leave from Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. He had seen her again when she visited her husband with her daughter and mother-in-law at their second camp at Camp Howze, Texas, before they were shipped from New York City to Marseilles. They had even double dated. Once my father arrived now, he never really left. Our mother felt that in some way a piece of her husband had been returned to her.

My dad served as a pallbearer and held my sister at her father's grave. He took her home to our Italian grandmother's house on Kildare Avenue where she and our mother lived, and read the comics to her as he held her on his lap. My sister remembers the happy sound of the rustling of the newspaper as he unfolded it and the distinct smell of the newsprint of the funny pages.

Not all of my sister's lap memories are happy, though. Our mother learned that she had become a widow while seated at the piano while holding her. The doorbell rang and our mother hesitated a moment before lifting the two of them from the bench. When she opened the door, the Western Union messenger handed her the telegram. She cried out, but, being the woman that she was, did not scream.

From that moment on our mother did not go out socially. She continued to work while our grandmother babysat so that she could support her now all-female family, including her disabled older sister. Her in-laws became so concerned about her that they urged their own daughter to bring our mother out to the Green Mill nightclub on Broadway Avenue where their son-in-law played in a band. These same in-laws were joyful when they learned that my father was coming round.

My father's own mother, my Norwegian grandmother, was not so thrilled. A widow with a child, she worried? She had lost my grandfather in April of 1944 and my dad as well as my uncle, who was fighting in Europe as a Ranger, were not allowed to come home for

the funeral. Her oldest daughter had married and moved to Atlanta. My grandmother was left alone to raise a 12 year old son and an 18 year old daughter. My aunt was staying out late and running a bit wild; my young uncle kept running away. My grandmother had hoped that my father would become the man of her unhappy house.

The DVD arrived but my sister could not watch it. When she saw the photos of the bitter cold and snow, she gave it to me. My father had only once talked about the cold of the harshest winter of the century. He told how they froze as they slept, ate and fought in those foxholes that they had to dig for themselves before they had to leave them to continue crawling on their bellies across Europe.

From that DVD order, my sister received an e-mail. The 103rd was holding a reunion in Cincinnati from July 29th to August 2nd, 2008. I would still be on summer vacation from teaching school. We had never traveled with each other alone before. There were 2 husbands, jobs, school, houses, illnesses, six children and five grandchildren between us to divert our attention. "Let's go," I suggested. "Maybe we can find someone who knew our dads."

I had heard about the new Megabus. We got online at www.megabus.com and registered. The tickets may only be purchased by computer or by phone with a credit card. Within minutes we had booked a round trip from Chi-town to Cincy for just \$38.75 a piece, including taxes and the 50 cent online fee. It was cheaper than one tank of gas in my SUV. The fare is based on availability six weeks before departure, so if we had known we were coming earlier, we might have even snagged it for a dollar each way!

We arrived in front of Union Station on Canal and Jackson at 7:50. We searched for the blue Megabus signs. Our bus, that was to depart at 8, was already there and the other passengers had already boarded. We could not find two seats together because the seasoned travelers quickly sat down in one seat and placed their backpack on the other so that they could stretch out once the bus started moving. I had to ask one young woman to move her stuff and she glared at me, but proved to come round after listening to my sister and me discuss our trip across the aisle.

The Megabus seemed luxurious – blue velour seats, air conditioning, and a bathroom. I learned that the company is owned by Coach and started in Europe. It is constantly adding new cities to the itinerary in its four zones across the country.

We stopped for twenty minutes in Zionsville off I-75, about twenty miles north of Indianapolis. The clerk at the TA Travel Center Truck Stop advised that our driver, Mr. Bell, was the nicest driver on the route. He was right. Mr. Bell joyfully placed our bags in the bin and welcomed each of us, explaining the route and extending a helping hand when needed on the stairs. We later gladly tipped him a couple of bucks for making us feel that we were in such good hands.

The driver pulled up in Indy in front of the City Market for just a few moments and picked up some more passengers. We arrived in downtown Cincinnati at 4th and Race at

precisely 3:30pm, right on schedule. As we stepped off the bus, we had the choice to enter the doors of the Town Mall shopping center that leads to the Hyatt. We would save that for our return trip so we opted to find transportation to our hotel. We had called the Radisson Riverfront off the I-75 bridge in nearby Covington, Kentucky, to ask if they could pick us up with their airport shuttle, but they couldn't. We wanted to walk there because it was such a beautiful day but the clerk suggested that we look for the red Executive Shuttle van instead. We soon saw one but it zipped right by us. The clerk had forgotten to mention that we needed to flag it down so we walked to the corner taxi stand and took a cab for \$7 plus tip.

There are seven bridges across the Ohio River in Cincinnati and they are all breathtaking. One is the historical Suspension Bridge built by the famous engineer John A. Roebling. Only two of the bridges can accommodate pedestrians, however, including the pretty Purple Bridge, but they are located far from our hotel so walking would have been out of the question.

We arrived at the Radisson to find a circular tower with a revolving restaurant at the top. It brought back warm memories of the one we used to have in Chicago at Michigan and Oak. My husband and I had eaten there the first Thanksgiving of our marriage to prove, I suppose, that we were now grown and on our own. My mother was devastated and I spent the entire meal just nibbling and wishing that we were at home with the relatives.

We entered the hotel to find several gray heads seated in the lobby chairs. Some had canes lying at their feet. They all wore badges that told us that we were in the right spot.

My sister and I looked at them and then at each other. We had found our parents. These seniors were, of course, the exact ages they would be if they had lived. Our mom died at 69 of lymphoma. Our dad died just eight months' later. His death certificate listed the cause of death as lung cancer and Parkinson's; we think he just gave up after losing the woman who had somehow sustained him for forty years even though she believed that she was somehow bad luck for the men she loved.

The reunion itself was well run like a military operation. We were surprised to learn that a company called Military Planners conducts these events for much of the armed services. We had thought that this was more of an informal type of gathering. Sue Dennedy of the organization led us on a jam-packed schedule. We missed the Casino tour in Indiana for the early birds on Tuesday, but arrived in time for the welcome dinner at the hotel on Wednesday. The following morning a comfortable bus arrived to take us on a grand sightseeing tour of Northern Kentucky, Cincinnati, Covington and the sin-city of Newport. We stopped at the former Grand Central Station that is beautifully restored to house the Cincinnati History Museum. The museum appropriately was featuring the exhibit "Cincinnati Goes to War." There were dioramas of scenes from The Great War including uniforms, ration books, blackouts, gas stamps and war bond posters. One poignant nook depicted a woman with a hand to her mouth receiving a telegram from a Western Union messenger. I had to turn away from that one and could not even take a picture.

One stop on the bus was to look at The Grey House in the Riverwalk area of Covington that is supposedly haunted by a young woman who hung herself during the Civil War because she was refused a dance by a general. The house across the street from it features a tunnel that leads directly to the Ohio River just one block down the hill. It was a vital part of the Underground Railroad.

That night we visited the Hofbrauhaus, which is billed as the first authentic reproduction in America of the original in Munich. I questioned the suitability of the choice of this particular restaurant for this group but the overly cooked German food was bountiful on long buffet tables and the polkas were loud. My sister even ordered a half-liter of beer, a first for her.

On Friday, the group was scheduled to visit the U.S. Air Force Museum, the largest military aviation museum in the world. We opted out, using the time to meet with Carole Martin. Carole's grandfather, Lucas Martin, edited the book *Album of Remembrance* that includes the texts of the oral histories he has compiled of the members of the 103rd. He and Carole are creating a new edition and asked us to be a part of it. For almost an hour we told the story of our two dads and our beloved mother who loved them both.

We were going to spend the afternoon visiting the new Underground Railroad Museum in Cincinnati that is supposed to be stupendous, but when we stood up from the table where Carole's tape recorder was perched, we found that my sister was covered in an angry red rash. It was creeping from her arms up her neck and onto her face. She had visited a doctor the day before we left and was prescribed an antibiotic in case it was impetigo and an anti-viral in case it was shingles. I constantly kept asking her if she had been gardening because it looked like a bad case of poison ivy or oak and she lives in the woods. She kept denying any knowledge of touching any plant.

We inquired at the front desk as to how we could find a hospital. The clerk advised us to take a blue city Tank bus to the central terminal in downtown Covington. The Tank busses pass between Cincinnati and all of the surrounding towns of northern Kentucky for just \$1.25. We then transferred to the #33 to get to St. Elizabeth's South. We had a delightful ride through many lovingly restored Victorian and red brick townhouses in the Licking River Historic Area that was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971. We also passed through some rougher neighborhoods that boasted beautiful but rundown architecture. When we arrived at the hospital about an hour and a half later, the triage nurse in the E.R. took one look at my sister and asked if she had been gardening. "Oh, yes," my sister replied. "I moved a large planter from under the oak tree and brought it inside so that I could water it!"

A few injections of steroids and a couple of Benadryl tablets later to combat the poison oak and we were back on the bus. When we disembarked at our hotel, we walked just two blocks to the Main Strasse, a restored German village complete with the Carroll Chimes Bell Tower and its glockenspiel. The little characters depict the story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin but they unfortunately did not come out to dance while we were there.

We ate on Main Street at a little French restaurant named Chez Nora. I ordered spicy jambalaya with andouille sausage and a glass of Pinto Grigiot. My sister had a huge steak salad and iced tea. We were stuffed and the entire bill came to just \$28.

We weren't so full as to forget about desert, however. We walked back to the Evergreen, the revolving restaurant. We had been given a 10% off coupon from the hotel and the restaurant honored it although we weren't buying dinner. The lights of the seven bridges sparkled on such a clear night, and the church steeples of the Mother of God and Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption churches glistened. The double chocolate cake with Greyer's Homemade Ice Cream, a Cincinnati original, melted in our mouths. Greyer's is said to be Oprah's favorite treat.

On Saturday, our last morning, we all met in the hotel dining room for our complimentary breakfast and then boarded the tour bus to take us to the BB paddlewheel riverboats in the connecting town of Newport. The city was once known as wild, with drinking, jazz and loose women, but it looked pretty tame that morning. We passed the new World Peace Bell, a 66,000 pound metal structure built in France and brought to the town to ring in the new millennium in honor of World Peace Day.

We had a buffet lunch of chicken and beef tips that surprisingly melted in our mouths as we glided past the Riverwalk and viewed the Floodwall Murals from the water. The paintings depict the history of the area and were created by the artist Robert Dafford at the base of the Roebling Bridge. The sights were amazing but even more amazing to me was to see how the men pulled out the chairs for their wives and held them around the waist as they walked together. These old vets appeared content and well adjusted with secure and long-lasting marriages. My sister and I watched them in wonder.

The hospitality suite on the 16th floor is where our education began. A forty-year-old man named Zack Sigler had created two rooms of photographs, books and research about the 103rd. His passion began when he found a photo of his namesake, Uncle Zack Sigler, who was killed in action on December 2, 1944, in France. The younger Zack had written to the National Archives in St. Louis to obtain his uncle's service record, and then found links online to all of the books, newsletters and groups related to the Cactus Division. He spent four days in St. Louis searching and printing from microfiche all of the issues of the newsletters from their camps, *The Camp Clarion Ledger* and *The Howitzer* from Camp Howze, Texas.

Zack painstakingly skimmed the photocopies and as he combed through the headlines, he suddenly handed us two articles. *The Howitzer* mentioned my sister's dad! Apparently he was a star basketball player and helped his team win several games. We never even knew that he played a sport. Suddenly his humanness became palpable -- a young man playing one of the great American pastimes, not knowing, thank God, that in just a few short months he would be dead.

I held the articles and my hands shook. It occurred to me that perhaps we could track down his yearbook from his high school in Chicago and learn even more about him. All

we had were the letters that he wrote to our mother – letters that were about her and my sister, not about him.

We began to search the nametags of each attendee, looking for one that read Company G. We found one – ninety year old Hank Pacha from Springfield, Illinois. He remembered the liberation of Landsberg, a sub-camp of Dachau. As I sat with him on the bus, he told me nothing of his rank or his role in the war, so like The Greatest Generation. When I returned home I received a note from him with a letterhead that read Brigadier General Henry F. Pacha.

We also met Jerry Brenner who remembered everything. He told us of the cold on the Climb to Climbach that December 15th, the day of greatest casualties for the 103rd. He reminded us that the Cactus Division engaged in 34 battles from November of '44 to May of '45, fighting 500 miles through France, Germany and Austria to the Brenner Pass in Italy. He related how they crossed into Germany on December 16th, one day after my sister's father was killed and advised that the name of the cemetery in France where he would have first been buried was Epinal. Mr. Brenner enlightened us that the concentration camp that my father helped to liberate on April 27, 1945, was called Kaufering, near Landsberg, Germany, and was a sub-camp of Dachau, and that the German 19th Army surrendered to the Division on May 5, 1945, at Innsbruck, Austria.

The time came alive for us.

We began to understand why our dad, for the rest of his life, could not stomach the thought of eating Spam, because he had lived on it for almost a year.

We tasted the Cognac he drank while getting “lost” in a French wine cellar for three days during house-to-house combat.

We heard the giggles of the French girls who gladly gave our father their full attention when he showered them with Lucky Strikes, Hershey bars and the most coveted gift of all – a regulation brown wool Army blanket. The women tailored them into warm and beautiful coats.

We smelled the blood of the young German whose ear was cut off by a member of the battalion, then handed back to him with the advice, “Give that to your Feuhrer.”

We felt the rage when our father reached Hitler's bunker and proceeded to relieve himself on it.

We saw the sadness when he approached the concentration camp where shadowy figures hid behind the doors, shivering in fear but finally emerging as walking skeletons after they heard the Yanks yell “Americans.”

Yet this man and another named Wallace Morgan of Blyth, California, who was captured, beaten, thrown down stairs, forced to forge rivers carrying German wounded and then

getting frostbite, and held as a POW for over a year, came back and fit in. They got their educations on the G.I. Bill and made lives for themselves and their families. "The G.I. Bill was the best thing to happen to America," he opined and we all agreed. How did our father's life turn out so differently?

It was only when we met another child of a deceased veteran that we learned about those who never connected with normalcy again. A tall and thin baby boomer from Massachusetts confided to me how he had lived a privileged life as the son of a man who inherited a prosperous family lumber business. Yet he detailed how after the war his father left his mother with four boys to run off with her best friend, the Godmother of one of their children. The father stayed in touch with his sons, to have them touch hot electrical wires to "toughen" them. The deep circles under the handsome man's eyes mirror my own, a telltale sign of his depression.

In a strange way I breathed a sigh of relief: ours was not the only father who returned unwhole to live life on the edge:

His threats of suicide when he gambled away every penny so sometimes there was no food for us to eat when the little grocery store owner down the block on Sheffield Avenue had to cut off credit to our mother;

how the neighbor upstairs offered to give our mother some oil for the kitchen stove to heat our four room apartment if she would give him herself.

his job, when he could keep one, as a policeman, a good cop who could think like a criminal to catch one.

his drinking every day -- Jim Beam with a Pabst chaser,

his smoking non-stop -- Lucky Strikes or Pall Malls, at least two packs a day;

his sadness every December 15th, when he wondered why he had lived and my sister's father had died;

his inability to sleep in a bed, always napping on the sofa for just a half an hour and then waking with a start, sometimes grabbing the loaded gun he kept under his pillow to protect his family. Our mother finally made him remove the bullets when she found our littlest brother waving it through the air.

"C'est la guerre," he would repeat. That we only knew too well.

Is it no surprise then, why neither this thoughtful man from Massachusetts nor I can sleep a full night; how we wake with a start and have to maniacally work in helping professions to keep ourselves from falling into the pit of our depressions? Or why my two younger brothers often laid stoned on the sofa, with an inability to search for work or find any semblance of a normal life?

We regrettably board the bus and return to the Radisson where we immediately hail a taxi to take us back over the bridge to Cincinnati for our return to Chicago. There is not enough time to take the Tank bus although we are smug that we now know how we could have gotten there for just the \$1.25. We arrive with enough time to grab an ice cream at the Chick Filet chicken restaurant inside the Town Mall. The shopping center hosts a beautiful fountain, a Kroch's & Brentano's bookstore (how I miss them in Chicago), a Pizza Hut and several specialty shops. It is packed with families enjoying the air conditioning and a bite to eat on this steamy day.

We make good time on our ride back to Chicago on the Megabus. Both Indy and the TA Travel Center look familiar. As we see the city's skyline from the Skyway, we are returning home from our journey with the answers we were really seeking to find but didn't know it. The Good War didn't end in 1945; it continues today.

As we think of all of these survivors of WWII, we know that the numbers reported are not the real numbers. The casualties of war are tenfold because it is every family member – the wives, their children, the way their children relate to their own spouses, and even the unborn grandchildren of these veterans who experience the effects of war. We know we will never let our kids or our grandkids forget their grandfathers' sacrifices, or their grandmother's. Her enduring love, work and commitment throughout a very difficult life with two soldiers are perhaps the greatest example of The Greatest Generation.

----- Original Message -----

From: loftypat@aol.com

To: chanrogers@comcast.net ; zack.sigler@boeing.com ; landcmartin@verizon.net ; dhelland43@yahoo.com

Sent: Saturday, January 31, 2009 12:58 PM

Subject: [SPAM]Re: Cunnally-Zaboth Sequel

Diane and I visited Ed Condreva today. He is the Chicago vet who contacted us after reading the article in the newsletter. He told us that he and my Dad traveled on the train from Camp Howze to NYC and spent the night on the town before embarking for Marseilles on the SSS Monticello on October 6, 1944. They were down in Level F, the bowels of the ship, for 15 days. They were only allowed up on the deck for 2 hours in the morning and 2 in the evening for air and had to climb up 3 levels to eat -- standing up. They slept in the bunks with their pack as a pillow and their rifle at their side.

When they landed in Marseilles, they had to climb some steep hills up from the port to the fields where they were supposed to pitch their tents. A lot of the guys fell by the wayside because they were still so seasick but Ed and Jim made it to the top. They each carried half a pup tent and a blanket. The soldiers had pitched

their tents all over the place and my Dad figured that in the morning, the sergeant would make them tear them all down and re-pitch them in a straight line. He told Ed just to lay the blankets down and he covered the two of them with the tent so they could sleep. Sure enough, that is exactly what happened in the morning, so he and my Dad were the first to pitch their tent in the right spot!

They were then boarded on boxcars to the front. Ed contracted trenchfoot from standing in the water in the foxholes. He also developed a huge sore on his leg and was afraid that gangrene was setting in. In late November a medic ordered an ambulance and he was soon evacuated back to Marseilles and then on a ship across the Channel to a hospital in London. When his feet healed, he was sent to France because he didn't have enough points to return to the States. When he finally did get to come home, he was sent to a camp in Indiana but was released when the commander decided that men who had 50 points could get out. His high school sweetheart had the church and the dress ready, and their wedding was held two weeks later. They were married for 59 1/2 years and had four sons. He lives with one son and two others called to check on him while we were there.

Photos to follow in the mail. Pat

Cunnally-Zaboth Sequel

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-----Original Message-----

From: Cranston Rogers <chanrogers@comcast.net>
To: loftypat@aol.com
Sent: Fri, 30 Jan 2009 10:42 pm
Subject: Cunnally-Zaboth Sequel

Pat: Herewith is the draft of a paragraph I plan for the up-coming newsletter. Please edit or call me Saturday 508-533-0422. Chan

Taped Interview

Cincinnati Reunion 2008

Title: _____

James Joseph Cunnally, Co. G 411th (died 2/24/90) (Remembrance by James Joseph Cunnally's step-daughter, Diane Zaboith Helland and daughter Patricia Lofthouse)

Dennis Zaboith, Co G 411th (KIA 12/15/44) (Remembrance by daughter Diane Zaboith Helland)

Part 1 of Interview

Diane: My dad's name is Dennis Zaboith. When my mother married my dad was drafted or enlisted. I do not know. He met Jim Cunnally who was another buddy from Chicago and they were in boot camp together. They became good friends. They double dated while they were in the States with my mom and a girlfriend that Jim had at the time. In October of '44 they were sent overseas to France. They were marching toward a town in France called Climbach preceding the Battle of the Bulge activities. They were getting in position for the big day, Battle of the Bulge. The German artillery was on higher ground than the American Army. There was a battle that

occurred. Jim fell to one area and my dad fell to another area. My dad was hit by gun fire and had shrapnel in his leg. Jim came over and my dad literally died in his arms. After the war Jim stayed for awhile and helped out with the Occupation Forces in Germany. He wrote a letter to my mom saying that he would like to visit her when he came back and tell her more of the details so that she would know exactly what happened. When he came back they ended up getting married when I was about five years old. I have my sister Patricia, who is with me today, and we have two brothers, Michael and Dennis. Dennis is named after my dad. I have been attending these ceremonies, the WWII Memorial Dedication in memory and honor of my two dads. Patricia was born when I was six. Michael was born when I was eight and Dennis was born when I was ten. I have some of my dad's letters that he wrote to my mom so I have some of those memories. Not a lot was talked about and even *our* dad, my stepdad didn't share much. I refer to Jim as my dad because he was the only dad I knew. I was only eighteen months old when my dad was killed. As Pat knows he did not share much. It would have been wonderful if he had. He had the opportunity to gather with other Army buddies, but he did not want to think or talk about the war.

Patricia: My father, James Joseph Cunnally Jr., was called Jim or Jimmy. He ended up becoming a sergeant. He was a radio operator in all of these

maneuvers and battles. But he also carried a Browning Automatic Rifle. He did kill. He always said he never had the heart to be a killer but he ended up being a killer. He stayed for almost two years in Germany in Mannheim helping with the prisoners of war with relocation. So he did not come back the States until 1946. That is when he looked up our mother Lorraine and brought Dennis' personal effects. I don't know his exact discharge date but I plan on looking that up. He never quite adjusted to coming back. He felt complete guilt for surviving. Today they call it survivors' guilt. I don't think in those days they even had a psychological term for it. He always questioned why he lived and Dennis died because Dennis had a wife and child and he had no one, except his mother, my grandmother at home. Every December 15, which was the day of Dennis' death, December 15, 1944, my father would go into a deep depression. He was always depressed. He drank. He was an alcoholic. He gambled. He lived life on the edge. He found work. He was a Chicago policeman, an Algonquin, Illinois policeman. For him life could be summed up with the French phrase, *c'est la guerre*, (It can't be helped)." That is how he described life. Our life growing up was very difficult. Our mother was a "saint". She had to live a life of complete uncertainty; never knowing if he was coming home, if he was drunk, if he had spent every penny which he did a lot. So she went to

work when we were quite babies. Her mother, our Italian grandmother, _____ took care of us while she worked. Our mother was our father's support his entire life; she never let go. We knew he had horrendous experiences in the war but he never really talked about them. Occasionally, if he had been drinking his Jim Bean, sitting at the bar in the kitchen, listening to Frank Sinatra records in the middle of the night with the lights dim, smoking his Pall Malls, then you would catch him and little snippets of the war experience would come out. For example, he told me about some of the nicer remembrances: the French girls and how happy they were to see him. I think he was quite the ladies' man over there. He told how they simply so wanted the American Army blankets because they were so poor. That they would take the blankets that were made of natural wool and they would tailor them into beautiful coats for their entire family. Then, of course, they also wanted the cigarettes and chocolate. **Diane**: He recounted to me one of his better memories was being lost for about three days with a couple of buddies down in a French wine cellar. For some reason they just couldn't find their way out of those wine cellars! It took them three days. **Patricia**: They drank cognac for three days. He could never eat Spam again. My mother could never serve Spam. Because it reminded him too much of the rations he lived on for so many months. In 1972, I had occasion to travel

to Europe after I got married. I told him I was going and did he have any interest? Maybe we could work something out where he and my mother could go. He said he had absolutely no desire to go back to Europe because he had crawled across Europe on his belly. And he did. When we read the accounts of the battles you can see what they endured; you can see what he was talking about. *Diane*: The weather at the time of the Battle of the Bulge was the most unusual coldest winter they ever had in the area. It was freezing cold, tons of snow. And they were crawling from one location to another on their bellies. It was a grueling experience. *Patricia*: He told my son one time, and I think Andrew was probably only about seven years old, that when they reached Hitler's bunker in southern Germany, as my father said, "They pissed on it". That was their message to Hitler. Then he told Diane about his experiences liberating the camps. *Diane*: He stayed after victory was declared to help liberate. I have tried to research which camps that he went to. But he said that as they approached the camps the prisoners there were afraid to come out because they did not know who was out there. He had to say, "We are the Americans. We are here to help you." He would say, they were in their little huts and slowly a head would peak out and they would look. Gradually, you would see these walking skeletons. He said they were literally like skeletons walking out. He said it was the

most unforgettable sight you could see. My husband and I were on a WWII tour in Holland about two years ago. In one of the museums they had pictures of exactly that: the huts they were in and some of the people standing in the doorways. I looked at it and I said, "Now I know what he experienced." It was so hard to understand but after seeing that picture of living skeletons standing there and coming out of these little shacks you finally begin to understand more. We understand more now than when he was alive because he did not talk about much. There is a Chicago author, Studs Terkel, who wrote the book, The Good War. My sister Pat called him and he came to visit my parents. They are a chapter in the book. And after reading what they told him we both learned so much more about our dad's feelings, emotions, and his outlook on life: like if you do not know if you are going to be living one day or the next what does it matter? He never resolved the guilt. He could never overcome the fact that he survived and my father was killed and he had a wife and family. He had no one. Why was he taken and he was saved? He always felt guilty that he survived. When Studs was there my mom had him point out a wall with pictures. Studs said, "Well, look. You have a wife, children, grandchildren and a heritage now." Dad would just shrug and say, "Well I guess you are right." But he didn't internalize it and really grasp what it all meant. He just never

overcame that guilt. **Patricia**: Our mother too suffered from guilt. She felt that somehow she had harmed the men she had loved in her life, first Dennis Zaboth and then Jim Cunnally. Then our brothers, Michael and Dennis, unfortunately were growing up in that atmosphere of suicidal thoughts, depression, gambling and unemployment. They seemed to have absorbed many of those same traits with the same feeling that life is questionable and you have to push it to the edge; whether you will survive to the next day, who knows. I think what I have learned through the years is that we count the casualties in war but that is not the real number. The casualties of war are tenfold because it is every family member, including the unborn children who experience the affects of war. We are hoping to learn more about it so that we understand it and hopefully we can come to terms in our own lives. It has affected our lives and the way we relate to our husbands and children too. Plus, we don't want our grandchildren to forget what their grandfathers' sacrifice did. **Diane**: Our mom was the sole breadwinner even though our dad worked. He was a gentle man, there was never any abuse. It was just his attitude toward life. He was goodhearted. But when he would get his paycheck and look at the money and say, "If I could double this, look what we could have." And when he did win occasionally, he was generous. But he would never look at the money and say, "Now we have to

pay the rent and buy the food.” He would look at it as a possibility of increasing it and bring joy to the family. We all know with gambling that does not happen often. She was everything. She was the glue. She too was a gentle soul inside. She had strength of character that as we got older we began to see. She held the family together and lived with the guilt that with my dad being a policeman, there was always a gun in the house. There was always that fear. He mentions in the book that he had many thoughts of suicide. He had the gun. Patricia: He had a war buddy that was in his unit, Willie Kramer, and they stayed friends in Chicago. He was on the phone with him one day when Kramer committed suicide. He shot himself when my father was on the phone. He often threatened suicide. Our mother today would be labeled co-dependent in all the substance abuse literature. She did endure and enable him, meaning that she kept a roof over his head and food on the table. We see it as supreme love. Diane: It was supreme love and supreme gratefulness for saving her because she was a widow with a child. She says too, in the book, it was like my dad coming back and life was going on. And she had more children whom she adored and grandchildren that she adored. Our mom developed cancer very young, lymphoma. She had surgery and chemotherapy and survived fifteen years. Around the fifteenth year mark our dad was diagnosed with lung cancer and beginning Parkinson’s.

And he did not want to take treatment. He tried it once and he said no I am not going to do that. And it was she who had been struggling to survive, taking all the treatments that were available. Her cancer returned. She died in June of 1989. He died in February of 1990 just a couple of months later. Maybe since he had all the thoughts of suicide, now he found his way out. But we are guessing. We will never know. **Patricia**: We kind of feel that maybe her body gave up fighting because she knew that she could not protect him any longer. It would have been too much for her to see him die, too. Maybe she was afraid of going on alone without him, or of losing another husband or because he was refusing treatment.

He stayed with that Unit, 103rd Division, Co. G 411th for his entire military service. After the war he was involved with liberating Jewish people from prisoner of war camps and relocating them. He did the same for the Russian POWs. He also helped relocate the German prisoners of war in Mannheim. Our parents are known as the Hanleys, Joe and Rosemary, in Studs Terkel's book. (Studs always changes the names when he conducts the oral interviews, although the facts are all true.) Dennis Zaboith is called Kevin in the book. In the book Jim, my father says after the war that he typed report after report trying to get these people back to where they belonged. Jim said everything was chaos. **Diane**: My parents were married

in April of 1942. Mom mentions visiting him, taking me and his mother down to Texas to Camp Howze to visit him. **Patricia**: Diane's dad Dennis Zaboth was away at camp when she was born. There is a beautiful letter placed in her scrapbook from her father to her mother upon her birth.

Diane: So he was already inducted in 1943. He went over to Europe in October of '44 and was killed in December of '44. I have some letters that my dad, Dennis, sent. I wish he would have put my mom's letters back in the envelope with his letters home. Other GIs did that because any letter to a veteran had to be destroyed after they read it. They marked out with black any parts that were censored. **Patricia**: In 2001, I was working for WTTW which was a public broadcasting station in Chicago and their radio station WMMT had a segment of war letters for Memorial Day. We shared some of Dennis' letters to our mother and they broadcasted them. The segment is called "War Letters" and we have a CD of them. **Diane**: Dennis was probably only in France where he was killed. **Patricia**: Jim was in France, Belgium and London. Jim was a radio operator and would often teach my children Morse code. He would tap it out on the table or the bar. **Diane**: If you were the radio operator it is my understanding you were the right-hand man to the Lieutenant. We went to a reenactment a couple of years ago when the 103rd had the reunion in Schaumburg, Illinois. They had all the

rifles that the 103rd would have had with them. Our dad always talked about how heavy that radio equipment was besides all his gear and backpack.

When I lifted the radio equipment up it was very heavy. Then he also had to carry the heavy rifle. **Patricia**: He wasn't very tall, about 6'9". But he was

as strong as an ox. Jim wrote a couple of letters to our mother after Dennis died. **Diane**: I have the letter to our mother saying he would like to stop by

and tell her more details. **Patricia**: I do not have any letters. In the

interview with Studs Terkel my father said that when they liberated the

German POWs they told the Americans, "You should have killed all those Russians. You will be sorry in ten years." What a prophesy that turned out

to be. Jim died February 24, 1999. He was 68 years old. We had almost

forty years with him. He adored his grandchildren. We feel that they gave

him a lot of joy and peace. He did mellow toward the end of his life. But

then he was hit with Parkinson's disease and the lung cancer. His

grandchildren loved him. **Diane**: My son, Mark, was the first grandchild

born and he could not say "Grandpa". It came out "Gumpy". My father like

that and the name stuck. Mark taught all the other grandchildren to say

"Gumpy". So he was "Gump" or "Gumpy" until the day he died.

Part 2 of Interview

Patricia: I want to mention that he did go to Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. His remembrance of that time was that everything was wet. Things never dried out: sheets, towels, pillowcases. He remembered the humidity. I also want to talk about his sleeping. He was never able to really sleep. He was never able to sleep in a bed. He would sleep on a sofa or on a cot on the back porch. He would sleep in twenty to thirty minute intervals. Then he would wake with a start. He would sleep with the television on. It seemed like he needed noise. We had a couple of experiences as children. Because he was a policeman he had a gun. He slept with the gun under his pillow. He was afraid at times that our neighborhood was deteriorating. It was beginning to get pretty tough with break-ins and robberies. I remember going out on the porch on a hot summer night in Chicago. It was the middle of the night and I was going out on the porch to get some air, not even knowing he was out there. I startled him and he pulled the gun from under his pillow. Another time my little brother, Dennis, was sleeping up in the top bunk in our back bedroom. Our father must have been sleeping up there

and my mother walked in there and my little brother was waving the gun.

We have found out since that these sleep disorders are a product of war. But

we did not know that at the time. It is a form of watching or hyper vigilance.

And that is what he did in the war. He had to keep watch over the prisoners.

He had to keep watch on “watch”. With the radio in Communications he

was always on watch. I would say for the rest of his life he never had one

night of full sleep.

TWO CACTUSMEN’S DAUGHTERS SEARCH FOR FATHERS’ BUDDIES

Two daughters of two Castusmen buddies are searching for any fellow Cactusmen who served with them in the 3rd platoon of Co G 411th Infantry Regiment. This very unusual situation began with two men from Chicago, who did not know each other, were assigned to G/411 at Camp Claiborne in 1943. They developed a close friendship, including double dates in Louisiana with future family and visits home on joint furloughs in Chicago. This friendship continued as foxhole buddies in combat until the attack on Climback December 15, 1944 when one of them became mortally wounded during an artillery barrage and died in the arms of the other. Sgt Dennis S. Zaboith, who was killed at Climback, had a wife and an infant daughter, whereas James Cunnally, his Chicago buddy, was devastated by the death of his friend, had no involvements, and believed a great injustice had been done in that he had not been killed instead of his married friend. Cunnally survived the war without personal injury; however, he did have to remain in Germany into 1946 where, after the war, he was assigned to assist in the return of prisoners of the Germans to their homeland. Jim Cunnally sent Lorraine Zaboith a letter describing the situation leading to her husband’s death and advising that he would try to retrieve Zaboith’s personal effects for return to the family.

Jim did visit Lorraine right after returning home and again at the final burial of Sgt Zaboith when his body was returned in 1948, which daughter, Diane remembers. In 1949, Jim married Lorraine and they had 3 children: a daughter, Patricia, and two sons, Dennis and Michael. In essence, James became an unofficial casualty of WW II through his depression and not outwardly showing any optimism in life’s daily activities. Fast forward forty years to Lorraine succumbing to lymphoma in 1989, and James passing away eight months later of lung cancer and Parkinson’s in early 1990. The family believes he gave up after losing the woman who sustained him for forty years even though she believed that somehow she was bad luck for the men she loved. Now the

children of Dennis and James would like some closure for their family life by finding others who witnessed and experienced what their fathers had experienced.

Amazingly we have 40 veterans on our master living roster of Co G/411th Regt veterans and while I have canvassed a number of these, I have not been able to find any who were in the 3rd platoon of G Company, that knew Dennis or James or any related incidents involving either of the two Cactusmen: Sgt Dennis S. Zaboith and Pfc James Cunnally.

Fortunately, the two daughters, Diane (Zaboith) Helland (815-784-4865) and Patricia (Cunnally) Lofthouse (847-698-9731) attended our reunion in Covington, KY in July and their spirits were greatly buoyed up by the experience of meeting fellow veterans of their fathers and sharing their experiences. They are planning to attend our next reunion in Nashville to continue their quest for persons who may have known their dads.