

John D. Boone – Private to Staff Sergeant

Served with distinction in the Hq1 Light Machine Gun Platoon from October 20, 1942 to November 24, 1944. He accepted a commission as a Second Lieutenant. Thereafter, Lt. John Boone served in Companies H and I (eye) for the duration of WW II.

John Boone is an outstanding representative of the "Greatest of the Greatest Generation."

John Boone was born September 7, 1920 in Tillmook, Oregon. He enlisted in the Army October 15, 1942. At the time, he was a Law School student at the University of Oregon. He volunteered for parachutist training, and was sent to Camp Blanding, Florida, assigned to the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment (508th PIR).



The regiment was activated to determine whether it would be more efficient for the Parachute School to train units or to continue training individuals. The experiment was a success; several regiments completed the Parachute School training program in time to participate in WW II.

The Army test program required that the 508th PIR recruits take basic infantry training, and concurrently complete an arduous airborne parachute school physical training program. The latter was administered by an airborne qualified cadre. The program was designed to prepare the recruits physically and mentally for parachutist training, and to eliminate unfit men from the program. A serendipitous effect of the tough months of training and the arduous weeks of training at the Parachute School was to forge a bond of love and respect among the Hq1 men that has endured over sixty years.



The 508th PIR men completed the required qualification parachute jumps on February 26, 1943. John Boone recalls, "After a short furlough, my first days off since October 1942, the regiment moved to Camp Mackall, NC. The camp was a brand new facility hacked out of the swamps.

After several months of advanced infantry and weapons training, perfecting parachuting techniques, undergoing extensive field training exercises, and largescale maneuvers in South Carolina and Tennessee, the 508th PIR moved to Camp Shanks, NY.

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We arrived in Camp Shanks on December 20, 1943 and starting overseas processing, including passes to New York City.

Christmas Day the regiment was restricted but we had a good Christmas dinner. Late in the afternoon of 27 December, following a short train and ferryboat ride, we boarded the USAT James Parker; and in the morning, we sailed into the Atlantic Ocean. After eleven days at sea, we arrived in Belfast, Ireland, and moved to Port Stewart.

Our first days in Ireland were devoted to learning the local customs and regaining the physical condition and muscles we had lost during the long sea voyage. The following weeks were spent on weapons firing, and short field exercises.

505th PIR veterans of jumps into Sicily and Italy lived with each 508th PIR company. They told us 'war stories,' answered our questions, and offered useful suggestions about what we could expect from the Germans on the battlefield. These sessions were helpful and enhanced our confidence.

On March 10, the regiment boarded trains for Belfast where we loaded on a ship for Scotland. From Scotland we moved by train to Nottingham, England. Our long trip from Camp Blandng, Florida was over.

In Nottingham, the 508th PIR lived in tents in a Kings Deer Park. We participated in several tough field exercises, and two dangerous night jumps with tactical exercises. By June 1944, the 508th PIR was physically and mentally ready for combat; the men were highly trained and confident.

Late on June 5, 1944, we had our final briefing, blackened our faces, said farewell to our comrades, and were boosted into our C-47s. On the aircraft, we were told we would drop into Normandy behind the beaches where several allied divisions would land.

We had a relatively smooth flight over the English Channel until we encountered dense low clouds. To avoid collisions, many of the pilots broke formation. Later, as we crossed the Normandy coast, the Germans employed antiaircraft and machinegun fires to attack our formations causing further dispersal of the planes. As the result of the dispersal of the planes, the 508th PIR men were dropped all over Normandy, and our carefully developed assembly plans were nullified."

Chapter II, Combat Operations – Normandy, includes a summary of the 508th PIR's first days in Normandy. It contains a description of John Boone's action that resulted in saving the lives of many soldiers. John Boone was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for his actions.

John Boone was awarded a second Bronze Star Medal for heroic action in Holland. John was in position with a section of Light machine guns in support of a roadblock when a battalion of German infantry attacked. A runner was sent to the

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81mm mortar platoon Observation Post (OP) requesting mortar fire be placed upon a group of Germans assembling in a nearby draw. However, the runner was hit before he could deliver the message.

John Boone then crawled over 60 yards exposed to enemy fire, and delivered the fire request and instructions, and returned to his position. The resultant accurate mortar fire drove the enemy away from the area, and proved a decisive factor in the defense of the roadblock.

John D. Boone served in the Army from October 1942 to January 1946. He received a Battlefield Commission to Second Lieutenant in the Army of the United States (AUS) and separated from the service in the grade of First Lieutenant. He earned:

- ?? Bronze Star Medal w/two Oak Leaf Clusters
- ?? Combat Infantry Badge
- ?? Invasion Arrowhead
- ?? Four battle stars
- ?? Parachute Qualification badge with two stars indicating combat jumps (Normandy and Holland)
- ?? Presidential Unit Citation
- ?? French and Belgian Fourrageres
- ?? Orange Lanyard of the Royal Netherlands Army
- ?? Numerous campaign and service medals – including the Occupation Medal with Germany Bar.



John and Helen Boone

Upon separation from the service, John Boone returned to the University of Oregon and continued his interrupted education. He married Helen in 1946 and they raised three boys in Eugene, Oregon.

John and Helen Boone reside at 4210 NE Shaver Street, Apartment 2, Portland, Oregon 97213-1000

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This Album is Not For Sale

This excerpt from the “We Served Proudly, The Men of Hq1” album contains the recollections of men who in their youth risked their lives in furtherance of our national interests. These memoirs are sacred to them -- especially those events alluding to activities in which comrades lost their lives on the battlefields of Europe.

This album was prepared for perpetual residence in the archives of the Camp Blanding Museum complex, operated by the Camp Blanding Museum and Historical Associates, Inc. Starke, Florida. We are grateful for the support and assistance of the Camp Blanding Museum and Historical Associates, and for their kindness in having the museum make our album available to historians, students, researchers and others interested in our background and brief history.

No reproduction or distribution restrictions are imposed or implied for the album or pages thereof – providing such actions are not undertaken for profit.

Copies of the album have been presented to the Hq1 veterans or their survivors that contributed information for the effort. To facilitate reproducing copies of individual memoirs for relatives or friends, the memoirs have been developed as separate entities.

October 19, 2004

~~George . Stock~~

Hq1 Album Collator