

Thomas (Tom) J. Broderick – Private

Served with distinction in the Hq1 Light Machine Gun Platoon from August 15 to September 21, 1944 when Tom was critically wounded and evacuated.



Albeit, Tom Broderick's combat experience was limited to only a few days, Tom was exposed to every facet of war with all of its violence, horror, hardships and heroics. However, in the brief time available, Tom performed courageously, honorably, and compassionately.

Tom Broderick's accomplishments exemplify the perseverance and courage evident in the Hq1 men that comprise the "Greatest of the Greatest Generation."

Tom Brokaw, in his book "The Greatest Generation" salutes Tom and Eileen Broderick's accomplishments as they successfully challenged and defeated adversity - his gracious tribute follows:

"Tom Broderick in so many ways embodies the best qualities of his generation. He was so eager to get involved in the war he enlisted in two branches of the service.

He was gravely wounded, but once he got over the initial understandable anger, he set out to be the best husband, father, businessman, and citizen he could be, sight or no sight."

Thomas J. Broderick was born September 13, 1924 in Chicago, IL. While a premed student at Xavier University of Cincinnati, Tom tried to determine which military service would provide him the most adventure.

The Merchant Marines looked like the best deal - you could quit any time you did not like them, so in 1942 he signed up.

During his first trip to Algiers, Tom saw some "cocky" paratroopers and decided he wanted to be one.

On November 9, 1943, Tom Broderick joined the Army. He tolerated 17 weeks of infantry basic training at Mineral Wells, Texas before going with two friends, Earl Carson and Henry Wardenski to Fort Benning, GA for parachutist training. Everyone thought Henry Wardenski was too old to be a jumper. Henry was 33 years old and married with three sons.

Henry explained that his mother and father were immigrants from Poland. In 1939 while they were visiting Poland, Henry's parents were killed during the German invasion. Henry yearned to avenge his parents' death, and the best way was to become a paratrooper and fight the Germans.

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The trio completed jump school and qualified as parachutists. A short time later, they arrived in Nottingham, England assigned as replacements to the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment (508th PIR). Earl Carson was assigned to Company C, and Tom Broderick and Henry Wardenski were assigned to the Hq1 Light Machine Gun Platoon.

The Hq1 Light Machine Gun Platoon was comprised of two sections with four squads per section. Kenneth (Rock) Merritt commanded Tom's section. Rock recalls. "In the two months I knew Tom Broderick he was always clean shaven, wearing a pressed uniform and polished boots. However, during those few days in Holland before he was wounded, Tom had not had a chance to shave and clean his clothes and to his astonishment I told him: Tom, you now you look like a paratrooper."

Rock Merritt continues. "Tom Broderick's search for adventure culminated on September 17, 1944, a sunny Sunday afternoon, as we parachuted into a field occupied by German infantry and antiaircraft guns a few miles south of Nijmegen, Holland.

Tom landed without a scratch, the German anti-aircraft guns were destroyed or abandoned, and the infantry was killed or captured.

Our machinegun section was assigned to support Company A. We were ordered to establish a roadblock on a major highway approach to Nijmegen. At dawn, I discovered we were alone, Company A had gone into the city without notifying us.

After a guarded tour of the city looking for A Company or any friendly troops, we made our way back to the drop zone. There we learned our battalion had engaged in a furious fight to wrest the drop zone from German infantry and antiaircraft guns. These forces were determined to destroy the arriving 82nd Airborne Division gliderborne artillery and the divisions heavy engineer equipment. The Germans were killed or captured and 19 of the 20 anti-aircraft guns were destroyed. All the gliders landed safely.

Later in the day, Company A was ordered to seize 'Devils Hill', the highest terrain feature in the area. My section was assigned to support Company B.

During the next few days, we repulsed several large aggressive German attacks. On September 21, our battalion situation was chaotic. Company A was fighting to hold Devils Hill, Company B was fighting off German infantry attacks, and the battalion area was infested with German snipers. [The marksmanship of the Germans opposing the 508th PIR was extraordinarily skillful. Of the 17 men from Company A killed taking Devils Hill, 10 were killed by headshots.]

About noon, the Germans increased the tempo of their attacks. All four of our guns were firing. Tom Broderick's squad leader called for ammunition and, as trained, a squad member threw a box of 250 rounds toward our machinegun. The ammunition box hit Tom in the back, and simultaneously Tom was shot in the head.

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We did not know Tom had been shot until we got him out of his foxhole. Then we were sure that he was dead or dying. We managed to call for a medic and had Tom evacuated. Almost two months passed before we received word that he was alive but would be blind for the rest of his life."

Epilogue

September 21, 1944, Tom Broderick was wounded -- the Army discharged him June 19, 1945. He went on to become a successful husband, father and businessman.

Earl Carson survived WW II and became a Fire Chief in Kansas City, MO.

December 24, 1944, Henry Wardenski wrote a compassionate and inspiring letter to Tom Broderick. Later that day, Henry was killed by Artillery fire.

Tom Broderick was a magnificent soldier, and a highly respected comrade. He soldiered with industry and diligence. A team worker, he carried his load and often helped weaker men.



Henry Wardenski

Tom Broderick earned:

- ?? Bronze Star Medal
- ?? Purple Heart Medal
- ?? Combat Infantry Badge
- ?? Parachute Qualification badge with a combat star (Holland jump)
- ?? European African Middle Eastern Theatre of Operations (ETO) Medal with Invasion Arrowhead. and a Battle Star
- ?? Orange Lanyard of the Royal Netherlands Army
- ?? Numerous service medals including the European Victory Medal

The good life for Tom Broderick started when he met Eileen. As faithful Roman Catholics from Irish American families, Tom and Eileen settled on the south side of Chicago. Tom's newly established insurance business flourished, and their family increased to seven children.

Tom's many achievements exceed the limits envisaged for this album; however, some of these noteworthy achievements ought to be acknowledged, at least by subject or area. Tom Broderick:

- ?? Married Eileen and they raised seven children.
- ?? Helped found the Blinded Veterans Association.
- ?? Established a successful insurance brokerage.
- ?? Continued a lifelong camaraderie with 508th PIR veterans.
- ?? Earns the admiration, love and respect of all that meet him.

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Thomas and Eileen Broderick were married May 12, 1951 at the Great Lakes Naval Station Hospital, IL.

They raised seven children Dan, Rita, Lucy, Scott, Katy, Tommy and Molly (deceased).

They have 13 grandchildren and one great grandchild. Recently two of their paratrooper grandsons served as paratroopers in overseas combat areas.



Tom and Eileen Broderick

Tom and Eileen reside at: St. Andrews Village #21 Royal Troon, Michagin City, IN 46360

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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.

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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.

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Geoff. Stock

Hq1 Album Collator