

Warren R. Brown - Private to Tech Sergeant

Served with distinction in the Hq1 81mm Mortar Platoon from October 20, 1942 to October 13, 1945.

Warren was an outstanding, courageous soldier, a magnificent leader, and a cherished friend, a popular member of Hq1. He carried his load, did his job, and was a trustworthy comrade, he was respected by everyone.

Warren Brown is an unusually outstanding example of the type men that comprise the "Greatest of the Greatest Generation."



?? Warren Brown says. "I'm happy to have had the opportunity to serve my country. Perhaps my efforts will make it a little easier for future generations. I remember my WW II experiences with mixed emotions. Some with pride, some with sorrow, and none with apologies. I was fortunate, I served beside the finest men of my generation.

?? I was raised and educated in Salem Massachusetts, and enlisted in the Army on October 14, 1943. At the first opportunity, I volunteered for airborne training.

?? When I left Salem, I promised my High School sweetheart, Martha Sullivan that I would return and marry her."

Warren Brown's comrades remember, throughout WW II, regardless of the circumstances, Warren's only complaint was "Let's get this war over with so I can go home, marry Martha, and raise orchids." True to his word, Warren, returned to New England in 1945, and married Martha Sullivan on June 29, 1946.



Warren and Martha raised three daughters, Cynthia, Ruth and Nancy, and Warren grew string beans, carrots, peppers corn, etc. in his backyard -- so much for the orchids!

Warren Brown was an exceedingly popular member of Hq1. He always spoke his mind and respected the opinions of others. Warren never hesitated to offer a suggestion or ask a question. Warren's favorite question, asked at every opportunity of Major General James Gavin, Commanding General, 82nd Airborne Division was "General - How is our war going?" Gavin usually welcomed Warren's question with a friendly optimistic response.

Warren served during all of the 508th PIR's combat days. He effectively functioned as a "runner" (messenger), connecting the mortar platoon leader with the battalion commander, company commanders, and the forward observers located in the battalion front line areas.

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Warren repeatedly declined promotions rather than forfeit his job as a runner. His explanation for failing to take advantage of many promotion opportunities was simply "I can do more for the men of the platoon as a runner than I can as a squad or section leader."

Finally, in 1945, in Heddernheim, Germany, Warren was promoted to Technical Sergeant.

In the fall of 1945, Warren was sent back to the United States and on November 7, 1945, at Fort Dix, New Jersey, he was discharged from the service. The Army lost a truly outstanding man.

Warren Brown recalls his first days in Normandy. "In the first few days, I was with a small group in a farmer's field. We fought off several German attacks from that field. We lost many men including our First Sergeant. My first patrol experience was to fetch water for our wounded men.

I was Lieutenant Abbott's runner until he was killed. Staff Sergeant Henry assumed command of the platoon and I was his runner. He was killed on July 4, 1944, while adjusting mortar fire.

In mid-July, the 508th PIR returned to Nottingham. We had a few days furlough, sadly participated in memorial services for our comrades lost in Normandy, and applauded our heroes that were decorated.

We welcomed replacements for our lost comrades and helped to orient them. Then we started preparations for our next combat mission.

Our stay in Nottingham was relatively short. On September 17, 1944, a bright Sunday afternoon, the 508th PIR parachuted into a farmer's fields south of Nijmegen, Holland. Our objective was to capture the important highway bridge spanning the Waal River. Its capture would facilitate the movement of British armored forces to and through the City of Arnheim.

We spent our first night in Holland, fighting in the city of Nijmegen trying to wrest the Highway Bridge from extremely strong determined German defenders. Early the next morning we broke contact with the Germans, and hurried back to the fields where we had dropped.

- ?? A strong German Infantry force with antiaircraft guns had occupied the drop area. These German forces were waiting to destroy our glider-borne forces coming from England carrying three artillery battalions and engineer equipment. The gliders were expected to land around noon.
- ?? We raced back to the drop area and supported our battalion as it made a frontal assault and cleared the Germans from the area.
- ?? Our assault companies destroyed 19 antiaircraft guns and captured or killed many Germans. In true 'Hollywood' style, the first heavily laden

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fragile gliders arrived over the landing area as the fighting ceased. All of the gliders landed safely.

We did have some memorable times. For example, in Holland I discovered that one of our officers had a birthday - and I decided he should have a 'surprise' birthday party.

We held our party in a bombed out cellar where a farmer's wife had once stored canned fruits and vegetables. Joe Bressler and Oscar Prasse requisitioned (purloined) some rum from British officers. Bill Frickel cooked a pot of the best chicken soup - the chicken was liberated from a farmer's yard. We obtained a five gallon can of jelly to spread on 'K' ration biscuits from a factory in Elst, a Dutch town in the German lines, and we swapped some 'K' rations with a farmer for some canned fruit.

As we were still in combat, not all the men of the platoon could attend the party, some were on observation posts and some were needed to service the mortars. However, most of the old timers were present that had served with the officer in Camp Blanding, and Camp Mackall - like Bill Goudy, Oscar Prasse, Arnold Foster, Larney Vancourt, Bill Frickel, Glenn Sommerville and Joe Bressler.

We sang Happy Birthday to the 'surprised' officer, ate the food, drank some rum and went back to our foxholes and the war. Over the years, the officer has told me 'it was the best Birthday Party he has ever had.'

We celebrated 'Armistice Day' on November 11, 1944 by marching 22 miles out of Holland to meet trucks that carried us to Sissonne, France.

We missed going back to friendly Nottingham. However, we looked forward to a comfortable winter in the barracks of a French Artillery Post.

We had dry rooms, good hot food, very little training and everyone looked forward to a pass to Paris. Our 'good' life was short.

On December 17, the Germans launched a massive attack through the Ardennes aimed at the English Channel ports. In the surprise attack, the Germans overran several divisions, killing or capturing many Americans. We spent months fighting a desperate enemy in the bitter cold and snow covered forests of the Ardennes, and through the fortified Siegfried Line, to the Roer River."



Warren Brown says. "Much is written about the Infantry soldier. But unless you have experienced 'winter warfare' as an Infantry soldier, it is difficult to visualize or comprehend the hardships you will suffer.

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Daily you live in rain, snow and extreme cold. You are always hungry - longing for a cup of hot coffee or a glass of fresh milk.

You live and sleep in holes dug into snow covered rocky ground or in bombed out cellars -- the only light or warmth you have is from a can or bottle filled with gasoline stuffed with a rag wick.

You daily encounter artillery fires, mortar attacks, air attacks deadly snipers, and terrifying rockets.

Friends are killed or wounded, nothing ever changes, and each day is the same, attack - dig in - move out, just keep going. Your hands get so cold you can hardly handle your rifle. You desperately need to get warm.

If you have experienced and survived any or all of these conditions, you are an Infantry soldier.

In addition, as parachutists, we in Hq1 carried everything we owned. We did not have transportation or kitchens. We carried a bare minimum of medical supplies, and we didn't have engineer support, tanks or heavy artillery."



A WW II comrade recalls. "On March 14, 1945, in Sissonne, France Warren Brown was the 'jumpmaster' for our practice parachute jump. He led twelve men out the door of our C-47 plane, a unique occurrence as the role of 'jump master' was a privilege and responsibility reserved only for officers and senior noncommissioned officers. Therefore, Warren's outstanding performance was an exception."

Warren Brown served with distinction in the Army. He earned:

- ?? Bronze Star Medal
- ?? Purple Heart Medal
- ?? Invasion Arrowhead
- ?? Combat Infantry Badge
- ?? Four battle stars
- ?? Two stars on his parachute wings for combat jumps.
- ?? Presidential Unit Citation
- ?? French and Belgium Fourrageres
- ?? Orange Lanyard of the Royal Netherlands Army, and
- ?? Numerous defense medals - including the Occupation Medal with Germany Bar.

Warren says. "After my service, I returned to Massachusetts and married Martha. I worked as a supervisor in a foundry, later as a quality control inspector at Smith and

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Wesson manufacturing weapons, and I finally retired from the Hampden County Hall of Justice Superior Court after 20 years service as a shift supervisor.

I loved working at the Court House -- I had about 400 girls I could call 'My Girls.' I loved them all -- from 18 to 70 but still girls.

My greatest noncombatant accomplishments were to marry Martha, raise my three girls, and, making a hole-in-one, on August 9, 1971, at the third hole (135 yards) of the Indian Mountain Golf Course.

After months of hospitalization, my beloved Martha died August 2, 2001. I am thankful for the 55 years we had together."

Martha was loved and respected by the men and women of Hq1 and the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment Association.



Warren & Martha Brown

Warren Brown and his daughter Nancy reside at 123 Gardens Drive, Springfield, MA 01119 - 2535

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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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