

## Lawrence (Larry) G. Fitzpatrick – Private to Staff Sergeant

Served with distinction in the Hq1 Light Machine Gun Platoon from October 20, 1942 to October 13, 1945.

Larry Fitzpatrick was an outstanding, courageous soldier, a competent leader, and a dependable comrade, respected by everyone.

Larry Fitzpatrick was awarded the Silver Star Medal for heroic action in the Netherlands during Operation Market - Garden. See Chapter II, Combat Operations – Holland.



Larry Fitzpatrick is most assuredly a distinguished member of the "Great-est of the Greatest Generation."

Among the Hq1 men, Larry was a quite, modest, achiever that seldom re-vealed his private thoughts. Larry's submission for the album was limit-ed to his date and place of birth; his in and out service dates, and the award of the Purple Heart Medal w/oak leaf cluster. Therefore, Larry's WW II comrades contributed information for this summary.

Larry Fitzpatrick was born September 1, 1923 in DuBois, PA. He entered the service October 19, 1942, and volunteered for airborne training.

Instead of receiving basic training and then going to Fort Benning, GA for parachutist training, Larry was sent to Camp Blanding, Florida where the Army was conducting a test program.

The Army wanted to ascertain whether entire units could be trained at the parachute school, rather than continue qualifying individuals as parachutists, and then assigning them to airborne units.

The 508<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment (508<sup>th</sup> PIR) was activated tat Camp Blanding to conduct the test.

When Larry got to Blanding, the 508<sup>th</sup> PIR consisted of a cadre of para-chute qualified officers and noncommissioned officers, and only enough "recruits" to activate the Regimental Headquarters & Heaquarters com-pany, a Service company, and the First Battalion. Larry was assigned to the Hq1 Light Machine Gun Platoon and served therein throughout World War II.

A consequence of the 508<sup>th</sup> PIR teat program was that the recruits concurrently received basic training and participated in an arduous parach-ute school physical training program.

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The latter program was designed to ensure that all parachute school candidates attained the physical capabilities and mental attitudes expected of parachutists. It also served to eliminate unfit candidates.

The parachute school physical training program consisted of running countless miles, doing hundred of pushups, hand-to-hand combat, and additional related activities developed by the cadre to challenge the stamina and fortitude of the recruits.

On February 3, 1943, Hq1 moved to Fort Benning, GA, and twenty days later Larry Fitzpatrick and the Hq1 men made their first parachute jump.

A few days later, they pinned on the prized parachute wings and went off on furloughs - the first free days they had had since October 1942.

By March 12, all the men of the 508<sup>th</sup> PIR had completed the parachute school qualification program, and by April, the regiment was assembled at Camp Mackall, NC.

Almost immediately, the regiment started an advanced infantry and air-borne operations training program. After many field exercises and parachute jumps, the regiment advanced to major field maneuvers.

In May 1943, the 508<sup>th</sup> PIR maneuvered in South Carolina against the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. It now needed only one large maneuver to qualify for overseas shipment.

The opportunity to demonstrate its effectiveness arose in September 1943 when the regiment moved to Tennessee to participate in the large-scale Second Army maneuvers. After several weeks of maneuvering, as ground forces the regiment executed a successful night jump and returned to Camp Mackall.

In December, the regiment sailed from the New York to Belfast, Ireland. After orientations, some field training and weapons firing the 508<sup>th</sup> PIR moved to Nottingham, England and prepared for combat.

Larry Fitzpatrick parachuted into Normandy on D-Day, June 6, 1944. A few months later on September 17, 1944, he parachuted into Holland in the vanguard of the forces determined to liberate the Netherlands.

In November 1944, the 508<sup>th</sup> PIR was relieved from combat in Holland and moved to France for reconstitution and rest. However, the Germans launched a desperate attack to save the Third Reich, which resulted in the "Battle of the Bulge."

The 508<sup>th</sup> PIR was ordered on December 18, 1944, to move to Belgium to block the attacking Germans and help destroy the "Bulge." In months of strenuous fighting in the deep snows of the Ardennes in bitter cold weather, the regiment

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penetrated into the Siegfried Line, helped destroy its fortifications, and drove to the West Bank of the Roer River – the threshold of Germany.

Following the surrender of the German army, the 508<sup>th</sup> PIR was assigned to the occupation forces in Frankfurt, Germany where it proudly performed security and honor guard functions for General Eisenhower's headquarters.

Lawrence Fitzpatrick's military accomplishments and experiences included:

- ?? Progressing from "Recruit" to Staff Sergeant.
- ?? Qualifying as a parachutist in 1943.
- ?? Parachuting into Normandy on D-Day, June 6, 1944.
- ?? Participating in capturing the regiment's major objectives in Normandy, Hill 30 and Hill 95.
- ?? Parachuting into Holland, September 17, 1944.
- ?? Leading the assault to capture "Devils Hill" in Holland.
- ?? Earning the Silver Star Medal for heroic action in Holland.
- ?? Receiving the Purple Heart Medal w/Oak Leaf cluster for wounds received in France and Belgium.
- ?? Performing leadership functions in the security forces and honor guard formations for Gen. Eisenhower's headquarters.

Larry Fitzpatrick earned:

- ?? Silver Star Medal
- ?? Bronze Star Medal
- ?? Purple Heart Medal w/Oak Leaf Cluster
- ?? Invasion Arrowhead
- ?? Combat Infantry Badge
- ?? Four Battle Stars
- ?? Two Stars for his parachute wings for combat jumps
- ?? Presidential Unit Citation
- ?? French and Belgium Fourrageres
- ?? Orange Lanyard of the Royal Netherlands Army
- ?? Numerous defense medals – including the Occupation Medal with Germany Bar.

Larry Fitzpatrick's military career lasted about 40 months. During those months, he transitioned from a youth to a seasoned combat leader.

He and Kenneth Merritt (both machine gunners) were the most decorated men of Hq1. They experienced all of the horrors, fears, violence, joys and sorrows, and successes associated with combat operations.

Larry was discharged from the Army November 7, 1945 at Indiantown Gap, PA, and the army lost a magnificent soldier

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Larry - 2003

Lawrence Fitzpatrick resides with his wife June in DuBois, PA. Their address is Post Office Box 211, DuBois, PA 15801-0211

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### This Album is Not For Sale

**T**his 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.

**October 19, 2004**

**~~Georg. Stoeck~~**

**Hq1 Album Collator**