

## Owen B. (O.B.) Hill – Private to Sergeant (Oops!) to Private

Served with distinction in the Hq1 Communications Platoon as Battalion Message Center Chief from March 1943 to August 1945.

O.B. Hill was a Hq1 “Hell’s Half Acre” survivor (See Chapter II, Combat Operations – Normandy).

O.B. loved his family, his country, and the Association he founded in 1975 – see Chapter IV. He was dedicated to the Association and the welfare of its members.

O.B. was a distinguished member of the “Greatest of the Greatest Generation.” He was an outstanding soldier, a trusted comrade, and a cherished friend.



O.B. provided information for this summary before his death in 2002, and his WW II comrades augmented it wherever appropriate.

“I was born October 8, 1921 in Fort Branch, IN and educated there and in Princeton, IN. On October 21, 1940, I married Margaret Boyles. We raised two children. Linda Ann born August 12, 1941 and Joe David arrived September 14, 1948.

Soon after Pearl Harbor, I enlisted in the Army and volunteered for airborne training. However, I had to complete basic training, before I was sent to the Parachute School at Fort Benning, GA.

After I made the five jumps and qualified as parachutist, I was selected for additional training as a communications and demolition specialist.

I completed the training, in March 1943, and was sent to Camp Mackall, NC for duty with the 508<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment (508<sup>th</sup> PIR). I was assigned to the Hq1 Communications Platoon, and served therein until the end of WW II.

At Camp Mackall, I received advanced infantry and airborne operations training. I participated in numerous field exercises, and made parachute jumps with equipment. Our regiment participated as the aggressor force in maneuvers in Tennessee, and someone decided we were ready for combat. At that time, I was a Sergeant, operating the Battalion Message Center.

We sailed from New York, December 28, 1943. Eleven days later, we landed in Belfast, Ireland. After orientations on the local customs, physical training to restore muscles lost during the sea voyage, and weapons firing, we moved to Nottingham, England.

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Nottingham was an attractive city. It had ample pubs, nice people, and an exciting history. However, we trained night and day preparing for combat somewhere in Europe.

In early June 1944, we moved to an airport, and completed preparations for entry into combat.

We spent many hours studying sand tables, mockups and maps, but no one knew where we would land in Europe.

After we were in our C-47 aircraft, we were told the objective was in Normandy."

After fighting off German attacks in "Hells Half Acre," O.B. Hill joined up with 508<sup>th</sup> PIR troops. On June 13, 1944 he was wounded and evacuated to England. He rejoined Hq1 in December 1944 at Sissonne, France. His joyful reunion with comrades was brief.

On December 17, the regiment was alerted to confront a massive German force moving swiftly through the Ardennes aimed at capturing the English Channel ports.

Early on December 18, Hq1 loaded into open trucks for a terribly long cold ride to Werbomont, Belgium.

During an attack, January 26, O.B Hill was again wounded and evacuated. He returned to Hq1 in Hedderheim, Germany. The 508<sup>th</sup> PIR was assigned occupation duty as security forces and honor guards for General Eisenhower's headquarters in nearby Frankfurt.

In August 1945, O.B. Hill bid an emotional farewell to his comrades and started home. He was separated from the Army in September and joined his family in Southern Indiana.

O. B. immediately enrolled in the University of Evansville and graduated in 1950 with a degree in Accounting and Business Management. For the next two years, he worked for the Internal Revenue Service and then entered private industry as an accountant.

In January 1979, while working for the Hughes Aircraft Company, in El Segundo, California, O.B. had a severe heart attack and survived his first triple bypass surgery.

Prohibited from returning to work, O.B. retired from the Hughes Aircraft Company in 1986 and moved his family to Cathedral City, California.

O.B. Hill often said.

"My most significant accomplishments were marrying Margaret, raising our children, and founding the 508<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment Association, WW II, 1942-1945."

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Owen B. Hill was an outstanding soldier, a cheerful and helpful companion, and a dependable comrade. He earned:

- ?? Bronze Star Medal
- ?? Purple Heart Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster
- ?? Combat Infantry Badge
- ?? Invasion Arrowhead
- ?? Three battle stars
- ?? Parachute Qualification Badge with a star (Normandy jump)
- ?? Presidential Unit Citation
- ?? French and Belgian Fourrageres
- ?? Numerous defense medals including the Occupation Medal with Germany Bar.

O.B. Hill died in June 2002 and our beloved Margaret died in January 2004. They are survived by daughter Linda and son Joe, and several grandchildren.



**Owen B. (O.B.) and Margaret Hill**

## 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.

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 . Stoket~~**

**Hq1 Album Collator**