

Captain Robert W. Speers

By Irving T. Shanley

Robert W. Speers (ASN 16149118 & O2021133) entered military service at Fort Custer, Michigan for duty as a parachutist 10/29/42. He joined the newly activated 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment 11/2/42 at Camp Blanding, FL and was assigned to the Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 81mm Mortar Platoon, the platoon in which he remained until deactivation of the 508th PIR in 1946.

After completion of basic training at Camp Blanding, the Regiment was transferred to Fort Benning, Georgia for parachute training. Upon completing the required five jumps and receipt of the coveted parachute wings, the Regiment was transferred to Camp Mackall, where Bob was promoted to Corporal as a squad lead of the 81mm Mortar Platoon. Here the Regiment underwent nine months of intensive unit tactical training culminating in maneuvers in Tennessee in preparation for combat duty.

Bob served as Squad Leader and Section Sergeant during combat in Normandy, Holland, Ardennes and Central Europe. Made combat parachute jumps into both Normandy and Holland. He was promoted to Technical Sergeant (later designated Sergeant First Class) and served as 81mm Mortar Platoon Sergeant in Frankfurt, Germany where the Regiment served as Eisenhower's Honor Guard in the Army of Occupation during the latter part of 1945 and 1946.

Upon the return of the Regiment to CONUS¹ in 1946, he remained in Germany serving as the Personnel Sergeant of the Military Intelligence Center (changed to European Command Intelligence Center) until his return to CONUS in 1948. Served as a training sergeant in the 7th Infantry Division at Fort Dix until his transfer to the 501st Airborne Infantry Regiment in Kentucky in 1948 as the Regimental Personnel Sergeant until deactivation of that unit at which time he was transferred to the 2nd Infantry Division at Ft Lewis, Washington where he played football under coach Lt. Tom Lomardo (the former West Point quarterback) until entering OCS in April 1950.

Bob was commissioned in Artillery in 1950 after attending the Army General School Officer Candidate Class #25 at Fort Riley, Kansas. Immediately upon graduating he attended Basic Field Artillery Officer Course. In 1958 he attended the Associate Advanced Field Artillery Course -- both classes at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. He served in various artillery units in the 2nd Armored Division, 2nd Infantry Division, 7th Infantry Division and the 1st Infantry Division as Forward Observer, Battery Executive, Battery Commander, Battalion S-4, Assistant Division Artillery S-3 and Battalion S-3. He was promoted to Captain in 1955 and retired at Fort Riley, Kansas November 1, 1962 while serving as S-3, 5th Battalion, 6th Artillery.

Bob's awards include: Army Commendation Medal, Bronze Star, French Croix de Guerre avec Etoile de Bronze, Basic Parachute Wings with 2 battle stars, Combat Infantry Badge, United States Unit Presidential Citation, American Defense Medal, WWII Army of Occupation Medal, Europe-Africa Campaign Medal with invasion arrowhead and 4 battle stars, National Defense Medal, WWII Victory Medal, French Fouragerre, Belgium Fouragerre, Netherlands Military Willems Orde Degree of Knight (Dutch Orange Lanyard).

¹ CONUS is the military abbreviation for CONtinental United States