

# Charles D. Turley – Private First Class

Served with distinction in the Hq1 Light Machine Gun Platoon from September 26, 1944 to November 24, 1946.

Charles Turley was an outstanding soldier, a team worker, a dependable comrade, and a cherished friend. He is a distinguished member of the "Greatest of the Greatest Generation."

Charles Turley was born November 7, 1925 in Mineral Springs, Ark. He was raised on a farm in Howard County near Nashville, Ark., and attended a one-room schoolhouse, and the Nashville High School.



Charles Turley was the third of five boys; and most of them went off to war by the time their sister was growing up. Like many of his generation. Charles Turley was "drafted" before he could complete high school.

When Charles entered the Army in 1943, two of his brothers were already in the service. He completed basic infantry training and volunteered for airborne training.

On July 15, 1944, Charles Turley qualified as a parachutist, and was authorized to wear the distinguished silver wings, and highly polished brown boots. He was assigned to the 508<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment (508<sup>th</sup> PIR) rear echelon in Nottingham, England.

Shortly after he was issued equipment, he was on the way to Sissonne, France to join the regiment. Charles was assigned to the Hq1 Light Machine Gun Platoon.

He vividly remembers that while the Hq1 men were orienting him and doing some training, all he thought about was an exciting Christmas in Sissonne. It was not to be!

On December 17, the Germans made a desperate surprise attack penetrating deep into the Ardennes. The German's incursion developed a huge bulge in the allied area, thus the campaign was named "Battle of the Bulge."

On December 18, 1944, a bitter cold morning. The 508<sup>th</sup> PIR joined an 82nd Airborne Division convoy and traveled to Werbomont, Belgium. That night, the regiment established a perimeter defense and prepared to stop the advancing German forces.

Charles Turley remembers two memorable events that occurred during the Battle of the Bulge. "A friendly aircraft dropped a bomb on us, and I almost captured a Tiger tank!"

"The first event occurred on Christmas Eve, 1944 near Vielsalm, Belgium. We were constantly under German observation and fire when a plane (one of ours)

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dropped a bomb on our position. Lt. Jones Epps our assistant platoon leader was entombed by the blast. It took several men with entrenching tools to dig him out and get him evacuated.

Meanwhile, I was scared to death, and was racing down the hill, when my Sergeant bellowed 'Where you going Arkansas?'

I know most soldiers are scared at some time. Nevertheless, that does not keep us from fighting and moving on – which is what I did.

We fought in the Ardennes against Germans and a bitter cold European winter. Daily we struggled through deep snow in the hilly Hurtgen forest.

We destroyed Siegfried Line fortifications, seized small towns, and killed or captured Germans.

My second memorable incident was when I almost captured a Tiger tank! It was near the end of the Battle of the Bulge, and even though I was a veteran, the rest of the platoon still treated me like the new kid on the block. Therefore, whenever the need arose for an outpost, I always drew the job.

It fell to me one bitter cold dark night to operate an outpost armed only with my M-1 rifle and a phone line back to the platoon command post.

In the morning, because of the dense fog, I could not see very far but I could hear a steady low rumble noise, which worried me as it, grew louder and more distinct. I was sure it was a tank but not one I recognized, it sounded more guttural than an American tank.

I cranked up the phone to call in my observation. I said 'Sergeant, we got a tank coming this way.' The Sergeant said 'Arkansas, do not worry about it, we have some of our own tanks roaming around out there, and it is probably one of them.' And he hung up.

The sound became still louder and the rumbling more distinct, it was definitely not our tank. I called the Sergeant again and said, 'I don't think this is one of our tanks' He said, 'Arkansas, you're just imagining things, it's got to be one of ours.' And he rang off.

A few minutes later, I called the Sergeant and told him 'There is a Tiger tank about 20 yards directly in front of me with German soldiers hanging on the outside. Bye.' And headed for the rear as fast as I could.

As my tank experience occurred during the end of the Battle of the Bulge and the Germans were demoralized and surrendering, I have often wondered if I had stood up and challenged them, if the Germans would have surrendered. I would have loved to capture a Tiger tank and a pack of Germans all by myself."

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Eventually, the 508<sup>th</sup> PIR reached the Roer River, and broke contact with the Germans, and returned to Sissonne, France

Charles Turley continues. "In Sissonne we held memorial services for the comrades we lost in the Ardennes and started preparing for another mission. We made a battalion parachute jump and then moved to airfields near Paris, prepared to parachute into prisoner-of-war camps to rescue allied prisoners. Our war ended before we could execute the mission.

The 508<sup>th</sup> PIR joined the Occupation forces and was assigned to provide security forces and honor guards for General Eisenhower's headquarters."

In November 1946, Charles Turley left his comrades in Hq1 and traveled to the United States to participate with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division in the WW II Victory Parade in New York City.

The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division prepared for the parade at Camp Shanks, NY, and marched down 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue on January 12, 1946. The parade was exciting and the men appreciated the warm reception.

After the parade, Charles Turley was sent to Camp Chaffee, Arkansas and was discharged from the Army on January 18, 1946.

Charles Turley was a courageous and competent soldier. He earned:

- ?? Bronze Star medal
- ?? Combat Infantry Badge
- ?? Parachutists Qualification Badge
- ?? Three battle stars
- ?? The Belgian Fourragere
- ?? Numerous defense medals including the World War II Victory Medal, and the Occupation Medal with Germany Bar

Charles Turley says. "Back home in Nashville, AR. lacking a High School diploma, I worked at odd jobs wherever I could.

I married Mattie Lee Puryear (deceased) in 1946, and we raised two children Tommy Dean and Debra Sue. I was a good, steady worker and when Cooper Tire and Rubber of Texarkana hired me in 1964, I knew I had found a home. Twenty-four years later, on January 1, 1988 I retired from Cooper Tire and Rubber.

I spend my time enjoying the company of my beloved wife Carol, and woodworking. I make birdhouses for my feathered friends and assorted items for my human friends."

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Arkansas is one of the few States that allows school districts to award diplomas to veterans and former servicemen who were drafted while still in school.

On November 9, 2001, C.. D.. Turley was awarded his High School diploma. The ceremony was attended by his brothers, sister and extended family. Wylie a younger brother also received a diploma.



**Charles Turley (L) and brother Wylie  
with High School Principal**

On October 5, 1996, Charles Turley married Carol Elizabeth Gullede. Carol had two daughters Susan and Karen.

Charles and Carol combined have nine grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

Charles and Carol Turley reside at 747 Ward Road, Texarkana, AR 71854



**Charles and Carol Turley**

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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.

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 S. Stokel**

**Hq1 Album Collator**