

Michael Wargo – Private to Private First Class

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

Garfield “Wilkie” Wilkinson was a courageous, reliable, soldier, loved and respected by everyone in Hq1.

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

Michael (Mike) Wargo served 20 years in the Army. He retired as a Sergeant First Class in 1963.



Mike Wargo’s military service and post-retirement accomplishments qualify him as a distinguished member of the “Greatest of the Greatest Generation.”

Mike was born July 14, 1924 in Hellertown, PA a suburb of Philadelphia. In October 1942, Mike enlisted in the Army at Allentown, PA, and volunteered for parachutist training.

Mike was sent to Camp Blanding, Starke, Florida where the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment (508th PIR) was activated October 20, 1942.

The 508th PIR had been selected to test the feasibility of training entire units at the Parachute School in Fort Benning, Georgia, rather than training individual men and assigning those that qualified as parachutists to airborne units.

When the regiment was activated it consisted of a cadre of parachute-qualified officers and noncommissioned officers, and only enough men for a regimental headquarters company, a service company, and a battalion comprised of four companies.

Mike was assigned to the Headquarters Company (Hq1) 81mm Mortar Platoon and served therein throughout World War II.

Mike had volunteered for parachutist training, and was sent directly from the reception center to Camp Blanding without the benefit of “basic” training, i.e., the School of the Soldier. Therefore, he was required to complete the prescribed basic soldier training program, and concurrently complete the arduous pre-parachute school physical training program.

The latter program was dedicated to insure that every man sent to the parachute school was prepared physically and mentally for the role envisaged for US Army parachutists.

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As a result, Mike and the men of the 508th PIR spent months training at Camp Blanding. They ran and marched countless miles, performed hundreds and hundreds of push-ups, and learned hand-to-hand combat. Additionally, they mastered the basic soldier skills of close order drill, marksmanship, and crew served weapons training.

When the 508th PIR men entrained to go to the Parachute School in Fort Benning, they were the most physically and mentally fit, and best trained men in the US Army.

The First Battalion men made their first jump in February 1943 and by March 12, 1943; every man in the 508th PIR was a parachutist.

The new parachutists proudly pinned on their cherished wings and left on furlough, their first days off since October 1942.

Upon returning from furloughs the men of the 508th PIR packed their equipment and moved to Camp Mackall, a newly constructed army camp hacked out of the North Carolina swamps.

Mike Wargo's experiences closely parallel the 508th PIR history as presented in the early chapters of this album. He participated in all of the regiment's training exercises, battles, and joyous and sorrowful times and helped to earn all of its honors and awards. For example:

- ?? He was present for the activation of the regiment at Camp Blanding
- ?? He parachuted into Normandy
- ?? He parachuted into Holland
- ?? He fought through the deep snows and bitter cold of the densely forested Ardennes and penetrated the Siegfried Line fortifications
- ?? He served in the security forces and honor guard formations supporting General Eisenhower's headquarters in Frankfurt, Germany

Mike Wargo earned:

- ?? Bronze Star Medal
- ?? Purple Heart Medal
- ?? Invasion Arrowhead
- ?? Combat Infantry Badge
- ?? Four Battle stars
- ?? Parachute Qualification badge with two stars for combat jumps (Normandy and Holland)
- ?? Presidential Unit Citation
- ?? French and Belgium Fourrageres
- ?? Orange Lanyard of the Royal Netherlands Army
- ?? Numerous defense medals including the Occupation Medal with Germany Bar

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In December 1945, Mike Wargo left Hq1 for the United States and [was] discharged from the service. Shortly thereafter, Mike re-enlisted and returned to Hedderheim, Germany where he again joined Hq1.

Following the deactivation of the 508th PIR in 1946, Mike served in the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, Fayetteville, NC.

In February 1949, Private First Class Wargo married Captain Jean Robinson in North Augusta, SC. They had five children Mary, Janice, Michael, Robert and John. They also had six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

In April 1963, Mike Wargo retired from the Army. At the time, he was an instructor in the Ground Mobility Department of the Infantry School.

Mike moved his family to central Florida where he was employed for twelve years at the McCoy Airforce Base in Orlando. Jean was employed as a teacher in the Seminole County School system.

In 1983, Mike and Jean Wargo began touring the States in a re-creational vehicle and attended 508th PIR Association and Hq 1 reunions. They chaired the 508th PIR Association's 1963 reunion at Daytona Beach, Florida, and sponsored the Hq1 1998 reunion at Orange Park, Florida.



Mike and Jean Wargo

Jean Wargo died in 2002. She was interred in the Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors.

Mike Wargo resides at 507 Sandstone Drive, Van Buren, AR 72056

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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.

October 19, 2004

~~George . Stock~~

Hq1 Album Collator