

# Garfield R. Wilkinson – Private to Staff Sergeant

Served with distinction in the Hq1 Battalion Intelligence Section (S2) from March 1943 to November 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).

Garfield Wilkinson was a distinguished member of the “Greatest of the Greatest Generation.”



Garfield died January 15, 2003. This summary was developed from information provided by his extended family and his World War II comrades.

Garfield was born March 10, 1920 in Laurel, Delaware. He was inducted into the Army February 9, 1942, at Fort Meade, Maryland. After basic training, Garfield volunteered for parachutist training at Fort Benning, GA.

Following an inordinate delay, Garfield was finally sent to the parachute school and made the required five qualification jumps. After a furlough, Garfield was ordered to join the 508<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment (508<sup>th</sup> PIR) at Camp Mackall, NC.

Initially, Garfield was assigned to Company A as a member of a rifle squad. However, Garfield was more interested in meeting and defeating the enemy on his terms rather than fighting the war hidden in the unglamorous ranks of a rifle squad. After some smart (slick) maneuvering, as only “Wilkie” could orchestrate, he obtained a transfer to Hq1 and was assigned to the Battalion Intelligence Section (S-2).

Garfield was now in a position where he envisaged “operating” independent of close supervision, leading small, dedicated patrols into enemy territory, capturing Germans and otherwise defeating them at every opportunity. The war began to look interesting!

Garfield trained diligently at Camp Mackall, and later in England preparing for combat in Europe.

In combat, Garfield Wilkinson excelled. He led attack formations, performed extensive patrols, captured numerous Germans, and enjoyed an enviable reputation for heroism, competence and confidence.

Garfield Wilkinson’s memoirs replicate the activities of the 508<sup>th</sup> PIR as depicted in the first chapters of this album. Of particular interest is Garfield’s heroic action saving the life of his “tent mate” Jim Lutton during a night parachute jump. (See Chapter 1, The Beginning).

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Garfield participated in all of the regiment's training exercises, maneuvers, and combat operations.

He parachuted into Normandy and fought heroically in "Hell's Half Acre."

He parachuted into Holland and led the battalion as a scout into the city of Nijmegen.

He fought tirelessly through the deep snows of the densely forested Ardennes, in the bitter cold, to attack and destroy Siegfried Line fortifications.

He performed in the post war Occupation forces as a noncommissioned officer in the security force and honor guards supporting General Eisenhower's headquarters in Frankfurt, Germany.

Garfield Wilkinson was an outstanding courageous patrol leader. He led numerous highly dangerous reconnaissance and combat patrols into and behind enemy lines, always seeking and obtaining information about the identification of enemy forces in contact and their capabilities.

Garfield consistently provided commanders with timely information, which contributed immeasurably to the decision-making process.

During his service in Hq1, Garfield Wilkinson earned the following awards and decorations:

- ?? 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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## The Good Life

On November 10, 1945, Garfield Wilkinson was separated from the service at Fort Meade, Maryland. He became an active member of the reserves and was called to active duty during the Korean War.



**Garfield and Shirley Wilkinson – Kansas City, Kansas 2000**

Garfield had two sons, Garfield II and Gary, a stepson Warren Breeden, three daughters Sandra, Theresa, and Dana and 11 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

Garfield's wife Shirley died in 2001 and Garfield died in 2003. They rest together in the Arlington National Cemetery.

Garfield's daughter, Dana Lynn Pearson is an active Associate Member of the 508<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment Association. She resides at 815 Fairfax Avenue, Springdale, AR 72764.

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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~~ . ~~Stake~~**

**Hq1 Album Collator**