

Staff Sergeant John A. Menighan

By Irving T. Shanley

John Menighan volunteered for the United States Army and for parachute duty in October 1942 and was immediately assigned to Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment being organized at Camp Blanding, Florida. He endured 13 solid weeks of basic and advanced infantry training with this Regiment and remained with the Regiment throughout WWII. When the Regiment was transferred to Fort Benning, Georgia in March 1943 for parachute training, John completed this rigorous training including the five qualifying parachute jumps and was awarded the coveted silver parachute wings.

After the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese on December 7, 1941, John had a strong desire to serve his country, and so, reluctantly he left his beloved wife, Doris, and their two children behind to enlist in the Army as a paratrooper.

When the Regiment was initially organized in October 1942, the average age of the men in the Regiment was 19. John was several years older than the other troopers but he was in good shape and had no trouble keeping up with the younger men. He was affectionately called "Father John" because of his maturing influence on his younger comrades. Other troopers in his unit sought him out for advice and counseling. John loved to sing and he had a great baritone voice and his buddies loved to hear him sing. Two of his favorite songs were "The Letter Edged in Black," and "Among My Souvenirs." His buddies asked him to sing these songs, and others, over and over again. Between battles, when the Regiment was recuperating and reorganizing at Camp Sissone in France, word came down from higher headquarters that one man from each platoon in the Regiment would be allowed a 30-day furlough back to the states. John Menighan, because he was greatly respected and admired by his buddies, was unanimously selected by the members of the 81mm Mortar Platoon to take advantage of this rare opportunity.

Prior to the invasion in Normandy, France in June 1944, the Regiment became part of the 82nd Airborne Division and remained with this division throughout the war. John parachuted with the Regiment into Normandy, France on D-Day, June 6, 1944, and into Nijmegen, Holland on September 17, 1944. He also participated with the Regiment in the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium during the winter of 1944-1945. When the war ended in Europe in May 1945, John and his Regiment were transferred to Frankfurt, Germany to become General Dwight D. Eisenhower's honor guard. During his service with the 508th, John was a Squad Leader in the 81mm Mortar Platoon.

John returned to the United States in September 1945, was honorably discharged as a Staff Sergeant, and returned to his family in Los Angeles, California. His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Parachute Wings, Combat Infantry Badge, Good Conduct Medal, American Campaign Medal, Europe-Africa Campaign Medal with four battle stars and invasion arrowhead, WWII Victory Medal, WWII Occupation Medal, National Defense Service Medal, United States Presidential Unit Citation, French Fourragere, Belgian Fourragere, and the Militaire Orde Degree of Knight from Holland.

Staff Sergeant John A. Menighan passed away February 11, 1978.