

Portland Chapter
41st Infantry Division Association
3906 NE Portland Blvd.
Portland, OR 97222



SEP 24 2001
Governor Atiyeh

Victor Atiyeh
7960 SW Fairmont
Portland, Oregon 97225

Dear Governor,

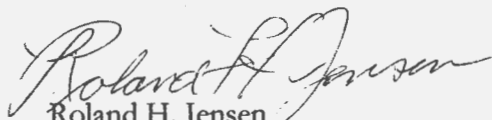
The 41st Infantry Division Association will hold its 53rd and last National Convention in Portland, Oregon, at the DoubleTree Hotel, Lloyd Center on September 20, 21, and 22, 2001. The convention will also mark the demise of the association.

As President of the Portland Chapter, I invite you and Mrs. Atiyeh to our last National Banquet beginning with cocktail hour at 6:30 on Saturday evening, September the 22nd; it will be an historic occasion for us, and we would be greatly honored by your presence.

Our main speaker for the evening will be Major General Raymond F. Rees, Vice Chief, National Guard Bureau. Brigadier General (Ret.) Fred Rosenbaum will be our master of ceremonies.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If there are any questions, please don't hesitate to let me know. I can be reached by e-mail at rjensen@easystreet.com or by phone at (503) 288-3906. Please let us know as soon as you can whether or not you will attend.

Sincerely


Roland H. Jensen
President, Portland Chapter
41st Infantry Division Association

OK-VA

AUG 21 2001

Governor Atiyeh

Don't know you

Don't know me
I'll come
I'll be there
I'll be there
I'll be there
I'll be there

- = MURPHY LAW OF COMBAT!
- NO COMBAT UNIT HAS EVER PASSED INSPECTION
- = IF THE ENEMY IS WITHIN RANGE - SO ARE YOU
- = BEST MATA MATHS THAT 2 BEARS TIMES 37 MEN EQUALS 49 ORBS
- = THE ONLY THING MORE ACCURATE THAN INCOMING ENEMY FIRE IS INCOMING RAINBOW A 60

- = YOUR LITTLE BLACK BOOK CONTAINS ONLY NAMES ENDING IN MB
- = EVERYTHING HURTS, & WHAT DOESN'T HURT DOESN'T WORK
- = YOU FEEL LIKE THE NUT BEFORE & YOU HAVEN'T BEEN ANYWHERE

17-3/1-2-3/9-11

For these veterans, the war is over, but the battle still rages

World War II combat veterans from the 41st Infantry Division wonder: "Can we stick it out?"

By TOM HALLMAN JR.
THE OREGONIAN

They met a lifetime ago when they were little more than kids, naive boys just out high school who were forced to grow up in a hurry after Pearl Harbor. They ultimately became one of the fiercest fighting forces in WWII, the 41st Infantry Division that shipped out to battle the Japanese in New Guinea and the Philippines.

When they arrived in Portland on Friday morning from across the United States, though, they were simply old men who greeted one another with handshakes and hugs and then tipped the bellmen a couple bucks to haul heavy suitcases into the hotel lobby.

As caught up as they were in their past and their stories, the future awaiting their grandchildren weighed heavily on their minds. In the hotel lounge, they quietly watched television news programs that showed the devastation in New York City. They listened as commentators discussed a country gearing up for war.

"This isn't going to be nothing like we were in," said Bud Lewis of Portland. "We knew who the enemy was, it was pretty clear. This time, we're going to be fighting ghosts."

"I wonder if we have the resolve to stick it out," said Bud Jensen, also of Portland. "That will be the test. As a country, can we stick it out?"

The men said the simple reality of war — one that people tend to forget when a groundswell of public support builds to respond to the terrorist attacks — is that men die. Every one of the vets knew someone who lost their life overseas.

The division began as a National Guard unit based in Oregon and numbered 13,000 men from Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Wyoming and Montana. The unit was activated Sept. 16, 1940, but life really changed when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

"We were federalized into the U.S. Army," Jensen said. "I heard it on the radio, and then there was

Men eventually were shipped out to watch the Oregon and Washington coast lines and to guard the bridges and ports. The division then went to Australia.

"The Australians were away fighting, and we were there to protect Australia," said Tom Lattanzi of Portland. "What we did was chase the girls."

The division, nicknamed the Sunset Division, was in the thick of WWII. They landed in Australia in May of 1942, and fought from January 1943 until the end of the war. They battled in New Guinea and the Philippines. They were scheduled to invade Japan on Nov. 1, 1945, but the war ended before then.

The division lost 965 men in combat. More than 5,620 men were wounded. Nearly 400 Silver Stars and 25 Distinguished Service Crosses were awarded to men who fought in the division.

"Damn right it was scary," said Newt Espe of Portland. "You'd go to sleep in your foxhole and not know if you were going to wake up in the morning."

On Friday, a melancholy mood hung over the hotel. Although they'd known this day was fast approaching, it hit the veterans Friday: After 53 years, this weekend's convention will likely be the last. Each conversation seemed a bit more important because they knew that most of them won't see one another again. And if they do, it will be at the cemetery where they'll bid farewell to an old pal.

"We're dying off," said Lewis. "This convention was supposed to be in Kansas City, but that chapter's president died, and the Portland chapter stepped in and took it over."

In 1990, the last time the 41st Infantry Division Association convention was held in Portland, more than 1,000 people attended. This year there are fewer than 300, and that includes wives.

The mood Friday was one of resignation, and the official program reflected that with poems and tributes written by the men:

By different paths we go separate ways

friendships stay with us all of our days.

May fallen comrades serve us as scouts,

preparing the way and finding best routes,

to a future reunion in Heavenly sites.

of our old buddies who have followed the light."

To a group of men who fought in a foreign land, the reality of war remains vivid, even more than 50 years after they came home to resume lives that led them into quiet professions such as insurance or sales.

They know there's nothing they can really do now. Their time has passed. Most people traveling U.S. 26 — or the Sunset Highway — don't even realize the roadway is named for them. They wonder if a young generation that never fought will have the stomach for this declared war on terrorism.

"It's damn scary," said Tom Lattanzi. "You hear your friend screaming in a foxhole 20 yards away, and you can't get out of your foxhole to help. You hear his head getting bashed in with the butt of a rifle and then there's silence and you know he's gone. That's war. It isn't some movie. We have to do something, but I hope our leaders make the right decision."

Lewis nodded.

"We're better prepared as a military than we were back then," he said. "But are we better prepared as a people?"

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