



Newsletter Issue 39, April 2018

Our People Issue—7000 of them!



The largest part of our database is now dedicated to people. We have accelerated our research to look at the service record of each person honored on a monument overseas and make a unique page for every individual so identified. We have a new person on our team: Mark Joseph Esller. Mark is concentrating exclusively on historical research of personnel and their data base entry. Some monuments have hundreds of names, so Mark is going through all of our long lists to re-search each individual and then create a page in our database with their history. He looks at unit histories, at findagrave, at ancestry.com, at NARA documents, and whatever else he can find on-line. In the example pictured at the left and described below left, the First Infantry Division Monument in Cantigny has 1138 names on it, all of whom were killed 100 years ago, so the re-search challenge is considerable. (We are trying to finish this one before the centennial commemoration and rededication there on 25 May.)

#7000

To save a child....

99 missions!



We just added the 7000th person to our database. William Baxter enlisted in

April 1917 in Kentucky. He served as a Private First Class in the Machine Gun Company, 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division. He was awarded a Silver Star during the Battle for Cantigny on 28 May 1918 when he kept his machine gun firing for over seven hours during terrific bombardments with no protection except a shallow trench, helping to break up five enemy counterattacks. He was killed in the battle and is now buried in the Hebron Cemetery in Adams, Indiana. His name appears on the 1st Infantry Division monument (along with 1137 other names) in Cantigny, France.

Hassel C. Whitefield was born on 13 June 1920 in Scurry County, Texas, to Phylander and Gertie Steele Whitefield, the fifth of eight children. Whitefield came across Utah Beach on D-day with the 90th Division and fought his way across France, through Belgium, and into Luxembourg as a Staff Sergeant in the 344th Field Artillery Battalion. The battalion fired 6000 rounds of 105mm artillery in the defense of Oberwampach, Luxembourg in the 36 hour battle that began there on 16 January. Whitefield was in his company's Command Post set up in the home of the Schilling family during some very intense enemy shelling. The five year old son Marcel bolted from the house in terror into the street. SSG Whitefield did not hesitate to run after him to try to save him but they were both tragically killed in the shelling. Whitefield was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions in the battle. Today, the town still remembers the incident with a plaque on the wall of the church. Whitefield is buried in the Hanson Cemetery in Comanche County, Texas.



Jack M. Beckman was born on 13 September 1922 in Burlington, Iowa. He enlisted in the Canadian Air Force in December 1941 and transferred to the US Army Air Forces in October 1943. He flew a P-51D fighter for the 355th Fighter Squadron, 258th Fighter Group. Between the two Air Forces he flew an amazing 99 missions over Germany as a fighter pilot. On 1 March 1945 he was forced to parachute from his plane over Bavaria and was killed by citizens after he reached the ground safely. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and is buried in the Aspen Grove Cemetery in Des Moines, Iowa. He is honored on the impressive monument at the Steeple Morden Airfield in the UK.

