



Newsletter Issue 41, October 2018

Centennial Success!

We last reported on this site in April 2016 as we launched a fundraising effort for its renovation. Henry Howard Houston II was a son of the famous Philadelphia Houston family. A 1916 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, he served with the 53rd Field Artillery Brigade on the Mexican border in 1916, as a volunteer ambulance driver in the American Field Service in Verdun in 1917, as an officer in the French Army Transportation Corps, then back in the US for training as an aerial forward observer, before rejoining the his old Pennsylvania unit as a Lieutenant prior to being killed in action in France in 1918 in the 2nd Battle of the Marne. He is buried in the Suresnes American Cemetery outside of Paris. His devastated father spent three years in France to properly memorialize his son. He donated large amounts of clothing and necessities to the villagers of Arcis-le-Ponsart that had cared for his son in his final hours. He built two large reservoirs and the water distribution system that the town still uses today. He had three bells cast for the church (today known as Henry, Howard, and Houston). Finally, he built a beautiful and moving monument to him in the remote area of France where he was killed. Although the



monument's care had been forgotten about by the family, the villagers had not forgotten. American War Memorials Overseas was able to locate family members who generously donated the funds for a renovation. Local citizens donated their time and energy to help clean up the site and manage the three contractors involved in the renovation. The mayor graciously hosted a ceremony and a reception on the very day that LT Houston was killed 100 years before, a few meters away. His memory lives on.



Bayonet Hero in the Bulge

On January 4, 1945, Lt. Richard Durkee successfully led Company A of the 551st Parachute Infantry Battalion (PIB) in a rare bayonet attack in the snowy outskirts of Dairomont, Belgium. The 551st then assaulted Rochelinval, the site of the sector's only river crossing, where it was decimated by the German resistance. Durkee's Company was no exception. After commanding one of his subordinates to advance their unit, Durkee confronted the situation's stark reality. The soldier replied, "Sir, I can't. They're all dead." Although incredible, the 551st's sacrifice was only fully recognized in 2001 when the unit received the Presidential Unit Citation.

As if Durkee's *first* bayonet assault was not compelling enough, his actions in Korea, for which he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, confirm his bravery. While serving in the 3rd Infantry Division, Durkee singlehandedly rushed an enemy position near Uijongbu with his bayonet before engaging in hand-to-hand combat. Durkee's men, inspired, rushed the hill and secured the position. As the leader of bayonet charges in two separate conflicts, Richard Durkee embodies a special breed of courage. As a young man, Durkee was a championship boxer and semi-professional baseball player. After retiring from the Army, he graduated from the University of Maryland. Mr. Durkee passed away on September 14, 2004, at the age of 86, and is buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Today he is honored on a memorial in Dairomont, Belgium.



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