

War Era Story Project 2012

Submitted by: Howard Gorrell

Current home town: Yakima, WA

Age:68

The following was written by Paul E. Gorrell of Dayton, OH, Captain, Army of United States, ret. on May 26, 2003. He died in August 2012 at the age of 95.

A War Experience

During World War II, I was a reserve officer in a division of all draftee soldiers. I was second platoon leader in a heavy weapons company. I was part of the cadre of regular army officers and reserve officers who formed the company nearly two years before.

Our 85th Division of the Fifth U.S. Army Corp was sent to Italy and entered combat in a defensive line north of Naples. During the second major battle that we were in, our company executive officer was killed by machine gun fire, and I was moved to Executive Officer. A short time later, our Battalion Command Post was hit by artillery fire, killing the battalion commander and two staff officers. My company commander was moved to Battalion and I was named as acting company commander. Our company had the 50 caliber, water-cooled machine guns and 81 millimeter mortars. Here I was, a farm boy from the hills of West Virginia, 27 years old and scared nearly to death, responsible for over 200 soldiers and myself.

Late one evening while we were in defensive positions awaiting orders to move forward, Staff Sergeant Dale Franquet came to my foxhole and saluted me. The salute was very unusual on the front line because all movement must be kept to a minimum in daylight. I know that something must be up so I returned the salute. Dale said to me, "Lieutenant, will you do me a favor". I said sure if I could. Dale handed me his billfold, watch, wedding ring and a letter to his wife. He said, "Will you please see that these are mailed to my wife?" I asked why and he told me that he was going to die very soon. I was shocked and felt I needed support, so I called back to Battalion Headquarters and asked our chaplain to come forward.

Dale said he believed in premonition and that his time was near. The Chaplain came very quickly and the three of us talked. Dale was Catholic and the Chaplain was Protestant. Dale quoted scripture passages to back up his belief. The Chaplain read some scriptures. I told Dale that I would have him transferred to another platoon or company. Dale said that would not help because it would happen wherever he was. The Chaplain then opened his briefcase and took out three communion cups, wafers and juice and we had communion. We talked some more and had more prayers. Then Dale saluted again and returned to his firing position. The Chaplain and I talked some more, and then he returned to Battalion.

Later that very night a mortar round made a direct hit on Dale's foxhole and he was killed instantly. The Litter Bearers were called forward and his body was removed before daylight. Needless to say, the items were mailed to his wife along with a letter from me telling his wife what a good soldier he had been and the details of this experience and details of his death.

Paul Edward Gorrell Obituary

PAUL EDWARD GORRELL, 95, born April 28, 1917 in Meadville WV and died August 9, 2012 in Maria Joseph Center in Dayton. Gorrell was preceded in death by his wife, Faith Barnett of nearly 65 years, parents Clyde and Della Gorrell, sister Evelyn and brothers John and Russell. He is survived by son Howard and granddaughter Maria and sister Helen Daugherty as well as many nieces and nephews.

Growing up on a hilly farm overlooking meadows, Gorrell attended a one-room elementary school, Tyler County High School, West Virginia University with Bachelor's Degree in Agriculture and then Ohio State University with Master's Degree in Agricultural Education. His high school teaching career was interrupted by Pearl Harbor so having volunteered was called to active duty in World War II. Served as acting Company Commander of a heavy weapons company, Gorrell received a Bronze Star, six Battle Stars, and a Combat Infantryman Badge for his services in Italy and was promoted to the rank of Army Captain. He resumed teaching in



Farmersville and Dayton for 35 years. Being an active member of the Rotary Club in Farmersville and the Kiwanis Club in Dayton for over 30 years, he enjoyed horseshoe pitching, bridge, golf and bowling. His body was donated to the Anatomical Gift Program of Wright State University School of Medicine. In lieu of flowers, please send a donation in his memory to the Honor Flight Dayton program, which Paul participated in during the October 3, 2009 flight. (Honor Flight Dayton, Inc., 525 Victory Road, Springfield, OH 45504 or <http://honorflightdayton.org/>) A memorial service will be at 11 a, Friday, September 14 at Fairview United Methodist Church (828 West Fairview Avenue in Dayton), where he was a faithful member for 52 years. A luncheon will be served immediately following the service in the church social hall. Interment will be held at a later date at the Creston Cemetery near Point Pleasant WV.