

Raymond J. Cunneen



This is the eighth in a series of articles that we hope to publish for years to come. With this series we want to honor Service Members that served our great Nation. As I mentioned in the last article we need your help to honor these fine Americans. If you have someone you would like us to include, please help us research and develop articles. Our email address is mhamlegionpost113@gmail.com

Ray Cunneen grew up on a farm on Erbe Road, between Blue Mounds and Mount Horeb, and graduated from Mount Horeb High School in 1943. Ray was drafted into the Army in February 1944 and headed off to Camp Blanding, Florida for Basic Training. Ray said that the Army gave the midwestern soldiers a couple days to get acclimatized before they started training, which was good since they were coming from cold climates in February. Basic Training was difficult during World War II, the Army pushed everyone hard, to graduate Infantry Basic Training they had to complete a 25-mile road march with full equipment.

When Ray finished Basic Training, he was shipped off to Camp Kilbourne and then was sent to Europe as a replacement. It took a couple weeks for the ammo ship that Ray was on to get to England. As soon as the ship docked in Glasgow England the soldiers were offloaded and then were shipped straight to France to begin serving with their units.

When Ray and the other soldiers that arrived with him got to their unit the First Sergeant went down the line and pulled people out for positions that he needed filled, such as Machine Gunner, Rifleman, Runner. Ray was selected to be a company runner. As a runner, he was responsible for: 1. getting the password out every night, 2. Making sure the Company Commander had a safe, dry place to sleep at night, 3. Passing orders from the Company Commander to his Platoon Leaders. 4. When the unit wasn't fighting they would take carriers with food out to the platoons.

Ray served in the 120th Regiment of the 30th Infantry Division. When he joined the unit they were Saint Louis, France. The Americans and their tanks had a hard time fighting in France due to all the hedgerows, so the infantry units were tasked with the majority of the fighting. It took a long time to fight through this area because you had to fight hedgerow to hedgerow. One day during the fight part of the Battalion that Ray was serving in was moving through their area and Ray saw a classmate Jack Holum. A

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couple days later they ran into each-other again at the Battalion's headquarters. After the breakout from this area the allies were able to defeat German forces and move through large sections of France. After the liberation of Paris, the Division moved on to block the largest and last ditch counterattack the Germans mounted against allied forces at the Battle of the Bulge.

As his unit entered Germany the Germans were determined to hold their ground so they were using everything they had to fight off the American forces. German tanks were firing air burst rounds at the American forces. Ray was hit with shrapnel and had to be evacuated to a hospital in England. Doctors operated and removed some of the shrapnel from Ray's body. Ray recovered after weeks of treatment at the hospital, went through some training and then returned to his unit as a runner. As Ray's unit continued across Germany they were crossing the Rhine River, shortly after the crossing Ray received word from Battalion Headquarters that his classmate, Jack Holum, had been killed by shrapnel.

After the war in Europe ended, Ray was pulled back to England in order to train for the fight in Japan. While they were still training, Japan surrendered so Ray and his fellow soldiers from the 30th were sent home. When Ray arrived in Wisconsin he was sent to at Camp McCoy to guard prisoners for a couple months before he was out processed and sent back to Mount Horeb. During his time in the service Ray received the following awards: Good Conduct Medal, the Combat Infantry Badge, the Belgian Fourragere, the Bronze Star, and the Purple Heart.

At the time, Ray's uncle was retiring from the Post Office so the postmaster needed a postman and hired Ray. Ray worked at the Post Office for 35 years before retiring.

Ray joined the Mount Horeb American Legion shortly after World War II and has been a member of our Legion for 72 years. The American Legion helped Ray get a loan for his home, and helped get him to the VA in Milwaukee in order to get a pension for his shrapnel wounds. When he visited the VA after the war the doctors gave him the option to have the rest of the shrapnel removed. Ray said the muscle had already grown over the shrapnel so he said he didn't want to have it removed, to this day Ray has pieces of shrapnel in his body from the battles in France.

Ray married Mavis on October 30th, 1948. Together they had five children, Vicki (Russel) Devitt, Whitewater, WI, Karen (Jerry) Martinson, Oregon, WI, Ray Jr. (Jane) Cunneen, North Prairie, WI, Patti (John) Cox, Barrington, IL, and Mark (Darlene) Cunneen, Verona, WI. Family has been very important to Ray, his children mean the world to him and him to them.

As a part of the Mount Horeb American Legion, Ray served our community, our veterans, and our youth as an officer and commander. Please take time to thank Ray for his service and sacrifices if you see him. You could even drop him a note in the mail to show your appreciation.

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Let us Never Forget that Freedom is NOT Free

Compiled by Jerry Hook