

## Allen E. Amick

This is the ninth in a series of articles that we hope to publish for years to come. In 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](mailto:mhamlegionpost113@gmail.com)

Allen Amick grew up and lived most of his life in Florida. Allen moved to Inglewood in Mount Horeb approximately three years ago to be closer to his son. Allen Amick is a very lucky man and he will be the first to admit to it. He has a unique souvenir from World War II, a wallet with a bullet hole, which he sometimes keeps in his walker. Allen also kept a journal of his war time service, describing what he was doing each day, and recently, he was kind enough to share his stories with me. I will not be able to tell Allen's entire story here, but it is a story of real life danger and daily struggles, and worthy of the attempt.

He attended the Army's infantry training at Camp Wheeler, Georgia in 1943 before reporting to Fort Meade, Maryland, and then on to Camp Patrick Henry. From there, Allen shipped out to Europe. Troops boarded a converted Canadian luxury liner formerly called The Empress of Japan, rechristened The Empress of Scotland, and bound for Casablanca, North Africa. Packed into what may have once been the cargo hold, the eight-day journey was hot and stuffy. Bunks were stacked three high. One night, unable to bear the cramped conditions, many of the men decided to sleep on deck, but they got wet because the waves came right over the deck.

After arriving at Casablanca, the men were loaded French 40 & 8 rail cars and headed for Oran, Algeria and Lion Mountain Camp for additional training. This was only a temporary stop on the way to Naples, Italy to join the fighting in Europe. The training at Lion Mountain Camp was difficult and dangerous. They ran obstacle courses and rehearsed attacks with live machine guns firing above their heads. Then the troops, including Allen, were taken by ship to Naples. On January 13, 1944 Allen received his assignment to the Army's 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division.

When Allen arrived in Italy, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division was training for an amphibious landing at Anzio 32 miles south of Rome. The training for the planned assault was very rigorous: fifteen hours a day with long marches and little rest. A Division wide amphibious landing rehearsal near Salerno, Italy was to cap off the training, but turned dangerous. The landing craft Allen was in started taking on water. The water level had reached their knees before the driver of the craft decided to head back to the transport ship. However, the steering gear had stopped working as well! Men started throwing equipment overboard to lighten the load. Only later did Allen and the others learn the landing craft were built to carry thirty-five men. Allen's craft was carrying forty men loaded down with combat gear. The men in Allen's craft were soaked but some men on other landing crafts were not so fortunate. Their crafts sank and some died as a result.

A couple nights later the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division set sail to execute the amphibious landing at Anzio. Their ultimate objective was to take Rome. For security purposes, none of the soldiers knew exactly where they were going to land until they were out on the boats. When the Division landed they initially faced light resistance. That all changed as they attempted to go inland.

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As the Division pushed towards Rome, they had to fight a combination of Italian and German forces well entrenched in the high ground. The Americans were forced to attack across open stretches of land where they could be seen and killed.

The Division's march to Rome took four months and numerous lives. On January 28, 1944, Allen's unit began an attack much further east than anticipated and American artillery, meant to soften up the entrenched Italian troops, started raining down on their position. The artillery barrage lasted only twenty minutes, but to Allen, it seemed a lot longer and, unfortunately, Americans were killed. The attack continued as planned but in the confusion, several of the men in Allen's company got separated and became pinned down by enemy machine gun fire and mortars.

During fighting near Cisterna, Italy, Allen was hit with shrapnel from artillery and had to be taken to an evacuation hospital. He was evacuated back to Naples where he stayed for almost a month to recover. While he was recovering, his unit did not make any additional progress. In fact, they lost a few hundred yards and had dug in to keep the enemy from pushing them back to the sea.

After four months of heavy fighting the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division took Rome. Allen's unit had fought their way from Anzio through Cisterna, Cori, Giuglianello, and Ardena and finally on to Rome. As I mentioned earlier, the Americans paid dearly for every inch of ground because the enemy had the high ground and had already fortified their positions using buildings and towns to their advantage. To tell you how difficult this operation was: on May 23, 1944, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division had one of the bloodiest days of WWII. In the attack that day they had 995 casualties.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Division returned to Naples to begin training for their next mission: an invasion of southern France. On August 15, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division landed near St. Tropez. Allen was in the first wave of troops storming the beaches and as he ran onto the beach he saw signs in German marking off the areas with land mines. As the attack continued, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry was forced, once again, to advance on an enemy who held the high ground, firing down onto Allen and other infantrymen as they crossed the beaches and into woods.

Later, as part of this campaign to liberate France, Allen participated in a battle for the Voges Mountains, a range of low mountains near the French/German border. In his journal, he describes it as one of the worst battles he had ever seen. Dug in and preparing a very strong defensive line, desperate German forces used everything at their disposal to keep the Americans from advancing any farther: buildings, the surrounding forest, tanks, pillboxes, mortars, machine guns, and artillery. Finding it necessary to retreat, it was the only time Allen could remember leaving wounded men on the battlefield to the mercy of God. The next night, Allen and two others went back to the area where the worst of the fighting had taken place to recover the bodies of those who had been killed. It took three months to reach Strasbourg, liberating the city on November 27, 1944. The campaign to retake France was costly for Allen's 3<sup>rd</sup> Division but it pushed the Germans back into Germany.

An attack on the Siegfried Line, a line of defensive forts and obstacles stretching along Germany's western border, was as dangerous and as costly as any other mission the Americans undertook during World War II. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division took heavy losses

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during this campaign. On March 16, 1945, Allen and his unit were pinned down by artillery fire and machine guns. Allen was shot in the back. He and seven others from his small unit had to be evacuated from the battlefield to a ship hospital. It took nearly a month for Allen to recover from his wounds. When he returned to his unit they were near Nurenberg, Germany. As the operation continued Allen's unit fought its way through Germany, from Augsburg, near Munich, to Saurlach, Bergesgarden and Neukerchen. Squeezed between the Allied advance from the west and the Russians from the east, Germany finally surrendered on May 7, 1945.

Allen rose to the rank of Staff Sergeant, receiving a number of awards and decorations. But if you ask him, he is simply grateful to have made it home alive. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division suffered devastating losses during the second World War. Nearly 26,000 men were injured, killed, taken prisoner, or listed as missing in action.

If you have a chance please send Allen a card to say thank you for his service and sacrifice. Please send cards to Allen Amick, Inglewood, 405 North 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Mount Horeb, WI 53572

### Let us Never Forget that Freedom is NOT Free

Compiled by Jerry Hook, edited by Lenee Anderson

