

Staff Sgt. Edward Wallace Hughes

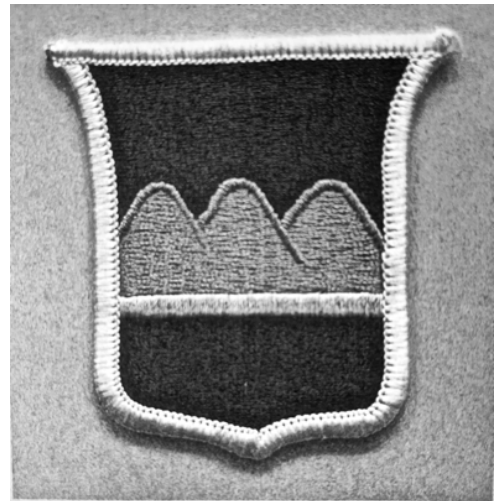
From the Paul Carter in the Orange County Historical Society *Newsletter*.¹

“Staff Sergeant Edward Wallace Hughes, son of Ernest Linwood and Nellie Pendleton Hughes, was born December 5, 1918 in Pennsylvania. He was the fifth child of seven. As a teenager Edward moved with the family to Orange, Virginia where he attended high school. He drove a cab in the Washington, D.C. area and was a cook at the Dining Car Restaurant in Rosslyn, Virginia.

“Edward was drafted into the army at Camp Lee, Virginia on February 11, 1942 and received training at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana and Camp Reynolds, Pennsylvania. Camp Reynolds was a debarkation point for troops going overseas. He married Arlene Davis Baggerly of Front Royal in June 1944 and was a father to Edward, Jr., born in September 1944. His wife and son remained in Front Royal while Edward was overseas.

“He landed at Utah Beach on August 4, 1944 after joining up with the 80th Division 317th Infantry, ‘Blue Ridge Boys,’ under Patton’s Third Army, to help liberate towns throughout France and Luxembourg from German occupation. His division was placed in reserve in Macheren, France where they rehabilitated, reorganized and trained after heavy activity in November when they had advanced 30 miles and taken almost 4,000 prisoners. According to 317th Infantry history, they had sustained 3,101 casualties, cleared Delme Ridge, passed through pillboxes of the old French Maginot Line, and captured the town of Falquemont.

“During this period of rest, Edward and his comrades experienced severe weather conditions as they were about to fight in the Battle of the Bulge. This was the largest and bloodiest single campaign fought by the U.S. in WWII and the second deadliest battle in American history. ‘During the day and evening of December 23, the infantrymen marched through the dense woods between Ettelbruck and the towns of Niederfeulen and Kehmen. Every day was the same: miles of marching, intense cold, swirling fog, mysterious woods, and general confusion,’ one soldier remembered. ‘We stumbled ten to fifteen miles each day with temperatures dropping to twenty below zero.’



Blue Ridge (80th Infantry) Division patch. Photo courtesy of Jackie Howell.

¹ Paul Carter, “Staff Sgt. Edward Wallace Hughes,” Orange County Historical Society *Record*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (Spring 2020), 8.

“On December 24, the 3rd Battalion, which included Edward’s Company K, departed Feulen, Luxembourg, at 0945 by foot and traveled four miles. When they attacked the hill west of Kehmen, they met heavy resistance of mortar, artillery and small arms fire. The enemy was dug into their positions in foxholes. In the bitter cold, they established positions below the west crest of the hill. Staff Sgt. Hughes was killed in combat during this battle 19 days after his 26th birthday. It was Christmas Eve.

News would reach his family via Western Union telegram that Edward was ‘Missing in Action.’ A few months later, in February 1945, he was found and notification was sent to the family that he was ‘Killed in Action.’ In April 1949 Edward’s remains were moved from a Luxembourg cemetery to Arlington National Cemetery. He received the Purple Heart posthumously.”²



Staff Sgt Hughes’ gravestone at Arlington National Cemetery. Photo courtesy of Betsy Rose.

² Betsy Rose, granddaughter of Staff Sgt Hughes collaborated on this story with Mr. Carter.