



THE SIGHTSEER



ALSACE • MEUSE-ARGONNE
NEW GUINEA • LUZON
KOREA • ALASKA

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE 6TH INFANTRY DIVISION, INC.

Featured in this issue:

Cagayan Valley Campaign

PAGE 3



Photo of 6th Infantry troops with wounded soldier in Northern Luzon---
In this issue, Medic **Albert S. Sessler, Jr.**, recalls his experiences in
the Battle for the Cagayan Valley in Northern Luzon – now 69 years ago

“THE SIGHTSEER”

National Association
of the 6th Infantry
Division

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Editor: Thomas Price

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MESSAGES

From the President: Dear Members—

We trust all have survived this past Winter as we are eagerly waiting to see your smiling faces at the next REUNION to be held in Louisville, KY. September 10th - 14th. God Bless and keep you all safe.

Cliffor Kessen, President (Cannon & K Co, 1st Inf)

From the Treasurer, Patricia Kessen—

Dear members—We began the year with \$10,347.11 and our balance as of 10/31/13 was \$11,690.25. Our expenses were \$1,563.73 and our total income was \$2,906.87. As of May 1, 2014, we have \$11,278.56 with all bills paid to date.

Our Membership form can be found on ion page 15.

From Thomas Price-Editor/ Website Historian:

In this issue of the Sightseer we have included another excellent feature story from Albert Sessler, Jr. regarding his recollections of the Campaign in the Cagayan Valley of Northern Luzon.

For renewing members, please send you **member dues and donations** to our Treasurer, Patricia Kessen

Letters, address updates, and TAPS information should be sent to our Secretary, Cathy Wilson

Remember, our website is www.6thinfantry.com. I will be including an online version of the newsletter including the reunion flyers on our web page. Online donations to the organization can be made from the website.

Thomas Price, Editor Website Historian,(son of Robert E. Price, 63^d Inf Co D, L & Hq)

NATIONAL OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES

NATIONAL OFFICERS

Sept. 2013 to Sept. 2014

PRESIDENT

Kessen, Clifford (Cannon & K Co, 1st Inf.)

VICE PRESIDENT

Copinger, Jr., Roger (Co.F, 63rd Inf.)

JR, VICE PRESIDENT

Tim McLogan

SECRETARY

Wilson, Catherine S.,
(Daughter of Andrew Sharpe,
Co H 20th Inf)

TREASURER

Patricia Kessen

CHIEF OF STAFF & HISTORIAN

VACANT

EDITOR AND WEBSITE HISTORIAN

Price, Thomas E., (Son of Robert E. Co L, D, Hq. 63rd Inf.)

CHAPLAIN

McLogan, Russell (Co.K, 63rd. Inf)

SURGEON GENERAL

Groff, Robin (Son of Robert Groff, Co L. 63rd Inf)

SGT.- AT- ARMS

Groff, Kelly (Son of Robert Groff, Co L 63rd Inf.)

TRUSTEE COMMITTEE

TWO-YEAR (2012-14)

Halberg, Virgil E. (HQ/HQ Btry, 80th.FA Bn.)

ONE-YEAR (2012-2013)

DuPriest, Wm. Lee (Co.E, 20th.Inf.)

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

An advisory function to the current president, consisting of active past presidents:

Wessely, Joseph L (Co.K, 63rd Inf.)

Witherel, Murvin J. (1999, E.Co., 20th Inf)



Demolition of a Japanese Pillbox

Using Gasoline/Dynamite Charge -- Northern Luzon -- 1945

CAGAYAN
VALLEY
CAMPAIGN

By **ALBERT L. SESSLER,**
JR.
Co L. 20th Inf.

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While the 20th
Infantry had been in more-or-

less continuous combat from the Lingayen Gulf landing on January 9, 1945, to Munoz, and then against the Shimbu Line, until being assigned to Manila for MP duty, other parts of the invasion force had likewise been fighting their way across Luzon. The defending Japanese were essentially divided into three main forces, one in the west-central part of Luzon, one in the south and one in the north. While the 20th Infantry was part of the force

attacking the Shimbu Line, other parts of the invasion force were moving to retake the Bataan Peninsula and Manila, where organized resistance had ceased by March 4.

Still other U.S. divisions had swung to the north to assault the Japanese around Balete Pass and in the Cagayan Valley. More than 100,000 Japanese troops had essentially been "bottled up"

in northern Luzon. Of course, it was a big “bottle,” and heavy fighting lay ahead before those troops were eliminated as a fighting force.

Around June 1, soon after I moved back to the Battalion Aid Station for my new job, the 3rd Battalion, along with the rest of the 20th Infantry, was relieved from MP duty in Manila, broke camp and headed north to the Cagayan Valley, known as the “breadbasket” of Luzon. The first stop of our trek was at a staging area near San Jose, north of Munoz, a town which held many memories for us of the recent hard-fought battle. The staging area was now an established base, with pyramidal tents for quarters, a theater area and electrical lighting.

Since V-E Day, when the European War ended, a demobilization plan had been put into effect for members of the armed forces who had been in service for the longest time, many since Pearl Harbor and before. The plan gave points for such things as time in service, time overseas, decorations and battle stars. Soon after June 1, two members of the Medical Detachment who had been in service for over four years and overseas for many months, and had several decorations, as well as children back home, for a total of over 104 points, bade us farewell and headed back

to God’s Country and civilian life. Since at the time I had accumulated only 46 points, it looked like a long war for me. Nevertheless, the point system had the whole-hearted approval of low-point individuals like me because first of all it was basically fair, and secondly it showed recognition on the part of the powers-that-be that members of the military should be allowed to return to civilian life after long war-time service.

Shortly before June 10, we moved again. Our regiment was headed north along Highway No. 5, through the Balete Pass, and into the Cagayan Valley. Our trek was long and damp, under threatening skies, through cloud-shrouded mountains. The narrow twisting rough mountain road ran high on the sides of thickly-forested hills. A fine, but very wet mist continuously enveloped us, and at times we passed through thick soggy grey clouds which limited our vision to only a few feet.



Filipino Porters N. Luzon

Where we stopped, near Bambang, the temperature was considerably cooler than

in other places we had been on Luzon, probably due to the elevation and the fact that we were somewhat further north than before. It was comfortably cool in the daytime, and chilly enough at night that a blanket was required. The flies were thick, as they had been in the mountains east of Manila, and the rain was frequent, so that the ground was quickly churned into a muddy near-impassable mess, especially on “roads” where vehicles tried to proceed, creating problems for all types of traffic. Once again, “General Mud,” the ancient enemy of armies on the move, was proving to be a formidable foe.

From the Bambang area, the mission assigned to the 20th Infantry was to secure Highway No. 5, and to eliminate Japanese forces which may have been bypassed during the earlier advance of other American units; in other words, a “mopping-up” operation. During this activity, infantry and artillery worked effectively in cooperation when concentrations of the enemy were spotted, with deadly results for the Japanese. However they were still full of fight and the operation was fraught with danger for our forces.

Around June 10, the 3rd Battalion moved again and its companies were engaged in combat operations west of Bambang. There were casualties, and I was kept

busy helping out and recording the flow of wounded as they were given initial emergency treatment and passed through the Battalion Aid Station to hospitals further in the rear. Probably most of the casualties were gun-shot wounds, with some shrapnel wounds from artillery or mortar fire.

Most of the GI's, although in pain, were stoical about their wounds, or joked about their bad luck, even when the wounds were serious. Some were clearly worried about the seriousness of their injuries, and concerned about what lay ahead. Only a few broke down, and we tried to reduce their concern before they were evacuated. Morphine usually helped, except where it could not be given, as in the case of head wounds.

Combat patrols to locate and destroy remaining Japanese forces went out along the Santa Cruz River, and to Kapaya, further west. The terrain was hilly, with narrow winding valleys, ideal for ambushes, and roads that were mainly rugged cart paths.

The relentless American advance through northern Luzon continued apace and was clearly having an effect on the capability of the Japanese forces to continue fighting, as well as on their morale. For the first time we began to see large numbers of Japanese soldiers

surrendering. Most were poorly equipped and clothed, with tattered uniforms. Many were suffering from malnutrition, malaria and other diseases and injuries, and for the most part seemed quite happy that the war was over for them. Since they were shipped almost immediately to an area further to the rear, we had little or no occasion to treat them for their various ailments.

This was the rainy season in Luzon, and the rugged terrain with steep slopes and heavy runoff aggravated the amount of water with which we had to contend. Ditching around the tents helped to keep us dry, but the constant rainfall on what passed for roads turned them into seas of mud through which vehicles would slip and slide. Winches mounted on the vehicles were sometimes needed to pull a truck or Jeep out of a mud hole into which it had become stuck. In late June we moved again, through the mountains on narrow winding roads, heading generally north to Ilagan. We were based in a broad valley with mountains visible in the distance. This would be our furthest north position in Luzon. Our camp was located "out in the boonies," with only the town of Ilagan nearby.

The Filipinos in the area were friendly, as they had been everywhere during our travels through Luzon. They were always happy to trade

with us for services, such as laundry, and for fresh produce such as eggs, bananas and pineapples, in exchange for candy, cigarettes and other items. I acquired three beautifully woven native hats, which I was able to mail home.



Author with Native Hats

Also every now and then we would buy a live chicken, which I learned to kill, de-feather, clean and cook for a welcome "fresh meat" addition to the usual army fare. Most of the chickens offered for sale were fairly ancient and rather stringy, but to our deprived palates this "home cooking" was delicious.

Our situation and living conditions at Ilagan were quite good. We were quartered in the familiar pyramidal tents, with gasoline lanterns for evening illumination, and enjoyed such amenities as movies three times a week, PX

supplies (candy, toiletries, etc.) and church services.

With no combat casualties coming in, life at the battalion aid station assumed a settled routine. We were set up in a pyramidal tent and had our medical equipment conveniently placed for efficient use. Regular sick call and drop-in trade for treatment for the normal run of bruises, cuts, infections and fevers of "undetermined origin" kept us reasonably busy.

Effective June 30, 1945, control of the 6th Division, together with the 32nd, 37th and 38th Divisions, and various supporting organizations, was transferred from I Corps to XIV Corps. On July 1, 1945, the XIV Corps passed to control of the 8th Army. By now it was clear that the U. S. campaign in the Philippines had been

successful. However General Yamashita still commanded a force of perhaps 25,000 troops, against which we were actively engaged. We could look forward to more hard fighting before enemy resistance on Luzon actually ended.

Of course, overshadowing the ending of such resistance was the realization that a larger and much more dangerous task, namely the invasion of Honshu, the main home island of Japan, still lay before us. We would not be going home until the job was finished.



Medic Administering Plasma to Wounded Soldier – Northern Luzon

Litter Bearers and Wounded



The Author in N. Luzon

TAPS, REST IN PEACE, DEDICATED TO ALL THOSE WHO SERVED IN WAR AND PEACE.



- LaVere Spainhower of Co. B 6th Inf. passed away 12-18-2013 age 90 in Walcott, IA. Reported by wife Docia Spainhower
- Samuel Tron of Div HQ 6th Inf. passed away 1-4-2014 age 94 in Oak Park, MI. He had been awarded The Bronze Star. Reported by daughter Rebecca Tron
- Edward Gast of Co. B 80th FA passed away 4-30-2013 age 93 in Lenexa, KS. Reported by son Mark Gast.
- Leonard Lott of Co. K 1st Inf. passed away 12-18-2013 age 90 in Fredericksburg, TX. Reported by wife Wanda Lott.
- Wayne Graber of Co. H 1st Inf. passed away 9-11-2013. Reported by Carl Gruening, Jr.
- Evelyn Visscher wife of Harold Visscher of Co. H 1st Inf. passed away in 2012. Reported by Carl Gruening, Jr.

DONATIONS

- Thomas Price, Portland, OR

JEEP TRACKS



List of members who have paid their dues since the last issue of the Sightseer. If you wish contact info on other members, contact Secretary Cathy Wilson.

63rd Infantry

Durward D. McAlexander

Vincent Impallomeni

William L. Allen

Milton Aus

Donald A. Emelander

Joseph L. Wessely

Robert E. Papineau

Elsie P. Laub (Glen P.)

Charles R. Keefe

Carol C. Kimbrell

Milvoy Cantor

Charles J. Sagebiel

Phyllis M. Peters (widow)

20th Infantry

Tony P. Ayres

Andrew J. Sharpe

Jarold Kornmann

Jeffrey A. Witherel, LTC
(USAR)

Son of Murven J. Witherel

Sharon Ehlers

Charles H. Boyd

Mary Sparks

.

Mrs. Barbara C.
Bergstrand

1st Infantry

Ronald H. Allor

Ray E. Oliver

Floyd J. Zimmer

Peter J. Flander "Stibe"

Norman W. Ruck

Carl Grueninger

6th Infantry

Hans O. Lettner

James W. Wooley

Theodore F. Maznicki

Roman J. Schneider

Mark Gast wrote:

It is with a heavy heart that I report the passing of my father, Edward Gast, a member of the 80th Field Artillery, 6th Infantry Division, on April 30, 2013 in Shawnee Mission, KS. He was 93 years old, and in great health up to his death.

Dad was proud of the 6th Infantry and kept in contact with his many Army friends over the years. He told many Army stories, my favorite of which was describing how his Battalion fired their guns at point blank range at the Japanese in the Battle of Munoz in February 1945.

Dad's wife (i.e., my mother), Edith L. Gast, still survives but is in poor health in a nursing home.

Please pass this news on to "The Sightseer" magazine, which dad cherished reading over the years.

T.F. Maznicki wrote thanking Cathy Wilson for sending him his membership card

and how important it was to him to receive it. He said that he did his basic training in Camp Croft SC before being sent to the Philippines. When he arrived at Clark Field, Luzon, he was arrested by the MPs and did 30 days behind bars, plus being required to do his training as well as extra duty. Then he wound up in Korea and wound up as the Mess Sgt. He said he was glad he did not opt to reenlist at the end of his duty given that the Korean War was about to begin. Although a proud Yankee from CT, Mr. Maznicki lives in Georgia to be near his daughter after his retirement. His wife passed away 9 years ago.

Doria Spainhower, of Iowa and wife of the late Sgt. Lavere Spainhower wrote that her husband enjoyed receiving the Sightseer and that he served in the 6th Div. Medical Battalion. He passed away in 2012 at the age of 94 and 10 months.

Rebecca Tron of Michigan wrote to notify us of the passing of her father, Samuel Tron who had served with the 6th Infantry HQ Co as Chief Clerk and then as a Master Sgt. He

was awarded the Bronze Star Medal and passed away on January 4, 2014.

Carl E. Grueniger, Jr. wrote to say that he had just turned 88 years old. He and his wife are now living in a retirement home. He recounted receiving Christmas cards from Anna Mae Graber, Harold Visscher, Lilly Wesse, Londa Weller and John Short (son of Lavern and Maxine Short). Anna Mae Graber wrote that her husband Wayne passed away on September 11, 2013. He wrote that he knows of only two members left from his days of combat while serving with Company H.





Filipino porters—Balete Pass--Northern Luzon-- 1945

***Minutes from 6th Infantry Division Meeting on Sep. 7,
2013 at Doubletree Hotel at Crystal City, VA***

Meeting was called to order at 0900 by President Clifford Kesson.

Pledge of Allegiance to Flag.

Prayer offered by Russel McLogan, Chaplain.

Recognition of Board Members:

President: Clifford Kesson, Vice-President: Roger Copinger, Jr. Secretary : Catherine Wilson, Treasurer: Patricia Kesson, Chaplain: Russell McLogan, Surgeon General: Robin Groff, Sargent At Arms: Kelly Groff.

Recognition of 4 past Presidents: Virgil Halberg, Russell McLogan, Roger Copinger, & Clifford Kesson.

Recognition of New Member Fred Hess 6th Infantry, MP Platoon

Reading of Minutes & Old Business-*unavailable-Secretary Wilson was at hospital with her father, Andrew Sharpe, during meeting held September 2012, in Dearborn, MI.*

Taps for Members who have passed.

Treasurer's Report by Treasurer Patricia Kesson, who shared detailed expenditures & Monies in. Also had printed Financial Report & Balance Sheets available for Members to view. Website expenses, and benefits of the website discussed. Incorporation Expense of \$10.00 to State of Oregon briefly explained. Patricia requested updated personal info known by any Member about any group Members so that Secretary Wilson may update mailing lists to avoid unnecessary return mail costs, which are quite expensive.

New Business

Discussion of attaching the 6th to another Active Infantry Reunion Group, due to the fact that ours was deactivated 30 years ago. There was some discussion of preferably attaching to a group who also fought in the Pacific; possibly the 24th Infantry Division. Members plan to investigate more before deciding. Matter tabled for present.

Difficulty locating an available/affordable Speaker for the Banquet on the evening of September 7. Suggestions were offered, and the one agreed upon was that each Member present could speak about their most important experience in Service. Motion by Jo Ann Halberg & seconded by Carol Hopkins. The motion was further affirmed by the Attendees, and that each Speaker would talk from 2-5 minutes.

Election of Officers:

Clifford Kesson was nominated for another term as President by Catherine Wilson, seconded by Lee Dupriest.

Patricia Kesson Volunteered to continue in Treasurer position.

Catherine Wilson was nominated for another term as Secretary by Carol Hopkins, seconded by Clifford Kesson.

Roger Copinger nominated for another term as Vice President, and seconded by Carol Hopkins. Chaplain Russell McLogan, Surgeon General Robin Groff, & Sargent at Arms Kelly Groff were affirmed by the Attendees to continue another term, without exception.

Tim McLogan was Generally Affirmed to fill the empty position of Junior Vice-President, and graciously accepted.

Virgil Halberg and Lee Dupriest agreed to continue as 2 year Trustees at the request , and General Affirmation, of the Attendees.

The Executive Committee of Roger Copinger, Russell McLogan, Virgil Halberg, and Lee Dupriest agreed to continue their positions at the request, and General Affirmation, of the Attendees. The Position of Historian was assumed to be Thomas Price, (unable to attend) due to his continued work on the 6th Website, and the organization, promulgation, and mailing of The Sightseer.

**[Correction by Thomas Price—I am the “Website Historian” and the “Editor.” I am honored to continue in those roles. It should be noted, that other than some old Sightseers, I no longer have possession of the physical artifacts that were in my possession prior to 2012. Those in my possession were sent to the care and custody of Roger Copinger, by approval of the board after the 2012 meeting. Keep in mind, that “Website Historian” is a different position than “Historian.” The last Historian was Milton Galke. I request that a different individual serve as “Historian.” The Historian ought to be a member who is willing to keep and protect the organization’s physical artifacts for the benefit of the organization until a decision can be made on donation to a museum or other suitable repository].

As we are presently unaffiliated with any other Reunion Group, discussion of locales for the 2014 Reunion of the 6th ensued. Louisville, KY was nominated by Lee Dupriest, and New Orleans was nominated by Russell McLogan. There was a motion by Lee Dupriest, seconded by Dora Copinger, for the location to be Louisville, KY for the 2014 Reunion, and New Orleans, LA for the 2015 Reunion. These locations were agreeable with the Attendees.

Discussion then revolved around benefits of Reunion BRAT vs. alternative methods, i.e. Travel Agent. Patricia Kesson will ask Travel Agent she knows who arranges Senior Travel Activities about

the feasibility of their use, and Lee Dupriest planned to check with AAA and report their findings to the Group by November 2013.

The date of the 2014 Reunion was discussed, and it was unanimously agreed upon and affirmed by the Attendees to keep the date the same as at present: the Wednesday immediately after Labor Day through to the following Sunday of that week.

The Closing Prayer was offered by Russell McLogan.

The Meeting was adjourned at 1023 by Clifford Kesson.

Respectfully submitted November 25, 2013 by Catherine Wilson, Secretary.



The Ruptured Duck

Membership Form - Note New Address for Mailing Dues To our New Treasurer Patricia Kessen

PLEASE PRINT
 (CUT THIS FORM OUT) **MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION - RENEWAL**
National Association of the 6th. Infantry Division, Inc.

NAME _____, _____, _____
(LAST) (FIRST) (INITIAL)

ADDRESS _____
(NUMBER & STREET) (BOX NO./ APT.#)

(CITY) (STATE) (ZIP CODE)

(_____) - ____ - ____ E-Mail _____
phone #

Served in : Company/Btry- _____ UNIT _____
REGIMENT, ARTY, MED. ENG, ETC.

DUES
 ONE YEAR----- \$10 ____ WWII ____ KOREA ____ ALASKA ____ RENEWAL ____ NEW ____
 TWO YEARS----- \$20 ____
 THREE YEARS---\$30 ____ DONATION ____ CHANGE OF ADDRESS ____

CHECKS PAYABLE TO: **NATIONAL ASSN. 6TH INF. DIV. INC.**
 & Mail to ----- **9733 STILL MEADOW CT**
UNION, KY 41091-6914

NOTICE:
 There is a new format for dues, after your name, the expiration date is shown as year i.e.: 2011, followed by the month in two digits. Jan= 01, Dec=12 No more guessing- it's plain,

YOU WILL NOT BE SENT ANY OTHER NOTICE THAN THIS NEWS LETTER, MARK YOUR CALENDARS PLEASE, OR PAY AHEAD-THAT'S FINE.

Please use the form, it makes life easier for your Sect/Treas. ; use it for Jeep Tracks listing, Thanks- Editor

