



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:

VICTORY AT LAST!

PAGE 3



Nearing the end of the War, 6th Infantry troops battle the mud

Northern Luzon -- 1945

“THE SIGHTSEER”

National Association
of the 6th Infantry
Division

Vol. #39-1, Spring 2014

Editor: Thomas Price

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MESSAGES

From the President: Dear Members—
It is getting close to another issue of the Sightseer. As the Thanksgiving Dinners will all be over I trust all had an enjoyable time with friends and family. It is also a bit late but I want to extend a hearty and much deserved THANK YOU to all Veterans from the past and to those men and women now serving in the Armed Forces today throughout the world.

The Reunion held this past September in Louisville, KY. was a success, we did however miss the folks who were unable to join us. Again a great big HUG for our own Russ Mc Logan who was the mastermind. As it was taken into consideration the REUNION for 2015 be held in New Orleans, LA., additional information will be forthcoming. Until we meet again I would like to extend a healthy and bountiful life for the upcoming Holiday Season to one and all.

Clifford Kessen, President (Cannon & K Co, 1st Inf

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 end of the War in Northern Luzon.

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

9733 Still Meadow Court, Union, KY 41091-6914

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

349 Happy Hollow Circle Suches, GA 30572

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, 63rd Inf Co D, L & Hq)

NATIONAL OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES

NATIONAL OFFICERS

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

VICE PRESIDENT

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

JR. VICE PRESIDENT

[VACANT]

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 (2014-16)

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

ONE-YEAR (2014-2015)

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.)



Demolished Japanese Artillery Piece-- Northern Luzon -- 1945

Victory at Last!

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

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In late July, 1945, the 20th Infantry moved from the Ilagan area of northern Luzon to the town of Bagabag in north central Luzon. Upon arrival, we set to work establishing our camp, erecting tents, building racks for our barracks bags and trenching around our tents for drainage and to keep the floors dry. The summer rains were still

with us, so we hastened to get our lodgings in shape. As we became established, amenities began to appear, and we soon had motion pictures again. Before long, wiring to the tents was completed, and we enjoyed electric lights in the evening.

There were extensive thickets of bamboo in the area, and we used this versatile material for a number of different construction purposes. We built frames for the sides of the tents and raised the center poles, which greatly improved ventilation and helped to minimize the summer heat. Bamboo racks held our clothing and other possessions on a platform erected on top of the mosquito bar poles that

held the netting that we closed about us in our cots every night.

With these improvements, the camp began to take on an aspect of relative permanence, suitable as a base for training for future campaigns. Japanese resistance in northern Luzon was weakening noticeably, and our leaders were making preparations for the next big offensive. This would be the biggest, most difficult and most challenging of all, the invasion of the Japanese homeland.

According to disclosures made after the war, plans were in place for the "Olympic" operation, an invasion of the southernmost Japanese home island of

Kyushu, to commence in November 1945, in which we would not participate. This would be followed by the "Coronet" operation, a massive assault on the main island of Honshu, in March 1946. The 6th Division had been selected to be a part of "Coronet."

Given the fanatical resistance of the Japanese which we had experienced thus far in the war, the total mobilization of the civilian population, the increasing use of "Kamikazi" suicide pilots, and the advantage to the Japanese of fighting on their own terrain, this would almost certainly have been a horrific blood bath, with extremely heavy casualties on both sides.

As I continued my duties at the battalion aid station, I found that I was experiencing problems with my vision. Accordingly I arranged for testing of my eyes. I had worn glasses before joining the army, because of fairly severe astigmatism, but had largely done without them since entering service.

In the army on Luzon, getting tested for glasses, like most things, was not simple. Around the first of August, after obtaining the necessary permission, I headed to a medical clearing company. From there I was flown by C-47 to the 7th Evacuation Hospital, where the testing was done. The C-47 was the military version of the twin-engine Douglas DC-3, a sturdy reliable transport plane that

revolutionized air travel in the United States in the 1930s. It was certainly one of the most famous and most highly praised American aircraft of World War II. Many thousands were produced, and many of them remained in some type of civilian service for many years following the war.

The plane ride from the clearing station to the hospital was my first and only on Luzon. I enjoyed it, even though this particular C-47 had obviously seen a lot of rough use. The crew members were in nondescript uniforms, performing in a casual but professional manner. As I recall, there was no door for the passenger area, which made for a deafeningly loud and windy time in the air. Still it was fascinating to see Luzon from above, with the native dwellings and rice fields diminished to toy-like dimensions, and the streams appearing as gleaming silver threads winding their serpentine ways through the mountainous surface. It was difficult to compare the long foot-marches we had made on occasion with the miniature landscape passing below us.

Testing of my eyes was completed after a few days. Glasses were to be made and sent to me. No airplane flight was available for my return to my unit, so I made my way back by surface transportation, usually hitch-hiking in the back of one of the army's ubiquitous two and one half

ton trucks. On my way back to the 3rd Battalion, I heard reports that our Air Force had dropped a new type of bomb on Japan that caused destruction on a scale hitherto unheard of.

I arrived back at my unit on August 9. Big news was coming in about the dropping of a first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, followed by the dropping of a second atomic bomb on Nagasaki on August 9, resulting in the virtual destruction of both cities. In addition, we heard that Russia had entered the war against Japan. These developments gave us all a great feeling of jubilation, and an optimistic belief that the war was finally drawing to a close.

In the meantime, however, the shooting continued. Between August 9 and August 14, the 3rd Battalion moved out of our garrison-like quarters in Bagabag and up into the mountains around Kiangang, which earlier had been Japanese army headquarters for their forces in northern Luzon, commanded by General Yamashita.

The area around Kiangang was mountainous, and torn up by previous heavy fighting. Demolished Japanese artillery and other equipment provided mute evidence of battle. The heavy rains had turned roads and trails into seas of mud, making movement of men and vehicles a real challenge. We erected a

pyramidal tent for the aid station and hauled in gravel to provide a floor of sorts and to keep the ever-present mud at bay.

In the aid station, we slept on litters supported above the gravel and were sheltered from the constant rain by the tent. The infantry GIs around us were not so fortunate, and were back to living in combat conditions. Casualties were relatively light as we slowly tightened the noose around General Yamashita's forces, but this was little consolation to those who were killed or wounded at this late stage of the war.

The aid station was set up in a small native village, inhabited by Igorot tribesmen, who were quite different in physical characteristics from the Filipinos in southern and central Luzon, in terms of stature and general appearance. Their villages were generally primitive compared to the towns and cities further south, somewhat resembling the villages we had seen in New Guinea. They welcomed the arrival of the American GIs and were eager to engage in trade for our cigarettes, candy and other items. I acquired a native machete, which was crude in design, but effective for cutting vegetation or as a weapon.

Rumors were constant in the days before August 15 concerning cease fires and cessation of hostilities. We heard about the Allies' demand of unconditional

surrender, the Japanese insistence that they be allowed to keep their emperor, and the final agreement of the Allies to this. A cease-fire was declared on August 15, and the war was finally at long last over.

That night erupted into a continuous thunder of all types of weapons being fired into the air, with flares and tracers illuminating the sky and the surrounding mountains. It was like an American Fourth of July celebration, in the darkened skies high over the island of Luzon.

No one wanted to be the last American to die in World War II, so there was an effort to exercise caution. Inevitably there were the stories, not substantiated, of someone being killed after the cease fire by stepping on a mine or being felled by "friendly fire."

Japanese soldiers continued to come into our lines. For the most part, they were in miserable condition, showing the effects of lack of food, equipment and proper medical treatment.

By August 22, we were back at our base camp at Bagabag, and appreciating the relative comforts there after the primitive conditions we had experienced during our stay in the Kiangnan area. We returned to the routine we had become accustomed to before our mission to Kiangnan. Our morale was lifted by the knowledge that the war was finally over and that we should be returning

to the USA before too long. A number of our fellow soldiers with longer time in service, and those with children, were leaving the organization now, as the required point count decreased from month to month.

Japan officially surrendered to the Allied Powers on September 2, 1945 (also known as V-J Day) aboard the US battleship Missouri, anchored in Tokyo Bay. As General of the Army Douglas MacArthur presided over the surrender ceremony, hundreds of US warplanes flew overhead in an awesome display of American power.

General Yamashita formally surrendered his forces on September 3, 1945, at Baguio. He would eventually be tried, found guilty of war crimes, and would be executed in 1946.

The end of the war also marked the return of a more "GI" attitude on the part of those in command. On September 1, we had an inspection of rifles and equipment, which my US carbine M1 .30 caliber and I fortunately passed without demerits. Parades also became a feature of this "peace-time" army.

Another result of the end of the war came on September 5, when censoring of the mail was halted. I could now seal the envelopes of letters sent to my parents, relatives and friends, though we were asked not to discuss plans for our future movements into possible "army of

occupation” locations. However I was free to tell my parents all about the location of our camp near Bagabag in north central Luzon. The war might be over, but we were still in the army, and the army had a huge job to do, providing occupation

forces for the far-flung former Japanese empire, disarming the Japanese military, and maintaining order in the civilian population. The 20th Infantry would have a part in all of this. The big questions for us were “Where are we

going and when do we leave?”

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Medics and Water Buffalo Luzon -- 1945





- Andrew J. Sharpe Co. H 20th Inf. Passed away 6-8-14 in Lake City, FL. Funeral Services and Internment were in Mims, FL 6-12-14. Reported by daughter Cathy Wilson.

- Verna Rein, widow of Jerome Rein Passed away 10-23-14 in Shakopee, MN. Interred at Ft. Snelling National Cemetery 10-28-14. Reported by Cathy Wilson.

- John B. Mason Jr. HQ Co. 6th Inf. Reported by son J. Thomas Mason

- Jarold Hans Kornmenn I Co. 20th Inf.

- Thomas Price, Portland, OR
- David Fairbanks, Gwinn, MI

Passed away 5-18-14 in Highland, IN.
Reported by daughter Gayle L. Manassa

- Rae C. Gambini HQ 1st Btn. 63rd Inf. Passed away 3-24-14 in Santa Rosa, CA. Reported by son Arthur L. Gambini.

- James L. Junkins Passed away 2-7-14. Reported by Son John Junkins

- M. Sgt. Floyd Buffington. 80th FA reported by Paul D. Robbins

- Cliff Kessen, Union, KY.



List of members who have paid their dues since the last issue of the Sightseer.

63rd Infantry

Col. Ernest Samusson Jr.
USA, Ret.
HQ Co.

Russell McLogan
Co. K

Gerald E. Davidson
Co. F

Robert B. Klenk
Co. F

Fred Ottoboni Jr.
HQ Co. 3rd Btn.

Richard A. Gardner
HQ Co. 1st Btn.

Hugh Givens
Son of James H. Givens
Co. K

Charles Comfort
Co. A

Robert Ford

David N. Fairbanks
HQ Co. 2nd Btn.

20th Infantry

Robert Quincœl
Co. F

Joseph Gorski Jr.
Co. D

William Dupriest
Co. E

Edwin J. Branam
Co. G

Robert S. Horner
Svc. Co.

Russell H. Meyer, Sr.
Svc. & HQ Co.

A.E. Hockemeir
HQ Co. 3rd Btn.

John R. Wiorek
Co. A

1st Infantry

Paul D. Weeks
Co. C FA

Harold L. Botts
Co. M

George Londy
Co. M

Albert J. Dunn
HQ Co. 1st Btn.

Paul D. Weeks
Co. C FA

Alan J. Switzer

Miscellaneous

Robert S. Horner
Serv. Co.

Robert H. Mountain
Co. K/Inf. Rgt.

Harold R. Fonda
HQ/Band

Leland R. Johnston
Co. A 80th FA

Paula McGirt
6th Div. Co. G

Hobart Hall
Co. B 51st Artillery

Ann P. Mason
(widow of John B. Mason Sr.)
HQ 6th Inf.

Eva R. Hardin
Co. M

Roger L. Laatz

Keota, IA 52248
2nd Btn A/T

Norman W. Ruck
Co. C

Carl Grueninger
Co. H

Kelly Groff wrote:

Tom, thanks for your work on the Sightseer...we missed you in Louisville.

Cliff, thank you for the well wishes and the mention of all the work Russ did to make the reunion a success.

Cathy, thank you for the "cyber" hug for my mom. She finishes radiation & chemo on December 2, and has gotten some relief from the constant pain. Though there are other side effects she is dealing with, I'm thankful that she is doing as well as she is.

Ro everyone associated with the 6th Infantry Division, the Groff family wishes you all a Happy Thanksgiving & very Merry Christmas.

We Love You All,
Kelly Groff.

Former Cpl Paul D. Robbins of Oskaloosa, IA wrote:

I was looking at the last Sightseer and decided to drop my two cents worth to you. I especially got a chuckle out of the item about the SS Slauderdyke. He mentioned hard boiled eggs, but forgot to mention the sauerkraut that went with them. We had them for 14 days and then we hit a storm a little short of New Guinea. There was no room at the rail. I went into the Army February 14, 1941 at Ft. Des Moines. I arrive at Ft. Frances E. Warren at Cheyenne, WY. I was put in D. Co. 20th Inf. A short time later, I was put in HQ. Co 20th Inf. In August of 1943 I started driving for Col. George L. Ramsey who was Reg. Com. I drove for him through desert maneuvers in CA. While we were in Camp San Luis Obispo he was promoted to Div. Chief of Staff and took me along as his driver. While we were in Hawaii he didn't pass his physical for combat. The new Chief of Staff, Col. Bruce Palmer Jr kept me as driver and I held that until I came home at the War's end. Col. Palmer went to Korea with the Division and during Vietnam he was Lt. Gen. 2nd In Command. I was in the Army 4 years and 9 months. Three years and 5 months with Col Ramsey and Col Palmer. Col. Palmer was at some unit at the front almost every day. One time he was there when Gen Patrick got shot. I was standing to his left between him and Col. Palmer. A short machine gun burst hit Gen.

Patrick and the regiment commander standing to his right. They both died from it, but Col Palmer and I did not get a scratch. We had a member of the 80th Field Artillery pass away last year. It was M. Sgt. Floyd Buffington. This isn't much, but the memories aren't as good as they were 70 years ago. Keep up the good work and good luck to all.

Wendell Forgaard of the 1st. Infantry Reg. 6th Inf. Found the photo of the 6th Infantry in a magazine.

It is included in this Sightseer. Thanks for sending it, Wendell!

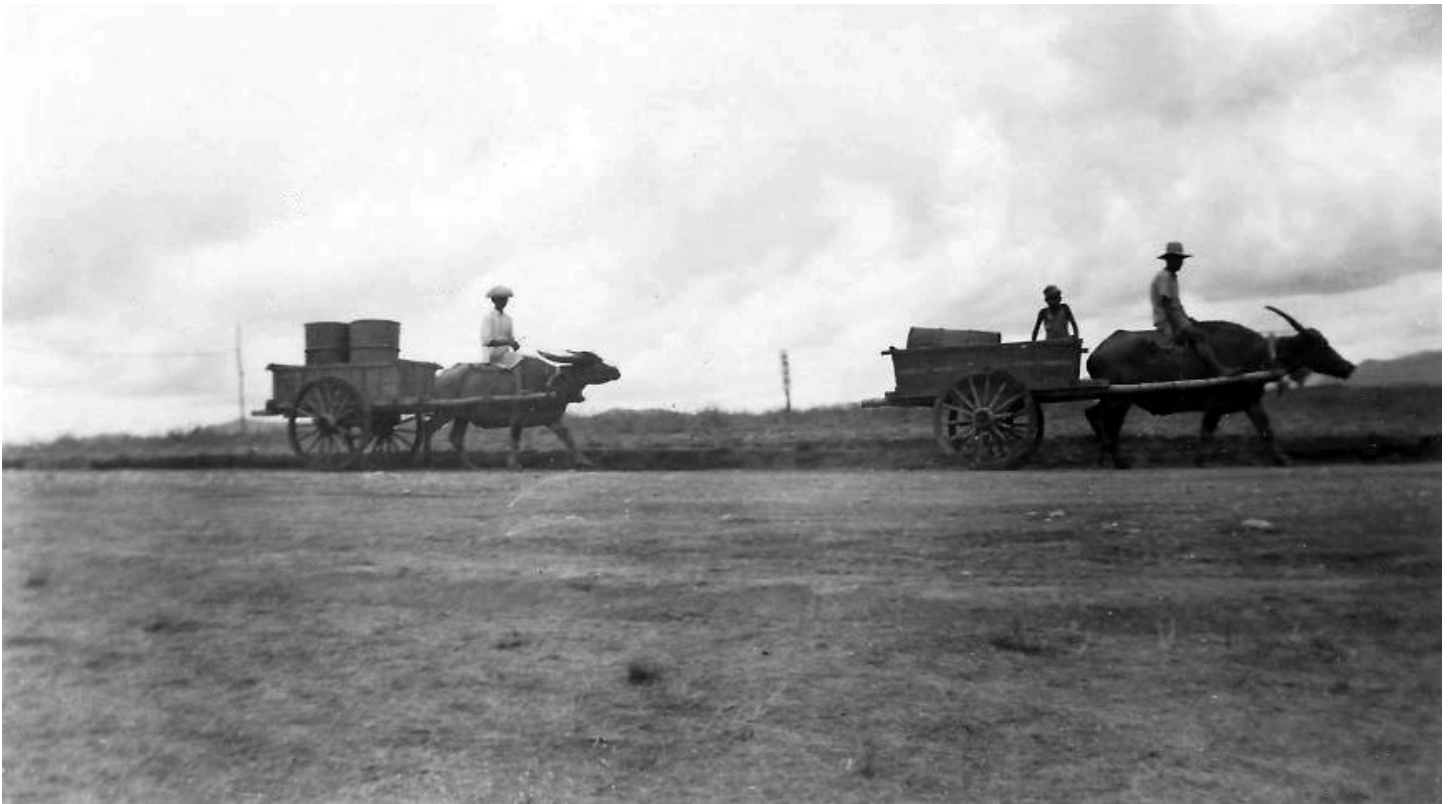
Bill Shebetka from Cedar Rapids IA sent his greeting to everyone. He and his wife, Eula were active members in the association for years. He noted that he had not attended for years, at first due to his wife's health problems and eventually her passing away. Since then he has lost all interest in traveling. But he wanted everyone to know that he has many fond memories of the enjoyable times they both had at the National Reunions. He wrote, that he has always felt very honored to have served as the Associations Chaplain for many years and for the honor of serving as President in Topeka Kansas in 1984. He said that despite hearing loss and arthritis, he feels pretty well for a 90 year old. He still lives in his own

home and still driving. He noticed the TAPS list getting longer which caused him to wonder how many more years the Reunions might be possible. He sent his best regards to everyone.

To all members from **Thomas Price**. Thank you for all your support over the last years. I want everyone

to be aware that I am now making sure that a web version (without contact information) is being posted on the internet. If you are able to receive and read the Sightseer on the web, please do so at www.6thinfantry.com Next, please pay close attention to your expiration date. We are very liberal with sending out Sightseers to members who

are late, but that is not fair to those who pay their dues. So be sure to pay your dues, your comrades will appreciate it. Have a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and Happy New Year to everyone!



Transport by Water Buffalo -- Luzon -- 1945



**MINUTES OF NATIONAL 6TH INFANTRY DIVISION ANNUAL MEETING SATURDAY, September
13, 2014
Louisville, Kentucky**

Meeting called to order at 0900 by President Clifford Kessen who then led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Opening prayer was offered by Chaplain Russell McLogan.

Roll Call of Officers and Recognition of Presidents. President Clifford Kessen, Vice President Roger Copinger, Jr. Vice President Tim Mc Logan, Secretary Cathy Wilson, Treasurer Patricia Kessen, Chaplain Russell McLogan, Surgeon General Robin Groff, Sargent at Arms Kelly Groff. Presidents in attendance were Russell McLogan (past), Roger Copinger (past), & Clifford Kessen (current).

Minutes were read by Secretary Wilson. She added the clarification to the Minutes requested by Tom Price that he is not the 6th's Historian, but the Editor of The Sightseer and that he also maintains the website for the 6th Division. The office of Historian was thus clarified as being unoccupied, at present. Minutes were nominated for approval by Roger Copinger, & seconded by Carol Hopkins.

Treasurer Kessen presented the current financial status of the organization, & noted that our Membership is beginning to decline, but that a few substantial donations have been helpful. She presented detailed information for the group, & provided 2 notebooks of current financial documents for review.

She requested again this year that Members who know of other Members who have passed away or relocated their residence or changed their mailing address to notify her or Secretary Wilson so that the mailing list can be updated, to hold down costs. She also mentioned that, while many Members who are housebound or in Care Facilities enjoy reading The Sightseer, costs for promulgation & mailing could be held down if more Members, who could, were willing to read The Sightseer online. The other cost cutting measure she suggested would be to eliminate duplicate mailings to identical addresses. Motion for approval of Treasurer's Report made by Russell McLogan & seconded by Kelly Groff.

TAPS with minute of silence in remembrance of Members who have passed. The importance of as widespread notification as possible of the passing of Members was discussed. The immediate group present agreed to share email addresses and telephone numbers to facilitate contact, and a written list was obtained by Secretary Wilson.

Committees: No new business.

New Member Roger Laatz of 6th Division Co. K was recognized & welcomed.

Unfinished business:

Russell McLogan presented individual copies of communication he had with Alaska Military Veterans organization as a group with which the 6th might attach itself. Discussion among the group indicated ambivalence with becoming part of that group. Roger Copinger said there is a group of Army Divisions he has had some email contact with, & he will check the list of available divisions to which the 6th might be better suited. Leroy Hopkins mentioned the 7th & 23rd Divisions, who were also in the South Pacific. Further action was tabled at this time until Roger is able to locate more information. He will communicate via email, with Mbrs present today, his findings. Motion to accept this action was made by Carol Hopkins & seconded by Robin Groff.

It was decided, by General Acclamation of the Group, to pursue emailing of The Sightseer, wherever possible (some have no computer access or email address).

Also, by Acclamation, a request was made to determine the number of current dues-paying Mbrs. Secretary Wilson agreed to provide that information via email.

The Annual Reunion for 2015, decided at the 2013 Business Meeting, to be held in New Orleans, is on hold until a determination is made whether to attach to another unit. Motion was made by Fred Hess & seconded by Carol Hopkins.

Election of Officers: Fred Hess moved that same slate of officers be kept in place. All Officers agreed to continue in their same position. The motion was acclaimed by all those present to continue, unchanged.

Discussion of location of artifacts & photographs-most remain unknown. Roger Copinger received a box of belongings of the 6th Division from the Holiday Inn the Reunion was held at in Indianapolis several years ago, earlier this year. It included two of our big banners, some flags, signs, & a cassette recorder/player. President Kessen will contact Tom Price to determine if he knows the location of any of the other artifacts.

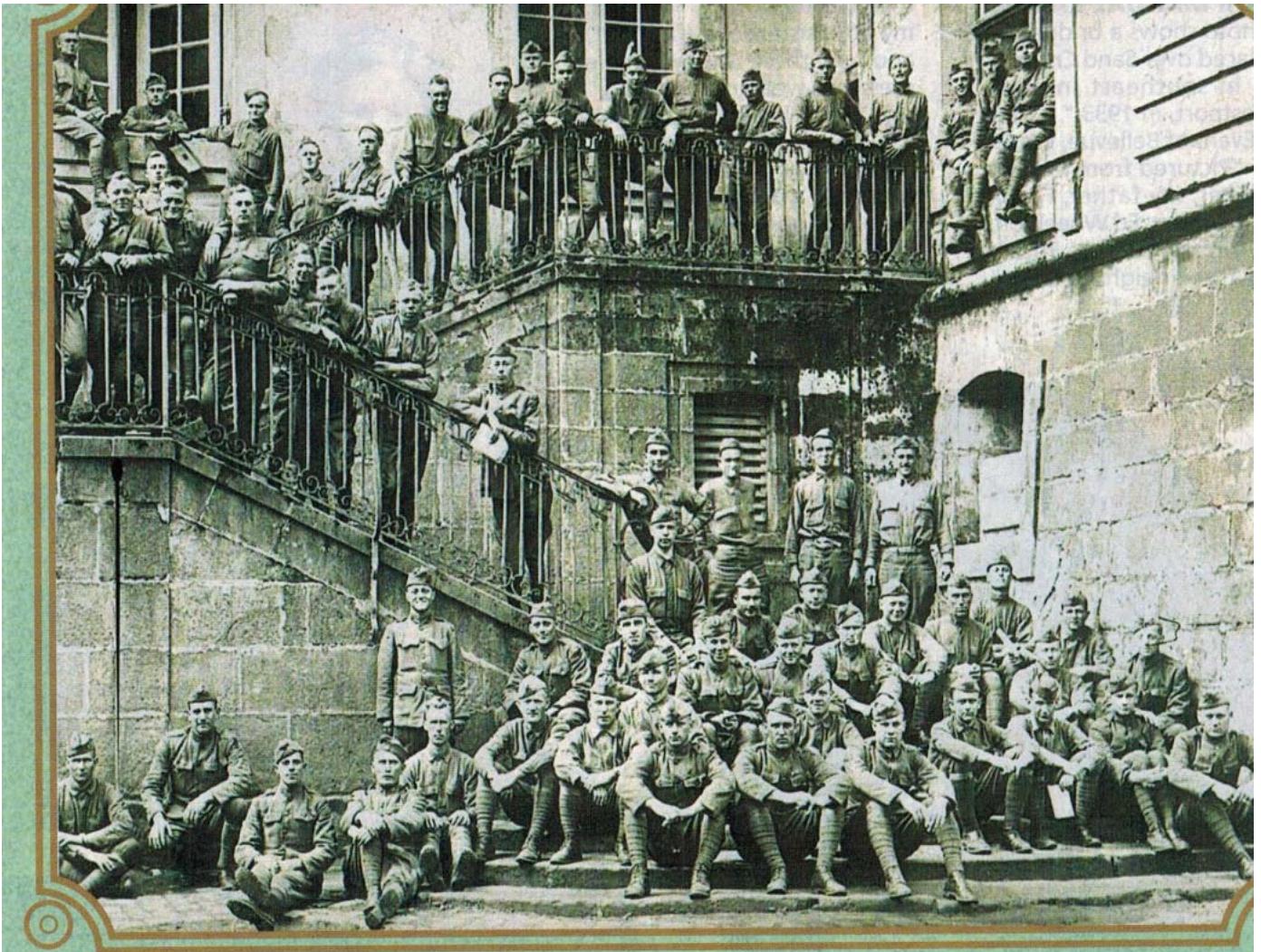
The meeting was adjourned by President Kessen at 1053. Closing prayer was offered by Chaplain McLogan.

Respectfully submitted,

Cathy Wilson, Secretary



Army vehicles on the move in Northern Luzon –
1945



FAMILY TREASURE DISCOVERED. "We were excited to discover this photograph 20 years after my father-in-law, Nicholas Benvenuto, passed away," writes Rose Benvenuto of Fort Myers, Florida. "It shows his infantry group in World War I at the Meuse-Argonne in

France, probably in 1918. We made a box frame as special gift to my husband, Gene, containing his dad's discharge papers and medals and other keepsakes. Nicholas is the third soldier from the left in the first row, sitting on the ground. This was the 6th Infantry.

Rare photo of members of the 6th Infantry Division
at the Meuse-Argonne in France about 1918





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

