

Seventeen men of Service Company, 275th Infantry met in Chicago, Illinois in August of 1962 for the purpose of organizing an association for former members of this company. These men were Eugene J. Petersen, Clinton F. Kruse, James Kyle, Harold Meeks, Lambert Hofstra, George Spark, Thomas J. Olson, John Kubicka, Yale Rodkin, Nick Markionni, Clarence Behee, R.C. Klemetsmo, L.W. Arnold, Floyd F. Buresh, Raymond D. Cox, Harold P. Miller and Charles M. Zimmer. During this meeting the first reunion (Salem, Oregon 1964) was scheduled and Eugene Petersen was elected president.

During the period before the reunion, many veterans of the 70th contacted these men requesting that a Division Association be started. Requests were so numerous that the reunion was open to all members of the Division. It was at this reunion that the Association, as it is known today, was formed. Gus Comuntzis was appointed chairman and the "Trailblazer" was established as the medium of communication for its members.

By Christmas of 1965, the Association had 155 members. Members were asked to furnish names and addresses of former Trailblazers with whom they had contact. The then Secretary- Treasurer, Dwight Snell, would then contact these former Trailblazers. Through the tireless efforts of Mr. Snell and a host of others, the membership grew to 250 members by the time of the second reunion (St. Louis, Missouri 1966). With the election of new officers, the search for new members continued unabated. By the time of the 1968 reunion in Denver, Colorado, membership was nearly 400. Attendance at the 1970 reunion in Reno, Nevada was disappointing. A resolution relating to the Vietnam War was adopted by our Association and sent to the President of the United States for inclusion in the Congressional Record of the Senate of the United States. It was presented by the Hon. Jennings Randolph of West Virginia and entered into the records July 23, 1970.

The Association continued to grow thanks to the tireless efforts of its many members. But as time marched forward, the ranks of the Trailblazers lost a notable veteran. General John E. Dahlquist, the first commander of the 70th Infantry Division, died June 30, 1975 and was buried in Arlington Cemetery.

1976, the year of the bicentennial, saw the reunion held in Toledo, Ohio. This was a notable reunion. Attending were three veterans of the German Sixth Mountain Division which had faced the 70th in the Saar valley some 32 years ago. The three, Kurt Schellenberg, Wilhelm Gottenstrotter and Erich Mayer, became associate members and have occasionally attended reunions since that time.

In September 1977 a group of 94 Association members and their wives made a "Return to Europe" trip planned through Galaxy Tours with the help of Floyd Freeman and Ted Metaxis. This tour, the second of its kind, lasted seven days (Sept. 21-28) and covered a 1000 miles of the area where the 70th fought.

The St. Louis reunion of 1978 saw double the number of expected attendees. It was also the first time the Association made a profit from the highly successful reunion. Lexington, Kentucky was selected as the site of the 1980 reunion.

June 4, 1979, Lt. General Thomas W. Herren (Commander, Task Force Herren), Colonel Wallace R.

Cheves, and Fred Cassidy, representing our Association, placed a plaque in the trophy room at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier signifying our honoring of all unknown soldiers. 1980 quickly came and another successful reunion was held in Lexington, Kentucky. Officers were elected and the quest for new members proceeded unabated. The April 1981 edition of the Trailblazer reported that the Association was rapidly approaching 1,000 members. It was also announced that the 1982 reunion would be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Frank Moran, the editor of the magazine at that time, was forced to step down as editor. And who took over? Edmund Arnold, the Trailblazer's first editor back in 1943. Ed continues his editorial duties as of this date and puts out a great magazine in a timely manner.

By the time of the reunion in 1982, paid membership stood at 1,145. Orville Ellis and his officers were primarily responsible for this amazing growth in membership. Lifetime memberships were offered for the first time in 1983 and the site for the 1984 reunion was to be Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. On June 10, 1984 the 70th Infantry Division was honored by a 40th birthday celebration at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. This marked the 40th anniversary of the 70th's stay at the Fort. It was here that the Division was located before shipping out to Europe in December 1944. The 1984 reunion in Philadelphia set another record in attendance. Membership also set a record with 1,375, which made the association one of the largest military associations in the country.

In 1986 the reunion was held in Portland, Oregon. Side tours were conducted to Corvallis and Camp Adair, the camp where the division was formed in 1943. It was announced that lifetime memberships stood at 200. The 1988 reunion was held in Nashville, Tennessee. Attendance reached a high point with 1,011 present for the final night's banquet. It was announced that the history book of the 70th would be out by the beginning of 1989. Because of the increasing size in attendance, it was also announced that reunion sites would have to be limited to locations that could handle 1,000 plus crowds. With that in mind, Las Vegas, Nevada was selected as the site of the 1990 reunion. By the beginning of 1989, lifetime memberships stood at 355 and total membership had risen to 1,600. The year also saw a profusion of mini-reunions. It was noted that our quarterly Trailblazer publication, which contained eight pages at the time Ed Arnold took over as editor in 1982, had grown gradually to twelve, then 16, then 24, and now to its present size of 32 pages. This not only speaks highly of the growth of our organization but of the many additional hours devoted to this fine publication. Attendance for the Las Vegas reunion broke the records. 1,115 were present. Membership in the association stood at 1,905. The 2,000 mark was not far off. It was at this reunion that a memorial was discussed, which would honor both our Division's participation in World War II and those killed and wounded. Most were in favor but the location of such a monument was hotly debated.

The 1992 reunion was held in Louisville, Kentucky. It was reported that membership exceeded 2,000 and lifetime memberships totaled 600. St. Louis, Missouri was to be the site of the 1994 reunion. 1993 was a busy year for the Trailblazers. A memorial plaque was dedicated on the Wall of Honor at Fort Leonard Wood. July saw the 50th anniversary commemoration celebration held at 70th Training Division headquarters. In August, a memorial plaque was put in place at Camp Adair. This plaque stands in a small park and picnic area maintained by the E.E. Wilson Wildlife facility in the vicinity of the old 70th Division headquarters building.

The 1994 reunion was held in St. Louis and side trips were arranged to Fort Leonard Wood. The trip included lunch at the Fort and a tour of the installation. Membership stood at 1,923, with the addition of 400 associate and honorary members. The site for the 1996 reunion was to be Orlando, Florida.

In May 1995, during the 50th Anniversary of the end of World War 2 in Europe, the memorial at Spicheren Heights was dedicated. With the help of the French Government and Charles Kelly, the monument was erected. More than 100 Trailblazers and their families and 1,000 plus French citizens were on hand for the emotional dedication. At this time the total Association membership, including active, inactive, associate and honorary, exceeds 2,300. Of these 729 are Life Members. The Association is deeply appreciative of the many individual members as well as the dozens of officers who have dedicated countless hours to locating former Trailblazers, writing personal articles, erecting plaques, planning and conducting reunions and generally contributing to the perpetuation of the memory of the 70th Infantry Division. THANK YOU!