

Engineers of 1142nd kept Allies advancing against Nazis



BATTLES, CAMPAIGNS: Rhineland, Central Europe

MEDALS, SPECIAL AWARDS: Service medal with two Bronze Service Stars; Good Conduct medal; World War II Victory medal.

RECOLLECTIONS OF ACTIONS, ANECDOTES, ETC.:

Born and reared on a family farm in southern Alamance County, Pugh graduated from Eli Whitney High School. After entering the U.S. Army, he received basic training while stationed at Camp Crowder, Mo., and was assigned to the 1142nd Engineer Combat Group.

During the winter of 1944, the group maneuvered in Tennessee, which included two crossings of the Cumberland River, one being very difficult under flood conditions. From June until mid-August 1944, the 1142nd Engineer Combat Group was stationed at Camp Campbell, Ky., actively engaged in training two engineer combat battalions and completing its preparation for overseas movement.

The 1142nd sailed from Boston

near the end of August and landed in Liverpool, England, a nine-day Atlantic crossing. Immediately after debarkation, the unit moved by rail to Bournemouth, England, arriving there the next day. The group was temporarily attached to the Ninth U.S. Army. Within two weeks the 1142nd sailed from Weymouth, England, and landed in France at Omaha Beach and was assigned to the First U.S. Army. The unit went on to Les Pieux, France, where staging operations took place.

A month later the 1142nd moved by motor convoy into Belgium where it joined the XIX Corps. Then they went on to Holland assuming responsibility for maintenance of the Corps supply routes in operations against the Siegfried Line in the "Seige of Aachen". This assignment consisted of road maintenance and bridge construction.

From October until year-end, the 1142nd operated in the Ninth U.S. Army doing engineering work. It was the First and the Ninth U.S. Armies, which were on the northern flank of the battle



Photo submitted

Ben Pugh during his Army years.

NAME: Ben Leighton Pugh

PLACE OF BIRTH: Snow Camp

DATE OF BIRTH: April 6, 1917

BRANCH OF SERVICE: U.S. Army

SERVICE DATES: October 1943 to January 1946

HIGHEST RANK: Technician 5th Grade

UNIT, DIVISION, ETC.: HQ Company 1142nd Engineer Combat Group

LOCATION OF SERVICE: Camp Crowder, Mo.; Tennessee maneuvers; Camp Campbell, Ky.; European theater of operations.

ALLIES AGAINST

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front, that stretched across the face of Europe. The Third Army was in the center, the Seventh in the south.

One of Hitler's last desperate attempts was the infamous Battle of the Bulge, in which the 1142nd narrowly missed participating in during the rugged winter of 1944 in the Ardennes Mountain region of Belgium. His goal was to cut off the First and Ninth Armies from the rest of the Allied Forces and capture Antwerp, a major seaport. Pugh's unit was relocated to the Aachen area replacing infantry and armor units which were moved into the Battle of the Bulge.

Throughout January 1945, the 1142nd continued to operate in the area

of responsibility to which it was assigned. The group's combat efficiency was rated as excellent. The strength of the unit was 67 enlisted and 16 officers. Because of the strong bonds formed during their war time experiences, the group has had yearly reunions. This is a highlight of Pugh's life, to once again see those with whom he experienced things that only they can talk about together and with such lasting memories. They, and many others, are truly a part of what has been called "The Greatest Generation."

He returned home to North Carolina in 1946 and resumed his work in the hosiery industry. With his superb business acumen and excellent math skills, he went into business for himself, first as part owner of a hosiery mill, later as a middle man in clothing, buying and selling. Long since retired and at age 92, he now resides in assisted living at Burlington Manor.