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Extract

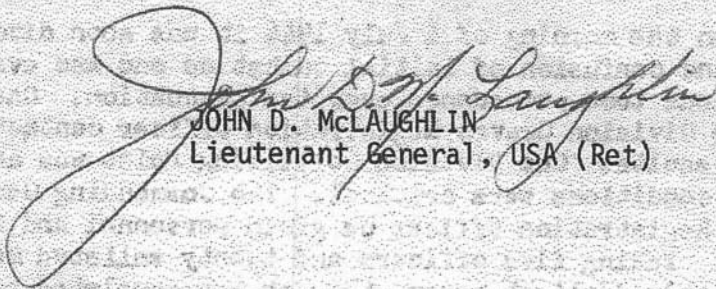
Quartermaster History, 83d Infantry Division, World War II
(covering period 20 April 1944 to 9 May 1945)

History Prepared by

Lt. Colonel (later Lt. General) John D. McLaughlin, USA

This extract covers the Graves Registration Service history of the 83d Infantry Division during the period mentioned above and covers England, France, Luxembourg and Germany. A total of 270 days contact with the Enemy was involved.

During the period covered by this history, the 83d Infantry Division evacuated 3,129 American and 2,322 German dead.


JOHN D. McLAUGHLIN
Lieutenant General, USA (Ret)

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QUARTERMASTER HISTORY - 83d INFANTRY DIVISION

PART THREE: GRAVES REGISTRATION SERVICE

SECTION I: NORMANDY

The Division, in its first combat mission, occupied a defensive line southwest of Carentan 28 June to 3 July 1944. During this period only fifteen men were killed and each was evacuated direct to the cemetery by the unit concerned. Very little was learned about Graves Registration Service from the operation. The Division Graves Registration Officer contacted each unit Graves Registration Officer and discussed methods by which evacuation would take place, using SOP No. 26, "Army Burials, Graves Registration, and Disposition of Effects," Hq EICUSA, dated 9 January 1944, as a guide. All sources of information, such as other Division and Corps Headquarters, were used to get ideas of what the job entailed. These sources proved helpful.

The system of Battalion and Regimental evacuating teams under regularly appointed Graves Registration Officers was carried out. Transportation was furnished to each of the Regimental Graves Registration Officers with which to conduct the work. It was decided that the Division operate two Collecting Points to help on the initial attack. The personnel for operation of these points was furnished by VII Corps Graves Registration Company. The Division Graves Registration Officer was furnished a quarter-ton truck in which to check and supervise the evacuation. 2½-ton trucks from the Quartermaster Company, with 1-ton trailers, were furnished to evacuate the dead from the Division Collecting Point to the cemetery. Only the trailers were used to carry bodies. A 3/4-ton truck and trailer is considered sufficient for the work. This was the Graves Registration Service set-up under which the Division attacked the morning of 4 July 1944.

Attacking on the morning of 4 July 1944 it was soon discovered that in the excitement and confusion of initial combat no one was evacuating dead. Tactical situations took precedence over the evacuation. Casualties were mounting and the Division Graves Registration Officer contacting the regiments did not obtain results. One Division Collecting Point was abandoned. By 6 July 1944 the conditions were critical. The Commanding General ordered the Division Graves Registration Officer be given personnel and transportation to clear the field. Taking five officers and twenty enlisted men, and working during all available daylight hours, the job was completed by 15 July 1944. This work over, the detail was cut to two officers and ten enlisted men. The Division had changed to VIII Corps and the VII Corps detail was withdrawn from the Division Collecting Point. VIII Corps would not furnish a similar detail to run the Point. Of the retained detail, one officer and five enlisted

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men were used to run the Division Collecting Point. The other officer and five enlisted men were used to search and check fields and to operate a second Division Collecting Point, if necessary. This decision proved itself in operation. During this period, which ended about 28 July 1944, it was impossible to keep an accurate check on how many men were killed and evacuated as at all times the number evacuated greatly exceeded the number reported killed. During the period 4 July to 28 July the Division Graves Registration Service evacuated to the cemetery 1,166 American and 517 German dead.

SECTION II: BRITTANY

Attacking on the morning of 4 August 1944, in the St. Malo Sector, the Graves Registration Service functioned smoother and evacuation of dead progressed steadily abreast of the situation. It became necessary to operate two Division Collecting Points and the organization was all ready to function. Here the distances for evacuation to a cemetery became a paramount problem and it was necessary for VIII Corps to establish a Collecting Point. During this period which ended about 25 August 1944, 560 American and 501 German dead were evacuated by the Division Graves Registration Service.

SECTION III: LOIRE RIVER

The Division's tactical mission during this period offered no problems to Graves Registration Service. Deployed along a wide flank, the action consisted mainly of patrolling details.

SECTION IV: LUXEMBURG

The period from 25 September to 6 December 1944 was not one to offer complicated problems to Graves Registration Service. The Division covered an extensive front and it was relatively quiet during the period. Action was limited to patrols, and casualties were light. Evacuation was to a Corps Collecting Point.

There were 155 American and 41 German dead evacuated during the period.

SECTION V: HURTGEN FOREST AND ROER RIVER

The period 7 December to 26 December 1944 was an active period, and problems imposed were mainly ones of transportation over a limited road net in German territory, and searching of the field of battle in woods and

thickly mined areas. The transportation problem was solved with the aid of a Corps collecting point.

The search of the battlefield became a tedious job as the presence of mines was a constant hazard. To overcome this, Anti-Tank companies and platoons of the regiments were used effectively. Search of the wooded areas, where falling trees and limbs from tree bursts had obscured the location of foxholes, made the job a long and arduous one. The main problem was to get enough personnel to adequately cover the ground; when the AT platoons were used, this problem was solved.

During the operation 456 American and 417 German dead were evacuated.

SECTION VI: ARDENNES

In the operation covering the period from 26 December 1944 to 6 February 1945, the Division covered a narrow front. The regiments advanced rapidly in heavy snowfall. Consequently, bodies were often hidden by snow and were therefore undiscovered.

For the greater part of this campaign the bodies were evacuated directly to the cemetery from the Division Collecting Point.

During the period 275 American and 236 German dead were evacuated.

SECTION VII: DRIVE TO THE RHINE

Combat during this period was characterized by rapid advances and few casualties. More enemy dead than Allied dead were evacuated through the Division Collecting Point.

Shortly after period began a Graves Registration platoon from the 608th Quartermaster Graves Registration Company, XIX Corps, joined the Division. The platoon was equipped with three 3/4-ton trucks and 1-ton trailers, and one 1/4-ton truck and a 1/4-ton trailer. This transportation was adequate for the evacuation of all bodies.

During period 83 Allied dead were evacuated to Margraten, Holland, and 126 enemy dead were evacuated to cemeteries in Germany.

SECTION VIII: DRIVE TO THE ELBE

The Division Graves Registration Section and attached platoon began this operation at the Germany-Holland border. The drive ended with the Division

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astride the Elbe River. The war with Germany ended with the Division still astride this river.

American dead were being evacuated to Holland. Therefore Army and Corps Collecting Points were very far from the Division Collecting Point.

299 Allied dead were evacuated to Margraten, Holland, and 243 German dead were evacuated to cemeteries in Germany.

On 9 May the Graves Registration platoon was detached from the Division. Shortly afterwards, the Division Graves Registration Section was dissolved.

SECTION IX: SUMMARY

The organization of the Division Graves Registration Section was developed to meet specific needs. For several days after the initial entry of the Division into battle there was only one officer and one enlisted man to operate the Division Collecting Point. It immediately became apparent that additional personnel was needed for operating the Collecting Point and for clearing the fields of the dead. The Division Graves Registration Officer asked for, and received, five junior officers, each with a team of four enlisted men. This personnel was placed on temporary duty. One officer and four men operated the Collecting Point under the supervision of the Graves Registration Officer. The other officers with their men cleared all the fields within the Division boundary. This organization was later reduced to the following: one Division Graves Registration Officer, a Major; two junior officers, and ten enlisted men. Each regiment, battalion, separate battalion and company, has a Graves Registration Officer and teams regularly assigned. The organization of the Graves Registration Section was changed once more by being reduced to one officer and nine enlisted men. At the time of this change, a Graves Registration platoon was attached to the Division from XII Corps. This platoon consisted of one officer and 22 enlisted men.

During periods between attacks evacuation is not an exacting task and very few problems arise. From a Divisional point of view, the use of a 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton truck and trailer to evacuate a small number of dead is not an intelligent use of transportation. Smaller transportation should be furnished, a 3/4-ton or 1/4-ton truck with trailer being desirable. This was the type of transportation used during later periods and proved satisfactory.

A general problem for all operations has been what records and reports should be kept. Initially a register of all men evacuated was maintained. A daily report turned in to G-1 and Office of Division Quartermaster by number of men evacuated. Gradually a card file was initiated to give the name, serial number, unit, cemetery, date of evacuation, and means of identification, if other than by dog-tag. The report to G-1 and Office of Division Quartermaster was continued, and a report by name and serial number of men evacuated was turned over to the Adjutant General.

In operations extending over a period from 28 June 1944 to 9 May 1945, this Division has evacuated 3,129 American and 2,322 German dead.

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McLAUGHLIN, JOHN DANIEL
LT. GEN. USA (Ret.)

Age 74, of Richmond, VA, on Saturday, January 3, 1992 at MCV Hospital, Gen. McLaughlin was born in San Francisco, CA, a son of the late John and Charlotte Bruhns McLaughlin. He enlisted in the U.S. Army at the age of 16 as a Private. At age 18, he became the youngest Sergeant in the history of his Regiment (64th Coast Artillery Anti-Aircraft Regiment). When he retired as a Lieutenant General in July, 1974, he was the Commanding General of the United States Theater Army Support Command, Europe. During World War II, he graduated from the first Officer Candidate Class of the Quartermaster School at Ft. Lee, VA and served with the 83rd Infantry Division in Europe, rising through the ranks from Second Lieutenant to Lieutenant Colonel by the war's end. After World War II, he joined the 82nd Airborne Division, serving first as the Division Quartermaster and later as Assistant Chief of Staff, G-4. Subsequent assignments included Comptroller, U.S. Military Advisory Group, Greece; Chief of Training, Quartermaster Corps; G-4, U.S. Military Advisory Group, Thailand; Chief, Operations Control, Office of the Quartermaster General; Staff Assistant, Office of the Secretary of Defense; Executive Officer (Chief of Staff) of the Defense Supply Agency (now the Defense Logistics Agency); Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, Viet Nam; Director of Supply, Office of Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics on the Army General Staff; Assistant Chief of Staff for Logistics (J-4) on the staff of CINCPAC (Commander-in-Chief, Pacific); and simultaneously held the positions of Commandant of the U.S. Army Quartermaster School; Commander of the U.S. Army Troop Support Agency; Commander of Ft. Lee, VA and (1971-1973) served as President of the Army's Subsistence Operations Review Board, which developed the Modern Army food service system.

He held the Distinguished Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Legion of Merit with four Oak Leaf Clusters, the Bronze Star Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters, the Air Medal and several campaign medals and foreign decorations.

Since retirement from the U.S. Army in 1974, General McLaughlin had been an executive in the food processing industry, serving as President, CEO and Chairman of the L. J. Minor Corp. He last served as President of L. J. Minor International of Solon, OH (a Nestle Company). General McLaughlin also served as Chairman, Board of Advisors, Educational Institute, American Culinary Federation; Member, Board of Directors, International Foodservice Manufacturers Association; Chairman, Military Foodservice Systems Committee, National Research Council, Academy of Sciences; Chairman, National Foodservice Education and Training Coordinating Council; Member, Board of Trustees, The Culinary Institute of America; Member, Regional Board, Sovren Bank, N.A. (Virginia); Advisor, United States Olympic Team, 1976, 1980, 1984, 1988 and current 1992 team; Member, Richmond Executive Council, Boy Scouts of America; President, Army Quartermaster Foundation; President, U.S. Culinary (Olympic) Team Foundation.

In 1973, he was awarded the International Foodservice Manufacturers Association's renowned Silver Plate Award for his work in improving Army foodservice, the Quartermaster of the Year Award by the Army, the Logistician of the Year Award by the American Logistics Association and the Silver Beaver Award, Boy Scouts of America. In 1981, he received an honorary doctorate in Business Administration from Johnson and Wales College. In 1982, he was made an honorary member of the National Security Industrial Association. In 1990, he was made a Diplomat of the Educational Foundation of the National Restaurant Association. He was the first to be appointed lifetime honorary member of the American Academy of Chefs and also made a lifetime member of The Order of the Golden Eagle. In 1991, General McLaughlin was made a Distinguished Member of the Quartermaster Regiment and inducted into the Quartermaster Hall of Fame.

He is survived by his wife, Elizabeth S. McLaughlin of the home; a daughter, Susan C. Fountain of Richmond, VA; two sons, John D. McLaughlin Jr. of Point Harbor, NC and William F. McLaughlin of Solon, OH; five grandchildren, Brad and Eric McLaughlin, Shawn-Marie McLaughlin, Matthew and Elizabeth Fountain and a sister, Mary Thibault of San Francisco, CA.

A Mass of the Resurrection will be recited at 1:45 p.m., Thursday, January 9 in the Memorial Chapel, Ft. Myer, VA. Interment with full military honors will follow in Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, VA. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the Army Quartermaster Foundation, Inc., PO Box A, Ft. Lee, VA 23801. Arrangements by J.T. MORRIS & SON FUNERAL HOME, Petersburg, VA.