



**In Memory Of**

**ROBERT HOWARD YORK**  
**Lieutenant General**

**United States Army (Retired)**

**23 April 1913 - 15 April 1988**

Lieutenant General Robert H. York was born in Birmingham, Alabama, 23 April 1913.

His military career began in July 1933 when he enlisted in the Alabama National Guard. He graduated from the United States Military Academy with a Bachelor of Science in Engineering in 1938 and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant of Infantry in the Regular Army.

His first assignment was with the 18th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division at Fort Wadsworth, New York. He was with the Regiment for 42 months serving as a Unit Commander.

In September 1942, as a 29-year-old Major serving as a Battalion Executive Officer, Lieutenant General York went overseas with the 18th Infantry and fought with the unit throughout all of its campaigns in Africa and Sicily and in the Normandy Invasion.

While with this unit, he served in all grades from Second Lieutenant to Lieutenant Colonel.

In July 1944, General York was transferred to the 83rd Infantry Division in Normandy and assigned as Regimental Commander of the 331st Infantry Regiment, the position he held until the division was deactivated in April 1946.

Approximately four months later he was assigned as an Instructor of Tactics at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York.

At the outbreak of the Korean War, General York was assigned to the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff G-3, Department of the Army, as a Staff Officer in Operations Division.

In August 1951, he was selected for attendance at the Army War College at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. Upon graduation he was assigned to the Office of Assistant Chief of Staff G-2, Department of the Army, as the United States Army Liaison Officer with station in Singapore. After first attending the Strategic Intelligence School, he served in this position until May 1956.

General York was assigned to the Infantry Center at Fort Benning, Georgia, in August 1956. While there he served successively as Director, Tactical Department, The Infantry School; Assistant Chief of Staff G-3, The Infantry Center; Director of Instruction and Deputy to the Assistant Commandant, The Infantry School; and Chief of Staff, The Infantry Center.

He was appointed Deputy Chief of Staff of the United Nations Command in Korea in July 1949 and served in this position until July 1960.

He returned to the United States in September 1960 with an assignment as Chief, International Division, Office of the Chief of Research and Development, Department of the Army.

Two years later in May, General York was reassigned as Military Advisor to the Deputy Director, Tactical Warfare Programs, Office of the Director of Defense Research and Engineering, Department of Defense, Washington, D.C.

In November 1962, he assumed duty as Director, Advanced Research Projects Agency, Research and Development Field Unit, and Joint Operation Evaluation Group, Vietnam.

General York took command of the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, 21 February 1964, and went with that unit to the Dominican Republic when it was ordered there in April 1965 to protect American citizens and other foreign nationals during the uprising in Santo Domingo.

He returned to the United States to assume command of Fort Benning, Georgia and the Infantry School, 16 July 1965, where he served until he became Commanding General of XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg, 1 August 1967. General York retired on 1 August 1968 and resided in Hartselle, Alabama, until relocating to the West Coast five years ago.

**Decorations:** Distinguished Service Cross; Distinguished Service Medal; Silver Star with two Oak Leaf Clusters, Valor; Legion of Merit with Oak Leaf Cluster; Bronze Star Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters, Valor; Air Medal; Purple Heart with Oak Leaf cluster; Combat Infantryman Badge; Distinguished Unit Badge; Croix de Guerre avec Palme; Legion E'Honneur; Army Commendation Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster.

**Medals:** American Defense Service Medal; American Campaign Medal; European-African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal (eight campaigns); World War II Victory Medal; Army Occupation Medal (Germany); National Defense Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster; Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal; Vietnam Campaign Medal; Vietnam Service Medal.

**Badges:** General Staff Identification Badge; Parachute Badge (Master); Aviator Badge.

A favorite verse of his... Isaiah 26:3  
*"Thou will keep him in perfect peace whose mind has stayed upon thee because he trusteth in thee."*

**Dear Bob:**

Enclosed is my article for G Company for the next issue.

I have also enclosed a copy of the Special Tribute paid to Bob York at the Memorial Services at Huntsville, Ala. This was delivered by Leo Schneider. I told Leo that I would send a copy of it for the *Thunderbolt*.

Also there is a copy of the Memorial Service program, with a complete list of Robert York's career in the Army.

I realize that this covers a lot of space in the *Thunderbolt*, but I believe that we owe it to this outstanding leader and to any of our other leaders that performed such great service to our division and the United States Army.

See you in Hershey,

**Joe Macaluso**

**The article to follow was delivered by Leo Schneider, 1st Bn Hq 331st Infantry Regiment, as a special tribute to LTG Robert H. York in a Memorial Service held at the BiCentennial Chapel at Redstone Arsenal, Alabama.**

Friends and family - either form of address would do. If you were Bob's friend, you were practically in the family and positively the York family relationship is unique in the finest sense of the word. I am privileged, flattered, and honored to have been asked by Betty to present the military aspect of Bob York's life.

Bob deserved a more knowledgeable and more articulate spokesman on this subject. I have not been a career soldier and most certainly have won no awards for elocution.

Difficult to separate Bob York, the man from the soldier. Certainly he gave unparalleled meaning to the words Duty, Honor, and Country as a soldier and at the same time was a loving and caring father and husband and a great friend.

I could spend an hour or more on the subject of Bob York, soldier, and still not do General York fitting justice. My coverage is necessarily brief, therefore, incomplete. But I could not do fitting honors to the memory of Bob York if I had hours.

So, let me open with some comments from a professional soldier. Herbert J. Lloyd was a LTC in 1984, when he was attending the Army War College that year. Eight students were to conduct a study of eight of the U.S. Army's most successful generals.

Colonel Lloyd, who had been a captain under Bob York, when Bob commanded the 82nd Airborne, asked to study General York, because of their previous service together.

Colonel Lloyd was particularly aware of how highly respected General York was by his soldiers and by even generals senior to him. Colonel Lloyd's studies included a comprehensive coverage of Bob York's entire military history. But one section of his research was particularly noteworthy and interesting.

Colonel Lloyd set about contacting officers and enlisted men who had served with Bob York, primarily in combat. Colonel Lloyd went to the root source and sought out letters from a few of those individuals. It is published as "**The Legacy of LTG Robert H. York, as Told by the Soldiers He Led**".

At this point I quote from Colonel Lloyd:

"As these letters arrived I began to see they were something rare indeed. The message of the letters went far beyond the needs of my study. The message is clear - SINCERE, ADMIRATION, RESPECT, LOYALTY, and GREAT PRIDE. The few trusted experience Combat Commanders I have shared these letters with all agree they have never seen anything like this before. Neither has the War College History Department."

I continue to quote Colonel Lloyd:

"The letters provide an insight into a great American who was blessed with a remarkable talent. I believe there are only a handful of leaders like this that are provided our nation every fifty years. We see the measure of the man under the most difficult circumstances. Circumstances that most mortals will never know." "Were it not for these letters you and I would probably never know much of this because General York always gave full credit to his soldiers."

Finally, Colonel Lloyd wrote:

"I am joined by many combat-experienced senior officers who believe that LTG Robert H. York, is the greatest Combat Commander the United States Army ever saw."

May I repeat the final paragraph from LTC Lloyd's summation of this study:

"I am joined by many combat-experienced officers who believe that LTG Robert H. York is the greatest Combat Commander the United States Army ever saw."

From where I stand, I could count thousands of Combat Infantrymen who would heartily endorse LTC Lloyd's conclusions.

Bob was commissioned at West Point in 1938 - Platoon Leader First Division.

In Africa the First Combat Action in the U.S. Army World War II.

I could quote a whole book of General York's accomplishments with the 1st Division that culminated with his command of an Assault Battalion on Omaha Beach on D-Day.

I will summarize Bob York's career with the 1st Division with a quote that I almost remember word for word that was stated to me by the late General Huebner. General Huebner commanded the 1st Division on D-Day. (This chat with General Huebner took place in our suite at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York probably some 20 or more years ago. Grace York and my wife, Shirley, were also present at this moment but General Huebner's remark was directed to me.

General Huebner said, in his opinion if any one man was responsible for maintaining the D-Day toe hold on Omaha Beach, literally keeping the 1st Division from being driven back into the sea, it was Colonel York. (Then a LTC, Bob commanded the 1st Battalion of the 16th Infantry Regiment in the First Division. Think about D-Day and its effect on the winning of WWII and relate that to the personal impact of Bob York.

After the war, Bob York was stationed at West Point. He was in Singapore as Military Attache and did a stint at Ft. Benning. There were several moves that led up to his assignment as Major General, commanding Ft. Benning on to Ft. Bragg as Commanding General of the 82nd Airborne.

Ultimately to the rank of Lt General, Commander of the 18th Airborne Corps which included the 82nd Airborne, the 101st Airborne and other Troops.

So much for that part of history.

Let's talk about the soldier and the man as I personally knew him. It was my distinct honor and privilege to have served



under General York in the 331st Infantry. I was a sometimes Buck Sgt., and was 1st Bn 331st Message Center Chief under Colonel York's Command. While obviously there was no social intercourse at all between Sgts and Colonels, it seemed our paths crossed often in the field. Bob spent considerable time away from Regimental Headquarters and he had no reluctances at all in pulling me out of the 1st Bn Headquarters location to expedite his visits to a Line Company. (Quite frankly, I was honored to have been singled out by Col. York, but given my druthers, I would have preferred to stay in my foxhole at Bn. Hqs. Of that relationship, I came to know a man, who next to my father, was a person whom I respected more than any other man I have ever known.

From that combat association came a post-war friendship that never stopped or wavered, a 40-year friendship was to include Grace York and my wife, Shirley, and our children. To me, General Robert York was the quintessential soldier. The proudest product of our country and of West Point. The best as a soldier and the best as a friend.

I want to mention certain words and other attributes which I have read and heard in describing Robert H. York. Brave; honest, strong, humble, integrity, caring, cool and unflustered, respectful, unpatronizing, brilliant, considerate, superior, superior leadership, unflappable under pressure, compassion for subordinates, courageous, charismatic and modest.

He commanded respect. He was sincerely admired. Loyalty - he earned it and returned it.

Of York, it has been accurately said he was "always visible to the troops."

He was "war wise." He was "always with the attacking unit." "unequalled tactician," "exemplary soldier," "great leader," "his troops would follow him to hell and back."

I feel that any small success that I may have achieved in business and in life was due in a great part that I tried to learn leadership from Bob York. I tried to emulate his unflinching integrity, and imitating, in my own poor way, his style and class.

I will end this with a first hand factual example of Bob York's charismatic leadership and military know how.

Bob came to the 331st Regiment on July 12, 1944, we had been in combat for 8 days. Our first day in combat was a July 4, a 4th I will never forget. By July 12th the organization and morale of the 331st were in a shambles. We had lost at least 5, maybe 6 Regimental C.O.'s in 8 days. 2 killed, 2 relieved and 2, I believe, replaced, one by Bob York.

We had also lost 3 Battalion Commanders, and at least 5 or 6 Company Commanders. The regiment had been fighting from dawn to dusk every day, taking tremendous casualties and yet accomplishing very little.

In 8 days we lost approximately 800 enlisted men and 75 officers, that was between July 4th and the time General York took over, on the 12th.

The newly promoted Bird Colonel York was ordered by the Division to attack almost simultaneously upon receiving command of the 331st.

Lt. Col. Staples who was a Regimental Staff Officer at the time, tells us, York persuaded the Division Commander to postpone committing the 331st to attack. Bob then ordered his people to get some rest, of course, excepting himself. York then visited every company and reorganized the entire combat element.

How can I explain to anybody who does not know the horror, the fear, the weariness, and distress of Infantry Combat, just how we, the troops felt - how depressed and low we were - at the time Colonel York took command.

Bob York told LTC Staples years later that when he saw the state of the regiment, it was the darkest day of his life. Incidentally, where I have mentioned Colonel Staples' name I am quoting from his letter to Colonel Lloyd. That letter and many others are now part of the War Department Historical Archives.

Bob York took on this impossible mission with a warm smile on his face, he gave courage and heart to a couple thousand weary, scared, thoroughly beaten and discouraged men.

In retrospect, I can well believe it could have been the blackest day of his life when he saw what he had to work with, but, he took the group and turned it into, what I believe, was one of the best combat regiments that ever served in the United States Army.

I believe that hundreds of 331st men and no doubt thousands of other soldiers are alive today because Bob York was their chief. He was the consummate soldier, tactician, and leader.

One other comment, I think I knew and was with Bob or with Bob and Grace through just about each post in elevation in command and rank. I never saw one bit of change in the man. This country boy, as Bob thought of himself, had no problem at all in taking off the 3 Star Jacket and all the panoply of rank and becoming a civilian and self-styled country boy.

I have heard the expression "Legend in His Own Time" applied to some people. I suspect most of them were just a legend in their own mind. Bob York would have been the first to say, Not me. Nevertheless, Bob York was and is a "Legend in His Own Time." I hope for the sake of our country that there will be other West Pointers and soldiers just somewhere near the caliber of Lt. General Robert H. York.

In behalf of Walt Ashmore and Joe Macaluso who are present here today, we've lost a wonderful friend, and in behalf of every dogface soldier of the 331st Infantry and perhaps everyman whoever served under General York, I salute and say a loving and fond farewell to the greatest combat leader that ever served in the United States Army.

MAY HIS SOUL REST IN EVERLASTING PEACE.

Leo Schneider

**By Bruce Henderson  
Staff Writer**

Retired Army Lt. Gen. Robert H. York, former commanding general of Fort Bragg and its famed 82nd Airborne Division and 18th Airborne Corps, died Friday, April 15, in San Diego. He was 74.

Born in Birmingham, Ala., Gen. York began his 30-year military career as an enlisted man in the Alabama National Guard. He graduated in 1938 from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., where he was also an undefeated boxer. He went on to fight in World War II, work at Army headquarters in Washington and command units at Fort Bragg and Fort Benning, Ga.

During World War II, his infantry regiment fought campaigns in Africa, Sicily and took part in the Normandy invasion. Later assignments put him in Singapore, Korea and Vietnam. Among his military decorations were the Distinguished Service Cross, three Silver Stars and four Bronze Stars for valor, two Purple Hearts and the French Legion D'Honneur.

In a postwar book about Vietnam and the military, "The Best and the Brightest," journalist David Halberstam cited him for his courage.

Gen. York put his career in jeopardy, Halberstam wrote, by filing field reports describing American involvement and losses as much heavier than official accounts. His commanding general was livid.

And in a restricted-circulation booklet produced several years ago at West Point, "The Legacy of Lt. Gen. Robert H. York," several cadets used the general's example in an attempt to define the personal characteristics that contribute to leadership. Using letters solicited from some 35 officers and men who served with Gen. York in World War II, the cadets pieced together a picture of him they hoped would be a model for young officers.

After World War II, Gen. York served as an instructor in tactics at West Point and served at Army headquarters in Washington. Following other assignments, he became staff chief at the Infantry Center at Fort Benning, Ga., served as deputy chief of staff of U.S. forces in Korea, again served in Washington, and served in Vietnam.

In February 1964, he was appointed commander of the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg and led the division's duty in the Dominican Republic in 1965. That year, he was named commander of Benning's Infantry Center and Infantry School.

In August 1967, he returned to Fort Bragg as commanding general of the 18th Airborne Corps and of the base. He retired in July 1968.

With retirement, he and his wife, Grace, moved to the general's home state in Huntsville, Ala. There he was active in church affairs, said his half-brother, Charlotte Observer reporter John York, and helped begin a halfway house for drug-abusing youths.

Characteristically, John York said, he spent little money on himself. "He lived in basics and that was all he cared about."

In retirement, the couple traveled in Europe and the Orient. They moved to San Diego several years ago.

Gen. York's daughter, Barbara Donnadieu, said her father had been diagnosed with cancer only in the past month and had been hospitalized two days.

Gen. York was "a very special man. Not just for his military career, but for his personal relationships and personal integrity and character," she said.

Active all his life, Gen. York enjoyed golf, hunting, fishing, reading and bridge. He was an avid boxing fan, from his four undefeated years in the ring at West Point, and a qualified parachutist.

He is survived by his wife, Grace Buckland York, and four daughters, Elizabeth Ann, Barbara Allison, Gail Andrea and Carol.

Military services will be held, possibly in San Diego, with memorial services planned at Fort Benning, Ga., and in Huntsville, Ala.

Gen York will be buried in West point.

## **My Observations Of Lieutenant General Robert H. York**

I first met with then, Colonel York in August 1944 at St. Brieuc, France, (Brittany Peninsula). George Company had taken it's objective, the C.O. of George Company (William E. Waters) was moved up to Battalion Staff as Operation Officer. As a Second Lieutenant, I was selected to become the new C.O. of George Company. At this time Colonel York gave his approval of my becoming C.O. as a Second Lieutenant and he told me that George Company was my Company and that no one could take it away from me.

At this time Colonel York expressed a great deal of confidence in me, and as it was I was determined to let him know that I would fulfill my obligation to him and the men of the Company.

I went to France as a Platoon Leader with George Company and from the day that we made our initial attack (4th of July) I knew that as Officers we had to develop into combat leaders. Within the next two weeks the 331st Infantry Regiment was to be commanded by a number of Lieutenant Colonels and Colonels. It was evident that none of these Officers were capable of leading a Regiment. The leadership was not there and as a result, the morale of the Regiment was at an extremely low level.

Word then came down, that we would have a Lieutenant Colonel, who was to be our new Regimental Commander, Robert H. York, a battle experienced Officer from the First Division.

As a platoon leader I was not in on the initial conferences that Colonel York had with the Battalion and Company Commanders. Word did infiltrate down, that now we finally had a leader. It was evident that immediately, planning for the attacks on enemy positions were given considerable amount of attention, and the plans of attack were well prepared.

The Regiment achieved instant success. Once success in combat came, then the morale of the Regiment reached new heights. With a high level of morale, came a great esprit de Corps within the Regiment. The Regiment then began to claim the honors which were bestowed upon it. The Regiment still had a large number of original compliment of Officers, but only through the leadership of Colonel York, did the Regiment finally begin to function as a true combat unit. Colonel York, through his motivation and leadership abilities, was able to bring out the best in each of his Officers. The enlisted personnel, within each unit, began to have confidence in the Officers that were leading them into combat.

Colonel York always had complete knowledge of what was taking place. On a number of occasions, when things began to break down and the pace began to slow, he always had the know-how of being there with the correct decisions.

When George Company was given Remich, in Luxembourg, as its objective, it was the first time that I had the Company in the attack on a built up area. The unit had been in a relative quiet area, with a considerable amount of patrol activity. For the first time since I took command, I was leading the unit in an attack on an objective. The Company had pushed to the outskirts of town, I was making plans for the attack. Colonel York was there, I gave him my plan of attack. His expressions and words of comfort gave me the confidence I needed to carry out my plans.

Needless to say, the attack was a complete success, and was achieved with few casualties. The next attack was in Gravenmacher, Luxembourg, and again we achieved success. I had set up the defense of the area for the night, and also the security of Company Headquarters. The only person to be challenged by the guard was Colonel York, checking the area, and he seemed extremely happy that the guard was on the alert.



Colonel York made himself known to all of the men of the Regiment. The lowest rank of enlisted man, at last, was able to see face to face with their Regimental Commander. This personal relationship with the Regimental Commander was an inspiration to all.

The Regiment spent considerable time in Luxembourg. Patrol activity was heavy, both with the Regiment and also with the enemy patrols that would cross the Moselle.

During this period, we were able to reorganize and to train our replacements. This was an order that came down from Regiment, that when units were not on the front lines, they would spend some time of the day in training for the next operation. As an Officer, I had attended many schools in the states and I had learned that once you are in a defensive position, you should plan for Alternate and Secondary position. I thought this was for tactical problems that were conducted in the states. Not so, within the 331st Regiment, the unit leaders were taken to the rear to select and to set up, Alternate and Secondary positions with the Regimental defense plan. Avenues of, and routes of withdrawals were selected and positions were designated for each unit.

As history tells us, the Germans attacked through the Ardennes, with it's left flank in the area of Luxembourg, where we were located. The Regiment had since moved to the Huertgen Forest area, but the unit that replaced our Regiment was able to stop the German advance in that sector. The planning by the Regiment would have paid dividends for us.

Our next movement into the Huertgen Forest area, was again a series of well planned against a well organized enemy. It took a considerable amount of initiative and leadership on the part of all Officers, originating with the Regimental Commander, to achieve our objective.

Colonel York was always at the Observation Post directing the Regiment in a series of offensive operations. After driving the enemy from the built up area of the town and into the open fields, Colonel York had remarked to me how well organized the German withdrawal had been executed. Our Artillery was on target, but because of their orderly withdrawal, Colonel York mistook the retreating Germans for advancing American troops, and he called off the Artillery fire.

It was later in this operation that Colonel York was wounded by mortar fire. He was told by the Medical Officer that he would have to be evacuated. Colonel York refused, and continued to lead the Regiment until it reached its objective on the Ruhr River.

When the Regiment was committed in the battle of the Ardennes, Colonel York was recuperating from the wounds that he received. He rejoined the Regiment after the Regiment had completed it's mission in the Ardennes. After a few days of rest, the units of the Regiment were subjected to an intense training program of River Crossing Operations. It seemed odd, that a unit with the amount of combat that we had, would need to do more training. However, when we considered the route of advance into Germany, it was only fitting that such a training program had to be carried out. As in combat, Colonel York was there to oversee the training. His ever presence was an inspiration to all, both enlisted and Officer personnel.

Once the Regiment crossed the Rhine River, it was evident that our training in the past week was to pay dividends. We encountered numerous rivers, which called for instant crossings in order to keep the enemy on the run.

My personal contact with Colonel York was limited for a period of ten days, mainly because of the fluid situation, which had developed. As we neared our objective on the Elbe River, I could sense that something was beginning to develop. As I reached the Regimental Objective on the River, at the town of Barbe, I was to make contact with the Regiment on the left. Upon moving to make contact, I was amazed that once again Colonel York had been in an advance position and had made the contact with the other Regiment.

Colonel York informed me that I was to move my Company to the River, cross the River in pontoon boats, and to secure the objective on the east side of the River. His order was to set up a defensive position and to make contact with the Regiment on the left, and to coordinate the defense of that position. In the tumult of the battle, his orders were clear to the point, there was never a need to question him as to how he wanted things done. The confidence that he expressed in each of his subordinate leaders had a tendency to bring out the best in each of them. His foresight in this operation enabled us to achieve not only our objectives, but also to withstand a determined counterattack by the enemy. The same enemy, just the day before, was able to drive a unit from another Division, back across the Elbe River.

When things seemed impossible, Colonel York always had a solution, such as deriving a method to get Tank Destroyers across the Elbe River, without a bridge, in order to assist the Infantry in driving back an enemy attack.

In the last operation across the Elbe, an attack by tanks and Infantry drove the enemy from a town that was well defended. In setting up a defense for the night, Colonel York was once again on hand to make sure that the tanks were dug in and that the units were ready for the counterattack that was sure to come in the morning.

I know that in this writing I had referred to myself and the Company I had commanded on many occasions, but in each of these actions, I have tried to relate overall the effect that Colonel York had upon myself and upon the members of my Company. Colonel York had an everlasting effect on not only my Military Career, I remained in the Military Reserves for over 25 years, but also upon my career. I have tried through the years to emulate Colonel York, because that only through proper planning and leadership ability, you are able to succeed. I am a member of the 83rd Infantry Division Association, and each year at our Annual Reunion, it is amazing the number of men, that served in the 331st Infantry Regiment, remember Colonel York. Each of them express a debt of gratitude that they owe to their Regimental Commander.

It is rare, that in the lowest grade of enlisted personnel, that these men would know their Regimental Commander. They know their Platoon Leader and the Company Commander, but never beyond that level of command.

The men of the 331st Infantry knew their Commanding Officer, because Colonel York during the time of his command, gained the respect of each individual within the Regiment and within the Division.

To me this is a tribute to his personal regard for the men, as individuals, and to his ability to lead through proper planning and personal supervision. Through his confidence in each of his subordinate leaders, he was able to motivate and to propel each of them to accomplish tasks that seemed almost impossible.

(The above article was written by Colonel Macaluso (Captain Mac to most of you) and I thought it would be a good idea to send it to his memory.)

**Samuel Klippa**

"D" Company

331st Infantry

P.S. We are deeply saddened by the loss of our great leader and he was a real gentleman to all of us.

## GENERAL YORK REVERED

A noted theologian once said: "Our concern is not how to worship in the catacombs but how to remain human in the skyscrapers." General Robert H. York could do both. As a military officer, he held with dignity, discipline and effectiveness, yet he never lost his humility. As a human being, he always treated other human's with utmost respect. A deeply religious man, he didn't have a single drop of bigotry coursing through his blood. Throughout his life, in the military and as a civilian, he faced challenges courageously and triumphed over all of them.

General York was the personification of all whom anyone would love, whom anyone would emulate -- an inspiration to everyone who met him, however brief.

The following anthology edited with excerpts from "The Legacy of Lt. Gen. Robert H. York As Told by the Soldiers He Led" reflect the gut feelings of officers and enlisted men who served with and under General York before, during and after World War II, attesting to the greatness of this exceptional, remarkable man.

To paraphrase Jon Stuart Mill's quotation (1806-1973): York was "capable of more wisdom and virtue than collective man can ever be."

*Jack M. Staus*

*Reg. Hds. 331st Infantry*

### From Col. H. J. Lloyd who compiled the letters

--- This year at the War College eight students were allowed to conduct a study of eight of the U.S. Army's most successful Generals. I asked to study Lt. Gen. York because of our previous service together and I was aware of how highly respected he was by his soldiers and by Generals senior to him.

--- The research to support this work is contained herein in the form of letters. As these letters arrived I began to see they were something rare indeed. The message of the letters went far beyond the needs of my study. The message is clear, sincere admiration, respect, loyalty and great pride. The few trusted experienced combat commanders I have share these letters with all agree they have never seen anything like this before. Neither has the War College History Department.

--- The letters provide an insight into a great American who was blessed with a remarkable talent. I believe there are only a handful of leaders like this that are provided our nation every fifty years. We see the measure of the man under the most difficult circumstances that most mortals will never know.

--- I am joined by many combat-experienced senior officers who believe that LTG Robert H. York is the greatest Combat Commander the United States Army every saw.

*Herbert J. Lloyd*

*LTC Infantry*

### First Infantry Division Officers

--- Essentially York was a very stable individual, not inclined to panic under the most adverse conditions and always exhibiting a calm, cheerful outlook on whatever situation existed. This being a natural trait of his character he projected a staunchness and sense of stability which, in turn, was transmitted to everyone around him.

--- In my own estimation one of his most valuable traits was that of dependability. Always mentally alert, he could grasp quickly the essence of any mission (instruction-directive-suggestion) and carry it through to a desired conclusion if such were humanly possible. There was never any doubt whatsoever of the accuracy of any report from York, such as where he (his battalion) was, what his situation was, etc. That factor alone was enough to attract the high regard of his commanders. Gen. Allen, CG 1st Div., had an immense confidence in Bob York as a Bn. Cmdr. So did his regimental commander. That high regard was held by York's contemporaries and was certainly held by successive commanders and their staffs, to include Gen. Huebner and whose exceptional insight as to the worth of any officer makes his opinion conclusive evidence.

--- Last it appeared that Bob York was some superhuman fantasy, I feel sure he would be the last person on earth to claim such Olympian powers. He was entirely human, with an extraordinary understanding of his fellow human beings. He was friendly and affable without losing control of modest reservedness. He was cooperative, not a syncopate nor a problem creator. Though a cliché expression, he was always part of the solution, not part of the problem. With a pleasing personality, a convincing honest and sincere attitude, he was, not unexpectedly, well like and could fit in unobtrusively with any group. Throughout his range of attributes, he inspired confidence; certainly among those above him in the chain of command, and I am sure this confidence was transmitted to the troops under his command.

--- For a summation on Bob York - as a man, as an army officer, as a commander, and as a conspicuous example of what a good soldier should be - he consistently measured up to the highest standards. He exemplified the motto of his Alma Mater (the USMA). He was a great credit to the prestige of the 1st. Inf. Div. and he truly served his country with honor.

*Stanhope B. Mason*

*Maj. Gen. U.S. Army (Ret.)*

*First Infantry Division*

--- Bob York was without a doubt the most remarkable of the many fine officers with whom I served during my 28 years in the Active Army from 1946 to 1968 (both in combat and peacetime). Without even bordering or being flamboyant or demonstrative, he had an engaging personality as displayed through his friendly eyes and pleasing smile. He could be serious and quiet when the situation demanded but would rapidly assume a different altitude as things changed for the better. General York had an ability to inspire men with a soft firm voice, a sincere countenance, and a totally honest way of dealing with others. A God-fearing man, he was deeply religious without formally adopting any organized religion. A handsome man with outstanding military bearing, he possessed unusual physical stamina and was an accomplished athlete in several sports. If I were asked to single out any one or two characteristics that would best exemplify this unusual man it would be humanity and love for his fellow man.



---One thing that impressed me very much at this stage of the game was Bob York's deep concern for the welfare and well being of the individual soldier. This attitude and feeling was to reappear time and time again; battle casualties grieved him.

--- I shall never forget when we were together in a landing craft moving in to assault our assigned portion of Omaha Beach on D-Day (June 6, 1944). As we approached the beach, Bob who never gave the appearance of fear or apprehension said to me quietly: "Mac I'd give anything if there were a band nearby playing the 'Stars and Stripes Forever.'"

--- Our work made easier by having Bob as our C.O. I do not know of anyone who did not like and respect him. He knew what he wanted and exercised command without bullying people. He was normally even-tempered. He respected his staff, his commanders and his men. In a combat situation he was always cool and unflustered.

--- During off-duty periods he was always friendly, took part in various activities and has as much fun as anyone else. A regular guy and a damned good poker player.

--- He is always gracious, friendly and totally unpatronizing.

*Herbert H. Scott-Smith*

*Lt. Col. USA (Ret.)*

*First Infantry Division*

--- We had no sooner begin to move than we knew our job was to have to dig, and dig deeply, because across a valley we would observe many German tanks grinding their way towards us. I have no direct memories here of personally hearing Col. York or observing him, but it was felt and obvious by everyone in the Battalion that his cool head in getting us damed well entrenched resulted in two things: 1) he was in command of a Battalion that wasn't going to move backwards; and 2) we were determined to stay alive even if we could hear the tracks caving in our hole on top of us.

--- Col. York became known to even the lowest Platoon leader, and that is because he had the damnest habit of moving all over with his Battalion up near the point.

--- He was also probing his nose up around the lead Platoons, up around the lead squads and finding out what was going on.

--- I'll never forget how quietly and professionally Col. York calmed him down and reasoned with him so beautifully, not with the shouting and obvious superiority of command, but with the reasoning of a friend in combat - the kind of thing that leaves you with even more profound respect for a leader.

--- It seemed to me that Sicily taught us all that a leader like Bob York can command a more total response from a junior officer with the mere suggestion of what he wishes than many a commander could with a shout.

--- He was never one to withhold a compliment from his officers when he knew that one was appropriate.

--- He was more than a commander. He knew how to counsel his troops. He knew how to assist in maintaining the moral and the physical excellence and the devotion to the job at hand.

--- One day there Bob York ordered me to take a few men and go out and find out precisely what I could directly ahead of our Platoon position. I put in a long, tough night that night hitting rifle fire in two or three places, but managed to get a good bit of information he wanted. About daybreak, I was off in a hedge row and I heard a scuffling a little behind me and I thought, oh no, they haven't done that. As I looked around I didn't find a German, I found none other than my Battalion Commander Bob York scrumping around on his belly kind of wanting to know how things were going!

*Teno Roncalio*

*First Infantry Division*

--- From the very outset of this encounter I perceived that here was a real soldier, resolute, but displaying a Solomon-like quality and sense of justice which later on continued to be manifest in all his dealings with officers and enlisted men alike.

--- On June 6, 1944, "D-Day," Colonel York, commanding the First Battalion, 18th Infantry, 1st U.S. Infantry Division landed on Easy-Red, Omaha Beach, Normandy, France. The landing of this Battalion was accomplished with a minimum of casualties (My Platoon did not lose a man until D-Day plus two). The Battalion moved through the 16th Inf. and reached the high grounds approximately eight hundred yards from the beach.

--- The night of June 6, 1944 the First Battalion moved through the rest of the 16th Infantry, whose complement of Officers and Non-coms had been drastically decimated during the Landing.

--- On June 7th, 1944 we moved in a southerly direction. The going was slow as we passed through Treviere and followed our Tank support. On the night of June 7th and during the early hours of June 8th, 1944 Colonel York led his First Battalion in an attack on the town of Formigny. The enemy was finally driving from the Eastern and Central part of town by Tank fire and small arms.

--- This man was blessed with nerves of steel, and that is one reason he instilled a sense of calm reasoning in his Officers and Enlisted Personnel. He could evaluate any situation in an instant. Then, in the twinkling of an eye, he would prescribe a solution which always succeeded. He had inner serenity which immediately impressed those individuals fortunate enough to make his acquaintance.

*George H. Duquay*

*First Infantry Division*

--- Bob York is a country boy and always took a practical, common sense approach to problems. This carried over into his military career and was the core quality of his leadership. He was always close to his troops and had a fine understanding of their problems. He would not hesitate to do himself, anything that the lowest ranks were called upon to do. I remember once in Normandy when I was with him inspecting the Battalion outpost. It was a scary situation. A truck had a flat tire in a suspected mined area. The driver was scared and having a hard time fixing the tire. Bob York was right in there helping the driver change the tire. On another occasion he was found at night during an artillery attack helping soldiers push a bogged down jeep out of the mud.

--- Bob York never fought battles from maps. He always got out on the ground, up front, and knew for himself what the

situation actually was. He was not an Arm Chair Commander! I'm satisfied that he was one of the very few commanders in Viet-Nam who really understood the problem in the early days. And, he knew the problem from experience, night after night, out in the provinces and villages with the troops. He knew we were getting into an un-winable war, and his reports to Higher Headquarters so infuriated his seniors, who were painting a rosy picture, that he narrowly missed getting busted. Fortunately, he had already been selected for promotion to Major General before they could hurt him!

--- Gen. York was a brave soldier. He was without doubt the most courageous officer I've had the pleasure of knowing. Not blind courage, mind you! He would never risk the life of one of his troopers of action. And, if the orders from higher Headquarters didn't make good sense he would never fear telling them so.

--- So, to sum up, Gen. York possessed the most essential elements of good leadership: (1) Love and respect for the troops he led; (2) common sense, practical approach and problems, and simplicity of orders; (3) Physical courage, moral courage and courage of convictions.

--- P.S. He is also one of the world's greatest poker players.

*Maj. Gen. Ben Sternberg*  
*First Infantry Division*

--- Our first combat experience came on Nov. 8, 1942, in the North African Campaign. The 1st Battalion went ashore in assault boats at the seacoast town of Arzew. It was night landing and there was considerable confusion on the beach; units had become separated and the rifle companies were having difficulty re-grouping and starting to move inland. I recall that Bob York (who was still Battalion Exec. Officer) took charge at that time, calmed its first objective. That engagement lasted three days and his leadership qualities were quiet evident throughout that first engagement.

--- One of his interesting attributes was his ability to take short naps and awaken completely refreshed.

--- A few days before the end of the North African Campaign in Tunisia I was wounded and evacuated to a field hospital. As soon as the Campaign was over Bob York took the time to locate and visit me and others from the Battalion who were wounded. He also took the time to write a long personal letter to my wife explaining the nature of my wounds and to prepare her for my return to the states. He did these things even though he was very busy at the time because the division went into immediate training for the Sicilian Campaign which took place only 2 months after the North African Campaign ended.

*Ray Froncillo*  
*First Infantry Division*

### **First Infantry Division - Enlisted Men**

--- I was in the 1st Bn. 18th Inf. of the First Division. Second Lt. Robert H. York came to us fresh from West Point and you knew it in his every move that he was destined to be a professional soldier, but little did any of us think he would attain the heights he did.

--- I can't remember exactly the date he was made a Lt. Colonel, but I do know it was before the Sicilian Campaign ended and that was less than a years time in the Division. I can honestly say I never heard or knew of a soldier who wasn't elated to see this man progress the way he did, for to us he had long since become the man we wanted to lead us, anywhere we were needed. I heard my buddies say many times since, "We would follow the old man down the Barrel of a Cannon." I for one would of gladly done this. Respect to me is something you've got to earn and the General had long ago earned that from the men he led.

--- He was a modest man, and you knew from his actions, he was a family man. He used to get off to himself after we were relieved after long periods in the front lines, and look at the pictures of his wife and kids for long periods of time, and do all a soldier could do, think of the day he could return to them. When we were relieved and taken to the rear to rest, he would never rest until he went to each Company and made sure a hot meal for his men was being fixed and their bedding rolls was being brought up for them. Then and only then would he rest, tho he had to be as tired and weary as the rest of us.

*Melvin F. Kerr*  
*First Infantry Division*

--- Not only was he admired for being a regular army officer, but he was a "man's man", an 'officer's officer', and a born leader. He rarely raised his voice, yet he talked with authority. His positive, assertive attitude made him a standout among officers ad enlisted men. He was cool under fire and would not ask for anyone something he wouldn't do himself.

--- I was close to him during the beachland in France. In the hedgerows country we were under continuous sniper fire, General York was concerned but not ruffled. He attempted to help locate the source of the fire and eliminate it.

--- I don't have enough positive adjectives to describe General York but speaking for the G.I.'s I knew and for myself as well we would have followed that man to hell and felt honored to have served him.

*Stewart Belknap*  
*First Infantry Division*

--- General York to me, was a very positive person. His actions, his bearing and his attitude always seemed to be giving and impression that there was definite job to be done so lets get on with it and get it over with. Don't worry about yesterday.

--- General York was a very thorough person in his assessment of a situation and very direct and decisive in his actions and orders once he had determined what he thought to be the best course to take and I believe that our regimental and battalion records will show that he was seldom wrong in his decisions

--- He was a very visible person. He was often in the line company areas visiting and talking to the enlisted men, and I think I am safe in saying that most of the battalion personnel knew him by sight. He was always at a forward command post, often with the company which was most heavily engaged. He wanted to know how things were going at any given time and being where things were happening was to him the best way to find out. He was a leader not a pusher

*Hal D. Steed*  
*First Infantry Division*



--- At the 1981 reunion of the Officers of the First Division, then Secretary of State Al Haig, was the after-dinner speaker. When General Haig entered the crowded room where cocktails were being served before the dinner, he spotted General York and immediately went to him and said, "General York, I've been wanting to tell you that while I was a cadet at West Point, you were my idol and inspiration." That, Colonel Lloyd, really sums up exactly how every man who served under General York felt about him

--- I heard Dr. Robert Green - and Dr. Green may have already written this to you - tell General York that the three military men he most admired were Marshall, Bradley, and York. (Dr. Green wouldn't even go to see the movie on Patton).

--- To try to list leadership qualities: He was first, a gentleman. He had unusual respect for each soldier regardless of rank; Never gave foolhardy order to any man, even when requested to do so by some officer of higher rank; Never raised his voice in giving a command; had his ears open and his mouth shut to anyone who could report anything in a battle situation and then acted or reacted; dealt in a very subtle and quiet way when reprimanding a soldier who have violated any rules.

--- Early one morning a private, who had just returned from a patrol into enemy lines, was giving General York a report. A replacement officer of the '90-day-wonder' variety kept butting in trying to speak to the then Colonel York. The Colonel kept telling the Lt. to wait. After getting the information from the private, Colonel York took the new officer into the underground battalion headquarters tent and gave him a lesson in military courtesy. The radio operator on duty only heard the opening remarks - "Who do you think you are? That private is as good a human being as you are."

*Norman W. Shrawder*  
*First Infantry Division*

--- Col. York seemed to understand that at best, men are pretty frail creatures, and knowing that, he had devised a system of disciplining his men in such a way that they had no loss of self-respect or dignity

*John M. Jamison*  
*First Infantry Division*

--- There is something very special about the man, something I had never experienced in any of the other Infantry Divisions I was in prior to coming to the 1st Bn. I never heard anyone criticize him, everything I heard was praise, the men all seemed to have so much respect for him. As time went on and I learned to know Col. York, I felt the same way. He was fair and honest with everyone. When an officer is so well thought of discipline is no problem

--- When I was put in charge of the Wire section Cpl. Wilson Douglas told me I should consider myself a lucky man. When I asked why, he said when we make the big invasion we're going ashore under the best commander in the U.S. Army (Co. York)

*Dean Weissert*  
*First Infantry Division*

--- The very first thing I noticed was his softspoken manner and a little twist at the one corner of his mouth. He always seemed to radiate sincerity and confidence in what he was doing. For twenty months we were together and cannot recall every seeing him angry. The General always seemed to be thinking and most sincere in his approach to matters at hand. Even in combat, he seemed the same, a smile on his face, although at times you could tell he was worried

--- To my knowledge, the General, never asked his men to do anything that he thought suicidal or just plain crazy, unless he was going to do the same. He dressed like the rest of the men and was always clean shaven. There was never any big talk of salutes except in Camp

--- Another time in Sicily we had just gotten a new Regimental Commander, and I overheard General York tell the new Commander, "I'm not sending my men up there until I know what's up there." He was great for night patrols and on occasion went on a few with us

--- He thought a great deal of his men and their safety. He always operated in a sensible quiet way. A way I might add which got the job done with the least amount of possible casualties.

*William J. Gatz*  
*First Infantry Division*

--- anything I could say about the General, (then my Colonel) would not be adequate to describe the greatness of the man

--- The General was a true leader of men. Regardless of the peril and difficulty of the mission, he led us in. We were confident we would succeed because he would always be with us; always with the attacking unit. We thought as long as Col. York was there, nothing was impossible. In combat, the Col. never sent us into attack without having a good idea of the enemy in front of us. Which, was without a doubt, the reason we were successful in our missions.

--- You would not have known a more 'war-wise' man. His combat tactics were well respected. He had the know-how to deploy his command to the best advantage

--- Every man I soldiered with said Gen. York influenced their lives in some way. He took the time to listen to your problems and always found a way to lessen the burden. Gen. York was a very compassionate man. I remember a few weeks before he left our command, we were stalled for about 30 days in one position. He and his driver were on a Recon Patrol when they ran into a fire fight. The driver was killed and I'll never forget Gen. York bringing him in: holding him in his lap crying. There's so many incidences like that I couldn't begin to remember them all

--- If this country ever goes to war again, there is nobody in the world I'd rather be with than Gen. York. If he was called on to serve, I'd try to be with him

*Warren 'Bucky' Rogers*  
*First Infantry Division*

## 331st Infantry Regiment - Officers

The facts, to reduce words, were our Battalion, which was to have Co. "C" at forward point of attack to take this fortress. Fortunately, then Colonel York came forward to discuss matters with us, and I had him accompany me to a large Castle building nearest the Fort. to observe the potential facts. Having German patrols in our vicinity we were in proper defense position, however we needed all the help possible. Thus Col. York observed all facts available and after consultation ordered an Anti Tank plus a Tank platoon into hedgerow in our position at a forward point - chosen as our line of Departure. This was the great key when these units and our Div. artillery went into rapid firing we were amazed at our good fortune. The Anti Tank and Tank units gunned a position, as designated by Col. York, (with great caution and all possible quietness) so when the Artillery and Tank units so mentioned - we jumped off using our predetermined Mortar and Machine Gun fire. The Tank fire hit directly down the tunnel where their bag gun was put it out of commission and destroying some ammunition stores. Then the artillery scored well also on the Concrete placements and my men moved forward rapidly - with the greatest of good fortune. We even turned some of the Germans' guns around against them. A planned attack of almost impossible results brought over 800 men of the enemy forth to surrender, plus a large number of their casualties. This is exemplary of then Col. York's excellent command decision and excellent attack plans which he observed being carried out.

--- Personally, I cannot overestimate Lt. General York's actions. His technical training and close personal follow through was always well known and greatly admired by all men of Charlie Company and the rest of the Regiment and attachments.

*Walter H. Edwards Jr.  
Then Capt. 331st, Co. "C"  
83rd Inf. Division*

--- In my lifetime, I have not known a man who more clearly met the qualities of leadership than Gen. York. Those qualities - intelligence, character, courage, confidence in himself, the ability to get along with people, and an inborn instinct to do the right thing at the right time. You were aware of it almost immediately after meeting him.

--- He lead by example; and, because of his obvious desire to get the job done and his demonstrated ability and courage in getting it done, his men have their best. He never lost his touch and concern for every individual under his command. I hear a lieutenant make the remark that, next to his father, he admired Colonel York more than any man he had ever known. A great many people felt this way.

--- He is a loyal, patriotic man, dedicated to God, Country, and profession. Bob loved to sing. When the opportunity presented itself we would have a few drinks and try to harmonize on songs we all knew. "Stout Hearted Men" was his favorite song.

*Robert C. Walker  
83rd Infantry Division  
331st Infantry Regiment*

--- York came to the regiment on 12 July 44. Organization and morale were in a shambles. We had had six Regimental C.O.'s in eight days. Two killed, two relieved and two replaced (one by York). We had also lost three battalion commanders and five or six company commanders. The routine for the regiment was attack every morning at 0600, fight until dark (about 2200 or 2300), button up for the night, go to Div. Hqr. for an order, assemble the Bn. Comdrs. for an order. I relate this sequence to demonstrate the lack of sleep and consequent exhaustion applicable to the staff. During this period, I got one hour sleep a night, the others were no different. York took one look at the staff and ordered every other one to get some sleep. He and I then visited every company and battalion headquarters and essentially reorganized the entire combat element. My recommendations were an important consideration in his decisions and illustrated his belief and practice that everyone be allowed to do their job until proven deficient. This aspect of his character, of course, only became apparent through longer association. York later told me that when he saw what shape the regiment was in that it was the blackest day of his life.

--- The evening of the day he took command Div. Hqs. ordered an attack for the following morning. York refused on the grounds that the regiment was not ready. No attack. He knew he would work in a tactical situation. We were in hedgerow country. Distances between hedgerows varied from 100 to 300 feet. York devised a plan whereby the 60m/m mortars would fire on the first row, 81s on the second, 105 mortars on the third, 105 Arty on the fourth and 155Arty on the fifth, regardless of distances between successive hedgerows. Prior to this Regimental COs had permitted no fire closer than 200 yards. On the next day he again visited each Bn. HQs company to explain the fire support plan and assure everyone that the attack would succeed. We advanced about ten times farther than we had on any previous day with few casualties. His visits and the success of the attack made him an instant hero to the entire regiment. Prior to the time he took command, we had suffered very heavy casualties. From July 4th to the breakout the regiment lost over 1,100 EM and 100 Officers. At least 75% of these occurred before York assumed command.

--- In the final analysis, York had that special quality of leadership that captures the imagination and inspires unserving allegiance and devotion: Charisma.

*John F. Staples  
83rd Infantry Division  
331st Infantry Regiment*

--- General York deports himself as a true professional and carries himself in a way that commands notice. He has a rugged masculine physique with a handsome face that suggests strength. His voice is not a particularly pleasant voice but it is distinctive and it, too, gets attention. At times when I think he is seeking complete attention this throaty-nasal toned voice will become so soft as to be almost inaudible and listeners do pay attention. It's a hackneyed expression, but applicable; "He's a man's Man". But, the York charm doesn't end with the Male associates. In a mixed crowd women, young and old are visibly fascinated as they unabashedly hang on his very word. York's secret of charm is really no secret to anyone who



has brushed elbows with the man. His personality is magnetic and appealing. He exudes charm and he bathes his audience in a warm glow.

--- He receives pleasure from group singing and his favorite song has been, "Stout Hearted Men." I have never seen him depressed nor have I seen him exhibit an exaggerated sense of buoyancy: emotionally, he keeps on an even keel.

--- If the General ever felt anger, it was always controlled and, during our entire association, he was never given to profanity or vulgarity.

--- He made it his personal business to inquire of men at company and/or squad levels as to how they were getting along, were they getting warm food and was the clothing adequate. This concern was well known through the command and the men responded with almost idolatrous loyalty.

--- Unconsciously, he transmitted to his officers, a feeling that each was important to him. Doing a good job for "The Colonel" became a personal thing with each of us. Being accepted by the group and, more importantly, by the colonel was all important. No officer in the regiment, to my knowledge, was ever made to feel inferior to or less important than any other.

--- there is no doubt his West Point experience brought all these things into focus but they are basically part of that mystical something we call Charisma.

--- I do not recall of him introducing himself but his presence was soon felt when food was brought up and the 'chow' line was formed. He spoke with several enlisted men asking if they had been receiving warm food and if they had what they needed in the way of clothing, then stepped back from the line to observe.

As had been the custom, officers were 'bucking the line' and stepping ahead of the enlisted men. One or two saw the colonel standing back of the line waiting and were quick to realize that he was sending a message. When the last man had cleared the line the colonel stepped up and was served. The officers were embarrassed and the enlisted men were both amused and impressed.

--- I asked him what was the colonel going to wear and he responded with "Oh, he's all dressed up - he took his entrenching tool off his belt."

*Charles P. Snyder  
83rd Infantry Division  
331st Infantry Regiment*

--- Colonel York always had a complete knowledge of what was taken place. On a number of occasions, when things seem to break down and the pace began to slow, he always had the know how of being there with the correct decisions.

--- Colonel York was always at the Observation Post directing the Regiment in a series of offensive operations.

--- Colonel York informed me that I was to move my company to the river, cross the river in pontoon boats, and to secure the objective on the east side of the river. His order was to set up a defensive position and to make contact with the Regiment on the left, and to coordinate the defense of that position. In the tumult of battle, his orders were clear and to the point, there was never a need to question him as to how he wanted things done. The confidence that he expressed in each of his subordinate leaders had a tendency to bring out the best in each of them. His foresight in this operation enabled us to achieve counterattack by the enemy. The same enemy, just the day before, was able to drive a unit from another division, back across the Elbe River.

--- When things seemed impossible, Colonel York always had a solution, such as deriving a method to get Tank Destroyers across the Elbe River, without a bridge, in order to assist the Infantry in driving back an enemy attack.

*Joseph A. Macaluso  
83rd Infantry Division  
331st Infantry Regiment*

--- I was a Captain of Field Artillery in the 908FA in direct support of the 331st C.T. I was attached to the 2nd Bn. 331st Artillery Liaison and forward observer. Before Col. York's arrival, we placed our fire by working as far forward as possible and then engaging separate targets that we could observe and adjust on, e.g. tanks, troops movements, strong points, etc. Col York added to this a new and highly effective fire plan. All mortar and artillery support was coordinated as rolling barrage lines moving ahead of our attack. For the first time, the yard-by-yard hedgerow fighting gave way to organized assaults that took hundreds of yards across the regimental sector. Taking more ground with fewer casualties can be a real morale booster.

--- At St. Malo, the Germans had constructed a large elaborate fortress - a labyrinth of underground bunkers supporting heavy naval guns facing the ocean. The 331st attacked from the landside. The 2nd Bn. made the final assault and took the surrender of approximately 600 German troops. It was our first big bag of prisoners and, somewhat overcharged with success, we gathered with their officers in a nearby schoolhouse and shared some wine with our captives. Into this bizarre scene came Col. York. The Colonel, through hell and worse, was always quietly strong, always in control. This moment, however, the steady composure turned to fury. Col. York knew then his enemy and within a few minutes he made certain that we did too. The drinks smashed to the floor, all ranks were jerked to full attention and all Germans, including some very high rank, were lined up and marched off with their hands on their heads. We had learned another lesson.

--- In our drive to the Roer River, Col. York was wounded in the hell and evacuated to the 109 (/) Evac. Hospital. A new C.O. was sent from Division to take over the 331st. York's replacement arrived at a busy time. The action around Gey and the open fields to Duren and the river was very heavy. The Germans were being reinforced and their fire support increased every day. The Colonel's painful wound should have kept him immobilized and hospitalized for at least 3 weeks. York, however, kept in close touch with the Regiment from his hospital cot and, when convinced that his replacement was a disaster, he discharged himself (AWOL) and on day 4 after his wounding arrived to take over. Not a day too soon.

*Harry C. Fleming, Jr.  
83rd Infantry Division  
331st Infantry Regiment*

### 331st Infantry Regiment - Enlisted Men

-- I was in a Marauder platoon attached to the 331st Infantry, of which General York was the Regimental Commander. He truly epitomized this position as a decisive leader, a man of strong character and military bearing, commanding respect, fearless under fire, instilling confidence in the men around him, as only a professional can do under those circumstances. He was a "soldier's soldier", beloved and respected by those above him and those beneath him.

--- During the war and right after it, when one spoke of the 83rd Division, the name of General York was always at the forefront; not the

Division of Assistant Division Commander. He was the man of paramount importance. He inherited a well known military name and was a legend in his own right.

--- Some years after the war, I had the honor of being named Co-Chairman of conducting a Reunion of the 83rd Division in New York. There was a lot of work and effort in getting men from all over the country to attend the reunion. General York, who was still in service, was most helpful in getting our peacetime association rolling. He came to New York to attend meetings and to offer whatever help he could. He was still one of the "boys."

*Emanuel Epstein*  
331st Infantry Regiment

--- we had outstanding commanders and at the same time Gen. York - then Colonel was certainly tops. We have rough assignments in combat at least from my standpoint. I knew we were guided by the best. I am sure from Gen. York down to my platoon leader the best was at hand.

--- Being attached to Message Center of Battalion I am sure I partook in many orders handed down by Gen. York and I can assure you that we always came up on top.

*John Walsh*  
331st Infantry Regiment

--- The first time I saw Bob York created a photo in my brain which after all these years remain vivid, clear as yesterday. The action was hot, heavy and moving fast, altogether too much so for any of my liking. Here was this guy with two silver birds on his shoulder screwing around in places which I would have given anything just to get the hell out of. Until that day, I had never seen an officer any higher than Major working that close to the front. This was to continue all during his command. It was only several years after 1945 was I to really appreciate a leadership which provided a much greater chance of getting out of the affair with a whole skin or at worse, alive.

--- After the war there were many chances to observe and hear Bob York. Even to this day I am amazed at the warmth, sincerity and apparent interest this man can bestow even in the shortest time with him. In looking back with the memory of the day the group of men who had been formed up to hear Col. York thank us for our military service under his command, to wish us well in the future because we were leaving the ETO for home. It isn't easy to forget a man who cares enough to cry as a child.

*Nick Boyd*  
331st Infantry Regiment

--- through my contacts with men and officers throughout the regiment, I was able to obtain first-hand reactions to our Commanding Officer, Robert H. York

---from the first month that York took command, the Regiment became a highly coordinated and spirited fighting unit. Admiration for York was exceptionally high. This was due largely to York's respect for the men serving under him; in stark contrast to our Division Chief of Staff, who refereed to replacements in the infantry as 'meat on hoof'. York's command were without threat, yet they came through 'loud and clear'. He was quick to discipline, yet always fair. -- He recognized laxity in leadership quickly. He changed command of his First Battalion four times

---At the battle of St. Malo, York was dubious about the accuracy of battle reports he was getting from one of his battalion commanders. He went forward, plugged a phone into battalion headquarters field line about 100 feet away and questioned the battalion C.O. as though York were back at Regimental Hqs. York's doubts were resolved in short order. The battalion commander was relieved on the spot.

--- He never issued orders expecting his men to accomplish the impossible without taking a full estimate of the situation even when this meant going up front himself but never with bravado and carelessness.

As York oriented himself on the battle situation in the Normandy Hedgerows when he assumed command he moved among the front line companies to obtain first hand information while getting personally acquainted with all of the officers. He followed one of the infantry lieutenants to a position at which point the lieutenant began describing the location of the enemy 88 tanks. York immediately recognized the vulnerability of the specific ground on which they were lying, yelled at the lieutenant: "What are we doing here"? Whereupon he moved out fast with the lieutenant close on his heels.

--- I recall the battle of Hamm, Germany when we were completely surrounded by German tanks; they were closing in on us. We felt we would be decimated. York's calm was pervasive. He grouped our men at strategic points. The tanks were stopped. Following this battle, York went on a forward mission in his jeep. His jeep hit a land mine. Fortunately, it was weighted down with sand bags. Though York and his driver were thrown and severely bruised, York called for the medics for his driver, while he commandeered another jeep and proceeded as though nothing had happened.

--- His leadership qualities were further evidenced by his ability to build confidence in his judgement, (which was highly regarded by Division Headquarters, Gen. Macon) to be strongly decisive, to keep his cool; he never appeared harassed or "rattled".

--- From his officers to his men, York's fighting spirit permeated throughout the Regiment.  
*Jack M. Straus*  
331st Infantry Regiment

**The Fall Issue of the THUNDERBOLT will have a continuation of General York's service during the Vietnam Conflict and any other special tributes.**