Indiana DAR Enduring Promise

To honor: James A. Bowman

By Janice Bolinger
DAR

The Indiana Daughters of the American Revolution will be recognizing the 1,500 World War II Hoosier Veterans who remain missing in action and unaccounted. Bricks will be placed in the area surrounding the Soldiers and Sailors Monument in Indianapolis. The Ten O'clock Line Chapter will be sponsoring bricks for seven Morgan County veterans including James A. Bowman.

Morgan County's James Arlo Bowman was born in Martinsville on Jan. 6, 1920. He was the fourth of eight children born to parents Thomas Jacob and Ola Jane Adkiins Bowman. He attended Martinsville schools, and at the age of 21 on Jan. 17, 1941, James enlisted in the United States Army. He was assigned to the 151st Infantry Regiment 38th Infantry Division. Known as the "Cyclone" Division, the 38th had been formed in 1917, and while in training at Camp Shelby, Miss., survived a tornado.

BOWMAN

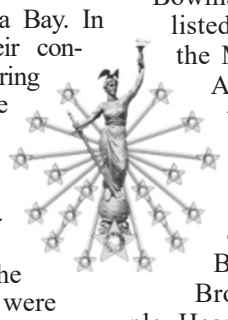
In January 1944, the 38th was deployed to the Pacific theater initially to New Guinea where the division saw limited combat. By December, the division deployed into the Philippines at Leyte to support clearing and security operations.

On Jan. 9, 1945 at 7 a.m. Allied warships entered Lingayen Gulf with troop landings beginning an hour later on Luzon. This battle lasted until the end of January. From the middle of January to early February, the largest tank battle between American and Japanese forces took place. The duel of tanks cost the deaths of hundreds of both American and Japanese soldiers.

A second amphibious landing took place on Jan. 15, and on Jan. 29, 1945, the 38th Infantry Division took part in yet another combat landing. It was in this siege of Luzon that James A. Bowman's 38th Infantry Division spearheaded the drive to annihilate the Japanese forces.

The Philippine Islands were of strategic importance to the United States with thousands of troops and aircraft stationed there. However, by 1942 Luzon, the largest island in the Philippines was captured by Imperial Japanese forces. (Courtesy map)

The division cleared Zig Zag Pass and the Bataan peninsula, and secured Corregidor and Manila Bay. In recognition of their contributions in clearing the Philippines, the 38th Infantry Division received the nickname, "The Avengers of Bataan."



Losses for the American troops were high, and on Oct. 25, 1945, SSgt. James Arlo Bowman was officially declared a casualty of World War II. While his remains have never been returned, a military marker in his memory is located at Liberty Cemetery in Martinsville.

Bowman's name is also listed on the Tablets of the Missing at Manila American Cemetery in Manila, Philippines.

Commendations and awards of James A. Bowman include: Bronze Star, Purple Heart, WWII Victory Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge, Marksmanship Badge, American Campaign Medal, Army Presidential Unit Citation, Army Good Conduct Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal and Philippine Liberation Medal.

From left: Mrs. Siler, Gene Poppino, James Arlo Bowman and Earl 'Doc' Siler pose at Siler's Drug Store in Martinsville in 1943 during Bowman's furlough. (Courtesy photo)

A military marker in Bowman's memory is located at Liberty Cemetery in Martinsville. (Courtesy photo)

(Courtesy photo)

Family members of James Bowman are requested to contact DAR member Janice Bolinger at 765-349-9862 or dlbjeb@comcast.net. It is hoped that families of all seven Morgan County WWII MIAs can be located.

April 1945 – World War II at 80

Battle of Okinawa and the death of Ernie Pyle

By Ronald P. May
MCC Contributor

OPERATION ICEBURG — The month of April opened with the Allies' amphibious landing on the island of Okinawa on April 1.

The island, the largest of the Ryukyus chain, stretched 70 miles long and 7 miles wide.

Located 400 miles south of Kyushu, Japan, Okinawa was the last major island defense standing between the advancing U.S. forces and mainland Japan.

Japanese military leaders intended to hold the island at all costs with their 100,000 troops.

U.S. military leaders needed the island as a launch point for air, sea and land operations in the future invasion of mainland Japan, planned for November 1945.

Codenamed, "Operation Iceberg," the landing at Okinawa was the largest amphibious operation of the Pacific theater.

The land battle lasted a grueling 82 days and involved four Army and three Marine Corps Divisions consisting of 183,000 combat troops, which later grew to 250,000 as the battle continued.

Although they were fewer in numbers, the Japanese fought tenaciously from well-developed defensive positions inside of caves, which concealed and protected them.

Morgan County men at Okinawa

Edgar W. Hovious had a front row seat to the amphibious landings.

HOVIOUS

A Martinsville native, the Coast Guardsman and Gunners Mate 3rd class was the captain of an anti-aircraft battery on his Landing Ship Tank (LST).

He witnessed thousands of Marines and soldiers going ashore on April 1.

As Easter fell on the invasion date of April 1, many of the landing forces were singing Irving Berlin's "Easter Parade" as they advanced to shore.

William "Bill" Pearson of Martinsville was one of the men in the "parade."

PEARSON

He landed on Okinawa with the 6th Marines.

A 1942 graduate of Martinsville High School, he was a PFC and not yet 20 years old.

Pearson endured the 13 weeks of grueling battle with the enemy in temperatures that often exceeded 100 degrees.

Pearson's division lost more than 8,000 killed or wounded in the weeks ahead.

The casualty rate was even worse in his company where there was one wounded for every three Marines.

Pearson was one of the lucky ones who survived without injury.

His younger brother, Donovan "Donnie" Pearson, also participated in the campaign for Okinawa.

The younger Pearson was serving with the 1st Marine Division.

He enlisted in the Marines in February 1944 after lying about his age. He was only 16.

The two brothers enjoyed a brief reunion on the island of Guadalcanal on Christmas Eve 1944.

Both men made it home safely after the war.

Martinsville native Ervin Cohen did not have the same good fortune as the Pearson brothers.

COHEN

Cohen, a 1940 Morton Memorial High School (Knightstown) graduate, was a PFC who had earlier served on Guadalcanal.

In May, he became one of many combat fatigue casualties and was later transferred to the Naval Hospital in San Leandro, Calif.

'Typhoon of Steel'

Combat was not confined to the land.

Enemy engagement proved to be just as deadly for the men on ships.

Japanese kamikaze attacks were so numerous and deadly around the waters of Okinawa that the title "Typhoon of Steel" was used to describe the onslaught of attacks on ships and armored vehicles near Okinawa.

During the brutal campaign, 36 Navy ships were sunk and 368 were damaged.

Close to 5,000 sailors were killed and another 5,000 wounded from the kamikaze attacks.

Russell Watson, a Lawrence County native who later moved to Bloomington, experienced the aerial savagery of a Japanese kamikaze attack on his own ship.

Watson was on board the Navy Destroyer USS Mannert L. Abele (DD-733) on April 12 when his ship was struck by a kamikaze 75 miles north of Okinawa.

The impact from the explosion split and sank the ship, causing the deaths of 83 — one quarter of the men on board.

Watson, who suffered broken ribs from the attack, made it into the water and was later rescued by a Landing Ship Rocket (LSR) vessel, which picked up survivors.

He was later sent to Washington D.C. to assist with gathering the service records accounting for the men on board his ship.

Death of Ernie Pyle

On April 18, tragedy struck beloved native Hoosier war correspondent, Ernie Pyle.

He was killed by a Japanese sniper on the island of Ie Shima near Okinawa.

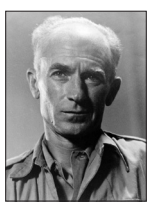
Pyle, who had been covering the war in Europe since 1940, had arrived in the Pacific Theater three months earlier in January 1945.

After spending time on Navy ships and visiting a few islands, he joined up with the Army's 77th Infantry Regiment for their landing on Ie Shima.

Pyle's articles appeared in 400 daily and 300 weekly newspapers, making him the most well-known and loved correspondent in World War II.

He was three months shy of his 45th birthday at the time of his death.

A member of the 77th Infantry Division erected a sign near the location of Pyle's death that read: "At this spot, the 77th Infantry Division lost a buddy, Ernie Pyle."


PYLE

The sign was later replaced by a permanent memorial obelisk that remains on the island today.

Pyle's body was buried temporarily on Ie Shima and was later transferred to a cemetery in Okinawa.

In 1949, his body was shipped back to the U.S., and he was laid to rest at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Philippines

The long battle in the Philippines continued throughout April, claiming the lives of more Americans, including two Morgan County men who died on the same day — April 25.

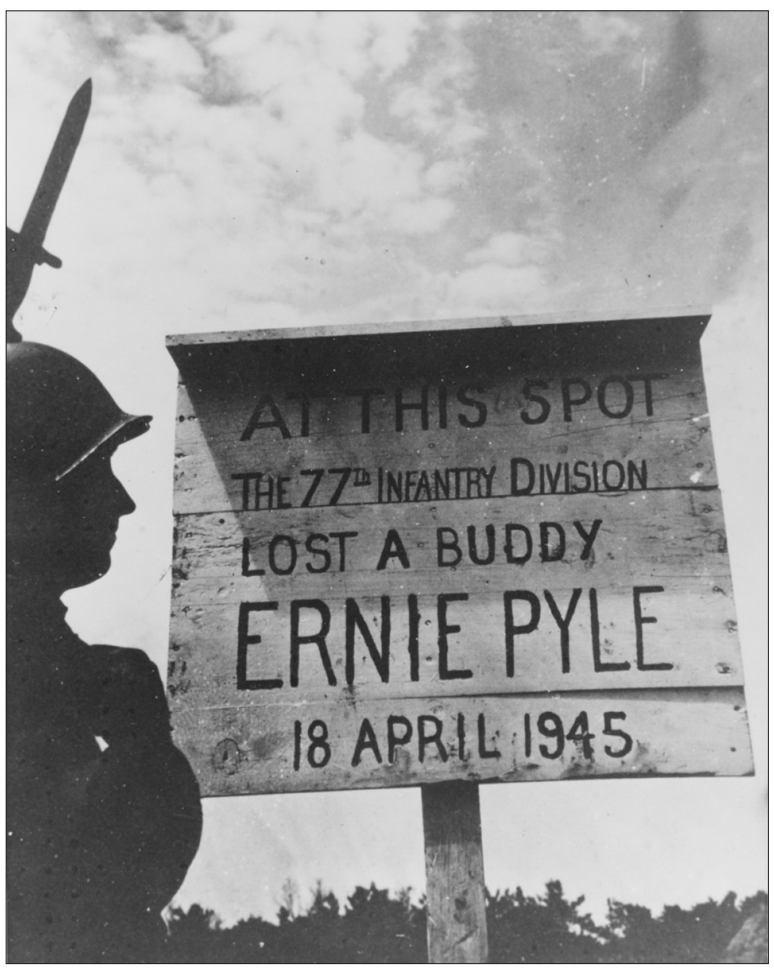
BOWMAN

James Arlo Bowman of Martinsville was killed in action near Bataan when a Japanese sniper shot him.

SSgt. Bowman was 25 and unmarried.

A 1940 graduate of Martinsville High School, he had been overseas for 18 months and was assigned to the Army's 151st Infantry, 38th Division.

He had served in New Guinea before being sent to the Philippines in December 1944.



A member of the 77th Infantry Division erected this sign near the location of Pyle's death. (Naval History and Heritage Command courtesy photo)

Marines wade ashore to support the beachhead on Okinawa in April 1945. (Public domain photo)

Charles E. Glover also died in action on April 25 while serving in Luzon with the Army's 38th Division.

A Martinsville native, Priv. Glover was killed instantly when an enemy mortar shell exploded near him.

Glover's battalion chaplain, Capt. Harry Krieger, sent a condolence letter to Glover's mother, Mrs. Ben Glover, at the end of May 1945.

Part of that letter appeared in a July 12, 1945, article in Martinsville's Daily Reporter.

The chaplain wrote, "As the radio operator for his platoon, his service was invaluable, and in many a critical hour, the responsibility of keeping in communication with the rest of the unit rested largely upon him. His special duty, too, made it necessary for him to keep very near the front in an advance, but there was never a time when Charles faltered or failed."

The chaplain ended his letter informing the grief-stricken mother that her son was remembered during the battalion's Memorial Day observance.

"Your son was in every respect the faithful soldier of whom his comrades and fellow Americans can be justly proud. Yesterday, on the occasion of our Memorial Day Observance, Charles was honored, as were other members of the Division who have given the last full measure of devotion."

The "last full measure of devotion" was soon required from other Morgan County men as American forces closed in on Japan in the final months of World War II.

Next time: May 1945 – Victory in Europe

Learn more about Ronald P. May and his books at https://ronaldpmay.com or contact him by email at ron@ronaldpmay.com. Check out his videos on YouTube at: World War II History & Stories with Ron May.