

Harold Combellick

Harold Combellick was born, raised and educated here at Gettysburg. He was one of seven children born to Benjamin and Marina Combellick. He had four brothers and two sisters.

He began his service career when he was drafted into the US Army on July 1, 1942 and served his basic training at Camp Crowder, Missouri. He was a member of the Army Signal Corps and it was while he was stationed at Camp Crowder that he qualified as an expert rifleman. From Camp Crowder he was transferred to Fort Dix, New Jersey and then to Ekins, West Virginia for maneuvers and from there he was sent to Boston, Massachusetts, where he continued to train as a telephone and radio repairman as well as being a truck driver. After being stationed at Boston he was sent to New York City and from there he shipped out for Glasgow, Scotland by way of the route where the Titanic sunk. Harold commented that Scotland was beautiful and they went by train from Glasgow to Bristol, England in 1943, and it was all green and lush and had gorgeous flowers and was so clean. They were sent to St. Loo, France on June 10, 1944 only days after D-Day. After being in France his unit traveled through Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg and Austria before getting to Germany. I have a feeling it was not just traveling through the countryside though.

He recalls asking an MP how many quarters there are in \$1 and when the MP didn't know the answer he said he "ran like Hell." He was a German dressed in an American MP's uniform. That is how he escaped the Malmady Massacre.

During the liberation of Germany he helped to haul prisoners out of the slave labor camps.

Harold was honored with three overseas bars, (referred to as Heresies and worn on the right sleeve, hash marks are worn on the left sleeve) Each overseas bar or Heresy designates 6 months in hostile fire. He was awarded an American Theater Service Medal, European African Middle Eastern Service Medal, Good Conduct Medal, and Meritorious Unit Award for service in Normandy Northern France-Ardenne and Rhineland Center. He also received a letter from Franklin Delano Roosevelt telling him that he squadron was the first to cross the Rhine River.

After coming home and landing in Norfolk, Virginia in November 1945 he was discharged at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin on November 25. And finally the trip home to Gettysburg and family where he married and became the father of three children, Roy, Linda McRoberts and Betty Ann who died at the age of 4 months old. He farmed for a few years and then moved to Aberdeen where he worked for Wilson Storage and Transfer for seven years. It was while at work that a warehouse door fell on him, breaking his neck and back. He was told he would probably never walk again and after three months at St. Luke's Hospital in Aberdeen he went to the VA hospital in Sioux Falls and after another three months walked out of there under his own steam, but he couldn't sit down, so for 11 years he either stood or laid. He farmed until 1972 and stood up on his tractor. He then had surgery for bone grafting and then moved into Gettysburg where he has since retired. He remarried and he and his wife became the parents of three children, Carmen, Billy and Brian. After retirement he worked for the Aberdeen American News, hauling the papers and also for the Potter County News, hauling the papers to Mobridge to be printed, so he spent a lot of lonely, early morning hours on the road.

At this time in his life he said he enjoys the meals at the Medicine Rock Senior Citizens, visiting old friends and playing cards.

Harold is one of many World War II Veterans that have seen many changes in the way a war is conducted and no doubt wonder why WWII was not the one to end all wars.

Thanks for your part in preserving our freedoms, Harold.