

Salute to veterans



Register photo by John Andrews

Brookings resident and World War II veteran Bob Camp poses with one of his most prized pieces of war memorabilia — an Italian .32 automatic Beretta. It was included in six cases of guns Camp confiscated when a man attempting to smuggle them into the mountains passed through his checkpoint in Innsbruck, Austria late in the war.

'Baptism of Fire'

■ Brookings man served in Europe in World War II

By JOHN ANDREWS
The Brookings Register

Bob Camp clearly remembers what happened on Nov. 16, 1944. That was the day the Brookings man and World War II veteran experienced his Baptism of Fire, or his first day in combat.

It happened in Europe, near the area where France, Switzerland and Germany meet. He recalls getting there at about 8 that morning.

"And I got hit that day," Camp remembers. "Shrapnel from a mortar shell, in my left leg."

"The concentration camp was a very gruesome place and it really shook everybody up how they could be so hard, so ruthless."

BOB CAMP
WORLD WAR II VETERAN
TALKING ABOUT LIBERATING DACHAU

He and the other members of the 409th Infantry Regiment of the 103rd Infantry Division had gone up the east coast of France to St. Die, where they encountered a mortar shell barrage.

"We didn't really run into any resistance until late in the afternoon. We'd gone down the side of the mountain, went

across a crick and back up into the woods.

"We'd already dug our foxholes and had them covered up with pine boughs and that. We were out talking with everybody and then they started lobbing those shells in. Everybody dove for their foxholes.

"I came in this way, and my buddy came in

this way," Camp said, gesturing in opposite directions. "And the shrapnel that got me in the leg got my buddy in the head and killed him."

Coming within inches of death was quite an indoctrination to the war for the Midwestern-born son of a minister. And it wasn't the only adventure Camp would have in his 18 months in Europe during the tail end of World War II.

From school to work to war

Camp was born in Nebraska, but because his father was in the ministry, he didn't stay there very long. In his formative years, he called Minnesota, Iowa, South Dakota, Washington state and Oregon home at

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