

The Battle of the Colmar Pocket Seminar 3-5 December 2010 by

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Between 3 and 5 December 2010 Outpost Europe and the Embassy of the Republic of France hosted historical seminars and commemorative activities in Arlington, Virginia commemorating the 66th anniversary of the Battle of the Colmar Pocket. The seminars were conducted in the Hyatt Arlington Hotel in Rosslyn, Arlington, Virginia. We were all greatly honored to be joined by MG Eldon Regua, Commander of the 75th Battle Command Training Division, descendant of the 75th Infantry Division; MG Randall Marchi, Commander of the 28th Infantry Division; and Colonel Hoffman representing MG Cucolo of the 3rd Infantry Division, to honor our veterans and commemorate the battle.

21 veterans from the Battle of the Colmar Pocket participated in the activities, including General (retired) Frederick J. Kroesen, who served as a Lieutenant with the 254th Infantry Regiment which was attached to the 3rd Infantry Division; Major General Lloyd B. Ramsey, then a Lieutenant Colonel commanding the 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry; Colonel Henry Bodson, who as a Captain commanded a battery in the 39th Field Artillery and served as Fire Direction Officer supporting the 15th Infantry; Colonel William E. Ryan, Jr., who as a Lieutenant served in I Company, 15th Infantry; and Colonel Charles P. Murray, Jr., who as a Lieutenant with C Company, 30th Infantry, received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions outside Kaysersberg on 16 December 1944. We were joined by other veterans of the 3rd Infantry Division, as well as veterans from other units which fought in the Colmar Pocket – the 36th Infantry Division, the 28th Infantry Division, and the 75th Infantry Division, as well as the 168th Chemical Mortar (Smoke) Company. We were also honored to have several children and other relatives of veterans present and of deceased Colmar Pocket veterans join us to honor the memory of their veterans.

Further veterans who participated were Sam Ieronimo (28th ID), Bob Phillips (28th ID), Arthur Habighorst (75th ID), Emery Antonucci (75th ID), COL Fred Clinton (254th INF), Bob Dutil (7th INF/3ID), John Miller (7th INF/3ID), John Keller (7th INF/3ID), Elias Hernandez (7th INF/3ID), Ralph Cartwright (142nd INF/36th ID), George Dexter (601st TD/3ID), Charles Condon (15th

INF/3ID), Rene Guercin (1st French Army), and Robert Ware Foster (168th Chemical Mortar Company), and COL Doug Dillard (82nd ABN DIV).

The seminars began on Friday evening with broad overviews of what was happening at that time throughout the world to place the Colmar fight into perspective and to review how each unit had arrived in Alsace by December 44/January 45. Saturday's seminars concentrated on unit actions in the Colmar fighting, with great testimonies from GEN Kroesen, MG Ramsey, and COL Murray, and many other veterans. Sunday morning's seminars discussed what the various units did after the Colmar Pocket in the final campaign in Germany, as well as further veterans' testimonies.

Numerous historians joined us to present on various aspects of the fighting in the Colmar Pocket and their efforts were greatly appreciated by Outpost Europe and especially the veterans as they gained greater perspective of the fighting in the Pocket. Naturally, during the war their perspective was that of one man trying to survive tough combat and horrendous weather conditions, and trying to take care of his buddies. Presenters included LTC (USA) retired Clayton Newell; Mr. George Cressman; CAPT (USN) retired Wilbur Jones; Mr. Mike Yarborough; Mr. Tom Crecca; Mr. Bill Boehm; Mr. Kevin Hymel; Dr. Mark Stout; COL (FR) Brice Houdet; LTC (USA) Tim Stoy; BG (USA) retired Creighton Abrams, Jr.; COL (USA) retired Doug Dillard.

On Saturday afternoon the group travelled to Arlington National Cemetery to place a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns together with Colonel Brice Houdet, Military Attache from the Embassy of France, to present a commemorative plaque to the Museum of the Unknowns, and to place a wreath at the 3rd Infantry Division Monument.

Saturday evening the Outpost sponsored a banquet honoring the veterans present and providing the veterans overviews on today's 3rd Infantry Division, 28th Infantry Division, 75th BCTD, and the French Army as presented by COL Hoffman, MG Marchi, MG Regua, and Colonel Houdet. MG Marchi presented each of the veterans a commander's coin, while MG Regua presented each veteran a 75th Division patch. Each veteran also received a certificate of appreciation from the Outpost.

The highlight of the dinner was the presentation of the French Legion of Honor to 7 veterans by Consul General Schaffhauser and Colonel Houdet. Mr. James Balogh, Mr. George Dexter, Colonel Henry Bodson, Colonel William E. Ryan, Jr., and Mr. Arthur Habighorst received their awards in person. Two awards were posthumous: Major General Daniel Raymond was represented by his daughter, Barbara McAuliffe, while Mr. Louis Schewene was represented by Captain Monika Stoy.

This event was the first time for such a commemoration here in the US, and the veterans were very appreciative of everyone's efforts. Outpost Europe is very grateful to all the historians and presenters who supported this unique event, but we are especially grateful to our veterans who traveled here to remember and to remember their lost comrades.