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FORT LEWIS UNITS DURING WORLD WAR II

By Don Simpson, LTC (Ret)

During World War II, six infantry divisions served at Fort Lewis. The post was capable of housing and training two divisions at a time and for much of that period two divisions were assigned. Of the six, the 3rd Infantry Division, which had been at Fort Lewis since 1920, was a Regular Army division. Four, the 33rd, the 40th, the 41st and the 44th were from the National Guard. The sixth division, the 96th, was activated during the war as part of the Organized Reserve. The 3rd and 41st were stationed at Fort Lewis when war was declared.

The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on Sunday morning, 7 December, 1941. The acting post commander, Colonel Ralph R. Glass, took immediate action to protect Fort Lewis, Camp Murray and McChord Field.



The 41st Infantry Division established a perimeter defense around the three

bases. The 3rd Infantry Division was sent to the training ranges to establish antiaircraft batteries. The 115th Cavalry Regiment from the Wyoming National Guard began patrolling the area's beaches. All leaves and passes were cancelled and a call went out over local radio stations for all military personnel to report back to their units.

The 41st Division's mission was expanded to

protect the coast line of Oregon and Washington. In mid-February 1942 the 41st was alerted for movement to Australia. The 162nd Infantry Regiment, the 641st Tank Destroyer Battalion and the 41st Reconnaissance Troop moved by train to Fort Dix, New Jersey. On 3 March, they departed Brooklyn Navy Yard for Australia aboard the SS Paula and SS Uruguay. The remainder of the division embarked at San Francisco on 19 March. Lead elements arrived in Australia on 6 April 1942 and began the longest overseas deployment of any division during World War II; participating in combat operations on New Guinea and the Philippines. General Douglas MacArthur labeled the division, "My Jungleers".

In November 1941, the 3rd Infantry Division was given the primary mission of training for amphibious landings. A training camp was established on Henderson Inlet eight miles



north of Olympia and each of nine infantry battalion landing teams embarked from facilities established there to conduct landings on the north side of McNeil Island. In the last week of January 1942, the 1st Battalion Landing Team, 7th Infantry, combat-loaded the USS Zeilin at Tacoma and sailed to San Diego for two weeks of concentrated training with the Navy. Over the next two months each battalion landing team conducted similar training.

Cont. on p. 3

President's Report-Ian Larson



We hope you enjoy this Spring-Summer issue of **The Banner**, again superbly compiled by our editor, Paul Knoop. *Friend* and Board member Don Simpson continues the history of Fort Lewis with his interesting

article about Fort Lewis during World War II. The installation's recent history was added to with the designation by the Department of Defense of Fort Lewis and McChord Air Force Base as a joint base, and renaming as Joint Base Lewis-McChord, or JBLM for short.

We continue to have more *Friends* opt to receive their issue of **The Banner** on-line. It is easy, convenient, and allows you to read **The Banner** at your leisure. You can also read past issues. Besides reducing the amount of paper used, the labor and the cost of printing, it saves postage. If you have a computer with access to the Internet, we hope you will consider switching to on-line receipt if you haven't done so.

On behalf of *The Friends* I want to wish Greg Hagge farewell and say thank you as he departs for a new position at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, MD. Greg was a long-time member of the Museum staff as the Assistant Director. He was the Acting Director during the period between Alan Archambault's departure and Myles Grant's arrival, and handled the duties with professional excellence. *The Friends*, in particular, enjoyed a cooperative relationship with Greg and received great support from him. Greg, we wish you much success in your new position as Curator of Ammunition with the Army Museum at APG.

You only have to drive by the Museum on I-5 to see that work on the facility is in full swing. Thanks to the Museum staff's efforts and support by the JBLM (I need to get used to this new acronym!) Cultural Resources Manager, the interior work will insure that the historic

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Director's Report-Myles Grant



Greetings Friends,

Spring is now upon us and the museum building restoration project and the planning for our reopening continues to progress well. The vehicle park shed refurbishments has been completed and our hope is to open the vehicle park to the public in late May 2010 as the first completed phase of our remodeling and restoration project for our historic museum facilities. As with any major remodel project, however, we have discovered a few unexpected challenges in the main building - asbestos and rotted sub flooring - which will delay the re-opening of the museum, but, as a result of these discoveries, we will now be privileged to have new hardwood flooring on the first floor - which will closely resemble the original 1919 wood flooring - and we will have a much safer facility free of all asbestos. Our current tentative date for a grand re-opening of the museum will be Independence Day 2011. In addition to the physical changes taking place in the building, the museum staff has been diligently planning the gallery and exhibit layouts to fit the newly remolded space and updating the museum's story line - which has been briefed and approved by the garrison and Corps commanders. Additionally, the museum is expanding its collection in the month of May through the cataloging of artifacts brought back by I Corps on their recent deployment to Iraq as the Multinational Corps Iraq and later U.S. Army Iraq headquarters. The museum's library and archives have been reconstituted in a temporary facility outside of the museum in order to allow the museum staff access to the research material needed to address the many official and public requests for information the staff receives.

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In February 1942, the 3rd Infantry Division replaced the 41st Infantry Division in defending the coastline. During this same period, the division was alerted for movement to Fort Ord. Initially, this was to be a temporary change of station. However, it became permanent and by the middle of May 1942, the last 3rd Infantry Division unit had departed Fort Lewis. The division later staged at Camp Pickett, Virginia and departed from Norfolk on 24 October 1942 as part of Major General George S. Patton's Western Task Force. On 8 November, they landed at Fedala, French Morocco, north of Casablanca, to begin two and one-half years of combat that led them through North Africa, Sicily, Italy, Southern France and into Germany.

The National Guard divisions were federalized in the square configuration. They had two infantry brigades of two regiments each; an artillery brigade of two light regiments of two battalions each and a medium regiment of three battalions; an engineer regiment, medical regiment, quartermaster regiment and other combat service support units. The square division was designed for the trench warfare and mass, frontal attacks of World War I. It was too big and lacked agility.

The triangular division was organized in "Threes" from rifle platoon to division level. It was more maneuverable and flexible. Supporting arms were also configured in "Threes" to support the infantry. The division could organize three regimental combat teams (RCTs) that included an infantry regiment supported by a direct support artillery battalion, an engineer company, a medical company and a signal detachment. Other division and corps units were available to augment the RCT.

To reconfigure as triangular divisions, the infantry brigade headquarters and one infantry regiment were eliminated; the artillery brigade headquarters became the division artillery headquarters and the artillery regiments reor-

ganized into three light direct support battalions and a medium battalion in general support. The engineers reorganized as a combat engineer battalion. Other support units consisted of a signal company, medical battalion, light maintenance company, quartermaster company, and military police company. The division was also assigned a tank destroyer battalion and a reconnaissance troop. Excess units were either employed in special defense missions or used to fill out other units. For example, the 161st Infantry Regiment was relieved of duty with the 41st Division and assigned as the third infantry regiment in the newly formed 25th Infantry Division. The 161st served with that division throughout the war. Similar arrangements occurred throughout the Army.

Other excess units became separate organizations assigned to Corps or Army level. As the history of each National Guard division is examined, one realizes it was a time of great turbulence and organizational change for these units. In many cases, it was easier to build a unit from scratch than to convert an existing National Guard unit.



On 27 February 1942, the 44th Infantry Division was assigned to Fort Lewis, replacing the 41st Infantry Division. The 44th, from New York and New Jersey, was federalized on 16 September 1940. They were previously assigned to Fort Dix, New Jersey; Camp Jackson, South Carolina; and Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. The 44th was to spend twenty-three months at Fort Lewis, the longest of any division assigned during the war. The division arrived as triangular with the 71st, 114th and 174th Infantry Regiments. The division mission was to train its units and defend the Pacific Northwest. Much time was spent patrolling the coastline and the beach areas of Puget Sound. Fort Lewis was ideal for training



Colonel Norman C. Caum addressing the 71st Infantry, Memorial Day, May 30, 1943.

large units. Units could progress from basic individual training through large regimental size maneuvers. Artillery units could fire at both Fort Lewis and the Yakima Firing Center, established in 1941.

On 27 January 1943, the 174th Infantry Regiment left the division for assignment to Western Defense Command. It was replaced by the 324th Infantry Regiment that activated on 1 February 1943 with a cadre from the other two infantry regiments. The experience of the 324th was typical of activating units during the war. Individual replacements were formed into units under the leadership of experienced cadres. Training progressed over a nine month period from the individual level to battalion and regimental combined arms exercises.

On 1 February 1944, the 44th departed Fort Lewis for participation in the Louisiana Maneuvers of 1944. After the maneuver, the division was assigned to Camp Phillips, Kansas until 24 August 1944 when it departed for Europe. The division entered combat in France on 15 September 1944 and ended the war in Austria.

On 1 May 1942, the 40th Infantry Division was assigned to Fort Lewis. The 40th, from California, was federalized on 23 March 1941 and had been



stationed at Camp San Luis Obispo, California. The division had transformed to the triangular configuration. The infantry regiments were the 160th, 184th and 185th. In June 1942, the 184th was transferred out of the division and assigned to Western Defense Command for coastal defense duties. Later, the 184th was assigned to the 7th Infantry Division and served with that division for the remainder of the war.

While at Fort Lewis, the 40th went through Army Ground Force Headquarters validation testing. Artillery units tested at the Yakima Firing Center. When the artillery units returned to Fort Lewis, regimental combat teams were formed and tested in combined arms. On 25 July 1942, the division received orders to move to the port of embarkation at Camp Stoneman, California, for movement to the Hawaiian Islands; thus ending their brief three month stay at Fort Lewis. Once in Hawaii, the division picked up the 108th Infantry Regiment as their third infantry regiment. The 108th was the excess fourth regiment of the 27th Infantry Division that was already stationed in Hawaii.



On 13 September 1942, the 33rd Infantry Division was assigned to Fort Lewis. The 33rd was from the Illinois National Guard and had federalized on 5 March 1941 in Chicago, Illinois, and then moved to Camp Forrest, Tennessee. The division arrived a Fort Lewis with two infantry regiments, the 130th and the 136th. The 136th had activated at Camp Forrest on 1 April 1942. A third regiment, the 123rd Infantry, was activated at Fort Lewis on 28 September 1942.

Of the original infantry regiments from the square configuration, only the 130th remained. The 132nd Infantry Regiment was detached on 14 January 1942 and assigned to Task Force 6814, the first Army unit to move to the Pacific Theater. The regiment departed New York on 20 January 1942 for Australia and then to New

Caledonia, where it became part of the Americal Division. The 131st Infantry Regiment was detached on 21 February 1942 and sent to Fort Bradley, Michigan to guard the Sault Saint Marie Locks located between Lake Huron and Lake Superior. The 129th Infantry Regiment was detached on 24 August 1942 and joined the 37th Infantry Division on Fiji Island on 20 September 1942.

The 33^d remained at Fort Lewis until 13 April 1943 at which time they moved to Camp Young California for Desert Training Center maneuvers. The division departed from San Francisco for Hawaii in July 1943. later, the 33rd participated in combat operations in New Guinea, Morotai Island and the Philippines.

The final division to serve at Fort Lewis during World War II was the 96th Infantry Division. The 96th activated at Camp Adair, Oregon near Corvallis on 15 August 1942. It arrived at Fort Lewis on 10 May 1943 for a short two month stay; departing on 12 July 1943 for the Oregon Maneuver Area, located between Bend and Burns, and participation in the Oregon Maneuvers of 1943. They returned to Camp Adair on 6 August 1943 and then moved to a series of posts on the West Coast until departing for Hawaii on 23 July 1944. The division participated in the campaigns in the Philippines and Okinawa.



A number of separate non-divisional units served at Fort Lewis during the war. The Army's first mountain infantry unit, 1st Battalion, 87th Mountain Infantry, activated on 15 November 1941, expanded to regimental size on 25 May 1942. On 19 November 1942, the regiment departed Fort Lewis for Hunter Liggett Military Reservation in California and then moved to Camp Hale, Colorado on 29 December 1942 to become part of the 10th Mountain Division. In August 1943, the 87th participated in the landings on Kiska Island in the Aleutian

Islands.

(Editors note: please see the Winter, 2007 Banner for detailed information on the 87th and the 10th Mountain Division.) [Click here to read this issue online.](#)

Fort Lewis played a major role in the reinforcement of Alaska. In March 1941, the 4th Infantry Regiment was deployed and established Fort Richardson outside Anchorage. The 138th Infantry Regiment from the Missouri National Guard that had been at Fort Lewis since 6 January 1942 embarked for Alaska in May 1942 and an assignment to Fort Randall located at Cold Bay on the Alaskan Peninsula. On 24 April 1942, the 58th Infantry Regiment activated. During May 1942 they staged at Camp Murray and departed for Alaska and assignment to Fort Glenn on Umnak Island in the Aleutians. Other artillery, anti-aircraft artillery and engineer units also staged through Fort Lewis prior to movement to Alaska.

Numerous other armored, artillery, anti-aircraft, tank destroyer and engineer groups and battalions activated, reorganized and trained at Fort Lewis.

During 1943, the Army acquired an additional 18,000 acres south of the Nisqually River that became known as the Rainier Training Area. This acquisition greatly expanded the post's maneuver training capability and brought the total post area to 90,000 acres.

IX Corps Headquarters which had been the senior headquarters at Fort Lewis since October 1940, relocated to Fort McPherson, Georgia in July 1944. IX Corps later deployed to Hawaii and ended the war on Leyte Island in the Philippines preparing for the invasion of Japan.

In the summer of 1944, Fort Lewis became the largest Army Services Force Training Center; training primarily medical personnel and engineers.

A contingent of 300 Women's Army Corps personnel arrived at Fort Lewis in late 1943 and assumed many of the administrative duties on the post.

Five Prisoner of War camps were operated on the post and by 1945 over 4,500 German POWs were held in these camps. The main camp was located north of Gray Army Airfield between 41st Division Drive and Pendleton Avenue.

The Army established and improved numerous camps and forts in the United States to train soldiers to prosecute the war. Fort Lewis played a major role in that process. Units and personnel who passed through here went on to combat in Alaska, the Pacific and European Theaters. It was a key installation in achieving the ultimate victory over Germany and Japan.

Don Simpson

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Taggart, Donald G. History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II. Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1947.

Fort Lewis Website. History of Fort Lewis, 1917-1919; 1919-1939 & World War II. Updated 1 July 2009; <http://www.lewis.army.mil/lewis-camp.asp> & <http://www.lewis.army.mil/lewis-wwII.asp>.

President's Report-Continued

characteristics of the building are retained and preserved. It is exciting to imagine how it will look when the work is done! Our brunch meeting on 6 June 2010 at Patriots Landing coincides with the anniversary of D-Day. Tom Morgan, Friends vice-president, will be our speaker. He will provide a presentation about

D-Day, a day that is less and less remembered as the veterans of "The Greatest Generation" pass on. Please mark your calendars and plan to join us!

Ian Larson

Director's Report-Continued

Lastly, the museum staff has built and supported the development of heritage centers in the new joint garrison headquarters, the historic post headquarters building, and in the I Corps headquarters. As always, these accomplishments could not be possible if not for the support of the Center of Military History and our magnificent and dedicated team of volunteers. Thank you for all your support and we will keep you posted as we continue to move forward with the museum restoration and new gallery layouts.

Respectfully, *Myles Standish Grant*

Fort Lewis Landmarks and Place Names By Synthia Santos and Paul Knoop

Gray Army Airfield, visible at the intersection of 41st Division Rd and Pendleton Ave, takes its name from Hawthorn C. Gray. Born at Washington D.C. on 7 March 1889, he entered the National Guard in 1912, served in World War I, and attained the rank of captain by February 1920. Gray was an ardent balloonist and established the world's balloon altitude record. He died accidentally during a free balloon flight at Scott Field, Illinois, in November 1927.

Editor's Corner

Would you like to know more about the work being done on the Museum? The contractor has many photos and weekly progress reports available on his website that you can review. Go to www.wpconstruction.com and select **CURRENT PROJECTS**, then **Fort Lewis Museum Historical Renovation**, or just click [this link](#).

All past issues of **The Banner** are available online at our web site, www.fortlewis-museum.com, by clicking on the newsletter tab. Included is an index of major articles and other items of interest.

**FRIENDS OF THE FORT LEWIS MILITARY MUSEUM
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
SUNDAY JUNE 6, 2010**

Place: Patriots Landing
Time: 1145-1230 Social Hour
1230-1330 Brunch
1330-1415 Program

Program: LTC (Ret) Tom Morgan, Friends Vice President, will present a program on the D-Day landings of World War II, focusing on General Eisenhower and Operation Overlord.



Please return your reservation form and check by Tuesday, 1 June 2010. Last minute reservations may be made by calling Paul Knoop at (253) 279-2598

Return this form to LTC (Ret) Donald A. Simpson, 6615 79th Street W
Lakewood WA 98499. Make checks payable to "The Friends".
Cost of brunch for members and guests: \$16.00 each.

Number of Reservations: _____ Total Amount Enclosed: _____

Name of Member: _____ Telephone Number: _____

Names of Guests: _____

Residents of Patriot's Landing do not need to make payment for the meal, but should make reservations for seating.

Please note that if you are not a Life or Honorary member, your 2010 Dues are now due, and payment maybe included with your Brunch payment.

**The Friends of the Fort Lewis Military Museum
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The *Banner* is printed four times a year and is mailed to all members of The Friends of The Fort Lewis Museum. Articles may be submitted to the Editor or left with the Director of the Fort Lewis Museum. The Friends assume no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts or other materials submitted for publication.

Editor.....Paul Knoop
 Assistant Editor.....Don Simpson

If you have comments or suggestions on the newsletter, articles to submit, or would like to receive your copy by email, please contact us: mail to Friends of the Museum, PO Box 331001 Joint Base Lewis-McChord WA 98433-1001 or email to friendsmuseum2@gmail.com

***Friends of the Fort Lewis Military Museum
PO Box 331001
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**Help Us Defend Our
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**If you are not a life or honorary member,
It's time to renew your membership for 2010.**

ANNUAL DUES

Individual.....\$ 10
Family.....\$ 15
Sustaining.....\$ 25
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A Life membership is only \$100.00

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