

1945 July 23-29

Combat Infantryman's Badge



Combat Infantryman's Badge
(Reddick Militaria)

Generals and armchair strategists have long called the infantry "the [Queen of Battle](#)" and "the point of the spear." The infantrymen themselves are more likely to use more prosaic nicknames, such as "ground pounders," "foot sloggers," or even "cannon fodder."

Many men and women served in the armed forces during World War II, but the infantry faced the most constant danger and worst living conditions. It was the soldiers on the ground who had to directly face the enemy and take ground to win battles.

The [Combat Infantryman's Badge](#) was created on November 15, 1943, as a [special award](#) to recognize the courage, skill, and sacrifice of the infantry. The criteria were established by a War Department publication and made retroactive to December 7, 1941, the date the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. "The badge consists of a silver musket mounted on a blue-enamelled rectangle one-half inch wide and three inches long, superimposed on a silver wreath of oak leaves open at the top." For additional awards of the CIB, stars are added at the opening of the oak leaves. In 1944, Congress granted an extra ten dollars per month pay for recipients Combat Infantryman's Badge. It is considered "the most prestigious badge in the U.S. Army."¹

This week we highlight articles about three La Crosse soldiers who earned the Combat Infantryman's Badge. They are just three of many La Crosse County soldiers who received that distinction.

Gets Infantry Badge

7TH ARMORED DIVISION, ETO — (Special) — Pvt. Paul L. Meier of the 7th Armored Division has received the combat infantryman's badge for excellent performance of duty in ground combat against an enemy in the campaign of Germany. His wife, Bernice H. Meier, lives at 1522 East avenue south, La Crosse, Wis.

(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 July 28, page 7)

Shiftar Given Combat Badge

WITH THE 100TH DIVISION, 7TH ARMY, Germany—(Special) —Pfc. Joseph Shiftar, 1128 Gillette street, La Crosse, Wis., has been awarded the combat infantryman's badge.

The local soldier's unit is a part of the victorious 7th United States army commanded by Lieut. Gen. Wade H. Haislip. The first American army to taste combat in World war II, the 7th was born at sea on D-1 of the Sicilian invasion. After sweeping the enemy out of Sicily in 37 days of hard, fast fighting the 7th became the mystery army of the European theater until revealing its power in the invasion of southern France.

From the beaches of the French Riviera the forces of the 7th army launched a drive that was to carry them more than 1,000 miles through the heart of Fortress Germany. No other army has fought over so long a route or has liberated so vast an area as the 7th. During this history-making drive

which carried it over the Maritime Alps, the rugged Vosges range, across the Rhine and Danube rivers, the men of the 7th captured more than 650,000 prisoners. This total includes only those prisoners taken in combat and does not include the thousands who surrendered en masse when the German 19th army and Germany army group G capitulated to the 7th.

In addition to the tremendous toll of prisoners taken, elements of the 7th army liberated thousands of Allied prisoners of war when they overran German prison camps.

(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 July 29, page 4)

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Humorous Things, Not Starkness Of Warfare, Are Recollections Of One La Crosse Soldier

Although the lot of an infantryman in Europe from D-Day until V-E Day was difficult, it was considerably brightened in Pfc. Lindsay Lloyd's case by his sense of humor.

He received the bronze star for heroic achievement and the purple heart for wounds received near Aachen, but the incidences which come to his mind are those which struck his appreciation of the ridiculous rather than those of the starkness of war.

On D-Day, landing with the second wave on Omaha beach, Lloyd said he was so loaded with equipment that he fell down three times before he reached shore, but it really didn't matter about getting wet, as the LCP which took his group of 35 from the troop ship to the shore already had taken care of that.

Slept In Pig's Bed

Months later, between the Rher and the Rhine, Lloyd and 14 others of his squad set up their mortars in a courtyard after dark and went into a barn to sleep in the hay. The next morning when they awoke they found they had been sharing a pig's bed. The pig, awakening at the same time, made a hurried departure after surveying the scene.

West of Aachen, on Sept. 19, 1944, Lloyd was injured by shell fragments from German mortar shells, which he calls a form of retribution because he himself was with an American mortar squad.

It was after three months in a hospital near Paris and a convalescent home near Cherbourg that he took an uncomfortable train ride returning to the replacement center.

In a box-like compartment of the third class coach the men and their equipment were so crowded that some slept out in the corridor, while Lloyd tried the short and narrow luggage shelf. He tied himself down with a tent rope because the previous occupant had



—Tribune Photo

PFC. LINDSAY LLOYD

fallen off and on top of his sleeping comrades below.

Made Own Stoves

To combat the bitter cold the men made stoves out of tin cans and used the oiled K-ration covers for fuel. When the smoke became unbearable, they opened the windows, thus reducing the temperature so much that they had to start all over again with their fires.

On Christmas Eve, when legend says that animals talk, Lloyd slept in a stable, he says, if the animals said anything he couldn't understand them.

Christmas Day brought a dinner of turkey and all the fixings; Christmas night was spent in a brick kiln, where the men slept on the three tiers of brick-drying racks with the cold wind blowing up between the slats.

Lloyd was anxious to see the famous Hartz mountains, but when he arrived there, he said they were covered with low-hanging

clouds and looked just like any others.

The forests of Germany didn't appeal to him—they look too cultivated, he said, with their straight, unvarying rows reminding one of rows of corn.

Sailed On July 1

By V-E Day Lloyd's group had fought their way to Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia. On May 28, 1945, he was transferred to the 86th chemical mortar battalion. He sailed for home with that unit on July 1.

He has been in La Crosse with his wife, Zelma, at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Schwartz, 428 South Seventh street. His mother, Mrs. Seth M. Lloyd, formerly of 1005 Cameron avenue, now lives in Flint, Mich.

Lloyd entered the army on Oct. 13, 1943, from Detroit, trained at Camp Fannin, Tex., and went overseas on March 23, 1944, where he joined the First infantry division as ammunition bearer in a 60 mm. mortar squad.

He received the bronze star for heroic achievement on the invasion beach for what he says was only part of his duty as ammunition bearer.

Official reports say his group was separated by one-half mile from the main unit, and that he crawled back and forth on his hands and knees under hostile observation, delivering important ammunition to his comrades to enable them to fight their way out.

Has Five Battle Stars

He wears the combat infantryman's badge, good conduct medal, bronze star, purple heart, the presidential unit citation and the ETO ribbon with five battle stars.

Two of Lloyd's brothers are in the service: M. Sgt. Seth M. Lloyd, with the signal corps in the Philippines, who has served since February, 1941, and S3c Malcolm Lloyd, in the navy since June, 1944, stationed at the navy pier in Chicago.

(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 July 29, page 12)

In 2005 there was finally recognition that soldiers in support units can also be exposed to combat with the enemy. The [Combat Action Badge](#) is an award for those circumstances.



Combat Action Badge

(Stars and Stripes)

Whether the emblem is a rifle or a bayonet, these awards are fitting recognition for those who are exposed to the dirty work of war that so few of us ever have had to experience.

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Sources & Notes:

¹ Jerold E. Brown, ed., *Historical Dictionary of the U.S. Army* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001), 117. Qualifications and regulations are spelled out in the [Code of Federal Regulations](#).