



BACK IN TIME — “That’s where we were, right there,” said 90-year-old Bill Tanner of Union City as he perused a copy of the Nov. 18, 1944, issue of The Stars & Stripes. On the front page is a prominent graphic entitled, “Lunging Against the Siegfried Lines.” Tanner spent three years in the European Theater of Operations during World War II, advancing from first lieutenant to lieutenant colonel,

and from platoon leader to commanding officer of an infantry battalion. “That little arrow right there, that’s where we were. Nineteen Forty-five would be the last year I saw it,” he said. The much-decorated veteran was given a copy of three Stars & Stripes newspapers and one copy of The Army Times, all from the February-December 1944 period.

After 65 years, military newspaper a real find

By **JOHN BRANNON**
Messenger Staff Reporter

A visitor handed a newspaper from long ago to Bill Tanner, 90, of Union City.

From a nearby table he took a pair of reading glasses, put them on and narrowed his eyes as if astonished at what he saw.

“Where in the world did you get this?” he exclaimed.

The object of his wonder was a copy of the Nov. 18, 1944, issue of The Stars & Stripes, a military newspaper published by GIs for GIs, in Europe and elsewhere.

Tanner is a much-decorated veteran of three years fighting with the 9th Infantry Division in the European Theater of Operations 1942-45. He rose in rank from first lieutenant to lieutenant colonel and from platoon leader to commanding officer of the 3rd Battalion, 47th Infantry Regiment.

His combat service was brought to an end when a mortar round exploded nearby, wounding him in his right foot. He was ultimately evacuated to a field hospital.

“We got the Stars & Stripes, but got it rarely,” he recalled. “We were lucky to get a letter from home. Then we finally got what was called V-mail. When

the war first started, it took three weeks to a month for mail to get to us.

“Let’s see. The war was over in May 1945. I haven’t seen one of these newspapers in almost 65 years. It’s great to see one again.”

Later, having perused it from start to finish, he enriched his previous comments. “The only thing that’s missing is some of the old Bill Mauldin cartoons with his Willie and Joe characters,” he said. “Mauldin was good. I remember one he did. It showed Willie with his jeep and he was holding a pistol, about to shoot the jeep like you’d shoot a horse.

“In another cartoon, Willie and Joe were hunkered down behind a tree. A sniper was shooting at them. Willie says to Joe, ‘Just ignore him. Maybe he’ll go away.’”

Tanner had some good reading material to use during the holidays. The Messenger gave him copies of three Stars & Stripes and one copy of The Army Times.

Memorial

May Simpson of Union City shares Tanner’s enthusiasm for the old newspapers. Her father,

the late Joe Estes, served with the U.S. Marine Corps in the Pacific during World War II. He saw action on such hotspots as Okinawa and Iwo Jima.

She, too, was given three copies of The Stars & Stripes and one copy of The Army Times.

She said she was surprised to see them. “You can’t hardly find them any more,” she said. “I’m going to make a display at my house as a memorial to my father. It will include the flag that draped his casket — he died in 1977 — and his Purple Heart medal. In the background there’ll be copies of these four newspapers.”

She said she’s doing this because first of all, he was her father. And second, “because we ought to honor all our veterans, those who have fought before as well as those in military service now.”

Origin

Where the four old newspapers were stored over a period of more than six decades is a mystery. About two months ago, they arrived via U.S. Mail in a packet addressed to this writer. The sender was Robert Vybrenner of Pennsylvania, a linguist during the Vietnam War. Vybrenner and this writer were members of the

same air crew that flew the Ho Chi Minh Trail during the war.

As it turns out, Vybrenner’s father, the late Joe Vybrenner, was a member of the U.S. Army’s combat engineers who went onto Utah Beach before the main landing party on D-Day June 6, 1944. He could have collected them and kept them as souvenirs.

Lanzer’s Printing in Union City laminated the four newspapers and made full-page copies of many pages.

One of the original copies, laminated by Lanzer’s, was donated to the Obion County Courthouse for display. Copies of all four will be donated to the Obion County Museum.

A brief history

Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia, states that Stars & Stripes “is an independent news source that operates from inside the U.S. Department of Defense but is editorially separate from it. ... [It] reports on matters affecting military service members and publishes five daily newspaper editions for the U.S. Armed Forces serving overseas — the

European, Mideast, Okinawa, Japan and Korea editions.”

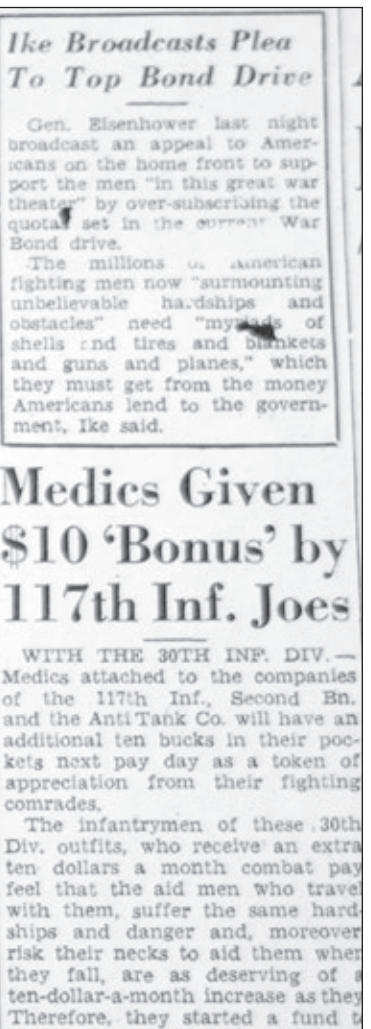
Headquarters is located at Washington, D.C.

Stars & Stripes was created on Nov. 9, 1861, when soldiers of three Illinois regiments set up camp in Bloomfield, Mo. “Finding the local newspaper’s office empty, they decided to print a newspaper about their activities,” the Web site states. “They called it Stars & Stripes.”

During World War II, the paper was printed “in dozens of editions in several operating theaters. ... Some of the editions were assembled and printed very close to the front in order to get the latest information to the most troops.”

The Web site also states that after cartoonist Bill Mauldin did his popular Willie and Joe cartoons for WW II Stars & Stripes, he returned home for a successful career as an editorial cartoonist and two-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize.

John Brannon may be contacted by e-mail at jbrannon@ucmessenger.com.



IN MEMORY OF ... — May Simpson of Union City displays a copy of the Oct. 26, 1944, issue of Stars & Stripes newspaper. She plans to use it and three others from the 1944 period in a display in memory of her father, the late Joe Henry Estes, who served in combat with the U.S. Marines in the Pacific in World War II. The display will feature his Purple Heart Medal, the U.S. flag that draped his coffin in 1977, and the four military newspapers.

MORALE BOOSTER — In World War II, as in all wars involving America, mail was a big morale booster to troops in the field. The photo and the

brief excerpts of other news is typical of the reporting done by Stars & Stripes and The Army Times.