

# Camp Adair

By Sonny Hays-Eberts

Camp Adair now lies abandoned north of Corvallis. Located just off Highway 99W, few motorists notice the sign promoting the four Army divisions that trained there almost 70 years ago. Some crumbling chimneys, some broken foundations and a memorial sign are all that remain to indicate this was once one of the most bustling places in all of Oregon. Interstate-5 has replaced Highway 99 as the main travel route and Camp Adair is probably more well-known now as a growing township of Corvallis south of the historical training camp site. I noticed the sign while driving to Monmouth for work, and a few weeks later, Judy and I made a trip up to check it out for some photography and to bring the dogs along. What was once a bustling little town is now a hunting and wildlife reserve which also features a mini-aviary of chukkar, quail and pheasant.

It is difficult to imagine how different this landscape was in 1942. The United States had just declared war and the massive mobilization of manpower was underway. Hundreds of new towns sprang up across America as the Army ramped up training, and ranks swelled. These 'towns' would be home to tens of thousands of young men undergoing training and maneuvers. In addition, sporting events and social events were part of the mix. Local citizens were quick to support the war drive, hosting USO dances and events in Corvallis, Salem, Albany, Eugene and Portland. The University of Oregon baseball team played (and lost) to the Timberwolves division team, which was one of the best baseball teams on the coast, sporting several players with Major League experience.

The Timberwolves, as the 104<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was known, was the federalized National Guard units of Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and Nevada. The citizens of Oregon adopted and supported all the units at Camp Adair, but the Timberwolves had a special place in people's hearts, as Mrs. Winston of Corvallis penned...

"Wherever go the boys of the 104<sup>th</sup> and whatever they do will always concern us in Corvallis who witnessed the birth of the outfit. They'll always be our bunch of boys."

Mrs. Winston would have plenty to keep up on. The 104<sup>th</sup> would serve with distinction in Europe; fighting through France to the Siegfried Line, fighting in Holland and Central Germany and linking up with the Soviet Union. They inflicted over 18,000 casualties and took over 50,000 prisoners while suffering 1,447 dead and 4,776 wounded. They took over 2,000 towns and communities and fought with valor and distinction, fully living up to the motto 'Nothing in hell can stop the Timberwolves.' They earned one Medal of Honor and 25 Distinguished Service Crosses.

The citation for the Medal of Honor awarded to Cecil Bolton indicates the strength of character found in the men of the 104<sup>th</sup>.

"Lt. Bolton, leader of the weapons platoon of Company E, 413<sup>th</sup> Infantry, on the night of 2 November 1944 fought gallantly in a pitched battle which followed the crossing of the Mark River in Holland. When two machine guns pinned down his company, he tried to eliminate, with mortar fire, their grazing fire which was inflicting serious casualties and preventing the companies advance from an area rocked by artillery shelling. In the moonlight it was impossible for him to accurately locate the enemies camouflaged positions; but he continued to direct fire until wounded severely in the legs and rendered unconscious by a German shell. When he recovered consciousness, he instructed his unit and then crawled to the forward rifle positions. Taking a two-man bazooka team with him on a voluntary mission, he advanced chest deep in chilling water along a canal toward one enemy machine gun. While the bazooka team covered him, he approached alone to within fifteen yards of the hostile emplacement in a house. He charged the remaining distance and killed the two gunners with hand grenades. Returning to his men, he led them through intense fire over open ground to assault the second German machine gun. An enemy sniper who blocked the way was dispatched, and the trio moved on. When discovered by the machine gun crew and subjected to direct fire, Lt. Bolton killed one of the three gunners with carbine fire, and his two comrades shot the others. Continuing to disregard his wounds, he led the bazooka team toward an 88-millimeter artillery piece which was having a telling effect on the American ranks,

approaching once more through icy canal water until he could dimly make out the gun's silhouette. Under his fire direction, the two soldiers knocked out the enemy weapon with rockets. On the way back to his own lines, he was again wounded. To prevent his own men's being longer subjected to deadly fire, he refused aid and ordered them back to safety, painfully crawling after them until he reached his lines, where he collapsed. Lt. Bolton's heroic assaults in the face of vicious fire, his inspiring leadership and continued aggressiveness even though suffering from serious wounds, contributed in a large measure to overcoming strong enemy resistance and made it possible for his battalion to reach its objective. HARRY S. TRUMAN"

Camp Adair is silent now. But if you visit it, take a second and listen to the ghosts of the soldiers past.