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Join Us!
**68th Merrill's
Marauders Reunion**

August 28-August 31, 2014

Hosted by the Merrill's Marauders Proud Descendants
in honor of their beloved Burma heroes

Crowne Plaza Milwaukee Airport Hotel
6401 South 13th Street Milwaukee, WI 53221



Scott Walker

Saturday Banquet Speaker:
Wisconsin Governor
Scott Walker

Merrill's Marauders Proud Descendants are honored to have Wisconsin Governor **Scott Walker** join us to speak at our Saturday dinner. ★

Need Assistance/Have a Question? Contact Jerrie Daly
mmpdtreas@gmail.com, or call 651-204-5002

Room Reservations Call: Crowne Plaza Milwaukee Airport, 6401 S. 13th Street, Milwaukee, WI 53221. Please reserve your room/s directly with the hotel by calling at 414-764-5300 or toll-free at 1-800-227-6963 and referencing Merrill's Marauders Proud Descendants. Rates are \$99 + tax per night. Rooms accommodate up to 4 guests. To make online reservations use the code **MMA** in the Group Code box. <http://www.cpmilwaukeeairporthotel.com>

Rates are good up to noon August 6, 2014. Reservations made after that date are subject to availability. Rates are good 3 days pre and post reunion dates.



**Don't Miss It! Friday
Reunion Excursion**

- 9:30–11 a.m. Harley Davidson Motorcycle Museum
The museum has more than 450 historic motorcycles and thousands of artifacts from the Motor Company's 110-year history. Bring your camera!
- 11:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m. Lakefront Brewery
Tour and lunch. You will also receive a souvenir beer mug.

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Our sincere thanks to **Gary and Rudy Binter** for their generosity in paying for the two tours and lunch, but you will have to pay the \$15 for the bus fare. As usual, Marauders get a free bus ride. Please let us know if you plan to take the tour, since we have to arrange for the bus (limited to 48 guests) and the purchase of tickets. It may not be possible to accommodate last minute decisions to join us. ★

A Message from the MMPD President



This is the last issue of the “Burman News” that will be published by an actual Marauder, as Bob Passanisi is ready to “pass the baton.” Sad, isn’t it?

Bob, you have done a fantastic job of information sharing, but alas, it is now time for the Proud Descendants to step up to the plate.

About 800 copies of the Burman News are mailed out periodically and there are still about 300 Marauders (50 Original 5307th and 250 Replacements) still marching our lands but yet, less than two dozen Marauders and 80 or so Proud Descendants attend the

yearly reunions. The rest of you are missing out on an important event.

My father, an enlisted GI from before the start of WWII and an original member of Galahad, died back in 1978. I still attended many reunions on my own, and brought my family to some. It gives them a better understanding of their heritage and the cost of freedom. I made so many great and lasting friendships because I attended the reunions, and I will continue to maintain the honor and legacy of the Marauders for as long as I breathe.

We, the Proud Descendants will continue with the “Burman News” in some sort of way. We do not have the finances to continue to mail 800 copies out, so we will try to go digital through email and web access.

Please do your part by contacting us ASAP with your name, address, phone, and email, and if you know of a Marauder or Descendant that is not electronically connected, please pass on their information and we will try to still mail them some sort of “News.”

Contact me directly: mmpdpres@gmail.com or our secretary Greg Walker: mmpdsec@gmail.com.

But the best way to aid the Marauders and their memory is to become a participant in the MMPD. Please don’t be a “no show” at the annual reunion. Become a lifelong friend instead.

— Bob Menta, Pres. MMPD

Vincent “Maxie” Melillo Praised by Guest Speaker Eric Shinseki

Former Veteran’s Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki, who’s also a Ranger, retired four-star general and former Army Chief of Staff, was the guest speaker in May for the annual ball held by Camp Frank D. Merrill. Shinseki acknowledged Marauder Vincent Melillo in his remarks and later sent a letter praising the Marauders for their WW II efforts.

The first Japanese-American to achieve the rank of four-star general, Shinseki was a friend of the late Nisei Marauders Roy Matsumoto and Grant Hirabayashi. Seen left to right in the photo are LTC Michael Scarpulla, commander of the 5th Ranger Training Battalion at Camp Merrill in Dahlenega, Ga., Marauder Vincent Melillo and former Veteran’s Affairs secretary Eric Shinseki. (See Mr. Shinseki’s letter to Vincent Melillo on page 3.)



Dear Mom and Dad,
 We just arrived and it is hot in the day and night. Me and the other troops made a campfire so we can write our letters. We were ambushed when we landed. I was shot in the head, but I felt no pain and kept fighting. It has been a long day and me and my brothers are tired. Good night from Burma.

Love,
 Tad (Merrill's Marauder Tootles)



YOUNG
 "CAMPERS"
 PRETENDING TO
 BE MARAUDERS
 WRITE PARENTS
 LETTERS FROM
 BURMA

Dear Ma,
 I am deep behind enemy lines. I was shot but I am fine. Do you remember those nice men who were graduating with me to become a soldier? Well if you don't, their names are John and Jim. Jim is dead and John, I have no idea where he is. Even if this is war, we tell jokes and talk about our family and friends. One guy said that his little brother got grounded for drinking COKE without permission. Tad said that a girl slapped him because he liked her. He was slapped because she already had a boyfriend. If I die, I hope you know I love you. Tell Hannah I love her.

Your loving Merrill's Marauder son,
 Zackary T. McKenzie

Three of 18 young participants in the National Infantry Museum's "Summer Camp Benning" program in June were asked to pretend they were Merrill's Marauders writing letters home to their parents from Burma. The homework assignment followed a Merrill's Marauder display and presentation by Vincent Melillo, 96, who's also a Korean War veteran and lives near Ft. Benning.

The young "campers" ranged in age from six to 15.

The three letters were written by Tad Warren, Brendan Belman and Zackary T. Kokenzie. Each young "camper" personalized his letter, although Melillo did share that he was injured in the Korean War when shrapnel hit him in the head, splitting open his nose.

April 3, 1944

Dear Mom,
 My team, the Merrill's Marauders, are in the jungles and carrying everything on our back. I stole an enemy soldier's pack today. Also, could you ask my wife how my new son, Snowy, is doing. (We called him that because we accidentally got him an Army hat that old people wear.) Thank you and I hope to see you soon.

Love Richard (Brendan Belmar)

After 70 Years, Delmar Strunk Gets His Medals

Delmar Strunk, 92, stood straight in a dark blue suit, shook hands and welcomed family and neighbors filing into the high-ceiling old auditorium Wednesday afternoon, May 28, 2014 in the Scotland ND City Hall.

That he was alive to see his life take this pleasant turn would have seemed beyond remarkable 70 years ago. Strunk had just emerged from some of the toughest jungle fighting in World War II. On the auditorium stage, he sat quietly and composed as Jon Hittle of the American Legion's China Post 1 described to the audience of about 100 Strunk's role at Shaduzup, in Burma, in March 1944. Strunk's team of the 1st Battalion of the 5307 Composite Unit had moved into position at 3 a.m. to fall upon an unsuspecting camp of about 400 Japanese soldiers. Col. Osborne had given orders that no one was to fire any weapons they were to use knives and bayonets.

Word was passed among Strunk and his companions, Hittle said: "Don't shoot 'em. Stick 'em."

U. S. Senator John Thune joined Col. Marshall Michels, Ranger Lt. Col. Orson Ward and Ranger Sgt. 1st Class Burle Christofferson of the South Dakota Army National Guard and Hittle in presenting Strunk the Bronze Star, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with two battle stars, U.S. Army Ranger Tab and Presidential Unit Citation. Many of Strunk's company's records were lost when a pack mule carrying them plunged over a cliff, and after the war, awards often



Delmar Strunk, 92, spoke Wednesday at a ceremony to award him a Bronze Star for his tour in Burma as one of Merrill's Marauders in World War II.

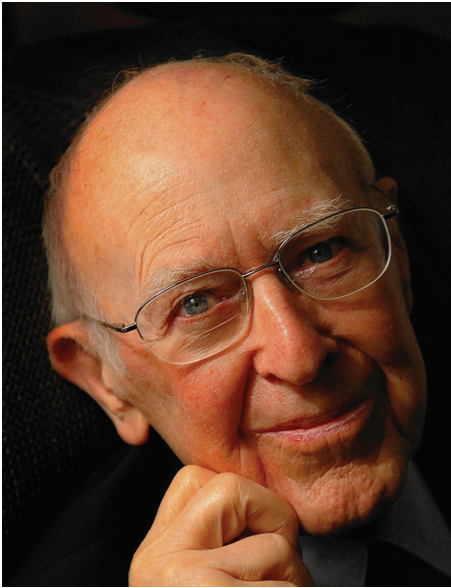
failed to follow soldiers into civilian life.

Senator Thune said the American Legion took the lead in seeking the documentation to support Strunk's military honors. Hittle directed the credit to Thune's staff, and Strunk's wife said she urged her husband to pursue the honors to which he was entitled. He told her he would, since their grandchildren would remember the occasion. For months, Merrill's Marauders successfully caught larger Japanese forces in pincer movements and attacked supply and communications lines behind Japanese lines. They fought in river valley jungles but in sight of snow-covered Himalayan peaks, Hittle said. They carried what they could pack on their backs and on mules and horses, and they were meagerly resupplied by air drops. The unit fought five major battles with the Japanese and about 70 smaller actions.

By the time the 5307th was pulled from combat, only two of its members had not been wounded or fallen ill. Strunk was not among them. He was evacuated and hospitalized twice for malaria and scrub typhus. He fought in three of the five major battles before his second hospitalization, and he was reassigned to another unit after he recovered. It might have saved his life. When Merrill's Marauders were disbanded, only 200 of the 3,000 members still were able to carry a weapon and fight. The rest had been killed, wounded or fell gravely ill.

"This day meant a lot to me," he said. The medals are good. They're priceless. I'm real proud of them. But you know, my friends that came, some of them never got invitations, they never got the word. But they came. They wouldn't miss it."

(Story courtesy of The Daily Republic)



Dr. James E. T. Hopkins

Hopkins, “Spearhead” Author, Passes

Captain James Ellicott Tyson Hopkins, our 3rd Battalion Surgeon, has been called by the Supreme Commander to answer **The Final Roll Call**, June 16, 2014. He was 99 years at his last birthday in January. Dr. Hopkins was a dedicated surgeon who would do everything possible to save our sick and wounded. One time, while operation on a severely wounded Marauder, it was suggested that the soldier didn’t stand a chance, Doctor Hopkins was heard to say “Yes, but I am going to give him that chance.”

Dr. Hopkins kept excellent records of the killed and wounded and wrote a paper, “Wounds Ballistics” for the Army Medical publication. He fought for the use of body armor and presented data that showed that even a small steel plate across the chest would save many lives.

Hopkins was one of the Medical Officers that grabbed a Jeep to the airfield and stopped a group of unfit sick and convalescing Marauders from being sent back into combat at Myitkyina. Dr. Hopkins, the author of the book “Spearhead, A Complete History of Merrill’s Marauder Rangers,” donated the rights to his book to the Merrill’s Marauders Association. With the passing of Dr. James E.T. Hopkins, we have lost more than a truly great man.

One Hundred Years of “Honor”; Passing of Roy Matsumoto

Master Sergeant Ranger Roy Matsumoto, an American of Japanese descent, a Merrill’s Marauder, Distinguished Member of the 75th Ranger Regiment, a Ranger Hall of Famer, a Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Famer, and recipient of the Congressional Gold Medal, has answered **The Final Roll Call**, a few weeks before his 101st birthday.

He enlisted in the Army in the fall of 1942 while living in an internment camp and answered president Roosevelt’s worldwide call for volunteers for a hazardous mission. He became one of the fourteen Nisei assigned to Merrill’s Marauders as interpreters. Roy’s invaluable skills in language, and the ability to listen to enemy scuttlebutt, was paramount in the survival of our 2nd Battalion at the siege of Nhpum GA.

Matsumoto was a “quiet, unassuming gentleman” who became used to dealing with prejudice. Back in the 70s, when he first attended one of the Merrill’s Marauders reunions with his wife and number one daughter Karen, he didn’t know what an American of Japanese descent could expect, He was overwhelmed with the attention, gratitude, and respect showered upon him. His daughter Karen was awed at the newly learned fact that her father was such a hero. She exclaimed, “He never said anything; I never knew any of this.”

Roy’s story was told in “Honor & Sacrifice: The Roy Matsumoto Story,” a film by documentary film producer Stourwater Pictures. The film was shared with attendees at the 2013 Reunion in Minneapolis, MN. The film has won a number of honors, including the prestigious 2014 Erik Barnour Award given by the Association of American Historians.

In any military campaign or action, many things, large or small, contribute to success or failure, but Roy Matsumoto’s service with Merrill’s Marauders was the one of the things that spelled the difference between success and failure. Every Marauder knows that if it weren’t for Ranger Roy Matsumoto, fewer, if any, Marauders would have returned from North Burma.



Roy Matsumoto



Two Proud Descendants and Patriot Guard Riders Honor Marauder

John & Susie Passanisi

The Patriot Guard Riders is a group of volunteers whose main purpose is to show honor and respect to veterans and their families when they answer the “Final Roll Call.” The Patriot Guard Riders motto is “Standing For Those Who Stood For US.”

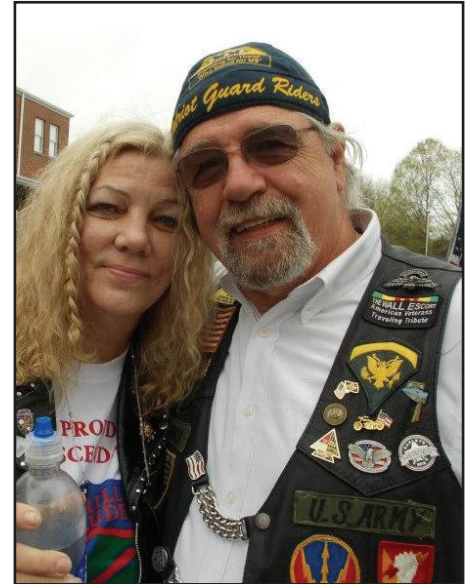
Susie and I have been members of the PGR for several years and have attended many of these missions in our home area around Fort Mill, SC. When requested by the family of a veteran, this group will come to the veteran’s service and stand in what is called a “Flag-line” (Flag-line=Each member of the PGR will line the entrance to the service holding an American flag and/or encircle the family and friends with flags at the gravesite). The PGR will also provide an escort from the service to the burial site (escort=an escort will usually be made up of mostly motorcycles, many of which will be flying American flags).

On February 8, 2014, two “Proud Descendants,” Susie Weston/Passanisi, the daughter of the late Col. Logan Weston (Orange

Combat Team—I&R Platoon) and John Passanisi, son of Bob Passanisi (White Combat Team and The Merrill’s Marauders Association’s Historian and Chairman), were notified by the Patriot Guard Riders that the family of Douglas Whitener, a former Marauder (1st Battalion, White Combat Team, Company B) had requested that the Patriot Guard provide a Flag Line and Escort for Mr. Whitener’s funeral service and burial in Greer, SC on Feb. 10, 2014.

So on the cold and rainy day of Feb. 10, Susie and I set out with our Harley Davidson motorcycle for a 2.5-hour ride, not only to pay respect to this veteran, but to let the family know that their hero was remembered by the Proud Descendants of the men he fought with, the Merrill’s Marauders.

The family was surprised and grateful that Susie and I, as part of the Marauder’s legacy, were able to make the trip to honor Mr. Whitener. As for Susie and myself, we are proud to have stood with the other 11 PGR members to



John and Susie Passanisi

honor the service and sacrifices of Mr. Whitener, but this mission was special for us because we also were able to represent our Dads, The Marauders and the Proud Descendants in paying respect to a Merrill’s Marauder.

To learn more about The Patriot Guard Riders, and how to request a mission, go to:
www.patriotguard.org

A Time to Reflect ... by Bob Menta

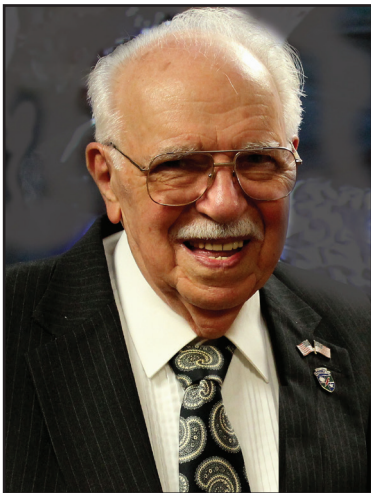
I hope everyone enjoyed the past Memorial Day Weekend. It was a time to watch parades and barbecues.

But most of all it was a time for me to reflect. To call to memory those who gave everything for their country and to understand the pain of the families that lost them.

I for one will always keep the 30th of May in my heart for on that day in 1944 my father was shot through his chest and endured a 13-hour trek back to 2nd Bn camp at Namkwi barely able to breathe where Dr. Abraham L. Kolodny performed a miracle to save his life.

My father always told me that the scars on his chest and back were from birth but one day when I was a teenager I found my father hiding behind our shed in full flow of tears.

It was only then that my mother revealed to me that he cried every
(see Menta, page 7)



Robert "Bob" Passanisi

47 Years of The Burman News

Sadly, and with a heavy heart, the time has come for me to end my involvement in publishing the newsletter, *The Burman News*. I say my involvement, because I expect that the Proud Descendants are not going to let the

newsletter just die. Proud Descendant, Sheila Fredrickson has already expressed her willingness to continue it in some form that is yet to be decided. It is intended that at this year's reunion Board meeting the Proud Descendants officers will decide on the form the new PD newsletter will take and will probably send a notice to all members. The notice will ask for your name and address and if you can electronically receive the newsletter, or if you need to receive a hard copy.

The newsletter started as two sheets by Tony Colombo in 1977. In 1980 it became a small 10-page booklet, and in 1981, it became a newspaper. In 1983, Ray Lyons became Executive Secretary and Editor of the newsletter and published it in a more permanent style as a 9x12" semi-gloss, eight-page, mailable tri-fold. In 1992, it was reduced in size to the standard 8.5 x11" I became Editor in 2004, and with the help of Sheila Fredrickson published it in color in November 2012.

The ten years that I had the pleasure of editing the *Burman News* has been a terrific experience, it has enriched my life, for I have communicated with many wonderful people that I would never have gotten to know. Ending the newsletter will leave a void, but age has taken its toll and dictates that it is time to stop.

Although the newsletter goes out to just a list of names, I really feel that it is more than that, for each name represents a friend that has enriched my life. Again I wish to thank each and every one of you for you dedicated help with your support and donations. For the Proud Descendants, for having the same character as our Burma Heroes and keeping their memory alive.

Thank you and God bless you.

— Editor, Historian, Robert E. Passanisi

Our Heroes Forever

PFC. BERNARD L. BROWN, 5307/475/2/G,
From grandson Mike Bronakoski, Final Roll
Call, March 6, 2014.

PVT. DONALD J. FRAZIER, 5307/1/C,
WCT, From granddaughter Suzanne Earl,
Final Roll Call February 6, 2014.

SGT. DONALD D. HESS, 5307/2/E BCT,
From Rudy Binter, Final Roll Call June 3,
2009.

CAPT. JAMES E. T. HOPKINS, 5307/3/
MED. DET. SURGEON, From Nephew Sam
Hopkins, Final Roll Call, June 16, 2014.

M/SGT. ROY MATSUMOTO, 5307/2/HQ
BCT, From Daughter Karen Matsumoto, Final
Roll Call, April 21, 2014.

SGT. BERNARD TELLER, 5307/475/1/
MED, From son Gary, Final Roll Call,
February 16, 1989.

PFC. ALBERT P. THOMASSON,
5307/475/3/L, From son Wayne, Final Roll
Call, February 11, 2014.

(Menta, continued from page 6)

Memorial Day because he recalled the horror of Burma and memory of his buddies that weren't as "lucky" as he was.

I pledge to never forget what my father endured and the sacrifices made by every Marauder and military person who served our country.

My thanks to you Marauders and Descendants who have suffered. You are what made this country great.

God Bless, and see you in Milwaukee.

— Bob Menta, Pres. MMPD

MEMORABILIA



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MERRILL'S MARAUDERS
 ASSOCIATION, INC.
 ROBERT E. PASSANISI
 Chairman/Historian
 111 Kramer Drive
 Lindenhurst, NY 11757-5407
 Web: www.marauders.org
 Email: historian1@marauders.org



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