

ALFRED MARCUS



Alfred Marcus (37096158) was drafted into the US Army on 2 December 1941. He left from Willmar for Fort Snelling to begin processing into the Army. That weekend he had off, and came back home for the time. On Sunday morning, 7 December, he heard about the attacks on Pearl Harbor. He wasn't supposed to be so far away from Fort Snelling so he scrambled to return to Minneapolis by that afternoon. He was sent to Fort Polk Louisiana where he began his basic training. He was assigned to the 32nd Armored Regiment, Third Armored Division. Alfred said that basic training was ok, nothing to complain about. He says that they were treated pretty good and he spent a lot of time working with the tanks. He stayed at Fort Polk for about three months.

After graduation, Marcus was sent to Fort Knox Kentucky for Radio Operators School. While there he learned Morse Code. His radio school lasted about another three months and he was sent back to his unit at Fort Polk. The unit was preparing for desert maneuvers in the Mojave Desert in California.



In June 1942 the 32nd went to the desert training center in the Mojave Desert. Alfred recalls that the temperature in the desert was around 143 degrees when they arrived. Around 25-30% of the men passed out from the heat. The unit was expecting to be going into North Africa when they left the United States. The training that they received in the desert was to prepare them for the fight in Africa.



On one day during the desert training, Alfred was asked by his company commander to take a Navy guy for a ride. The Naval officer had been griping about how tough he had it so Alfred's CO told him to give him a ride, but don't kill him. Marcus took the Navy guy out in the tank through some of the roughest ground that he could find. The two went off about a four foot drop and were rattled around. The Navy guy was trying to stand in the turret when they dropped and when the tank came down, he fell and broke his leg. When they got back to the base Alfred helped the guy out and was worried that he might get in trouble, but nothing was said about it.

One day while in the Mojave, Alfred was granted a leave to visit a friend that was in the hospital in San Diego, about 300 miles away. He ended up hitch hiking the whole way there. First he rode in an Army truck for 50 miles or so. Then he was able to catch a ride with a woman that was in the movies and her parents and dog to El Centro. After that he rode in the back of a dry ice truck, and he says he nearly froze.

In early October 1942, the division was transferred to Camp Pickett Virginia. They traveled there by troop train. They continued their training in Virginia for about three months. In mid January they were sent to Fort Indiantown Gap Pennsylvania. On one occasion they were called upon to go to Wilksbury Pennsylvania to help end a coal miner strike that was going on. They loaded their tanks and weapons with live ammunition and were told to use them if needed. They were there to get the workers back to work. By the time they got up there, however, the strike was over.

In early August 1943 they were alerted for Overseas service and moved to Camp Kilmer and Fort Dix in New Jersey. While there, they heard talks about censorship and security, received shots, and got physicals. In September, they boarded trains for New York Harbor and boarded troop transport ships.

Alfred's trip across the Atlantic was extremely rough. There were multiple ships in the convoy going over and at times the waves got so high that Alfred couldn't see the others around them. Many of the men on board fell ill with sea sickness. Alfred also got sick from the sea, but not so bad to have to throw up like many of the others.

Alfred's platoon was assigned a special detail to help out in the kitchen. One time while in the kitchen the waves shifted things so much that a bunch of sausage that were on the table were thrown onto the floor. No problem to the cook, he just picked them up and set them back on the table to serve. Alfred also remembers the cook having a broom handle type stick that he used as a walking stick to keep him up on the slippery and sticky floors on ship. This was also his stir stick when making oatmeal, but it wasn't cleaned in between uses.

After 14 days at sea, Alfred landed in Liverpool England. The regiment was stationed at Codford Wiltshire and trained over Britain's Salisbury Plains. Alfred's camp was at Codford St. Mary, a small village and they lived in 10' x 12' quonset huts. Eight men lived in each hut. All of their maneuvers were held in the plains.

Marcus remembers an instance when he and another man, Floyd Bell, saw a rabbit go down into a hole in the ground. After examining the hole they realized that it was just a short tunnel. Floyd put his hand down one side of the tunnel and Alfred put his down the other. Both men pulled out a rabbit. They roasted the rabbits over an open fire for a simple easy meal. Another time the two men caught a rooster from a nearby farmer and made a kettle of chicken soup. They thought that these meals were a nice change of pace from the K-Rations that they had gotten from the Army.



While in England Alfred had the chance to do some traveling and sightseeing. Stonehenge was within walking distance from their training area and he ventured out to that. He was extremely impressed by this sight. He says "I often marvel at how those stones were brought there from miles away." Marcus also saw the Pembroke Castle in Wales. He traveled to London and saw Big Ben, St Paul's Cathedral, and the Nelson Monument in Hyde Park. He traveled to see Westminster Abby and also saw the house of Parliament. At the Parliament he had a lunch of pigeon meat, which he thought was good.

During his travels in London Alfred did have to go into the subway station for a bomb shelter during the Luftwaffe air raids. Even during training he recalled hearing the "Buzz Bombs" going overhead, but most of the raids were focused on London. The US soldiers were well received by the English as far as Alfred could see. He doesn't recall any of them being mean or anything to them.

The unit spent nine months training in England preparing for the crossing of the English Channel and the invasion of France, what is now known as D-Day. In the days before the invasion, Alfred and the rest of the regiment spent their time preparing their tanks for landing. They all had to be waterproofed. Extensions were put onto the exhaust systems to bring the exhaust up above the expected water line. They prepared and planned to be landing in about 4-6 feet of water. They also had to seal up any holes and seams in the tank and coat all moving parts with cosmoline. The men knew that once this was all in place, they still had to de-waterproof the tanks after landing ashore. The men in the tanks couldn't see out once they were in and couldn't move the turret, so the tanks were not battle ready right off the beach.

On D-Day, 6 June 1944, Airborne and Infantry men landed on the shores of Normandy to establish a beachhead for the landing of the tanks and other vehicles needed for the battle against the Germans. Before leaving France, Alfred recalls listening to General Eisenhower when he came out to see them off. He also saw General Bernard Law Montgomery, the British General.



Alfred's group landed on Omaha Beach a few days after D-Day, about 23 June as he recalls. They landed, as expected, in 4-6 feet of water and drove their tanks onto the shore when the tide went out. They began to take all of the waterproofing off the tanks to be ready for battle.

Alfred and the men of the 32nd didn't encounter any enemy resistance when they landed. The men, as Alfred describes them, were very tense and scared since leaving England. They worked getting their tanks ready for battle, preparing for the fight that they knew was coming, but constantly thought about the task before them. The process of getting the tanks battle

ready took about a day, and then the regiment took off into France, on edge, but ready to fight.

It didn't take long for Alfred to come into contact with the German forces. Within a day or two, as Alfred recalls, the division began what would be 118 days straight of enemy combat. It was apparent early on that the men were on edge. During the first two days of fighting alone Alfred says that in his tank only they fired over 5,000 rounds of ammunition. That included both the 37mm cannon and the three .30 cal machine guns. He says that they were a little trigger happy and would rather shoot to keep the enemy down rather than wait to give them a chance to present themselves. The first two days of combat was stiff, only gaining 1,500 yards in 2 days, 29 - 30 June.

Alfred and the 32nd Armored Regiment crossed the Vireo river at St. Jean de Daye and repelled a German attack attempting to cut the Normandy beachhead on July 8-12.

Alfred's memories of his personal feelings are summed up in the fact that he only ate half of one can of a K-Ration over the first two days of combat. He says that he was just too scared to eat. K-Rations consisted of a can of some sort of food, a couple of ounce candy bar, and a few crackers. It was all contained in a box, about the size of a Cracker Jack box. In combat, the empty boxes served as their toilet, since they were not able to get out of the tank to do their duty. Alfred explains, "trying to do B.M. in a Cracker Jack box was not easy while sitting in a tank. A person loses most of ones modesty in war areas."

Alfred was assigned to Bravo Company, 32nd Armored Regiment, 3rd Armored Division. He was assigned to a light tank. These offered much more protection than a regular infantryman had, but the light tank's armor was no match against the German tanks or heavy artillery. Their primary objective was to combat German infantry and light artillery and mortars.

Alfred says that the first weeks in combat were the worst, especially seeing some of his buddies "looking like hamburger". He says "it is very hard to shoot at people and to kill them. But when they are trying to kill us...then a person kind of forgets..and thinks of them as an animal."

The landscape of France was full of Hedge-rows, which only had one opening in them to pass through. This made chasing the enemy out difficult. Alfred recalls on one night they pulled into one hedgerow area that had German tanks on the other side. The hedges were too high to get over or to shoot over. The German tanks were there before they were, and Alfred's group didn't even know they were there. The Germans heard them and took off at first light.



On another occasion in the hedgerows, a German tank was parked on the other side. As soon as the German tank commander realized that they were there, and a dozen US Tanks staring down at him, he stood up, shouted "Heil Hitler", and shot himself. This action was something that surprised Alfred.

The days in combat were the same. It didn't matter if it was Sunday or Wednesday. On a very rare occasion did Alfred recall having anything like a church service while in combat. Generally they didn't want to assemble too much and leave themselves as a target for the Germans.

On one night early on in Alfred's combat experience a couple of men from his group were killed. Bill Stefanick and David Bond took their tarp to make a lean-to against their tank to sleep under, stretched out with no rain to bother them. That night a large German artillery shell landed going through the tarp, and killed both men. Most nights, Alfred and the men slept under or inside their tanks. This event clinched that concept.

The men carried their sleeping bags or blankets in their duffel bags. Their bags were carried on the outside of the tanks. Generally, they did not get out of the tanks as this would pose an undue risk. They would try to take care of any "Nature Calling" early before they moved out, when the area was fairly secure. After moving out, the K-ration box was all the amenities that they had.



Female French Collaborators

Alfred says that as a whole the civilian population in France were quite friendly towards them. At times the civilians would even dig up a bottle of wine to give to the American liberators. Alfred did witness a couple of Frenchmen burying a dead Nazi soldier, but they left his feet sticking out of the ground. After having covered the body with soil, the men urinated on the dead man's exposed feet. Alfred also saw women going around towns with all of their hair shaved off. He found out that they were collaborators with the Germans working against the Allies.

As Alfred moved across France, they took many German prisoners. On one occasion, he watched a German get captured, and when the American soldier asked his superiors what to do with him, they told him to do whatever. The American in turn shot the German. This bothered Alfred extensively. He suspects that the shooter thought he was getting even for some of his friends being killed, but the event didn't sit well with Alfred.

Throughout July 1944, the 32nd Armored Regiment pushed and fought their way farther away from the beachhead. On 27 July they attacked north of Canisy to aid in the St. Lo breakthrough. On the 27th and 28th of July they advanced against enemy resistance to Cerisy La Salle and Rouncy, leaving destroyed enemy vehicles in their wake and capturing and killing hundreds of enemy soldiers.

On July 30 they crossed the Sienne River near Gavray France, meeting more enemy resistance. On 31 July they secured a bridgehead across the See River by fording the stream after building up the bed with rocks.

In August 1944, one of Alfred's friends in his unit, Maxwell Peacock, was captured by the Germans. Out of four men in the tank, two were killed, Maxwell and another man were captured. They were driven off to prison camp in the back of a truck. Alfred remembers clearly watching the truck drive away, unable to shoot for fear they might hit the Americans. Maxwell weighed 135 pounds upon release.

Throughout August 1944 Alfred and the men of the 32nd Armored Regiment fought their way deeper into France. The push involved almost constant contact with the enemy. On 6 August they secured the bridgehead across the Mayenne River. On 13 and 14 August, after crossing the river, they advanced 45 miles into France, leaving a trail of destroyed and burning enemy equipment and vehicles in their wake. On 16 August, they met up with British forces and effectively cut off the German retreat to the east from Normandy. Alfred continued northeast and they liberated French town after town, crossing the Marne River on 27 August.

On 2 September Alfred crossed into Belgium, and into the intense battle for the village of Mons. The fight into Mons cost the German Army severely. Over 2,000 enemy soldiers were taken prisoner. The passage through Belgium was short. The German forces appeared to be on the run, but resistance was met continually. One night around dusk, Alfred recalls the people of the town celebrating the American liberation. The American soldiers were showered with hugs and kisses. He saw a little girl he thought to be around 6 years old or so come up to shake his hand. As a good nature gesture to the "little girl" he picked her up, one hand under each arm. It was then that he realized that this little girl was actually a little 18-20 year old lady, and he recalls that he "felt a little embarrassed." Near Liege Belgium, Alfred recalls the unit taking around 3,000 enemy prisoners, which were turned over to the Service Company to be taken care of.

On 12 September 1944, Alfred reached the German border, and with it the Siegfried Line. The Siegfried Line was a man made fortification along the German border. They had made large concrete pillars to try to make the passage into Germany impossible. These large pillars were called "Dragon's Teeth." To pass over these, the Americans built large ramps over the Dragon's Teeth.

German resistance upon entry into their country was stiff. The 32nd Armored destroyed several 88mm guns, and six concrete pillboxes, sustaining heavy casualties. Alfred recalls trying to examine one of the pillboxes, but a few shots from a German sniper changed his mind.



The Siegfried Line, guarding the entrance into Germany. The concrete "Dragon's Teeth" were meant to deter mobility through the area.

In one of the first towns that Alfred and the other Americans reached in Germany, Morburg by Alfred's recollection, the Bergermeister, or mayor, of the city came out of a bomb shelter, saw the American advance, shouted "Heil Hitler" and shot himself. Upon further investigation in the town, they found that the mayor had also shot his wife and daughter, but had not killed them.

At one time the Germans had picked up the US radio frequency, so Alfred and the 32nd was unable to use their radios. The Battalion Commander came to Alfred's Company Commander with a message that needed to be brought to a task force located north of them. The Company Commander asked Alfred to carry the message, by tank over open terrain and German fire. Alfred started out, going as fast as he could go, hearing blasts from German Artillery. Each of the rounds was getting closer and closer. Finally, Alfred ordered his driver to slow, almost to a stop, and the next rounds went ahead of them about 200 feet. After a couple of more shots from the Germans, each getting closer, Alfred had the driver "step on it" and the next shells landed behind. They made the whole trip this way, and delivered the message. Alfred was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for his actions from delivering this message.



They moved into Germany and assisted in the capture of Stolberg by 18 September. When Alfred came into town, most of the German Army was gone, but there were still snipers in the city. As Alfred recalls, "the Lieutenant from the 1st platoon asked me if I would be willing to go with him to locate the snipers. I agreed and we had to get them before they'd get us. They were hiding out in a big castle...we won." He was awarded the Bronze Star for this action. He also remembers going into this castle, a large former soap factory, where men and women were gathered for the promotion and "manufacture" of the Aryan race, Hitler's choice race.

One day while crossing some plains, Alfred saw a pear tree with fresh pears on it. He thought he would get out and get some pears for his crew, but all of a sudden the Germans began firing at them from about 300 yards away. The Germans were positioned behind some farm buildings. Alfred did get a few pears before scurrying back to his tank. At his tank, he saw a German Panzer Tank moving in to his right. Alfred radioed for air support to assist with the Panzer, since his tank would be no match. The air strike came in a wiped out the tank, and Alfred and his unit took around 250 prisoners without losing a single GI.

Alfred and his unit stayed in Stolberg through September, all of October and into November. As the weather grew colder, the men fought cold, and the Germans. On 24 and 25 November they participated in an attack to oust German salient in the vicinity of Northberg. They fought and pushed the Germans back through the rest of the month and into December, finally pushing the enemy over the Roer river on 12 December 1944.



They received orders to return back to Belgium to help stall the German advance in the Ardennes, in what is now known as the Battle of the Bulge. The 32nd was set to fight over a very large front, from Manhay to Marche, beating down numerous German attacks.

Prior to the Battle of the Bulge, Alfred had the chance to meet up and get together with a couple of his friends from back home, Ed Sweirenga and Chester Roelofs. The men got together and spent some time catching up and visiting. The three men only had about 3 hours to be together, but at the time, they didn't realize that it would be the last time the three would all see each other. Chester Roelofs was killed in action during the Battle of the Bulge on 19 December 1944.

On 28 December 1944, Alfred was tasked with leading another tank into the woods to try to make contact with the Germans, to see where they were located. Alfred and another tank started out, and not far into the woods Alfred heard an explosion behind him. The second tank had hit a land mine. Two of Alfred's friends, Dexter Wilson and Arnold Thornberg were killed in the explosion. Alfred says, "why I didn't get hit I do not know because they followed directly behind me. It was only a matter of inches to the right or left of my exact tracks that the tank behind me followed. Once again I had a Guardian Angel."

In January, Alfred and the 32nd made an attack against the Germans in snow and mist north of Lierneux. In some of the most severe winter weather, they fought and battled fanatical German resistance, pushing a mere 1,000 yards a day at times. During this time Alfred's tank was hit by an artillery shell and tore the track apart. Alfred had to stay behind his column and try to repair it. When they caught up to the others, Alfred's tank was detailed with the task of acting as an ambulance, due to the fact regular ambulances were unsafe for passing through the lines.

On 3 January 1945, serving as an ambulance was what Alfred was doing. He had a wounded soldier laying on the outside of the tank, being transported behind the lines for medical attention. An incoming round exploded near Alfred's tank. The wounded man almost had his leg severed from the blast and shrapnel. Alfred had his head looking out of the tank, watching the wounded man. Marcus was hit in the left side of his head and left elbow with shrapnel from the round. He was awarded the Purple Heart for his wounds.

By the tail end of January, the Germans were losing their offensive in Belgium. The Battle of the Bulge ended and the German Army was on the run. After the Battle of the Bulge, Alfred returned to Stolberg, and prepared to cross the Roer River. The German resistance blew a dam on the river and caused it to swell making it difficult to pass. The 32nd Armored finally got across on 26 and 27 February and pushed their way into the Cologne plains attacking a well dug in German enemy.

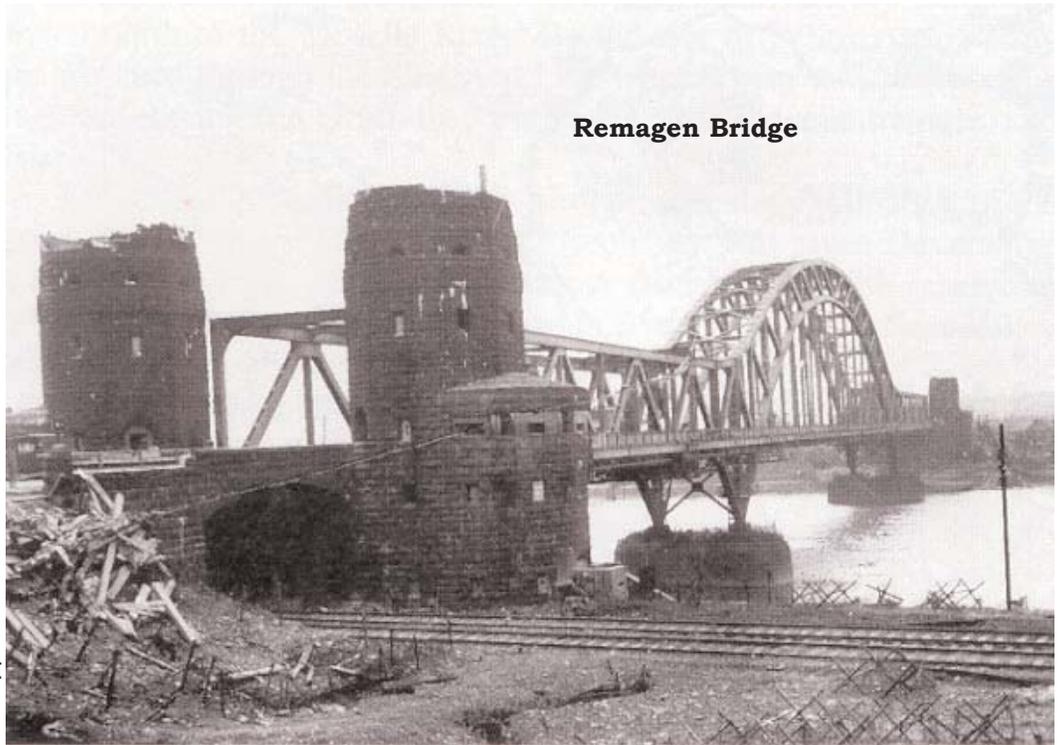


On 3 March 1945, one of Alfred's pals was sitting in his tank with the hatches closed waiting. A German artillery shell came in right on top of his position. Alfred ran over to see if he could help, but it was too late, his friend, Donald Bailey, was killed. Alfred opened the hatch and lifted him out. "I don't know where I received the strength to do this as he weighed between 250 - 300 pounds."

Days after Bailey's death, Alfred and the 32nd reached and took Cologne, reaching the Rhine River.

They crossed the Rhine river at Remagen Bridge, and attacked north, clearing enemy from the area south of the Siegfried River.

On 24 March, the 32nd and Marcus launched a pre-dawn attack that surprised the enemy near Asbach. For two days the enemy kept up its resistance, but eventually crumbled and a breakthrough was achieved. The next day they captured Hachenburg Germany and bridges on the Dill River at Herborn.



Remagen Bridge

On 29 March Alfred began the trek to Paderborn. The 32nd Armored traveled 90 miles in one day overtaking, destroying, or capturing hundreds of German trucks and supply vehicles. On 30 March they met heavy resistance against an SS Panzer Training Regiment near the city.



On 31 March 1945 the Third Armored Division (which Alfred's unit was a part) Commander, Major General Maurice Rose, was killed in the woods near Paderborn. The General's jeep came around a corner and found himself surrounded by numerous German tanks. The General pulled out his side arm to surrender when an over zealous German soldier misunderstood the General's intentions and shot him. General Rose has been considered one of the best Commanders of the War, but is little known as he was a fairly private man and didn't have his name in the headlines like General Patton. He chose to lead his men from the front of his division.

On 1 April, Paderborn was taken. Connection was made with the 9th Division effectively enveloping the Ruhr Industrial area of Germany. On 5 April they pushed east and fought troops along the Weser River, crossing the river on 8 April at Veckerhagen. Thus opening the door through the heart of Germany.

Major General Maurice Rose
26 November 1899 - 31 March 1945

On 11 April 1945, members of the 3rd Armored Division liberated the Nordhausen Concentration Camp near Nordhausen Germany. Initial estimates put 3,000 dead at the camp and 2,000 still alive, but only barely. Alfred recalls coming into the area of the camp. He saw four prisoners eating off the carcass of a dead horse, crawling with maggots. They just wanted something to eat. They couldn't walk, only crawl. Many of the prisoners were suffering from tuberculosis, and most were suffering from extreme starvation. They were only fed potato peels, one slice of bread, and something to drink all day.

From here on, Alfred notes that the resistance became light. The German Army was all but beaten. They crossed the Saale River pushing northeast, meeting sporadic German attacks and beating them down. Alfred and the 32nd pushed to within miles of Berlin, but it was determined that the Russians would be the ones to liberate the German Capital.

They were relieved from combat on 25 April 1945 near the city of Dessau. On 7 May German Colonel General Alfred Jodl signed the instrument of surrender in Reims France. The War in Europe was over.

The Third Armored Division was sent back to Frankfurt Germany to set up their post war positions. Alfred was stationed in a small town called Eppertshausen, where he says they “stayed to eat, sleep, and get fat.” He actually had a chance to go deer hunting a couple of times near here and one time shot one. He brought it to a family on the edge of town and was invited for dinner. He remembers fondly how good that fresh venison dinner tasted after months of rations. Alfred also recalled that they began to have regular church services again too. They were held in a large room above an old tavern.

In September, Alfred was sent back to the United States and landed at Camp Grant New York. From here he shipped home his souvenirs and collectables. He was allowed to take one gun home, but somehow he managed to dismantle and send six home. On 28 September 1945 Alfred Marcus was discharged as a Staff Sergeant from the US Army. He had been sent to Camp McCoy Wisconsin for processing out, and took a train back to Renville Minnesota to become a civilian once again.



Nazi knife and pistol, a couple of the souvenirs brought home by Alfred.



After the war, Alfred was married, bought a farm near Prinsburg, and raised three children.

Medals awarded to Alfred Marcus



Alfred Marcus today. Marcus still fits into his uniform and wears for the Memorial Day programs in Prinsburg.

Alfred Marcus with his MN WWII medal given to him by Blue Star Mother Jackie Rasset.



On 9 June 2007, the State of Minnesota dedicated the World War II Memorial on the Capital grounds in St. Paul. Alfred joined a contingent from Willmar who attended the event.

When the veterans arrived, they were each presented with a special medal in recognition of their service in World War II.

Following their presentations, they were invited to look over numerous displays of WWII era equipment and nostalgia. A special dedication program also took place, with Governor Tim Pawlenty speaking. Aircraft flyovers also highlighted the day. Everyone in attendance was treated with celebration cake.



On October 1st & 2nd, 2010, Alfred traveled to Washington D.C. on Honor Flight, southwest Minnesota. This was his first time seeing the WWII Memorial in DC

Alfred joined over 100 other World War II veterans from Minnesota on the trip which toured the WWII Memorial, Korean, Vietnam, Lincoln, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force memorials, Arlington National Cemetery, and the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum.

The whirlwind trip showed Alfred appreciation and honor for his service in the US Army during World War II.

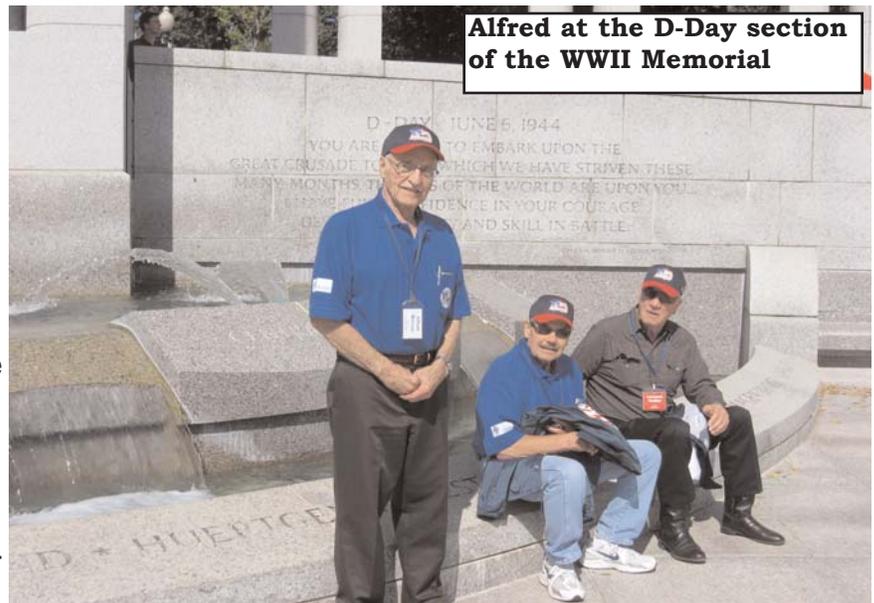
Alfred left Luverne Minnesota about 5am on 1 October, traveling to Souix Falls South Dakota to fly out to DC. After arriving in the District, the group immediately went to the World War II Memorial. The veterans were able to tour the grounds for approximately 2 hours, and took a group photo before their departure.

They traveled down the mall to the Lincoln, Korean, and Vietnam memorials, spending a couple of hours there before heading to Arlington Virginia where they stayed the night. At the hotel, they were treated to a hero's banquet.

On 2 October, they went to the Navy Memorial, Marine Corps Memorial, and Arlington where they witnessed the Changing of the Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Enroute to Dulles to fly out, they stopped at the Air & Space Museum, seeing the Enola Gay on display, the airplane that helped end the war.

Although a rapid trip, Marcus loved the experience. "it was a trip of a lifetime" he recalls.



Alfred at the D-Day section of the WWII Memorial



Group photo of all the veterans on the Honor Flight in 2010.



Marcus, left, with Gus Hoffer at the base of the Lincoln Memorial



On 12 November 2010, Alfred along with three other Combat Wounded Veterans were presented with the American Patriot Award at the Willmar Auditorium as a part of the Veteran's Day Observance.

The American Patriot Program Honor Award is an award given to honor military veterans through America's pastime, baseball.

The award is designed to honor combat wounded veterans with a special, laser engraved baseball bat. Alfred was the second Minnesotan to receive the award.

During the program, a brief summary of Alfred's service was presented by Jon Lindstrand, and the award was presented by Wes Hazlett, national chairman of The American Patriot Program.

In addition to the award, Alfred received a letter of appreciation from Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty, a special handmade fleece throw with his branch of service on it, and other donated items in honor of his service.



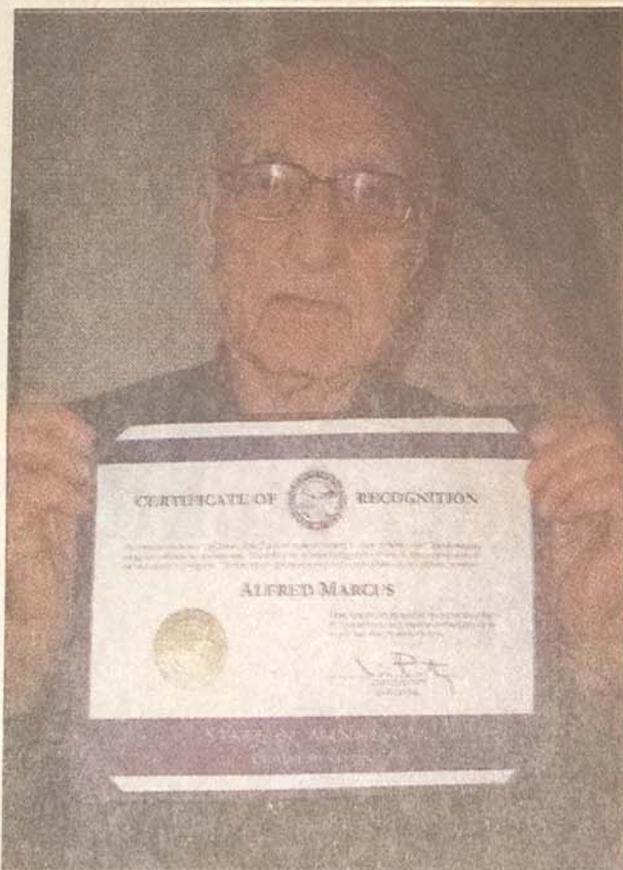
Above, the American Patriot Program honor award. This special laser engraved bat has his name, rank and branch of service on it.

At right is the Certificate of Appreciation from Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty.



Marcus being presented the American Patriot Award for his service in World War II.

Alfred Marcus is presented with the American Patriot Award



Alfred Marcus is shown here with his American Patriot Award that he received in Willmar on November 12.

By Bev Ahlquist

Alfred Marcus of Prinsburg was one of four combat wounded Veterans from Minnesota that were presented with The American Patriot Award (TAPP) on Nov. 12 at the Willmar War Memorial Auditorium. They received the award for their sacrifices in defending our American Freedom.

The award was a total surprise to 90-year-old Marcus, a World War II Veteran. "To my surprise I didn't know nothing about it," Marcus said, going on to explain his son called from the cities and said he wanted to go see the display Jon Lindstrand had at the War Memorial Auditorium in Willmar and he would pick Marcus up so he could see it too.

"He knew about it and I didn't.

When I got there and got the award, I think my heart skipped about ten beats."

It was something else, Marcus said. "I don't remember what they said when they gave me the award, I was too excited, I couldn't comprehend at all."

Lindstrand nominated Marcus and three others for the award and presented all four with the award that night. The other three recipients were Ron Macke-danz of Kandiyohi, a Vietnam veteran, Glen Gauer of Willmar, a Korean veteran, and John House-nick of Hutchinson, an Iraqi veteran.

In presenting the awards, Lindstrand summarized their

military careers, their history in the military, highlighting some moments relating to their military service. "He was extremely excited about it," Lindstrand said of Marcus. "It was a great event and a lot of fun to be a part of it."

Lindstrand said the American Patriot program was started in 2009 by baseball and hockey enthusiasts who wanted to pass along their thanks to combat wounded veterans. They work with makers of major league baseball bat companies and NHL hockey companies. This is a national award and only five people from Minnesota have received this award.

Lindstrand said he had been visiting with Wes Hazlett of Raymond about doing something locally, they wanted to honor some local veterans and they

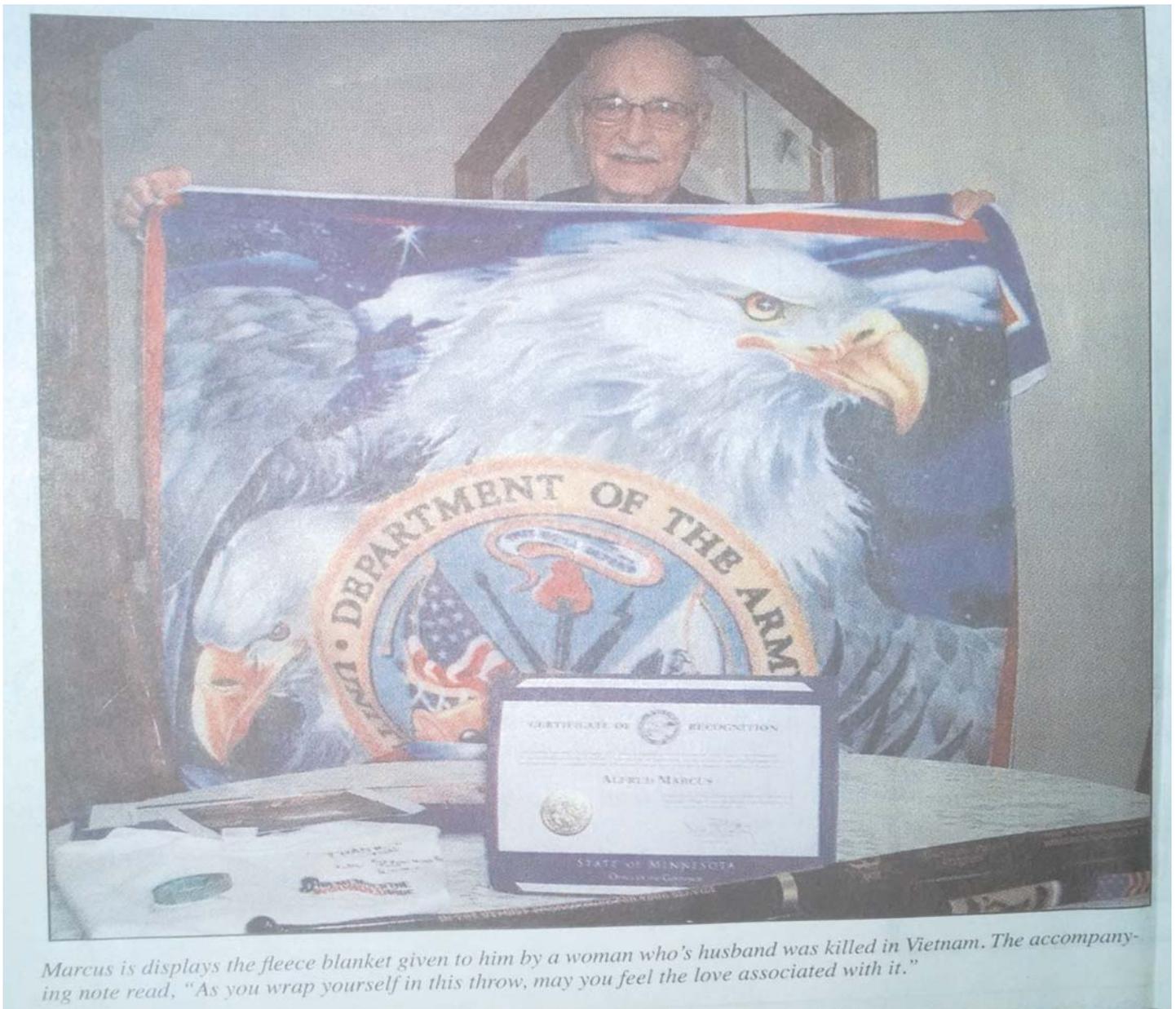
did that on Nov. 12th. "We chose four to honor this year and it may be something we continue to do as time progresses."

Hazlett grew up in Kandiyohi and went on to play baseball for the Reds for a season or two, then did some other league playing, according to Lindstrand. "And since then he's taken his love of baseball to utilize that to honor some veterans." Hazlett is the founder and volunteer national director of The American Patriot Program.

Marcus said the certificate he got was signed by Governor Pawlenty and read 'this certificate is presented to Staff Sgt. Alfred Marcus in recognition of receiving the American Patriot Award. Your determination, courage and patriotism are a true inspiration. The sacrifices you endured during your time of service in order to keep our country safe and secure are worthy of recognition, therefore with the appreciation and respect of the people of Minnesota this certificate is presented to Alfred Marcus.'

Marcus was also given a baseball bat signed by a baseball pitcher and told it was for going to bat for them. He also received a t-shirt signed by a corporal in the U.S. Marines; and a fleece throw that has a big Eagle on it. "It's really pretty," said Marcus. The fleece throw was from a woman in memory of her husband who gave his life in Vietnam in 1968. The letter accompanying it said 'As you wrap yourself in this throw, may you feel the love associated with it.'

The entire night was something else, Marcus said. "He (Lindstrom) said I was the second one in Minnesota that got that award. There's only 31 or 32 throughout the whole United States, so it really is something...I thank them all for doing it." Marcus said when he got the award it brought tears to his eyes. "I had to take my handkerchief out."



Marcus displays the fleece blanket given to him by a woman whose husband was killed in Vietnam. The accompanying note reads, "As you wrap yourself in this throw, may you feel the love associated with it."

The above article was run in the November 24, 2010 edition of the Raymond-Prinsburg News. Alfred was extremely proud of his recognition. The photo at right shows the four recipients of the award that night. Each man was chosen to represent the different eras of service.

From left, John Housenick (Iraq War), Ron Mackedanz (Vietnam), Glen Gauer (Korea), and Alfred Marcus (World War II).

Each of the men was honored for their service as combat wounded veterans.





CONSULAT GENERAL DE FRANCE
A
CHICAGO

Chicago, November 10, 2014

Dear Mr. Marcus,

It is a great honor and privilege to present you with the Knight of the Legion of Honor medal. Through this award, the French government pays tribute to the soldiers who did so much for France and Western Europe. 70 years ago, you gave your youth to France and the French people. Many of his fellow soldiers did not return, but they remain in our hearts.

Thanks to your courage, and to our American friends and allies, France has been living in peace for the past seven decades. You saved us and we will never forget. For us, the French people, you are heroes. Gratitude and remembrance are forever in our souls.

To show our eternal gratitude, the government of the French Republic has decided to award you the Legion of Honor. Created by Napoleon, it is the highest honor that France can bestow upon those who have achieved remarkable deeds for France.

Thank you for what you did and congratulations.

Sincerely yours,

Vincent FLOREANI
Consul Général de France à Chicago

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In November, 2014 Alfred was awarded the French Legion of Honor Medal. It is the highest award that the French Government can present.

A small presentation program was held for Alfred at the school in Prinsburg to bestow the award upon him.



Alfred's Legion of Honor Medal

Photo from the presentation ceremony from the Raymond-Prinsburg News.



Shortly after the formal presentation, Alfred traveled to Willmar to show me firsthand what the medal looked like, and share a copy of the letter of issuance with USMHC.