

2005.11.26

P. 20-21

ARKANSAS TIMES • JUNE 4, 1992

H I S T O R Y

DUTCH HARBOR REVISITED

Arkansans Remember the Aleutian Islands' "Forgotten War."



A Battery 206, Summer of 1941: (Kneeling, from left) Woodrow Little, Woodrow Trimble, Thomas Little, (back, from left) Floyd Halley, Kent Jones, Larry Obsitnik, Donnel Drake, Clyde Hill and Jerald McKinney.

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BY WILLIAM E. MAXWELL JR.

Fifty years ago, some 1,700 Arkansans came to grips with the reality of war. It happened in the most unlikely of places—far to the north in the rugged and isolated Aleutian Islands of Alaska.

On June 3, 1942, Japanese airplanes bombed and strafed the American military bases at Dutch Harbor on Amaknak Island. Among those underneath the falling bombs were the men of the 206th Coast Artillery (Antiaircraft) Regiment, Arkansas National Guard.

The Arkansans arrived in Alaska in August 1941, four months before the United States entered World War II. After the Nazi conquest of France and the Low Countries of 1940, America hurriedly began preparing for war. President Franklin D. Roosevelt obtained congressional authorization to mobilize and deploy the National Guard to defend American interests.

The 206th, stationed in 11 cities and towns, was ordered into federal service on Jan. 6, 1941. Under the command of Col. Elgan C. Robertson of Marianna, the 206th moved to Fort Bliss, Texas, to undergo intensive training. In March, draftees were assigned to the 206th to bring the regiment up to war strength.

In July 1941, the 206th was ordered to Alaska. A persistent tale, worthy of Ozark folklore status, links the fate of the Arkansans with New Mexico's 200th Coast Artillery. According to the story, the overseas deployment of the two regiments was decided by the mere flip of a coin. Over the years, the coin toss legend has been embellished with detail

and "eyewitness" testimony. The loser of the coin toss would be sent to the desolate Alaskan post while the winner drew "glamorous" duty in the Philippines. The Arkansans lost the coin toss. The New Mexico unit was sent to the Philippines, where it surrendered with the rest of the U.S. forces in 1942, only to endure the Death March.

The real reason the 206th went to Alaska and not the Philippines was more mundane. In July 1941 it appeared that the Germans might overwhelm the Soviet Union. American military planners worried that the Japanese might take advantage of the situation to seize bases in the Far North, threatening American defenses. A number of units were immediately dispatched to reinforce Alaska to counter any possible Japanese threat. The 206th was ordered north because it was the best of the five antiaircraft regiments then training at Fort Bliss.

The 206th reached Dutch Harbor on Aug. 16, 1941. The weather was cold and constantly wet. One veteran, Paul "Fox" Conway of Sherwood, recalls that after their arrival in August the sun didn't shine until Thanksgiving Day.

The Aleutians also have a wind phenomenon known as a williwaw. The winds often exceed 100 mph and can last for minutes or days. The capricious winds can suddenly reverse direction and have the power to beach ocean-going vessels. At least four members of the 206th died as a result of williwaws.

The Japanese attack on Dutch Harbor was a first. It marked the first time that North America came under aerial bombardment. The raid began shortly before 6 a.m. on June

3, 1942, and lasted about 20 minutes. Eleven bombers and six fighters from the aircraft carrier *Ryujo* participated in the attack, which caused only minor damage but inflicted 52 casualties. Twenty-five men from an Alabama National Guard unit were killed by one bomb.

Thirty-six hours later, the Japanese returned in greater force. Their most spectacular success was the destruction of oil tanks holding more than 750,000 gallons of fuel. The sound of the explosion was heard more than 40 miles away at the new top-secret airfield on Umnak Island. The two air raids did not achieve the Japanese objective: to shut down the Dutch Harbor bases. In the two attacks, 43 were killed and about 50 wounded. The 206th lost seven killed in action and nine wounded.

Results could have been far different. Before the first attack, the Japanese commander sought permission to invade Dutch Harbor. Submarine reconnaissance had revealed that Dutch Harbor was defended by only one-third the number of troops expected. Higher authority overruled the invasion idea. Tokyo Rose announced that Dutch Harbor had been invaded and captured. In fact, the Japanese fleet moved away from Dutch Harbor and invaded two islands at the end of the Aleutian chain. Over the next 15 months the United States assembled a force to repel the invaders while keeping up a constant bombing campaign.

The air raid on Dutch Harbor was the opening move of a giant offensive by the Japanese. On June 4, far to the south near Midway Island, American forces ambushed the would-be attackers. Thanks to a code-breaking secret known as ULTRA, the United States knew the Japanese plans. The main event, the Battle of Midway, ended disastrously for Japan. The secondary attack on Alaska met with more success. For fifteen months, the soldiers, sailors, and airmen on both sides waged a bitter struggle known as the Aleutian campaign. On May 11, 1943, the United States invaded the island of Attu. The carnage on Attu was second only to Iwo Jima in terms of the number of combatants.

Historians call the Aleutian Campaign the "Forgotten War." Those who were there will never forget it.

William E. Maxwell just received his master's degree in history at the University in Central Arkansas at Conway, where he will teach in the fall. He wrote his thesis on the 206th, in which his father, William E. Maxwell Sr., served as a corporal.

Arkansas
Times

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**PORT MEARS
DUTCH HARBOR, ALASKA**

September 5, 1941

The following is a list and time served under Federal Service of each National Guard of this organization, to date.

Name	Grade	ASN	Months	Days
D Johnson, Lewis E.	T/Sgt	20756755	22	0
D Hobby, Ira C.	T/Sgt	20756754	13	20
Nash, Vernon C.	1st Sgt	20756753	13	7
Long, Edwin A.	S/Sgt	20756755	13	6
D Cheatwood, Jack	Sgt	20756759	12	2
D Prince, Melvin A.	S/Sgt	20756757	11	18
Leader, Frank V.	S/Sgt	20756754	11	10
D Pilkington, Wayne W.	S/Sgt	20756756	10	29
Kn Kaufman, Richard C.	Sgt	20756770	10	23
D Drake, Donnel J.	S/Sgt	20756761	10	14
D Hill, Clyde T.	Sgt	20756752	10	14
D Smith, George L. Jr.	Sgt	20756778	10	14
Gribble, Lee Roy W.	Corp	20756793	10	14
Stinson, George P.	Corp	20756779	10	14
D Williams, Charles A.	Sgt	20756781	10	7
Conway, Sykes P.	Sgt	20756780	9	29
D King, Horace A.	Sgt	20756771	9	29
March, Herbert E.	Corp	20756802	9	29
D Kelley, Carl A.	S/Sgt	20756763	9	28
D Obsitnik, Lawrence W.	Corp	20756806	9	28
D Gresham, George D.	Sgt	20756769	9	25
Trimble, Woodrow C.	Sgt	20756901	9	22
Albright, Aubrey T.	Sgt	20756757	9	14
Laubach, Chaires W.	Sgt	20756772	9	14
D Thompson, Edgar V.	Sgt	20756768	9	14
D Galloway, Herman B.	Corp	20756790	9	14
D Garrett, George L.	Corp	20756791	9	14
D Owen, Donald R.	Corp	20756808	9	14
Dean, Joseph E.	PFC	20756788	9	14
Cartrell, Deway W.	PFC	20756792	9	14
Walker, Kenneth E.	Sgt	20756780	9	13
D Nix, Jack L.	PFC	20756805	9	11
D Berham, Curtis R.	Sgt	20756783	9	9
Richards, Charles E.	Sgt	20756775	9	8
D McMillion, Stephen D.	Sgt	20756773	9	7
D Little, Woodrow W.	Corp	20756800	9	7
Laubach, Forrest N.	Corp	20756798	8	28
Reynolds, Francis B. Jr.	Corp	20756774	8	28
Anderson, Bernard W.	PFC	20756818	8	28

Federal Service Rec Cont.

Baney, Frederick A.	PFC	20756782	8	28	
D Baten, William L.	PFC	20756784	8	28	
D House, Francis E.	PFC	20756796	8	28	
McMillion, Joe W.	PFC	20756874	8	28	
Peterson, John L.	PFC	20756809	8	28	
Stoes, William A.	PFC	20756811	8	28	
D Taylor, Howard E.	PFC	20756814	8	28	
Thomas, Arthur L.	PFC	20756899	8	28	
D O'Neal, Thomas P.	PFC	20756881	8	28	
Brown, Grady L.	Pvt	20756828	8	28	
D Hill, Jesse O.	Pvt	20756795	8	28	
Pierce, Arlie I. Jr.	Pvt	20756885	8	28	
Pool, Albert S.	Pvt	20756887	8	28	
D Privitt, Corbett O.	Pvt	20756888	8	28	
Williamson, Fred A.	Pvt	20756911	8	28	
Otto, Jack	Corp	20756807	8	27	
Beasley, Paul W.	PFC	20756822	8	27	
D Gwyn, Lawrence E.	PFC	20756794	8	27	
Malnik, Phillip J.	PFC	20756870	8	27	
Tate, Luster V.	PFC	20756813	8	27	
D Weatherford, Hugh D. Jr.	PFC	20756908	8	27	
D Tracy, William H.	Sgt	20756815	8	26	
D Diemer, Tony W.	Pvt	20756841	8	26	
Barnes, Fred J.	Pvt	20756821	8	25	
D Hand, Johnny W.	PFC	20756858	8	25	
D Bennett, James B.	S/Sgt	20756758	8	23	some unknown R.A. service
D Greasy, Dale G.	PFC	20756858	8	23	
Williamson, Joseph T.	Pvt	20756912	8	23	
D Busby, Homer W.	Corp	20756786	8	22	some unknown N.G. service
Scott, G. Edwin	Sgt	20756777	8	21	
Dougherty, Harry K.	Corp	20756843	8	21	
D McKinney, Gerald F.	Corp	20756803	8	21	
Stout, Bernard E.	Corp	20756812	8	21	
D White, Sam Frank B.	Corp	20756816	8	21	
D Bailey, Benjamin F.	PFC	20756819	8	21	
Byrd, James E.	PFC	20756829	8	21	
D Carrico, Cornelius B.	PFC	20756831	8	21	
D Cone, Louis Jr.	PFC	20756834	8	21	
Costley, James D.	PFC	20756835	8	21	
Graft, Leonard L.	PFC	20756837	8	21	
D Dix, Cecil E.	PFC	20756842	8	21	
Faulkner, Charles B.	PFC	20756848	8	21	
Johnson, Ralph W.	PFC	20756863	8	21	
Jones, Kent L.	PFC	20756865	8	21	
Justice, Edgar	PFC	20756866	8	21	
Lafferty, Russell T.	PFC	20756867	8	21	
League, Earl H.	PFC	20756899	8	21	
Mansfield, George L. Jr.	PFC	20756871	8	21	
McPherson, James R.	PFC	20756875	8	21	
D Moren, Billie B.	PFC	20756804	8	21	
Newby, Mack T.	PFC	20756878	8	21	
Newton, Robert A.	PFC	20756879	8	21	
Parker, Henry T.	PFC	20756882	8	21	
D Simmons, Bitsy	PFC	20756895	8	21	

THURMAN

Federal Service Roll Cont.

Thurman, Dewey H.	PFC	20756900	8	21
Blunk, Charles E.	Pvt	20756826	8	21
Chambers, William J.	Pvt	20756832	8	21
Jones, Clifton H.	Pvt	20756868	8	21
Lamb, Clifford L.	Pvt	20756868	8	21
McDonald, Henry C.	Pvt	20756873	8	21
Richardson, Doyle E.	Pvt	20756889	8	21
Little, Thomas L.	Corp	20756799	12 8	19
Paul, David H.	PFC	20756883	8	15
Snodgrass, Walter M.	Sgt	20756388	8	0
Sansing, Robert L.	Corp	20756776	8	0
Adams, Harvey F.	PFC	20756817	8	0
DeRoche, Alfred E.	PFC	20756840	8	0
Eans, Tollie R.	PFC	20756844	8	0
Green, Archel E.	PFC	20756853	8	0
Greene, Boyed F.	PFC	20756925	8	0
Halley, Floyd L.	PFC	20756927	8	0
Mitchell, Wyre T.	PFC	20756876	8	0
Moses, Grover C. Jr.	PFC	20756946	8	0
Huckabay, Leo M.	PFC	20756949	8	0
Simmons, James M.	PFC	20756938	8	0
Veasey, William H.	PFC	20756903	8	0
Bajorek, Adolph F.	Pvt	20756820	8	0
Ballard, Rowland E.	Pvt	20756914	8	0
Balckwood, Oliver	Pvt	20756824	8	0
Bradley, Harold D.	Pvt	20756916	8	0
Brimmingstall, Clarence K.	Pvt	20756827	8	0
Cain, Roy W.	Pvt	20756830	8	0
Carlley, Reuben L.	Pvt	20756918	8	0
Clements, Luther H.	Pvt	20756920	8	0
Deiure, Joe J.	Pvt	20756839	8	0
Durham, Jack E.	Pvt	20756922	8	0
Emerson, Orville	Pvt	20756924	8	0
Fitzhugh, Obie F.	Pvt	20756846	8	0
Foreman, William B.	Pvt	20756847	8	0
Gann, Lenzy	Pvt	20756851	8	0
Gates, Jake M.	Pvt	20756852	8	0
Griffith, Charles A.	Pvt	20756926	8	0
Haden, Russell R.	Pvt	20756854	8	0
Hathcote, Joe L.	Pvt	20756857	8	0
Haustein, Bruno G.	Pvt	20756858	8	0
Hinkle, Carl V.	Pvt	20756928	8	0
Huffman, William A.	Pvt	20756862	8	0
Jeter, Charles A.	Pvt	20756929	8	0
Lamberson, Benjamin J.	Pvt	20756930	8	0
McDill, Joel A.	Pvt	20756932	8	0
McMann, Don	Pvt	20756933	8	0
McNeely, Joe L.	Pvt	20756934	8	0
Moore, Frank P.	Pvt	20756935	8	0
Moses, James A.	Pvt	20756945	8	0
Norwood, James R.	Pvt	20756880	8	0
Page, Emmett E.	Pvt	20756936	8	0

Federal Service Ros Cont.

Pierce, Joseph E.	Pvt	20756886	8	0
Pratt, Menden N.	Pvt	20756937	8	0
Sauter, Edward J.	Pvt	20756892	8	0
Shuffield, Thomas E.	Pvt	20756894	8	0
Simpson, Frank	Pvt	20756896	8	0
Simpson, Frank L.	Pvt	20756939	8	0
Smith, Benjamin F.	Pvt	20756947	8	0
Smith, Carrol L.	Pvt	20756940	8	0
Smith, Eugene C.	Pvt	20756941	8	0
Sutton, Bill H.	Pvt	20756942	8	0
Traywick, Clettus W.	Pvt	20756948	8	0
Vance, Arlie B.	Pvt	20756902	8	0
Vick, Harry S. Jr.	Pvt	20756904	8	0
Wilbourn, William R. Jr.	Pvt	20756908	8	0
Woolford, Murray E.	Pvt	20756943	8	0
Yancey, J. B.	Pvt	20756913	8	0
Yarborough, Walter W.	Pvt	20756944	8	0
Phillips, Joseph R.	Pvt	20756884	7	11
Blanton, Grady W.	Pvt	20756825	6	24
Berry, William E.	Pvt	20756915	Ab	in arrest
Clements, Aubrey C.	Pvt	20756919	Ab	in arrest
Huffman, Marshall S.	Pvt	20756861	Ab	in arrest
Wells, Robert J.	Pvt	20756906	Ab	in arrest

UNIT HISTORY OF BATTERY "A", 206TH COAST ARTILLERY (AA)

On October 3, 1901, an infantry company was organized in Little Rock and designated Company "C", Second Regiment, Arkansas State Guard. The muster roll shows three officers and forty-one men. This company was disbanded in 1902. On June 13, 1902, an additional company was organized numbering three officers and sixteen men, and became Company "M", Second Regiment, Arkansas State Guard. 1907 to 1909 were lean years for the State Guard. The slight public interest shown the previous few years had gradually died away. In 1909 interest was revived to some extent and a reorganization effected. Little Rock was designated as headquarters with an assignment of fifteen officers and five men. In 1912, another reorganization placed Company "E", First Regiment, Arkansas National Guard in Little Rock. On June 18, 1916, President Wilson, through the Secretary of War, called into Federal service the National Guard Troop. Company "E" of Little Rock was ordered to Fort Logan H. Roots and mustered into the Federal service with their Regiment. They left for Deming, New Mexico, August 10, 1916, where they remained in camp until February, 1917. They returned to Fort Logan H. Roots and mustered out March, 1917.

The Arkansas National Guard Troops had just gotten comfortably settled in their customary occupations when recalled into service for the World War. In response to the call of President Wilson, Company "E", with the other Arkansas Troops, mobilized for service at Fort Logan H. Roots on March 31, 1917. Transferred in August to Camp Pike for guard duty, and remained there until November 17, 1917, when ordered to Camp Beauregard, Louisiana. Sailed for France as replacement troop May, 1918. At Camp Beauregard the Little Rock unit with the other Arkansas Troops were organized into the 153rd Infantry. During the period of training at Camp Beauregard, previous to the company's departure for overseas service, several of the men were sent to France as replacement troops. Men from the company were thus scattered all through the army in active warfare. Members were in the ranks of the Rainbow Division, Pershing's Own, and were among the first to reach France. The 39th Division, of which the company was a unit, reached France in August, 1918. The organization returned to the United States in December, 1918, and was officially mustered out at Camp Beauregard, Louisiana in December, 1918.

When the Arkansas Guard was reorganized in 1921, Machine Gun Company "H", 141st Machine Gun Battalion, was organized in Little Rock, Arkansas and received Federal recognition June 21, 1921. The latter part of 1923 the 141st Machine Gun Battalion was mustered out of service and the units reorganized into the 206th Coast Artillery (AA) Regiment. Battery "H" in September, 1924 mustered three officers and eighty enlisted men. On September 1, 1932, Battery "H" was moved to Hot Springs, Arkansas and this unit was designated Battery "A", 206th Coast Artillery (AA), (searchlights), and remained as a National Guard Unit until January 6, 1941, at which time it was ordered Federalized and moved to Fort Bliss, Texas.