

This week's veteran is Bob Bilyeu.

After enlisting in the Army in Taylorville in December, 1944, Bob reported to Fort Sheridan, IL, on January 2, 1945. He was sent to Camp Fannin, Texas, for eight weeks of basic. Upon completing basic and a short leave at home, he arrived at Fort Ord, CA, to be shipped to the Philippines. Bob was assigned to join the 108th Infantry Regiment. Before they disembarked, each soldier was supposed to be able to swim 100 yards. Because he couldn't swim, he gave another soldier ten dollars and his dog tags to take the swimming test for him.

It took 34 days at sea to reach Leyte Island in the Philippines where the 108th was assisting in "mop-up" operations after the Battle of Leyte, October 20, 1944 to December 31, 1944. General Douglas MacArthur waded ashore on Leyte on October 20, 1944, after which he spoke his famous line, "People of the Philippines, I have returned."

From Leyte, Bob's unit went to the Island of Panay where they were prepared for the invasion of Japan. The soldiers were told that only 29% of them would survive the invasion. Because of the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Japanese surrendered without an invasion for which Bob was very thankful. He disagrees with anyone who says the bombs should not have been dropped.

After the surrender of the Japanese, the 108th was sent to Kwangju, Korea, as part of the occupational forces of Korea. One day Bob overheard the supply sergeant say that he was going home. He applied and was awarded the job of supply sergeant which meant a promotion to staff sergeant. We have heard many stories of soldiers getting jobs because they could type, but Bob could not type. He spent many long hours filling out reports using the two fingered typing method. While in Korea, Bob was sent to the hospital in Seoul, Korea, to treat a ruptured appendix. To fight infection, Army doctors gave him penicillin to which he had an allergic reaction. Not knowing what the allergic reaction was, they treated him for barber's itch, a fungal infection.

Bob returned to the states on October 6, 1946, and was discharged at Fort Sheridan on November 25, 1946. While on leave in November before his discharge, he married Helen Foley of Dalton City, IL. They have three girls: Michelle, Ramona, and Leisa, six grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

Thank you, Staff Sergeant Robert E. Bilyeu, for what you gave for us.

Date to remember:

May 26, 2013: VFW Ladies Auxiliary dinner and gun raffle. Gun raffle tickets may be purchased from any Veteran's committee member..

Note cards with a picture of the proposed Memorial are available for purchase at Wash House Equipment.

Web site: assumptionveteransmemorial.com