

Soldier recalls history of war; believes stories should be told

By Susan Fox

Veterans who sacrificed their youth and innocence fighting in battles around the world during WWII are learning the value of telling their stories.

"I didn't want to tell this story," said Francis Puthoff, who served with the United States Army's 198AAA in the Pacific. "It was awful living it. But now I realize that what I did as well as what my buddies did our country shouldn't be forgotten. It's history."

Puthoff has compiled a book recording his memories of the war. In it he writes: "As veterans there are so few of us anymore. We sometimes talk to young people and they have no idea what was going on then, or why. So many years have gone by, they wouldn't believe the things that happened."

Puthoff enlisted in the Army in September, 1942. He was the son of Bernard L. and Bertha E. Puthoff of St. Patrick - the oldest of their 14 children. He was sent to Officer's Candidate School at Camp Davis N.C. and graduated in June 1943. While enroute to his duty assignment in Fort Sheridan, Ill., he was able to spend a week at home, where he attended his sister Vera's marriage to Melvin

Woehrmyer. From Fort Sheridan, he traveled to Camp Adair, Ore., and additional training, and then to San Francisco and onto a troop ship bound for the South Pacific.

When the troop ship Hollandia deposited its cargo of soldiers in Cape Sansafor, New Guinea, Lt. Puthoff was assigned to a small island, Middleburg, Island, about a mile away from Sansafor, with orders to defend it.

His troops placed 40 mm guns and M51s on the southern half of Middleburg Island, and Lt. Hughes was assigned the northern half of the tiny island, 1 1/2 mile wide by 1 1/2 miles long.

"It was when the moon was full you could expect the Japanese planes," Puthoff explained, "and Aug. 23, 1944, the third full moon of our campaign in New Guinea, my friend, Francis Korbe of Hayes, Kansas, told me he was going to die that night. By 10 p.m. he was dead."

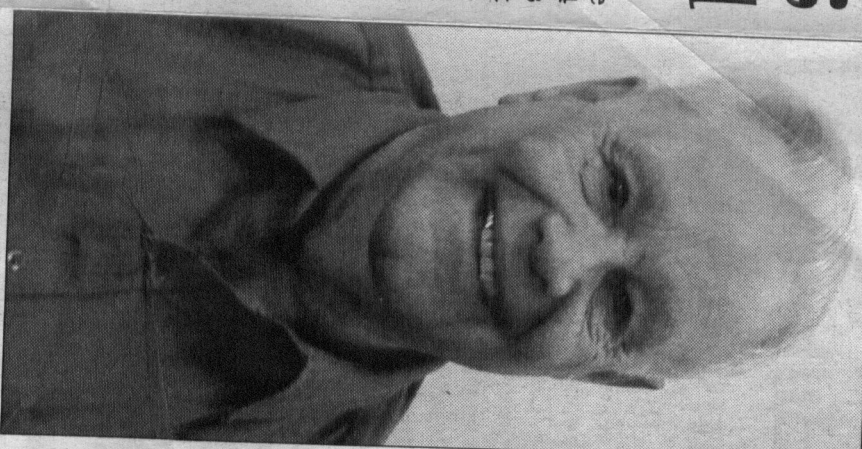
Puthoff and his battalion were reassigned to the Philippines. When attempting a beachhead, Puthoff and a Sgt. Radacioni had to keep their heads down all of one night as the enemy fired on them from

the mountains.

"From 8 p.m. on we were under the gun," he said. "By 4 a.m. I thought the world was coming to an end." The next morning the rest of the battalion disembarked and most headed for Manila. Puthoff's unit went to Baguio, summer capital of the Philippines. While there, the soldiers engaged the enemy and stopped the movement of refugees out of the city. "I won't tell you what we did, but we stopped the refugees, and finished the northern invasion of Luzon."

While in the Philippines, Puthoff met a young local man who washed his clothes and did other chores for the soldiers. Twenty five years later, this young man, Porfirio Callo, called him from Akron, Ohio, where he was a doctor. He told Puthoff that 1,200 Philippines doctors had come to the U.S. during the 1950s.

Puthoff came back to the United States on the General Omar Bundy, in a 30 day trip from Manila to San Francisco. He arrived in Sidney, Ohio on Mother's Day, May 13, 1946, where he was met by his father, a brother and a brother-in-law, and carried off home, welcomed by his brothers, sisters and



FRANCIS PUTHOFF TODAY AND IN 1943

Mother.

After the war, Puthoff attended The Ohio State University and majored in health and physical education. He met his wife, Freda during his schooling, and they were married.

"She helped me with my reports," he said. Puthoff graduated in 1949, and received his master's degree in 1953. He taught school until he decided to go into the insurance business, like his father had done. With Freda he raised six chil-

dren, who live across the country. The couple has 23 grandchildren.

Puthoff has devoted many years to a study of genealogy and his German heritage. For 25 years he sang with the Dayton Liederkranz.

Puthoff and others have organized a reunion of the 198AAA at the Ramada Inn in Dayton, Sept. 12, 13 and 14, 2003. It will be good for these old soldiers to see one another and remember.