

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Webster Phillips

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Veterans Remember Oral History project

Interview # VR2-A-L-2011-058

Webster E. Phillips, an Army WW II infantry veteran who was action at Normandy, St. Lo and the Battle of the Bulge, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Dec 12, 2011 Location: Webster Phillips family home in Pontiac, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: Audio Transcription Center, Boston, Massachusetts

Edited by: Betty Workman and Rozanne Flatt, ALPL Volunteers

Total Pages: 30 pages Total Time: 1:24 / 1.4 hrs

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on November 12, 2011.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Webster E. Phillips, *Veterans Remember*, VR2-A-L-2011-058

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Webster E. Phillips was born on December 15th, 1920 in Thebes, Illinois. His father moved the family frequently during the early years of the Great Depression, but eventually settled in Rockford, Illinois, where he worked as a metal finisher. Times were tough, and Webster dropped out of school after the 8th grade and like his father, began working as a metal finisher. Following Pearl Harbor, Webster elected not to take a war industries deferment, and was drafted in November of 1942. He attended basic training in Ft. Benning, Georgia, and after additional training in intelligence work and reconnaissance patrolling techniques, he was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 117th Infantry Regiment, 30th Infantry Division, a National Guard unit originally organized in several southern states. Phillips worked in an Intelligence and Reconnaissance team, who were expected to patrol forward of friendly lines and conduct reconnaissance on the enemy.

The 30th Division deployed to England in February, 1944, and after several more months of training in southern England, the division hit Omaha beach in Normandy on D + 4, or June 10th. The 117th saw its first combat several days later, and played a crucial role in the St. Lo breakout. Assigned to the First Army, the unit fought its way across northern France and into Belgium in the summer and fall of 1944. In the process, Phillips earned a Purple Heart and two Bronze Stars for gallantry, but did manage to see Paris while on pass. He earned his second Bronze Star for an engagement near Aachen in October. During the Battle of the Bulge, the unit helped hold the northern shoulder of the bulge against repeated attacks from the elite 1st SS Adolf Hitler Division. After the Bulge, the division fought its way into Germany. Phillips earned his third Bronze Star for valor in March. After the war was over, he saw a German concentration camp. He returned to the states in August, 1945, and reclaimed his job in Rockford. It was there he met his future wife, and the two were married just two weeks later. Mr. Phillips passed away in May, 2012.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Infantryman during WW II – Europe; Intelligence and Reconnaissance patrols; England in 1944; D-Day; breakout from St. Lo, France; French reception of American GIs; Battle of the Bulge; Rockford, Illinois; German concentration camps; Bronze Star for valor

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