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January 26, 1995

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John:

Here is a draft of a report on the memorial church service and the rededication ceremony of the Eric Wood memorial in Belgium on September 11, 1994.

I encourage you to edit it in any wish you see fit in order to make it fit the space available in The Cub or to make it more readable. My purpose was to include as much detail as I have available, so that as the rewrite man you would have a wide choice of portions to be deleted or edited.

If you would rather have it in a different font or layout, please let me know. My computer skills are limited but I can do fonts and paragraphs. I am sending this draft by fax, but if you want an original, I can send it to you overnight by Federal Express at no cost to you.

I will try to fax to you a brief biographical sketch of myself on Thursday.

I expect to be at home most of the time on Thursday, so give me a call if you have any comments or questions. If there's no answer, leave a message.

Thanks for the copy of The Cub.

Best regards.

Bob

Eric Wood Memorial Rededicated

In his book, *Battle: The Story of the Bulge*, John Toland writes, "There are many impressive monuments to the Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes....My favorite is on a lonely foot trail several miles from the village of Meyerode. Here in the middle of a dense forest lies a moss-covered mound in the form of a cross—the exact spot where 1st Lieutenant Eric Wood, Jr., died. Across the path is a small monument built by the people of Meyerode. On it in English in (mistaking his rank) they have chiseled, "In January 1945 died here in heroic struggles by the German Offensive Eric Fisher Wood Captain U.S. Army."

The events leading up to Wood's death have been reported in a number of publications including Toland's book and in *St. Vith: Lion in the Way*, the 106th Infantry Division in World War II, by Colonel R. Ernest Dupuy. Briefly stated, they are that, on December 17, 1944, the 589th Field Artillery Battalion's Battery A, of which Wood was the executive officer, was attempting to withdraw to Schonberg. When Wood was faced with capture, he escaped into the nearby forest.

On December 18th, Peter Maraite, a German-speaking Belgian seeking a Christmas tree, encountered Wood and an unidentified enlisted man. Despite the presence of German troops in the area, Maraite led them to his home in Meyerode where his wife Anna Maria and daughter Eva were. There they were fed and given shelter overnight.

It appears from statements given by the Maraites that it was Wood's intention that, if he was not able to reach the American position at St. Vith, he would wage guerrilla warfare against German supply movements through the woods of the Ommer Scheid. Subsequent reports of small arms and mortar fire, coupled with German complaints of enemy attacks in the area, suggest that Wood may have been carrying out his stated intentions.

On February 25, 1945, a Graves Registration detail of the 424th Infantry, which included S/Sgt. John S. Fisher and Pvt. William F. Lucas, responded to a report of dead soldiers in the woods south easterly of

Meyerode. At the location now marked by the Wood memorial cross, they found the bodies of Wood, an unidentified American enlisted man, and seven German soldiers. The fact that Wood had a sum of money in his possession suggested that he had been the survivor of the encounter with the dead Germans.

Wood was subsequently buried at the American Cemetery at Henri-Chapelle, Belgium, where over 8,000 other Americans who lost their lives are also interred.

While there are other monuments memorializing groups of people or military units, the Wood memorial has had a special significance for many people. In addition to honoring Eric Wood as an individual, it stands as a symbol of the sacrifices of other Americans who also gave their lives in the cause of freedom, but who are not so specifically memorialized.

The Wood memorial is shown as a point of interest on maps illustrating tours of the Ardennes battlefields. For some visitors it has a special significance, the extent of which is not always disclosed by any record of their visits. In at least two instances, the record left is intriguingly incomplete. In January 1990, two handwritten notes on similarly lined notebook paper were found on the monument. The text of one reads:

*To Lt. Wood,
May you never be forgotten.
David Goehring, Jr.
12-28-89*

A second note, similar in appearance to the first, but bearing a later date, is longer:

*December 30th, 1989
With God's help, we will all
remember those who died
in these woods.
Some died for misguided nationalism
and a madman's twisted vision.
Others died for the freedom
we still enjoy today.*

*May we all work together
for a world at peace
and for harmony among men.*

*Lt. Eric F. Wood, you will
remain in my memory
until I die. I only hope
I can justly commemorate
your story.*

*Steven B. Wheeler
Portland, Oregon
U.S.A.*

Although the legend on the monument shows Wood's rank as "Captain", both Goehring and Wheeler refer to Wood's rank correctly as that of lieutenant. The text of each message and the use of the correct title of "lieutenant" suggests that, apart from the possibility that they had read about Wood's activities in the battle, both Goehring and Wheeler knew him personally. Efforts to locate them have been unavailing.

During the summer and fall of 1994, the Belgian people celebrated their liberation by Allied forces from five years of occupation by the Germans. These events relived the joys of freedom regained, revived the memories of oppression and hardship, and prompted remembrance of and mourning for the numerous civilians who lost their lives during the battle or who were executed by the Germans.

This period was also the occasion for American veterans to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of their participation in the various military campaigns. Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, wearing their unit patches or other insignia were much in evidence. During the summer, the Benelux Chapter of the Reserve Officers Association of the United States, Department of Europe, undertook the cleaning and restoration of the Wood monument. The ROA arranged for a memorial service at the Meyerode church in conjunction with the 10 o'clock mass on Sunday, September 11th.

As the church had been badly damaged during the war, Wood's parents helped to repair and enlarge the church building. In addition, his

father, a brigadier general on Eisenhower's staff and an architect and builder prewar, provided architectural services in connection with its reconstruction. The labor required was provided without charge by parishioners.

In addition to members of the parish, the congregation at the memorial service on September 11th, estimated to have been 250 in number, included the following:

- Benelux Chapter, ROA: Lt. Col. John G. Greene, AUS Ret., Chapter President; Col. Ryall, AUS; Lt. Col. Van der Straeten, AUS;
- U.S. Army Color Guard: 5 NCOs from 80th Area Support Group, NATO/SHAPE Support Group, Chièvres, Belgium;
- Air Force Junior ROTC Cadet Corps, SHAPE American High School, SHAPE, Belgium (approximately 30);
- Armed Forces TV Unit, SHAPE;
- Circle of Reserve Officers of Brussels: Lt. Col. Jean Yves Stocq and other officers.
- Belgian Color Guard;
- Dr. Emil Mertes, burgermeister of Meyrode-Amel;
- Kurt Fagnoul, German-speaking historian of the Eastern Cantons.

The following, having had an association with or interest in Eric Wood, were also present at the church service:

- Ted Kiendl, former executive officer of B Battery, 589th F.A. Battalion, good friend of Wood, and vigorous defender of him in postwar controversies.
- Eva Maraite Kreins, daughter of Peter and Anna Marie Maraite who gave Wood shelter on the night of December 18, 1944.
- Adda and Willy Rikken, living at Gouvy, Belgium; Adda is Belgian, daughter of a Belgian army officer, former school teacher who began her teaching career in 1945 in a small primary school near Medell not far from the present site of the Wood monument. The Rikkens have been warm hosts and volunteer tour guides to visiting American veterans. Each Memorial Day since

1989 they have gone to the Henri Chapelle American Cemetery and placed flowers on Wood's grave.

- Bob Lowry, classmate of Wood in the Class of 1942 at Princeton University and with him a member of the field artillery ROTC unit there; also, with his wife Mary, long-time friends of the Rikkens who first led them to the Wood monument in May 1989. The Lowrys came from San Francisco for the purpose of representing the Princeton Class of 1942 at the rededication ceremony.

The service at the church was conducted by Fr. Albert Backes, with beautiful organ music and choir singing from the loft at the rear of the church. The Belgian color guard was stationed between the high altar and the low altar. Flowers at the base of the low altar were from the Princeton Class of 1942. As Meyerode is in one of the three German-speaking cantons which became Belgian after the Treaty of Versailles ending World War I, the service was in German.

Although the sermon was not translated into English, Fr. Backes mentioned Wood in the course of it. Lt. Col. Greene, on behalf of the ROA, made brief remarks referring to Wood which were translated into German by Commandant J. Electeur.

At the conclusion of the church service, the units and individuals listed above, together with a few members of the local community proceeded by car and bus to the location of the Wood monument at the side of the narrow paved road leading through the forest. Those not involved directly in the ceremony were aligned in a semicircle at the edge of the road opposite the memorial and facing it. The Belgian color guard formed a semicircle behind the monument, facing toward the roadway. The American color guard then passed in review.

Dr. Emil Mertens, burgermeister of Meyerode-Amel, gave a brief statement in German in which he expressed hopes for continued peace and then placed a bouquet of flowers at the base of the cross.

Bob Lowry, representing the Princeton Class of 1942, expressed appreciation to the Benelux Chapter of the Reserve Officers Association for arranging the memorial services and acknowledged the sacrifices and

harships endured by the armed forces and by the civilian population during the dreadful winter of 1944-45. He then placed flowers at the monument from the Princeton Class of 1942 accompanied by a card reading:

PRINCETON 1942
In Memory of Our Classmate and Friend
Eric Fisher Wood, Jr.
who, at this place, gave his life in the
cause of freedom during the
Battle of the Ardennes
January 1945

Princeton University
Class of 1942

September 11, 1994

The 106th Infantry Division Association transmitted to Lt. Col. Greene of ROA a memorial card reading:

In Memory of a Former Comrade
Eric Fisher Wood Jr.
589th Field Artillery Battalion, "A" Battery
Who Defended Freedom to the Last
Rest in Peace, for You Have Not Been Forgotten
From Your Comrades
and the 106th Infantry Division Association
September 11, 1994

This card, laminated in plastic, was to be further encased by the ROA to protect it from the elements before being placed to remain on the monument.

Adda Rikken also placed a bouquet on the monument from the Rikkens. Ted Kiendl, called upon to make some remarks, did so by reading the text of the Steven Wheeler note described above.

Fr. Backes then said a brief prayer, at the conclusion of which the rededication ceremony was completed.

Although not on the previously-announced schedule of events, the units and individuals identified above then proceeded several miles to a meadow near the hamlet of Wereth for the dedication of another monument, this time one recently erected by the inhabitants of the area.

In the late afternoon of December 17, 1944, eleven black soldiers of the 333d Field Artillery Battalion attached to the 106th Infantry Division were captured by members of an SS unit. The prisoners were thereupon clubbed, bayoneted and shot, and left lying in the roadway.

The newly-erected memorial at Wereth memorializing the eleven soldiers reads in German:

**Here on 12/17/44
eleven U.S. soldiers
were shot
by the SS**

The units and most of the individual participants identified above were present at this ceremony. Flowers were placed on the monument by Dr. Emil Mertes, the burgermeister; Ted Kiendl presented flowers on behalf of the Rikkens, the Lowrys and himself. A Belgian trumpeter played "Taps" and the ceremony concluded with a prayer by Fr. Backes.

Most of those present then proceeded to an inn at Herresbach for lunch, following which the participants went their several ways.

To: John P. Kline
Date: January 26, 1995
Re: The Cub - Lowry biographical sketch

Robert N. Lowry -Associate member

Born Washington, D.C. February 25, 1919; Princeton University, B.A. 1942; married Mary Dudley, former Navy nurse in the South Pacific, in 1946; two grown children; four grandchildren..

Appointed 2nd Lieutenant AUS June 1, 1942 from Field Artillery ROTC program; commissioned 2nd Lieutenant, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve July 3, 1942; field artillery officer 12th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, December 14, 1942-April 12, 1945 (participated in invasions of Bougainville [Nov. 1943], Guam [July 1944] and Iwo Jima [Feb. 1945]; CO Marine Detachment, USS *Europa*, Bremerhaven, Germany [Aug.-Sept. 1945; to inactive duty Jan. 28, 1946.

University of Virginia School of Law, 1946-48, LL. B. 1948. Attorney, Southern Railway Company, Washington, D.C. 1948-50; associate and partner, Turney & Turney, Washington, D.C. 1950-53; associate and partner, Brobeck, Phleger & Harrison, San Francisco, 1953 to retirement in 1989 (public utility regulation, banking, corporate and hospital law).

Served as member of board of directors and committees of local hospitals and on boards and committees of church and church-affiliated organizations.

Once again, the above biographical sketch is too wordy, so take your pick of that which you want to use. The *Europa* was a North German Lloyd passenger ship, the third largest passenger ship afloat (after the *Queen Mary* and the *Queen Elizabeth*), converted at Bremerhaven under the supervision of the Navy into a troopship to bring home troops from Europe.

J.P. Kline
January 26, 1995

2

With 100 Marines, I was in charge of the security of the ship while it was undergoing conversion. As it was a temporary assignment, I only made the maiden voyage to New York after boarding about 5,000 GIs in Southampton on September 18, 1945. The ship made only a few additional voyages before the Maritime Commission found it to be unsafe to operate further. It was later given to the French to replace the *Normandie* which burned and capsized in New York in 1942. The *Europa* sank in shallow water in a storm at LeHavre in about 1946, was refloated, renovated and sailed as the *Liberté* of the French Line until about 1960 when it was scrapped.