

Fort Stewart Vets Recall Shelling Patton's Office

By KEVIN MEREDITH

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FORT STEWART - Members of the 567th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, which spent three months at Fort Stewart during the height of World War II, still remember the time they shelled Gen. George Patton's command post.

"He sure raised hell about that, you know," said William Lint, one of about 100 battalion veterans attending a reunion at the post Friday.

"He was very unhappy," agreed Edward Reiss, a staff sergeant 45 years ago.

"We got an official reprimand," said former T-4 George Goodman, with a tinge of pride in his voice.

The incident took place in 1945,

just a few days before the Germans surrendered. Fortunately, Patton was elsewhere on the continent when the shell struck his office. The battalion was doubly blessed, because the shell was a dud and didn't explode.

The battalion spent about six months in Europe, earning four battle stars in campaigns that included the Battle of the Bulge.

But the shell that hit Patton's command post wasn't fired against an adversary, as the enemy had been all but vanquished by then.

"Everybody was happy," said Lint. "They wanted to get rid of their shells, didn't want to carry 'em back."

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KEITH MEREDITH/Staff

BACK ON THE POST: Old soldiers line up for pictures at Fort Stewart

Shelling

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The schnapps flowing freely in those heady days may also have contributed to the carelessness, the veterans admitted.

Former members of the battalion have gathered annually since 1949, but Friday marked the first time they held a reunion at Fort Stewart.

Their memories of the post in its earliest days might explain why their return has taken so long.

"Swamps, sand fleas, mosquitoes," Goodman said tersely.

"Ticks," Reiss added even more tersely.

The veterans, most of them accompanied by their wives, traveled from as far as Utah and Oregon to

attend the reunion. They spent all of Friday at Fort Stewart, touring the post in three Army buses.

They still carry with them clear memories of their first night in Germany, when many men died in German strafing fire. And some still recall all the places where they fought, and even how to spell them.

But no one interviewed Friday could say much about what has changed since they last saw Fort Stewart, one of many stops the battalion made stateside before they reached the final battles of the world's last global conflict.

Albert Moore, a private first class during the war, conceded that many of the old barracks buildings were still there, but that little else at the post was familiar.

"Oh, it's altogether different," he finally said without elaborating.

From "Ack Ack" to guided missiles

World War II veterans together again after 46 years

By Spec. Linda Thele

More than 120 World War II veterans and their family members rekindled memories of the "Fighting" 567th Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion here last week, according to Mr. Gus White, former first sergeant.

"We are celebrating our 40th reunion in Savannah," Mr. White said. "My last visit to Fort Stewart was about 46 years ago. The buildings have changed and it looks like they've added more acreage."

The 567th AAA had spent their final advanced training at then Camp Stewart before embarking to Europe. This unit was a 40-millimeter "Ack-Ack" unit, which means they had 40 millimeter automatic weapons.

These veterans were in England briefly before they sailed for France, where they fought in campaigns there.

"Visiting Fort Stewart brings back a lot of memories," Mr. White said. "It felt great to be back."

"We spent about five months here before embarking for England," said Mr. Rober Bunker, former captain. "It's brought back a lot of memories."

"It's been a delightful trip," he said. "Fort Stewart has changed a lot, but I hardly recognized it."



Veterans and their families look over old war machines at the museum.

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"About 46 years ago we were in Louisiana with our husbands before arriving at Camp Stewart," Mrs. Goldie Winters said. "Myself and another lady, Mrs. Mildred Todd, arrived in Savannah by train three days before our husbands."

"We had nowhere to go when we arrived and were sent to a private home where we slept on Army cots. We stayed there two nights before going to Camp Stewart."

"When we came into camp the military police said that they couldn't let us in without a pass. I said well we can't get a pass because I had to see my husband to get the pass."

"The MPs wanted to know what battalion he was in. I said the 567th. He said there's none here and I said there's soon going to be one here."

"So, we got into camp before they did," explained Mrs. Winters, whose husband, Herman, held the rank of corporal.

"Fort Stewart has changed so much I can't even see where the old cafeteria was," Mrs. Winters added. "I had a job there 46 years ago."



A veteran air defense artilleryman holds one of the latest ADA weaponry pieces, a Stinger missile launcher.



The veterans and their families enjoy a meal at one of the dining facilities.



A lot has changed here, said one of the veterans touring the gym and weight rooms.