



# VETERANS OF THE FIRST ENGINEER BATTALION

March, 2020

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Visit us on Facebook or [diehardengineer.com](http://diehardengineer.com)

## **PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS**

Plans are coming along nicely for this year's reunion and next year's as well. I thank all those who are working to make these successful. The majority of us, who simply attend and enjoy these reunions, can't fully appreciate the effort and hours that go into their planning, for months and even years in advance.

We love our organization and the First Engineer Battalion, and we cherish the memories – good and bad – of our time in the unit and the people we served with; that's the reason the organization exists. The Battalion will no doubt be around for a long time to come, but the future of our organization isn't as certain.

We don't have to be “big,” but we do need new members in order to be sustainable. Facebook and website “visits” are nice, but they don't seem to translate to new members. If you know someone who is or has been in the Battalion, please encourage him or her to join us. Remember that membership is open to all who have served honorably in the Battalion, and that service can be current. We are more than ready to welcome our first active duty members. I especially look forward to having our first female member. The Army is decades past the time of being a “boys' club,” and we must move past that time as well if we expect to prosper as an organization.

Caren and I hope to see you in September. In the meantime, have a safe, healthy and happy Summer!

Jay Franz



## History of the Veterans of the First Engineer (Combat Battalion)

Esther Arynton

I was asked when we joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Engineers Association and any information I have about it. Bob joined it the year they decided to include the Engineers who, after the war, were assigned as Occupation Forces to rebuild Germany.

Our first reunion was in 1985. The story I heard at that time was that the Association consisted of all the enlisted men who trained together in England and Omaha Beach in Normandy in June, 1944. They had grown very close and wanted to stay in contact with each other. They decided to attend the 1<sup>st</sup> Division reunion as a group. I don't know how many years they did that but they were quite bitter because they were not recognized, in fact, they felt they were completely ignored. Colonel Gara, who led them from Normandy through Germany, advised them to start their own Association. The man who actually did all the field work and succeeded (with help from Colonel Gara and his Executive Major Stowell) in forming the 1<sup>st</sup> Engineers Association was the Company Cook, Oscar Feldman. Oscar had quite a reputation among the group. When General Eisenhower visited them in the field in Germany, Oscar went against orders to feed him a special meal and gave him hot dogs and Campbells beans and announced that in his company the soldiers and the officers ate the same food.

At the first meeting they invited Colonel Gara and Major Stowell to be their advisors. After a few years they decided to ask the Occupation soldiers to join them. It was the most welcoming group we have ever been involved in. Those people really were very devoted to each other and made the Occupation soldiers and their families feel so welcomed. At each meeting the speaker was a high-ranking officer who would always bring an Honor Guard with him.

One meeting in particular stands out in my memory. Colonel Gara stood up after the dinner and said he was asked to provide the speaker. He said, "I didn't get one because it's time all of you spoke up and got rid of your demons." These men had never made any mention of the war or of their time in service.

Colonel Gara would point to one of his ex-soldiers, say his name and mention a horrible occurrence that he was involved in and asked him to finally talk about it and get that demon behind him. He was a remarkable person; he knew his men so well and had so much respect for them.

One man described going over the ridge at Normandy and finding one of the Engineers lying on the ground with both legs gone and fighting to stay alive to lead them through a mine field. Another told of encountering barbed wire in Germany, finding a break in it, and coming upon a horror he could never forget with naked bodies in piles and people too weak to stand, crying and reaching out for help. The Engineers said that gave them a new reason for vengeance against the Germans. This meeting went on and on through most of the night with just horrible memories they had never told anyone, not even their wives. Everyone left in tears. No one could say a word.

Bob and Colonel Gara got to be great friends and he asked Bob if he could help in getting more Engineers in the group because many of the World War II veterans were fading away. Bob started looking for ones who served in Korea and Vietnam. He spent hours and hours on the computer and telephone. It started growing from there.

**Do you have any memories to add about the history of the Association??? Please let us know!!**

Alan Simmons-Newsletter Editor

Cece Simmons-Assistant Newsletter Editor

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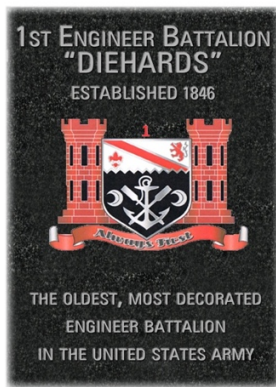
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# MUSEUM OF THE ARMY UPDATE

Dennis O'Dea

2021

This is either a proof or a photo of the actual plaque.  
Something all of us will see at the 2021 reunion!



## UPCOMING REUNIONS

2020

Ft. Riley, KS

**Save the dates!!! Sun., Sept. 13-Weds, Sept. 16, 2020**

Our 2020 Reunion is quickly coming. Bob Roby has been working hard to make this a memorable time.

Get your reservations made!! Four Points by Sheraton, Manhattan, KS. Bob has blocked 50 rooms (see Registration form for details); he's getting a lot of interest from potential attendees so be sure to get your reservation made soon.

There will be a guided tour of Manhattan on Sunday. (Board Members please note---there is a Board meeting Sunday evening).

Ft. Riley is our destination on Monday. We'll meet current members of the battalion in the morning, have lunch on post, and then do some touring.

Tuesday is scheduled for a full day tour of Abilene, including the Eisenhower Library. Our Banquet will be Tuesday evening. Members of the battalion will be attending with us and you know how they dress up! We might want to up our attire also!! (Just a suggestion, not a requirement)

Times and costs are on the Reunion Registration form included in this newsletter.

Tom Jennings continues to work with the DC area's convention and visitors' bureau on the 2021 Annual Reunion which will be in Fairfax, VA. Plans are for it to be a Friday-Sunday event in late September or early October. The new Museum of the US Army will host the Association. We'll have a tour of the museum and also have dinner there. A bus trip to the WW 2, Vietnam, and 1st Division Memorials is tentatively scheduled. At the Division Memorial we are planning a wreath laying ceremony to honor our fallen comrades.

## AND BEYOND

Reunions beyond 2021 were discussed at the 2019 Annual Meeting. It was moved by Alan Simmons to have our reunion in conjunction with the Society of the First Infantry Division in 2022. Motion was seconded and passed on a voice vote.

Dominic Tavano proposed that we have a reunion in conjunction with a river or ocean cruise. He volunteered look into that idea for the 2023 reunion.

## 1<sup>st</sup> INFANTRY DIVISION REUNIONS

Terry Hueser

The Officers of the First Infantry Division will hold the 101st Dinner at

Where: Junction City, Kansas

When: 24- 26 April 2020.

This is for Commissioned and Warrant Officers who have served in combat with the First Infantry Division or Officers currently serving with the division. For information visit [dangerforward.org/newsletter.pdf](http://dangerforward.org/newsletter.pdf).

The Society of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division's 101st Annual Reunion is being held at the:

Astor Crowne Plaza

New Orleans, Louisiana,

12-16 August 2020.

*"Bring your comfortable shoes, cameras and sense of adventure ready because the next Society of the First Infantry Division Reunion is in New Orleans Louisiana. If you like lights, jazz, creole cuisine, museums, culture and so much more, this is the reunion you don't want to miss. We have events set up to take you on a cruise on the Mississippi River; private tour to a Rum Distillery; City Tours and tours to The National World War II Museum, New Orleans, and If that is not enough for you, that's where the adventure of exploring the French Quarter on your own comes into play".*

For information visit [1stid.org/annual-reunion](http://1stid.org/annual-reunion).

The Diehard Tunnel Rats will be holding their reunion with the Society of the First Infantry Division Reunion in New Orleans. For information contact Phil Hoge "Diehard 5" at [hoggpr@gmail.com](mailto:hoggpr@gmail.com)

## **CHANGE OF COMMAND**

1<sup>ST</sup> Battalion Facebook page

Diehard Battalion Change of Command!!

Below are photos from today's [March 6] BN Change of Command!

Once again, we bid a fond farewell to LTC Eric Gilge and his family, as they continue forward within the Engineer Regiment!

And welcome LTC Sidney Howard and his family into the living legacy that is the Diehard Battalion!

Always First! Diehard!



## **TAPS**

### **Woodrow John Gilbert**

Dear Mr. Hueser,  
My name is Marilyn Gilbert and my husband Woodrow John Gilbert was a member of the Veterans of the First Engineer Battalion organization. I am writing to give the sad information that he passed away in October. He attended some of the reunions, the most recent being in Ft. Riley, Kansas. Our son, Michael, attended that one with him and they enjoyed it very much.

I didn't know if you kept records of deceased members, but your name was in our email contacts and in the saved phone numbers in our home phone. We will miss him so very much as we were married for 54 years, have 3 wonderful sons, two wonderful daughters-in-law, seven grandchildren, and are expecting our 1st great-grandchild in January.

Johnny loved being an Engineer and gave it all he had. He was a born mechanic as I am told from an early age he would take his toys apart and put them back together! He was an honorable man who gave his family a good home and took

excellent care of us in spite of all the problems with PTSD from Viet Nam. His battle continued for 50 years.

Thank you and this organization for all you do to honor our veterans.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Gilbert



## **\*\*\*\*HELP NEEDED\*\*\*\***

### **\*\*Website Coordinator\*\***

Terry Hueser said he wants to be replaced. He is using computer software that's more than 10 years old, and requires several hours to upload items to our website ([www.diehardengineer.com](http://www.diehardengineer.com)).

If you are interested in being the Website Coordinator, or helping with it, please contact Terry. (<mailto:huesert@aol.com>)

Jerry Hunter volunteered to look into what software will allow us to keep the website updated. We also have a Facebook page, managed by Jerry Hunter, Pam Smoulder, and Jenny Coppolo. Members should check both sites for information between reunions.

### **\*\*Newsletter Editor\*\***

Cece Simmons

Alan and I have decided to step away from producing the association's newsletter. The July, 2020 issue will be our last one. It's not an arduous job, but we feel that it's time for new blood and new ideas.

The newsletter is published 3 times a year---March, July, and November and generally runs 8 pages. The first page is often the President's message or graphics. The last page is for the mailing label and a reunion reminder and/or graphic of some kind. The actual content is 6 pages. I will admit that I sometimes have a problem finding enough content for those 6 pages. That's where the new blood with new ideas comes in. I create the newsletter using Microsoft Word, but any word processing program works. I convert it to a PDF file to send to the printer since we still have about 50

members who don't have email addresses or prefer to get a hard copy of the newsletter. I will send all the past files to whomever takes on the job and help with getting started.

## **SAHLER-SEDAN VFW POST 287**

Adapted from an article by Joseph Felice, for the *United States World War One Centennial Commission website*

The Sahler-Sedan VFW Post 287 of Coatesville, PA was named after the only Coatesville resident to be killed during World War I.

In April, 1917, Wellington G. Sahler and his friend, Lance Eck, enlisted in the Army. They were both assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> Engineers Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Division. He was assigned to Company E. On October 10, 1918, Cpl. Sahler was killed in action and buried in the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery in France.

In November, 2019, his friend Eck worked with the VFW post in Reading to charter the Sahler-Sedan post in Coatesville to commemorate his friend. (Sedan was the Eastern most point that the American forces had reached before the Armistice was signed.) In December, 1919, the post was chartered.

In the article Mr. Felice writes, "The ...remaining tragedy for these veterans is the legacy of their honor and sacrifice is quickly fading making them nearly forgotten heroes." He goes on to say, "Given the times in which we live, I cannot think of a better moment to restore their legacy. Their lives serve as valuable reminders of how we cannot allow adversity to deter us from being of service to our families, friends and community. Now it is up to us to preserve both of their legacies..."



Cpl. Wellington Sahler

*Editor's Note: Do you know of any other veterans' organizations named in honor of 1<sup>st</sup> Engineers members? Let us know!!*

## **MEMORIALS/MUSEUMS NEEDING DONATIONS**

**The National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial**  
NDSWM  
P.O. Box 29091  
Washington, DC 20017  
<http://www.ndswm.org/donate>

## **World War I Memorial**

US Foundation for the Commemoration of the World Wars  
Donation Dept.  
701 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW #123  
Washington, DC 20004  
<https://www.worldwar1centennial.org/honor/national-wwi-memorial/memorial-fundraising.html>

## **Remember Museum 39-45 (Belgium)**

KBFUS  
10 Rockefeller Plaza, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York City, NY 10020  
<https://kbfus.org>

## **ARMY HUMOR**

A general notice one of his soldiers behaving oddly. The soldier would pick up any piece of paper he found, frown, and say, "That's not it," and put it down again. This went on for some time until the general arranged to have the soldier psychologically tested. The psychologist concluded that the soldier was deranged and wrote out his discharge from the Army. The soldier picked it up, smiled, and said, "That's it!"

How many officers does it take to screw in a light bulb?  
*Only one, but it's done from 30 miles away using a laser targeting at a cost of \$8.3 million*

REAR, n. In American military matters, that exposed part of the Army that is nearest to Congress.  
Ambrose Bierce, The Devil's Dictionary

Don't forget to renew your membership!!  
Application is included in this newsletter.

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**If you are receiving the printed version of our newsletters but are willing to receive your copies via email, please contact Terry Hueser (<mailto:huesert@aol.com>). It cost us more than your individual dues to print the newsletter!!**

Veterans of the First Engineer Battalion  
 Annual Reunion, 13 – 15 September 2020  
 Ft Riley / Manhattan, Kansas

Motel information: Four Points by Sheraton, 530 Richards Drive, Manhattan, Kansas 66502  
 Room Block under Veterans of the First Engineer Battalion, Room Rate is \$95.00 + tax  
 Phone # (785) 539-5311. Reservations deadline is 14 August 2020

Please send registration and payment NLT than 14 August 2020 to:  
 Veterans of the First Engineer Battalion, Attn: Bob Roby  
 12 Oak Valley Road, Manhattan, Kansas 66502

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Guest Name \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Schedule of Events

Sunday, 13 September	1200-1800	Registration
	1600-1700	Manhattan City - Guided Tour (14 pax max)
	1500-2200	Hospitality Room Open
	1900- UTC	Board Meeting
Monday, 14 September	0730-0845	Registration
	0845-1600	Fort Riley Tour
		Lunch at own cost at Ft Riley Dining Facility
	1700-	Dinner at RC McGraws (\$20.00 per person)
	1800-	Membership meeting (RC McGraws)
Tuesday, 15 September	0800-1600	Bus tour Abilene, Kansas
		Lunch at Mr. K's Farmhouse Restaurant (Pay on Own)
	1730-	Banquet Social Time, Four Seasons
	1800-	Banquet Meal, choice of meat (\$30.00 per person)
		Chicken _____ Beef _____
	1900-	Banquet Program
Wednesday, 16 September		Good-Byes and departure

Cost:

Registration Fee	\$20.00	Member _____	Guest _____	Total _____
Monday Ft Riley tour	\$25.00	Member _____	Guest _____	Total _____
Monday Dinner	\$20.00	Member _____	Guest _____	Total _____
Tuesday Abilene Tour	\$25.00	Member _____	Guest _____	Total _____
Tuesday Banquet	\$30.00	Member _____	Guest _____	Total _____

Total Cost \_\_\_\_\_

Registration fee is required. All other events/cost is what you want to attend.

**Payment is required by 14 August 2020 if you plan on attending any events.**



**"ALWAYS FIRST"**: Motto of the First Engineer Battalion

## **Membership Application / Renewal Form**

### **Veterans of the First Engineer Battalion**

Membership in our organization is open to all persons who have ever served honorably in the First Engineer Battalion, US Army. We publish three newsletters a year and hold an annual reunion each September.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Company(s) served in \_\_\_\_\_ Last rank held \_\_\_\_\_

Years served in Battalion: From \_\_\_\_\_ To: \_\_\_\_\_

Dues are \$10.00 per year. You can pay up to 5 years. Make check payable to:

**Veterans of the First Engineer Battalion**

Mail your application/dues renewal to:

**Dale Greenfield, Treasurer**

**Veterans of the First Engineer Battalion**

**20539 401<sup>st</sup> Avenue**

**Huron, SD 57350**

**Dated: March 2019**



# Veterans of the First Engineer Battalion

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## ***SAVE THE DATE: 2020 REUNION---MANHATTAN, KS***

