

VERY REVEREND MONSIGNOR EDWARD R. GLAVIN
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—
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February 22, 1996

Mr. Norb Lippert

Dear Norb,

I shall only be able to give you general information only about your brother. I don't have a particular memory of him, but that is not unusual. The 475th Infantry was not the usual Army Unit. The nature of its operation, members did not get to know other members very well. The 475th Infantry was a Long Range Penetration Unit. The Army had no other units like it. It was formed and used in imitation of the British Chindids, used the table of organization and the equipment of the Chindids, which made it distinctive. Our designation was an invitation of the British designations. It operated as part of a divisional brigade, and the United States Army had no other brigades.

The Chindids were organized by Lord Wingate, a famous British General who was killed in Burma. The Unit was sent into the Burma Jungle behind the Japanese lines with the mission of destroying their supply lines and forcing the Japanese to withdraw. The 475th is the only Infantry Unit in the China-Burma-India Theater, and the only Unit that did Infantry fighting. Their objective was to get behind the enemy lines, harrass them, and by interfering with their supply lines, force the enemy to withdraw. The original American Unit was known as Merrill's Marauders because it was commanded by General Merrill. It made the Long Range Penetration to the Japanese all-weather air strip at Mytkina when it was known as the 5307 Composit Unit. At Mytkina, the Unit was reorganized as the 475th Infantry Regiment. The operation was very dangerous and physically exhausting. We went into the Jungle behind the Japanese lines and marched for hundreds of miles through the jungle. There was no way back and so everyone had to simply keep going and moving ahead with the Unit. The 475th Infantry moved out in three serials. It first went south towards Bajmo and four engagements at Tonkwa. After the fall of Bajmo, the 475th Infantry moved into the jungle south and behind the Japanese position, and marched 700 miles through the jungle to cut the Burma Road behind the Japanese. These are the days before the helicopter and the Unit made its penetration without being detected by the Japanese.

The Burma Road ran north and south from the seacoast north through Burma and into China. From about where the road enters China there was another road at right angles which led over into north Burma at Bajmo. The objective of the 475th Infantry was to force the Japanese withdrawl from north Burma and thus permit

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a back-door way into supplying Chinese Forces. The Americans built a fantastic road known as the Lido Road from India into China. The 475th Infantry along with other units formed the Mars Task Force which set itself up along the Burma Road below the Japanese Forces cutting off their supply line. With the Burma Road cut, the Japanese Forces to the north were unable to get supplies and so they withdrew south opening the area for the Lido Road to connect to the Burma Road and provide a means of supplying China. A 21-day battle was fought along the Burma Road ending up with the Japanese Force withdrawing south and opening north Burma for the Allied effort. The Japanese withdrew south and with the northern area free, they connected the Lido Road with the Burma Road and began to supply equipment and gasoline to the Chinese Forces. Thus there was a ground-level supply route for trucks into China. But a pipeline was built along side the Burma Road, and the pipeline supplied the gasoline for the Air Force in China. The pipeline became as important as the Road itself.

It was next to impossible to describe how dangerous and difficult our operation was. The Unit cut its way through uncharted jungle and over mountain ranges; through territory where there were no roads and no trails. Conscious that we were in Japanese occupied territory, there was the constant danger of ambush. In an ambush, the Japanese always killed first anyone who seemed to have any authority. So we wore a special jungle fatigue and everyone dressed alike from private to colonel. We wore no insignia of any kind because of that. I wore no Chaplain's cross but looked the same as any other soldier. In that I was fulfilling the orders given by the commanding general. We crossed the Schweli River at flood stage on a bridge made of bamboo and jungle vines. When we arrived at the Burma Road, we were too small a Unit to go out and block it, so we set up our Units on five little mountaintops along side the Road from which we could interdict the Road. When the Japanese withdrew south, we were flown over the Hump into China to serve with Chinese Combat Command until the end of the War. We were spread out all over China. The 475th had marched single file through the jungle and achieved a great victory over the Japanese.

Edmund Glavin