

## **John Kerr**



John Kerr was born in Greencastle, Indiana in 1925. His father worked in a town nearby in the office of the State Penitentiary. As John observed, there was not much excitement in the little town. But, there was a war going on and the excitement level was about to change. His country called, and John responded. Two months after graduation from high school, at age 18, John found himself at Ft. Benjamin Harrison, being inducted into the Army. Basic training followed at Ft. Hood, Texas.

He sailed for action in Europe from Camp Miles Standish, Massachusetts, in December of 1944. The Aquitania was the sister ship of the Lusitania, a fast boat that crossed the Atlantic alone, rather than in a convoy. He debarked in Scotland, traveled by train to Bournemouth, England, and then crossed the English Channel to LeHarve, France.

The weather in Europe that winter was freezing cold with snow, just the opposite of Ft. Hood. A 2<sup>1/2</sup> ton truck took him from LeHarve to Givet, France, where he was assigned to the 78<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, Intelligence and Reconnaissance Section. This Section was expected to gather information about the German positions and equipment, and so, as you might expect, he spent some time behind enemy lines. It was a dangerous job, and in the first combat encounter the patrol lost three of its seven members.

The Battle of the Bulge was looming, and for that epic encounter John was attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army. He was on the ground during the struggle for the bridge at Remagen. This battle was fiercely contested, because the bridge held the key to movement of Allied troops and supplies necessary to combat the German offensive. The Allies prevailed, and as the Army moved toward Germany and victory, many villages were forced to surrender—most did so peacefully. Resistance came primarily from those places defended by hard core Nazis.

The War ended, but John remained in the Army Reserves. He was activated but not deployed during the blockade of Berlin and the Cuban Missile Crisis. During that time he received the equivalent of a BA and MS in logistics and supply, and retired at the rank of Lt. Colonel after 33 years of service.

By no means did the military occupy all of John's time. He returned to Indiana, and married his sweetheart, Laurel, in 1947; he subsequently received a bachelor's degree in education, as well as a teaching certificate, in elementary education, and then a Master's in Education from Indiana State University, which qualified him to be a principal. After teaching briefly in Brownsburg, he moved to Central Elementary School in Pike Township, where he remained until he retired, having served his country well in both peace and war

John and Laurel have been married for 70 years. They had four children and a multitude of grandchildren. John is a Catholic and Laurel a Methodist, and as John puts it, "...on Sunday we

go to our separate churches together.” They are family, and they take care of one-another. What else would you expect from such a gentle warrior.