

Roland Dille, US Army, WWII

This week, I decided to tell the story of another important person with a military background from our community. It helps me write these stories when I knew the individuals, so here is Roland Dille's military story. You can listen to his story and/or read the transcript at www.heritageed.com.

Roland was born in Dassel, MN and for all who knew him, he would talk about Dassel as long as you were willing to listen. Dassel is located about 50 miles west of Minneapolis. His parents were farmers but also very active in their community. His father served on the town board, school board and as a county commissioner. His mother served on the town board, one of the first women to do so. This served Roland and Beth Dille well, since both were very active in community activities.

All males in the US were required to register for the draft, so Roland registered for the draft while on Christmas break from the University of Minnesota in 1941 and got his draft notice the following May. While in basic training, he got to see Joe Lewis and Ty Cobb, as he recorded in his oral history interview. After completing basic training he shipped to New York City. While waiting to take a ship to Europe, Roland spent a few days in New York City and was in Times Square when FDR beat Thomas Dewey. The trip across the Atlantic took 10 days and there was a constant fear of German submarines. After spending a few days in England, and on Christmas Day, 1944, Roland and others left England for France, landing at Cherbourg. And from there to the front lines. Roland told about helping guard several thousand captured German prisoners, shelling German lines and getting shelled by them, some of the people in his group and about his pass to Paris. Roland served most of his time with a tank division. He progressed into his military career, some of his other duties and assignments included anti-tank gunner, military police, student at Biarritz Army University, Army of Occupation - Austria and he was in charge of a carpenter shop with 12 German prisoners -1945-46. Roland served in the Battle of Northern France and received numerous decorations. Check out the rest of his story on-line.

As you know, Roland returned to the US, completed his PhD and served as President of MSUM. To date his is the longest serving president of the University. As an interesting side-note, Roland became president on 1 July 1968. I got out of the Air Force on 15 July 1968 and returned to college at MUSM or MSC as it was called in 1968. Roland passed away 26 May 2014 and is missed by all who knew him.

The Heritage Education Commission has 70 Veterans oral histories completed and 200 regional oral histories completed. All can be heard on-line on our website. We are continuing to interview individuals who served in the military. If you are interested in telling your story, please contact me or send an e-mail to hecrrv@gmail.com.