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41 Infantry Brigade Combat Team • 142 Fighter Wing • 82 Brigade • 173 Fighter Wing • Joint-Force Headquarters • Combat Operations Group

The 41st Infantry Division Association reunion visits historic vessel

VANCOUVER, Wash. -- They came with walkers, canes and wheelchairs. Their wives, children and grandchildren saw them get younger with every step they took toward the reunion check in. These are heroes that have lived to tell the story of those that didn't get the chance to tell their own story. The 41st Infantry Division, one of only four National Guard divisions that were activated prior to Japan attacking Pearl Harbor, had its 60th reunion at the Red Lion at the Quay in Vancouver, Wash., Aug. 27-31, 2009. Over 40 veterans and their family members met at the hotel to remember times past. A very special treat was in store when the Amphibious Forces Memorial Museum generously offered the 41sters and their families free rides aboard a DUKW, a combination boat and car, to visit the USS LCI 713, an amphibious landing craft used in landing the 41st at Zamboanga in the Philippine islands. "It is so nice to have the reunion close to home," said Tom Lattanzi, a 41st veteran who was born in the Philippines and really wanted to get back there with the 41st, but was unable to due to being shot not once but on two separate occasions. "It was great to see who is here. It is important to remember all my acquaintances. Everyone here is a hero." Bud Lewis, a friend of Lattanzi's, a fellow 41ster and recently elected President of the 41st Infantry Division Association this weekend said, "I love these reunions. I get to relive old memories and to recapture old friendships that I had 50-60 years ago. As I get older I find out friends are the best things to have. These friends were forged in battle and the horror of that war and are precious like a jewel in a crown, but as time goes by they slip away." As the 41st Infantry Brigade Honor Guard brought in the colors at the beginning of the Saturday night banquet, shaky hands were brought up to render a salute. The young soldiers of the 41st Brigade are proud to be part of the heroic history that these veterans continued through WWII, and that their fellow soldiers continue even now with 41st's largest deployment since WWII to Iraq. Edward Bartlien, President of the 41st Infantry Division Association and part of 41st Signal during WWII said, "41st has a proud history. During WWII we were the first division deployed overseas and were the longest serving overseas division with service from March 1942 through December 1945, and we fought in more campaigns. We received a Presidential citation, and we had at the time the longest continuous combat record of 76 days with 26 days on only very limited C rations." Brig. Gen. Charles Yriarte, the 41st Infantry Brigade Commander (rear) addressed the assembled veterans saying, "Every person in this room has sacrificed. I wouldn't be here today without your sacrifices. You did this country great, and I applaud you. This room is filled with heroes both past and present. I went to Iraq because I love my country. I found out that the Iraqis are good people and like everyone are looking for safety for themselves and their families. I already knew, but it was proven that American soldiers never quit. They do their job. You are this nation's greatest generation, and you became leaders when you came

home. Our soldiers are doing that now. Our nation is great, we remain great and we got that start from you.” Art and Judy Alsos met in Australia when she was 16 and he was 17. The Australians were so excited to have the Americans arrive. She said, “We prayed the American boys would come. The Japanese had already bombed Darwin so when the Americans came they were received so well. The Aussies will never forget.” As the Australians will never forget, the world will never forget what those American boys did during WWII and the sacrifices that were made. Thank you to the 41st then and now. **Commentary by Lt. Col. Alisha Hamel OR 150 Project Coordinator**

