

Great Great Uncle John Thompson's



Experience in World War II



By Trevor



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Grade 4

Valley View Elementary



Questions for Great Great Uncle

1. Who inspired you to join the Army?
2. When did you join the Army?
3. Where were you stationed for boot camp?
4. What position were you in?
5. Did you have to go over seas? If so, where?
6. What was the highest rank you got?
7. Did you ever get to drive an army tank?
8. Did you get out of the army before the war ended?
9. Who was the president at the time?



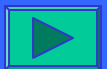
His Story

Uncle John grew up in Columbus, Montana, one of thirteen brothers and sisters. His parents Earl and Zeta Thompson were farmers. The family had to work hard to supply food, clothing and fuel to keep the farm house warm in the winter months. This is where Uncle John and his family were when they heard over the radio that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. Uncle John was seventeen at the time. He remembers that President Roosevelt had said, "The Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor and that we were now at war." This was also his last year of schooling.

He volunteered in the army at the age of eighteen as there were no jobs, as this was toward the end of the Great Depression, and because his best friend had signed up too. Leaving behind parents and family.

He joined in 1942 and was out in 1946 with no furloughs or vacations because he was on the front lines at all times, fighting. Being on the front line was really close to combat and at one point he was captured by the enemy, the Germans. When he convinced them they were going the wrong way thus they turned around walking into Uncle John's company and the Germans were all captured. He never got to go on an USO show as being on the front line and he was fighting all the time. And shows happened behind the lines, where the mess and medical supply tents were located if they were fortunate to have them. It was very, very scary as you were constantly under fire, sometimes heavy fire. He was also afraid of being and going hungry, and of freezing to death. (You had no time to be bored.) He never wanted a pet as it was too dangerous, plus food was scarce enough for the soldiers.

After enlisting he was stationed at Camp Roberts, California for boot camp. Now it is called Vaneberg Air Force Base where they now shoot missiles into space. After finishing six weeks of boot camp he was sent to Germany.



His position was considered Unlimited Services. He signed in as a cook but as they needed many more foot soldiers that is what he became. He also signed a waiver where the government would not be responsible for any injuries. Because of his already bad back, He was classified as a 4F.

He went all over Europe for example, Ireland, England, France, Poland, Germany, Belgium, Czechoslovakia and Austria. He was also involved in the Normandy Invasion and at Utah Beach.

He was on the *Queen Mary*, a ship like our huge tour cruise ships of today. The Irish were really surprised when the *Queen Mary* arrived at the war front (Ireland), as they thought it had been sunk. Each soldier slept on a hammock or berth as they were called then. There were two soldiers per berth plus all their belongings and supplies.

Upon entering the army Uncle John was a Staff Sergeant with his platoon but obtained Active Sergeant Major by the time he was discharged.

Uncle John received two Silver Stars on different incidences saving a soldier's life, risking his own. He also received two Bronze stars when he destroyed a German machine gun nest by throwing a hand grenade into it. A Purple Heart due to trench foot, an already broken back, plus shrapnel received in his leg by flying gun powder pellets. He also got a Presidential Citation which is an Honorable Mention in an official report for bravery or meritorious service in the Armed Forces.

Uncle John didn't even get to drive an army tank as he usually had to walk many miles in very cold, freezing conditions. For Uncle John winter was the hardest part of being in the army. **THE COLD!!!!** You were cold everywhere, and all the time from walking in knee and waist deep snow, from sleeping on the frozen ground where sometimes you actually stuck to the ground from the frost, and if you were sent to a hospital, as he was for trench foot, it was just as cold inside as it was outside, even with layers of blankets.



As usually the men's feet would stick out as the beds were too small, it would take hours to get warm.

During this time President F. D. Roosevelt dies from normal complications and Vice President Harry S. Truman succeeds him on April 2, 1945, as President.

Uncle John stayed in the army all the way to the end of World War II. Matter of fact, they were told by German soldiers that the United States had dropped the atomic bomb over Hiroshima, Japan. As they had no communication from home. Both sides stopped fighting, the Allies which included Great Britain, France, Soviet Union and The United States, etc and the Axis countries which included Germany, Italy and Japan, etc..

Upon leaving the army Great Uncle John Thompson went to Montana and South Dakota to visit family and friends. He arrive in Seattle in 1951 where he started working for Boeing as an area representative, then as a contract scheduler onto becoming a contract negotiator. While working at Boeing he met and married his wife. They live in Seattle where he worked part-time for the Water District until July of 2002.

He said while fighting the war they were not concerned about making history but just wanted the war to end and of just going home. He also said that it was hard making special friendships as people didn't last long to develop a friendship. Also said the thing to remember about World War II is the **DICTATORSHIP** is not a good means to govern a country.





Each star represents where he went.





"The 80th Only Moves Forward"

HEADQUARTERS
80TH INFANTRY DIVISION
U. S. ARMY



*By The Direction Of The President
Of The United States*

a

*SILVER STAR MEDAL
Is Awarded To*

S SGT JOHN E. THOMPSON
HQ Co 318TH INFANTRY

*For Gallantry In Action While
Serving With The 80th Infantry Division,
European Theater Of Operations, In
WORLD WAR II*

H. L. McBRIDE
MAJOR GENERAL, U. S. ARMY
COMMANDING



Great Great Uncle John today





WINIFRED MAN IS DECORATED FOR GALLANTRY

WASHINGTON, Jan. 1. — (AP) — For the single handed destruction of a German machine gun nest, Staff Sgt. John Eirox Thompson of Winifred, Mont., has been awarded the silver star medal for gallantry in action, the war department announced today.

Sergeant Thompson, a member of the 318th regiment of the 80th infantry division, received the award for "displaying outstanding courage and exceptional initiative in the face of ~~ever~~ hostile fire to rescue a comrade," the announcement said.

During the division's drive into the Saar basin in November, 1944, Sergeant Thompson's platoon came

sniper and machine gun fire. Thompson said. Thompson was shattered by an enemy sniper. Seeing a wounded comrade helpless, he crawled through enemy fire and

returned to the platoon with his friend's rifle. He then killed the sniper. He then crawled through the intense machine gun fire. the citation said. He carried out the machine gun crew.

III. AWARD OF SILVER STAR MEDAL: By direction of the President, under the provisions of Army Regulations 600-45, dated 22 September 1943, as amended, the Silver Star Medal is awarded the following named personnel:

JOHN E. THOMPSON, 39621107, S Sgt, Hq. Co 2d Bn, 318th Infantry, United States Army. For gallantry in action in FRANCE on 26 November 1944, in connection with military operations against an enemy of the United States. At ZIMMING, FRANCE, although his rifle was destroyed, S Sgt THOMPSON advanced with his platoon. Observing a wounded comrade, he crawled through severe enemy fire to carry the casualty to safety. Then, with his comrade's gun, he killed a sniper and destroyed a machine gun nest. S Sgt THOMPSON's courage and devotion to duty exemplify the highest traditions of the armed forces of the United States. Entered military service from MONTANA.

