

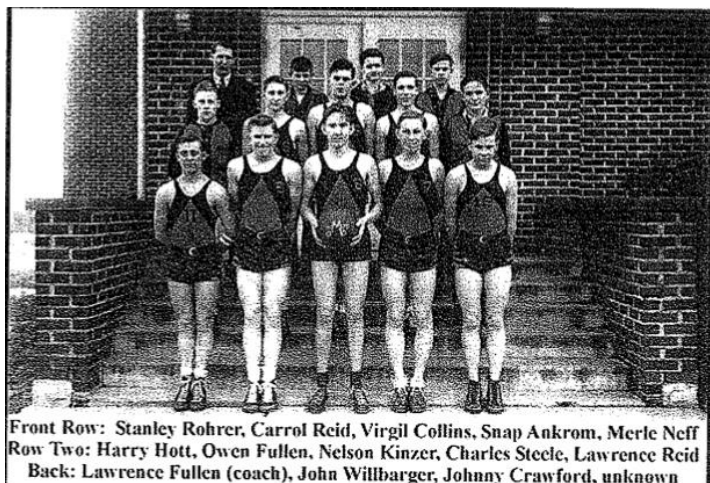
Ernest Dewey “Snap” Ankrom

1921 to 2009

EARLY YEARS

Ernest Dewey Ankrom was born April 13, 1921, in Pickaway County, Ohio, the oldest child of Roy and Marie Ankrom. His aunt called him “Snapper” OR “Snap” when he was a baby, saying he looked like a snapping turtle crawling across the floor with his head up turning side to side to see all that was around him.

He grew up in Muhlenberg Township, Ohio, which is centered on the town of Darbyville. He was a high school baseball and basketball star and earned a starting position on the varsity baseball team and started as a guard on the basketball team. He graduated from Muhlenberg Township High School in 1939. The 1940 United States Census records him living with his parents, brother and four sisters in his maternal grandfather’s house in Darbyville, Ohio.



MILITARY LIFE

On October 23, 1942, Snap Ankrom enlisted in the United States Army in Columbus, Ohio, with the rank of private. He was eventually assigned to the 179th Infantry Regiment (Tomahawks). That regiment was assigned to the 45th Infantry Division (Thunderbirds). In April 1944 Snap arrived in Italy. At that time, the 179th had units fighting in both the Anzio campaign and the Rome-Arno campaign. Snap must have participated in one or both of these campaigns and by September 1944 he had been promoted to Second Lieutenant.

CAPTURE, CAMP LIFE, LONG MARCH

Prior to the end of the Rome-Arno campaign, 2LT Ankrom’s unit was transferred to Southern France and Operation Dragoon, the Allied drive north from the beaches of the French Riviera. On September 10, 1944, his unit was near Pinal, northeast of Lyon, France. Snap was commanding a mortar platoon. He left his unit to meet with another officer regarding strategy. He

was captured by the Germans while returning to his unit and was transported into Germany. On November 10, 1944, he arrived at Oflag 64 in Szubin, German occupied Poland.

On January 21, 1945, 2LT Ankrom began the Long March from Szubin to Parchim, Germany. He was transported by rail to Oflag 13B near Hammelburg, Germany, arriving on March 9. At the end of March, with Allied Forces approaching, Oflag 13B was evacuated. Per Meltesen in Roads to Liberation, Snap was in March Column #1, a group of 400 who were marched out of Hammelburg on March 28. The troops were organized in standard United States Army formation and it is likely that 2LT Ankrom was a squad leader. The column carried fabric panels, made from sheets, on which "US" and "PW" were written. Whenever Allied aircraft approached, the panels were laid on the ground in hopes that the planes would not fire on the column.

On Thursday, April 5, 2LT Ankrom's column left Furth, on the outskirts of Nuremberg, and marched into the city. Late in the morning, Allied aircraft bombed Nuremberg and the US and PW panels did not protect the column. Ankrom helped count the casualties after the attack, reported by Meltesen as 25 killed, 23 wounded, and 13 walking wounded. After dealing with the casualties, the column marched on to Feucht, south of Nuremberg.

The following morning the column was reorganized and on April 7 the march began again. The column followed secondary roads, heading south and east toward Munich. On Friday, April 13, the column found out that President Roosevelt had died. On April 16 they crossed the Danube River by ferry and reached Weltenburg. By April 27 the column was close to Moosburg and Stalag 7A but instead of stopping, marched on south. On May 2 they reached Gars am Inn, east of Munich, which had proclaimed itself an open city. At



this point, the American Senior Administrative Officer of the column refused to march onward. By that evening the 14th Armored Division of the United States Army had arrived and taken over Gars am Inn. This is most likely when 2LT Ankrom's squad acquired a Nazi flag, which they all signed and presented to Snap as a souvenir. Snap Ankrom and his comrades had marched nearly 584 miles (932 kilometers)

from Oflag 64 and he had kept a diary of the entire experience.

ON THE WAY HOME

On May 3, 1945, Snap officially became a Recovered American Military Personnel (RAMP) under the control of the 14th Armored Division. All the prisoners were taken back to Stalag 7A, near Moosburg, for processing. He would have passed through Camp Lucky Strike and then home to Ohio for 60 days leave.

Who knows what the next day will bring? I'm sure I don't and I don't care because I'm on my way home!! It's the greatest feeling in the world to know you're going home. Ankrom's letter to his parent, May 8, 1945. (Zachariah, "Nazi Flag Heirloom Missing")

By August 15, 1945, he was in Miami Beach, Florida, assigned to an Army Redistribution Center. On August 23 his engagement to Lois Jean Fausnaugh was announced in the Circleville Herald. They were married on October 24, 1945 and raised a son and daughter.

A CIVILIAN AGAIN

After his discharge from the Army, Snap entered the second, post war training class of the Ohio State Patrol, which was composed entirely of war veterans. He graduated on June 11, 1946, and was assigned to the Springfield, Ohio, Highway Patrol Post. However, patrol work was not for him because before the end of 1946 he was employed by Columbia Gas of Ohio.

Snap and his wife Jean made their home in Circleville, Ohio, where they raised two children. For twenty years he and his brother Bill officiated at high school basketball games. On May 26, 1971, he was awarded a gold watch by Columbia Gas in recognition of 25 years of service. He was a member of the Methodist Church, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks Lodge #77, American Legion Post #134, and the Sertoma Club where he served as president. Shortly before his death, Snap donated his souvenir Nazi flag to the Pickaway County Veterans Service office, where it was displayed for a number of years. He died October 8, 2009, in Circleville, Ohio, where he was buried.



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