

78 YEARS SINCE THE 76TH LEFT

THIS IS A SPECIAL INSERT TO THE REAL MCCOY NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHTING A SOLDIER'S TIME AT CAMP MCCOY IN 1943 AND 1944 AND SOME OF THE TIME OF HIS UNIT — THE 76TH INFANTRY DIVISION WAS AT MCCOY AS WELL. THIS SOLDIER AND THE UNIT LEFT MCCOY AND WENT ON TO FIGHT IN THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE AND MORE DURING WORLD WAR II.



Courtesy photo

This photo, taken in 1944, shows Battery C, 302nd Field Artillery Battalion, 76th Infantry Division just before the unit was to deploy overseas to fight in Europe for World War II. Among them in this photo is 2nd Lt. Harry Baker who shared his memories and photos of his time at Camp McCoy in the 1940s and about his unit as they went overseas.

Recalling Camp McCoy: One World War II vet's memories of service at post in 1940s

BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

Seventy-eight years ago in November 1944, then-2nd Lt. Harry Baker was loading up on a Chicago and Northwestern train with the rest of his 500-man artillery battery to deploy to Europe from Camp McCoy.

For Baker, the deployment out of McCoy on a snowy, late-November day just after Thanksgiving most likely brought to light the reality of where he was heading overseas.

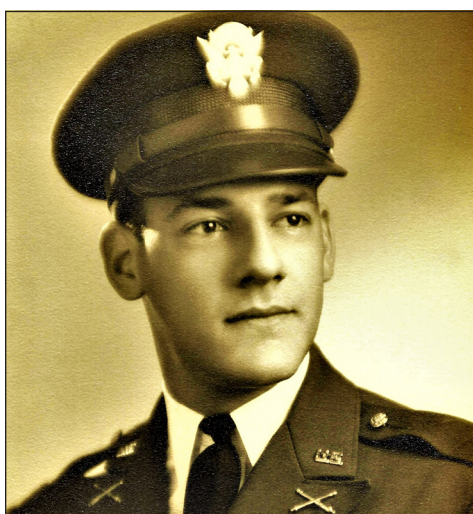
"We entrained just after Thanksgiving that year and headed east through Chicago," he wrote in a memoir entitled "Reminiscence" in 2000 at the age of 80. "Two nights later we arrived at Camp Miles Standish on Cape Cod, Mass. — a marshalling depot where units were housed until shipping was available at the Boston Navy Yard. Two days later we were moved to the dock and boarded a Liberty ship ... built solely to carry troops, generally in a convoy."

Baker, now 102 years old, is a retired Army lieutenant colonel and currently resides in Pewaukee, Wis., and is a native of Milwaukee. During World War II, he was an artillery officer with Battery C, 302nd Field Artillery Battalion, 76th Infantry Division. His path to service time at McCoy was like many others — a war came calling.

Baker said he graduated from Riverside High School in Milwaukee in 1939. "Then after a summer of working in the Cudahy Packing Company Slaughterhouse, I went to East Lansing, Mich., to matriculate at Michigan State College," he wrote in his memoir. "The date was Sept. 1, and coincidentally on that date, Adolf Hitler's German Army began the invasion of Poland."

And Camp McCoy at that time was still mainly a camp comprised of buildings on what is now the same area as South Post Housing Area. Much of it was tent pad spaces, wood buildings, train tracks, and artillery and training ranges. Like Baker's military life, that would all change in just a few short years.

By December 1941, more specifically Dec. 7, 1941, Baker was taking military science as part



Courtesy photo

Shown is Cadet Harry Baker, a native of Milwaukee, Wis., in 1941 while attending Michigan State in East Lansing, Mich.

of his college courses, and the woman who would become his wife of 78 years — Patricia — had also been attending classes at Michigan State since the fall of 1940. But also on that day, Baker wrote about what he and Pat learned.

"In December of 1941, a Sunday, we went to the movies in East Lansing, and upon exiting the theater in the dark, were met with newsboys shouting 'extra, extra' about the Pearl Harbor bombing. We looked at each other and said, 'Where is Pearl Harbor?' We went to the college Union and over coffee heard the radio describing the event until late at night. The next day, the entire campus seemed to have matured over night at the prospect of war — giving authentication to that event in 1939 when Hitler invaded Poland."

Soon after Baker competed for Advanced ROTC and was eventually accepted into artillery. He stated in his memoir that many men who were attending Michigan State for a time were going over to Canada and enlisting in the Canadian air force. But that soon changed.

"One bright morning in April 1943, we were told to assemble in Demonstration Hall in ranks," his memoir states. He said his major said, "This is voluntary for those of you who agree, and mandatory for those of you who do not. We are leaving for Detroit tomorrow morning to be inducted into the U.S. Army."

Baker said instantly he and his ROTC classmates were all made corporals and by June 1943 they were on the move.

"We were shipped off in June 1943 to Fort Custer (Mich.) for issuance of equipment, clothing, and preparation for basic training camp," Baker wrote. "The details were only two or three days, and we then embarked on a troop train to Camp McCoy, Wis., assigned rifles, and began training as infantrymen."

Once at Camp McCoy, Baker's training for war began. He discussed his first stay at McCoy in 1943 in his memoir.

"One of the first days there, a new young lieutenant decided that we would be toughened up if we took a 20-mile hike — finishing off with an obstacle course," Baker wrote. "It was to his downfall since our shoes were only days old and not yet broken in. The blisters and foot difficulties sent many men to sick bay. The lieu-

tenant was shipped overseas to an infantry unit as punishment.

"We trained for a month before getting a pass to town," Baker said, "continuing through July heat we hardened up and again entrained the first week of August (1943) heading for Fort Sill, Okla., for the Artillery School for the Army."

Baker trained at Fort Sill, earned his second lieutenant bars, and in early 1944 he received military orders back to Camp McCoy to serve with the 302nd Field Artillery Battalion. In between that time, Baker was able to make his way back to Wisconsin and get married to Patricia on Dec. 10, 1943, in Milwaukee. It was a beautiful memory for him.

"What a beautiful affair — candlelit aisles at St. Marks, beautiful bride in white, I was in my newly gained uniform, and Father Stimpson did a very solid and memorable service for us," Baker wrote.

And Baker described his new job at Camp McCoy in early 1944.

"In addition to being a battery officer, I was selected to be aide-de-camp to Brig. Gen. Henry C. Evans, Division Artillery Commander at his headquarters," Baker said. "Duty there other

(See **MEMORIES**, Insert Page 2)



Fort McCoy historical photo

Soldiers learn about some equipment in one of the installation's new barracks in the "New Camp" in the summer of 1943 at Camp McCoy.

MEMORIES

from Page 1

than assisting him in personal, social, and all military matters consisted of time-consuming representation of the general at special and general court martials of which there were many.”

But prior to Baker’s first or second arrival to Camp McCoy, the installation itself saw a transformation itself in 1942 while Baker was still in training. In February 1942, the U.S. War Department announced the building of a cantonment area, referred to as the “New Camp,” which is still Fort McCoy’s cantonment area today.

The new camp site was all countryside consisting of scrub oak, jack pine, and wild grass in early 1942. More than 1,500 buildings were constructed by more than 8,000 workers, which took nine months to complete at a cost of \$30 million (approximately \$545 million today). The triangular share of the cantonment area, or the “triad,” was designed to allow troop units to live and train efficiently under one headquarters.

“The most memorable part of the whole operation was the wonderful cooperation of everybody in the surrounding communities,” said Lt. Col. D.C. Lamoreaux, the area construction engineer in 1942 in a local news article. “They (the community) contributed a tremendous amount to the success of the camp.”

Similarly, an article in the Aug. 28, 1942, edition of The Real McCoy newspaper also discussed the opening of the “New Camp McCoy” as it was announced by then-Camp Commander Col. George M. MacMullin. “Huge is not the name for it,” the article states. “The camp is larger than many of the cities within the territory, and plans for training, according to Col. MacMullin, will bring in more Soldiers than there are civilians in several of the nearby communities.”

“They were very nice accommodations,” Baker said. “It was nice to have warm rooms and hot showers.”

At the time Baker first stayed in the “New

Camp” in 1943, most buildings were less than a year old. Baker also mentioned a pet peeve about waiting in line for the mess hall in winter when returning in early 1944.

One of his not-so-fond memories was “to be lined up for mess and those damned coal-fired furnaces would get soot on a uniform. Try to stay in proper uniform with the coal flakes on your uniform that came out of those ... kitchens.”

As busy as Baker probably was throughout 1944, when June 6, 1944, took place — the D-Day invasion in France — he said “everything seemed to change that day.”

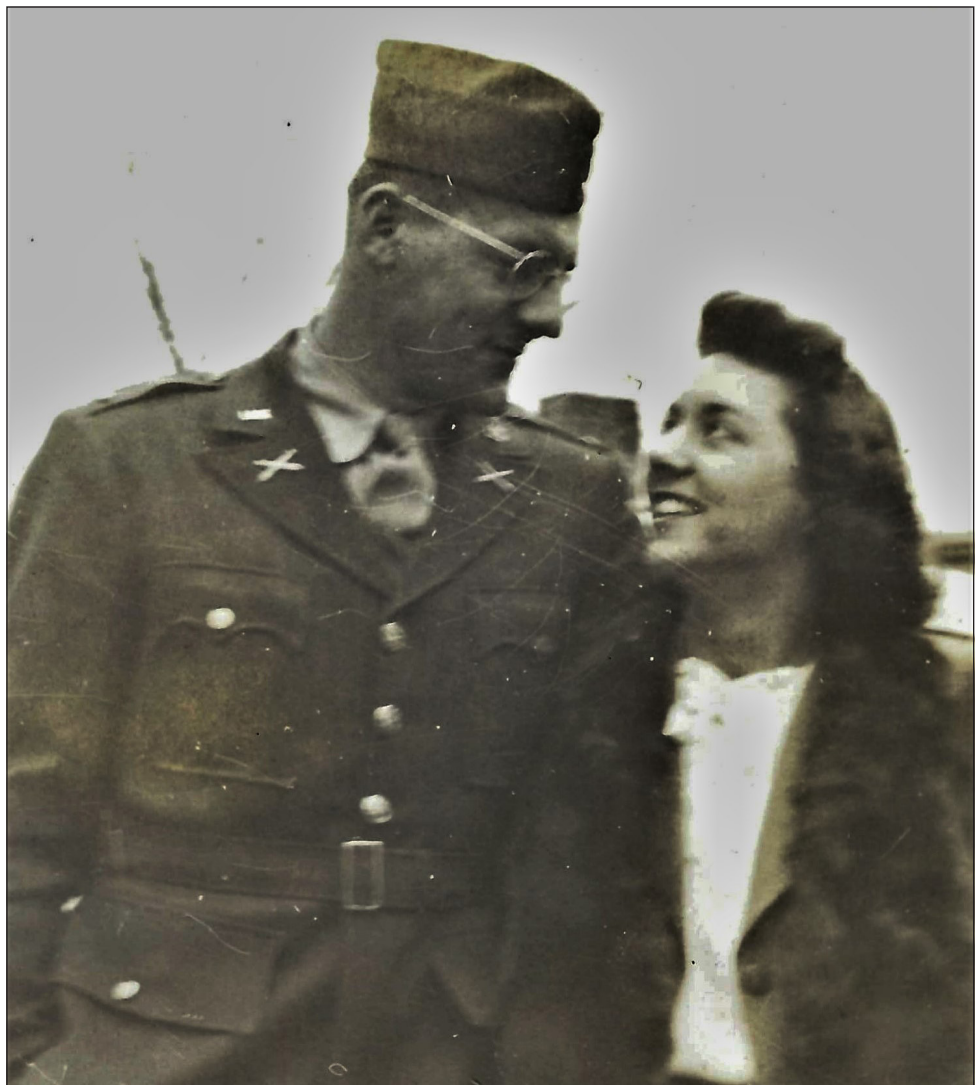
“The tiring training and repetition now proved to require even more acceleration,” he wrote. “Heightened security at post, stringent pass and leave orders, and orders from Washington came quickly to prepare for port of embarkation, preparation, and plans. My dear wife arrived shortly after, having graduated from Michigan State, and I left the barracks finding quarters for us nit in Sparta as I had planned, but farther away in a town called West Salem.”

From June to November 1944, Baker’s unit and the rest of the 76th Infantry Division that was at Camp McCoy continued to prepare for deployment, and by before Christmas 1944 they had all made it to Europe.

Baker went on to fight in the Battle of the Bulge and many other battles well into 1945. He was among tens of thousands of Soldiers who trained, processed, and went through Camp McCoy during World War II.

He returned home to his wife in August 1945. And as he said, “Wonderful to see my darling girl after too long a separation. ... How lucky to be reunited.”

After World War II, Baker served in the Army Reserve where he retired in 1980 at his current rank.



(Above) Second Lt. Harry Baker and Patricia Baker stop for a candid photo together late 1944 at Camp McCoy. (Below) Second Lt. Harry Baker is shown in the center with his fellow Soldiers from Battery C of the 302nd Field Artiller Battalion a little closer up in the group photo that was taken at Camp McCoy.



Courtesy photos

Second Lt. Harry Baker and Patricia Baker are shown Dec. 11, 1943, in Milwaukee, Wis., after getting married. This was in between Harry’s first time at Camp McCoy earlier that year, and he would be assigned to the 302nd Field Artillery Battalion at Camp McCoy just weeks later in 1944.



76th Infantry Division, McCoy have history tied to World War II



BY SCOTT T. STURKOL
Public Affairs Staff

In October 2022, dozens of Fort McCoy community members took time to help celebrate the 102nd birthday of retired Army Lt. Col. Harry Baker — a World War II veteran who served with C Battery, 302nd Field Artillery Battalion, 76th Infantry Division at then-Camp McCoy in 1943-44.

Baker trained at McCoy and deployed from the post with his battery of 500 men in November 1944.

Looking at the history of the 76th, according to <https://military-history.fandom.com>, the division was a unit of the Army “in World War I, World War II, and the Cold War.

“The division was deactivated in 1996 and has been reconstituted as the 76th U.S. Army Reserve Operational Response Command in 2013.”

History shows the division began training for war at Camp McCoy in September 1943 where the unit focused on winter training.

This training focused on the use of skis, snowshoes, toboggans, snow tractors, snow goggles, winter camouflage suits, Eskimo parkas, and more.

Written in a training notebook by Staff Sgt. Melvin Wagner with Company B, 417th Infantry Regiment, 76th Infantry Division, while training at Camp McCoy for that winter training, he made an important note.

“The colder it gets, the more a man thinks to himself — to hell with his equipment,” Wagner wrote in the composition book donated to the Fort McCoy History Center. “It is the responsibility of NCOs to check men constantly.”

Wagner’s training notes also covered everything from diagrams of skis and snowshoes as well as conduct of how to properly teach winter skills. As a noncommissioned officer, it was likely he was teaching other Soldiers the same skills he had learned.

The history of the 76th also shows that while operating from Camp McCoy, an “advanced training group moved in November 1943 to Northern Michigan (the Upper Peninsula) to near Watersmeet.”

While near Watersmeet, winter training experts from the Mountaineering Training Center at Camp Hale, Colo., gave a special training program, and the additional winter training began in the Ottawa National Forest near Watersmeet. Watersmeet is approximately 210 miles north of Fort McCoy — just across the Michigan-Wisconsin border.

A training schedule that was issued by the 76th Infantry Division Winter Training Detachment for the week of Nov. 22-28, 1943, for the “Watersmeet Area, Michigan” from the 76th leadership, Maj. Eric. E. Wikner, at Camp McCoy.

The schedule includes “character of training” subjects in multi-hour blocks throughout the days such as “critique on shelters and bivouacs, winter first aid, security of small units, stream crossings, infiltration at night on snowshoes, sniping and range estimation, dummy positions and trails in snow, infiltration and ambush small units,” and “conditioning exercises and close-order drill.”

Soldiers with the 76th trained in Michigan until March 1944 while others continued training throughout at Camp McCoy.

Baker, who was a second lieutenant at that time at Camp McCoy, recalled his battery of Soldiers completing their wide variety of training.

“We did our work with our guns on the south ranges there,” Baker said. “Then there was a lot of familiarizing with trucks, ... and a lot of road marching ... and we did things to get (artillery)

guns oriented.”

In June 1944, the 76th Infantry Division celebrated its second anniversary of reactivation at Camp McCoy with a special edition of The Real McCoy newspaper on June 17, 1944 — just 10 days after D-Day and the landing at Normandy. In that edition the 76th’s Commanding General, Maj. Gen. William R. Schmidt, sent a message to the division’s troops.

“The final phase of the battle is at hand,” Schmidt’s message states. “The tremendous power of the Allied Nations is now being unleashed in all its fury. The liberation of France has begun.

“The Allies are driving hard up the Italian boot. ... Victory will come to Allies but it will not be an easy one. It will come only when the full might of our arms defeat the enemy on his own battle-ground. ...What the future holds for this division no man knows. ...Time is short and there is much to be done.”

By November 1944, trains headed from Camp McCoy to Camp Myles Standish in Massachusetts for staging before transport to Europe, the history shows. On Thanksgiving Day 1944, three transports sailed from the Boston port of embarkation to Europe.

Baker said he remembers when they left.

“We got on a train and went through Milwaukee all the way to Miles Standish,” Baker said. “When we went to sea we went on a Liberty ship. I was disappointed though. I had fallen asleep when the ship left, and I didn’t get to see my country as we went to leave. We were already at sea.”

Baker said they sailed south toward Florida, caught an armed convoy with destroyers, and then headed towards Europe where they arrived safely.

The history states “the 76th Infantry Division arrived in England” on Dec. 20, 1944, “where it received additional training. It landed at Le Havre, France, on Jan. 12, 1945, and proceeded to the Limesy concentration area. The division moved to Beine east of Reims and then to Champlon, Belgium, Jan. 23, to prepare for combat.

“Relieving the 87th Division in defensive positions along the Sauer and Moselle Rivers in the vicinity of Echternach, Luxembourg, Jan. 25, the 76th sent out patrols and crossed the Sauer, Feb. 7, and breached the Siegfried Line in a heavy assault,” the history states.

“The advance continued across the Prum and Nims Rivers, Feb. 25–27. Katzenkopf fortress and Irrel fell on Feb. 28, and the attack pushed on toward Trier, reaching the Moselle, March 3.

“Driving across the Kyll River, the division took Hosten, March 3, Speicher on March 5, and Karl on March 10; swung south and cleared the area north of the Moselle, crossing the river, March 18, near Mülheim an der Mosel. Moving to the Rhine, the 76th took over defenses from Boppard to St. Goar and crossed the Rhine at Boppard, March 27,” the history further states. “It drove east and took Kamberg in a house-to-house struggle, March 29. A new attack was launched April 4, and the Werra River was reached the next day.

“The attack continued in conjunction with the 6th Armored Division; Langensalza fell, and the Gera River was crossed, April 11. Zeitz was captured after a violent struggle, April 14–15, and the 76th reached the Mulde River on April 16, going into defensive positions to hold a bridgehead across the Mulde near Chemnitz until Victory in Europe Day in 1945.”

Baker obviously survived the war and retired from the Army Reserve in 1980. In September 1992, more than 600 people associated with the 76th held a reunion at Fort McCoy to recall their time at the post 50 years later as well.



Army historical photos

A scene where Soldiers with the 76th Infantry Division were completing winter training in Watersmeet, Mich., is shown in November 1943.



76th Infantry Division Soldiers complete winter training at Camp McCoy in late 1943.



Soldiers with the 76th Infantry Division board a train at Camp McCoy in November 1944 after months of training at McCoy. The troops begin their deployment to Europe.

Some imagery of McCoy from 1943-1944 — seeing what 76th Soldiers saw

76th Division Anniversary Edition



THE REAL MCCOY

FIRST SONS
OF THE
NATION

Published Weekly By and For The Military Personnel of Camp McCoy

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Hundreds Add Praise For Men Of 76th Division

The 76th Infantry Division has received hundreds of letters of praise since its activation two years ago. The following are excerpts from letters selected at random from the Division's files. After the 76th left A. P. Hill Military Reservation, Va., the Reservation's Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. E. F. Munschower wrote:

"I have had many favorable comments made to me about the conduct of the 76th Division presented by soldiers in Bowling Green, Fredericksburg and Richmond. . . . In spite of the apparent haste and confusion that results from a large troop movement, the area, visited by units of the 76th Division was in excellent condition, and my inspecting officers told me (Continued on page 10)

Gen. Wainwright, Philippine Hero, Once 76th C of S

The men of the 76th Infantry division have been led by officers of outstanding ability. Its record of staff was a young regular Army officer whose name is known and honored today throughout the land as the hero of Corregidor—Lt. Gen. Johnathan M. Wainwright.

May Gen. Ralph C. Smith, who led the 27th Infantry division in its capture of Makin Island in the Gilberts in November 1943, was assistant commander of the 76th in 1942.

And, because fine leadership produces fine soldiers the record of the 76th in supplying officers is very high. In the two years of its life in this war, more than one thousand of its enlisted men have left to attend one of the 17 schools for officer candidates.

There are thousands of other enlisted men and officers who are putting into practice the lessons they learned while in training with the 76th Infantry Division. They are the former soldiers of the 76th who are now fighting in the Pacific Islands, on the Italian front, and taking part in the wave of American invading Hitler's Europe.

76th Marks 2nd Birthday; It's Actually 24 Years Old

Although the 76th Infantry division is celebrating its second anniversary of reactivation it is actually 24 years old. It was born in 1917 during World War I at Camp Devens, Mass. It was one of the first divisions of the national Army drawn from the civilian ranks of the country through conscription.

The colorful red, white and blue shield insignia was adopted. It embodied "spirit, fire and steel" and the colors of the nation. In the days of World War I it was the symbol of the United States Army. When World War I came to the United States, the 76th was one of the first divisions to be reactivated on the eastern front.

Division Marks Second Anniversary, Looks To Future With Confidence

The following is a message to 76th Infantry division troops by Maj. Gen. William R. Schmidt, commanding general, on the second anniversary of the division's reactivation and the occasion of the first Infantry day.

The final phase of battle is at hand. The tremendous power of the Allied Nations is now being unleashed in all its fury. The liberation of France has begun. The Allies are driving hard up the Italian boot. The unbreakable offensive ring is growing tighter around both the Germans and Japs. And, the thought which is uppermost in the minds of all freedom-loving people will be realized—crushing the Axis.

Victory will come to the Allies but it will not be an easy one. It will come only when the full might of our arms defeat the enemy on his own battleground.

Among hundreds of thousands of American soldiers now stationed on the world's battle-fronts there are many 76th trained men. Those men came into the 76th division with varying standards of combat efficiency but when they left us they went with the highest standards possible in the training time allotted. The splendid records these men are making on the battlefield is a lesson for all in training to study.

This second anniversary of the reactivation of the 76th Infantry Division, coming as it does on the first Infantry day, is of particular significance in that we of the 76th are now entering the final period of our combat training. Soon we too will be called upon to carry our portion of the burden of battle.

What the future holds for this division no man knows. But we do know that wherever we are sent or whatever we are called upon to do, we shall be ready. It is the duty of every officer and every enlisted man of this division to put forth his utmost effort to study and work and train until the division is fully prepared to take its place in the forefront of the battle.

Time is short and there is much to be done.

Time Short, Much To Be Done, Schmidt's Message

Members Fight Enemies On All Fronts

Men of the 76th Infantry division training for combat action, didn't stop work this week to look back upon their achievements since reactivation two years ago.

Training went on as usual. The division presented Expert Infantryman badges to 800 soldiers on Friday.

If the troops had thumbed through the pages of the Division's two years of activity here are some of the events they would run across:

Men Men For the Job

The 76th Infantry Division was activated on June 11, 1942, at Ft. Meade, Md. Training began immediately and proceeded rapidly until October when the division was given a special mission. Invasion of North Africa had come and other world events were making it necessary to supply well-trained men for immediate overseas duty. The 76th had those men—specialists in combat. They had the added experience of major training for the 76th was the first division in the nation to give its troops that tough hand-to-hand combat training. So, from October until February, 1943, the 76th division (Continued on page 9)

Veteran Leaders Guide Destinies Of 76th Division

Directing major policies of the 76th Infantry Division at Camp McCoy are four military leaders with varied army careers.

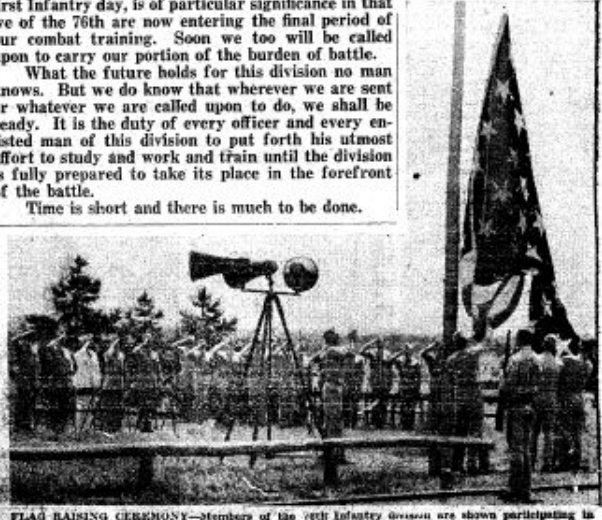
Maj. Gen. William R. Schmidt, division commander, assumed command Dec. 14, 1942. He was formerly assistant commander of the 31st Infantry Division at Camp Rucker, Ala.

Gen. Schmidt has had 31 years' service in the Army. Born in Verdigris, Neb., he began his military career as a second lieutenant in the 1st Infantry Division upon graduation from the U. S. Military Academy. Three years later he was ordered one grade and in May 1917 became a captain. (Continued on page 9)

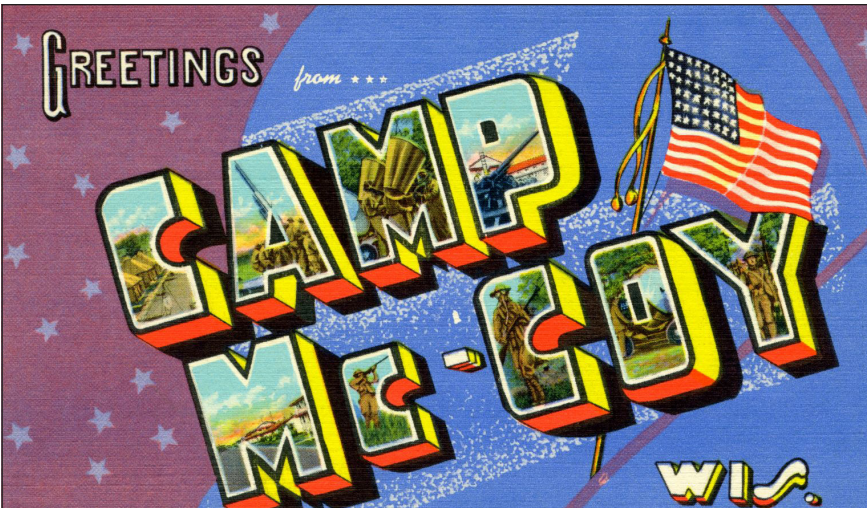
Unit Papers Keep 'Em Posted

Written and edited by enlisted men of the 76th Infantry division, six unit newspapers are keeping their readers up to the minute with "local" news. Those publications are THE MINUTEMAN of the 204th Infantry regiment, ENGINEERS of the 36th Engineer battalion, CANNONEERS POST of the Division Artillery and the SIGNALMAN of the Division Signal company. The papers are under the supervision of the respective intelligence officers.

Flag Raising Ceremony—Members of the 76th Infantry Division are shown participating in a traditional flag raising ceremony.



Here's a Camp McCoy post card from 1943-1944.



Here's a scene of an employee at the post exchange at Camp McCoy in 1943.



A look inside Camp McCoy barracks in 1943. These were the new barracks built in 1942 "New Camp."



The Camp McCoy Officer's Club is shown in 1943.



Army historical photos

Soldiers in a Camp McCoy mess hall (dining facility) in 1943. At the time of this photo, this facility was less than a year old.

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