



The Lobster Battalion Reunites at Fort Leonard Wood

By Ms. Christy Lindberg

Fifteen veterans, two widows, and more than twenty-five friends and family members traveled from all over the country to meet at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, for the annual reunion of the 86th Chemical Mortar Battalion (the Lobster Battalion). The 86th was a World War II battalion that once served as an attachment to General George Patton's 3rd Army. Each chemical mortar battalion was given a code name starting with the letter *L* (fitting as they "lobbed" shells at the enemy, commented one veteran).

Chemical Basic Officer Leader's Course (CBOLC) Class 03-07 and Chemical Captain's Career Course (CMC3) Class 02-07 hosted a dining-out on 12 April to honor the esteemed guests. The veterans were surprised with a video presentation of the battalion's history (by the U.S. Army Chemical School History Office). Additionally, the Chemical Corps Regimental Association (CCRA) bestowed the Honorary Order of the Dragon on the 86th.¹ The CCRA also presented the Veneration Pin to family members in recognition of their loved ones' service. Mrs.

Mildred Ferguson commented that "it's very nice. He [Mr. James Ferguson] has been gone for a long time now, but I know [that] he would have liked this." Darrell Honeycutt emotionally stated that "[at] most reunions, we sit around and retell the same old stories; this is a once-in-a lifetime experience. It's overwhelming."

CBOLC Class 03-07 and the 84th Chemical Battalion conducted a memorial service and wreath-laying ceremony at the World War II Memorial Chapel to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice in battle and those who have since passed on. Several veterans wiped away tears as Taps sounded and twenty-one volleys were fired in memory of those who gave their lives for our Nation. Staff at the U.S. Army Chemical Museum unveiled a special exhibit dedicated to the service of the 86th, while the Chemical School History Office conducted interviews to record the histories of the veterans. The veterans' wives were also interviewed, and it was discovered that one wife, Barbara Sylvester, had served as an Army nurse in Italy and the Pacific, but had not received recognition for her contributions to the war effort. This was rectified when Brigadier General Thomas Spoehr, Chief of Chemical and Commandant of the U.S. Army Chemical School, presented Ms. Sylvester with the Women's Army Corps Service Medal.² Another wife was instrumental in assisting the Dutch underground.

The reunion concluded with a barbeque lunch and a great deal of reminiscing.

As the CBOLC officer in charge (OIC) reflected on the support that the class received from senior leadership, he added that "it all went off nicely . . . the veterans really enjoyed their night." The CMC3 OIC commented on the challenge of coordinating an event with so many moving parts. "Getting everyone on the same page and finding time in our schedules was [were] very difficult." However, the



Members of the 86th Chemical Mortar Battalion

reward was worth the effort. Veteran Eugene Bozych smiled as he said, “Thank you. This was very nice, very nice.” Harold McCarty stated that “there are no words to express our gratitude for all you did to make our (*sic*) [the] 86th reunion such a memorable event. It was one of the best!”

The reunion of the 86th Chemical Mortar Battalion served as a reminder of the service of Dragon Soldiers that served before us and for those who continue to defend freedom in various locations around the world. It was an honor to show the veterans how much they are appreciated and what a privilege it is to have them as part of the Chemical Corps family. 🐉

Endnotes:

¹The Order of the Dragon Program (OODP) was established to maintain and enhance the legacy of the Chemical Corps and to promote cohesiveness and esprit de corps in the Chemical Corps Regiment by recognizing individuals who have served the Corps with distinction. The OODP consists of three awards: the Ancient Order, the Honorable Order, and the Carol Ann Watson Spouse Award. Nominated personnel must meet the criteria established for each level of recognition.

²The Women’s Army Corps Service Medal is awarded to women who served in the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps between 20 July 1942 and 31 August 1943 or the Women’s Army Corps between 1 September 1943 and 2 March 1946.

Ms. Lindberg is the historian assistant for the U.S. Army Chemical School History Office.



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Include your full name, rank, current unit, and job title. Also include a list of your past assignments, experience, and education and your mailing address, fax number, and commercial daytime telephone number. **Include a statement from your local security office stating that the information contained in the article is unclassified, nonsensitive, and releasable to the public.**

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