



**Clifford
Cross**
Army

Clifford Cross

Apr 7, 1915 - Dec 21, 1996

BIRTHPLACE: Spokane, WA

SOLDIER DETAILS

HIGHEST RANK: Staff Sergeant

DIVISION: Army, 21st Armored Infantry Battalion,
11th Armored Division, Company C

THEATER OF OPERATION: European

SERVED: Aug 15, 1944 -

BATTLE: Lorient Pocket, Bastogne, Siegfried Line,
The Ardennes

HONORED BY: The Cross Family

BIOGRAPHY

Clifford Cross, (CJ) was born in Spokane, WA but grew up in Riley, KS. He was drafted and placed into the 11th Division. The 11th Armored Division Activated 8/14/42, and began in Camp Polk LA where they trained in the Louisiana woods for a year. Then they moved to camp Barkeley, TX for advanced training and prepared them for overseas duty. At Camp Cooke CA they had dessert training maneuvers, shipped out and arrived in England 11/12/44. They were called the Thunderbolts and they readied for combat. Two weeks after leaving England, they were on the front line. 12/30/1944 – the 11th relieved the 94th Infantry Division in the siege of the Lorient Pocket. The 11th was holding Neufchateau-Bastogne Hwy. On the day 12/18 the 11th was to go to the Lorient Pocket but the Germans had unleashed a massive counter offensive in the Ardennes. The 11th went through Normandy through the Argonne to the banks of the Meuse Rive. It was bitter cold with rain and snow making the march rough. At the Meuse, elements of the division were deployed and assigned to guard the river and others went on patrol. As a sole supply corridor was getting pounded by the Germans and the 11th left the Meuse and traveled 85 miles to Neufchateu. They immediately launched into their first action attacking and by the next day they with the 41st Calvary, ran into an enemy attack headed for the Highway. The fighting was fierce and bitter. I was a heavy artillery barrage that night but all gains were held. The next day they grabbed key terrain pressing on to Acul, but were pinned down by heavy artillery and mortar fire. Twice in the battle, the armored doughs (infantry riding on tanks) tried to seize the town of Chenogne but each time superior forces drove them off. The third and final assault was launched on New Year's morning. Tanks and artillery laid down massive fire while the infantry followed up. The town was secured by noon. While they regrouped, 13 artillery battalions hurled fire on the Bois des Valets. Armored doughs penetrated the thick woods and cleaned it out.

Seizure of the key point doomed the Germans effort to cut the supply route. Next they moved on and were caught in a counterattack and the next day the 17th Airborne Division relieved them. From here they moved through the freezing terrain and liberated more than a dozen towns. The division suffered heavy casualties but were causing greater losses to the enemy. 1/13/1945 during the Battle of the Bulge, Von Rundstedt was losing his gamble as Allies were shrinking the Germans hold. With the 11th as spearhead, the 3rd Army's 8th Corps kicked off to drive a northbound wedge into enemy line while other units pushed from the northeast and farther east near Novelle. The Germans fired small arms, artillery and rockets at the advancing troops. The Division answered with a crushing 12,000 rounds. The linkup was secure. The way was paved for an all-out smash at the enemy's Siegfried Line. The 11th Armored began a drive to pierce the Siegfried Line. Mines had to be cleared, pill boxes crushed, and road blocks demolished. At the edge of the line, the 11th pulled a fast one. The Germans were expecting an armored frontal attack with the usual heavy artillery preparations, instead the command jumped off before dawn without artillery. At dawn, the Germans in bunkers and pillboxes found themselves surrounded, their plotted interlocking fields of fire outflanked and three towns taken. In March of 1945 the 11th was involved with the resistance along The Rhine River. Their blows made the resistance begin to crumble. Pushing on they reached the Kyll river causing the Germans to abandon the bridge. The allies took the towns of Gerolstein, Mayen, and Andernach which set on the Rhine river. Another town, Brohl fell also as the 11th Thunderbolt units roll north along the Rhine to meet First Army forces and make a steel trap on six enemy divisions. The 11th moved past the Rhine going through Darmstadt and Hanau. These went on to cover on Fulda, key communications center on March 31. They hit the town from the front and rear. The key towns for communication capture by April 1 it was noted the big shots were fleeing from Berlin. The 11th were 60 miles from Czechoslovakia but changed direction and as they pushed through Bavaria the enemy retreated. Thunderbolt tankers ran into a group of enemy teenage youngsters company of whom were only 13 years old. The youth had been given uniforms as the Americans' approached and had been ordered to leave the town. Homesick, hungry and tired they were pickup while carrying white flags, and returned to their homes. Later in April, the 11th captured the largest chemical warfare supply dump in Germany with an estimated 3,000,000 round of chemical artillery shells and thousand of gas mines. The 11th Thunderbolt drove on and liberated 1722 Allied prisoners at Weiden on April 22. Nabburg, Schwarzenfeld and Cham fell without resistance. The men of the 11th witnessed first-hand of SS (Schutzstaffel - powerful German soldiers) atrocities. Hundreds of bodies lay along the route that led front h Flossenburg concentration camp. The SS had marched the prisoners out of the camp and those that could not keep up were shot. The Thunderbolt was able to liberate some Allied prisoners along the way. The 11th kept going and fighting and by May 8th were at a neighboring city to the Danube River. Despite their rejection of the German's terms, the town of Linz was unscathed as they entered the town. Women and children showered their vehicles with flowers. Slave laborers from Russia, Poland, and Yugoslavia were dancing in the streets. The 11th found concentration camps at Mauthausen and Gusen where 16,000 political prisoners were merely living skeletons and ridden with disease. The bodies of more than 500 were stacked between 2 barracks. May 9 the war officially ended. The mission of the Allied Armies – unconditional surrender of Germany – was accomplished. The 11th Division saw 4 months and 10 days of combat. They had captured 76,229 prisoners, had swept across Germany capturing hundreds of cities and towns, destroyed a large part of the German forces and liberated thousand of Allied prisoners and slave laborers. CJ Cross witnessed the horrible sites of the Flossenburg, Mauthausen and Gusen concentration camps. He returned home with a German pistol and a watch which was captured from a German soldier in 1944. The pistol looks like a Luger but is actually a P-38. A cheaper gun much like the Luger but presumed made cheaply for the German army. The watch has interesting marking inside. Also found on a mission on a German soldier were binoculars with case and night lenses.