

Elmer Curtis Green

U.S. Army

Private First Class



Infantry



Army Specialized Training Program



86th Infantry Division



Combat Infantryman Badge

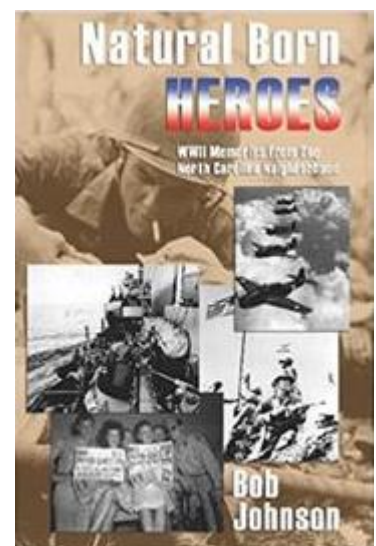
Bronze Star Medal	Good Conduct Medal	American Campaign Medal
Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal	European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign	World War II Victory Medal



Excerpt from *Natural Born Heroes*

Curtis volunteered for the Navy but flunked their eye test, so he went into the Army where he was placed into the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) at North Carolina State University. ASTP was a program that took promising young men and sent them to college to finish their education and then to Officer Candidate School (OCS) to be commissioned. After college, Curtis was sent to Fort Benning, Georgia, to take Officer Candidate School. He was in the eleventh week of a 13 week program when his entire class was disbanded, and its members sent to infantry divisions as enlisted replacements.

He was assigned to the 86th Infantry Division along with 5,000 other former members of the ASTP program. The 86th was trained as an amphibious assault unit to be part of the invasion of Japan when it was suddenly reassigned to Europe in January of 1945 to replace the many soldiers lost during the Battle of the Bulge.



As Curtis' unit went through Germany, they would take over German houses, sending the civilians upstairs while they stayed downstairs. This served two purposes. One was to protect the American from being shelled. The Germans weren't, for the most part going to shell a house occupied by German civilians. It also maintained better relations with the Germans who were not being put out on the street. The more disciplined units were careful to not be unnecessarily destructive, making the Germans more friendly towards them.

Curtis tells a story about one of his buddies, Bob Beverly, a soldier from Georgia. They were standing in the road in Mannheim when "down the street came these three German brats, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve years old, goose stepping. They got right in front of us and said, "Heil Hitler."

Bob grabbed one of the kids, bent his arm down, put him over his knee and "wore his butt out." Bob then said, "Heil Hiler, hell. Be quiet!"

Another soldier in Curtis' company was William McClusky, who was six foot four inches tall and an American Indian. The general consensus of the company was that they were "sure glad he was on our side." Once they came to the outskirts of a small town in the late afternoon where the bridge was blown out. The platoon decided they would an assault across the river the next morning. That night, McClusky disappeared for a couple of hours and then came back, saying "I know how to go."

At daylight, McClusky led the men towards the village. They came to a small outpost with a dead German inside. They continued on past three more posts, each with a dead German inside. "He saw 'em, he found 'em, and he killed them, quietly at night." Curtis' unit got safely across the river. Curtis said McClusky was not decorated for his feat. He said, "No, that was just McClusky."

...Around this time, the 86th Division switched over to the 3rd Army, from the 1st Army. A shiny new jeep with a brightly painted Major's leaf on it came to his unit headquarters. Normally the officers made themselves inconspicuous because the Germans sought out the officers as targets. Inside the jeep was a major, a corporal, and a diver, all dressed in spit and polish. The major announced to the regimental commander that they were now part of the Third Army.

The major told the colonel, "Welcome to the Third Army. Your walking days are over, and your fighting days have just begun."

Curtis' unit, the 342nd Infantry Regiment had been in the Ruhr twenty-one days and covered about 110 miles. The next day, his unit was loaded up on trucks, tanks, and jeeps and went fifty miles. Instead of carefully fighting their way through the Germans like in the 1st Army, the 3rd Army, commanded by General George S. Patton, ran through the German lines before they could set up a defense or blow up bridges.

Curtis said, "If you let the Krauts dig in, you have to dig them out." He was happy with the change of tactics.

Curtis was in Austria when the war in Europe ended.... He was on a patrol around this time looking for any Germans who didn't know about the war's end. He came upon a deer about 400 yards away. He set up his gun and killed the deer. He brought it back to the house he was staying at and impressed the Austrians with his prize. He shared the deer with his squad and his hosts. Fifty years later he called up an Army buddy who was with him then and asked if he remembered what he was doing that day, fifty years earlier. His buddy immediately replied, "eating that damn deer you killed."

On June 3, 1945, Curtis' unit left Europe and deployed to Japan to fight the Japanese. While at sea in the Pacific Ocean, the Japanese surrendered, and Curtis' unit was diverted to the Philippines. He left the Philippines in April 1946 and the Army in May 1946. He then had a career at the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. until he retired to Hendersonville, NC where he lived in Haywood Knoll.