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Association of Army Dentistry (AAD)

Summer 2019 Newsletter

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The summer season holds several holidays of significance to the military and our country: Memorial Day, honoring those men and women who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our country while serving in our Armed Forces, Flag Day celebrated on 14 June, and Independence Day on the Fourth of July. The U.S. Army, America's First National Institution, was officially established on June 14, 1775 and has played a vital role in the growth and development of the American nation over the last 244 years.

As I watched the events that unfolded over the 75th anniversary of D-Day on 6 June, I was struck by the remarkable courage and heroism exhibited by those who fought to preserve our freedoms. Tom Brokaw's 1998 book declared the generation that persevered through America's Great Depression and fought in World War II as America's "Greatest Generation." As President Donald Trump stated in his D-Day speech at the American cemetery of Colleville-sur-Mer in Normandy, France, on June 6, 2019: "They came from the farms of a vast heartland, the streets of glowing cities, and the forges of mighty industrial towns. The Americans who fought in World War II, charged Omaha Beach and ran through the fires of hell, were moved by a force no weapon could destroy: the fierce patriotism of a free, proud, and sovereign people. They battled not for control and domination, but for liberty, democracy, and self-rule."

We lose more of the greatest generation each year and the memories of their heroism fades as the years pass. The 75th anniversary of D-Day was a special occasion and served to remind us of their sacrifices. One author listed the core values and characteristics of this generation as personal responsibility, humility, a hard work ethic, prudent saving and self-discipline, and faithful commitment – loyalty and your word was your bond.

Thank you for your service to our nation and may we treasure the memory of the sacrifices of the Greatest Generation and all those who have served.

Ron
Ronald J. Lambert, COL, USA (Ret.)
President and Chairman, Board of Directors

Membership

Thank each of you for renewing your memberships. As we increase the number of members in the AAD, our ability to support our 501(c)(3) mission improves. I would like to actively grow our membership, but I need your help. Please reach out to your colleagues or friends who may not be members and encourage them to consider membership in the AAD. Share the AAD newsletter with them. The link to apply for membership is below:

<https://www.associationofarmydentistry.org/memberships/>

Active Component News

CPT Paul J. Gilroy, serves as the Executive Fellow at Office of the Chief, US Army Dental Corps, Joint Base San Antonio. He functions as the primary liaison with the Association of Army Dentistry under the direction of COL Craig Patterson, the Corps Specific Branch Proponent Officer at the Corps Chief's office. The March, April and May 2019 editions of *The Dental Corps Bulletin*, were received from the Corps Chiefs office and have been added to our website since our last newsletter. Each of the Bulletins is placed on our website when received.

<https://www.associationofarmydentistry.org/the-dental-corps-bulletin-2/>

The 2019 Corps Chief's Awards of Excellence were recently announced. Each of the recipients received a letter of congratulations from the AAD, an AAD challenge coin, a one-year membership in the AAD, and a gift card. Awards of Excellence 2019 winners follow:

Dental Education: COL Kenneth Erley, Dental Health Command – Atlantic (DHC-A), Fort Gordon, GA.

Exceptional Service and Leadership: COL Tawanna McGhee-Thondique, DHC-Pacific, 618th DCAS.

Junior Officer: MAJ Kourtney Logan, DHC-Europe, Vogelweh, Germany.

Non-Commissioned Officer: SFC Brandon Jemison, DHC-Central, Fort Leavenworth, KS.

Junior Soldier: SPC Alexander Haug, DHC-Central, Fort Bliss, TX.

Civilian-Category I: Alberto Sierra, DHC-C, JBSA, TX.

Civilian-Category II: Roxanne O'Neal, Dental Corps Chief Office.

Reserve Components News

Legacy, Remember Where You Came From!
Peter M. Tan DDS, MSHS
COL, USA (Ret.)

I am sure many mothers have told their children to be respectful, honorable, caring, and thoughtful. I too had a mom that developed these characteristics in my sister and me when we were growing up. Typically, as an adolescent and teenager, I often felt that they were empty words that held no real value for me. My mother was a quiet, loving, and a protective parent that steered the family through my developmental stages of questioning, rebelliousness, and conscious disregard. My mom was supportive of my father who was a career civil servant and a World War II Army veteran who received a GI Bill to go back to college for his Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degrees. My mother worked long hours as a nurse in pediatrics, usually with newborns as a critical care nurse. Yet, that is all I really knew since she was quiet, humble and very religious with a past of pursuing the vocation as a nun.

My immigrant parents cared for their children and saved all their money to send us to the best schools they could afford. I was fortunate to be accepted and attend St. John's College High School in Washington, DC, a college preparatory Junior ROTC program. That changed everything for this 13 year old. Besides the close mentoring by the Christian Brothers, the Army ROTC cadre developed their students into a very forward thinking, consequence aware, student body. The Army Values were developed very early, and I realized that if one worked hard, showed discipline, strived for the best with every single opportunity, then maybe there would be a chance for success.

This was a time I also began to understand and respect legacy. I wanted to peel the layers of the mystery of my mom and learn more about who she was. I was delighted to learn that there was so much to talk about, and her past was being uncovered. Besides her desire to become a nun later in her career prior to meeting my dad, my mother was a healthcare provider and trained and practiced in the Philippines. She was a public health and critical care nurse who was also performing midwife duties in the provinces. When WWII began, she was part of the U.S. Army 65th Med Company MD Guerillas at Clark field and Camp Nicoles during the Japanese invasion of the Philippines and was a commissioned officer. As a citizen of an American territory, she served with bravery during a horrible conflict involving families and friends, to include my wife's uncle and grandfather who were Bataan Death March and POW survivors.

During my mother's life in the United States raising two children as a Charge Nurse for Columbia Hospital for Women in Washington, DC, I knew she had the

demeanor and composure of a combat nurse and the calm of someone who delivered breach babies and cared for trauma patients. It was not until her death in 2000 that I realized that our quest for veteran benefits were not granted because of previous decisions made a generation before.

Guerilla forces during WWII in the Philippines were not recognized because President Truman previously rescinded the recognition of Filipino veterans serving under the United States to receive veteran benefits. Their service began in 1941, when President Franklin Roosevelt created the U.S. Army Forces of the Far East, offering full veterans' benefits to Filipinos who enlisted. The Philippines at that time was a U.S. Commonwealth, and Filipinos were U.S. nationals. But once the war ended, the benefits were quickly rescinded by President Harry Truman in 1946, and the Filipinos who served were stripped of their status as U.S. veterans. The Philippines was singled out from the 66 nations allied with the U.S. during the war.

Filipino veterans of World War II were finally awarded the Congressional Gold Medal after a lengthy battle for national recognition of their U.S. military service and sacrifices nearly 75 years ago. The Congressional Gold Medal is the highest civilian award bestowed by the U.S. Congress to an individual or group that contributed to American culture and history. This was accomplished on November 30, 2016, when the U.S. Congress passed final legislation granting the Congressional Gold Medal award to Filipino and American Veterans of World War II. The measure was signed into law by President Obama on December 14, 2016.

On October 25, 2017, my wife Grace, her aunt and cousin and I were present at a ceremony in the U.S. Capitol to honor the 260,000 Filipinos who fought alongside American forces during the war and more than 57,000 Filipino troops who died. As we recently mark another one of mom's birthdays and Mother's Day, we will remember that day when we celebrated my mom, my wife's uncle and her maternal and paternal grandfathers. I will finally be able to close the chapter that verifies my mom as truly a selfless servant, a role model that made me the person I am today, and a proud veteran of the United States of America for her grandchildren to emulate. Legacy, we will never forget where we came from and my mother, will always be "mom" and is ever more present in our hearts!



Dental Corps History

Notable Historical Leaders of the AMEDD appeared in the Spring edition of the *AMEDD Museum Foundation Monitor* and is reprinted by permission of the editor, Peggy Carter, COL, USA (Ret). Andy Watson, AMEDD Regiment Historian, highlights former Chiefs of the Dental Corps, Surindar Bhjaskar, MG, USA (Ret) and Bill B. Lefler, MG, USA, (Ret), who strongly influenced the direction of Army Medicine.

[PDF Here](#)

The AMEDD Museum Foundation has taken on an ambitious campaign in the expansion and modernization of the Museum's exhibits and operations, to bring dramatic new opportunities for visitors to explore and connect with Army Medicine's vibrant history and discover the value of Army Medicine now and for the future! For more information and to contribute to their campaign go to their website.

<https://www.ameddmuseumfoundation.org>

Military History

Alexander P. Suer World War II US Army Dentist
by JEKing

Preface. In 2008 I sent an email to a number of friends with whom I was still in touch since retirement in 2000. The email related briefly a story about the gallantry and valor of an Army dental officer, Alexander P. Suer. [4] My intention to look for the "rest of the story" faded as elder-life caught my attention. Recently one of the old timers asked if the old history file had any relevant topics for the AAD Newsletter. The 2008 email popped up from the file.

Alexander P. Suer was a man of heroic proportion. Stories of his military service illustrate the roles dental officers play as dentists, medics, Soldiers and patriots,

* * * *

Part I

Every Soldier has stories. Some stories are well known; many are preserved in writings, sounds and images. But sadly most stories vanish as memories . . . and old Soldiers . . . fade away.

Pete Suer's life story is partially preserved in the Citation for award of a **Silver Star** [1]

for Gallantry in Action

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918, takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Captain (Dental Corps) Alexander P. Suer (ASN: 0-400651), United States Army, for gallantry in action while serving with the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82d Airborne Division, in action on 26 December 1944, in Belgium. Captain Suer, Assistant Battalion Surgeon, received word that two men had been wounded near a German occupied town. Under full enemy observation, within 200 yards of enemy positions, Captain Suer went forward at the risk of his personal safety. In route forward his group was observed upon open terrain and a mortar barrage was laid down upon it. Captain Suer was seriously and painfully wounded, but asked that others be treated and evacuated first. His conduct in deliberately trying to cross open terrain to help the wounded was a credit to the Medical Services of the United States Army and to his regiment.

GENERAL ORDERS. Headquarters, 82d Airborne Division, General Orders No. 34 (July 14, 1945)

* * *



Silver Star

Alexander P. Suer[2], [3] was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1917, where he attended schools to include earning a Doctorate of Dental Surgery (DDS) from Temple University School of Dentistry in 1938. After a short period

of private dental practice he was commissioned into the U. S. Army Reserves in 1939 and in April 1941 he entered the active duty Dental Corps. He completed the Officers Basic Course at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

He qualified for wearing the airborne patch at Fort Benning, Georgia. Assigned to the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) the **dentist / Dental Corp officer / paratrooper** - now trained as part of the 82d Airborne Division to be a **combat medic**.

During WW II dentists, including Dr. Suer, were assigned directly to tactical maneuver units, deployed with them and were usually subordinate to unit surgeons.

Under combat conditions they were entirely engaged in combat casualty care. On 28 April, 1943 the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment boarded the USS Monterey on Staten Island in New York for a twelve-day Atlantic crossing to North Africa, where they landed in Casablanca on May 10, 1943.

Operation Husky

On Friday, July 9, 1943 a massive multi-nation invasion of Italy was directed first at Sicily. Captain Suer and his regiment embarked on C-47s at Kairouan Field in Tunisia, jumping into Sicily. Despite high winds on the Drop Zone scattering the American paratroopers behind enemy lines, Captain Suer landed without incident. The second day Suer borrowed an ambulance at the 45th Infantry Division and made many trips to the coast removing the injured from the battlefield to the safety and care of hospitals ships. Evading German and Italian patrols and waving Red Cross flags he boldly reminded the enemy soldiers of protections of the Geneva Conventions as he treated wounded indigenous people, Allied military and Italian and German military. Captain Suer was intensely committed to the preservation of life, relief of suffering of the wounded, and evacuation from the dangers of the battlefield.

August 20, 1943 Messina fell, winning the battle for Sicily and ending Operation Husky. The 505th PIR then returned to Kairouan in Tunisia.

Operation Avalanche

On October 1, 1943 the 505th PIR joined the liberation of Naples Italy and remained to occupy the area for about 6 weeks. By all indications the jump and medical / dental support was smooth for Captain Suer and his fellow paratroopers.

Normandy Operations

Captain Suer could not have known in Naples that he would not see actual combat from November 18, 1943 when the 505th departed Italy by sea until 6 June 1944, D-Day.

Regimental Surgeon Dr. Robert Franco characterized Dr. Suer with an anecdote:

"Pete Suer and I were walking across the fields when we saw human silhouettes moving. Pete, who spoke German, shouted that they were encircled by heavily armed Americans. The Germans dropped their arms and we forced them to lie on the ground. They were fifteen, we were two! Pete went to call for help, so I was the only one to keep these men. I was terrified that they could see my Red Cross armband. Luckily this did not happen."

U.S. Army Dental Corps Captain Alexander P. Suer suffered devastating wounds on December 23, 1944 when he advanced into combat to save two injured soldiers, and insisted they be evacuated before him. He died of wounds on February 1, 1945 at Walter Reed Army Hospital.

[*]

Source notes.

[1] *The 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment Roll of Honor Officers*
http://www.ww2-airborne.us/units/505/505_honor_off.html

[2] Alexander Suer was referred to as "Pete" by the people who knew him as an airborne dentist / medic. A note written by Dr. Suer's father Benjamin Suer referred to him as "Al".

[3] Monier T and De Trez M; Alexander "Pete" Suer, 'A dentist in the 505th PIR, 1942 - 1945". Conferences Presented During the 15th Congress of *Societe d' Francaise Histoire de l'Art Dentaire* ; Reims, FR, April 29 and 30, 2005.

Footnote [3] should be acknowledged as the source of most of the information about Suer. Great difficulty was encountered in deciphering sources because there are so many who quote Monier and De Trez (in French).

[4] *505th PIR Unit History* describes the airborne / battlefield experiences faced by Captain Suer <https://www.ww2-airborne.us/units/505/505.html>

Retiree News

The Defense and Accounting Service (DFAS) June Retiree Newsletter is available below. The myPay page has been revamped and is now simpler, more streamlined, and more mobile friendly. This edition covers the seven steps involved in a Retired Pay Account Checkup.

<https://mypay.dfas.mil>

[PDF Here](#)

Motivational Corner

The link below is to the April/May 2019 edition of *Imprimis*, and is reprinted by permission of Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, MI. *Sacred Duty: A Soldier's Tour at Arlington National Cemetery*, was adapted from a speech on April 9, 2019, at Hillsdale College by Senator Tom Cotton from Arkansas. He describes the sacred duty of serving with The Old Guard at Arlington National Cemetery in 2007 between his tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.

[PDF Here](#)

Social Media

Please check out and like the AAD's Facebook page.

<https://www.facebook.com/AssociationofArmyDentistry>

The page provides updates on a variety of current and past subjects. Please avail yourself of the work that MAJ Mike Hoffman has provided in establishing and maintaining our Facebook page. Mike recently graduated from the AEGD-2 program in Hawaii. The residents were conferred their Masters in Oral Biology from USUHS on June 12th aboard the historic USS Missouri. Congrats!

In Memoriam

Frank F. Ledford, LTG, USA (Ret) passed away on 15 May 2019 after a brief illness. LTG Ledford served as the 37th Surgeon General of Army, selected in 1988.

Patrick D. Crowe, COL, USA (Ret) passed away on 18 March 2019 in Honolulu, Hawaii at the age of 93. COL Crowe was a past commander, consultant to The Surgeon General in Fixed Prosthodontics, and Residency Director.

The link to the "In Memoriam" section of the AAD's webpage, where the obituaries are organized by year of death, is below.

<https://www.associationofarmydentistry.org/about/in-memoriam/?loggedout=true>

We post the obituaries that are brought to our attention; if there are others that you wish to share on our website, please forward them to the AAD.

Conclusion:

We are fortunate to have the articles submitted by John King, COL, USA (Ret) and Pete Tan, COL, DC, (Ret). COL Tan, a member of our Board of Directors, pays tribute to the legacy of his mother, who served with bravery and dedication to duty in the Philippines during WWII. Thanks Pete for sharing your inspirational story.

COL King's article features CPT Alexander Suer, a true WWII hero. John has done so much to preserve the history of the Dental Corps, both on active duty and in retirement, and we thank him for researching and sharing the story of this remarkable dental officer. I was not aware of the remarkable patriotism and heroism of CPT Suer. Part II of CPT Suer's story, covering the Normandy invasion until his death, will appear in the next newsletter. John asks that anyone with an interest in history email comments and suggestions to him at the following email address. john.was.king@gmail.com Comments for me may directed to my email below. Thank you to our membership for your continued commitment to the Army and Army Dentistry. Best wishes for an enjoyable and productive summer.

Ron

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