He answered America's call...

wife Audrey Riley

the

Luzon

casualties

of combat.

spearheaded

annihilated the

in the battle that

participated in

supply for

ended the

Leyte in December,

month long

campaign.

and

Regiment (Curley's

through

Southern

in April,

years old. This began

68 years, until

One long-time veteran who left his mark on our community.

-- Presented by the Camp Gordon Johnston WWII Museum

Wilburn "Curley" Messer and the 38th Division "Cyclone Boys"

By Tony Minichello, CGJA

Mayor Wilburn "Curley" Messer, 92, passed away at 0730 May 10th in Carrabelle, Florida. Curley ioined the Kentucky National 38th Division prior to WWII, Guard assigned to "C" Company, and was 149 Infantry regiment. The 38th was called to active service on January 17th 1941. The soldiers mostly came from Indiana, Kentucky, and West Virginia. The at Camp Shelby, division trained part in the 3rd Army MS and took in Louisiana in Maneuvers held September 1941. In November 1942 the entire division was sent to Carrabelle, Florida to be trained in amphibious warfare under the invasion of instructors back from North Africa. that "Curley"

It was during this time met and proposed to his who was, at the time, 14 a marriage that lasted Audrey's passing away 2010

Curley served with Division as it fought New Guinea, the Philippines, and suffering 3464 during 210 days The 38th the drive that

Japanese forces on Bataan, liberated Luzon. Seeing action on

1944, the 149th Infantry unit), performed a "mopping up" The division then the liberation of the Philippines securing protecting the water Manila. After the war Division was deactivated November 9, 1945.

Curley and Audrey stayed a in Kentucky with Curley

short time working in law enforcement and, having gotten a good "mustering out" check from the army, he decided that Carrabelle with it's

great hunting, fishing and wonderful lifestyle was where his heart was. So, he and Audrey returned in 1946 and, as they say, the rest is history.

Curley has lived, and seen, an awful lot of history in his lifetime and we are grateful for his generation's sacrifices and service for our great nation. It would not be too much of a stretch to

say that much of Carrabelle's history is also The history of Wilburn "Curley" Messer.

He was instrumental in the formation of the CGJ WWII Museum as well as a long-time benefactor.

World War II 38th Division History

- Activated: 17 January 1941 (National Guard Division from Indiana, Kentucky, and West Virginia).
- Overseas: 3 January 1944.
- Campaigns: New Guinea, Southern Philippines,
- Returned to U. S.: 30 October 1945.
- Inactivated: 10 November 1945.

Combat Chronicle of the 38th Division

The 38th Infantry Division arrived in Hawaii on 17 January 1944. It received further training and the duty of the defense of Oahu Elements trained in the Oro Bay area, New Guinea, from July to November; then moved to Leyte in December. Enemy Paratroops attempted to capture the Buri, Bayug, and San Pablo strips on 6 December. The 149th Infantry Regiment destroyed organized resistance, 11 December, and defended the strips until relieved, 4 January 1945. The Division landed in the San Narciso area in Southern Zambales Province, Luzon, 29 January 1945, without opposition. The San Marcelino airstrip was secured on the same day and the port facilities at Olongapo were captured on the 30th as well as Grande Island in Subic Bay after an amphibious landing. Driving west of Olongapo the 38th destroyed an intricate maze of enemy fortifications in Zig-Zag Pass. While elements landed at Mariveles on the southern tip of the peninsula, 15 February, other units pushed down the east coast road to Pilar and across the neck of land to Bagac along the route of the March of Death. The Bataan Peninsula was secured on 21 February, although mopping-up activities remained.

Elements moved to Corregidor, 24 February, to clear the enemy from the Rock. Units assaulted and captured Caballo Island, 27 March, Fort Drum on El Fraile Island, 13 April, and Carabao Island, 16 April. The 38th engaged enemy forces in the mountainous terrain between Fort Stoutsenburg and Mount Pinatubo, 10 March. Elements pushed north from San Felipe to Palauig Bay and east from Botolan along the Capas Trail cutting the enemy's withdrawal route. The Division moved to the area east of Manila, 1 May, and attacked enemy forces behind the Shimbu Line. By 30 June effective enemy opposition had been broken. The 38th continued mopping up enemy remnants in the Marikina area of eastern Luzon until VJ (Victory over Japan) Day.



Sources for this article: Official History of the 38th division WWII. 38th division Yearbook and, of course, Wilburn "Curley" Messer himself. The Uniform Room at the Camp Gordon Johnston WWII Museum is named in his honor.