

AMVETS post enlists 95-year-old WWII veteran

At age 95, Frederick Tremberth is the newest member of AMVETS Post 29 in Mount Clemens. The vets formally signed up the Clinton Township resident at their general membership meeting this week.



Linda May

Laura Stephens is Fred Tremberth's daughter, one of his seven children. She happened to see a friend's car one day at the AMVETS post and stopped in to see her.

"When they saw my dad's license plate with the Purple Heart (Medal) on it, they all came out and shook his hand and talked to him. They invited him to be a member. He was very honored," Stephens said.

Tremberth survived the landing on Omaha Beach on D-Day, and the 29th Infantry Division's battles from there to Germany.

Tremberth was inducted into the U.S. Army in 1943 and released in 1945. In between, he served as a combat vehicle mechanic. He drove jeeps and half-ton trucks, and repaired and maintained them. His unit participated "Northern France, Normandy, Rhineland and Central Europe" according to his military papers.

Tremberth was awarded the Bronze Star Medal "for meritorious achievement in ground combat against the armed enemy."

The Tremberth family, which also includes 11 grandchildren and seven great grandchildren, is fortunate to have their patriarch's paperwork safely tucked in a binder. A fire at the Military Personnel Records Center near St. Louis in 1973, destroyed between 16 and 18 million official military personnel records,

but the family has theirs preserved.

The family even has a United Press correspondent's account of the 29th Infantry Division from the American Expeditionary Force Radio Weekly.

In 1944, Edward V. Roberts wrote: "There has never been enough written or said about this frontline American outfit, and the part it has played in assault upon Hitler's fortress Europe. Since D-Day, security has clouded some of its proudest accomplishments — how the men with the little blue and gray shoulder patches stormed ashore in the face of one of the strongest German concentrations in the beachhead area; how they took Saint-Lo, where their wounded filled one orchard, and overflowed into the next; and what they did at Perrier, and at Brest, where they held the right flank under direct fire of a battery of huge German naval guns."

More than 3,000 Americans were killed, wounded, missing, or taken prisoner on Omaha Beach.

"We had to wait until the first group went in," Tremberth said. "There were lots of bodies in the water and quite a few more were hurt. It was kind of tricky. The ones before us got it the most."

In the Battle of Normandy, the 29th heroically relieved 90 Army Rangers who survived from a contingent of 225 who had landed on D-Day. The 175th Regiment of the 29th Infantry Division liberated the city of Saint-Lô, a gateway to the south of Normandy. After three months of fighting, the 29th was supposed to withdraw and rest but was ordered to push on six days later to Germany to attack the heavily defended industrial sector of the Ruhr.



COURTESY VIRGIL ORLANDO WYATT

World War II veteran Frederick Tremberth (center) became a member of AMVETS Post 29 last week. Welcoming him are (left to right) second vice commander Aaron Flynn, third vice commander Richard Oldfield (rear), post commander James Lumpkin, first vice commander Jason Lashuay (rear), Sons of AMVETS member Brian Rickert, and Sons of AMVETS commander Frank A. Pettke (rear).

That's where Tremberth was wounded.

"We were going from town to town and we were scouting to check things out," he said "We were behind this house in an alley and they had trip wires back there from a booby trap. You never knew what you were going to be stepping on. I guess it was a land mine, but I call it a booby trap. And I got shrapnel in my leg. They hid the wires very well. The Germans are very smart. Things happen. But I'm still here."

After the Germans surrendered in 1945, the 29th was deactivated. There were nearly 29,000 division soldiers killed, wounded, taken prisoner or declared missing in action. But, between D-Day and V-E Day, the 29th took nearly 39,000 prisoners of war, constructed 22 bridges and cleared 2,800 miles of roads. Its vehicles — like those maintained and by driven by men like Tremberth — traveled more than 960,000 miles.

Fraser military historian Steven Mrozek said: "According to the division's records, five members earned the Medal of Honor, 44 were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, 816 were awarded the Silver Star Medal and 6,308 were awarded the Bronze Star Medal during the war.

"Fred served with the Anti-Tank Company of the 116th Infantry Regiment, part of the 29th Infantry Division. Landing in the vicinity of the Easy Green sector of Omaha Beach on D-Day, Fred participated in four campaigns and went from D-Day to V-E Day with the 116th Infantry. Fred will be celebrating his 96th birthday in May and has always lamented never going back to visit Normandy, or any of his other battle-grounds.

"Since he hasn't been able to return to Normandy, I brought a bit of Normandy to him. I gave Fred some of the sand I collected from the Dog Green sector of Omaha Beach on June 5,