



FOUR ROSES

by Vernon Brantley, 75th Infantry Division

In early December, 1944, Company D of the 26th Regiment of the “Big Red One” (First) Infantry Division, had pulled into a bivouac area for some needed rest. The liaison officer had arranged for them to stay for a week or two at the Schmetz family farm near Clermont, Belgium. Marcel, then an 11-year old in the family, was on Cloud 9. He loved visiting with the American soldiers, and particularly sharing their plentiful food. At that time, Four Roses bourbon was issued as a ration to most officers.

When news came that the Germans had launched what is now known as the Battle of the Bulge, the First Division was told to “Pick up what you can carry and move out.” All kinds of equipment, food, personal belongings—and likely most reluctantly, Four Roses bourbon—were left behind by the soldiers, who hastily hid most items, in hopes of preventing the Germans from finding them if they occupied the area.

After some time, young Marcel began retrieving the things left behind, including the bourbon, at his family’s farm. The locals began developing a taste for this bourbon, and it is still appreciated in many parts of Europe today. Later in life, Marcel met and married Mathilde, and together they created a museum in honor of the American soldier, beginning with the items he had collected in 1944. This museum, called The Remember Museum 39-45, which operates today, was opened in 1994 and is managed by Marcel and Mathilde. This museum to the American soldier is one of the premier such museums to be found in Europe.

Two of our SC Chapter members were in Belgium in the fall of 2016. They met Marcel and Mathilde and toured the Remember Museum. The Schmetzes also said that in December, they planned to fly to Washington DC to take part in ceremonies commemorating the Battle of the Bulge. Our Chapter members Barbara Mooneyhan and her husband, Everett Davis, convinced the Schmetzes to depart earlier than planned for the U.S. in time to speak about their museum at the quarterly meeting of the South Carolina Chapter of the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, held at Fort Jackson, Columbia, SC.

Upon returning to SC, Barbara told me that some of the bourbon that Marcel had collected in 1944 was on display at the museum, and that he



Photo by Richard Hurst

Vernon Brantley (left) presents a bottle of Four Roses Kentucky bourbon to Marcel Schmetz (center) while Mathilde Schmetz (right) looks on.

had asked her if it was still available. This got me researching this bourbon and solving the mystery of the name. This bourbon, as with all bourbon, was made in Kentucky from corn and limestone water, which gave it a rich, smooth taste. The name Four Roses derives from the 1880’s story of the engagement of Lawrence Lavallo Jones, a distiller by trade, and Mary Peabody. Lawrence had pursued Mary for five years, proposing marriage each time he visited her in Columbus, GA. He finally decided, while there in Columbus for a dance, that he would ask Mary only once more. He gave Mary a dozen roses, telling her it would be his last proposal and asked her to come downstairs for the dance wearing a corsage of roses if her answer was “Yes,” and wearing no roses if it was “No.” She wore four roses, and the memory of that wonderful answer was commemorated by the naming of Lawrence’s most popular brand of bourbon as Four Roses.

Following the Schmetzes’ excellent presentation on the Remember Museum at the December Chapter meeting, I was privileged to present to them a fifth of Four Roses bourbon as a way of thanking them for their visit, and particularly for continuing to remember, preserve and honor the American soldiers for their role in liberating Belgium.

STILL Looking for VBOB Memorials Information

Thank you to all the chapters who have already sent in their VBOB Memorials information and photos. Has your chapter?

We’d like to recognize all the VBOB Memorials (monuments, statues, benches, etc.) that our chapters have erected over the years, by compiling a comprehensive list of them. We will post photos and listings of VBOB Memorials on our website, and in *The Bulge Bugle*. Then our members will know about all of them and can visit them.

Send digital material to: tracey@battleofthebulge.org (preferred method)

or by mail to: Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, Inc; PO Box 27430; Philadelphia, PA 19118-0430:

QUESTIONS? Please contact Tracey Diehl, 703-528-4058, tracey@battleofthebulge.org