

HB 1092
OLGEIRSON

Staff Sgt Miles O, Shelley, Company F, 164th Infantry Regiment

The premier infantry regiment of the North Dakota National Guard is truly legendary.

When the First North Dakota Infantry was called to service in the Spanish American War, serving in the Philippines in 1899, nine soldiers earned the Medal of Honor.

In addition, Battalion Commander John Fraine, future state legislator and Lieutenant Governor, and Battalion Commander Frank White, future state legislator, governor, and US Treasurer, earned brevet promotions for bravery and were later awarded the Silver Star.

The flag carried by the Regiment during that war was adopted in 1911 as the flag of the State of North Dakota.

When 1st North Dakota was federalized in 1917 for WW1, it was renamed the 164th Infantry Regiment and served in France. *[As a replacement regiment, meaning that soldiers were transferred to, and fought with, other front-line units.*

Numerous North Dakota soldiers were cited for bravery. Lt Herman Brocopp, later assistant adjutant general, earned the Distinguished Service Cross for his calm leadership under fire.

Young Miles Shelley joined Company F, 164th Infantry, in Carrington, in 1938. He was 18 years old and probably joined for the dollar a drill and a new pair of boots like many boys did. The history of the Regiment was well known. By that time, the buildings at Fraine Barracks and the streets at Camp Grafton were named for Guardsmen who had earned the wartime respect of their peers.

The 164th was called for a year of training in 1941. During the training maneuvers, older veterans told stories these heroes to instill pride and esprit de corps within the unit.

When war was declared, President Franklin Roosevelt distributed letters stating "You are a soldier of the United States Army. You have embarked for distant places where the war is being fought. Upon the outcome depends the freedom of your lives; the freedom of the lives of those you love --- your fellow citizens - your people.

As the soldiers of the 164th Infantry Regiment, North Dakota National Guard, sailed to Guadalcanal, they knew that they would be the first US Army unit to offensively engage the enemy – in either theater. Worries about their families back home, the fear of the unknown, the legacy of the unit, and the expectations of a President must have seemed a heavy burden.

Different people carry that type of burden in different ways. Miles Shelley carried it with finesse. He was a natural leader, concerned for his men, and had the instinct to take control within the chaos of battle.

His legacy is summarized very well by those who served with him. They wrote Staff Sergeant Miles O Shelley, Carrington, ND, was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the Silver Star, the Bronze Star, and the Purple Heart – the first and last ones posthumously—as a small reward for the countless heroic deeds he performed on Guadalcanal and Bougainville. With many of his most heroic acts unrecorded, Miles sacrificed his life on Bougainville in May, 1944, so that the rest of the platoon might withdraw unharmed, by calling in artillery on top of him when he lay helpless and out of reach. “Shelley Field” on Bougainville is named for Shelley.”

In 1992, the ND Adjutant General hosted a trip to Guadalcanal for the 50th Anniversary of the unit actions there. I heard their stories of the battle on Guadalcanal that earned the everlasting respect from the Marines they reinforced. Later, as Editor of the 164th Infantry News, I met many more soldiers of the 164th, collected their stories, and talked with their families. The more I got to know them, the more magnificent I knew they were.

The 164th infantry Regiment can be called legendary, but it was composed of individual soldiers whose actions made it so. There are no original North Dakota National Guardsmen from the 164th Infantry remaining on this earth. It has been almost 81 years since Staff Sgt Miles Shelley sacrificed his life to save others. Through his actions, he created his own legacy, while representing his unit, his state, and his country well.

Naming the Staff Sergeant Miles Shelley WWII Bridge would honor his individual legacy of heroism as well as perpetuate the memory of the Legendary 164th Infantry Regiment.

MILES O. SHELLEY, KIA



On Guadalcanal, 15-16 Dec 42, Miles Shelley earned a Bronze Star for providing the intelligence needed to destroy machinegun positions.

On Bougainville, 18 Jan 44, he earned a Silver Star for rescuing a comrade under heavy fire and administering first aid.

On Bougainville, 1 Apr 44, he gave his life by drawing enemy fire to himself to allow the remainder of the patrol to retreat to safety and call for artillery.

He was a first cousin and best friend of 1st Sgt John Paulson, Co F, who – some 65 years after the war – was still awed by Shelley's courage and mourned 'every day'.

"When it happened.... I was just a few members back of him when he was hit; he was lead scout and had just broke over a small hill when some entrenched Japs opened fire on him; pinning him down. He yelled to lay down a heavy barrage, the Japs then shot Miles again, no more word of him after that. We couldn't advance any more due to their position, so we backed off and sent in artillery fire. What a great person he was."

---Loren Ellis. Co F, Bloomer, WI

I. AWARDS (POSTHUMOUS) OF THE DISTINGUISHED-SERVICE CROSS:

By direction of the President, under the provisions of the act of Congress approved 9 July 1918 (Bull 43, WD, 1918), a Distinguished-Service Cross is posthumously awarded by the Commanding General, United States Army Forces in the South Pacific Area, to the following-named enlisted men:

MILES O. SHELLEY, (20711126), Staff Sergeant, Infantry, Americal Division, United States Army, for extraordinary heroism at Bougainville, Solomon Islands, on 1 April 1944. Despite the imminence of contacting dug-in enemy on higher ground favorable to them, and despite not being a member of the leading platoon, Sergeant Shelley courageously volunteered to be lead scout rather than endanger a less experienced man. In this capacity he led his company up a steep hill and discovered the hostile position. While reporting to the platoon leader he was fired upon. Instead of seeking cover, he immediately charged the enemy alone and unaided, and was seriously wounded. He lay unable to move but continued heroically to call out exact directions for artillery fire in the face of close-range rifle, machine-gun and mortar fire. Completely willing to sacrifice his own life for those of his comrades, he urged them to leave him behind and withdraw, for an artillery concentration was about to start in the area where he lay. Immediately thereafter, Sergeant Shelley was killed by an enemy fire burst. Following the withdrawal a devastating barrage was laid down by the artillery. Sergeant Shelley's exemplary courage and great sacrifice were in keeping with the highest traditions of the Armed Forces of the United States. Next of Kin: Mr. Oscar Shelley, Father, Carrington, North Dakota.

