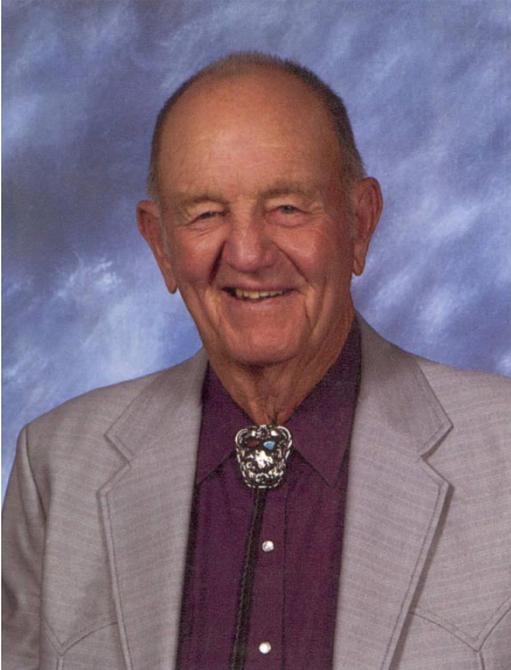


William Richard Barrett PFC
B-BTG 420 AFA
CCB
WWII Vet

I was born in Northeastern Iowa. Our family moved to a farm in Kansas before I started school. We lived on a small farm. I grew up and attended school in Solomon, Kansas.

I answered the draft and was inducted the 23rd of September 1943. My first assignment was with the 16th Armored Division. I was there until spring of 1944. At that time a large group of the 16th trainees were shipped to the 10th. We finished basic training there and in Sept. we were headed overseas. On



Sept. 23, 1944 we landed in Cherbourg, France. There we picked up our tanks (M-7), a 105 MM Howitzer that was mounted on a medium tank chassis. I remained in the same gun crew for the remaining time. The driver and I stayed on the same weapon.

Then it was an armored column across France to where we seen action around Metz. I was living in the field and it was muddy. On Dec. 15th we received orders to move out the next morning. We had no idea where to, but we did know we were heading North.

On the afternoon of the 17th we moved through Bastogne and set up in firing position just north and east of Bastogne. There was no snow on the ground that day. We spent the night on the ground and woke up the next morning with 7" of snow on us. From that position we never fired a shot. Then we had to move back through town to another site and got shelled going through. The fog was heavy so our observer could not see targets.

On the 19th we were shooting in all four directions, including the road we came in on. The enemy had surrounded us. We tightened up and we started running low on ammunition. I zeroed my sights several times but never fired at a direct target. The orders came through, that if you saw our tanks, to shoot between them as the enemy was behind them. We held our positions as best we could. That afternoon the 101st Airborne came in on trucks. I had a personal weapon, but never fired it. I went to bed many nights counting how many bullets I had for my carbine, but that old 50 caliber was mine to take care of, and I was not going to use that carbine if I had that 50 caliber, because that could turn tanks around. I was never wounded, however Colonel Brown, Commander of the 420th at the time, was hit by a shell that went over my head and hit the colonel, and eventually killed him. Major Crittenberger took over for him.

We were there until the middle of January till we moved down South and east to the vicinity of Metz. We continued in that direction to the border of Austria. My next move was to be a replacement and head home for 30 days. On my way home, they dropped the big bomb, so my orders changed. About 3 months as a prison guard in Ft. Hood, Texas, then I was discharged on Feb. 1, 1946. And that ended my military career.

I have an older brother who entered the Army-Air corps and served his time in India. He was not in the fighting part, but he was in a dangerous part of India. He got out all right and lives in San Antonio, TX. I have two younger brothers, James and Walter.

I lived in Kansas until 1970. Then I moved to the Phoenix area. There I got in touch with the 10th Armored Vet's Association and have enjoyed it since then.

I met my wife, Dolores, square dancing and in 1980 we were married. In 2003 we decided it was time to move. So we moved to Las Vegas. We have enjoyed Las Vegas even though we have not hit the big one.

Sincerely,
Richard Barrett