



**American Legion Post 178
Millerton NY**

Killed in Action Tribute



PFC Richard A. Flinn U.S. Army

Richard A. Flinn was born on February 8th 1921[i] to Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Flinn at Fairview Hospital, in Great Barrington MA.[ii] His father Arnold Flinn married Richard's mother Mildred Pixley in Millerton NY shortly after his return from France following World War I in 1919. His father Arnold served as a soldier as part of B Co, 1-308th Infantry Regiment, the famed "Lost Battalion" where he later received two Purple Hearts for wounds he received during his service.[iii] Arnold was a member of American Legion Post 178 as well as the World War I Veterans Organization in Copake.

Richard grew up in the hamlet of Shekomeko in the town of North East and attended Pine Plains Central School. He worked for Donald Payne on his stock farm located on Silver Mountain at the time of his enlistment.[iv]

PVT Richard A. Flinn was assigned to A Co 1st Battalion, 313th Infantry Regiment[v], 79th Infantry Division[vi] as an Infantryman tasked to operate a "flamethrower"[vii].

The 313th Infantry Regiment and the 79th Infantry Division were activated at Camp Pickett VA on June 15 1942. The Division trained at a number of locations throughout the United States to include Camp Blanding FL (1 Sep 42 – 3 Mar 43), the Tennessee Maneuver Area (3 Mar 43 – 19 Jul 43), Camp Forrest TN (19 Jul 43 – 17 Aug 43), Camp Young CA (17 Aug 43 – 4 Dec 43), and Camp Phillips KS (4 Dec 43 – 31 Mar 1944), before moving to Camp Miles Standish MA on March 31st 1944 in preparation for embarkation from Boston MA to England as part of the build up for the invasion of France.[viii]

During the training period after his enlistment, Richard was able to take a number of furloughs to visit his family, one of which was reported in the "Neighborhood News" section of the Register Herald dated January 27, 1944. The notice simply stated that "PVT Richard Flinn of Kansas has returned to his duties after a furlough with his parents Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Flinn".[ix]

The 79th Division embarked from Boston on April 7th 1944 and arrived in England on April 16th 1944. There the Division finished its preparations for its participation as part of Operation Overlord, the invasion of France that would follow less than two months later. The Division landed in France on June 14th 1944 (D +8), at Utah Beach.[x] The 79th Division was immediately pushed to the front a few miles away to take the lead in the offensive to secure the port of Cherbourg, thereby giving the Allies a secure port from which to off load additional forces and supplies needed to sustain the invasion.[xi] The 313th Infantry Regiment was given the task of leading the assault that began at 0500 on the June 19th 1944. The 313th Infantry Regiment rapidly progressed and contact with German units was almost instantaneous. At first it was little more than spasmodic small arms fire and occasional artillery bursts that soon swelled into a fierce concentration that was to subside only with Cherbourg's capitulation. One American GI observed that the fighting was "...just like Tennessee maneuvers—only with live ammo." While another commented that the hedgerows utilized with desperate ingenuity by the hard-pressed German Army was "decidedly un-American".[xii]



**American Legion Post 178
Millerton NY**

Killed in Action Tribute



Despite determined resistance 313th Infantry Regiment, was on its objective at Bois de la Brique by 1400 that day. It is this accomplishment and success that marked Richards, the 313th Infantry Regiment, and the 79th Division's first day of combat in World War II. The 313th and the Division repelled a vicious German counterattack in an engagement that lasted four hours was repelled with heavy German losses. All the 79th Divisions units reached their objectives, most of them on or ahead of schedule. Officers and men, side by side in combat, noted a new and lasting rebirth of mutual respect and confidence.[xiii]

The next day June 20th saw the lead elements of the 313th become the first American unit to enter the city of Cherbourg, and would lead the way in clearing the city of German units on a house-to-house basis under persistent Sniper fire. This would continue till June 26th when Cherbourg was secured and 6,000 German prisoners taken.[xiv]

Between the 26 of June and July 2, the 79th Division manned defensive positions along the Ollonde River in preparation for the offensive that would clear the western Cotentin Peninsula.[xv]

On July 3, 1944 the 79th Division began its attack along the west coast of the Cotentin Peninsula with the goal of clearing the area between the Ollonde River and the Ay River estuary, a distance of seven miles. In order to accomplish this task, the Division had to first secure the high ground of Montgardon Ridge, overlooking the important cross-road and rail junction town of la Haye-du-Puits. Critical to the success of securing the Montgardon Ridge, was Hill 84, which gave a dominating position overlooking not only Montgardon Ridge, but also overlooked la Haye-du-Puits and the remaining ground between Montgardon Ridge and the Ay River Estuary a distance of approximately one mile.[xvi]

The 313 Infantry Regiment initial task in this offensive was to function as the Division reserve, while the Divisions two other Regiments the 314 Infantry Regiment and the 315 Infantry Regiment moved to secure Hills 84 and 121. By the early morning of July 4th, a battalion from the 314th Infantry had successfully secured Hill 121 which gave the Artillery an excellent observation post for which to support the assault on Montgardon Ridge. Both Regiments however were encumbered by the hedgerow-by-hedgerow advance as well as the continuous rain that prevented rapid movement toward the Divisions objectives.[xvii]

By midmorning of 5 July General Wyche [the 79th Infantry Division Commander] had decided on a new, bold move, which he hoped might explode the division out of its slow hedgerow-by-hedgerow advance and perhaps trap a sizable number of Germans north of the Ay River. He committed his reserve, the 313th Infantry (Col. Sterling A. Wood), in a wide envelopment to the right, to pass across the western end of the Montgardon ridge and drive rapidly downhill to the Ay.

Starting at noon on 5 July, the 313th Infantry moved toward the ridge with a two-company tank-infantry task force in the lead. Marshy terrain and lack of adequate roads slowed the movement. By late afternoon the task force was still several hundred yards short of the ridge. As the troops reached a water filled ditch running through the center



**American Legion Post 178
Millerton NY**

Killed in Action Tribute



of a flat grassy meadow, they came under such a volume of artillery fire that the advance stalled. Just before dark the enemy counterattacked twice and drove the task force and the rest of the regiment several miles back in confusion. Before daybreak, 6 July, few would have attested either to the location or the integrity of the regiment. Mercifully, the Germans did not exploit their success. The regiment found time to regroup.[xviii]

It was at this juncture with the failed assault of the 313th Infantry to secure the western section of Montgardon Ridge, that General Wyche renewed the attack on Hill 84 in earnest. He ordered the 315th Infantry Regiment supported by both tanks and tank destroyers against Hill 84. By late evening, July 5, the 315th Infantry had taken the north slope of Hill 84, thereby giving the division at least a toe hold on this critical piece of high ground. Determined to capitalize on this success, General Wyche shifted the 314th Infantry Regiment to secure the eastern slope of Hill 84, which it successfully accomplished by late morning on July 6th.[xix]

On the afternoon of July 6, the fourth day of the offensive, the 313th Infantry found itself at the foot of the northern slope of Montgardon Ridge, west of Hill 84. Later that afternoon General Wyche, recognizing the negative effect that the hedgerow terrain had on coordinating the efforts between his three Infantry Regiments, ordered that each Regiment carry the crest of the ridge and to attack when ready to do so. While the 313th was unable to advance due to strong German positions protected by wire obstacles and minefields, the 314th and 315th were able to secure Hill 84 and the ridge to the east of Hill 84 overlooking la Haye-du-Puits.[xx]

During this offensive, the 79th Infantry Division had faced two very experienced, but understrength German Divisions, the 243rd and the 353rd. Early on July 7, elements of the 2nd SS Panzer Division were sent to the la Haye-du-Puits sector in order to reinforce those two divisions and counter-attack the Americans. The German counter attack was launched on the afternoon of July 7 with such ferocity that it nearly forced the 79 Infantry Division off the hard fought M. Ridge. The Americans in all three regiments however quickly regrouped and managed to hold onto their hard fought gains, but the effort to do so resulted in over 1,000 killed, wounded and missing.[xxi] One of those killed on July 7 was a young PFC from Millerton NY, Richard A. Flinn who was just 23 years old.[xxii]

On Thursday August 10, 1944 The Register-Herald ran an article titled "Six Area Men Killed in Action" with the article leading with the death of PFC Richard A. Flinn. The article briefly highlighted his service, his surviving family members and that his father Arnold has been a member of the famed "Lost Battalion" during World War I.[xxiii]

In the December 7 1944 issue of The Register-Herald there appeared a birth announcement which stated the following; "A son, Richard, was born to Mrs. Richard Flinn and the late Pfc. Richard Flinn on Saturday Dec 2, at Sharon Hospital. Baby weighed 7 lbs, 1 oz. Mrs. Flinn is the former Catherine Stuetzle of Pine Plains." [xxiv]

The May 17, 1945 issue of The Harlem Valley Times, reported that the previous Sunday May 13, was designated a national day of prayer by President Truman marking the end of the war in Europe. The



**American Legion Post 178
Millerton NY**

Killed in Action Tribute



article observed that the day was observed in Millerton with a Memorial Service at the Presbyterian Church “in memory of the Millerton men who gave their lives in this great struggle”. In addition to the family members of those being honored, the service was attended by the American Legion, the Legion Auxiliary, Eastern Star and the Millerton Gun Club. In addition to PFC Richard Flinn honored during the service, it also recognized SGT Gilbert S. Tabor Jr. PFC Harold Milton, PFC Jack Best, TSgt Donald Card, PFC John E. Burke, LT James Miller, and CPL Robert Liner.[xxv]

In April of 1948 the remains of PFC Richard Flinn were repatriated to the United States with funeral services held at the Millerton Presbyterian Church, and his remains finally laid to rest in Irondale Cemetery. Military Honors were rendered by American Legion Post 178, with the article noting that he was survived by his wife, son, parents, two brothers and a sister.[xxvi]

References

[i] Grave Stone of Richard A. Flinn, Irondale Cemetery, Millerton NY - <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=28159660>

[ii] “Six Area Men Killed in Action” The Register-Herald, Pine Plains NY. August 10, 1944 Pg. 1

[iii] <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=28159742>

[iv] “Six Area Men Killed in Action” The Register-Herald, Pine Plains NY. August 10, 1944 Pg. 1

[v] Grave Stone of Richard A. Flinn, Irondale Cemetery, Millerton NY - <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=28159660>

[vi] Stanton, Shelby L. Order of Battle, U.S. Army, World War II. Novato, CA: Presidio, 1984. pp. 147.

[vii] “Six Area Men Killed in Action” The Register-Herald, Pine Plains NY. August 10, 1944

[viii] Stanton, Shelby L. Order of Battle, U.S. Army, World War II. Novato, CA: Presidio, 1984. pp. 147.

[ix] The Register-Herald, Pine Plains NY. January 27, 1944 Pg. 3

[x] Stanton, Shelby L. Order of Battle, U.S. Army, World War II. Novato, CA: Presidio, 1984. pp. 148.

[xi] http://www.lonesentry.com/gi_stories_booklets/79thinfantry/index.html

[xii] http://www.lonesentry.com/gi_stories_booklets/79thinfantry/index.html

[xiii] http://www.lonesentry.com/gi_stories_booklets/79thinfantry/index.html

[xiv] http://www.lonesentry.com/gi_stories_booklets/79thinfantry/index.html

[xv] Stanton, Shelby L. Order of Battle, U.S. Army, World War II. Novato, CA: Presidio, 1984. pp. 148.



**American Legion Post 178
Millerton NY**



Killed in Action Tribute

[xvi] Blumenson, Martin. BREAKOUT AND PURSUIT. UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II, The European Theater of Operations. CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY, UNITED STATES ARMY WASHINGTON, D. C., 1961 Pg. 72

[xvii] Ibid. Pg. 73-74

[xviii] Ibid. Pg. 74-75

[xix] Ibid. Pg. 75

[xx] Ibid. Pg. 75

[xxi] Ibid. Pg. 76-77.

[xxii] "Six Area Men Killed in Action" The Register-Herald, Pine Plains NY. August 10, 1944 Pg. 1

[xxiii] "Six Area Men Killed in Action" The Register-Herald, Pine Plains NY. August 10, 1944 Pg. 1

[xxiv] "Births" The Register-Herald, Pine Plains NY. December 7, 1944 Pg. 1.

[xxv] "Side Views" The Harlem Valley Times, May 17, 1945 Pg. 6.

[xxvi] "Side Views" The Harlem Valley Times, April 22, 1948 Pg. 10.

Online Resources:

Richard A. Flinn - Find A Grave.com

Biographical Info

Name: Richard A. Flinn

Date of Birth: Feb. 8, 1921

Rank: PFC

Service: U.S. Army

Service #: 32576351

Unit: Co A, 313th IN Regt.

Hometown: Millerton NY

Date of Death: Jul. 7, 1944

Buried at: Irondale Cemetery, Millerton, Dutchess County, New York, USA

Awards: Purple Heart