

• History of the iron horse

“We’ll start the war from right here.”

— Brig. Gen. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.

Story by Stephanie Sanchez • Photos courtesy 4th Infantry Division

On the morning of June 6, 1944, strong tides drifted 4th Infantry Division Soldiers ashore the Normandy coast of France — almost 2,000 yards from their planned landing on Omaha Beach.

In the days leading to the invasion, a Navy control boat directing the Soldiers hit a mine and sunk. Water currents had been stronger than expected, leaving the Soldiers without direction. All their training had been for specific targets at a particular location.

As the first wave of Soldiers stormed Utah Beach, which was named after this operation, Brig. Gen. Theodore Roosevelt Jr., an assistant division commander, took charge.

Walking with the help of a cane and carrying a pistol, the general immediately surveyed the area and located the routes to advance. Then he returned to his Soldiers and said the famous words, “We’ll start the war from right here.”

And they did.

Roosevelt, who was the eldest son of President Theodore Roosevelt, rallied the remaining wave of troops and directed them to Utah Beach. His impromptu plans were successful, and later earned him a Medal of Honor, the military’s highest award. For Soldiers of the 1st and 29th Divisions who landed on Omaha Beach, however, it was a bloodbath.

D-Day was one of the many historic events that made the 4th Infantry Division famous. From World War I to the Global War on Terrorism, the division has earned many battle streamers, and many of its Soldiers are highly decorated. Others became famous for their careers outside the Army.



Fourth Infantry Division troops walk ashore Utah Beach on D-Day, June 6, 1944.



4th Infantry Division Soldiers perform a helicopter assault during Operation Paul Revere IV in November 1966.

Among some famous Soldiers are the author of *Catcher in the Rye*, J.D. Salinger, who was a staff sergeant in World War II; the founder of Wendy's restaurants, Dave Thomas, who was a mess sergeant in the Cold War; and the author of *Forest Gump*, Winston Groom, who was a captain in Vietnam.

Four division Soldiers were awarded the Medal of Honor for their actions in World War II, and 11 Soldiers were given the honor for their service in Vietnam. The only recipient from the division still living is 1st Sgt. David H. McNerney, who distinguished himself when his unit was attacked by a North Vietnamese battalion near Polei Doc during the Vietnam War.

The division's roots stem back to World War I, when it was formed at Camp Green, N.C., on Nov. 17, 1917. During that time,

Maj. Gen. George H.

Cameron gave the division its nickname, "Ivy,"

which was derived from the Roman numeral IV. It was also

later nicknamed "Iron Horse," after it became a

mechanized organization. The division's patch has four ivy leaves pointing in four directions. The ivy plant in the patch signifies the division's motto, "steadfast and loyal."

"One of the jokes NCOs will say is the patch signifies four second lieutenants pointing north," said Robert O. Babcock, the 4th Infantry Division historian and a former second lieutenant with the division. "That's a joke that has been around forever, and as a former second lieutenant, I could identify with it — even though I think I knew which way was north."

During World War I, the division was the only group of Soldiers to spend time in the French, British and American sectors.

"World War I was a bloody thing that most of us in the current generation don't know much about. But, that was a heck of a war," Babcock said.

After the war ended, the division was disbanded, like most divisions. It was stood-up again in 1940, at Fort Benning, Ga.

During World War II, the division was used as an experimental unit for methods that had been demonstrated by the German blitz through Belgium and France. The three-year experiment drew the motorized

division to participate in the Louisiana Maneuvers and the Carolina Maneuvers, Babcock said.

"It turned out, we couldn't get equipment fast enough. ... Consequently, in summer 1943, they threw in the towel on the experiment and made it a straight-leg infantry," he said. "Then, they designed them to be one of the invasion divisions."

The division was then sent to England. It practiced for the invasions from January to June 5, 1944, and was the first to land on D-Day. More than two months later, the division, along with the French 2nd Armored Division, liberated Paris from four years of Nazi rule.

On Sept. 11, 1944, division Soldiers were the first force to cross into Germany where they gathered a bucket of soil to send to President Roosevelt. They were then involved in their bloodiest battle in mid-November in the Hürtgen Forest, Germany.

Division Soldiers fought in cold rain, snow and amid trees 150 feet tall against German artillery and infantry resistance. By the end of the battle, all that was left were shrapnel-torn stumps and broken trees, but the mission had been accomplished.

"If you ask any World War II vet,



they will say that was the worst fight we were ever in. We averaged 150 percent casualties in the infantry companies. They were bringing up replacements at night to replace the killed and wounded,” Babcock said. “Most people have never heard of the Hürtgen Forest because it was overshadowed by the Battle of the Bulge.”

Though fatigued after the Battle of Hürtgen Forest, division Soldiers helped halt the German push in the Bulge.

Gen. George S. Patton later wrote to Maj. Gen. Raymond Barton of the 4th Infantry Division, “Your fight in the Hürtgen Forest was an epic stark infantry combat; but, in my opinion, your most recent fight — from the 16th to the 26th of December — when, with a depleted and tired division, you halted the left shoulder of the German thrust into the American lines and saved the City of Luxembourg and the tremendous supply establishments and road nets in that vicinity, is the most outstanding accomplishment of yourself and your division.”

By the end of the war, the division earned five battle streamers, which accompanied the five earned during World War I.

Division Soldiers then participated for six years in various battles of the Cold War. After, they were deployed to Vietnam where they set up in the central highlands and were in charge of screening the border of South Vietnam as the first line of defense against infiltration down the Ho Chi Minh trail through Laos and Cambodia. The

division earned another 11 streamers from the Vietnam War.

In January 2003, division Soldiers, who had been moved to Fort Carson, Colo., from Fort Hood, Texas, were deployed to Iraq under the leadership of

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— Robert O. Babcock, 4th Infantry Division historian

Maj. Gen. Raymond Odierno. On Dec. 13, 2003, division Soldiers and Special Operations Forces captured Saddam Hussein during Operation Red Dawn, said Steven Ruhnke, the 4th Infantry Division and Fort Carson museum curator. Many items collected from Hussein’s palace will be displayed at the new 4th Infantry Division museum when it opens at Fort Carson next year.

Many division Soldiers have deployed to Iraq at least four times, others have deployed to Afghanistan. Troops recently started to pull out of Iraq.

The division “is the fourth-oldest division in the Army.

It has produced a lot of great leadership over its years,”

Ruhnke said. “Of

course, look at Gen. Odierno, who was the head of [American forces in] Iraq, and was the division commander in 2002.”

With a rich history behind them, division Soldiers proudly march singing, “Steadfast and loyal, we’re fit to fight!

The nation’s finest Soldiers, keep liberty’s light. Our Soldiers roar for freedom, we’re fit for any test. The mighty 4th Division ... America’s best.”

To contact Stephanie Sanchez, e-mail stephanie.s.sanchez@us.army.mil.



Fourth Infantry Division Soldiers during World War I.



A 4th Infantry Division Soldier and Afghanistan security forces patrol as a team.

Fourth Infantry Division across the world

CAMP GREEN, N.C. FORT BENNING, GA.

Division formed at Camp Green, N.C., on Nov. 17, 1917, the same year America entered World War I. The division deactivated shortly after World War I in August 1919.

Division was reactivated at Fort Benning, Ga., in 1940.

CALAIS, BORDEAUX, BREST, FRANCE

Division doughboys embarked on a number of ships headed to France on April 1918. They landed in Calais, Bordeaux and Brest. Out of 29,180 Soldiers on the ships, 56 died when a German torpedo hit a vessel. By the end of World War I on Nov. 11, 1918, the division had earned five battle streamers.

VIETNAM

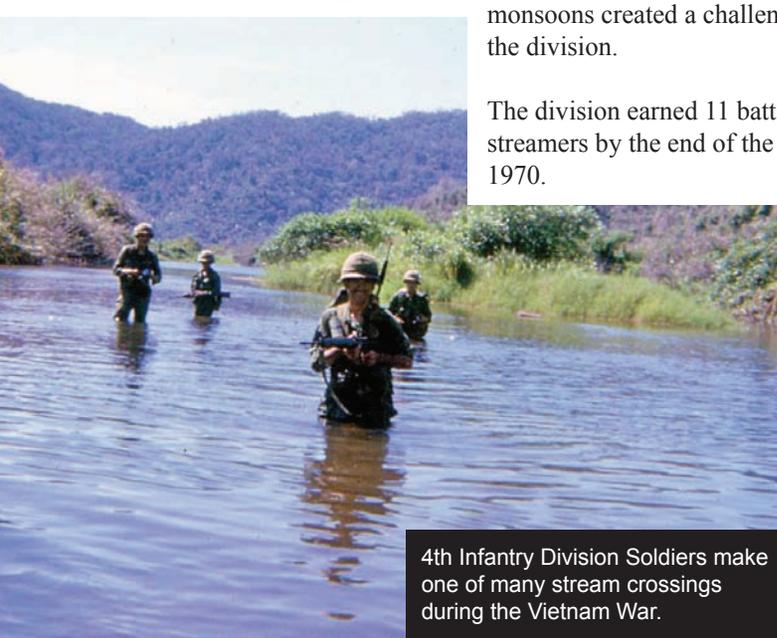
Division Soldiers were in combat against the North Vietnamese from Sept. 25, 1966, to Dec. 7, 1970. The Soldiers had been in charge of screening the South Vietnam border and were the first line of defense against the infiltration down the Ho Chi Minh trail through Laos and Cambodia. Triple canopy jungles, extreme heat and seasonal monsoons created a challenge for the division.

The division earned 11 battle streamers by the end of the war in 1970.

UTAH BEACH, CHERBOURG, FRANCE

At 6:30 a.m. June 6, 1944, division Soldiers stormed ashore a stretch of the French coast named Utah Beach after this operation. Soldiers took over the port of Cherbourg a little more than 20 days later.

Division Soldiers and French 2nd Armored Division soldiers earned the distinction of liberating Paris from four years of Nazi rule on Aug. 25, 1944.



4th Infantry Division Soldiers make one of many stream crossings during the Vietnam War.

4th Infantry Division Soldiers fight through a German town in spring 1945.



HÜRTGEN FOREST, LUXEMBOURG, GERMANY

The division fought in the bloodiest battle in its history in November 1944. During the Battle of Hürtgen Forest, Soldiers fought against German artillery and infantry resistance in cold rain, snow and amid trees 150 feet tall.

From Dec. 16-26, 1944, the fatigued Soldiers then fought in the Battle of the Bulge in Luxembourg. The war ended five months later.



IRAQ AFGHANISTAN

Division Soldiers were given orders for deployment to Iraq on Jan. 18, 2003. Aboard 37 ships, they sailed to Turkey, where the Turkish government halted their trek to Iraq. Two months later, the Soldiers were redirected to enter Iraq through Kuwait. On Dec. 13, 2003, division Soldiers and Special Operations Forces captured Saddam Hussein.

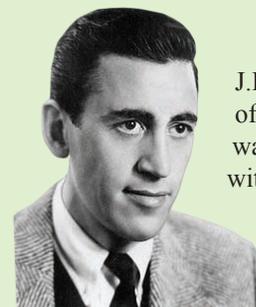
Soldiers recently began to pull out of Iraq.

In May 2009, division Soldiers were also deployed to Afghanistan.



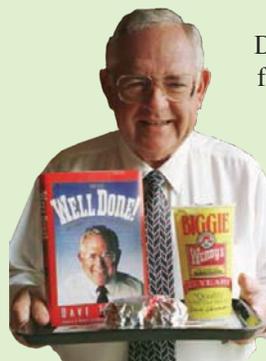
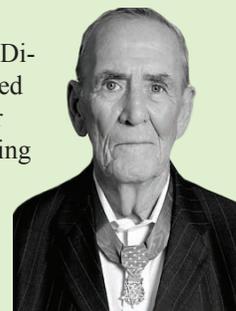
Interesting facts, Famous NCOs

Ernest Hemingway attached himself to the 4th Infantry Division during World War II. He spent most of his time with the 22nd Infantry Regiment.



J.D. Salinger, author of *Catcher in the Rye*, was a staff sergeant with the 4th Infantry Division during World War II.

Eleven 4th Infantry Division Soldiers earned the Medal Of Honor for their actions during the Vietnam War. The only recipient still living is 1st Sgt. David Mc-Nerney.



Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's restaurants, served as a mess sergeant with the 4th Infantry Division during the Cold War in the 1950's.

The 4th Infantry Division, along with Special Operations Forces, captured Saddam Hussein on December 13, 2003.