

Email from Stewart Harris to Dr. Chris Magra on May 4, 2024

Thanks, also, for your interest in my great uncle, Julian Ellis, a Tennessean who won the Silver Star. Although I've already sent it to you, I again attach the medal citation for your reference. Here's the extra info you requested, both about Julian and about two of his brothers who served. Unfortunately, I know considerably less about them, largely because, like Julian, they didn't talk much about their war experiences, at least not around me.

As his citation indicates, Julian Ellis served in Company A, 290th Infantry, 75th Infantry Division, United States Third Army.

I grew up near Julian, but I didn't know him well. He was very quiet and unassuming. My parents told my siblings and me about his medal, and about the citation that went with it, but it was only after my younger brother begged to see the citation that Julian reluctantly shared it with us. Even then, he did not wish to discuss it.

Fortunately, before my mother died in 2021, I sat her down and constructed a family tree on Ancestry.com and recorded as many family stories as I could on multiple Zoom calls with her and my siblings. According to Ancestry, as enhanced by my mother, here are the basic facts of Julian's life:

He was born on October 20, 1918, near Big Rock, Tennessee, located in Stewart County, after which I am named. He was one of nine children born to a farmer named Joe Rufus "Daddy Joe" Ellis, who was born in Kentucky, and his wife, Nellie Ella "Mammy" Duncan, who, like Julian, was born near Big Rock.

Julian's older brother, Rufus, served in the South Pacific, where he apparently came face to with the Japanese at least once, when an enemy soldier, who could have shot him, emerged from the jungle and inexplicably turned and walked away; Rufus thought the Japanese soldier may simply have been embarrassed, since Rufus was moving his bowels at the time.

Julian's younger brother Marvin, was, I believe, an Army artillery observer, which, as you know, was a particularly hazardous job. He also served in the South Pacific, including in the Battle of Peleliu, which involved extraordinarily heavy American casualties. Marvin had no middle name until his induction, when the Army insisted upon one, so he became Marvin Hudson Ellis.

Julian was issued a draft card (copies of front and back attached) in Dover, Tennessee, the Stewart County seat, on October 16, 1940, when he was almost 22.

Julian enlisted in the U.S. Army on January 20, 1943, when he was 24. Like his brother, Marvin, he had no middle name, so he took one: William. For some reason, Ancestry.com won't give me his original enlistment documents, but here is the information they have obtained from government sources:

Name

Julian Ellis

Race

White

Marital Status

Single, without dependents (Single)

Rank

Private

Birth Year

1918

Nativity State or Country

Tennessee

Citizenship

Citizen

Residence

Stewart, Tennessee

Education

Grammar school

Civil Occupation

Farm hands, general farms

Enlistment Date

20 Jan 1943

Enlistment Place

Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia

Service Number

34506893

Branch

Branch Immaterial - Warrant Officers, USA

Component

Selectees (Enlisted Men)

Source

Civil Life

Height

70

Weight

155

After his honorable discharge, Julian followed most of his family north, where they had migrated in the late 30s and early 40s to find work in greater Detroit. He then spent the rest of his working life in the automotive industry. I seem to recall that he spent most of his career at Ford, but it's a faint recollection.

Julian died on December 1, 1992, in Christian, Kentucky, at the age of 74, and was buried in Indian Mound, Tennessee.

My younger son, Benjamin, shares my interest in all things World War II, so I recently sent him Julian's citation, which I had neglected to mention to him earlier. He was quite moved, especially since he happened to be in Germany at the time, on a trip with some of his fellow PhD candidates in MIT's politics department (Ben's concentration is in Security Studies). He mentioned Julian to one of his colleagues, who shared with him a history of the 75th Infantry Division (copy attached). The history takes the form of a letter from the Division's commanding officer to his men, and contains several maps on the final pages. The action on the date of Julian's citation, April 6, 1945, is described in some detail.

1940 Draft Card (front and back)

SERIAL NUMBER 226	1. NAME (Print) Julian Ellis <small>(First) (Middle) (Last)</small>			ORDER NUMBER 135
2. ADDRESS (Print) R.F.D. 2 Big Rock, Stewart, Tenn. <small>(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)</small>				
3. TELEPHONE Big Rock 48 <small>(Exchange) (Number)</small>	4. AGE IN YEARS 21	5. PLACE OF BIRTH Stewart <small>(Town or county) (State or country)</small>	6. COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP U.S.A.	
DATE OF BIRTH Oct 28 1918 <small>(Mo.) (Day) (Yr.)</small>			7. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Nellie Duncan Ellis <small>(First) (Middle) (Last)</small>	
8. RELATIONSHIP OF THAT PERSON Mother			9. ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON R.F.D. 2 Big Rock, Stewart, Tenn. <small>(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)</small>	
10. EMPLOYER'S NAME Mrs. Nellie Ellis				
11. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS R.F.D. 2 Big Rock Stewart, Tenn. <small>(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)</small>				
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.				
REGISTRATION CARD D. S. S. Form 1 <small>(over)</small> 16-17108 Julian Ellis <small>(Registrant's signature)</small>				

Negro	Blue	Blonde	Ruddy
	Gray	Red	Dark
Oriental	Hazel	Brown	Freckled
	Brown	Black	Light brown
Indian	Black	Gray	Dark brown
		Bald	Black
Filipino			

Other obvious physical characteristics that will aid in identification.....

I certify that my answers are true; that the person registered has read or has had read to him his own answers; that I have witnessed his signature or mark and that all of his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:

Dixie Parker
(Signature of registrar)

Registrar for **Big Rock, Stewart, Tenn.**
(Precinct) (Ward) (City or county) (State)

Date of registration **October 16, 1940**

Stewart County 131

1945 Silver Star Citation

RESTRICTED

HEADQUARTERS 75TH INFANTRY DIVISION
APO 451, c/o Postmaster
New York, N. Y.

GENERAL ORDERS)

2 May 1945

NUMBER.....113)

SECTION

AWARD OF SILVER STAR.....II

SECTION II. AWARD OF SILVER STAR

Sergeant JULIAN ELLIS, 34 506 893, Company A, 290th Infantry, for gallantry in action in connection with military operations against the enemy on 6 April 1945, in Germany. Advancing a Hucharde, the 1st Platoon was forced to halt when enemy machine gun and automatic weapons fire was placed upon it from well concealed positions. Sergeant ELLIS and another soldier continued to advance in the face of this deadly fire, creeping and crawling to the left flank of the platoon. Then exposing themselves they rushed the enemy positions, using rifle fire and hand grenades. Three men of one machine gun crew were killed, several members of the second crew were wounded and the remaining ten German soldiers surrendered. In neutralizing an enemy strong point at extreme risk to their own lives, Sergeant ELLIS and his comrade displayed daring initiative and gallantry, reflecting the highest traditions of the armed forces of the United States. Entered military service from Big Rock, Tennessee.

BY COMMAND OF MAJOR GENERAL PORTER:

EARL M. LINER
Colonel, General Staff Corps
Chief of Staff

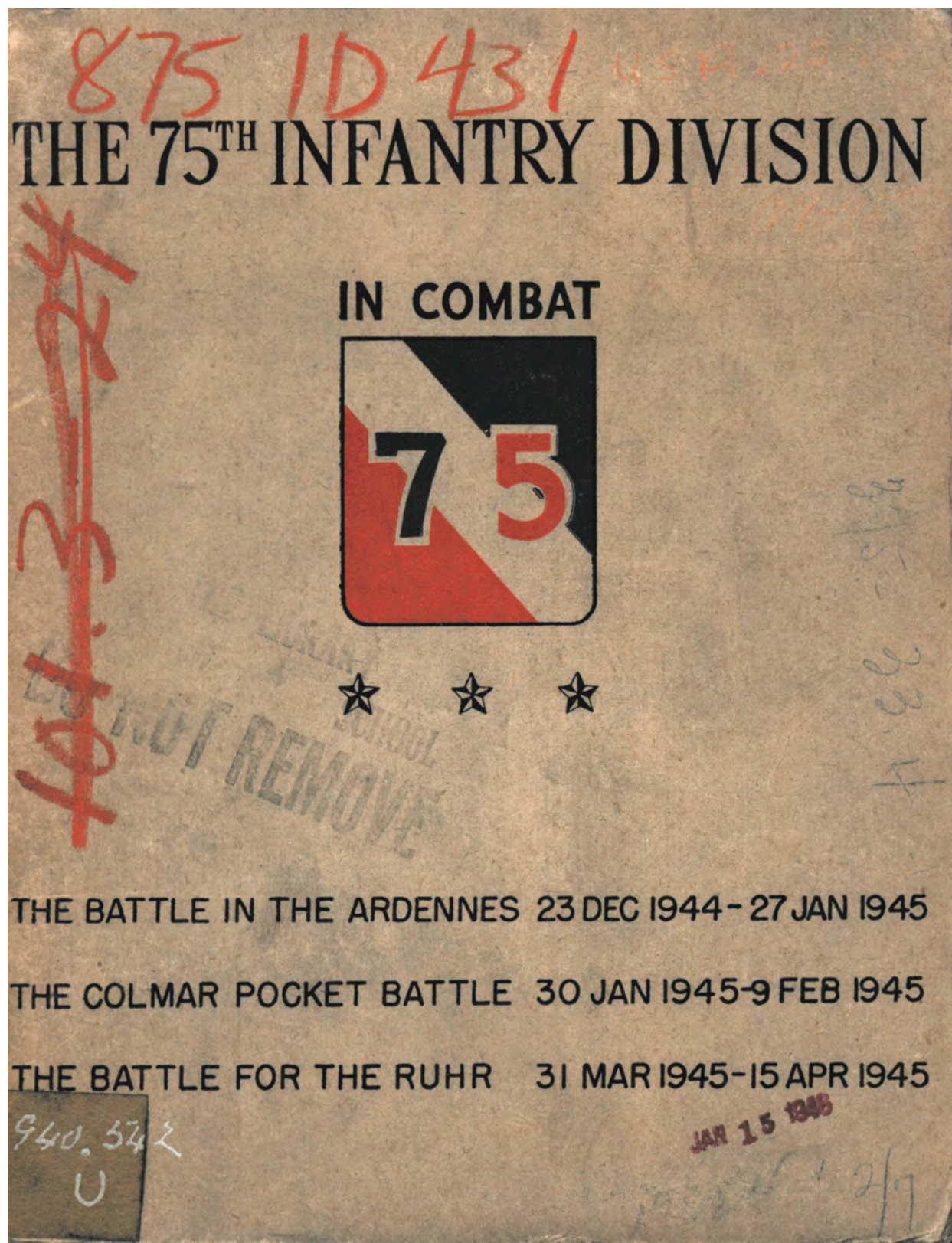
OFFICIAL:

/s/ Robert T. Engle
/t/ ROBERT T. ENGLE
Lieutenant Colonel, A.G.D.
Adjutant General

A CERTIFIED TRUE EXTRACT COPY:

Walter Bagad
WALTER BAGAD
1st Lt, Infantry
Ass't Pers Officer

RESTRICTED





GENERAL PORTER DURING THE COLMAR CAMPAIGN.

Foreword

HEADQUARTERS
75th INFANTRY DIVISION
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL
APO 451, U.S. ARMY

4 JUNE 1945

To all Members of the 75th Infantry Division
and Attached Units:

I have directed that this farewell message shall not be published in the form of any routine official military document. It is my desire that it be considered as a personal letter from me to every officer, warrant officer, and enlisted man.

Orders have been received assigning me to a new duty. I must depart immediately. I have never appreciated any other military assignment so much as I appreciate the opportunity that I have had to serve with you. I have never so thoroughly enjoyed any other service. I feel that with you I have rendered to my Country the most important and the most effective service of my career as an officer. Feelings of loneliness and sadness fill my soul as I leave you.

I met you first near the end of those bitter cold and hard fought days of the Ardennes. You had come through that vicious introduction to war with great credit to yourselves. Since then you have constantly improved your skill in the art of war. You have learned to win more readily and at lower costs. Your confidence and morale have soared to heights rarely attained. In the Colmar Pocket, where you saw war in its ugliest aspects, you performed excellently under the French First Army. Operating with two veteran American and two veteran French divisions, you contributed your full share to that complete victory. On the Maas River under the British Second Army you established an unpenetrated wall against every hostile threat and you mastered the difficult technique of reconnaissance across a formidable stream. Moving to the U.S. Ninth Army, you mopped up the Roer-Maas triangle. Your next assignment was to screen the assembly of the XVI Corps for its crossing of the Rhine River and to collect the information of the enemy and the terrain on which the detailed plans for the crossing were based. You achieved unparalleled success in the accomplishment of those missions. Crossing the Rhine you attacked successfully for fourteen successive days against the determined resistance of four German divisions, two of them being among the enemy's best remaining divisions. You destroyed the bulk of the hostile forces north of the Ruhr River. You drove the remnants across the river with such swift and skillful maneuvers and with such powerful and relentless attacks that you were able to secure intact certain of the all-important Ruhr bridges. With the threat that you had set up on his north flank, the enemy south of

the river threw down his arms and surrendered the largest number of men ever captured in a single operation.

You have been tested in battle by the commanders of British and French armies as well as by our American high commanders. That you constitute one of the best divisions ever to have served our Country is attested to by the mass of commendations received from those senior commanders and by unsolicited high praise from officers and enlisted men of many units that have served side by side with you.

When the early surrender of the remaining armed forces of Germany became inevitable, the division was moved into that portion of Westphalia situated south of the Ruhr River. You were charged with the maintenance of security and the operation of military government in a vast area including millions of recently conquered people and with the assembly and care of 175,000 Allied prisoners of war and displaced persons. This mission in a wholly unfamiliar field was in its immediate urgency and in the long range influence of its execution on the reconstruction of Germany as well as on Allied relations more important than any combat mission ever given to you. Every individual in the division immediately recognized the tremendous importance of his job and every individual has worked with energy, endurance, and personal enthusiasm far beyond the call of duty. The result has been another cherished triumph for the division.

Proud as I am of your achievements in combat and of your success in handling the problems incident to the occupation of a conquered territory, I am equally proud of your exemplary personal characteristics. In your high intelligence, in your clean living, in your good behavior, in your cheerful acceptance of dangers and hardships, in your friendly attitude and your thoughtful consideration of others, in your loyalty to each other and to your leaders, and in your high standard of discipline you excel any equal number of young men I have ever known.

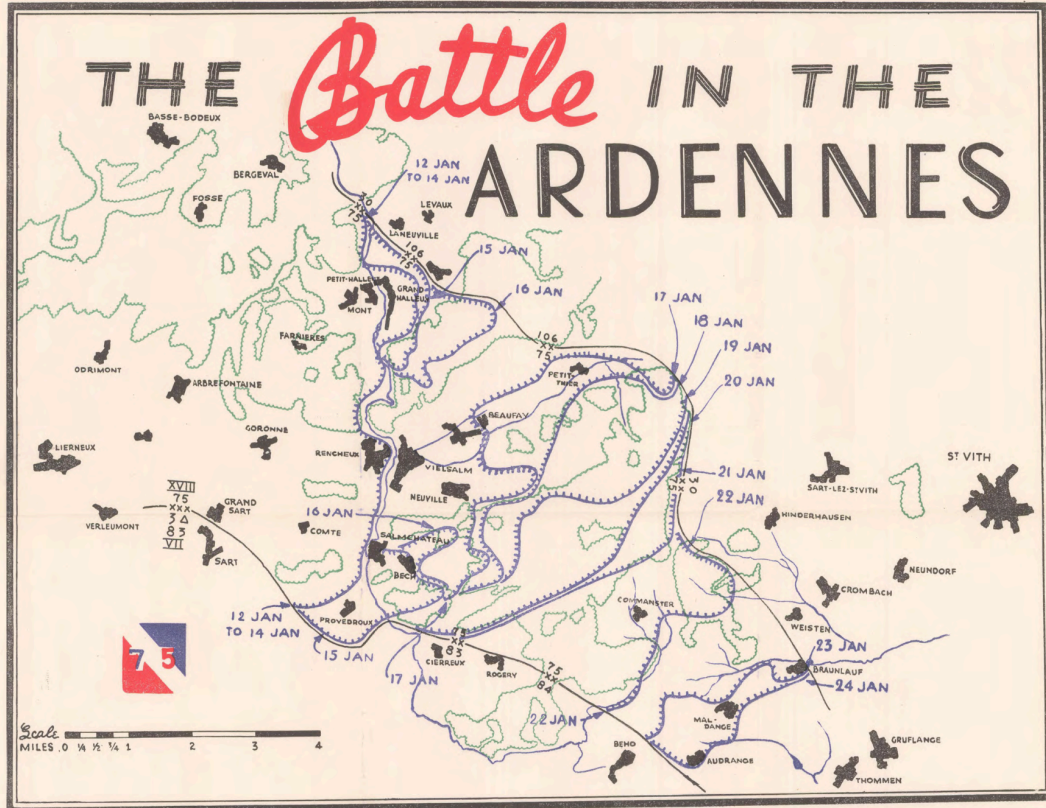
Regardless of where we may be called to serve during the remainder of this war, each and every one of us will be 75th Infantry Division men as long as we live. I am exceedingly anxious that at an early date you will initiate the organization of a division association through which we may meet and renew old acquaintances during the years to come.

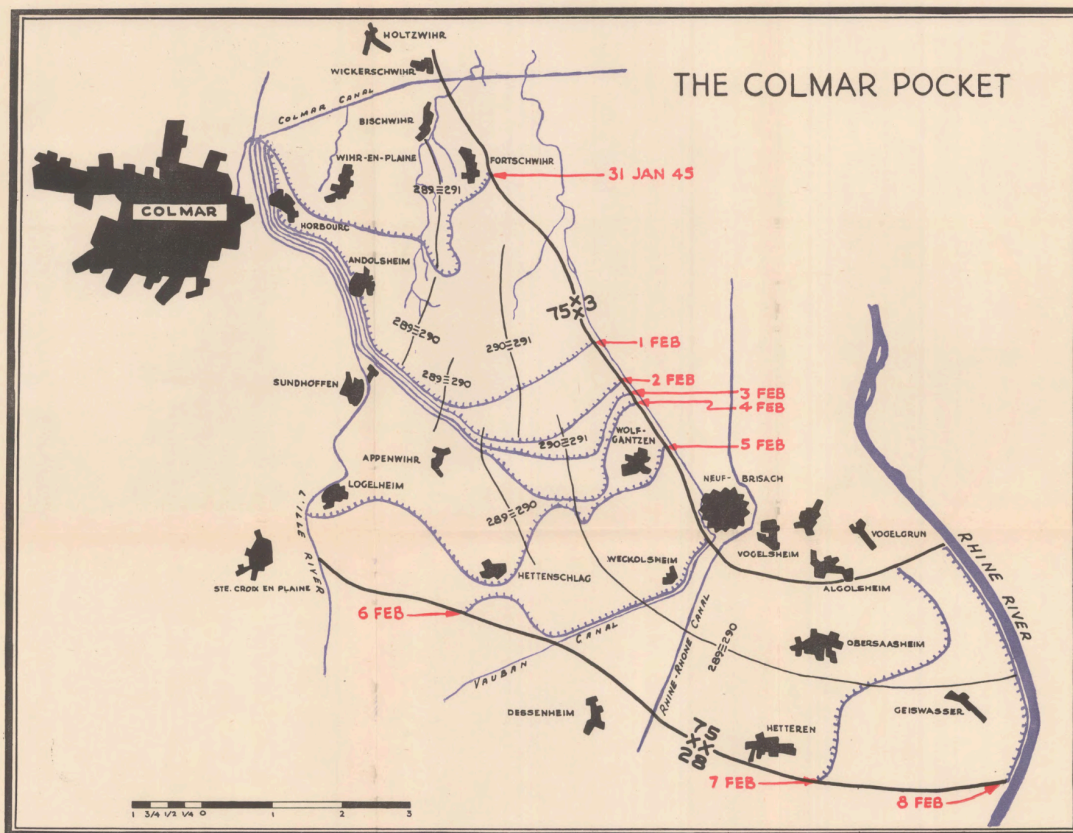
I leave you knowing that neither as a division nor as individuals, neither in war nor in peace will you ever accept failure or be content with mediocre performance of your tasks. I shall follow with pride and pleasure your future achievements in this war and the active leadership which I confidently expect you to assume in civil life when you have returned to your homes. I shall always be glad to hear from any of you and I do hope that none of you will ever fail to visit me when you are in a position to do so. Happy memories of our months together will brighten the remaining days of my life.

With my most fervent wishes for your future success and happiness, I bid you, Good-Bye!

RAY E. PORTER
MAJOR GENERAL, U.S. ARMY

THE *Battle* IN THE ARDENNES





THE BATTLE FOR THE RUHR

