

Floyd Virgil Sprinkle (Co G, 319th) – A Monumental Veteran

Restoring a Monument for an 80th Division WWII Soldier

By Mark A. Smith, Carroll County, Indiana

Upon exiting my wife's family reunion a year or so ago, I chanced to glance over at two stones resting in the gravel of the parking lot. One was worded "John E. Snoeberger" on the bottom, and the top was worded Floyd Virgil Sprinkle (sic). Researching Mr. Sprinkle I discovered that he was a WWII veteran who was the namesake of the Rockfield baseball diamond.

With that in mind I sought to restore not only the monument itself but the honor of Floyd and his contribution to the county, state, and nation. Depicted here is the "before" of the monument. This was accomplished by presenting documentation to Trustee Don Leisure who presented the matter to his board.

Floyd Virgil Sprinkle was born on October 28, 1918 in Rock Creek Township, Indiana, the son of Elmadore Sprinkle and Ethel Nipple Sprinkle. He was a graduate of Rockfield High School. His marriage in 1936 in Jeffersonville, Indiana was to Mary E. Guthrie with Mr. and Mrs. Robert Wasson as witnesses with George Groher as officiator.

Life was very kind to the young couple as Floyd pursued a career as a carpenter, and Mary as a teacher in the Rockfield School.

This was all destined to come to a screeching halt on December 7th, 1941, when, as Janet Gobel recounts "they were sitting at the kitchen table when news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor came on the radio and Floyd said he would be called up to war."

His enlistment was at Fort Benjamin Harrison on March 16th, 1943 and at the time he was not assigned any branch of service and was enrolled as a Private under the terms of enlistment *for the duration of the War or other emergency, plus six months, subject to the discretion of the President, or otherwise according to law.*

His status rapidly changed as he became a part of the 319th Infantry Regiment, 80th Infantry Division, Third Army under General George S. Patton.

According to morning reports of the regiment via regimental historian Andy Adkins, Sprinkle was promoted to Corporal on 15 September of 1944; to Sergeant on 28 September of 1944, and reported as MIA on 10 October 1944; the unit was near Atton, France at Abaucourt, France. On 25 January of 1945 his status was changed from MIA to KIA. On the date which he was reported as MIA, reports showed "a counter attack by enemy tank and infantry at 1000. Company withdrew to woods in rear of hill and went into defensive position and were subjected to artillery fire. Lost 24 men." This supports the recollections of Jim Ferrier as told by his father Robert of his death by tank/artillery fire.

The added sadness of his story lies in a letter to his wife dated October 4th, 1944. The letter was postmarked October 16th, 1944. Mary received the letter after Floyd was killed in action. In the letter Floyd states: "Dear Mary: How are you? I am O.K. and still able to get around. How is everything around home? Suppose you are still busy teaching school. Well, I suppose you notice the heading of Sergeant. I have been going up the ladder so fast the last few days, that I don't know what rating I do hold. Ha. So I

am now Sergeant and have charge of a squad of men. Sgt. Dus was transferred to another Company so I was put in charge of the squad. I am still in Sgt. Price's platoon."

Mary later received a Purple Heart notification from Roland Walsh, Brigadier General of the United States Army. Another accolade granted Sprinkle was the Combat Infantry Badge. He was laid to rest in the American Cemetery at Luxembourg.

Labor Day, September 1, 1947, a Rockfield version of the "Field of Dreams" was dedicated in honor of our veteran with a full day's schedule including a 2:00 ball game between the Rockfield Girls and Rockfield Knotholes; 5:00, a basket lunch; 7:00, a program of dedication featuring Rev. John Barkley of Flora as speaker, and at 8:30 another softball game between the Rockfield Rockies versus the Hauske Harlem of Peru (Delphi Citizen, August 28th of 1947). Guess what? The home team carried away a victory, 6-3, thanks to "Hank Nipple's homer in the last inning (Flora Hoosier Democrat, September 4th, 1947). Other Rockfield contributors to the victory were Little, Coble, and G. Nipple.

The aforementioned Delphi Citizen article of August 28th of 1947 also touted the cohesiveness of the Rockfield citizenry and the manner in which the entire community joined forces to assemble the bleachers and other accoutrements and not one particular citizen was accented in the process.

The names underneath our featured veteran on the monument are those of Ernest Flora,(12-15-1911-12-26-1983) husband of Margaret Helen Snoeberger Flora; Lewis J. Deel,(12-1-1899-7-4-1970) who served the Rockfield area for forty years as a merchant and who was married to Mabel Eva Ray on 6-15-1921); and John E. Snoeberger (2-4-1910-2-2-1993), brother of Margaret Helen who was a Rockfield entrepreneur in his own right as a farmer, owner of the "Centennial Farm, and Snoeberger Hatchery. Additional activity of John E. involved serving as school bus driver for the Delphi Community School System for 20 years. John E. was married to Mable Martin on 10-6-1931 and upon her death was married to Estelle Smith Humphreys.

According to Jim Ferrier, the Floyd Sprinkle Field Monument was at the softball diamond just north of the Rockfield Community Center. Upon the closing of the school and the reversion of the softball field to farm ground, the Monument was transferred to the barn of Jim and Janet's parents. After the Community Center was built, it was returned to that location and recently restored.

So, who are the Ferriers to whom I referred? They are the children of Robert Ferrier (1912-2003) and his second marriage was to Mary Guthrie Sprinkle in 1947, who passed away on February 3rd, 1980. I thank both of them for their personal vignettes which added a human touch to this entire drama.

Post Script: We all owe an immense debt of gratitude to Trustee Don Leisure and his wife Pat, as well as Rock Creek Advisory Board Members Larry Leach, Carroll County Veterans' Service Office, and Al and Sandy Brown for readily accepting this challenge without fail, as well as the Caldwell Monument Company at Logansport, Indiana.