



COURTESY PHOTO

An arrow points out Yankton's Maynard Larsen in this wartime photo.

Profile

# Maynard Larsen Was Part Of The 'Bloody Ax'

BY DOUG SALL

For The Press & Dakotan

Maynard Larsen, Yankton resident, thought he was home free when he failed his physical after having been drafted in 1942. He then married and he and Lydia started a family — then the unimaginable happened — a second draft notice! This time he passed muster and found himself at Ft. Crook, Neb.; it was August of 1943.

Maynard, though, was used to adversity having grown up during the Depression, dropping out of school after the eighth grade and then, out of necessity, landing a spot in the Civilian Conservation Corps (C.C.C.) at age 16. He spent upwards of eighteen months with the C.C.C. in Belle Fourche and spoke fondly of the experience. Paid \$30 a month, he was required to send \$22 home and the rest was his, \$8! This he supplemented by taking other's weekend KP duty. He always had money!

Following Basic Training at Camp Adair, Oregon in the fall of 1943, he found himself attached to the 70th Infantry Division, known as the "Bloody Ax" (There's a book by John Howard Baker, entitled "Camp Adair: The Story of a World War Two Cantonment." Four divisions used Camp Adair before seeing action in Europe and the Pacific theatre. The unit insignia was a white ax, a snowy mountain and a green fir tree, all on a red background.) Due to some dental issues, however, Maynard did not depart with the 70th and they were headed for Europe.

Instead, Maynard was sent to the South Pacific, to New Caledonia which at that time was used as a supply depot. He and his compatriots participated in the island hopping which ensued, passing thru places like Pelelieu and ending up on Angaur. Pelelieu was one of the most horrendous battle places of the entire Pacific theatre, a place where the First Marine Division took some 6,500 casualties and Maynard's unit, which came in around October of 1944, suffered some 3,300 casualties. (Interestingly, some two dozen Japanese soldiers hid in the caves and remained there until April 22, 1947!) Another spot of high interest was the Philippines and, in particular, Leyte. The sea/air battle of Leyte Gulf occurred prior to troops engaging the enemy on Leyte proper. It was there that Maynard suffered shrapnel wounds from "friendly fire", along with several others. (Later, Dr. Beilby removed a metal fragment from under his tongue!) On another occasion, a Japanese tank approached his position,

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# Yankton Has A Rich History With The National Guard

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BY BROOKS SCHILD

For the Press & Dakotan

**South Dakota National Guard Creed**  
*I am an American Soldier.  
I am a member of the South Dakota Army National Guard,  
a protector of the greatest state and nation on earth.  
Because I am proud of the uniform I wear,  
I will always act in ways creditable to the military service and the nation it is sworn to guard!*

The history of the Militia or National Guard in Yankton started at Dakota Territory's beginning.

Yankton organized the first militia in the area and has supported a great military tradition ever since. Many men and women from Yankton and the area have served their state and country. This article explains some of the history of the local units, the conflicts they were involved in and their ever changing names. Many other Yankton area men and women have also proudly served their country in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard.

This timeline tells the story of the Yankton Militia:

- **January 27, 1862** — Company A of the Dakota Calvary Militia was formed in Yankton as a result of the Sioux Indian uprising. They assembled in different areas of town but helped to build a stockade at Third and Broadway to protect Dakota Territory citizens. Both Sioux Falls and Mitchell evacuated the entire cities to come to the territorial capital stockade for protection. (You can currently see the monument marking the location on the north lawn of the Yankton County courthouse). After all was calm in Yankton, A Company traveled west in the Dakota Territory as a Calvary while B Company was formed and stayed in Yankton. After three years, the units were disbanded.

- **April 13, 1867** — Companies C, D and F were organized in Yankton County as Calvary units.

- **December 1884** — Reorganization and Company E, 1st Regiment formed. The unit was issued 1873 Springfield rifles and attended six drills annually with a 10-day encampment.

Gen. James W. Harden said of the Dakota Militia, "Dakota, alone of all the territories, maintains a militia force, and that in numbers and efficiency outranks that of many older commonwealths of the nation."

- **1889** — With the statehood of North and South Dakota, the Dakota Militia was split up. North Dakota got the 1st Regiment and South Dakota would get the 2nd Regiment, without ever having a 1st as a state. Yankton's "South Dakota National Guard" would be called Company M, 2nd Regiment. They were alerted that year during the Ghost Dance War. (Between statehood and the turn of the century, militias were referred to as National Guard).

- **1893** — Yankton's unit was once again reorganized into Company M, 1st South Dakota Infantry.

- **1898** — U.S. declares war on Spain and approximately 1,500 troops from South Dakota experience intense combat near Manila in the Philippines. When they returned, they were all mustered out of the Army and South Dakota went virtually without a National Guard because of a lack of funding. Even though the state couldn't fund the Guard, Company M stayed on in Yankton, drilling and training when they could. The townspeople helped them



MARK MAXON/P&D ARCHIVE PHOTO

Seven years ago today (Sept. 30, 2006), members of Yankton's Charlie Battery came home after a tumultuous year in Iraq. They received a rousing welcome home from family, friends and the community.

with whatever supplies they could.

- **1903** — M Company was supported by the state but in 1905 it was reorganized into the 4th South Dakota Infantry, M Company. Things remained quite the same until the mid-teens.

- **March 1916** — Poncho Villa and 400 followers crossed the Mexican border into Texas and killed 21 Americans, nine of whom were soldiers. President Wilson called on the National Guard in June to patrol the border. M Company was one of the units that went to San Benito, Texas, for seven months. At this time, all of the South Dakota National Guard reported to service.

- **March 1917** — The president ordered the return of the South Dakota National Guard and enlisted them in active service for World War I. Company M became F Battery, 147th Field Artillery Regiment under the 41st Division. F Battery used horses to pull the guns and fire control.

- **January 1918** — Battery F and the 147th boarded the White Star liner *Olympic* in New York City Harbor and set unescorted sail to England and eventually France.

- **June 1918** — Battery F and the 147th arrived in France where they trained soldiers and supported troops in combat. The units remained on line until the end of the war. When they arrived in South Dakota, they were discharged and South Dakota, in poor financial times, once again had a limited National Guard.

- **1922** — Battery E, 2nd Battalion, 147th FA Regiment was formed with horse-drawn 37mm guns mounted on 75 mm guns. (The unit was a 75 mm unit but did not have ammunition for the "new" artillery). E Battery drilled at the old Stuelpnagel's egg processing plant near Third St. and Pine. Besides the stockade in 1862, this was the first official assembly place for the Yankton unit. In 1927, the horses were replaced by FWD and White trucks. E Battery was called a "Portee Artillery" because the guns were carried and not towed.

- **March 1935** — E Battery was sent to Sioux Falls during the Morrell packing plant strike. An armory was built between Fourth and Fifth streets on Walnut. It is currently used as the Yankton City Hall. The men met upstairs and used the basement as a motor pool.

- **November 25, 1940** — President Franklin Roosevelt ordered all elements of the 147th FA Regiment, including Yankton's E Battery, to active service because of the war in Germany and threats by Japan. Yankton became a 105 mm towed Howitzer unit.

- **October 1941** — E Battery along with the 147th, boarded the *Willard A. Holbrook* liner in San Francisco and sailed to Pearl Harbor, on the way to the Philippines. On

Nov. 29, 1941, they left Pearl Harbor to Midway Island and eventually the Philippines. Pearl Harbor was attacked while they were at sea. The captain of the *Holbrook*, against orders from the Army colonel, turned his ship to

Australia. (It was noted that the entire attacking fleet of the Japanese and certain peril if the captain had not made this decision).

- **January 1942** — Yankton's E Battery and the 147th

FA Regiment defended Malay Bay near Darwin. They were attached to the Australian military forces in the northern territory. They moved 2,000 miles south to Balarat, where

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Please take time to remember the brave men and women of the United States Armed Forces who gave the ultimate sacrifice of their lives to help make and keep the United States the land of the free and the home of the brave!



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