

Guard

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they actually received their first 105 mm artillery pieces. They were then attached to the 1st Corps in Brisbane.

• **December 1943** — Battery E moved to Kiriwina Island and Milne Bay, and was reorganized as Battery B, 147th Field Artillery Battalion. They island-hopped, securing islands on the way to Japan from May 1944 to May 1945. They traveled through Noemfoor Island, New Guinea, New Brittan, Sarmi, Batang, Legaspi and Lingayen.

• **January 17, 1946** — The unit was deactivated in Japan and sent home after an initial one-year deployment that resulted in 61 months of active duty, mostly overseas.

• **March 1947** — Yankton's National Guard unit was once again reorganized into Company C, 1st Battalion, 196th Regimental Combat Team. In September 1950, C Company — along with the rest of the 196th RCT — were inducted into federal service and sent to Camp Carson, Colo., for training because of the North Korean invasion of South Korea.

• **July 1951** — Company C and its sister units were deployed to Fort Richardson, Alaska, until September 1952. There, they protected the northern border of the United States.

• **Summer of 1955** — Company C is reorganized to Battery D of the 260th FA Battalion with 155mm artillery.

• **October 1959** — A military police battalion was established in the area and Yankton and Vermillion became the 115th Signal Company Support with



COURTESY PHOTO

Yankton's Charlie Battery was mobilized for homefront work during the historic Missouri River flood of 2011. They are shown here assisting with sandbagging operations in Yankton. The Yankton unit was also deployed to Dakota Dunes and to Pierre.

approximately 300 men.

• **October 1, 1961** — The Yankton and Vermillion unit was sent to Fort Riley, Kan., to replace regular Army units that were sent overseas during the Berlin Crisis. They stayed there until Aug. 11, 1962.

• **January 1968** — Yankton's 115th Signal unit became today's C "Charlie" Battery, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery. The unit responded to the Rapid City flood in 1972 and were trained for nuclear weapons in 1974 and in 1978, becoming the first reserve unit/battalion that was nuclear-qualified in the United States. Charlie Battery took ownership of a new armory located just west of the State Hospital in 1976 (it is the current location of the unit) and

changed their main guns to the 109 Howitzers.

• **1997** — Charlie Battery turned its self-propelled 109 Howitzers in for its current equipment which is Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS).

• **May 30, 1998** — Charlie Battery had 30 soldiers volunteer to help out at the Spencer tornado.

• **March 15-May 7, 2003** — Charlie Battery and the 1st Battalion, 147th FA were activated to Fort Sill, Okla., for deployment in the Iraqi War. The initial phase of the war went so fast that the battalion was deactivated and sent back to South Dakota.

• **June 14, 2005-Sept. 30, 2006** — Charlie Battery was activated for Operation Iraqi Freedom. They trained at Fort

Dix, N.J., and were deployed to Baghdad, Iraq, on Oct. 7, 2005.

Their military police (security force) mission was to train Iraqi police. The unit saw combat throughout the deployment. They returned home to Yankton to one of the largest "welcome home" ceremonies and parade in the history of South Dakota. More than 35,000 people lined the streets of Yankton.

• **April 15, 2009-March 30, 2010** — Charlie Battery, along with the 1st Battalion, 147th FA, were activated and deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The battalion trained at Fort Hood, Texas, and deployed to Kuwait City, Kuwait. There they secured the Kuwaiti Sea Port of Debarkation/Embarkation. At the time, this port accounted for nearly 95 percent of all supplies for both the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

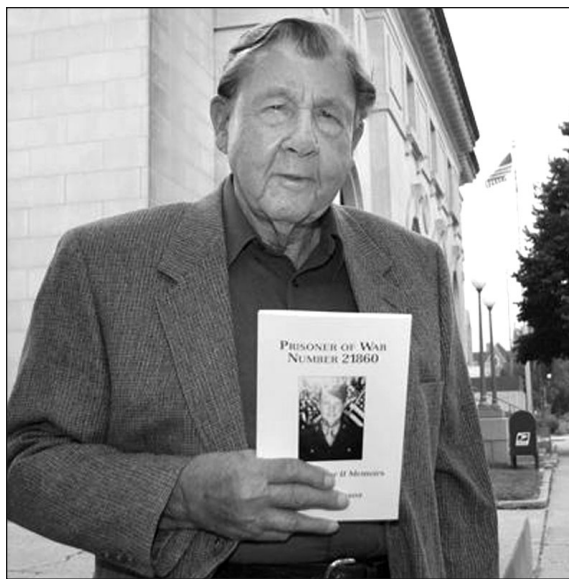
ADDENDUM

• **June 2011** — Charlie Battery was called to State Active Duty (SAD) to help battle the Missouri River floods of 2011. They traveled to Pierre for one week, filling tens of thousands of sand bags to help protect the city. When the flood waters threatened Yankton, the unit moved south, down the river for three days to fill thousands of sand bags for local residents. Then the unit was moved to Vermillion to support the flood effort in Vermillion and Dakota Dunes. The unit was on duty for 18 days total and the members earned the South Dakota Emergency Operations Ribbon.

• **September 2012** — Due to the reorganization of the Army National Guard, the 1st Bn, 147th Field Artillery has lost one battery. The Bravo Battery armory in Salem was closed and the unit was moved to Yankton. Yankton's Charlie Battery was deactivated and the unit changed to Bravo Battery. The Battery traveled to Camp Ripley, Minn., in 2012 and to Camp Guernsey, Wyo., in 2013 for annual training.

A South Dakota National Guard historian, Dean Mann, said it best: "All South Dakota National Guard members past and present can be proud. The SDNG Coyotes (South Dakota's citizen-soldiers) have done, and continue to do, their duty. And the record is clear: They have done it in such a way as to distinguish themselves among their peers."

Yankton can be very proud of its citizen-soldier history and the support that the city has given to those men and women. The Dakota Territory's militia started in Yankton and today continues to lead with its soldiers, in the South Dakota Army National Guard.



KELLY HERTZ/P&D ARCHIVE PHOTO

The Rev. Oliver Omanson wrote a book, "Prisoner of War Number 21860: The World War II Memoirs of Oliver Omanson," that describes his experiences as a POW during World War II.

Profile: Omanson's Book Details His Experiences As World War II POW

Four years ago this month, Oliver had a book signing of his recently published memoirs of World War II. Nathan Johnson, of the PRESS & DAKOTAN, published a wonderful tribute to Oliver and his book on Saturday, Sept. 5, 2009. In it he reviewed Oliver's military adventures, becoming a POW, and eventually being released some 19 months later.

For the purposes of this special Heritage Edition on veterans, Nathan's article is being reprinted in its entirety. His book remains available at the Carpenter's Shop in the Yankton Mall and at the Yankton Community Library.

DOUG SALL

By Nathan Johnson

It may have taken the Rev. Oliver Omanson more than six decades to write a book about his experiences as a prisoner of the Nazis during World War II, but it's a story he has never hesitated to share in the meantime.

In fact, the Yankton man said he has never turned down a request to speak about that dark time in his life, despite how difficult he sometimes finds the process.

At 92, Omanson is still occasionally overwhelmed with emotion when talking about "Prisoner of War Number 21860: The World War II Memoirs of Oliver Omanson," the book he recently self-published.

"I'll get through it," he said during this interview, taking a deep breath. "The memories run pretty deep. Just don't let it stop you from asking questions."

He has good reason to breathe deeply. Omanson and nine others were captured in Salerno, Italy, after they became trapped behind enemy lines in July 1943. There were many days in the final months of the war, as the Nazis forced him and approximately 1,000 other prisoners of war to march more than 600 miles from northern Poland to near Hanover, Germany, that he thought he might never draw another breath. With body lice consuming his blood, frost bite stinging his limbs and hunger gnawing at his stomach, his faith in God, memories of home and the support of fellow prisoners kept him from succumbing to the exhaustion that enveloped him day and night, he said.

Omanson realizes many of his peers chose not to talk about their World War II experiences.

"I had veterans in mind when I wrote this. I know what those guys are going through," he said. "I've had so many Baby Boomers come to me and say, 'My dad was in World War II, but he won't talk about it.' But I think one of the healthiest things you can do is talk about this."

Upon returning to South Dakota from the war, Omanson was immediately invited by a church group to talk about the war.

"I was bawling all the time and carrying on, but I finally got through that stage," he recalled. "I never asked to go anywhere to talk about it, but the invitations kept coming to me. I tried to follow the lead of the Lord, communities and people to see where it was going."

The book has been a sporadic work in progress for about 30 years, according to Omanson. Originally, he planned just to write up something for his family. But many friends and acquaintances convinced him that he needed to write a book that would be more widely available. He eventually settled on publishing 1,500 copies of his book.

Even the writing of the book contains some painful memories for Omanson. His daughter, Dr. Deborah Omanson Stevens, collaborated with him on doing the research necessary to make the book historically accurate. But she passed away in January 2008, only three weeks after she

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Larsen

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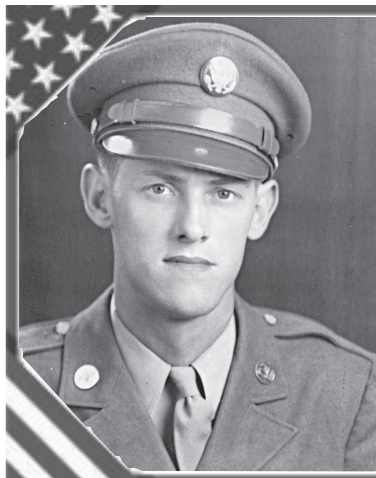
traveling up a hillside. According to Maynard, the guy carrying the bazooka got hit so Maynard picked up the weapon, fired at the tank and missed. Somehow he managed to get it reloaded, fired again and struck the turret where-upon the tank spun around and hightailed it back down

the hill. The bazooka was not Maynard's assigned weapon; rather, he was a B.A.R. man and an expert rifleman with the M-1.

At the war's end in the Pacific in August 1945, Maynards outfit was told they'd be going home but, instead, they were sent to Japan as part of the occupation force where he remained for several months. Getting home was a bit of a problem, however, because strikes in California had impacted the availability of troop carriers.

Finally, though, it was over and Maynard was discharged on Jan. 13, 1946, at Ft. Leavenworth, Kan.

Following the War, Maynard worked for Larson Bros., kitty-corner from Gurneys, repairing furnaces, oil burners, etc. Then, following a brief move to St. Cloud, Minn., he returned to Yankton and went back to furnace repairing and formed Broadway Sheet Metal, south of present day Walgreens.



Thank you to our Father, Grand Father,
& Great Grand Father

Doyle Stewart
United States Air Force
1944-1946

You served our country with courage and honor. You defended our freedoms and ideals. You make us proud to be Americans.

Gregg & Mary Lee Stewart and Family



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