UCF Veterans Legacy Program

John P. Fiebelkorn (1912-1985)

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John P. Fiebelkorn was born in Buffalo, NY on June 26, 1912, the oldest son of Cleopha Norris and John Fiebelkorn. Cleopha immigrated from Berlin, Germany, returning there several times during her life. John was the oldest of five children, including Dorothy, Sylvia, Rita, and Joseph. He attended high school at St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute on Main Street in Buffalo, but had to drop out as a sophomore to help take care of his family. Starting as a teenager, John worked in a factory that made women's stockings. Later, he delivered baked goods via a closed, horse-drawn wagon. He met Helen Barbaritz, his sweetheart, because she worked at a restaurant on his route.

John enlisted for one year in the US Army in late 1940. He served at Ft. Bragg, NC and Camp Blanding, FL. He got to visit home, Washington DC, and New York City, NY, during his year. Just before John planned to return home to Buffalo for good, the Japanese attacked the US Naval Base at Pearl Harbor, HI on December 7, 1941. As a trained soldier, the Army kept John in service until the end of the war. He did not see his family or his beloved Helen again until after the war ended 1945.

John continued to train for deployment in the 192nd field artillery unit of the 43rd Infantry Division (ID), first at Camp Shelby, MI. While there, he participated in the Carolina Manoeuvres, a large, multistate infantry training exercise that prepared men for battle. Before shipping out to the South Pacific, John also trained in both Catalina Island and Fort Ord, CA.

John and the men of the 43rd ID shipped out to Guadalcanal in February 1943. John's artillery unit consisted of teams of men that fired the 155mm howitzer, a cannon that shot a ninety-six pound projectile up to seven miles and left craters up to thirty-five feet in diameter. They supported both Marine and Army infantry units in the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, and the Philippines. Once infantry units took islands, artillery units and others held the territory, often keeping a large presence where they had airplane landing strips–vital to resupplying islands with everything the troops needed to fight, rest, and eat.

In John's letters to Helen, he talked about life at home, asked about how everyone was, and offered advice to Helen's younger brothers when it was their time to serve in the military. He talked about putting on shows during down time, with the soldiers playing all the parts in silly plays. John also explained that in 1944 the military censors kept sending his letters back, so for a time he stopped writing. The military

censored letters to keep sensitive information out of the hands of the Japanese and to keep morale up on the Home Front. Throughout it all, John dreamed of coming home and starting his life with Helen.

After the war, John married Helen and they had two daughters and five grandchildren. He continued to drive a bread truck for the Nabisco and Millbrook companies, retiring in the late 1970s. He loved to garden and to participate in Veterans organizations and at his Catholic Church. He and Helen came from big families; they enjoyed family picnics and German American dances. John passed away on August 25, 1985 from cancer at the VA hospital in Buffalo. He is buried in Mount Calvary Cemetery with his wife Helen, who passed away in January 2010, and his sister-in-law Agnes Barbaritz, who died in April 1989.

This biography is based on the Fiebelkorn family's archives and the expertise of Dr. Amelia Lyons, John's granddaughter. We thank the Fielbkorn family for their generous participation in the UCF VLP program.

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