

Mission of Mercy: MP recognized for his efforts in World War II

By SGT. AUDREY HAYES
Special to The Messenger

MANASQUAN, N.J. — “I remember the night and the trip to Carentan. You’ll remember that no one was on the road, except for the five of us in the horse drawn carriage. There is one thing that has stayed with me over the forty years, it was the fact that we never knew each other’s names, nor did we ever see one another’s faces.”

That is an excerpt from a letter that Walter “Rookie” Pruikisma wrote about an event that took place a few nights after the mighty invasion of Normandy, France, during World War II.

He dubbed it his “Mission of Mercy,” when he volunteered to escort an injured French woman and her two children to a hospital, 12 miles through war-torn land, by horse and buggy.

Seventy-four years later, Pruikisma, now 95 years old, and a resident of Brick, New Jersey, was recognized, not only for his heroic acts that night, but also for his contribution as a Military Police Soldier during World War II.

On Oct. 13 at the Manasquan First Presbyterian Church in Manasquan, N.J., Pruikisma received the Order of the Marechaussee medallion in Silver. Maj. Gen. Phillip M. Churn, the assistant to the chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, Reserve matters, presented him with the medallion, which is awarded by Military Police Regimental Association.

The Marechaussee was established in 2000 and is the highest honor an MP can receive. It recognizes exceptional dedication and contribution to the MP Corps over an extended period of time.

Pruikisma was drafted into the United States Army in September 1943. The following February, he boarded a ship and sailed to Great Britain with his unit, D Company, 783rd Military Police Battalion.

Four days after D-Day, D Co., along with C Co. from the 783rd, arrived on Utah Beach, Normandy, France. They were the first MPs on the battle-ridden shore. Their mission was to set up traffic control points, process prisoners of war and establish the Red Ball Express — a highway that was used to move an endless supply of cargo to Gen. Patton’s Army.

Pruikisma’s company set up its headquarters in Sainte-Marie-du-Mont, Normandy, and established a traffic control point. But, it was two days later, June 12, 1944, when his most memorable event — the Mission of Mercy — occurred.

A local French boy came to



VETERAN HONORED — Walter Pruikisma poses for a portrait after receiving The Military Police Regimental Association’s Order of the Marechaussee in Silver, during an award ceremony Oct. 13, 2018, Mannasquan, N.J. The Order of the Marechaussee is the top honor a Military Police Soldier can receive. Pruikisma received the award for the time he served as a Military Police Soldier, assigned to D Company, 783rd MP Battalion, during World War II. Just days after the invasion of Normandy, France, Pruikisma volunteered to escort an elderly French woman to the hospital, who was injured nearly a week earlier

his post late at night and asked an officer if someone could help him transport his mother to a hospital.

She was injured on D-Day, when a German soldier threw a grenade into their home.

Pruikisma recalls the officer saying, “I’m not going to assign anyone for this mission. But, I will take volunteers.”

Pruikisma said he thought of his mother and how he would want someone to help her, so he volunteered. Then, Cecil Morris, another MP from his company with Obion County ties, said he would go, too, to help pull security during the trip.

At 1 a.m., Pruikisma, Morris and the French boy, along with his sister and injured mother, boarded a small, two-wheeled, horse-drawn carriage and began their mission to the hospital in Carentan — 12 miles away and in no man’s land. Pruikisma knew which direction Carentan was because he watched the glow of the city burning the night before.

“The only thing I could hear was the sound of the horse’s hooves and iron wheels hitting the cobblestone,” said Pruikisma. “The streets were completely empty.”

When they reached the scorched town, soldiers from

the 101st Airborne Division were watching from windows and doorways as the carriage rolled by, not stopping them to investigate where they were going.

When they reached the hospital, Pruikisma saw a church across the street. In front of the church building were two piles of dead German and American Soldiers that reached five feet high.

They quickly jumped out of the carriage and rang a bell at the hospital. A pegged-leg French man hobbled to them

when a German threw a grenade into her home. In the middle of the night, Pruikisma, along with a fellow MP, and the family set out on a 12-mile journey through the war-torn land to Carentan — the town with the nearest hospital. Across from the hospital was a church with two piles of dead American and German Soldiers that stood nearly five feet high. The Frenchwoman was admitted to the hospital and received help. Pruikisma calls this his Mission of Mercy, because amid the death and war, it was love and human kindness that prevailed that night. (U.S. Army Reserve Photo by Sgt. Audrey Hayes)

and opened the gate.

Nurses, or perhaps nuns, Pruikisma said, received the injured French woman and were so thankful for his and Morris’ service. After a couple of minutes, they got back on the carriage and headed back to their headquarters.

Just like that, it was over.

Although, it was a sliver of time compared to the rest of his duration in the war, this mission remained his most memorable.

“You know, I never talked about any of this for nearly 40 years,” said Pruikisma. “I left all



SILVER STAR — A hat, with the words “Silver Star” embroidered on it, sits on an audience member’s knee during Walter Pruikisma’s Order of the Marechaussee award ceremony, Oct. 13, 2018, Mannasquan, N.J. The Military Police Regimental Association’s Order of the Marechaussee is the top honor a Military Police Soldier can receive. Pruikisma received the award for the time he served as a Military Police Soldier, assigned to D Company, 783rd MP Battalion, during World War II. (U.S. Army Reserve Photo by Sgt. Audrey Hayes)

that stuff on the boat.”

Until one day, he had an urge to know with whom he shared the lonely, dangerous road to Carentan.

“It was like a book, but without the last chapter,” said Pruikisma.

He started to write letters inquiring about the injured French woman and the pegged-leg man. He sent one to a church in Saint-Marie-du-Mont and another to the town’s mayor.

The newspaper of Saint-Marie-du-Mont published an advertisement with Pruikisma’s inquiry about the family he helped, but no one responded.

A couple of years later, Pruikisma tried again. This time, he sent a letter to the mayor of Carentan. And, this time, the mayor replied. The letter included the names of the people he escorted to Carentan, 40 years prior.

Pruikisma and the daughter of the injured French woman — whose name he now knew as Madame Andree Tourraine

— wrote letters to each other explaining what they remembered of the events that night.

“Upon learning your name, I finally feel like I began to read the last chapter and the story is coming to a completion,” Pruikisma said in a letter to her.


Pruikisma wasn’t officially recognized for his selfless service during the war, until 2016. The French government awarded Pruikisma with the Legion of Honor, the country’s highest recognition.

And now, two years later, the Military Police Regimental Association is bestowing their highest honor upon him, as well.

“I’m proud to have served as an MP,” said Pruikisma. “When I was in France and Belgium and Holland, it didn’t matter what other [national] army I was working with. They knew I was authority when I had my MP brassard on.”

Editor’s note: Story and photo courtesy of U.S. Army Reserve. www.usar.army.mil





VETERANS DAY
HONORING ALL WHO SERVED

Century 21
GOLDEN SERVICE REALTY

Each Office Independently Owned & Operated
204 W. Washington Ave. • Union City, TN 38261
Office: 731-885-8000
century21.com

2019 Medicare Part D Prescriptions Drug Plans

Helpful Information

- Evaluate Part D plans EVERY YEAR.** Drug plans change every year. What plan is good this year for you may very well be much worse for you next year. What drugs are covered change, copays change, and even what pharmacy you can use may change. It is important that you select a plan that allows you to remain at the pharmacy of YOUR choice and not the insurance plan’s choice.
- It’s about more than just the cost of the premium.** Part D members must consider several other factors when making a decision for 2019. Copay amounts, preferred drug, drug approval considerations, and even what pharmacy you are allowed to use all factor in to the total annual cost for you. You have to consider all of these factors. Kizer Pharmacy has a unique software program that can analyze all of this in just seconds. Our pharmacists are highly trained to help you with this process.
- Be careful to not make decisions hastily when being solicited by mass mailings, infomercials, or telemarketing. Many times you can be signed up to plans that are not best for you. Remember there is big money for the insurance plans in the Medicare industry. Take your time and get a trusted, second opinion. Many times only pharmacists know of upcoming cheaper therapy options, the differences in acute vs. chronic meds in your regimen, and unique ways to save money going forward. Also, preferred drug status (lower copays) changes almost every year for expensive brand medicines. There are alternatives that we can discuss with you.
- Review Drug Regimen and Plan Considerations with a Pharmacist.** This is a good time of year to not only ask a pharmacist what plans would be best for you and your drug regimen, but to review your prescriptions with a pharmacist. Many times, this process can result in better and sometimes, less expensive treatment options for you. This may be a time that you can discuss other programs that can save you time and money while also improving your health; programs such as, **MedSync** where you can get all of your maintenance prescriptions on the same day each month.
- Be aware of the preferred networks of the Part D plans for the coming year.** Many times Part D plans will sign special deals with only certain pharmacies that incentivize you to use that pharmacy. In 2019, some pharmacies may not participate at all in some Part D plans. Check with us at Kizer Pharmacy – we can help you!

Whether you are new to Part D, renewing your current plan, or looking for alternative Part D plans, reviewing the 2019 plan information using your prescription information with a pharmacist is vital to making the best selection

Again, make sure to come see one of our pharmacists from
November 5th – December 7th to help you with your Part D plan.

KIZER Pharmacy

1117 S.Miles Avenue • Suite 1 • Union City, TN 38261 • BISHOP CENTRE BUILDING
JUST CALL US! 731-885-2226 • Mon-Fri: 8am to 6pm; Sat 9am to 1pm