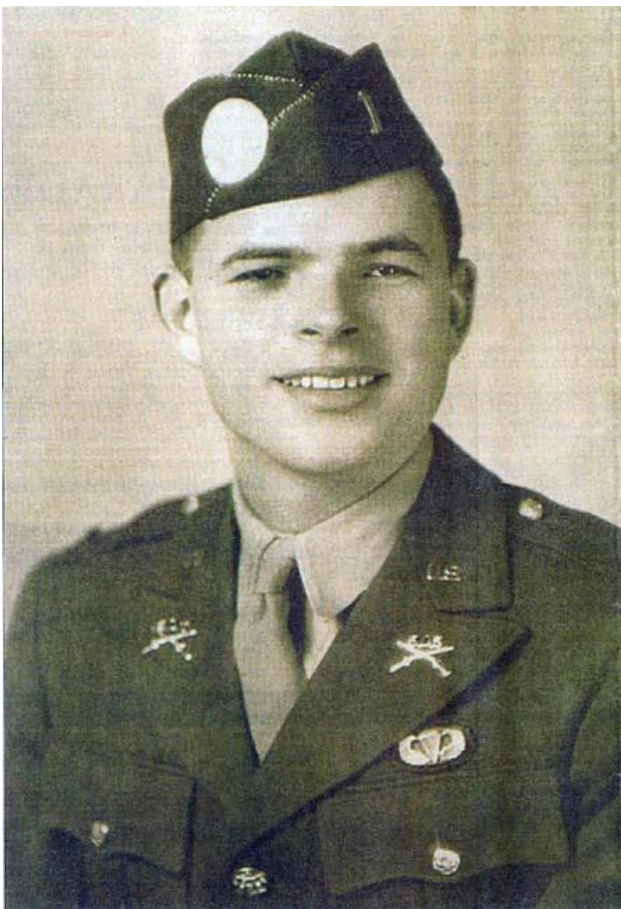


FIRST LIEUTENANT TURNER BRASHEARS TURNBULL III "IN MEMORY, BRING HIM HOME" 1921—1944 Turnbull Descendants Strive to Correct 57-Year-Old Mistakes ©

By Frankie James 1998



Prologue

In 1999, while the rest of Oklahoma and the nation celebrated the lives given of those who defended our country, another kind of tribute was paid in Pushmataha County this Veterans Day to an all but forgotten man. After so many years, the name of young Turner B. Turnbull III was officially noted as a new engraving on the Choctaw War Memorial at Tuskahoma. It is fifty-seven years after the fact, but none the less significant for those descendants who claim Turnbull blood.

Turner Brashears Turnbull III was born in Durant, Oklahoma, October 30, 1921, to a full-blood Choctaw father and a Scottish (white) mother. Although his heroism during D-Day, June 7, 1944, has been written about by more war historians than possibly

any other Oklahoma war hero, it has been difficult for Oklahoma to claim their Native American hero. You won't find his name on the War Memorial at Tuskahoma, the Choctaw Nation's capitol, among those of other Native American heroes. Neither is it on the "Oklahoma Rose" Granite Wall at the state capitol complex on which are listed the names of 11,000 native sons who died for their country. His official remembrance is limited to a few lines in Vol. XXIII of the Chronicles of Oklahoma, War Memorial book, published by the Oklahoma Historical Society. He mainly lives on in the memory of relatives and a few "old

soldiers,” who like to talk of him at the reunions of I Company of the 180th Infantry of the Oklahoma 45th Division National Guard, which he joined while a student at Bacone Indian School in Muskogee, Oklahoma. I Company, which began at Bacone, was originally made up entirely of Indians. Even today, his comrades recall his bravery as a soldier and his being a very special young man. However, his grave marker in Normandy says he was from Colorado, when in reality his young roots were planted deep in the Choctaw Nation in Southeast Oklahoma and his home town of Durant.

Choctaw Heritage and Background

As half Choctaw, he was a member of one of the proudest of Choctaw families; his great grandparents, Turner B. Turnbull, Sr. and Angelico “Jerico” Perkins, walked the infamous Choctaw Trail of Tears. And yet at least three contemporary authors, in writing about young Turner’s heroism on D—Day, have given him to the Cherokees. His ancestors held important positions in tribal government for the great Choctaw Nation both during Indian Territory days and after Oklahoma statehood.

Turner Brashears Turnbull, Sr. was elected Choctaw supreme Judge in 1849. He served in several other offices and then also was elected District Chief. David Perkins, Jerico’s brother, also was a highly respected Choctaw judge. Young Turner’s grandfather, Turner B. Turnbull, Jr., a full—blood Choctaw, was Sheriff of Blue (Bryan) County, Indian Territory, head of the famous Choctaw Lighthorsemen(1890—98)and also served in the Choctaw House of Representatives. His grandmother, also a full blood Choctaw, was Adeline Dwight; her father was the famous Presbyterian minister Timothy Dwight. In the 1930s, Ben Dwight, her brother, was a renowned Choctaw Chief.

In 1914, young Turner’s father, Walter J. Turnbull, Sr. (who, by virtue of his lineage could have been nothing but full blood Choctaw), was the youngest Chief ever elected by popular vote. However, the President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, was called on to rule on the validity of the election because Walter was only 28 when the rule was that chiefs be at least 35. Walter was not allowed to serve. Well educated and a brilliant lawyer, he also served two terms as District Attorney of Bryan County.

How can our hero have slipped and fallen through the cracks all these years? A brave young man who gave his life for his country in the liberation of Europe, he was recommended for the Distinguished Service Cross, but posthumously awarded the Silver Star, the third highest medal for valor. One answer is perhaps because there were so few left of his immediate family; now there is only a sister who is elderly, seriously ill, and lives out of state. (She died, early in January of 1999). Quite possibly, she may have known nothing of the Choctaw Memorial and these other errors, or at that point in her life, it was just too difficult to effect the changes. Turner’s only brother, Walter J. Turnbull, Jr., died in 1992. He was a lawyer and a

Marine Corps officer. Upon completion of service, he joined the U.S. General Counsel's Office and was sent to Guam as the Regional Counsel for the Officer in Charge of Construction. He remained 25 years, eventually retiring from the Government of Guam as the Assistant Attorney General. Turnbull never returned to Oklahoma to live.

With all the recent attention given to the movie Saving Pvt. Ryan, based on Stephen Ambrose's book, D-Day June 6, 1944, The Climactic Battle of World War II, (1994), it was called to the Turnbull family's attention that the author devoted four pages to Turner's heroism, but Ambrose said he was half Cherokee. He further noted men called him "Chief" out of his presence. The actual plot for the movie' was drawn from the death of one of Turner's men, machine gunner Sgt. Bob Niland, killed at his gun. It was believed his family lost three sons, including him, in one week. The one remaining son, their fourth, Fritz, in the 101st Airborne (the real Private Ryan), was quickly snatched out of harm's way, lest the same thing happen to him.

Turner's Young Life

Turner Turnbull III was the youngest of three children. His mother, Lucille McCarty Turnbull died when he was only five, and he was orphaned at about 15 when his father died. Up to this point, he, his brother Walter Turnbull, Jr. and sister Beulah Margaret Turnbull had lived in Durant with their grandmother Adeline Dwight Turnbull at the Turnbull ranch at Caddo and with their aunt Margaret McBee in Durant. With the death of his father, Turner went to live with another aunt in Colorado, where he finished high school. It is also thought he and his brother attended Haskell Indian School in Kansas. He came back to Oklahoma to attend Bacone Indian School at Muskogee and while there enlisted in 1939 in the Oklahoma National Guard. A year later, while still a student, he was inducted into the active military service with the 45th Division. He was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant after graduating from Officers' Training (Candidate) School at Fort Benning, Georgia. *Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. 23. Oklahoma War Memorial*

Preparation for a date with destiny

Turner found his niche as a paratrooper in the famous elite all-volunteer 82nd Airborne Division and served in the African, Sicilian, and Italian campaigns. The soldiers of the 82nd were a little older than the average GI and most were of better than average education. In the airborne invasion of Sicily, Turner's plane crashed, probably shot down by friendly fire. In Sicily he sustained a life threatening abdominal gunshot wound and was hospitalized in England for four months. Awarded the Order of the Purple Heart for his wound, this alone could have been his ticket home, but our young man of destiny chose to rejoin his men for the D-Day invasion.

Under the cover of darkness, Turner's 2nd Battalion/505th. Regiment 82nd Airborne Division parachuted into France behind German lines very near Ste. Mere

Eglise about 1:45 a.m. on the morning of June 6, 1944, approximately four hours before the massive U.S. offensive on the beaches of Normandy. This was one of the few drops which went well that night. Some of the troopers in the first flurry of activity, illuminated by the light of inadvertently caused fires, were killed by German rifle fire before they hit the ground. Some were casualties of flak before they could even make the jump. And some suffered the greatest misfortune of all when they landed directly in the village of Ste. Mere Eglise on top of some of the buildings, like the church where they were almost impaled on the roof and spire. Easy marks for the German rifles, their lifeless bodies were left dangling until the liberating 3rd Battalion/505 Regiment could extricate them when daylight finally came. Ironically, then the German soldiers captured in the night were ordered to perform the task. However the 2nd Battalion drop went almost flawlessly. In the darkness, they quickly regrouped and were ready to move.

Ste. Mere Eglise, a major German communications center inland from Utah Beach and known to be occupied by German troops, was the first objective of the invasion. It was to be captured and held at all cost. The success or failure of the invasion was thought to hinge on this action. If the invasion was in jeopardy, Ste. Mere Eglise was to be the fallback position for all the U.S. forces for this area. The 3rd Battalion/505th. Regiment drew this assignment. Through excellent reconnaissance information they quickly located and dismantled the main German communications cable for the whole area. Without a shot being fired (they had been ordered to use knives, bayonets, and grenades only if necessary) , they successfully accomplished this with very little resistance from the German soldiers. Thus Ste. Mere Eglise became the first town to be liberated in the European Theater of Operations. However, through miscommunications and confusion, it was believed for several hours that morning that the mission had failed.

On to Neuville-au-plain, Ste. Mere was to be held at all cost

Because a major German assault was expected from the north, the 2nd Battalion was ordered to proceed to the hamlet of Neuville-au-plain, capture it, and set up a defensive line to protect the stronghold of Ste. Mere Eglise. Before the 2nd could get to their assignment, they were ordered back to help the 3rd secure Ste. Mere. At this point, 2nd battalion commanding officer Lt. Col. Benjamin Vandervoort, trusting in Turner's reputation for military leadership, gave the Neuville-au-plain assignment to him and his small platoon of men, an assignment originally meant for all 600 members of the 2nd 505th. Regiment War historians have stated Vandervoort's decision to give Turner the Neuville-au-plain combat outpost assignment was possibly one of his best of the war and one that reaped great benefits for the Regiment and thus the Division.

Turner's previous experience in North Africa and Sicily had gained him the respect of officers and enlisted men alike. With all the exuberance and confidence of youth, he jog-trotted his men the two miles to Neuville. Most of them awake all night, the

harrying experience of jumping into unfathomable consequences of the darkness, and then the uncertainty of finding the rendezvous did nothing to deter their intensity. They were ready. They went straight through the town, where they met no resistance, to a slight rise at the northern edge. This afforded them the “high ground,” an unobstructed sight for quite a distance, and some cover, which would accord the makings of an excellent site for an ambush. The unit was lightly armed; with only a machine gun, a bazooka team, a few Browning automatic rifles and the rest regular rifles it was hardly a match for taking on the best the German 1058th Grenadier Regiment could throw at them. It was known the Germans were already positioned in this area. Turner’s deployment of what little equipment and few men he had would have to be termed brilliant. In some accounts, no sooner had Turner positioned his men on both sides of the road than the Germans hit. He could see the large enemy column approaching from about 400 yards away. Greatly outmanned and outgunned, Turner and his men were soon tested to the utmost, and many were to pay the supreme price of their lives.

The enemy foolhardy enough to meet Turner’s brave young men head on died gloriously for their fatherland.

It was a ruse. The Germans had commandeered a number of American paratrooper uniforms and attempted to pass this main column off as German prisoners of war in the process of being surrendered. In an almost surreal scenario, a Frenchman bicycled up to Turner to confirm what appeared to be the case of a massive surrender. Each of the paratrooper uniforms represented either an American soldier dead or captured. Although much against the Geneva Accord and the Articles of War. The fakes were even waving the requisite American orange recognition flags. By one account, the Germans were singing, which made the situation even more bizarre. However, the ruse was discovered in time because Turner’s machine gunner threw a volley to the side of the column. The Germans scattered, dove for ditches, and immediately returned fire. The fierce battle was on for access to the road. The Germans attacked Turner’s flanks with crushing machine gun fire, followed by a heavy mortar barrage that smashed into the platoon. However, it was said any German soldier who was foolhardy enough to meet Turner’s brave young men head on died gloriously for their fatherland. Despite the numerous casualties, Turner’s defensive line remained solid under many attacks throughout the day. Then began the enemy flanking maneuver to spread Turner’s men even thinner. Some of the earliest action had taken out the bazooka team. According to David Eshel, “Some 200 of the enemy were converging on the 40 men of which a third had already been killed or wounded in the first salvo,” *Bravery in Battle, Stories from the Front Line*, (1997). Turner’s men took out three German tanks and a self—propelled assault gun.

Col. Vandervoort’s instructions were if they came under attack to hold the road as long as they could and then fall back. He had taken them a 57mm anti—tank gun at one point but it was almost history as soon as it was deployed. Resurrected after a

near hit, the Americans were able to use it to knock out the tanks and the gun that had been following the “real” German soldiers behind a fog from smoke canisters. Vandervoort sent a runner to Turner to inquire of the platoon’s status, and Turner said, “Okay, everything is under control. Don’t worry about me.” A white smoke signal flare was to indicate the time for him to withdraw, but somehow in the heat of battle it was missed. Turner and his men fought on almost to the last man. A flyover by a squadron of American fighter—bombers scattered the German soldiers for a brief time and gave the besieged platoon a little relief, but such was the extraordinary effort of bravery exercised before overwhelming odds. Little did they know how very important it was to the whole success of the invasion. From 9:30 a.m. on, all day, from the South of Ste. Mere Eglise, the Germans had forged a massive counterattack against the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 505th.

So much was determined by so few.

Although eyewitness accounts of this D-Day action differ slightly in numbers and times, they are basically the same. In a letter to Walter Turnbull, Jr., Staff Sergeant Floyd West, Jr., who was in Turner’s platoon in the States, Africa, Sicily, Italy and Northern Ireland, but had transferred to 0 Company Headquarters in Ireland, describes their D-Day events. Turner was ordered to take his platoon of about 35 (other sources say 42) men to set up a perimeter about 2 miles from the drop. This was the main road to Utah Beach and the ones who owned the road would clearly be in a very superior strategic position at the most critical time of the invasion. Sgt. West also confirms that, unbelievably, Turner’s small group successfully defended the road. They held the full regiment of the German 1058th Grenadiers at bay for approximately eight long hours (the whole day well into the late afternoon).

The bravery of Turner and his men truly earned the 3rd platoon of D Company, 2nd Battalion, 505th Regiment, 82nd Airborne the highest regard of many World War II historians. Some of those there that day said this should have been the action of at least a battalion. There can be no question that the actions of Turner’s handful of men did not allow this massive force of Germans to advance saved countless American lives. If they had, those defending Ste. Mere Eglise would have been caught in a deadly pincer action.

Close to collapse, yet they fought on

By early afternoon the situation of Turner and his men was critical; they were close to collapse - - and yet they fought on. Only 23 men were still on the firing line; of the others, 11 were stretcher cases and nine were dead. When their ammunition was gone and the platoon was subject to being overrun, a decision had to be made. In what might be termed foolish hand—to—hand combat, Turner was ready to charge the enemy, making his last stand. It was almost too late to even try to withdraw. Pvt. Sebastian, one of Turner’s men, who had been sent to survey their situation, returned saying there might still be a way out. Turner possibly had only five or (perhaps 16 by some accounts) men left to fight, some of them wounded. In the

confusion a detail from E Company, sent by Col. Vandervoort to help in their withdrawal, was overlooked for the moment. Pvt. Sebastian asked for the Platoon to be allowed to vote on whether to make the stand or to withdraw as they had been ordered. Some sources say the men voted to run the gauntlet. Others say Turner's men acquitted themselves in a very orderly fashion, somewhat like leaving after a long day's work with a job well done. In essence, Turner gave his men an alternative to certain death to live to fight another day. Men were dropping as they talked. Machine gunner Sgt. Bob Niland volunteered to cover them, but was killed before he could reach his gun. Pvt. Sebastian also volunteered to cover them with a Browning automatic rifle, but that was about it. Some reported the 16 men, running one at a time, taking elusive courses, headed for the American lines. Each one expected his present step to be his last. Although it was a considerable distance, they all made it out. The badly wounded had to be left behind. Captured, they were treated humanely and taken to French hospitals, but lived, and then were released when the Americans overran the area. Some were even released that night when the American tanks advanced to the area. Apparently at some point, Turner's men did make contact with the relief detail from E Company. According to one of their men, Sgt. Sampson said of Turner after he walked beside him part of the way back to Ste. Mere Eglise, "He was a good man."

Turner could easily have given up and surrendered his post. *An excerpt from The Armed Forces Officer, Department of Defense, Department of the Navy (1950)*, states, "Their one day fight had preserved the flank of an Army. For economy of effort, and power of decision, there is not a brighter example in the whole book of war." For this, Turner was recommended for the Distinguished Service Cross, but would ultimately receive the Silver Star. His platoon, however, was awarded history's highest accolades. S.L.A. Marshall, the European Theater of Operations historian states in his report that "By its all-day stand, the platoon had kept the Ste. Mere Eglise force from being hit simultaneously from north and south during the most critical hours of D-Day, and by providing this breathing space to the major defensive base of the Division had helped immeasurably to stabilize the position of an entire (VII) Corps. John Keegan, in *Six Armies In Normandy*, said about Turner, "Turnbull belongs not only with the brave, but among those who saved the invasion." And Stephen Ambrose pointed out that "Turner's heroic stand allowed Krause (Lt. Col Edward Krause, 3rd Battalion, 505 PIR) Col. Benjamin Vandervoort, 2nd Battalion, 505 PIR, to concentrate on resisting an even stronger counterattack from the German 795th Regiment south of Ste. Mere Eglise. It was as big a counterattack as the Germans mounted on D-Day." D-Day, (Page 317).

The Choctaw blood coursing through Turner's veins that day no doubt recalled days of his Indian forebears. The Choctaws, one of the Five Civilized Tribes in the early Southeastern United States, though reluctant to fight, when pressed earned tremendous respect from their enemies. Such was their skill for swiftness, daring, stealth, and deadly sureness, so their foes frequently thought they were possessed with supernatural powers. Perhaps somewhere deep down inside, he was again able to call on that masterful ancient tribal military art of the Tuskahoma, the red

warriors of the Choctaws. He could also have drawn from the tenacity of his grandfather Turner B. Turnbull, Jr., the Brothers Turnbull, and the Choctaw Lighthorsemen, who helped bring law and order to Indian Territory. Turner, Jr. was as much a master of the Remington rifle as young Turner was of the M-1. He struck terror in the hearts of lawless marauders who had made life unbearable for decent people in Oklahoma's wild frontier days. From his pictures, young Turner's Indian blood was obvious, which explains his men calling him "Chief."

One is hard pressed to explain how this small group of very determined men could have done what they did on June 6, 1944, in facing such overwhelming odds. To fully realize what they accomplished, one must consider what might have been had they failed. Ste. Mere Eglise was held at all cost for the many who fell in so doing.

A very Brave young commander now belongs to the heroes of the ages.

Up to this time, be it youth, be it consummate good luck, an extreme sense of optimism "do not worry about me, Col.," or a guardian angel tested one too many times—in the end he could not be saved. It almost had to have happened. According to Sergeant West, all night long the decimated U.S. forces in this area were under a vicious shelling and lost many, many men. On the morning of June 7, when the damage was assessed and numbers counted, Turner was assigned a few additional men from a company that had lost all its officers. Although it is difficult to conceive, some historians have said June 7 was an even bloodier day of battle than the invasion. Again, the Germans were counterattacking, and he was given another perilous assignment. There were only ten of them in all; they were crawling along a hedgerow, virtually in the open, with Turner in the lead. He turned and rose on his elbow to speak to Sergeant West. They heard the shell coming but there was no place to go but "flatten out." Some said it was a mortar shell like those that had taken such a great toll on the men the day before, others said it was an artillery shell. Does it truly matter? He had lived to fight another day. If there is a merciful death, this was surely one. In a blinding flash amidst a thunderous explosion, in a millisecond it was over. Shrapnel had forever closed the book of life for Turner.

More than a half century has passed, but some still remember him as a very special young man. For them he will be forever young... Only 22 years old, with black, black hair, sparkling brown eyes, a brilliant smile, over six feet tall and somewhat lean. Turner's grave in the large 82nd Airborne cemetery just outside Ste. Mere Eglise is marked by one of the thousands of white crosses of those killed during this climactic battle of battles of World War II. Although he was among the many gallant young men who died, at several points he could have taken an easier way out and perhaps even lived a long, rich, full life with a wife and children. Historically, Turnbolls are survivors, but taking the easy way out or giving up has never been their mark.

A number of the Turnbull descendants who still live in Oklahoma are working toward having the factual errors about Turner corrected. We want his name placed

in honor on the Choctaw Memorial at Tuskahoma and the “Oklahoma Rose” Granite Wall at the Capitol in Oklahoma City, and his marker in Normandy changed to read “Oklahoma.” Due to an excellent article, in the Tulsa World by Rik Espinosa on Veterans Day, November 11, 1998, “A Hero’s Story” four of the things set out in the beginning of this story are well on their way to be done. Turner has his place on the Choctaw Tribal Rolls. With all due respect to the noble Cherokees, he is now a certified 50% Choctaw (the remainder whit). Unfortunately, we cannot rewrite history, but we can make the historians acutely aware that he is Choctaw. Based on proof from Turner’s Oklahoma birth certificate, Tom Hinkle, director of the Oklahoma War Memorial has assured the Turnbull family his name will be there by Veterans Day 1999. On Memorial Day, 1999 his name also will be unveiled on the Choctaw War Memorial among the other Tushka Hommas, the great Choctaw Red Warriors, who died so nobly in this and other wars. His marker in the Ste. Mere Eglise cemetery may soon reflect he is a native son of Oklahoma who answered his call to duty in Muskogee, Oklahoma, not Boulder, Colorado. Supporting data for this has been submitted to the American Battle Monument Commission in Arlington, Virginia.

Why Turner should be considered for the Medal of Honor

Because he was originally considered for the Distinguished Service Cross, we fervently believe if all things were considered, Turner merits the ultimate upgrade to the Medal of Honor. We believe his deeds at such a pivotal time during the Invasion clearly fall within the guidelines for the Medal of Honor. There is no doubt his personal bravery or the conspicuous self—sacrifice that distinguished him and ultimately cost him his life raised him to the highest plane of heroism. The Tulsa office of U.S. Senator James Inhofe has agreed to help. Danny Finnerty, the office’s Communications Director has made some excellent suggestions for our continuing efforts in the quest for a Medal of Honor for Turner. The office of U.S. Representative Wes Watkins (of Turner’s district) also has agreed to help, especially in the matter of Turner’s military records.

As mentioned earlier, Turner’s sister, Beulah Margaret Turnbull Davis of Corpus Christi, Texas, who died 1999, although 81 and seriously ill, suffering from a brain tumor, was aware of our efforts for Turner. Her two daughters, Turner’s nieces (Len Slusser and Diana Elizabeth Johnson) also live in Texas. His namesake, a nephew, CDL NC (North Carolina State Defense Militia) Turner B. Turnbull IV, son of Walter Turnbull, Jr., lives in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and his sister, Susanne, in Colorado. Many Turnbull descendants still live in Oklahoma.

Turner’s Story is a collaboration of Frankie James (Tulsa, Oklahoma), Turner B. Turnbull IV (Fayetteville, North Carolina), and Frank Vanderbilt (Houston, Texas) . A group of three, made up of two blood relations and one who married into the Turnbuls whose greatest ambition in this regard is to have World War II Hero First Lieutenant Turner B. Turnbull III given the recognition and paid the honor

we believe is his due. Perhaps he knows we relatives, although a bit down the line, care very much about our hero. We reclaim him for his native Oklahoma, for our Choctaws, and for our proud Turnbull family so that his name and place in history will be preserved for generations to come. It was said by author Allen Langdon, "What the under gunned Americans lacked in heavy metal was made up for by bravery, teamwork and the skills of the individual men. The 505th was incomparable, which caused many to wonder where such men came from." We Turnbuls know. Turner is our hero.

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Special Recognition: Frank Vanderbilt, Collaborator and Historical Researcher, Tuner B. Turnbull IV, Carleton James, Editor and Proof Reader, Dr. Michael Blechner, Phd., Editor, Proof Reader and Military Consultant Taylor G. Smith, Turner's Commanding Officer D Company, 505 PIR, 82nd Airborne Division, and Floyd West, Jr., Staff Sergeant who was with Turner when he died.

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©Frankie R. James, October 22, 1998

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TURNER'S STORY ©

TULSA WORLD, November 11, 1998, Rik Espenosa.(Archived Article)



TULSA WORLD, "Forgotten Hero," November 11, 1998, Editorial, Julie DelCour

While the rest of Oklahoma celebrates those who defended our county, another kind of tribute will be paid in Pushmataha County this Veterans Day to an all but forgotten man.

The name of native son Turner B. Turnbull will be etched Wednesday on the Choctaw War Memorial in Tuskahoma. Turnbull never would have received such recognition had it not been for this family's efforts 54 years after his death.

Because Turnbull was orphaned as a teen-ager and spent several years in Colorado, his grave marker in a cemetery near Normandy France, shows him from that state instead of Oklahoma, where he enlisted in the Army in 1940.

His name also is not among the 11,000 native sons on the Rose Granite Wall of the Oklahoma War memorial in Oklahoma City.

His family wants the grave marker changed to reflect his Oklahoma origins and his name added to the Oklahoma War memorial.

The bravery of Turnbull, a tall lanky 22-year-old with a brilliant smile, likely spared the lives of many Americans in the early hours of the D-Day invasion, according to historian Stephen Ambrose. The exploits of Turnbull's platoon was a partial basis for the recent movie, "Saving Private Ryan."

Turnbull commanded a platoon of the 505th Parachute Infantry Division, 82nd Airborne Division, just inland from the Utah Beach landing area. On June 6, 1944, his men held off 2,500 German soldiers, keeping them from advancing on the French village of Ste.-Mere-Eglise.

Turnbull died the next day when an artillery shell burst over him. He was posthumously awarded the Silver Star.

He may deserve more. Relatives believe his heroism should have earned him the Medal of Honor and he may have been denied that honor because of his Indian heritage.

In Wednesday's Tulsa World, reporter Rik Espinosa details the battles of Turnbull's family to get Oklahoma Political leaders' support for giving Turnbull his due.

The powers that be should get behind the family's push. The memory of 1st Lt. Turner Turnbull, along with the memory of all our war dead, deserves to live on in Oklahoma