



35th Infantry Division  
"Santa Fe"



## IN MEMORY OF PFC HOWARD KEPLINGER



**137TH INFANTRY REGIMENT E-COMPANY**

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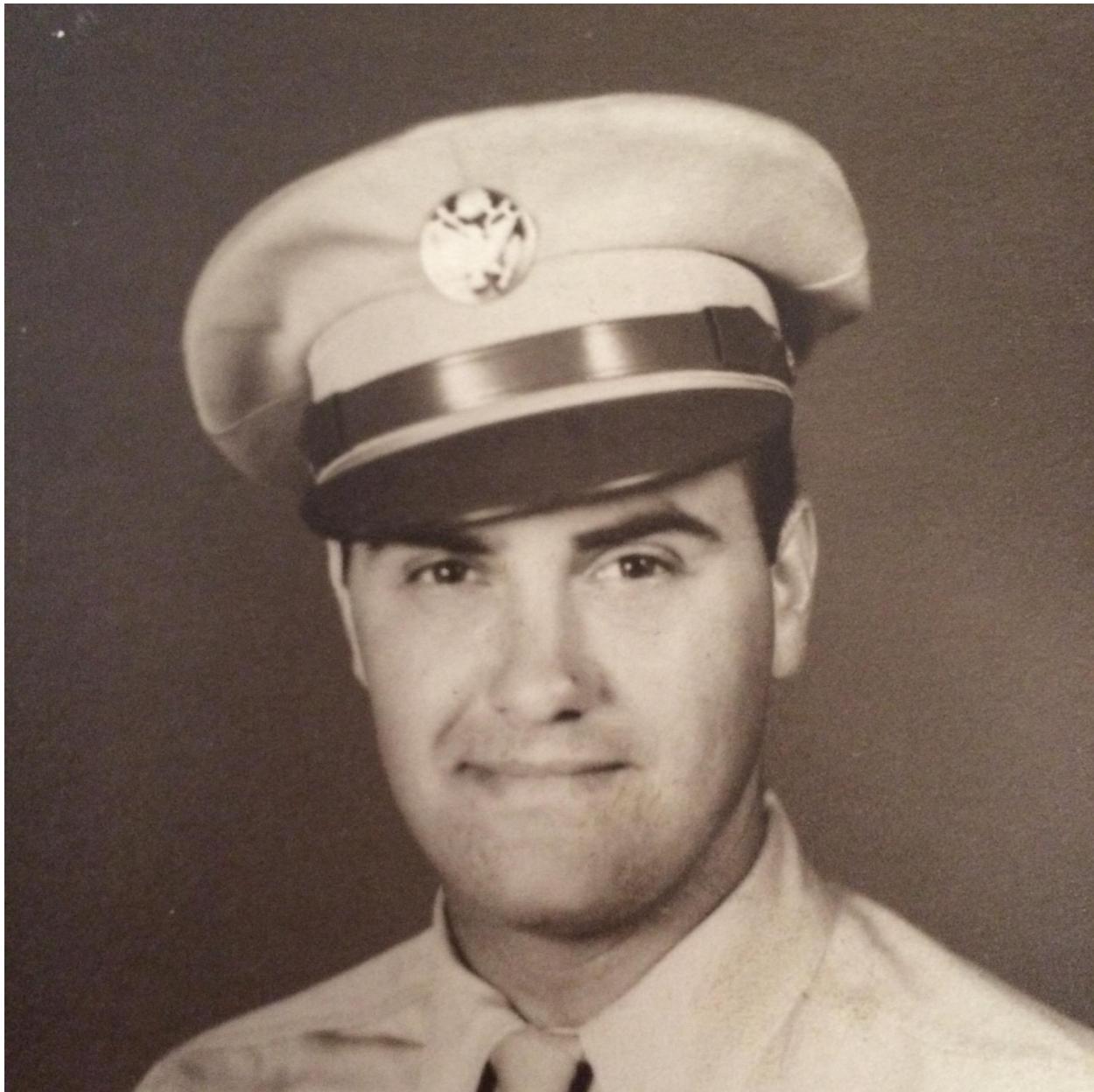
**THIS MEMORIAL BOOKLET IS PRESENTED TO PFC MURRAY LEFF, E-137-35 IN  
REMEMBRANCE OF HIS COMPANY E FRIEND, BY HIS FRIENDS OF THE 35TH  
INFANTRY DIVISION ASSOCIATION**

**PFC HOWARD DONALD KEPLINGER (1919-1945)**

SEPTEMBER, 2016

# **PFC HOWARD D. KEPLINGER**

**35th Infantry Division - 137th Infantry Regiment - E Company**



**H**oward Donald Keplinger was born November 4, 1919, in Hagerstown, Washington County, Maryland. His father is Howard C. Keplinger (1887- 1956) and his mother Lona E. Widdows (1885- 1963). He had five brothers and two sisters.

John Keplinger (1909 - 1956)  
Paul L. Keplinger (1911-1980)  
Ruby Irene Keplinger (1913-2006)  
Charles Keplinger (1915-1999)  
Ethel Louise Keplinger (1917-2003)  
Rudolph L. Keplinger (1922 - 1945)  
Herschel Keplinger (1927 - 2002)

**H**oward married Evelyn Virginia Summers in 1939. They had three daughters: Betty Jean (Price), Betsy Jane (Thompson) and Peggy (Dudley). Betty Jean and Betsy Jane are twins. Two of the daughters live in Hagerstown, Maryland, and one daughter lives in Harrisonville Pennsylvania.



**PFC Keplinger's daughters in 2013: L-R. Jean, Peggy, Jane**

**K**eplinger enlisted in the Army on March 14, 1944, at Fort George G. Meade, Maryland. PFC Keplinger received his basic training at camp Wheeler, Georgia. He joined Company E of the 137<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment on September 18, 1944. He was promoted to PFC on November 30, 1944.

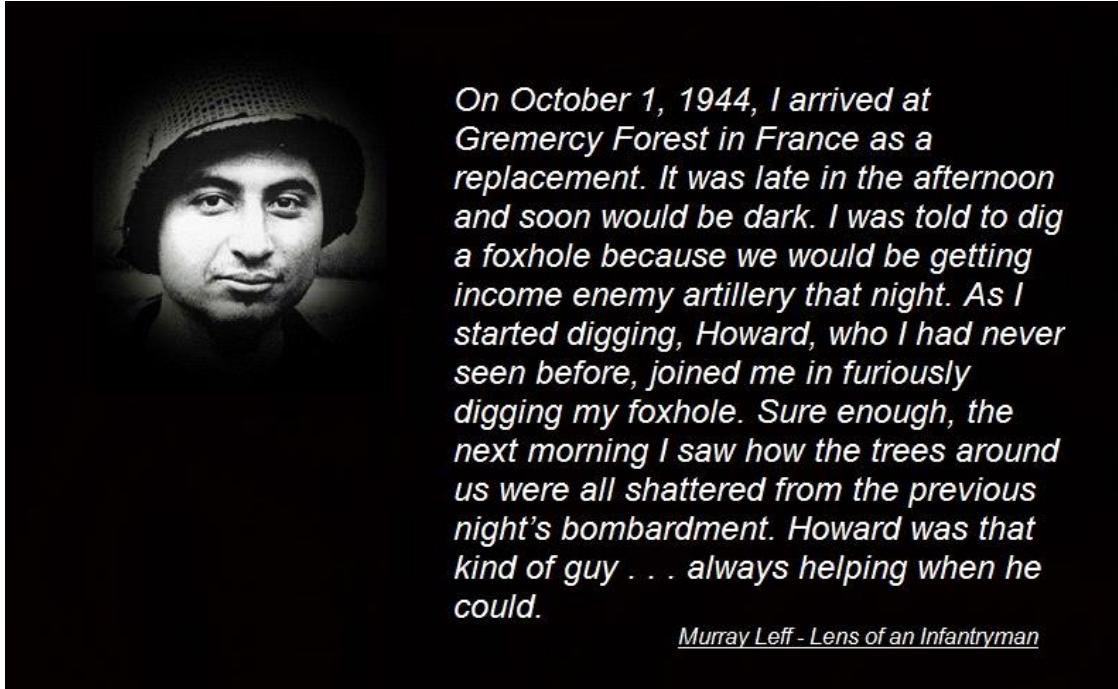


**Sweetheart Pillow Case from Camp Wheeler**



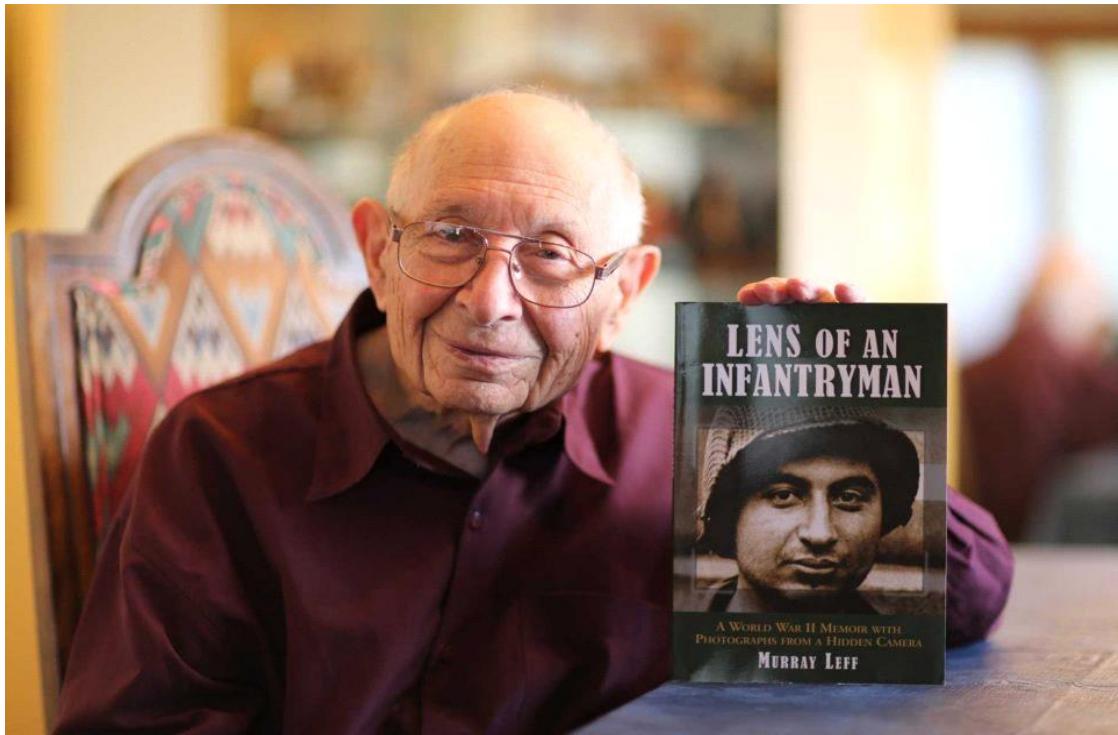
137th Infantry Regiment E-company

Regimental crest of the 137th Infantry Regiment, 35th Infantry Division. PFC  
Keplinger Joined Company E on September 18, 1944



*On October 1, 1944, I arrived at Gremercy Forest in France as a replacement. It was late in the afternoon and soon would be dark. I was told to dig a foxhole because we would be getting income enemy artillery that night. As I started digging, Howard, who I had never seen before, joined me in furiously digging my foxhole. Sure enough, the next morning I saw how the trees around us were all shattered from the previous night's bombardment. Howard was that kind of guy . . . always helping when he could.*

*Murray Leff - Lens of an Infantryman*



**Murray Leff with his book "Lens of an Infantryman"**

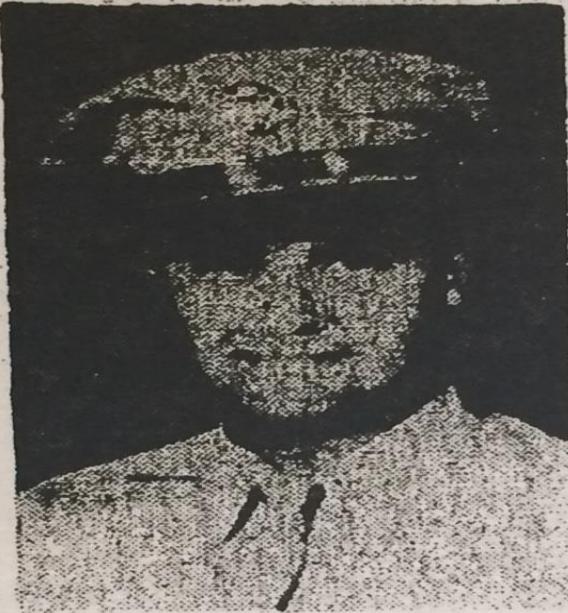
**PFC** Howard Keplinger was Killed in Action March 9, 1945. The 35th Division was in Germany. On March 7th, the Division was fighting on the outskirts of Ossenberg while absorbing all types of intense enemy fire. The road from Rheinberg to Ossenberg gave the 137th the strongest opposition encountered during this operation and was dubbed "88 Alley". The enemy was determined to hold Ossenberg in order to keep their positions west of the Rhine River and Wesel. On March 9th, the 2nd Battalion was mopping up the remaining enemy resistance in Ossemberg. PFC Keplinger was killed in action that day. He is buried in the American Cemetery and Memorial at Margraten, Limburg, Netherlands, Plot H., Row 6, Grave 27

HEADSTONE INSCRIPTION AND INTERMENT RECORD													
INSCRIPTION (Front) (Name, Rank, Organization, State, Date of Death, Grave No.)											CROSS		
SECTION A	HOWARD D. KEPLINGER PFC 137 INF 35 DIV MARYLAND MAR 9 1945 27												
	INSCRIPTION (Rear) (Service Number)												
33845493													
PERMANENT CEMETERY				BLOCK	ROW	GRAVE	S OF D				CROSS		
MARGRATEN 4601				H	6	27							
SECTION B	CREED	RACE	SEX	DECORATIONS									
	1	1		SS PH									
TEMPORARY CEMETERY				BLOCK	ROW	GRAVE	D.O. NUMBER				ARM		
4650				V	1	21	8633				1		
NAME AND ADDRESS OF NEXT OF KIN											ROSTER REFERENCE		
MR. HOWARD C. KEPLINGER (FATHER) 118 <del>XX</del> WEST WILSON <del>XX</del> BLVD. HAGERSTOWN, MD.													
REMARKS													
H.M. MOG													

## Local Soldier, Father of Three Children, Dies in Battle

Pfc. Howard Donald Keplinger, 25, 224 South Mulberry street, was killed March 9 in Germany, his wife, Mrs. Evelyn Keplinger, was advised yesterday by the War Department.

A member of the 137th Infantry Company of the 35th Division in

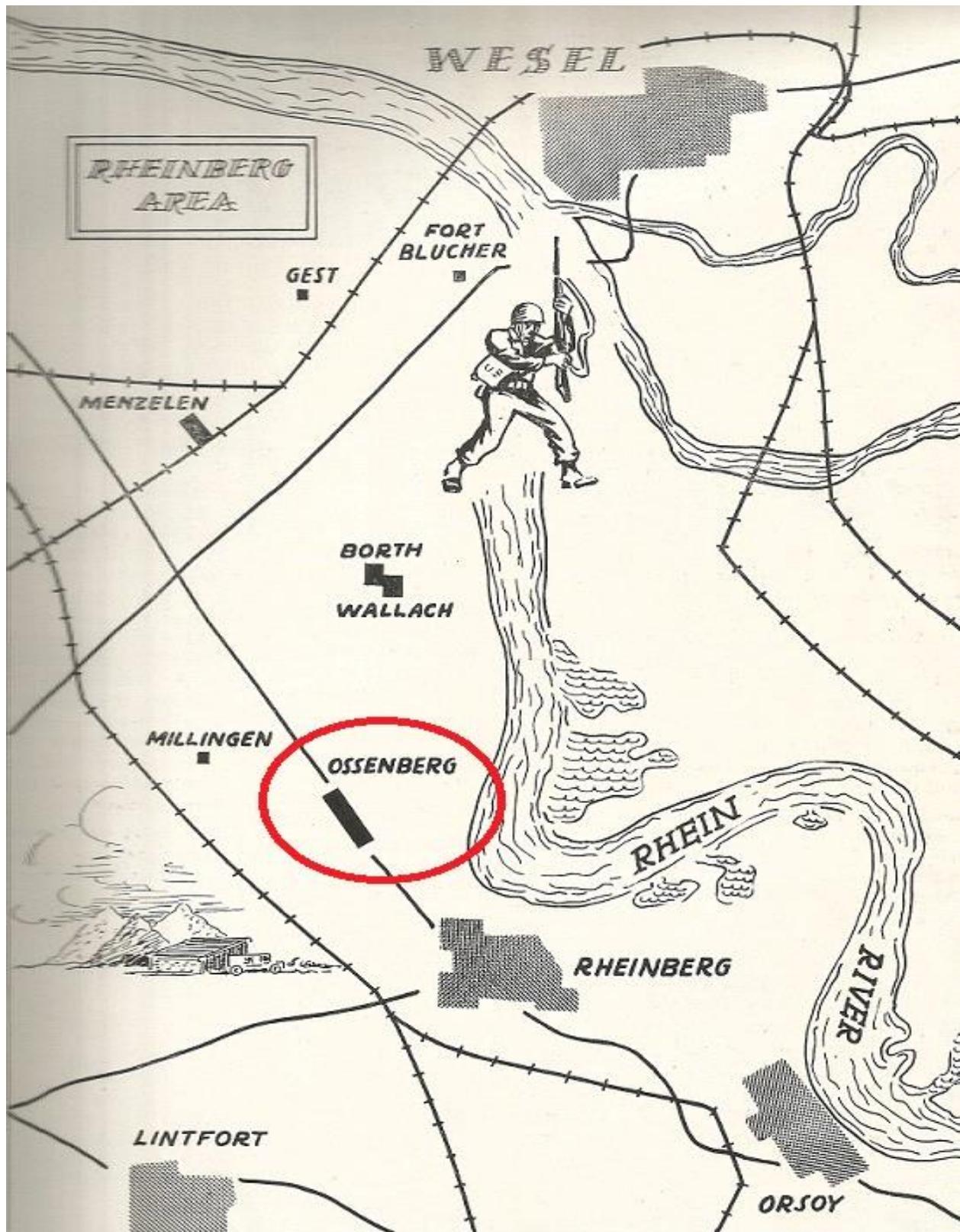


Pfc. HOWARD D. KEPLINGER

the Third Army. Pfc. Keplinger was employed at the M. P. Moller Company as a Fairchild Aircraft inspector before he entered the service March 15, 1944.

The son of Mr. and Mrs. Howard C. Keplinger, 118 West Wilson boulevard, he received his basic training at Camp Wheeler, Ga., and had been overseas eight months. In addition to Germany, he served in France, Belgium and Holland.

Besides his parents and wife he is survived by three children, Jean, Jane and Joan; five brothers and two sisters.



Rheinberg Area Location Map



**Headstone of PFC Howard D. Keplinger at the Margraten American Cemetery,  
Netherlands**



**Murray Leff, March 10, 1945, in Ossenberg, Germany, one day after PFC  
Keplinger was Killed in Action. From book "Lens of an Infantryman,"  
by Murray Leff**

**PFC** Howard Keplinger is the recipient of the Purple Heart and the Silver Star:

*The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918, takes pride in presenting the Silver Star (Posthumously) to PrivateFirst Class Howard D. Keplinger (ASN: 33845493) United States Army, for gallantry in action while serving with the 137<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in action near Ossenberg, Germany, on 9 March 1945. Although himself wounded by shell fragments during the course of a sharp enemy counterattack supported by artillery fire and tanks, Private Keplinger, a rifleman, made his way to a wounded comrade some fifty yards distant. As he carried the soldier to cover, Private Keplinger was killed by the near burst of another enemy artillery shell. His gallant self-sacrifice in placing the life of a wounded comrade above any thought of personal safety reflects the highest credit upon Private Keplinger's character as a soldier.*



Silver Star medal

WAR DEPARTMENT  
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE  
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

463453

REPORT OF DEATH

FULL NAME		ARMY SERIAL NUMBER	GRADE			
Keplinger, Howard D.		33 845 493	1bb Pfc			
HOME ADDRESS		ARM OR SERVICE	DATE OF BIRTH			
Hagerstown, Maryland		Infantry	4 Nov 19			
PLACE OF DEATH		CAUSE OF DEATH	DATE OF DEATH			
European Area		Killed in action	9 Mar 45			
STATION OF DECEASED		DATE OF ENTRY ON CURRENT ACTIVE SERVICE	LENGTH OF SERVICE FOR PAY PURPOSES			
European Area		14 Mar 44	YEARS MONTHS DAYS			
EMERGENCY ADDRESSEES (NAME, RELATIONSHIP & ADDRESS)						
Mrs. Evelyn V. Keplinger, wife, 224 South Mulberry St., Hagerstown, Maryland						
Evelyn Virginia Keplinger, wife, Betty Jean Keplinger, Betsy Jane Keplinger and Peggy Joanne Keplinger, same as above.						
Lona Etta Keplinger, mother, 118 W. Wilson Blvd., Hagerstown, Md.*						
INVESTIGATION MADE?	IN LINE OF DUTY	OWN MISCONDUCT	WAS DECEASED ON DUTY STATUS	AUTHORIZED ABSENCE	IN FLYING PAY STATUS	OTHER PAY STATUS (SPECIFY BELOW)
YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
						X
						X
						NO

ADDITIONAL DATA AND/OR STATEMENT

BATTLE  NON-BATTLE

\*Howard Clayton Keplinger, father, same as above

\*\*Combat Infantryman—source and date of order will be furn'd when rec'd

Evidence of death rec'd in WD 21 Mar 45.

COPIES FURNISHED:		
S. G. O.	P. B. I.	F. O., U. S. A.
S. G. O. M. S.	O. P. D.	ARMY EFFECTS BUREAU
S. A. O.	VET. ADMIN.	CASUALTY BRANCH FILE
A. G. 201 FILE		

WD AGO FORM 52-1  
1 DECEMBER 1944

THIS FORM SUPERSEDES WD AGO FORM 52-1, 20 MAY 1944, WHICH STOCKS ARE EXHAUSTED.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

ADJUTANT GENERAL

Report of Death, March 29, 1945

THE AMERICAN NATIONAL RED CROSS  
EASTERN AREA

Form HS-343  
March 1948

TO: Repatriation Records Branch  
Disinterment Locator Section  
Office of the Quartermaster General  
Department of the Army  
Washington 25, D. C. DATE: August 26, 1948

FROM: Director, Home Service SUBJECT: KEPLINGER, Howard D., Pfc.  
33 845 493  
Plot V, Row 1, Grave 21  
United States Military Cemetery  
M Margraten, Holland  
Mrs. Evelyn V. Keplinger, Wife  
224 South Mulberry Street  
Hagerstown, Maryland

Your Reference: QMG MR 293

Next of kin: Old Address: New Address:

In compliance with your request of August 4, 1948 for an investigation in connection with the disposition of the remains of this deceased serviceman, we submit the following information:

1. OQMG Form 345 X was submitted by Mr. Howard C. Keplinger, Father  
(Name) (Relationship)  
118 W. Wilson Boulevard  
will be submitted. Hagerstown, Maryland

xx about August 21, 1948.  
(Date)

2. Mrs. Evelyn Keplinger, Widow        has relinquished disposition authority.  
(Name)        X has remarried.  
       is deceased.  
       is incompetent.

3.        We have been unable to locate.

REMARKS: Statement of remarried widow forwarded with Form 345.

*Pauline A. Rogers*  
(Mrs.) PAULINE A. ROGERS  
Director, Home Service  
Eastern Area

12441  
033048

**Correspondence with the Red Cross regarding the final burial place for PFC  
Howard D. Keplinger**



**The family erected a memorial plaque (Cenotaph) in remembrance of  
PFC Howard D. Keplinger at the Rest Haven Cemetery  
Hagerstown  
Washington County  
Maryland, USA  
Park Lawn, Lot 158, Space 3**



**Howard's wife with her three daughters. Evelyn remarried. She died in 1999.**

**H**oward's brother, Sgt. Rudolph L. Keplinger served in the Pacific Theater during World War II and died of his wounds on May 24, 1945, on Luzon. Rudolph served as a Sergeant, 12th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, U.S. Army. He enlisted in the Army on December 16, 1942, in Baltimore, Maryland. He was noted as being employed as a sheet metal worker. He was married to Delorous Marker. Three days after his brother's death, he himself went to the aid of a wounded friend and was wounded.

**R**udolph "Died Of Wounds" received in action on May 24, 1945, and was awarded the Purple Heart. He is buried in the Manila American Cemetery in the Philippines in Plot B, Row 4, Grave 138. He was also awarded the Silver Star.

MC

HEADSTONE INSCRIPTION AND INTERMENT RECORD									
INSCRIPTION (Front) (Name, Rank, Organization, State, Date of Death, Grave No.)									
SECTION A	RUMAKER		RUDOLPH L. KEPLINGER SGT 12 REGT 1 CAV DIV MARYLAND MAY 24 1945 138						
	INSCRIPTION (Rear) (Service Number)		33389641						
PERMANENT CEMETERY FT. MCKINLEY 7701				BLOCK	ROW	GRAVE	<input type="checkbox"/> S OF D	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CROSS	
CREED	RACE	SEX	DECORATIONS	8	4	138			
1	1		SS PH (OLC)						
TEMPORARY CEMETERY				BLOCK	ROW	GRAVE	D-D NUMBER	ARM	
7747				1	11	1385	7488	1	
NAME AND ADDRESS OF NEXT OF KIN MR. HOWARD KEPLINGER (FATHER) 118 WEST WILSON BOULEVARD HAGERSTOWN, MD.							ROSTER REFERENCE		
MARKS									
M. CMZ									



**Howard's brother grave site at the Manila American Cemetery in the Philippines**

KEPLINGER HOWARD D  
KEPLINGER JOHN D  
KEPLINGER RUDOLPH L

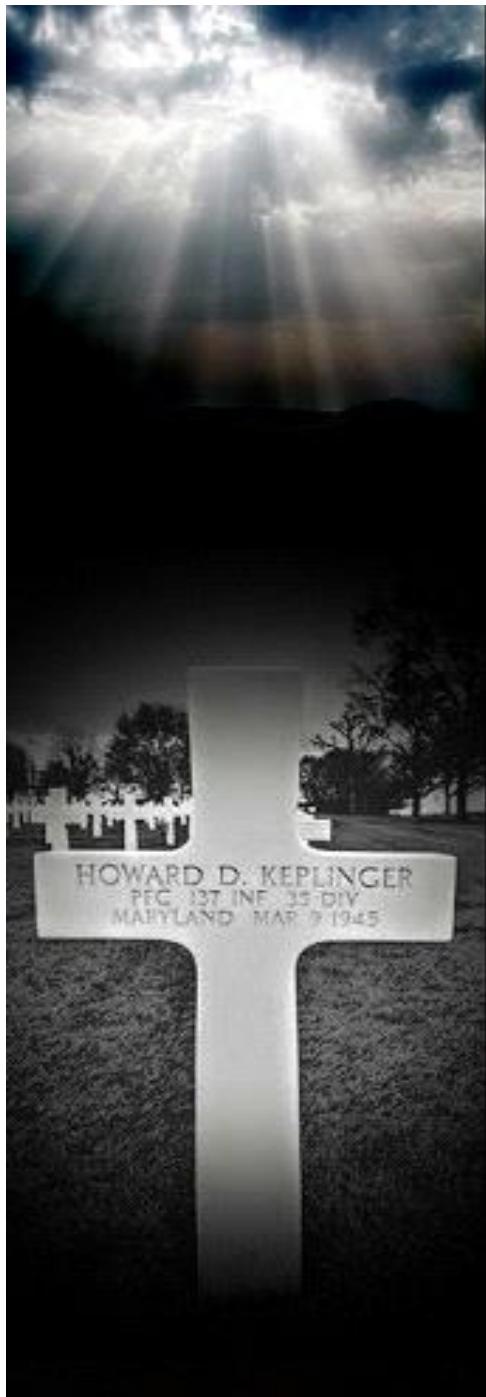
Keplinger Brothers' names on the U.S Roster of War Dead.

## Posthumous Medals Given To Brothers

Howard and Rudolph  
Keplinger Cited for  
Heroism

Two Hagerstown brothers, serving in the Army at opposite sides of the world, have been awarded the Silver Star posthumously for gallantry in action displayed when they exposed themselves to enemy fire to rescue wounded comrades.

From the Morning Herald, Hagerstown, Maryland, 27 March 1946



They were called to be part of something bigger than themselves. They were ordinary people who responded in extraordinary ways in extreme times. They rose to the nation's call because they wanted to protect a nation which has given them, us, so much.



*Murray Leff*

*Howard Keplinger*



**Murray Leff at the grave of Howard Keplinger.**