World War II and the Wildcats

Pfc. Michael S. Byczek
Company M, 321st Infantry Regiment, 81st Infantry Division (Army)

Written and Compiled by

Michael E. Byczek, Esq.
Grandson

Michael S. Byczek was the son of Martin Byczek and Maryanna Dudek. He was born in the Bridgeport neighborhood of Chicago, IL on August 3, 1917 and was baptized at St. Barbara Catholic Church. The Byczek surname is known as among the earliest Polish settlers in Bridgeport. Prior to World War II, Michael had various jobs, such as a "hustler" for a printing company. Martin and Maryanna Byczek owned a farm in Roselawn, Indiana during the 1940s. The family, including Michael, divided their time between Bridgeport and the farm in Indiana.

On June 18, 1942, at the age of 24, Michael S. Byczek joined the Army during World War II as a Private First Class with the 81st Division Wildcats. He was discharged on January 18, 1946 when he was 28 years old.

Upon returning home to Chicago, he worked for the State of Illinois as a grain inspector and remained in that position through retirement. Michael S. Byczek (33) and Marie Flanagan (27) were married at St. Bridget's in Bridgeport on November 4, 1950. Marie Flanagan was the great-granddaughter of William and Julia Rooney who were prominent early settlers of Chicago dating back to 1835. During the 1960s and early 1970s, Michael S. and Marie Byczek owned and operated a tavern with banquet hall on Lyman and Farrell.

Michael S. and Marie Byczek spent most of their life in the Bridgeport neighborhood. Their son and eldest child Michael M. Byczek married Betty A. Bykowski in 1974 at St. Helen's in the Ukrainian Village neighborhood. They are Michael E. Byczek's parents. Michael S. Byczek's father-in-law Martin J. Flanagan, had served with the 23rd Engineers in France during World War I. The 23rd Engineers were known as the "Road Builders" of the American Expeditionary Forces. His son Michael M. Byczek is an honorably discharged Naval Air Reservist (Vietnam Era).

Michael S. Byczek passed away in Oak Lawn, IL on December 17, 1992 at the age of 75. Marie (Flanagan) Byczek passed away on March 5, 1996, also in Oak Lawn. She was 72 years old. Both of their funerals were held at St. Barbara in Bridgeport. They are buried together at Resurrection Cemetery in Justice, IL in the Martin and Maryanna Byczek family plot.

Michael S. Byczek and the Wildcats

The 81st Division (Army Infantry) consisted of the 321st, 322nd, and 323rd Regiments, collectively called the "Wildcats" attributed to a World War I unit that earned a fierce fighting reputation. The Wildcats were activated on 6/15/1942 at Camp Rucker (Dale County, AL).

Michael S. Byczek entered the Army on 6/18/1942. He joined the 321st Regiment and was part of Company M in the 3rd Battalion (formally written as Company M, 321st Infantry Regiment, 81st Infantry Division). It was a "Heavy Weapons" company. Michael operated a machine gun.

Michael's older brother George and younger brother John also served in the Army during World War II, as did multiple cousins. Raymond Byczek, first cousin and son of Jacob Byczek, died in the Philippines.

The Wildcats received extensive and specialized training. The 81st Division first went into combat in the Pacific during September 1944 after initially having prepared for action in Europe. The Wildcats launched an amphibious invasion of Angaur in the Palau (Pelew) nation of islands. The 3rd Battalion of the 321st Regiment was kept in reserves and were among the last to depart the ships and land on the beach.

The Wildcat invasion of Angaur was part of a joint operation with the Marines who launched their own amphibious invasion of the neighboring island of Peleliu. The Marines went into Peleliu first while the Wildcats were ready in reserve. Once the Marine operation was underway, the Wildcats began their own objectives in Angaur.

The military campaign in Peleliu was worse than expected. Angaur was a relatively smooth campaign for the Wildcats. As a result, the 321st Regiment was quickly deployed to Peleliu to assist the Marines. The remainder of the Wildcats, the 322nd and 323rd Regiments, stayed behind to finish their activities on Angaur and other smaller islands in the region. The 321st Wildcats played a significant role in what started as a Marine operation. The Wildcats would eventually assume full responsibility for Peleliu with several landmarks on the Island named for them, such as “Wildcat Bowl”. The contributions of the 321st Regiment to these efforts are memorialized in a monument dedicated to them on Peleliu.

After the military operations on Angaur and Peleliu were over, the Wildcats were potential reserves for the invasion of Okinawa in Japan. Ultimately, they were not needed. Instead, the Wildcats spent time in New Caledonia to rest and continue their training for the next assignment in the Philippines.

Michael S. Byczek injured his left hand during an amphibious training maneuver aboard the USS Leedstown that took place between April 16th and 19th in 1945. While Michael recovered in the hospital in New Caledonia, the Wildcats were sent to Leyte in the Philippines. In May, he was formally transferred from the Wildcats to the medical facility located in Noumea, New Caledonia.

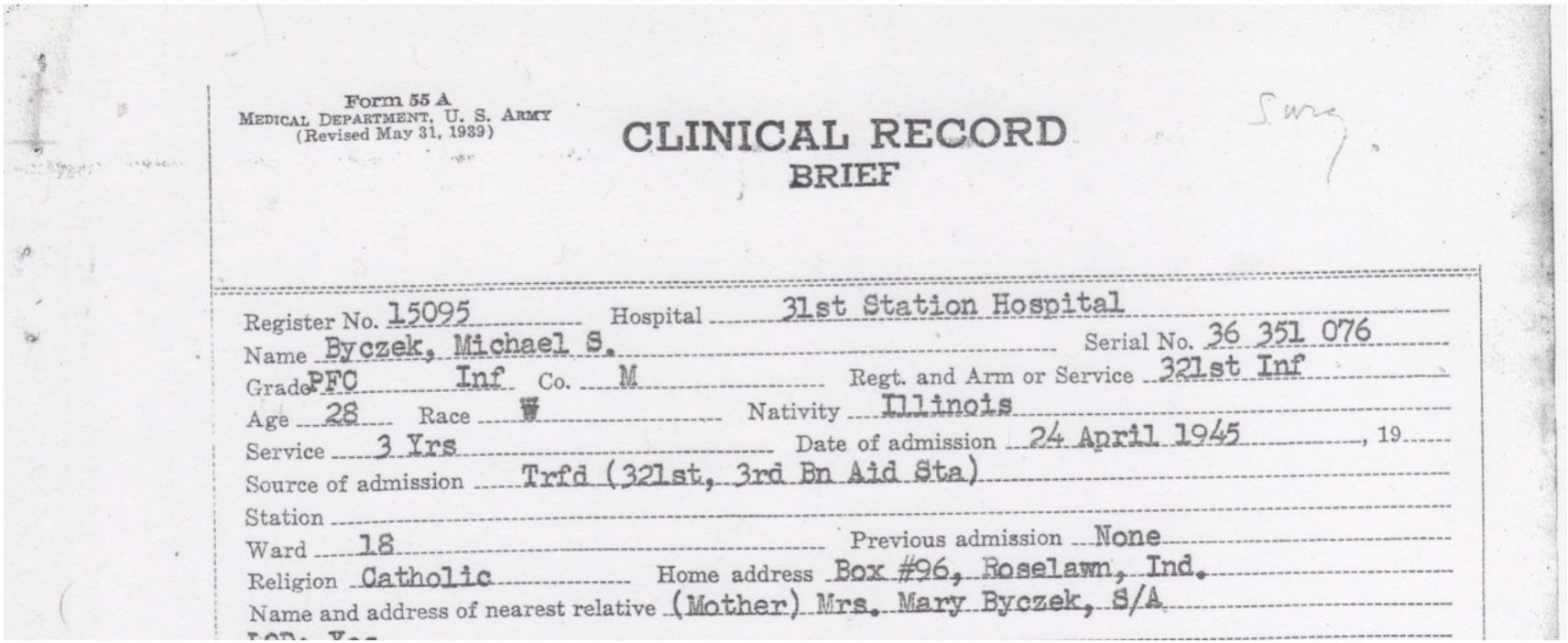
Michael S. Byczek returned to duty upon discharge from the hospital on August 6, 1945, four months later. He was transferred to the 4th Replacement Depot, which was also stationed in Leyte in the Philippines. The 4th Replacement Depot was used as a transition to civilian life. Combat soldiers were transferred to this unit to begin the process of returning home. The Wildcats and 4th Replacement Depot were reassigned from the Philippines to Japan in September 1945 during the occupation phase at the end of the war. The Wildcats were sent to Amori while the 4th Replacement Depot was assigned to Tokyo.

Between August 16th and October 22nd in 1945, Michael S. Byczek became associated with the 5th Camp Battalion, which appears to have been located in Manila (Philippines). This unit handled his transfer from the 4th Replacement Depot to the Headquarters Company of the Western Pacific Army Forces in Manila. He remained in Manila through the end of the war. At the time of his transfer on October 22nd, the 4th Replacement Depot was located in Japan (moved from Leyte to Tokyo on 9/4/1945). On December 6, 1945 Michael was transferred to the 693rd Replacement Company of the 29th Replacement Depot for transportation back to the United States.

Michael S. Byczek was officially discharged from the military on 1/18/1946 at Camp McCoy in Wisconsin. However, the 29th Replacement Depot indicated that he was given special translation accommodations for return to the family farm in Roselawn, Indiana instead of Chicago. As a result, Michael S. Byczek passed through Camp Grant in Rockford, IL. It was the same location where his father-in-law Martin Flanagan was discharged in 1919 after service in World War I.

Michael E. Byczek, grandson, compiled a comprehensive HTML-based World War II online archive with documents, videos, photographs, and books. The archive was originally compiled in May 2021 to commemorate Memorial Day and is available at:

https://michaelbyczek.pro/genealogy/worldwar2/michaelbyczek.html

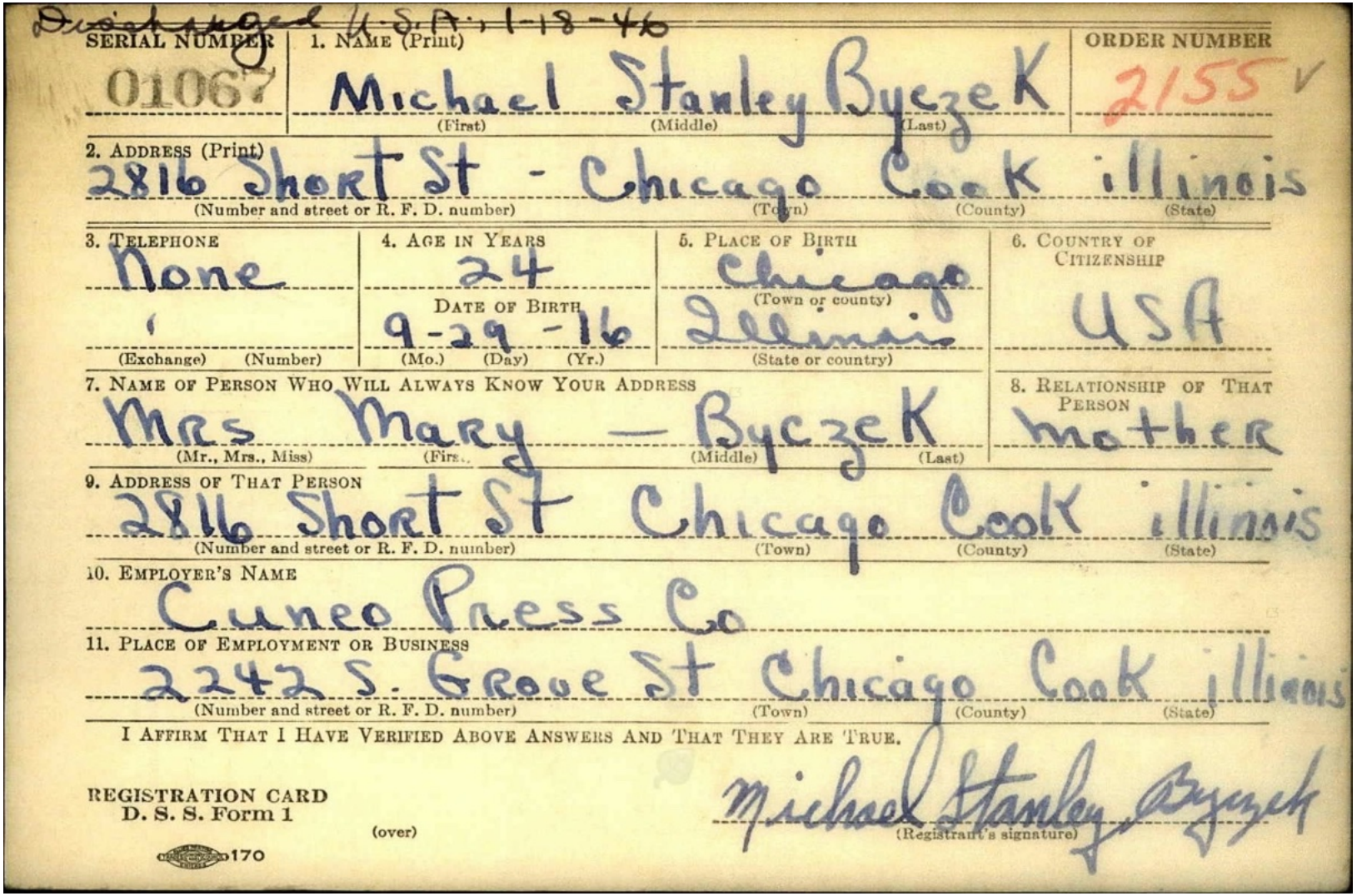


Form 55 A
MEDICAL DEPARTMENT, U. S. ARMY
(Revised May 31, 1939)

CLINICAL RECORD
BRIEF

Register No. 15095 Hospital 31st Station Hospital
Name Byczek, Michael S. Serial No. 36 351 076
Grade PFC Inf Co. M Regt. and Arm or Service 321st Inf
Age 28 Race W Nativity Illinois
Service 3 Yrs Date of admission 24 April 1945, 19
Source of admission Trfd (321st, 3rd Bn Aid Sta)
Station
Ward 18 Previous admission None
Religion Catholic Home address Box #96, Roselawn, Ind.
Name and address of nearest relative (Mother) Mrs. Mary Byczek, S/A

Michael E. Byczek obtained his grandfather's medical file in about 2008



Discharged U.S.A. 1-18-46

SERIAL NUMBER 01067

1. NAME (Print) Michael Stanley Byczek (First) (Middle) (Last)

ORDER NUMBER 2155 V

2. ADDRESS (Print) 2816 Short St - Chicago Cook illinois (Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)

3. TELEPHONE None (Exchange) (Number)

4. AGE IN YEARS 24

DATE OF BIRTH 9-29-16 (Mo.) (Day) (Yr.)

5. PLACE OF BIRTH Chicago (Town or county) Illinois (State or country)

6. COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP USA

7. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Mrs Mary — Byczek (Mr., Mrs., Miss) (First) (Middle) (Last)

8. RELATIONSHIP OF THAT PERSON mother

9. ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON 2816 Short St Chicago Cook illinois (Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)

10. EMPLOYER'S NAME Cuneo Press Co

11. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS 2242 S. Grove St Chicago Cook illinois (Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

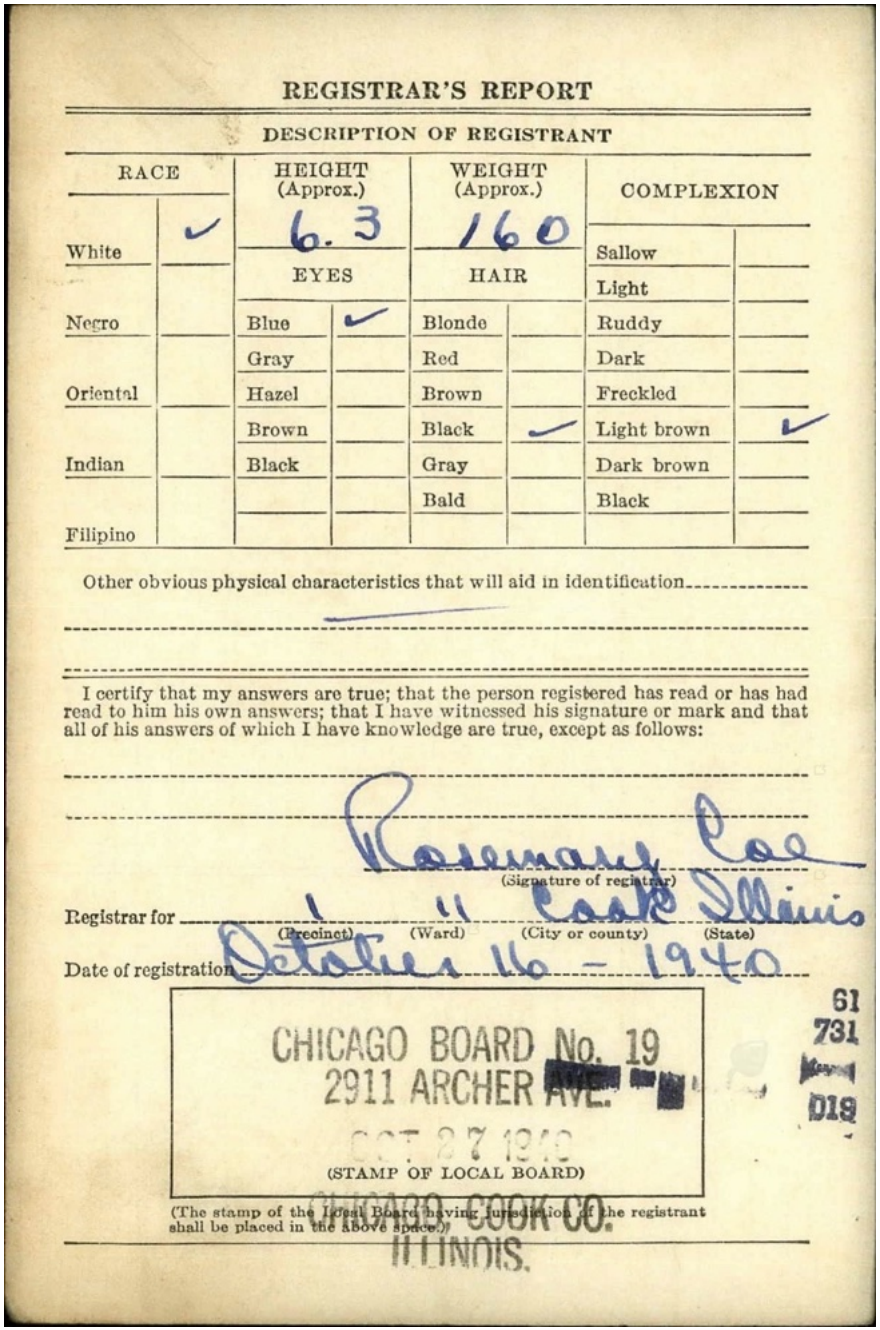
Michael Stanley Byczek (Registrant's signature)

REGISTRATION CARD
D. S. S. Form 1

(over)

170

World War II Draft Card
(Front)



REGISTRAR'S REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF REGISTRANT

RACE		HEIGHT (Approx.)		WEIGHT (Approx.)		COMPLEXION	
White	✓	6.3		160		Sallow	
		EYES		HAIR		Light	
Negro		Blue	✓	Blonde		Ruddy	
		Gray		Red		Dark	
Oriental		Hazel		Brown		Freckled	
		Brown		Black	✓	Light brown	✓
Indian		Black		Gray		Dark brown	
				Bald		Black	
Filipino							

Other obvious physical characteristics that will aid in identification ——

I certify that my answers are true; that the person registered has read or has had read to him his own answers; that I have witnessed his signature or mark and that all of his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:

Rosemary Lee
(Signature of registrar)

Registrar for 1 (Precinct) 11 (Ward) Cook (City or county) Illinois (State)

Date of registration October 16 – 1940

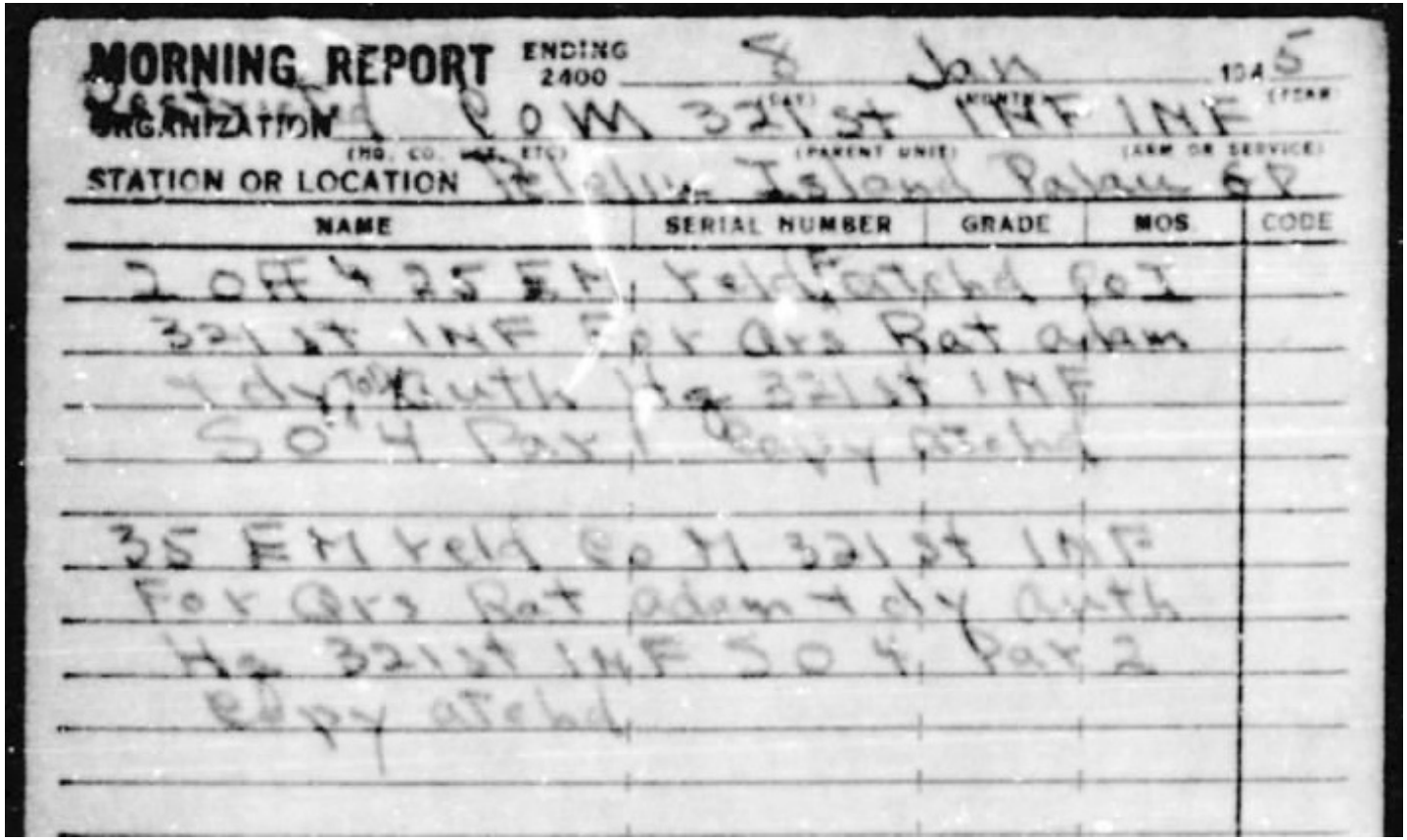
61
731
D19

CHICAGO BOARD No. 19
2911 ARCHER AVE.
OCT 27 1940
(STAMP OF LOCAL BOARD)

(The stamp of the Local Board having jurisdiction of the registrant shall be placed in the above space.)

CHICAGO COOK CO.
ILLINOIS.

World War II Draft Card
(Back)



MORNING REPORT ENDING 2400 8 Jan 1945

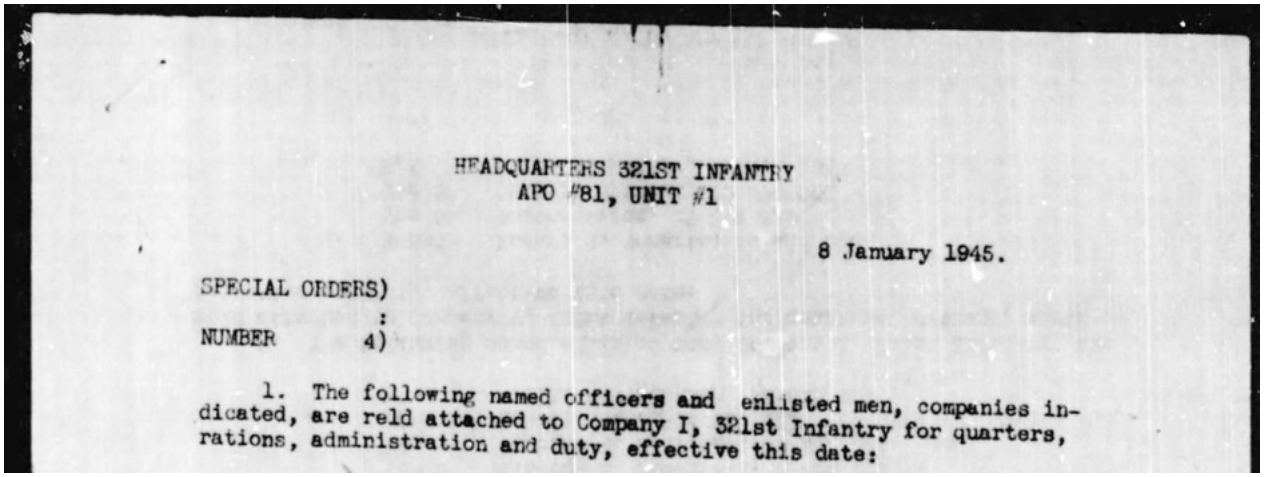
ORGANIZATION (HQ, CO., ETC.) Co M 321st (PARENT UNIT) INF (ARM OR SERVICE) INF

STATION OR LOCATION Peleliu Island Palau 6 D

NAME	SERIAL NUMBER	GRADE	MOS	CODE
2 OFF & 25 EM joined Co I 321st INF For Qrs Rat allow 4 dy Auth Hq 321st INF SO 4 Par 1 Copy attchd				
35 EM joined Co M 321st INF For Qrs Rat allow 4 dy Auth Hq 321st INF SO 4, Par 2 Copy attchd				

Company M - 321st
Morning Reports (1/8/1945)

Members of Company M, listed on an attached sheet, were temporary associated with another Wildcat unit

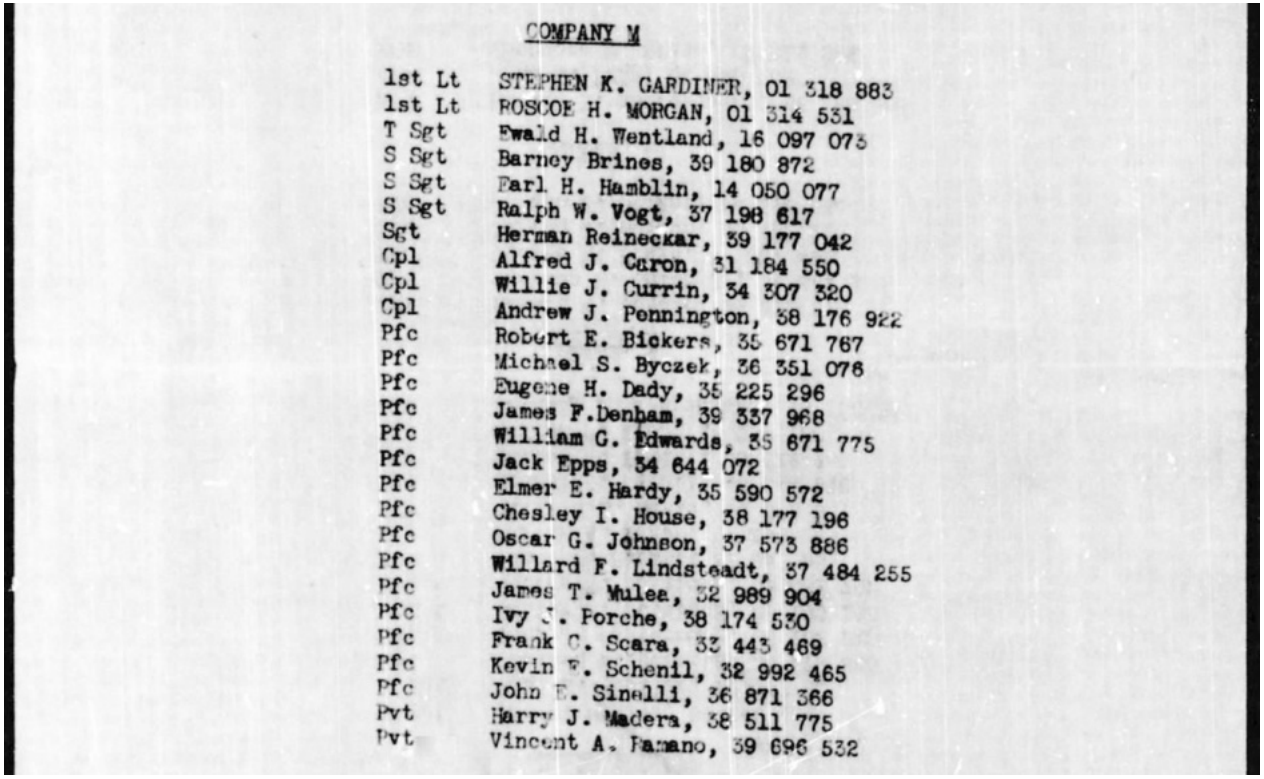


HEADQUARTERS 321ST INFANTRY
APO #81, UNIT #1

8 January 1945.

SPECIAL ORDERS)
:
NUMBER 4)

1. The following named officers and enlisted men, companies indicated, are reld attached to Company I, 321st Infantry for quarters, rations, administration and duty, effective this date:



COMPANY M

1st Lt	STEPHEN K. GARDINER, 01 318 883
1st Lt	ROSCOE H. MORGAN, 01 314 531
T Sgt	Ewald H. Wentland, 16 097 075
S Sgt	Barney Brines, 39 180 872
S Sgt	Earl H. Hamblin, 14 050 077
S Sgt	Ralph W. Vogt, 37 198 617
Sgt	Herman Reineckar, 39 177 042
Cpl	Alfred J. Caron, 31 184 550
Cpl	Willie J. Currin, 34 307 320
Cpl	Andrew J. Pennington, 38 176 922
Pfc	Robert E. Bickers, 35 671 767
Pfc	Michael S. Byczek, 36 351 076
Pfc	Eugene H. Dady, 35 225 296
Pfc	James F.Denham, 39 337 968
Pfc	William G. Edwards, 35 671 775
Pfc	Jack Epps, 34 644 072
Pfc	Elmer E. Hardy, 35 590 572
Pfc	Chesley I. House, 38 177 196
Pfc	Oscar G. Johnson, 37 573 886
Pfc	Willard F. Lindsteadt, 37 484 255
Pfc	James T. Mulea, 32 989 904
Pfc	Ivy J. Porche, 38 174 530
Pfc	Frank C. Scara, 33 443 469
Pfc	Kevin F. Schenil, 32 992 465
Pfc	John E. Sinelli, 36 871 366
Pvt	Harry J. Madera, 38 511 775
Pvt	Vincent A. Pamano, 39 696 532

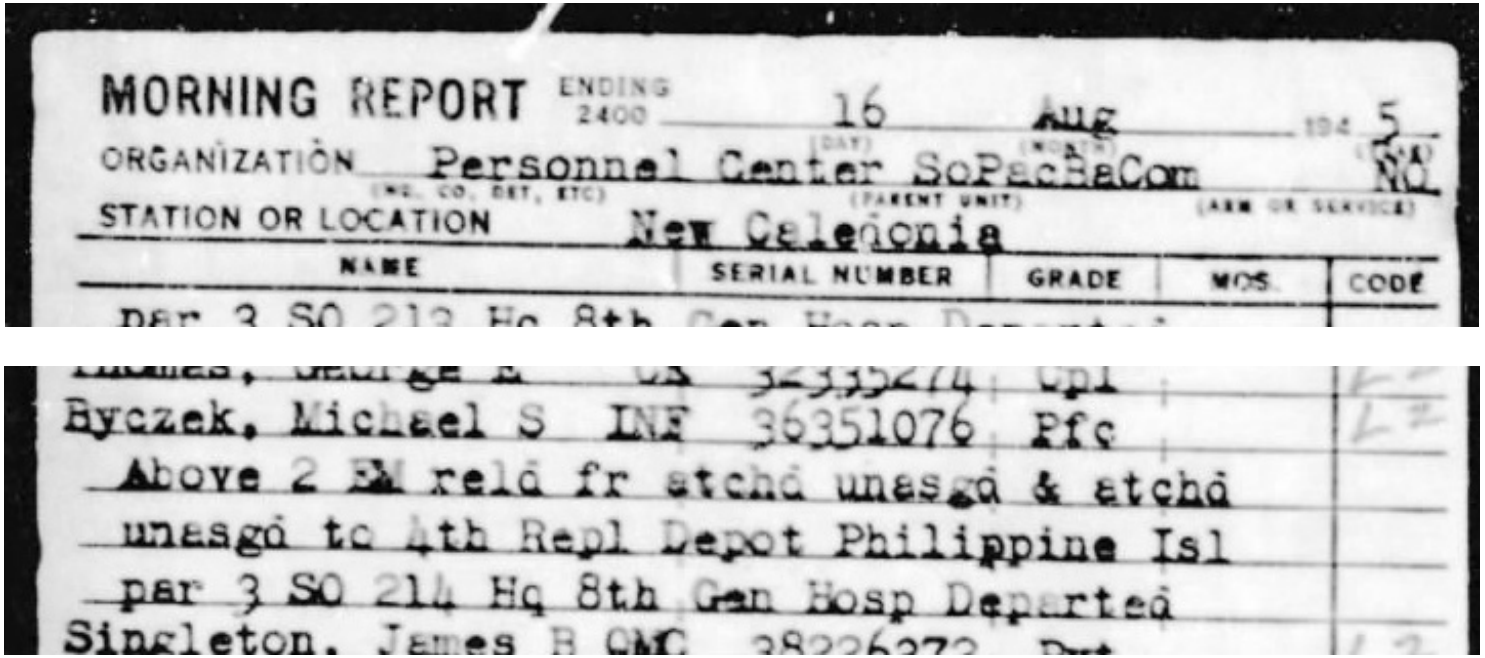
Michael S. Byczek was among those in Company M who were the subject of this Special Order

To dy 4th Repl Depot via Personnel Center APO 502:

17603	Thomas, George E Former orgn: Co B 362nd Engr Regt	32335274	Cpl	CE	C	NBI	A	24 Jun	FSC, rt fibula, ai, LD (football game)
16822	Byczek, Michael S Former orgn: Co M 321st Inf Regt	36351076	Pfc	INF	W	NBI	A	24 Apr	FCC, 3d finger, left, ai, LD (electric fan)
17384	McGovern, Thomas F Jr Former orgn: 150th Ord (MM) Co	16142171	Cpl	OD	W	DIS	C	6 Jun	Dislocation, left knee

8th General Hospital
Morning Reports - August 6, 1945

Transferred to the 4th Replacement Depot



MORNING REPORT ENDING 2400 16 (DAY) Aug (MONTH) 1945 (YR)

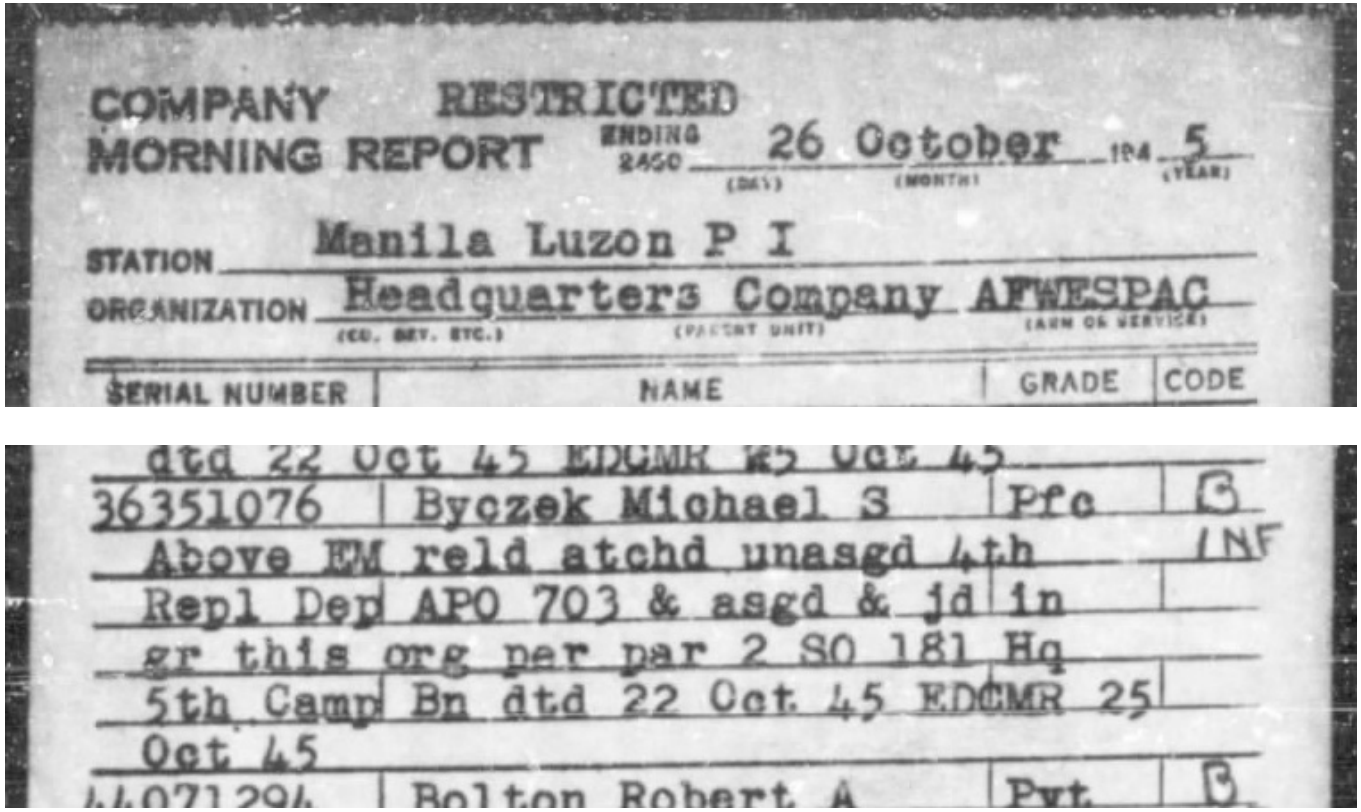
ORGANIZATION (NO., CO., DET., ETC.) Personnel Center SoPacBaCom (PARENT UNIT) NO (ARM OR SERVICE)

STATION OR LOCATION New Caledonia

NAME	SERIAL NUMBER	GRADE	MOS.	CODE
par 3 SO 213 Hq 8th Gen Hosp Departed				
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]		
Byczek, Michael S	INF 36351076	Pfc		
Above 2 EM reld fr atchd unasgd & atchd unasgd to 4th Repl Depot Philippine Isl par 3 SO 214 Hq 8th Gen Hosp Departed				
Singleton, James B	CMC 38226272	[illegible]		

New Caledonia Personnel Center
Morning Reports - 8/16/1945

Departed for the Philippines



COMPANY RESTRICTED
MORNING REPORT ENDING 2400 26 October 1945
(DAY) (MONTH) (YEAR)

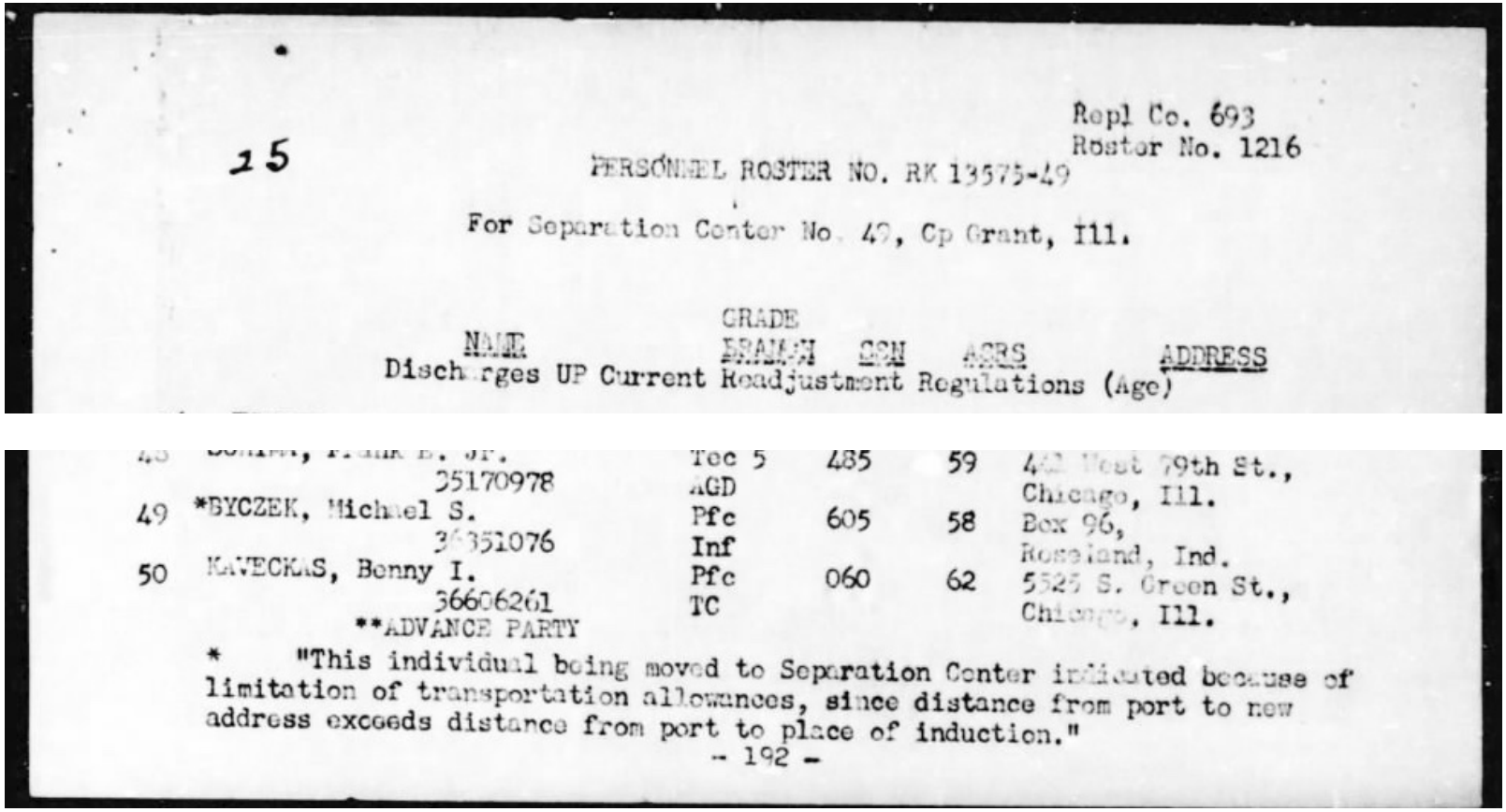
STATION Manila Luzon P I

ORGANIZATION Headquarters Company AFWESPAC
(CO., BTY., ETC.) (PARENT UNIT) (ARM OR SERVICE)

SERIAL NUMBER	NAME	GRADE	CODE
	dtd 22 Oct 45 EDCMR 25 Oct 45		
36351076	Byczek Michael S	Pfc	B
	Above EM reld atchd unasgd 4th Repl Dep APO 703 & asgd & jd in gr this org per par 2 SO 181 Hq 5th Camp Bn dtd 22 Oct 45 EDCMR 25 Oct 45		INF
44071294	Bolton Robert A	Pvt	B

Headquarters Company AFWESPAC (Army Forces, Western Pacific)
Morning Reports - 10/26/1945

Transferred from the 4th Replacement Depot to the AFWESPAC in Manila



15

Repl Co. 693
Roster No. 1216

PERSONNEL ROSTER NO. RK 13575-49

For Separation Center No. 49, Cp Grant, Ill.

	NAME	GRADE BRANCH	CSN	ASRS	ADDRESS
Discharges UP Current Readjustment Regulations (Age)					
	[illegible] 35170978	Tec 5 AGD	485	59	[illegible] West 79th St., Chicago, Ill.
49	*BYCZEK, Michael S. 36351076	Pfc Inf	605	58	Box 96, Roseland, Ind.
50	KAVECKAS, Benny I. 36606261	Pfc TC	060	62	5525 S. Green St., Chicago, Ill.

**ADVANCE PARTY

* "This individual being moved to Separation Center indicated because of limitation of transportation allowances, since distance from port to new address exceeds distance from port to place of induction."

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29th Replacement Depot Roster List
Morning Reports

Roselawn, IN was listed as the final destination

Freedom of Information Request

Obtained by Michael E. Byczek around 2006.

INFORMATION RELEASABLE UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

Name
Byczek, Michael S.

Branch of Service and Serial/Service Number(s)
36 351 076 - Army of the United States

Dates of Service
June 18, 1942 to January 18, 1946

Duty Status
Discharge

Rank/Grade
Private First Class

Salary
N/A

Source of Commission
N/A

Promotion Sequence Number
N/A

Assignments and Geographical Locations
N/A

Military Education
N/A

Decorations and Awards
Service Lapel Button WWII, World War II Victory Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge and Bronze Star Medal

Transcript of Court-Martial Trial
N/A

Photograph
N/A

Place of Entry
Chicago, IL

Place of Separation
Camp McCoy, WI

FOR DECEASED VETERAN ONLY

Place of Birth
N/A

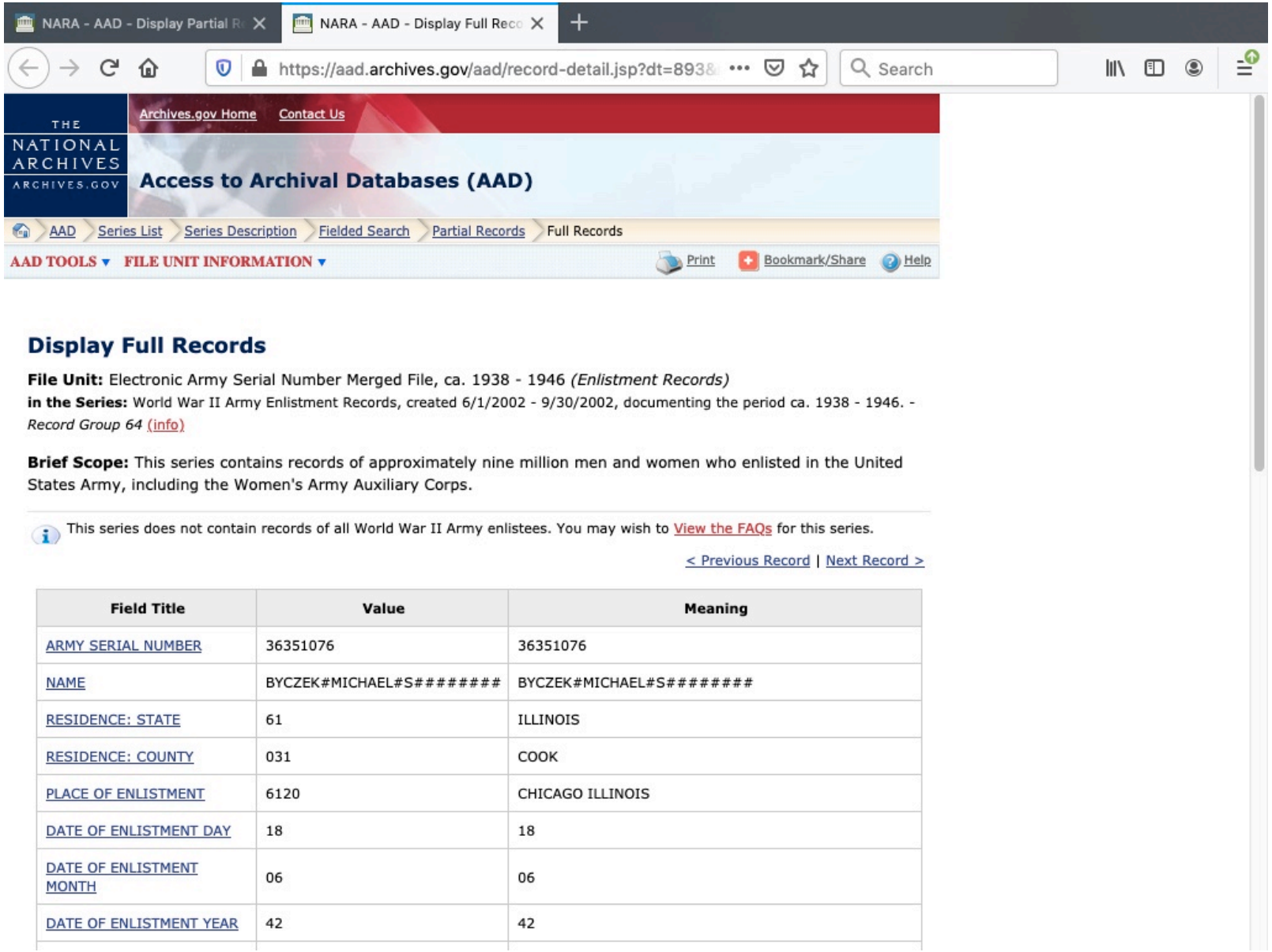
Date of Death
N/A

Location of Death
N/A

Place of Burial
N/A

NOTE: N/A denotes information is not available in the veteran's records

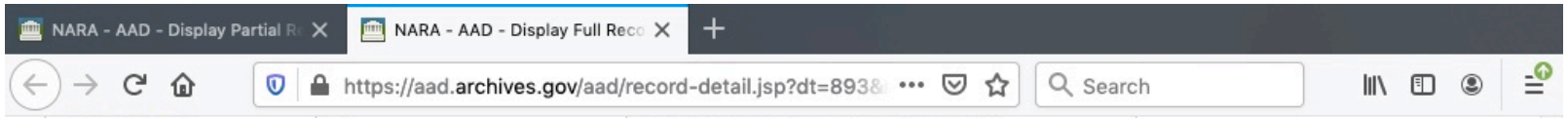
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION NA FORM 13164 (Rev. 02-02)



The National Archives have a transcription of Michael S. Byczek's enlistment data on their website.



Field Title	Value	Meaning
ARMY SERIAL NUMBER	36351076	36351076
NAME	BYCZEK#MICHAEL#S########	BYCZEK#MICHAEL#S########
RESIDENCE: STATE	61	ILLINOIS
RESIDENCE: COUNTY	031	COOK
PLACE OF ENLISTMENT	6120	CHICAGO ILLINOIS
DATE OF ENLISTMENT DAY	18	18
DATE OF ENLISTMENT MONTH	06	06
DATE OF ENLISTMENT YEAR	42	42
GRADE: ALPHA DESIGNATION	PVT#	Private
GRADE: CODE	8	Private
BRANCH: ALPHA DESIGNATION	BI#	Branch Immaterial - Warrant Officers, USA
BRANCH: CODE	00	Branch Immaterial - Warrant Officers, USA
FIELD USE AS DESIRED	#	#
TERM OF ENLISTMENT	5	Enlistment for the duration of the War or other emergency, plus six months, subject to the discretion of the President or otherwise according to law
LONGEVITY	###	###
SOURCE OF ARMY PERSONNEL	0	Civil Life
NATIVITY	61	ILLINOIS
YEAR OF BIRTH	17	17
RACE AND CITIZENSHIP	1	White, citizen



BRANCH: CODE	00	Branch Immaterial - Warrant Officers, USA
FIELD USE AS DESIRED	#	#
TERM OF ENLISTMENT	5	Enlistment for the duration of the War or other emergency, plus six months, subject to the discretion of the President or otherwise according to law
LONGEVITY	###	###
SOURCE OF ARMY PERSONNEL	0	Civil Life
NATIVITY	61	ILLINOIS
YEAR OF BIRTH	17	17
RACE AND CITIZENSHIP	1	White, citizen
EDUCATION	0	Grammar school
CIVILIAN OCCUPATION	999	Undefined Code
MARITAL STATUS	6	Single, without dependents
COMPONENT OF THE ARMY	7	Selectees (Enlisted Men)
CARD NUMBER	#	#
BOX NUMBER	1069	1069
FILM REEL NUMBER	5.131	5.131

< Previous Record | Next Record >

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Wildcat Training and Preparation

Trained throughout Alabama and Tennessee, including Conecuh National Forest in Alabama
Camp Horn, Arizona (Hyder near Yuma) - Desert Training
Prepared for Europe, but reassigned to Pacific (appears while in Arizona)
California (three bases) - Camp San Luis Obispo (in San Luis Obispo, CA) - March 1944
Camp Beale (Marysville, CA)
Camp Stoneman (Pittsburg, CA)
Departed through San Francisco Harbor
June through July 1944 - Oahu, Hawaii (passed through Honolulu and Pearl Harbor)
August 1944 - Guadalcanal (Solomon Islands) [used as rehearsal area to launch invasion of Angaur]

Type of Training

Extensive desert training, corps level exercises stressing attack of fortified defense positions
California and Hawaii - Amphibious
Guadalcanal - Jungle training, acclimatization, and rugged terrain training

81st Division Organization

Based on "triangular" organization, online resources, and books (statistics are approximate):

81st Infantry Division ("Wildcats") with 9,000 combat troops

Combat Units: 321st, 322nd, and 323rd Infantry Regiments

Each Regiment: 3 infantry battalions
service company
medical detachment
antitank company
cannon company

Each Battalion: 3 rifle companies
1 heavy weapons company with 81 mm mortars and heavy .30-caliber machines guns

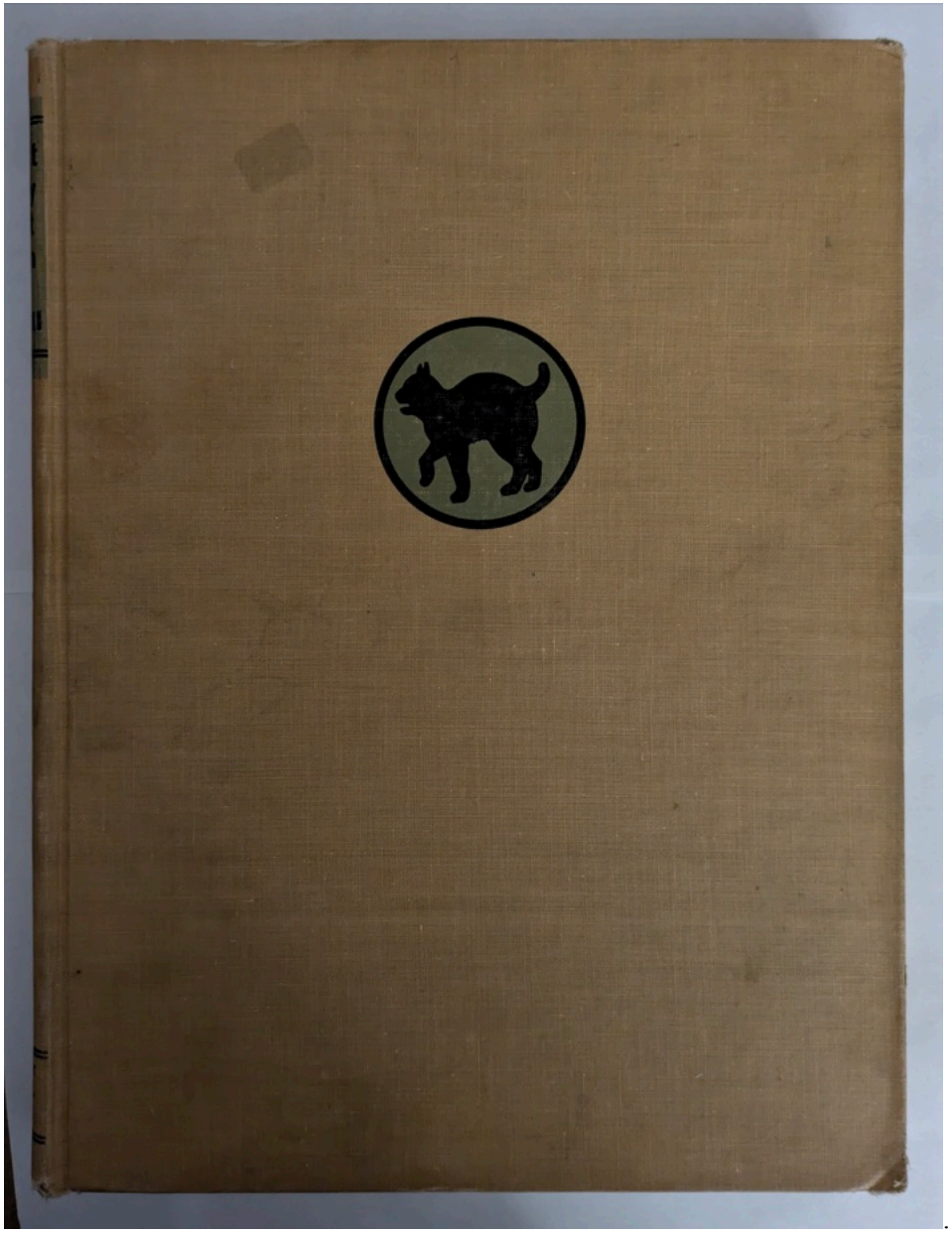
1st Battalion: A, B, and C (rifle) and D (heavy weapons)
2nd Battalion: E, F, and G (rifle) and H (heavy weapons)
3rd Battalion: I, K, and L (rifle) and M (heavy weapons)

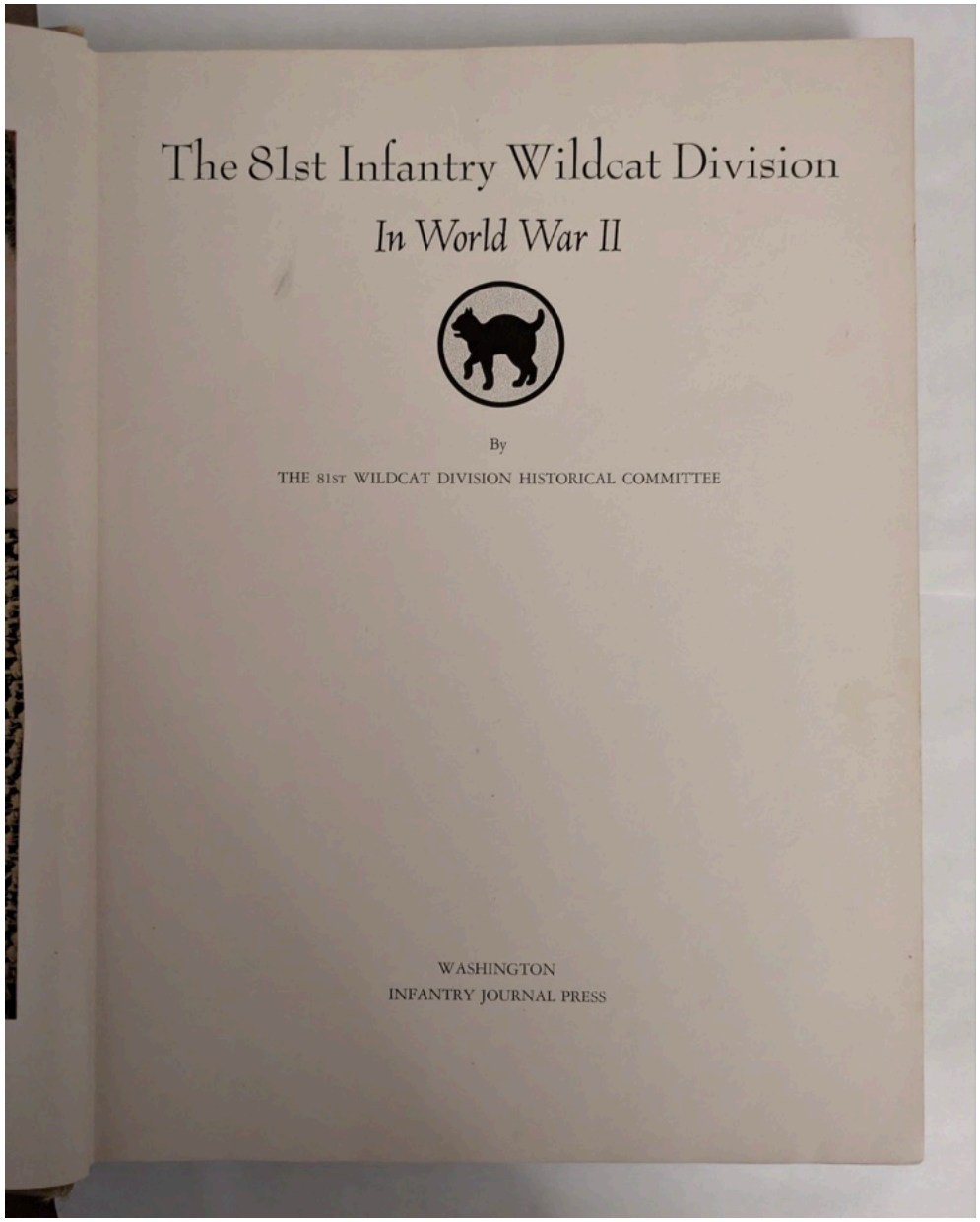
Resources

The National Archives has numerous digitized videos and photographs of military operations in Angaur and Peleliu. Compete operational reports are available through several websites that detail minute-by-minute activities. Various sources have photographs and information about the Wildcats that are available online.

Michael E. Byczek has copies of the three most important books about the Wildcats in World War II:

1. An official Wildcat historical book from their own perspective (1948)
2. An official account through the perspective of the Marines at Peleliu with extensive reference to the Wildcats (1950)
3. A present-day documentary about the Wildcats with emphasis on Peleliu, but covers the entire war (2011)





The 81st Infantry Wildcat Division

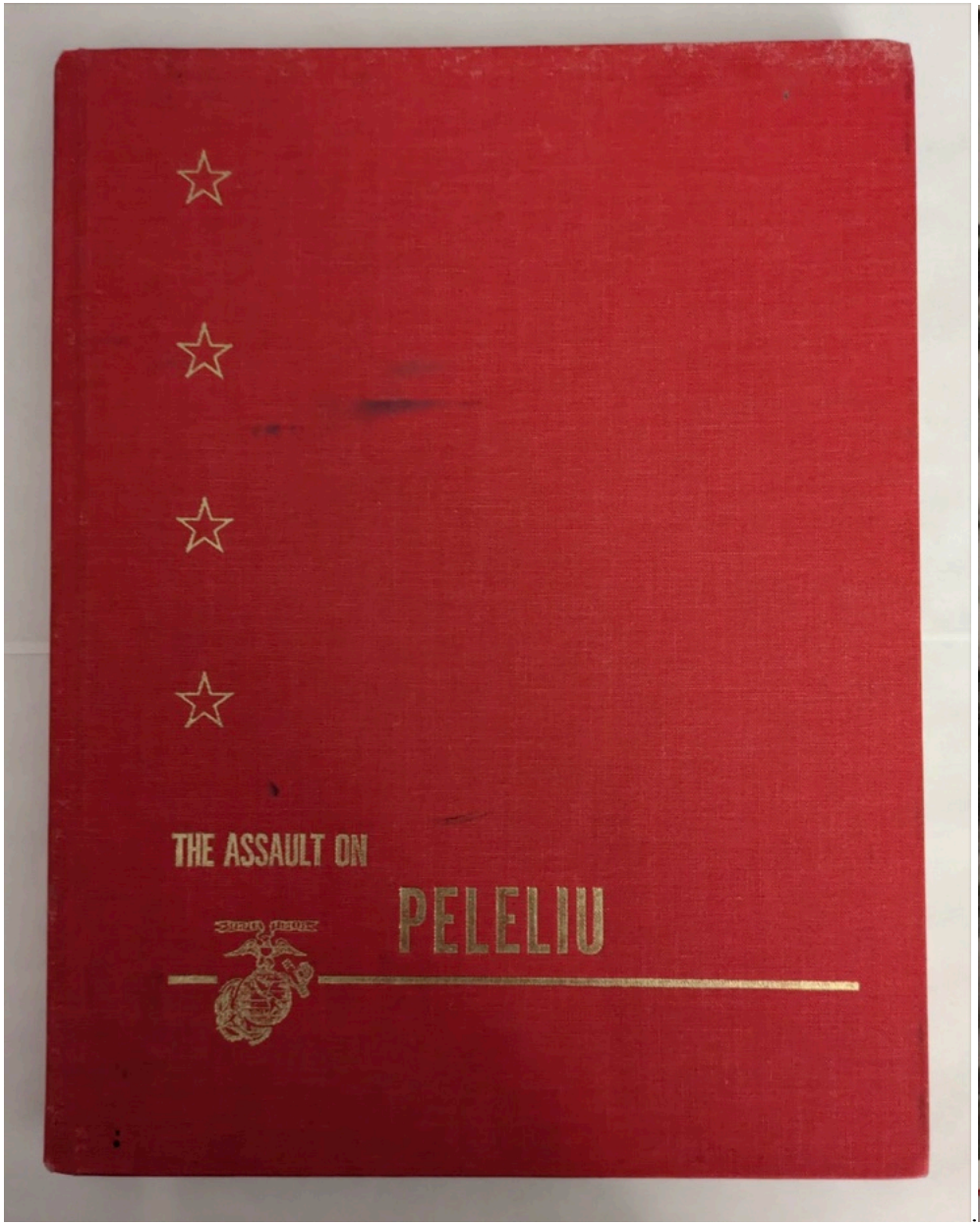
In World War II

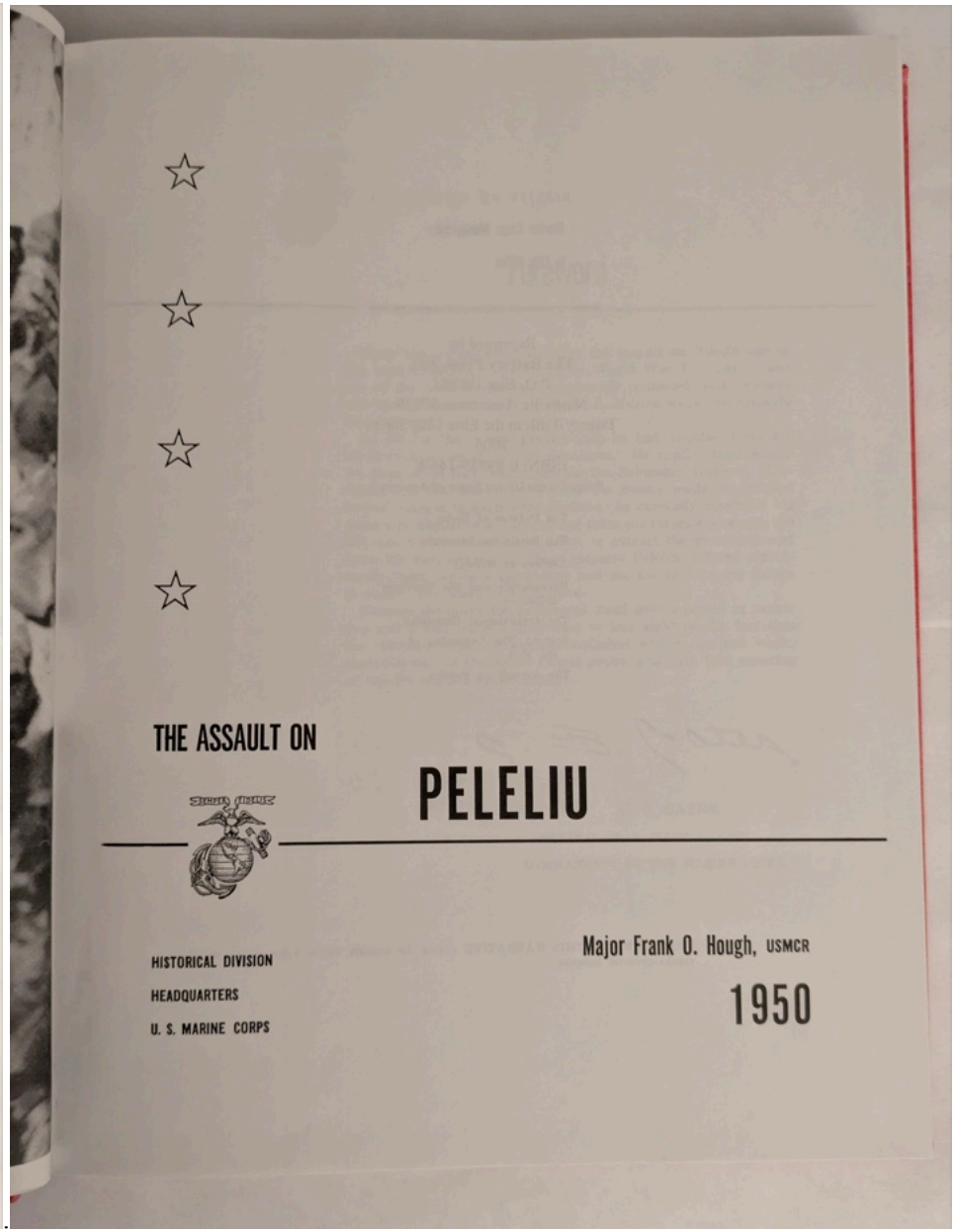
By

THE 81ST WILDCAT DIVISION HISTORICAL COMMITTEE

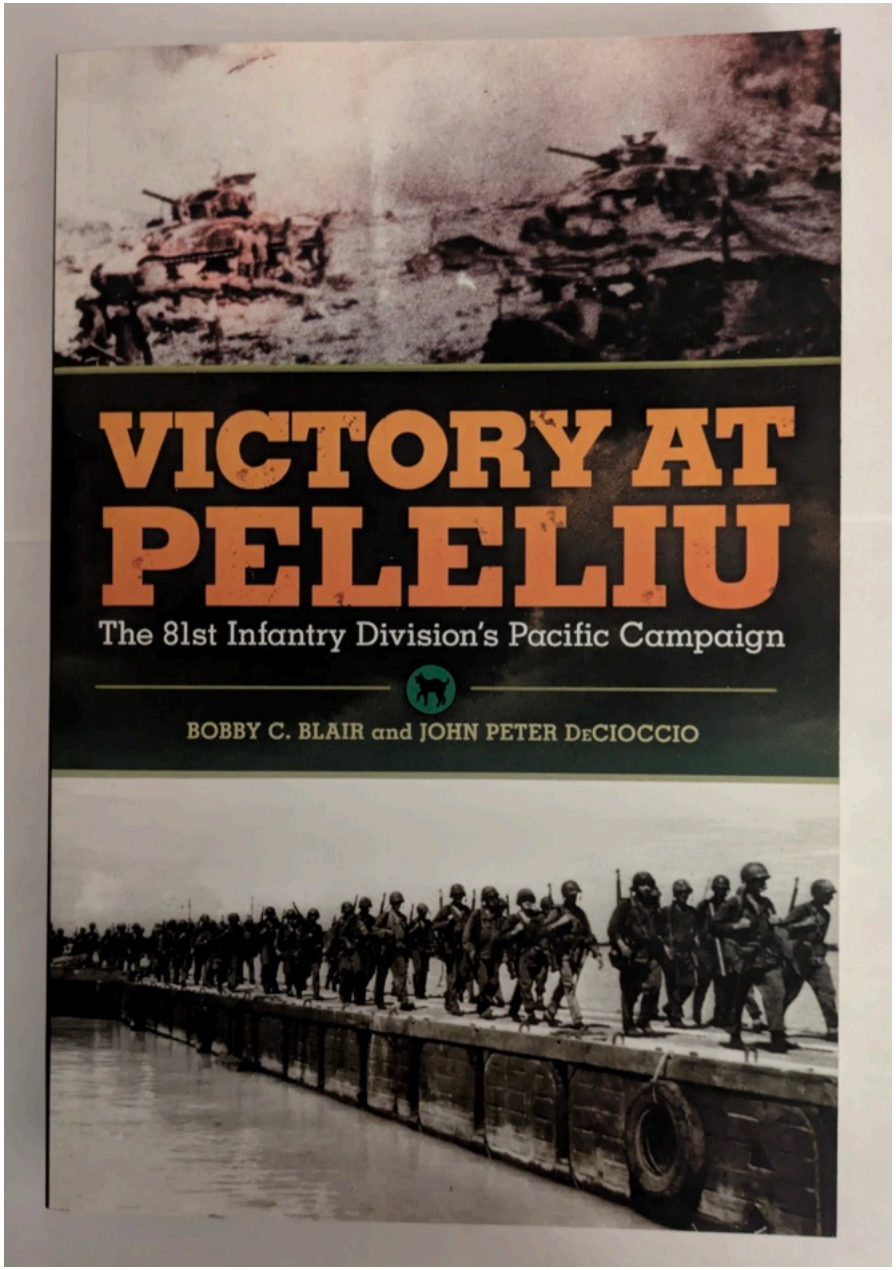
WASHINGTON
INFANTRY JOURNAL PRESS

The official Wildcat perspective of World War II
Actual Item from the *Michael E. Byczek Genealogy Collection*
Photo Credit: Michael E. Byczek. Copyright 2025.





The official Marine perspective of the Peleliu Operation
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Present-day documentary about the Wildcats with emphasis on Peleliu
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Additional Information

Michael E. Byczek, an Illinois attorney and managing real estate broker, has compiled original records for genealogy since 1992. Research and analysis have been published on family websites for over 30 years. A project to compile comprehensive digital, print, and video documentaries for every direct blood ancestor began in September 2024 for accurate online genealogy.

Michael S. Byczek and Marie C. Flanagan are Michael E. Byczek's grandparents. Their eldest child, a son, Michael M. Byczek (father) married Betty A. Bykowski in 1974 at St. Helen's on Augusta and Oakley in Chicago. They have two children. Their son Michael E. Byczek is the eldest and was born in the Bridgeport neighborhood.

Revision History:

11/12/2026
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