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Article Summary: Miltonberger's military career lasted more than thirty years. In World War II he commanded the 134th Infantry Regiment. His collection includes detailed and personal records of that regiment, initially comprised primarily of Nebraskans.

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Photographs / Images: Gen Dwight Eisenhower inspecting the 134th Regiment near Cornwall, England, in 1944 while Miltonberger, Gen Paul Baade, and Gen George Patton stand at attention; map of the path of the 134th Regiment across Europe, 1944-1945; running account of regimental activities on October 10, 1944, near Manhoue, France, in a journal maintained by the Regimental Operations Officer; inset example of German propaganda addressed to soldiers of the 35th Division; Miltonberger visiting an unidentified French town after liberation in his jeep, "Cornhusker"; Miltonberger being welcomed home to Nebraska on June 26, 1945



In May 1944 Gen. Dwight Eisenhower (left) inspected the 134th Regiment near Cornwall, England. Miltonberger (third from left) maintained friendships with Eisenhower, as well as with Gen. Paul Baade (second from left) and Gen. George Patton (right). (NSHS-M662-144)

THE BUTLER B. MILTONBERGER COLLECTION

By Douglas R. Hartman and Andrea I. Paul

The Archives of the Nebraska State Historical Society holds one of the most complete research collections available relating to the activities of a military unit during World War II. The unit, the 134th Infantry Regiment, was composed primarily of Nebraska National Guardsmen and was commanded by Lt. Col. Butler Buchanan Miltonberger.

Miltonberger, a native of North

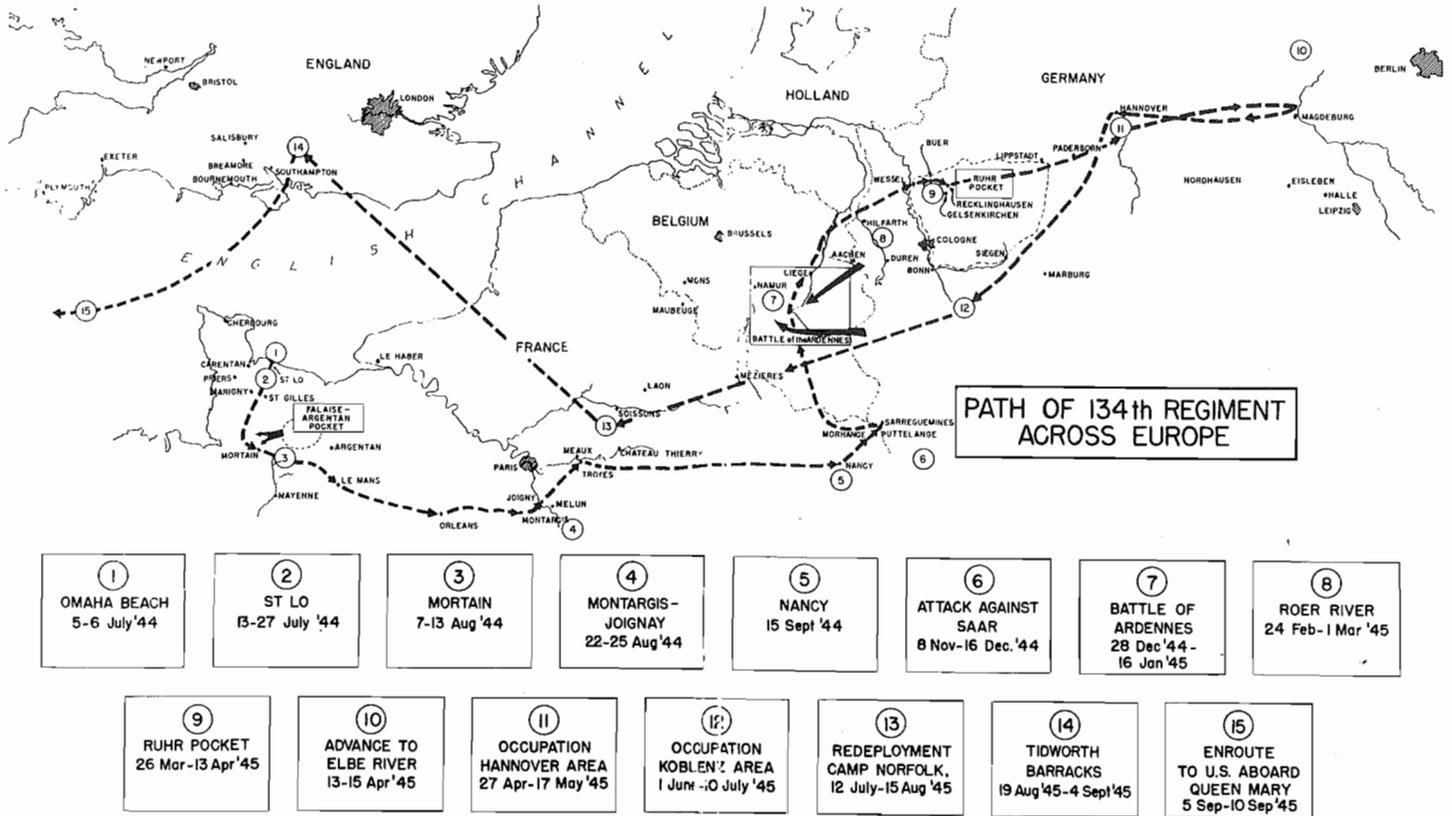
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Platte, was born on August 31, 1897. He began his military career as a private in June 1916 when the National Guard was mobilized during the Mexican border dispute. During World War I, Miltonberger fought with the Fourth Division in the Argonne, returning to North Platte as a first sergeant. As a civilian, he worked in North Platte as a postman while also engaged in bridge building, surveying, and road construction.

On May 12, 1923, he was commissioned a first lieutenant in the Nebraska National Guard and a year later was promoted to captain. He commanded Company D, 134th Infantry, for ten years and was promoted to major in 1933. In 1935 his unit was

called into active duty during both the Omaha streetcar riot and the Republican River flood. On January 9, 1938, Major Miltonberger single-handedly captured Willard Brucks, an escaped killer who had broken into the Omaha armory to seize weapons. He was promoted to lieutenant colonel on October 7, 1940.

America's reaction to the outbreak of war in Europe on September 1, 1939, was to begin mobilization of National Guard units and intensify their training. The 134th Regiment, "Nebraska's Own," was mobilized as part of the Thirty-fifth Division in December 1940 and assembled at Camp Joseph T. Robinson, Arkansas. Nicknamed the Santa Fe Division, the Thirty-fifth



From 134th Infantry Regiment, *Combat History of World War II* by Butler B. Miltonberger and James A. Huston. Gen. Butler B. Miltonberger Papers, MS 3558, State Archives, Nebraska State Historical Society (hereafter Miltonberger Papers).

Infantry was comprised of men from Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska National Guard units.

At the time of mobilization, Miltonberger was attending Battalion Commanders Staff School. In February 1941, he assumed command of the First Battalion and in May took over command of the entire regiment. Miltonberger's promotion to regimental commander was extraordinary since he was neither a West Pointer nor a regular army man. Apparently Miltonberger's own special credentials — he had attended four training schools for officers in the 1920s and 1930s — and his reputation as a dis-

ciplined soldier and popular leader led to his rise through the ranks.

For the next three years, Miltonberger led the 134th through training at Camp Robinson, Arkansas; Fort Ord and Camp Luis Obispo, California; Camp Rucker, Alabama; and Camp Butner, North Carolina. The regiment finally departed from New York on May 12, 1944, and arrived in England fifteen days later. The unit continued its training in southern England, and during that time it was inspected by Generals Dwight D. Eisenhower, George S. Patton, and Paul Baade. Eisenhower, in particular, was impressed with the 134th and drew upon his midwestern

background in giving the men a pep talk. As Miltonberger recalled, Eisenhower "told them that he was a Kansas boy . . . and that he was very proud of this Nebraska Regiment and he souped the men up no end."¹

The 134th was ready to join the fight to liberate Europe and nearly a month after D-Day, July 5, the regiment landed on Omaha Beach. The first combat that Miltonberger's men faced was the battle of St. Lo. On July 15 the regiment attacked the primary objective, Hill 122. After four days of continuous fighting in which over 900 casualties were sustained, the 134th occupied St. Lo on July 18. In apprecia-

Butler B. Miltonberger

tion of the unit's tenacity and valor, the French government awarded it the croix de guerre.

The 134th then moved south and forced the Germans back beyond the Vire River on August 5. After only twenty-two days of fighting, the regiment had broken through the Germans' main defensive line.

Miltonberger and the 134th participated in the Battle of Mortain and liberated the city of Nancy on September 15. The regiment was then thrust into the Battle of the Bulge at Bastogne in December to relieve the 101st Airborne Division. The 134th held the eastern defensive line for about ten days "against really tough opposition. The kids did a good job in the cold and snow — we came out with about 15 or 20 men to a company."² The 134th Regiment's authorized strength was 3,000 men. As injuries and deaths occurred, replacements came from other units. The regiment suffered 10,000 casualties while advancing over 1,500 miles in combat during its ten months in Europe.

After the Battle of the Bulge in January 1945, Miltonberger was promoted to brigadier general and was assigned assistant division commander of the Thirty-fifth Division, serving under General Paul Baade. At war's end in the European theater, General Eisenhower invited Miltonberger to accompany him back to the United States for a victory tour. Miltonberger was then assigned to special duty with the War Department personnel section. In 1946 President Truman nominated him to be chief of the National Guard Bureau with the rank of major general. He was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on February 1, 1946.

As National Guard chief, Miltonberger's primary objective was to rebuild the guard to an enlistment of 682,000 men, three times as large as its pre-war strength. Essentially, a completely new National Guard had to be created as all of the pre-war guard enlistments had expired during the war. By August 1, 1947, when Milton-

berger was forced to retire due to ill health, more than 100,000 men had been enlisted or commissioned and were receiving military instruction and training. During his one-and-one-half-year tenure as National Guard chief, Miltonberger also oversaw the expan-

sion of the air training program of the guard and the development of the first national advertising campaign to promote the guard and explain its importance to the nation's security. In describing his greatest accomplishment as head of the National Guard

Journal entries from the afternoon of October 10, 1944, near Manhoue, France. Maintained by the Regimental Operations Officer (S-3), this record provides a minute-to-minute account of regimental activities. Miltonberger Papers.

- 1215 - GEN. BAADE PHONED COL. B.B.M. AS TO SITUATION.
- 1345 - T.D.'S REPORT LACK OF INF. TO POINT OUT TARGETS. COL. B.B.M. CHECKS SITUATION WITH JURY BLUE 6. REPORT 27 OTHER P.W.'S
- 1420 - TASK FORCE MOVING 2 MILES NORTH OF HILL 196.
- 1435 - BLUE REPORTS ^{ENEMY} ~~ARTY~~ COLUMN MOVING TOWARD JALLACOURT
- 1440 - S-2 HAS NO REPORT. S-3 IS CHECKING WITH RED FOR VERIFICATION.
- 1445 - ^{1ST} BRIDGE BLOWN OUT. MOVING ON TOWARD 2ND BRIDGE
- 1446 - MAJ. LUMLY CONFIRMS DESTRUCTION OF BRIDGE.
- 1450 - 161ST LAISON PLANE SHOT DOWN JUST NORTH OF HAN.
- 1455 - ENEMY COLUMN~~S~~ REPORTED IN MALACOURT. MAJ. CARROL DIRECTS T.O.T. FIRE ON MALACOURT.
- 1500 - T.O.T. CORRECTED FROM MALACOURT TO JALLACOURT.
- 1515 - RED OP REPORTS ONE RED & ONE GREEN FLARE OVER FOSSIEUX.
- 1600 - CHANGE TANK CO. TONIGHT.
- 1650 - REQUEST TO HI-POT TO FIRE MISSION ON BRIDGE 966293. CLEAR TO FIRE GIVEN TO JOHNSTON.
- 1740 - CO C, 737TH TX BN PASSED THIS PT. GOING TO ASSEMBLY AREA.
- 1755 - F CO ON WAY BACK.

The Krauts send these over & it is their idea of propaganda. Our men get a big kick out of it. They sure know we are fighting them. We captured several thousand of these in a Kraut, dug out.

G.I.'s of the 35th Division!

AS you won't be home for Christmas

Come over to GERMANY
FOR THE
WINTER SPORTS!

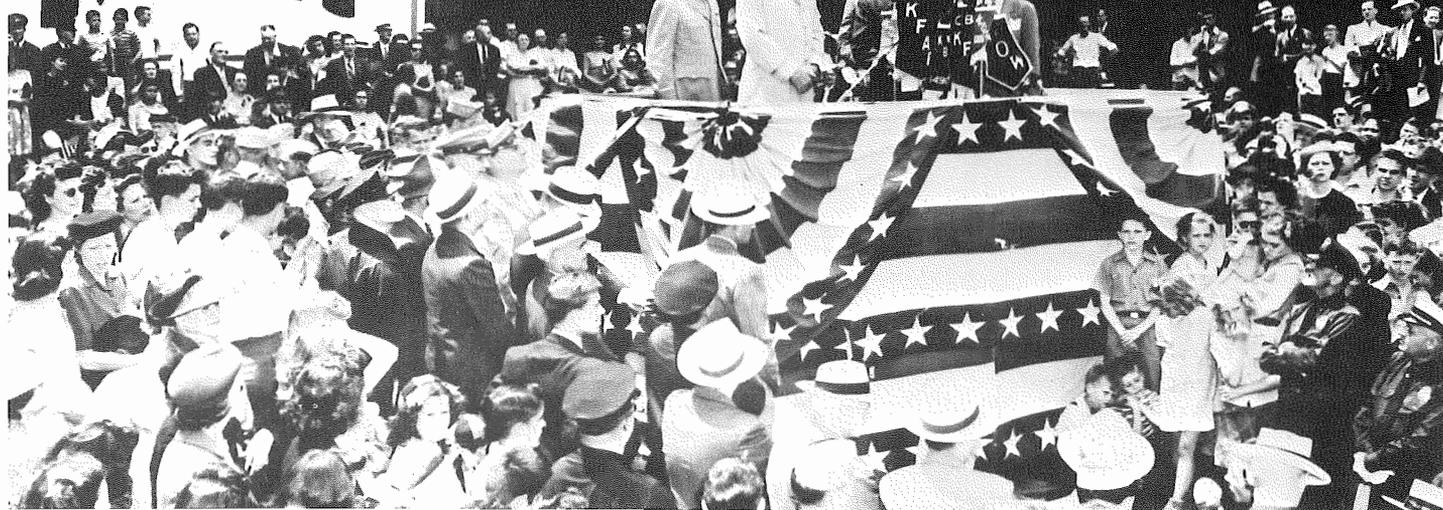
We invite you most heartily!

We accept — In fact, "All Hell bein' Stop Us."



The above example of German propaganda was intended to break American morale but had the opposite effect. The 134th Regiment's response was the same as its regimental motto: "All Hell Can't Stop Us." Miltonberger Papers . . . (left) Colonel Miltonberger visits an unidentified French town after liberation in his personal jeep, "Cornhusker." (NSHS-M662-592)

Welcome "MILT"



After a brief stop at North Platte, Miltonberger was officially welcomed home to Nebraska with a parade in his honor on June 26, 1945. In a tribute to Miltonberger, Gen. C. H. Danielson (left) stated, "Never before . . . have Nebraska soldiers fought so gallantly or with such grim determination . . . America is grateful. Nebraska should be proud." (NSHS-M662-656)

and, indeed, in explaining the National Guard's "raison de'etre," Miltonberger said,

It is the civilian soldier who fights and dies. The Guard teaches discipline, which is needed in civil as well as military life - the whole country needs discipline today. Our program reaches into every town, every small community, to make disciplined men better peace-time citizens and better soldiers for war.¹³

After his retirement, Miltonberger returned to his home in North Platte. After co-authoring a history of the 134th Regiment's activities in World War II entitled *All Hell Can't Stop Us*, Miltonberger spent his retirement years hunting and entertaining prominent public figures. He died at his lakeside cabin near North Platte on March 23, 1977.

The Butler B. Miltonberger collection was received by the Nebraska State Historical Society in 1977.

Because Miltonberger stipulated that the collection was to remain sealed until ten years after his death, the material was not processed until 1987. At that time, eighteen cubic feet and two drawers of material were inventoried and made available for research.

The collection is unusual, because it provides a detailed account of Nebraskans' activities in the European theater during World War II. Typically, historical accounts of the war offer generalized descriptions of battles using large-scale discussions of cooperating armies. In the Miltonberger collections, researchers have access to detailed and personal records of a regiment initially comprised primarily of Nebraskans.

Miltonberger's regimental papers include secret map overlays, daily

orders, operations officer journals, intelligence reports, press releases, unit journals, aid station reports, award recommendations, and personnel rosters and reports. The various supplementary maps provide information on daily orders, movements, regimental boundaries, attack plans, and enemy strength. These materials, along with Miltonberger's daily log and taped interviews with the retired general, enable the researcher to follow the 134th Regiment across Europe.

NOTES

¹Interview with Butler B. Miltonberger by Donald D. Snoddy, 1970, State Archives, Nebraska State Historical Society.

²Newspaper clipping in scrapbook, General Butler B. Miltonberger papers, MS 3558, State Archives, Nebraska State Historical Society.

³Ibid.