

★ NORMANDY ★ BRITTANY ★ ARDENNES ★ CENTRAL EUROPE ★ RHINELAND

# THUNDERBOLT

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***Seeking Local Heroes;  
Ohio Veterans to be Honored as Part of Four-Day Celebration***

Cleveland (July 27, 2017) – The 83<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, which was born in Ohio 100 years ago and served in both world wars – including in the hedgerows of Normandy and in the Battle of the Bulge – is coming home to honor its roots and native heroes.

The search for area 83<sup>rd</sup> veterans or their descendants to be included in the four-day, downtown event will continue right up to its culminating public memorial service in The Old Stone Church, Public Square at 2:00 p.m. on Aug. 5.

“The 83<sup>rd</sup> has deep and broad roots in Ohio, and we’d like every one of those veterans and their families to be acknowledged in what is shaping up to be a really special Cleveland reunion,” said John Markuns, President of the 83<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division Association, which will have over 180 attendees from a dozen states and four countries. “It’s been amazing to have so many reach out to us already, and we know there are more out there.”

Originally nicknamed the “Ohio Division” when established at Fort Sherman in 1917, the 83<sup>rd</sup> has counted 85 of its members from Cuyahoga County on the Fountain of Eternal Life at Veterans Memorial Plaza, each having given their lives in service to their country. These names are listed at [www.Clevelandvetsmemorial.org](http://www.Clevelandvetsmemorial.org). Every name will be read aloud during Saturday’s memorial service. Following the church service, attendees will process to a public wreath laying ceremony at the Fountain of Eternal Life in Greater Cleveland Veterans Memorial Plaza, (formerly Mall A.) **Ohio World War II veterans are also expected to be among the roughly 10 members of the 83<sup>rd</sup> to attend in person. This rare gathering constitutes one of the largest of surviving “Greatest Generation” veterans anyone could expect to see in 2017.**

Anyone who served with the 83<sup>rd</sup>, or who believes a family member may have, is strongly encouraged to contact the Association at [jmarkuns@aol.com](mailto:jmarkuns@aol.com). More information on the 83<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division Association is also available at [www.83rdassociation.com](http://www.83rdassociation.com).

The reunion takes place Wednesday, Aug. 2 through Saturday, Aug. 5. Highlights of the festivities leading up to Saturday's memorial service include:

- Public exhibit at the Cleveland Renaissance Hotel highlighting the 100-year history of the 83<sup>rd</sup> and those who proudly wore – and continue to wear – its black and gold insignia, which features the letters "O", "H", "I" and "O" in a monogram pattern.
- A series of workshops and presentations, including World War II and 83<sup>rd</sup> veteran Tony Vacarro introducing a showing of the HBO documentary, "Under Fire, the Untold Story of Pfc Tony Vacarro."
- Attendance at the Indians-Yankees game Friday night at Progressive Field

***The 83<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division***'s history is one of vital roles in conflicts that determined the fate of the world. It was established in July 1917 with headquarters at Camp Sherman, Ohio, and its 332<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment saw combat action as the only American unit in Italy during World War I. Rechristened the "Thunderbolt" division when reactivated for World War II, the division landed on the beaches of Normandy in June 1944 and saw combat action for the next 244 days from Normandy, Brittany, the Ardennes, the Rhineland and Central Europe. It was less than 38 miles from Berlin when Germany surrendered, the closest of any American unit.

The division was reactivated as the 83<sup>rd</sup> Army Command in 1967 with Army Reserve status. From then until September 1997, the Ohio-based reservists were deployed to Vietnam, Bosnia, Haiti, Somalia, Panama, Honduras and the Persian Gulf. The 83<sup>rd</sup> was reflagged as the 83<sup>rd</sup> US Army Reserve Readiness Training Center at Ft. Knox, KY in November 2013.

***The 83<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division Association*** was founded in 1946, with its 500-plus original members holding its first ever reunion in Cleveland. It provides veterans and their families the opportunity to stay in contact and preserve its proud history, honoring the memories of those who served and died in service of their country or the years that followed. Through seven decades of reunions, this is only its second return home.

The Association appreciates any help spreading the word in search of veterans or their descendants; please feel free to contact us with any interest in featuring the memorial service, the reunion or its members in the days leading up to or during the event.

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