



We salute

Continued from page 1

Stockdale graduated NMMI in 1939 and entered Oregon State University the following fall, majoring in veterinary medicine. Following Pearl Harbor, Stockdale enlisted in the Army, as did his brother Oid. Gayle Stockdale eventually found himself in North Africa with the 752nd tank battalion, soon to be one of the most decorated tank battalions of WWII, having received its training in the California desert from Gen. George S. Patton. A year later Stockdale was in Italy driving the German and Italian armies northward while participating in the capture of such cities as Rome, Verona and Cecina, one of the bloodiest battles of the Italian theater. Defeating the Germans at "The Rock," the battalion was later awarded the 85th Infantry Divisional Commendation. After receiving a battlefield commission to the rank of Captain, Stockdale took part in the capture of Bologna, his tank leading the allied forces into the town. Somewhere in the action, the young captain earned a Bronze Star for valor. Stockdale's tank was hit and burning. After he'd ordered his crew out to take cover, Stockdale, himself wounded, returned to the tank through intense shelling and rescued its driver, who was left behind in the vehicle. That was the first of his two Purple Hearts. The next came while riding in a jeep that was blown out from under him, killing the driver. Miles from his unit, two resistance fighters helped him navigate his way back to his unit, a two-day journey spent mostly crawling while hiding from German snipers. He later told his daughter Gay that his first sight upon returning to his unit was the reason he teared up each time he heard the National Anthem: "I had never seen anything so beautiful as our flag flying proudly over the commander's tent ..."

The war ended not long afterward, the 5th Army having chased the remainder of the German forces high into the Alps of northern Italy. Stockdale had accumulated a number of medals, including The Legion of Merit, The



Courtesy Photo/Gay Stockdale

This photo from the military newspaper Stars and Stripes shows Stockdale's tank and its crew as it entered the Italian city of Bologna on 21 April of 1945.

Soldiers Medal, The Bronze Star and a pair of Purple Hearts along with a promotion to major, but by then, the Wallowa Mountains were calling him home. He returned, opening an Enterprise saddle shop. He soon met Ina Paulson, who owned a nearby coffee shop. The couple married in May 1947. They ranched along the North Highway and raised their daughters Judy LaVerne and Gay LaRaine Stockdale (now Bothum and Stockdale, respectively). Both daughters say the couple greatly respected and loved each other. "In our entire life, we never witnessed or heard an argument between them," Gay Stockdale said.

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