



St. Johns High School

Home of the Redwings!

Charles Berkhausen

Interviewed by Justin Smith

Charles Berkhausen, a man of his country, fought with pride and honor for his country in World War II. Fighting in the European theater he went through everything.

He Was 18 years old when he was drafted to the United States Army. He was sent to Europe to fight the Nazi forces on the ground. Him and the 2nd armored division called "Hell On Wheels" started at Normandy and fought in "D-Day" on June 6, 1944. He fought along all of the dead bodies of fallen army men and crawled in the bloody water. Fighting under the command of General Patton and General Eisenhower, who later decorated Mr. Berkhausen on the battle field. They Rolled across Europe in their tank defending themselves with many weapons such as: 50 cal. Machine gun, tank, 75 Hollister cannon, 37mm & 90mm mortars, Tommy guns, 45 pistol, and hand grenades. He was in every major battle in the European theater including The Battle Of the Bulge, where many men froze in the cold. They had no free time. He was always in battle and the normal day was "Plain Hell". He had three brothers in the war, two in the army, and one in the navy. He keeps in touch with two of his gunners, one from Skull, Arizona. The second was his first gunner from St. Johns, who he says is one of the best soldiers that the U.S. army ever had, John Caudy. He had to carry John off the Battle Field to an ambulance after he was shot. He was taken prisoner and he had to walk for sixteen days and nights without stopping for more than ten to fifteen minutes at a time.

He told me of an incident when he went up to a German S.S. trooper wanting to get some German marks (the German currency), but instead of grabbing German Marks out of the soldiers bill fold there was a U.S. silver certificate. After taking it from the soldier he showed Brakon, another soldier that he was with. Brackon took the Tommy gun off Mr. Berkhausen's shoulder and unloaded the clip in the S.S. trooper. He took drastic measures to stay alive, once by jumping into a lily pond and hiding. This was when he and Brackon were spotted and were taken prisoner. Another was more successful in Normandy he had to crawl into a blown up cow so that he wasn't seen by the Germans. The German soldiers walked right past him.

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When asked "what advice would you give kids so they can be successful?" He replied, "always be proud of America and the colors of red, white, and blue. Always keep in mind of all of the men that fought for our freedom." Finally, "be successful in school and get the best education that you possibly can".

He wanted to end with this " the good ole U.S.A., the most wonderful of all countries that any of us could live in. I am thankful that I could fight for the freedom of our country, but the real heroes are still over there and never will return, may God bless them all."