

Biography of Raymond M. Bush



96th Infantry Division
Leyte and Okinawa

Ennis, Texas

Raymond Bush was a first lieutenant in the U.S. Army. He joined the Army on March 21, 1941. He reported for basic training at Fort Sill, north of Lawton, Oklahoma in Comanche County. Fort Sill is remembered as the last home of Geronimo, Chief of the Chiricahua Apache tribe. Geronimo died on February 17, 1909 of pneumonia, and he was buried in the Apache Cemetery at Fort Sill.

Bush was transferred from Fort Sill to Fort Lewis southwest of Tacoma, Washington along the shores of Commencement Bay and the foot of Mount Rainier in Pierce County. He was appointed to the Infantry Officer's School on March 9, 1942. He graduated, and was commissioned a second lieutenant in June of 1942.

Second Lieutenant Bush was assigned to Camp White near Medford, Oregon the county seat of Jackson County. Camp White was near the Rogue River, where swimming and fishing was a popular after hour's diversion for troops.

In October of 1942 Bush was promoted to first lieutenant, and assigned to Camp Beale, which opened as an Army training base in October of 1942. Camp Beale was between and east of Marysville and Wheatland, California in Yuba County in the Sacramento Valley north of the city of Sacramento. It was the training site for the 13th Armored and the 81st and 96th Infantry Divisions.

First Lieutenant Bush was assigned to the 96th Infantry Division, which had been deactivated on January 7, 1919 following the end of World War I, and reactivated on June 24, 1921 in the Organized Reserve in Portland Oregon. The Division was called to active duty on August 15, 1942. During training at Camp Beale, the 96th produced a large number of expert marksmen, and was given the nickname “Deadeye.” It then became known as the “Deadeyes Division,” and conducted numerous training sessions around the U.S.

In mid 1944 the 96th Infantry Division was assigned to the XXIV Corps, and shipped out to the Pacific where training continued in the Hawaiian Islands from July to September of 1944.

On Friday, October 20, 1944 Bush landed with the 96th Infantry Division at Leyte in the Philippines. The 96th landed from Leyte Gulf on the east coast at the south edge of San Jose and through and passed Dulag. Bush and the 96th quickly secured the beachhead on Leyte, and moved inland. Once inland fighting intensified, and the assault slowed, but the 96th persisted, and by November 9 had taking their assigned objectives, which was the Tanauan, Dagami and Tabontabon sectors.

Bush and the 96th were relieved by fresh troops from corps reserve, and the “Deadeyes Division” fell back to a defensive position along the beachhead. They continued to eliminate pockets of Japanese, and by Christmas Day Leyte secure. For the next three months the 96th was engaged in mopping up operations, and training for their next assault.

Bush and the 96th remained on Leyte until the middle of March. The division was embarked in transports in Transport Group “Easy,” and on March 27, 1945 steamed northeast for Okinawa in the Ryukyu Islands, Japan.

On Easter Sunday, April 1, sunrise came at 6:11 a.m. bringing the first light of day to “Operation Iceberg.” Bush and the 96th was part of the XXIV Corps, which was part of the Southern Attack Force. H-hour was set for 8:30 a.m.

Transport Group “Easy” or Task Group 55.2 hoisted out their Higgins boats that would come along side the transports to receive assault troops. When the time came Bush and others descended heavy cargo nets that had been heaved over the railings of the transports. They descended to the bobbing Higgins boats below, and would be delivered in waves to the Hagushi Beaches.

The expeditionary force assigned to capture Okinawa was made up of the Tenth Army, which was under the command of Lt. General Simon Bolivar Buckner. It consisted of III Amphibious Corps made up of the 1st, 2nd and 6th Marine Divisions under the command of Major General Roy S. Geiger, and the XXIV Army Corps made up of the 7th, 96th, 77th and 27th Infantry Divisions under the command of Lt. General John R. Hodge.

The initial landing beginning at H-hour was a four division front that extended over five-miles of beaches known as the Hagushi beaches. The 6th Marine Division would land on the northernmost Green and Red beaches, and moving south, the 1st Marine Division on Blue and

yellow beaches, The 7th Army Infantry Division on Purple and Orange beaches and Bush and the 96th Army Infantry Division on the southernmost White and Brown beaches.

The dividing line between Marine and Army units was the Bisha River

Sunday on Easter morning the weather at Okinawa was slightly overcast and cool. The offshore wind was light and the sea calm. The landing at H-hour was unopposed. The beachhead was established near Sunabe, and within three days Bush and the 96th eliminated enemy resistance in the large Sunabe hill mass that dominated the XXIV Army Corps landing beaches.

The 96th Infantry Division aggressively attacked along and down the western coast of the Okinawa toward the main Japanese defense hub at Shuri. Enemy resistance grew stronger and the fighting more intense, and on April 9 the 96th Division initiated a series of attacks against the powerful Japanese defense position at Kakazu Ridge, and by April 15 it had gained dominance of the ridge. But on April 10 1st Lieutenant Bush was killed in action.

Battle for Okinawa was long and bloody. At 3:30 p.m. on June 21 III Amphibious Corps' commander, Major General Geiger, declared Okinawa secure. The 96th Infantry Division had ended its participation in the battle on June 12 after 73-days of fighting. The division suffered 7,294 casualties, which included 1,504 killed.

The “Deadeyes Division” would be awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for extraordinary heroism.

Before joining the Army, Raymond Bush was employed by the Dallas Division of the Southern Pacific Railroad as a file clerk in the Ennis office.

He had married Edith Christine Whitfill in 1941. She was the daughter of Charles Abraham and Mary Josephine (Hill) Whitfill of Alma.

First Lieutenant Bush was awarded the Infantry Combat Badge, the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart Medals, and his unit was awarded the Presidential Citation.

(Credit the Jack Lummis site; jacklummus.com)