

## **Robert L. “Bob” Butler**

### **Presented by Mike & Pat Butler at Cemetery Walk**

I was born August 11, 1923, to John and Kathleen Mealman Butler, in Pocahontas, Iowa. The youngest of 12, I had 9 sisters and 2 brothers. My oldest sister, Myrtle, was born in 1898. Dad worked for the Rock Island RR, and Mom raised vegetables and kids.

We didn't understand the crash of '29, but times were hard and being so young, I remember walking the tracks for lumps of coal to help heat the house.

I graduated from 8<sup>th</sup> grade in Pocahontas, and we moved to the Hartley-Melvin area. I attended school in Melvin, but dropped out and ended up in the Civilian Conservation Core. It was hard work, but it paid and I learned more about auto mechanics and how to use a shovel!

When Pearl Harbor was bombed, I was still in the CCC and did not get called right away. I did go in 1943. My brother Red was an artillery sergeant in Europe and brother Herb was in the Pacific Ocean with the Navy.

I joined the 8<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Observation Battalion. (8<sup>th</sup> FAOB). They were a new unit training before the war started to move forward of our lines and triangulate where enemy artillery was coming from, then feed the coordinates back for our artillery. It took a lot of wire for communication. I chased supplies and tried to figure out how to get them up to my guys.

One of our scariest days was when General Patton pulled out to support the Battle of the Bulge, but no one passed that order on to us! Fortunately, they remembered us soon enough and we got to head out too.

We slept where we stopped. In small town and even abandoned farms, we checked everything out before settling in. I was checking a dark cellar one night and the stairs collapsed. It really hurt my ankle. Unfortunately, if you went into a field hospital, you might come out as a replacement new guy in the

infantry. I decided I would prefer the 8<sup>th</sup> FAOB, so lived with it. It bothered me the rest of my life. (The VA later put in an artificial ankle, but I wore it out).

There were not a lot of jobs available when I got back to Hartley after discharge. The government paid us “walking around” money. I remember Frank & Elsie Walters farm on the East end of Hartley. They were some who were kind enough to put us to work and pay what we were worth.

Virgil Lage hired me at his DX station between the Creamery and the old Legion Club. He sold it to me as he moved more into the Creamery management. Abel Anderson was very kind in giving me a steady business of servicing the cream trucks and had this nice girl Julie in the office. She and I hit it off and we were married in 1953. We had 2 sons: Mike and Pat.

I did use some of my GI bill for flying lessons with Lambert Fechter, but they ended with his tragic crash!

The Hartley Legion has done such good things and those guys knew what it was all about, so I became a Legion member.

I joined the Hartley Fire Department in 1954 and stayed for 35 or so years. Great guys, and I always felt we were doing a real service. It did drive Julie, Mike, & Pat a little crazy that I installed a buzzer in the garage, so I got an early warning of an alarm.

You know I really liked sitting in the shade of our garage and watching you all go by. Of course, I had to warn some of you that it is only neighborly to say hello and if in your car to “slow down”, we have kids around here!

Full service gas station work is hard on you. When there was a retirement after the high school opened, I applied and became a “Maintenance Engineer”! It seemed like custodial work, but I like the title!

The building and grounds were new and for 25 years I loved the kids passing through. Occasionally I let them know they were out of line, but mostly they were youngsters growing up in a small town. The teachers and other staff were great too, just sometimes I also had to wonder what they were up to?!

When Julie died in 1986, I decided it was time to slow down. I retired and even sold our North Spirit Lake cabin. I did make the FAOB reunions and saw more of my grandkids.

On December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pearl Harbor, I was getting on the bus to head home from Branson, MO. I didn't even get to sit in my seat! In the blink of an eye there was pain and I moved on!

It was a great life, and I do enjoy watching you. The only problem is I can no longer offer constructive criticism!

Bob