



In Search of El dorado

A daily journal of my travels and adventures in my.....Search for Eldorado

Hello to Family & Friends

Tuesday, March 9th 2021 Day 51



It was a quiet night at the Heart of Texas Picnic Area. I heard a car about 7 a.m. but that was it, except for the deer I scared away. At least I think they were deer, I could only hear them, not see them.

I headed north to Cross Plains and the home and museum of Robert E Howard. It is permanently closed at this time.

For those of us who read comic books back in the 60's and 70's, or the magazine *Weird Tales* even before that, this is the man who created Conan the Barbarian.

The following is from Wikipedia - **Robert Ervin Howard** (January 22, 1906 – June 11, 1936) was an American author who wrote pulp fiction in a diverse range of genres. He is well known for his character Conan the Barbarian and is regarded as the father of the sword and sorcery subgenre.

Howard was born and raised in Texas. He spent most of his life in the town of Cross Plains, with some time spent in nearby Brownwood. A bookish and intellectual child, he was also a fan of boxing and spent some time in his late teens bodybuilding, eventually taking up amateur boxing.



From the age of nine he dreamed of becoming a writer of adventure fiction but did not have real success until he was 23. Thereafter, until his death by suicide at age 30, Howard's writings were published in a wide selection of magazines, journals, and newspapers, and he became proficient in several subgenres. His greatest success occurred after his death.

*Although a Conan novel was nearly published in 1934, Howard's stories were never collected during his lifetime. The main outlet for his stories was *Weird Tales*, where Howard created Conan the Barbarian. With Conan and his other heroes, Howard helped fashion the genre now known as sword and sorcery, spawning many imitators and giving him a large influence in the fantasy field. Howard remains a highly read author, with his best works still reprinted, and is one of the best-selling fantasy writers of all time.*

Howard's suicide and the circumstances surrounding it have led to speculation about his mental health. His mother had been ill with tuberculosis her entire life, and upon learning she had entered a coma from which she was not expected to wake, he walked out to his car and shot himself in the head.



On to Abilene I went. This is going to be a Gpops day as this is the museum of the Division he served in during WWII.

I seem to remember him telling me there was a museum in Texas, but I'm not sure. I did not realize this museum was here until a couple weeks ago and made sure to include it in my itinerary.

We have read info about the Mystery Division previously, in fact that research is what led me to finding their webpage.



The Mystery Division

When the 12th Armored Division was temporarily reassigned from the Seventh Army to the Third, it left the Seventh Army short of armor protection. To confuse enemy spies and keep their identity secret, the Hellcats were ordered to remove the shoulder patches from their uniforms and paint over all unit markings on their vehicles. This earned them a third nickname—the 'Mystery Division.'



He probably spent a lot of time in one of these.



A Sherman Tank

A single 12th Armored Division Sherman tank carries infantrymen into bomb shattered Schweinfurt, Germany. This center of the German ball bearing industry had been heavily bombed by Allied aircraft and then shelled by artillery for days before the 12th Armored Division men moved in to mop up.



The terrible devastation of war.

The Last Battle

While most of the Division was making its way to Heidenheim, elements of the 23rd tank Battalion and 17th Armored Infantry Battalion engaged in what has come to be known as the strangest battle of the Second World War. Schloss Itter (Itter Castle) had been pressed into service by the SS as a prison for high-value French political prisoners during the war. With defeat imminent, Nazi officials dispatched the 17th Waffen SS Panzergrenadier Division to execute these prisoners- including former Prime Ministers and even tennis star Jean Borotra. Lacking adequate armor and Infantry to repel an attack of such magnitude, Lieutenant John C. 'Jack' Lee chose a radical solution to his problem- he re-armed captured German soldiers, Major Josef Gangl of the Wehrmacht and his troops. Fighting commenced on 5 May and continued until the combined force was relieved by the 142nd Infantry on 6 May. This engagement has the distinction of not only being the last battle of the war in Europe, but also the only one in which American and German forces fought alongside one another as allies.

Later on in the museum this story was a little different. I messenger sent to find other troops ran into the German commander who, knowing the war was already lost and wanting to save lives, volunteered to take up arms against his countrymen.



The Nazi Eagle

The eagle holding the swastika was the national emblem of the Third Reich. Although the eagle was the national symbol of over twenty other countries, Hitler and the Nazis regarded the eagle as a strictly Aryan symbol. This figure was applied to nearly every item produced during Nazi rule, from clothing and documents to weapons and equipment. This bronze eagle with wings spread was known as the Wehrmachtadler or Armed Forces Eagle.

They had a history of the Swastika here that was quite interesting. If you want to do a little research it would be worthwhile.

Hey dad, does this bring back any memories?



They looked you up while I was there and told me you were in this division.

Headquarters/Headquarters Co.

In United States Army units, a Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC) is a company-sized military unit, found at the battalion level and higher.

In identifying a specific headquarters unit, it is usually referred to by its abbreviation as an HHC. While a regular line company is formed of three or four platoons, an HHC is made up of the headquarters staff and headquarters support personnel of a battalion, brigade, division, or higher level unit.

As these personnel do not fall inside one of the regular line companies of the battalion, brigade, or division, the HHC is the unit to which they are administratively assigned.

The typical personnel strength of an average HHC is 80 to 110 personnel.

“Amateurs Study Tactics; Professionals Study Logistics.”
-General Omar N. Bradley

Rations:

912 Crates of K Rations at 43 Pounds Per Crate: 20 Tons

Or

1,367 Crates of C Rations at 40 pounds Per Crate: 27 Tons **Water:** At least 1 gallon per man; 11,000 gallons or 46 Tons

Ammunition

In combat operations, a Division would consume an average of 39 tons of ammunition per day

Medical Supplies

Even when not engaged in combat, a Division would use about 1,000 pounds of medical supplies daily

Miscellaneous Supplies

About 3 tons of miscellaneous supplies— everything from socks to pencils— were distributed to the troops daily

Once again I deleted a photo – It stated the task of moving a division of 10,000 men 150 miles (Abilene to Ft Worth).

Fuel Usage:

77 Light Tanks at 1 Mile Per Gallon: 11,550 Gallons

462 Jeeps at 14 Miles Per Gallon: 4,944 Gallons

471 GMC 2-1/2 Ton Trucks at 6 Miles Per Gallon: 11, 775 Gallons

25 Heavy Wrecker Trucks at 8 Miles Per Gallon: 469 Gallons

30 M32 Tank Recovery Vehicles at .8 Miles Per Gallon: 5,625 Gallons

6 Treadway 6-Ton Bridging Trucks at 4 Miles Per Gallon: 225 Gallons

30 Ambulances at 8 Miles Per Gallon: 563 Gallons

54 M7 Priest Self-Propelled Howitzers at .7 Miles Per Gallon: 11,610 Gallons

186 Medium Tanks at .8 Miles Per Gallon: 34, 968 Gallons

60 Weapons Carrier Trucks at 8 Miles Per Gallon: 1,125 Gallons

3 4-Ton Cargo Trucks at 8 Miles Per Gallon: 57 Gallons

9 M25 40-Ton Tank Recovery Trucks at 2.2 Miles Per Gallon: 612 Gallons

8 Piper L-4 Spotter Aircraft at 5 Gallons Per Hour: 80 Gallons

6 Surgical Trucks at 6 Miles Per Gallon: 150 Gallons

54 Armored Cars at 8 Miles Per Gallon: 1,013 Gallons

501 Half-Track Vehicles at 3.5 Miles Per Gallon: 21, 543 Gallons

Total: 106,309 gallons of fuel...or 1,933...55 gal drums weighing 319 tons...enough to cover almost ten football fields.

**Operations of the
12th Armored Division**
5 December 1944 to 5 May 1945



Entering France

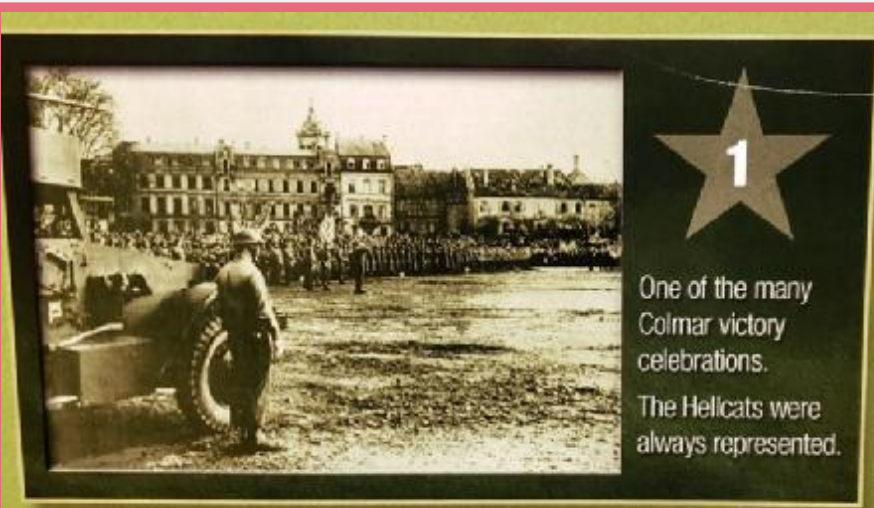
The 12th Armored Division landed at LeHavre, France on November, 11 1944 after crossing the English Channel from Southampton.

Fortunately, Gpops was on leave in the U.S. at the time of the D-Day invasion, otherwise I might not be here to author this newsletter.

Mystery Division

The 12th Armored Division was known as the "Mystery Division" and was the point for the Third Army's attack from Trier, France to the Rhine River. The attack included 13 divisions in all and covered about 100 miles.

Trier
18 Mar 45



1
One of the many Colmar victory celebrations. The Helicats were always represented.



Strasbourg

2



2

Knocked out
German pill box
on the Maginot
Line defenses.



3

Crossing the
Rhine River by
pontoon bridge
at Worms,
Germany

Worms
28 Mar 45

3



4

Wurzberg after
artillery shelling
and bombing
runs.

Wurzberg
3 April 45

4



12th Armored
Division
Occupation
Headquarters -
Heidenheim



Heidenheim



Col. Seiller with
bodies at Hurlag
death camp
near Landsberg.



Landsberg
27 April 45

Kochel

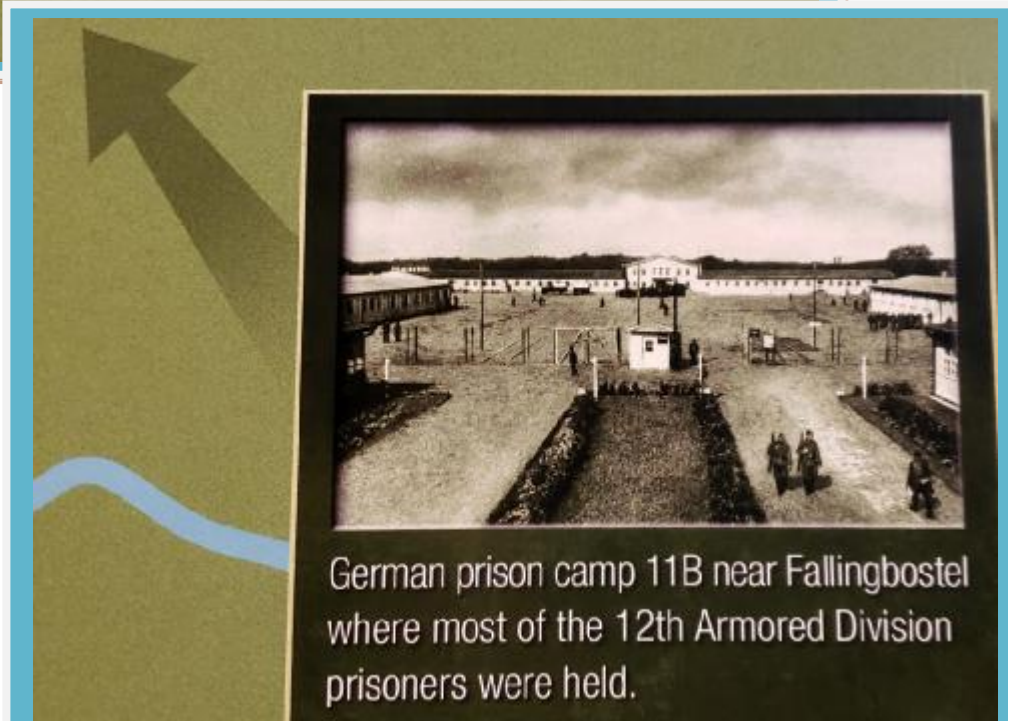


The 12th Armored
Division secures the
capture of German
scientist Dr. Wehmer
Von Braun.





9 Nurnberg



Bad Tolz
2 May 45



Itter Castle - Kufstein, Austria

I know he has pictures of this place, looking out of the windows at the mountains.



Hitler's Mountain Top Retreat

Berchtesgaden



RESCUING ANNETTE

MONDAY, JANUARY 8TH, 1945: 1500 HOURS

The following are dioramas which depict the Battle for Herrlisheim. Some photos turned out of and some are hard to see, mostly due to lighting.



The lady at reception told me an interesting story – They used photos and verbal accounts to build the scenes, then asked some actual participants to view the dioramas and offer their advice. Most said something along the lines of “well, you’ve got the snow right”.

THE WATERWORKS AND

TUESDAY, JANUARY 9TH, 1945: 0300 HOURS

PURPLE HEART LANE



This is about a twelve foot long diorama

THE STEINWALD WOOD

TUESDAY, JANUARY 16TH, 1945: 1100 HOURS



THE INITIAL ASSAULT

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10TH, 1945: 1330 HOURS



THE SECOND ASSAULT

THURSDAY, JANUARY 18TH, 1945: 0300 HOURS



FIRE FOR EFFECT

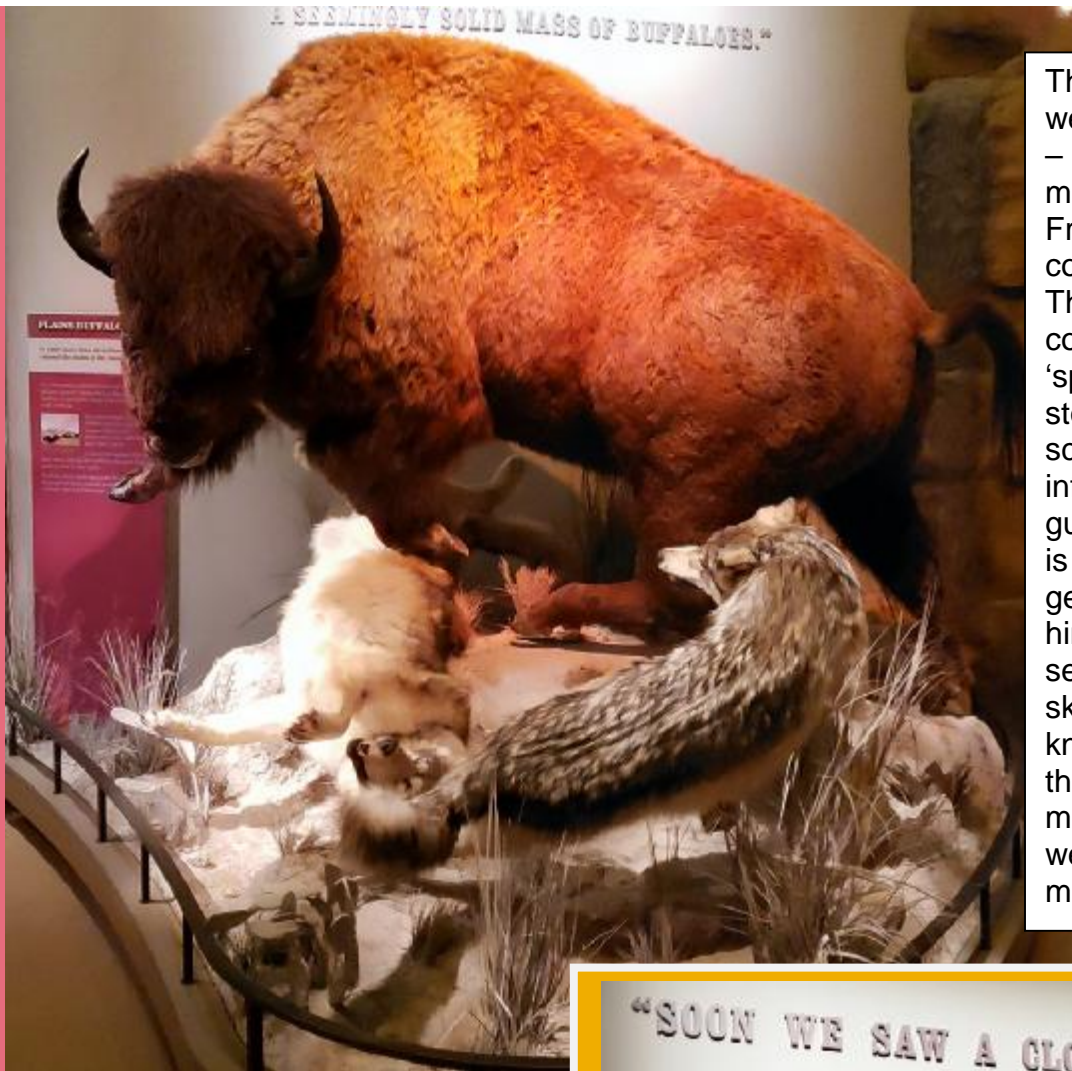
FRIDAY, JANUARY 19TH, 1945: 1200 HOURS



I was also informed that there are only about 40-50 12th Armored veterans still alive. So, to my Dad, my girls Gpops, thank you for your service! We are all very proud of you, love you, and are thankful that you are still here for us. Not knowing that I was going to be here today, Erin went to his house and cooked a good dinner for him.

The next stop is a unique interactive museum of the Texas Frontier.





This covered a lot of ground we all well aware of by now – First inhabitants, mammoths, Spanish, French, buffaloes, Indians, cowboys, trail drives, etc. The interactive parts are a couple movies, holographic 'spirit guides' who tell their stories of Texas, touch screens with way too much information, and so on. Our guide through the museum is Buck Taylor. The older generation will remember him as Newly from the TV series *Gunsmoke*. I skimmed the stuff I already knew and listened to most of the stories and watched the movies. It is an extremely well done museum, very modern.

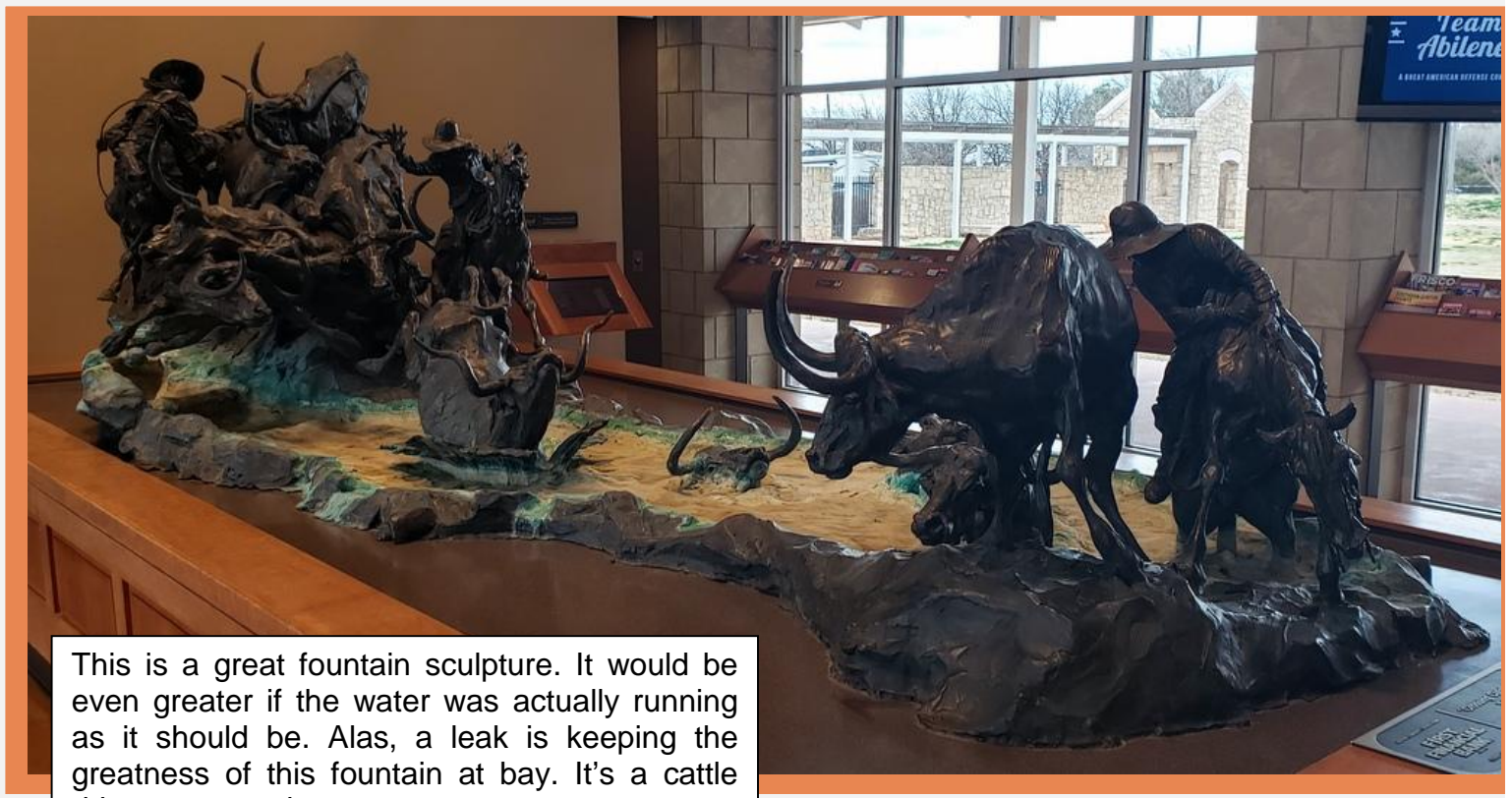
"SOON WE SAW A CLOUD OF DUST RISING. WE JUDGED THE HERD TO BE FIVE OR SIX MILES WIDE. AS FAR AS WE COULD SEE WAS A SEEMINGLY SOLID MASS OF BUFFALOES."



Can anyone tell me what this is?

This photo is a little dark so I will relate it here – Luxuries could be difficult to come by on the Texas frontier, and even harder to transport. Travelers often had little room to carry anything but absolute essentials. Settlers were sometimes forced to share many things, including personal grooming items. A toothbrush, such as this one, might be hung in stage stops, boarding houses or other public places for use by all who wished to clean their teeth.

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This is a great fountain sculpture. It would be even greater if the water was actually running as it should be. Alas, a leak is keeping the greatness of this fountain at bay. It's a cattle drive across a river.

I realize I told you I was taking a break from museums, but this one was special. I wish I could have called Gpops while I was there and asked him questions. I also did not notice until I was leaving that they have an audio tour. But there were something like 200 stops and I don't think my back could take that kind of abuse.

I did tell them about the history you have written down and the stories you are always telling us. They are anxious to get their hands on it.

There were more than 17,000 men who served in the 12th Armored, and Gpops is one of only 50 or so still kicking.

I am planning to spend the night here in Abilene. The wind was so strong from the south today that I was almost blown off the road a couple times. In fact, I don't know for sure, but it seemed at one point that a red light came on and the engine started to slow down, so I am wondering if there is some sort of tipping sensor that shuts down the engine if the vehicle tips past a certain point. Anyways, instead of fighting that wind as I head south I might as well spend the night and have an easier time in the morning.

Of course that depends on if I want to see anything else here in Abilene. However, even their brochure on what to see here has only a two day itinerary. LOL

It's not a museum so maybe everyone will be interested, but Abilene is home to the largest selection of storybook character sculptures, with the latest count at twenty-five. That might be an interesting bike ride or walk around downtown, and it ain't a museum.

There are also ruins of a fort nearby, but I plan to visit the Fort Stockton National Historic Park next week, so I will skip that one here.

Until next time.....