

Colonel Leo V. Strausbaugh (Class 36-42)

Biography from the US Army Ranger Hall of Fame (2008)

Leo V. Strausbaugh was born on January 1, 1920 in Hillsboro, Illinois. He joined the Army on March 24, 1942, and was assigned to the U.S. Army Artillery base at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma for three months of basic training and training on horse drawn artillery. Two months prior to his completion of basic, Leo was selected for OCS. On October 29, 1942, after completing OCS, Leo was promoted to 2nd Lt. and was assigned to the training center mule pack battery with 75 millimeter howitzers.

In December of 1942, Leo was reassigned to the 98th Field Artillery Battalion located at Ft. Carson, Colorado. A few weeks later, the 98th was transported to Newport News, Virginia for shipment overseas, destination unknown. Leo was assigned to B Battery, led by Captain Arthur "Bull" Simons. In February of 1944, the 98th's mules were shipped to Merrill's Marauders, and LTC Mucci took over the 98th with the purpose of turning those who volunteered into a Ranger Battalion. Leo was one of the first to volunteer. The Ranger training in the mountains and jungles of New Guinea was rigorous.

After Leo organized and led an impressive platoon demonstration for the 6th Division, he was promoted to 1st Lt. Around July 1, 1944, companies were organized to reflect the TOE of a Ranger Battalion. Capt. Simons led B Company, and, having his choice of officers, chose Leo to be his second in command. Training and organization completed, Leo and the Rangers were ready for action, just in time to spearhead the invasion of the Philippines.

On October 18, 1944, two days prior to the main invasion force, Leo and B Company landed on Homonhon Island during the initial re-taking of the Philippines, then moved to Suluan to take out a Japanese held lighthouse used to signal enemy ships and send radio messages. Captain Simons made the initial assault on the light house, but he and his men became trapped in the lighthouse and surrounded by Japanese. Leo led thirty-five Rangers to the lighthouse, eliminated the Japanese threat, and rescued Captain Simons.

In January 1945, the invasion force moved into the Lingayen Gulf in preparation for the invasion of Luzon. Ranger Companies B and E secured the island of Santiago, then moved onto Luzon. During May of 1945, Leo was appointed B Company commander and promoted to Captain. Soon thereafter, he was awarded the Bronze Star for leading B Company thirty miles beyond 6th Division front lines, to seek and locate Japanese positions. Leo located the Japanese positions in the vicinity of the IPO Dam and provided the intelligence for 6th Division's attack.

During June of 1945, Leo's B Company was chosen to become a third segment of Major Connolly's task force and take the town of Aparri from the Japanese. Strausbaugh's Rangers, without the support of the 6th Ranger Bn., traveled over 400 miles on this 30 day mission, positioned themselves on the Cagayan River, gathered intelligence and on June 21st, took Aparri. B Company proceeded to and secured the air strip south of Aparri

just prior to a jump by a battalion of paratroopers from the 11th Airborne. Strausbaugh's Rangers pushed south and made contact with elements of the 37th Division which closed the gap, dividing the Japanese forces and giving the Americans control of the west side of the valley. The Aparri operation sealed the fate of the Japanese in the Philippines and ended combat operations for the 6th Rangers, freeing them to prepare for the invasion of Japan.

The dropping of two atom bombs on Japan eliminated the need for that invasion.

Following the war, Leo Strausbaugh, returning to Artillery, served in the U.S. Army Reserve for 28 years and rose to the rank of Colonel in 1969. In 1959 he graduated from Command and General Staff College (C&GS), Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas. Colonel Strausbaugh served as the Director of Instruction for the 5038th USAR School, 102nd Ozark Division, for five years. **In 1973, one year before his retirement, Colonel Leo V. Strausbaugh was inducted into the OCS Hall of Fame at Ft. Sill.**

