

## **Robert Marshall Alber (1916 – 1945)**

Robert Alber was born in Monongahela, Washington County, Pennsylvania in 1916. The family moved to Hollywood, California when Robert was 4 years old. His mother was Dr. Catherine R. Alber,. He had one brother, Reynold H., and one sister Marguerite. Later, they moved to Chula Vista where Robert attended Chula Vista Junior High School and Sweetwater High School. Athletic, he played baseball and football in and graduated in 1936. He majored in art at San Diego State College during 1937 and 1938. He then worked at the Rohr Aircraft Company in Chula Vista. In the summer, Robert also worked in Imperial Beach as a lifeguard at the city pool. He was never married.

In 1943, he was drafted into the army, and attended boot camp at Camp Roberts, in California. He was a Private First Class in the infantry and his service number was 39-710-924. On June 7, 1944 (D-Day+1), he landed at Omaha Beach, Normandy France. In July, 1944, while listed as Missing in Action (MIA), he was found wounded at St-Lo France, and sent back to England for rehabilitation. In October, 1944, he returned to the front lines in Germany, where he saw action in the December German “Battle of the Bulge” offensive. He was killed in action (KIA) on 23 March, 1945 in Germany while serving with Company I, 38<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, First Army. His mother received a letter dated 13 April, 1945 apprising her of her sons’ death. He is buried at a Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery at Henri-Chapelle, Belgium. The location of his grave is at Plot F, Row 5, and Grave #43. He was awarded the Bronze Star for heroic action in saving two wounded fellow soldiers, two Purple Hearts, and two Presidential Unit Citations.

A website ([globalsecurity.org](http://globalsecurity.org)) has the history of this famous unit as noted below:

*As part of the build up for Operation Overlord, the Normandy invasion, the 2d Inf. Div. was transferred from Fort Sam Houston to Ireland in October 1943. On June 7, 1944, D Day +1, the division stormed ashore at bloody Omaha Beach. While other units were stalled by the determined German resistance, the Indianheads blasted through the hedgerows of Normandy. After a fierce, 39-day battle, the 2d Inf. Div. took the vital port city of Brest, which was liberated on Sept. 18, 1944. From positions around St. Vith, Belgium, and throughout the Battle of the Bulge, the 2nd Inf. Div. held fast, preventing the enemy from seizing key roads leading to the cities of Liege and Antwerp. Resuming the offensive on Feb. 6, 1945, the division joined the race to annihilate the fleeing Wehrmacht.*

In addition to his name appearing in Memorial Park and on a street in the Sunbow community, it also appears on an Honors Plaque at San Diego State College.



(A special thanks to Mrs. Sandy Duncan and Robert's sister, Mrs. Marguerite Parsons for their invaluable research and assistance on PFC Robert Alber.)