



Railsplitter Obituary



Joseph Roger Knack

2 August 1925 – 1 December 1944

Birth: 2 Aug 1925
Rochester, Monroe County, New York, USA

Death: 1 Dec 1944 (aged 19)
Nieuwenhagen, Landgraaf Municipality, Limburg, Netherlands

Burial: Netherlands American Cemetery and Memorial
Margraten, Eijsden-Margraten Municipality, Limburg, Netherlands
Section G ~ Row 16 ~ Grave 23

He was in **Company L** of **Third Battalion**, in the **334th Infantry Regiment**, which was within the **84th Infantry Division**. As such, he had the honor of participating in the very first day of combat operations ever for the 84th ID, as his regiment was the first to assault the German town of Prummern, on Nov 18, 1944.



Railsplitter Obituary

Note that the initial assembly of the 84th Division contained a lot of volunteers that were considered “4F”. As such, they were originally designated to be an occupying army in Germany after the war was over, allowing combat armies to come home. Joseph Roger Knack had tried to volunteer twice but was rejected, do to poor eyesight. But as the U.S. ran out of young men, he tried a third time and got in.

As time went on and casualties took a toll on US armies, the 84th Division was moved into combat. The 334th Infantry Regiment was the first in the field. Joseph served as a Private in the 334th Infantry Regiment, 84th Infantry Division, U.S. Army during World War II.

He enlisted in the Army on December 10, 1943 in Rochester, New York. He was noted as being Single, without dependents.

He was "**Killed In Action**" in Germany during the war and awarded a Purple Heart.

Overall unit historical information provided by eight sources:

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/84th_Division_\(United_States\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/84th_Division_(United_States))
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelfth_United_States_Army_Group
- “Railsplitters”

https://www.lonesentry.com/gi_stories_booklets/84thinfantry/index.html

- “Fortune Favored The Brave” https://digicom.bpl.lib.me.us/ww_reg_his/89/
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Queen
- <https://www.med-dept.com/unit-histories/53d-field-hospital/>
- <https://www.fieldsofhonor-database.com/index.php/en/american-war-cemetery-margraten-k/63649-knack-joseph-r>
- War Dept. Historical Film H.R. B-29 called “American Ninth Army-Aachen to the Roer River” viewable at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vwPodSEKJA>.



Railsplitter Obituary

His unit: Company L of Third Battalion, in the 334th Infantry Regiment, was within the 84th Infantry division (Railsplitters, commanded by Maj. Gen. Alexander R. Bolling), which was in XIII Corps, within Ninth Army (commanded by Lt. General William H. Simpson), part of Twelfth United States Army Group.

Timeline of Action:

1. 84th Infantry Division was ordered into active military service on 15 October, 1942, at Camp Howze, Texas.
2. 84th Infantry Division embarked on 20 September 1944 and arrived in the United Kingdom on 1 October, for additional training. Note that the Knack family said JRK went over in August as a member of the Signal Corps.
3. The 84th Infantry Division landed on Omaha Beach Normandy, 1–4 November 1944. The crossings were made in LSTs, LCTs, Liberty ships, and the H.M.S. Cheshire.
4. They moved to the vicinity of Gulpen, the Netherlands, 5–12 November as part of the 9th Army.
5. 84th Infantry Division entered combat on 18 November with an attack on Geilenkirchen (mining and transportation center with a population of 20,000), Germany, as part of the larger offensive code-named Operation Clipper, in the Roer Valley.
 - a. Two of its regiments were loaned to the Second British Army for Operation Clipper, the 333rd and 334th, and were attached to the Sherwood Yeoman Rangers.
 - b. To the 334th went the distinction of being the first 84th unit to enter combat, seizing the initiative in the Geilenkirchen sector on 18 Nov., attacking and capturing Prummern (high ground over Geilenkirchen).
 - c. Captured Geilenkirchen on 19 November, which was second largest German town to fall up to that time.
 - d. 84th Infantry Division detached from the Second British Army Nov. 23 and rejoined XIII Corps., Ninth Army, for Operation Queen.



Railsplitter Obituary

6. The division pushed forward to take Beeck and Lindern (both are north eastern suburbs of Geilenkirchen) in the face of heavy enemy resistance, 29 November.
7. On Nov 30, 1944 (date of his being wounded), the 333rd and 334th fought and captured high ground west of Lindern and north of Beeck. Note that in the referenced "Fortune Favored The Brave", page 29 provides a brief action report of Third Battalion for that date.
8. Note that Democrat And Chronical newspaper (Rochester NY) reported (AP story) on their Dec 1, 1944 front page top headline "9th Army Surges On, Widens Hold on Roer". Article says, "while the shattering attack by three divisions of the Ninth Army beat back the dug-in Germans". Assuming that this morning newspaper was a day behind reporting war news from Europe, this is potentially the news report of the battle where he was mortally wounded on the 30th.
9. Information received by his parents (in received order): Western Union Telegram on Dec. 11 informing them that their son had been "seriously wounded in action" on Nov. 30, from General Dunlop; second telegram on Dec 17 that their son had died, from General Dunlop; after those telegrams were received, a letter dated Dec 1 arrived from General Bolling, stating that he died on Dec 1, 1944, in the American Military Hospital in Holland, and wrote he was "a conscientious and courageous soldier" and "during the stress of combat he remained cheerful and cool-headed, and he was an inspiration to his fellow soldiers"; a letter dated Jan. 13, 1945 from General Dunlop, states that death occurred on Dec 1, not on Nov 30, as was mistakenly reported in the second telegram; a letter dated Aug. 16, 1946, arrived from Colonel Charles D. Carle (commanding at the Records Administration Center in St. Louis, MO), stating "he received severe shell fragment wounds of the head in action 30 November 1944 near Apweiler, Germany" and that "death occurred on 1 December 1944". Due to his regiment location on Nov. 30, he likely received his fatal wound north of Apweiler.
10. The U.S. Army's 53d Field Hospital's Third Hospital Unit was assigned to treat 84th Infantry Division wounded from "17 Nov 44 - 25 Dec 44" while it was in Nieuwenhagen, the Netherlands. This is the probable location where Private J. Roger Knack passed away on 1 Dec.



Railsplitter Obituary

11. Posthumously awarded Purple Heart Medal.

Provided by: *Historical Wyoming*

(Vol. 66 No. 1, Winter 2019)

Intermediary source: *WWII Gold Star*

Veterans of Wyoming County, NY,

By James Gillen

Original source: sister Doris Anne (Knack) Fyle

Joseph Roger Knack

Pvt., U. S. Army

Joseph Roger Knack was born August 2, 1925. In his school life he was active in student affairs and played on both the football and track teams. He was known as one of the most popular members of his class. A graduate of Perry High School class of 1943, he became the editor of the school newspaper, *The Yellowjacket*, in his senior year. In his two years before graduation he worked at the *Perry Herald* where he was known as "Roge." According to his sister, his dream was to become a journalist. His family moved in 1943 after Joseph R.'s graduation when his father, an employee of the Robeson Cutlery Co., took a job in Rochester.

After winning a scholarship to the Rochester Institute of Technology, Joseph R. studied printing where he obtained a job at Eastman Kodak in Rochester, NY.

He enlisted in December of 1943.

Receiving his training at Camp Crowder, MO, in the Signal Corps, he was then sent overseas in August of 1944. While serving with 334th Infantry Regiment, the 84th Infantry Division on the German front on November 30, 1944, he was killed in action at the age of 19. He was buried in the Netherlands American Cemetery and Memorial in Margraten, Netherlands: Plot G, Row 16, Grave 23.

Survived by:

Parents: Joseph H. & Marie (Schmidt) Knack

Sister: Doris Anne (Knack) Fyle

Provided by: *Democrat & Chronicle of Rochester NY*

(Dec. 19, 1944, page 15)

Pvt. J. Roger Knack, 19, Killed in Action

Pvt. J. Roger Knack, 19, was killed Nov. 30 in infantry action in Germany, his parents have learned. He was the only son of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Knack, 217 Pardee Rd.

Private Knack was a graduate of Perry High School and was a student at Rochester Institute of Technology when he entered service in December, 1943. He was sent overseas last August. He leaves his parents and a sister, Miss Doris Anne Knack.



**J. ROGER
KNACK**