



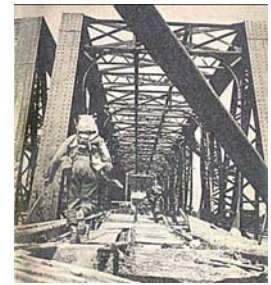
Wilbur Richard Heist
Sergeant U.S. Army
12 January 1943 – 15 May 1946



"Blue Devils"
 Infantry Regiment



88th Division



Blue Devils Crossing the
 Po River Bridge

Wilbur was the third son and the fifth of twelve children born to **Oliver George Heist** (30 June 1889 – 28 February 1936) and **Beulah Florence Reichard** (28 February 1890 – 3 March 1974). Wilbur was born at home on 15 February 1923 in Wescosville, Pennsylvania, in Lower Macungie Township. He attended grade school in Wescosville, and attended Allentown High School from 1937 to 1939. He then worked as a Clerk until enlisting in the Army. He enlisted as a Private in Allentown, Pennsylvania, on 12 January 1943. A week later, on 19 January 1943, just prior to reporting for duty, Wilbur married **Evelyn Mae Laubach** (born 10 October 1924) in the parsonage of the Reverend David Kaufman in Emmaus, Pennsylvania. She went to live in Gatesville, Texas, while Wilbur was assigned to a tank destroyer battalion at Fort Hood near Gatesville. Wilbur was then ordered overseas to the European Theater, and Evelyn returned to Pennsylvania to live on her family's farm off Route 29 between Emmaus and Shimerville, Pennsylvania. Wilbur left the States on 19 October 1944 to join the 351st Infantry ("Blue Devils") Regiment, 88th Infantry Division, which had been transported from Oran, Algeria, to the Naples, Italy, area in February 1944. Wilbur was assigned to Company G. The Division had been placed on the defensive in Italy in October 1944, undergoing rehabilitation from earlier combat in Italy, including the Battle of Laiaticoas. On 15 April 1945, the Division went on the offensive, advancing toward Monterumici Hill, a key position in the entire German defensive line near Bologna. After two days of fighting, the Blue Devils knocked the well-organized German defenders off the key ridge. Once past Monterumici, they continued on across the Po River to the Italian Alps, seizing Verona on 25 April 1945, and Vicenza three days later. They then fought off counter-attacks, took Cornuda, and pressed on into Borgo and Fiera di Primiero as word reached the Division that the German forces in Italy surrendered on 2 May 1945. Wilbur subsequently served as part of the Allied Occupation Forces in Germany. While involved in transporting German prisoners by train, the toes on Wilbur's right foot were crushed by a train wheel. He was first taken to a hospital in Austria but they could not speak English, so he was evacuated to Italy where the toes were amputated. Gangrene eventually set in, so he was evacuated to the States in October 1945 and admitted to Army Lawson General Hospital near Atlanta, Georgia, where part of his foot had to be amputated. He remained there until 15 May 1946, when he was discharged there with disability as a Sergeant. He was awarded the Combat Infantry Badge, European-African-Middle-Eastern Medal (w/two bronze battle stars), World War II Victory Medal, Army Occupation Medal, American Service Medal, and the French Croix de Guerre. Wilbur then went to Chicago for electrical training at the Coyne Electrical School under the G. I. Bill, while Evelyn lived in an apartment in Wescosville. Wilbur graduated in 1947 and, after returning home, he went to work as an Electrician for his brother **Ralph Heist**, who had an electrical contracting business based in Trexlertown, Pennsylvania. Wilbur and Evelyn successively lived in apartments in Emmaus, Wescosville, and Trexlertown before buying a home in Cetronia, Pennsylvania, in 1950. In 1948 or 1949, Wilbur's foot became seriously infected, and he was admitted to Valley Forge Military Hospital for treatment after his family doctor in Trexlertown gave him a letter demanding that he be admitted there because the infection was military-related. Wilbur worked for his brother until 4 June 1966, and then joined International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 375 in Allentown until June 1986, when he retired. Shortly thereafter, Wilbur and Evelyn moved to Florida, where Wilbur enjoyed playing golf. Wilbur died in the Oak Hill Hospital in Brooksville, Hernando County, Florida, on 22 February 1994. He is buried at the Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, Florida. Four of Wilbur's brothers, **Paul Martin**, **Earl Oliver**, **Morgan Reuben**, and **Robert Ernest**, also served in the Army; Paul in Korea, Earl and Morgan during World War II, and Robert from 7 February 1946 to 10 August 1947.