



Special Services
Force Patch



Bert
February 2015



Bertram S. Winzer
Private First Class U.S. Army
10 December 1942 – 22 September 1945



Canadian
Commemorative
Silver \$5 Coin



Congressional Gold Medal

Bert was born on 17 September 1922, in Emmaus, Pennsylvania. He attended grades 1–8 at Lincoln-Central School in Emmaus, and graduated from Emmaus High School in 1940. Prior to entering the Army he worked as a Yarn-Winder for the Jute Mill at Gordon and Jordon Streets in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and for Roy C. Wieder Gas Station in Emmaus. Bert was still living in Emmaus when he was drafted into the Army as a Private on 10 December 1942. He was first sent to Camp Maxey, Texas, for basic training as an Infantry Rifleman, and then to Fort Ethan Allen at Essex, Vermont, where he was assigned to and underwent advanced training with 1st Special Service Force, an élite joint American-Canadian parachute commando unit, a forerunner of today’s special forces. On 11 July 1943, Bert left with his unit for Alaska where he fought in the Aleutian Islands Campaign at Kiska and Segula Islands until returning to the States until 26 October 1943. He then he left for Africa and subsequently fought in several battles including the battles for Naples-Foggia, Anzio, and Rome-Arno in Italy; Southern France (Alpes-Maritimes); and the Rhineland (Franco-Italian Border area). At Anzio, Bert often went on reconnaissance patrols that infiltrated German camps in the area. It was at Anzio where the unit became known as “The Devil’s Brigade,” the nickname given to them by the Germans, and of which a movie and TV History Channel documentary have been made. In addition to several campaign medals for his service in the Pacific and European-African Campaigns, Bert was awarded the Purple Heart for a shrapnel wound incurred in his left shoulder on 26 September 1944, in Southern France. The force disbanded and Bert was assigned to the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division at the Battle of the Bulge. After World War II ended, Bert returned to Pennsylvania and was discharged at Indiantown Gap on 22 September 1945. He returned to the Lehigh Valley, marrying **Joyce Marie Meeker** (31 July 1924 – 11 February 1981), and living in Allentown from 1945 until 1982. He then moved to and settled in Lower Macungie, Pennsylvania. After the war, Bert worked for Ritter & Yost Motor Company in Allentown from 1946 to 1965, Cliff Motors in Hellertown, Pennsylvania, from 1965 to 1966, and Mack Truck Company from 1966 to 1982. He became a life member of the Breinigsville, Pennsylvania, VFW Post 8282, and Consistory President for the United Church of Christ in Allentown. It wasn’t until 25 April 2013 that Bert was retroactively awarded the Bronze Star Medal, which had been authorized for World War II combat veterans under a 1962 presidential order. Then, on 3 February 2015, at a ceremony on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, Bert and other surviving members of the “Devil’s Brigade” received the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian honor that Congress can bestow, and a Canadian Commemorative Silver \$5 Coin. In March 2015, he received the Chevalier (Knight) in the French Legion of Honor, the highest French decoration, from the government of France. Bert and Joyce raised two children: a daughter, **Pamela (Winzer) Deppe**, and a son, **Kim Bertram Winzer**, who served in the Army in Vietnam from 5 January 1971 to 7 February 1972. Bert’s parents were **Paul A.F. Winzer Jr.** (27 March 1893 – 6 February 1978) and **Florence Lillian (Wood) Winzer** (10 February 1897 – 26 December 1978).