



76th Infantry Division

Merritt James Smith
Technician 4 U.S. Army
12 June 1942 – 13 January 1946

Merritt was born on the family farm on 30 January 1920 in Lynnport, Pennsylvania. When he was two months old, his family relocated to a farm on Mertztown Road between Brookdale and Butz a Gass. He attended grades 1–8 from 1926 to 1935 at Butz School at the intersection of Mertztown and Hilltop Roads in Lower Macungie Township. He lived on the farm until 1938, and then went to work helping a local tradesman, Harry Kauffman, in his painting and wallpapering business from 1938 to 1940. He entered the Army as a Private at Willkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, on 12 June 1942 while living in the Mertztown-Brookdale area. He was assigned to the 76th Infantry Division at Fort Meade, Maryland, where he underwent basic training. The Division moved to A.P. Hill Military Reservation in Virginia in July 1943, where Merritt received additional infantry training, qualified as a Radio Operator/Maintainer, and was assigned to Headquarters Company, 417th Infantry Regiment. In October 1943 the Division moved to Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, where they trained for winter warfare. They left the States on 23 November 1944 for the European Theater, arriving in England on 4 December 1944, where they underwent additional training before crossing the English Channel on 19 January 1945 and entering into combat the following month along the Sauer River near the Luxembourg-German border. The 76th Division then advanced through Belgium and Germany more than 400 miles and crossed 20 rivers against hostile resistance in 110 days of combat, capturing more than 33,000 prisoners. During April 1945 they crossed the German provinces of Thuringia and Saxony to within 50 miles of the Czechoslovakian border, halting at the Mulde and the Schopau Rivers. The Division remained in this area until the war in Europe ended, and was inactivated in Germany on 31 August 1945. Merritt remained in Germany until he returned to the States on 9 January 1946 and was discharged four days later at Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania. He returned to work for Mack Trucks from 1946 to 1948 while also doing part-time painting. In 1948 he established his own painting and wallpapering business, which he ran until 1982. During that period, he also worked part time as a Sales Representative for Yearbook House Company selling yearbooks to schools until 1977, and then for several other small companies selling advertising specialties until 1995. Merritt married **Joyce Estelle Folk** (born 10 December 1921) in 1943 in Walberts, Pennsylvania. Initially they lived in Walberts and then moved to Slatington, Pennsylvania, in 1948 where they lived until moving to Millsboro, Delaware, in 1984. With his penchant for remaining active, Merritt had a flea market stand at a flea market in Laurel, Delaware, which he ran from 1984 to 1995, and he supervised the annual summer painting for the Kutztown, Pennsylvania, Folk Festival from 1988 to 1995. After 1995, Merritt raised indoor plants, sometimes for sale and sometimes to give away as gifts. Merritt was a member of the Male Chorus at Trexlertown Lutheran and United Church of Christ Churches from 1937 to 1941; the Slatington Lions Club from 1953 to 1973; and the Northern Lehigh and the Lehigh County School Boards and the Lehigh County Parent-Teachers Association during the 1960s and 1970s, holding several leadership positions in them. He also became an old-car enthusiast, owning four vintage cars. Merritt and Joyce had four sons: **Keith**, twins **Alan** and **Paul**, and **Karl**. Merritt's parents were **James William Smith** (30 November 1866 – 21 November 1936) and **Ellen Louisa Rausch** (5 May 1878 – 10 April 1951).