WILLIAM GEORGE LAPOSHA

US ARMY 1943-1946

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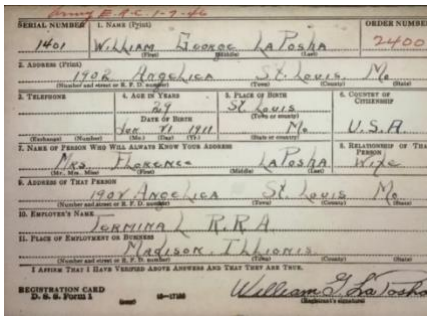
William George LaPosha was 21-JUNE 1911. His father was Frank LaPosha (1881-1950) and his mother was Theresa Thomas LaPosha (1889-1967). He had one sibling, Edward Frank LaPosha (1910-1993). In 1930 the family lived on Mallinckrodt Street in St. Louis.

In the 1940 census, his occupation was listed as a stone mason. His education showed he completed elementary school 8th grade. Bill registered for the draft 16-OCT 1940. His employer at the time was Terminal Railroad Company in Madison Illinois. His wife was Florence L. LaPosha Lapping. In 1942 William began a 16-week Police Academy training course. At the time he lived on 1425 Newhouse in St. Louis. They would have one son, William.



SERIAL NUMBER 1401 — 1. NAME (Print): William George LaPosha — ORDER NUMBER 2400
2. ADDRESS (Print): 1425 Angelica St. Louis Mo
3. TELEPHONE — 4. AGE IN YEARS 27 — DATE OF BIRTH Dec 11 1911 — 5. PLACE OF BIRTH St. Louis Mo — 6. COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP U.S.A.
7. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS: Mrs. Florence LaPosha — RELATIONSHIP OF THIS PERSON: Wife
8. ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON: 1425 Angelica St. Louis Mo
9. EMPLOYER'S NAME: Terminal R.R.A.
11. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS: Madison Illinois
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.
REGISTRATION CARD — D. S. S. Form 1 — William G. LaPosha

Bill played amateur baseball and won a championship in 1932. He would later have contracts with two minor clubs although he never pursued baseball as a career. He played amateur baseball with the Belleville Stags at first base and often competed with professional baseball teams in exhibition games. He also played halfback on several professional soccer teams.

The Official Family

Left To Right —
Howell, Spoto, Foster, Parkhurst, Major Cutler, Keeling,
Major General Harry J. Collins, Bolz, Captain McCahey, LaRosha,
Warrant Officer Tucker, Neece, Hightower, Roney, Wagoner,
Light Col

Bill entered the service in 1943. He was assigned to the 42nd Infantry (Rainbow) Division as a military policeman (MP). The nickname of the 42nd Infantry Division, the "Rainbow" division, reflects the composition of the division during World War I. The division was drawn from the National Guards of 26 states and the District of Columbia. It represented a cross section of the American people, as the rainbow represents a cross section of colors.

In April 1943, Brigadier General Harry J. Collins assumed command of the 42nd Infantry Division at Camp Gruber, Oklahoma, and was promoted to major general. As a senior commander, Collins earned the nickname "Hollywood Harry" for his flamboyant personal conduct, including use of a motorcycle escort with flashing lights and sirens when he traveled. He trained the 42nd Division in the United States for 16 months before departure for overseas service.

The division went overseas November 1944 and deployed to Europe in December 1944, when it landed in the French port of Marseille. After arriving in France, the three infantry regiments (222nd, 232nd, & 242nd) were briefly detached as part of the Seventh Army's VI Corps. The regiments entered combat in the vicinity of Strasbourg, relieving elements of the 36th Infantry on 24-December 1944.

The 42nd Division, under Collins, played a major role in stopping the last German drive into Western Europe, known as the Battle of the Bulge. The division then went on to take part in the Western Allied invasion of Germany. By mid-December, the Rainbow division had advanced into Alsace, closing in on the Strasbourg area.

While defending on a 31-mile sector along the Rhine north and south of Strasbourg in January 1945, the regiments repulsed several enemy counterattacks at Hatten and other locations during the German "Operation Northwind" offensive. On 24 and 25 January 1945, in the Bois D'Ohlungen, and the vicinity of Schweighouse-sur-Moder and Neubourg, the 222nd Infantry Regiment held a position covering a front of 7,500 yards, three times the normal frontage for a regiment in defense.

The 222nd Infantry Regiment was repeatedly attacked by elements of the German 7th Parachute, 47th Volks Grenadier Division, and the 25th Panzer Grenadier Division. During the ensuing struggle, one company of the 222nd Infantry was surrounded, but withdrew from their position and infiltrated back through the Germans to the regimental lines after exhausting all but 35 rounds of ammunition. For 24 hours, the battle raged, but the Germans were never able to break through the 222nd lines. For this action the 222nd Infantry Regiment was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation.

The side entrance to the Burgerbrau-Keller in Munich. It was in this beer hall that Hitler gave birth to the national socialist party and nazism. From left to right: Capt. J. B. McCahey, Jr., aide to General Collins; Corp. William LaPocha; Maj. Max Richter, surgeon, Special Troops, 42nd division; Maj. Gen. Harry J. Collins; Corp. Spencer Lightcap; the manager of the beer hall (unnamed), and Pfc. Robert Keeling.

On 14-February 1945, the 42nd the entire division entered combat, taking up defensive positions near Haguenau in the Hardt Forest. After a month of extensive patrolling and active defense, the 42nd went on the offensive. On the night of 27-February the Germans laid down a heavy concentration of artillery and mortar fire and under this the elements of the 6th Mountain Division were withdrawn and replaced by the 221st Volksgrenadier Regiment. In the brief period this unit had been in the line, German soldiers had come to respect the Rainbow and fear its patrols and raids. "Is your division a part of Roosevelt's SS?" asked one German when captured. The remark was passed along, and men kidded each other about being in the Rainbow SS.

The 42nd attacked through the Hardt Forest, broke through the Siegfried Line, 15-21 March 1945, cleared Dahn and Busenberg, and mopped up in that general area, while the 3rd Army created and expanded bridgeheads across the Rhine. Moving across the Rhine, 31-March 1945, the 42nd captured Wertheim am Main, 1-April 1945, and Wurzburg, 2–6-April 1945, after a fierce battle. Schweinfurt fell next after hand-to-hand engagements, 9–12-April 1945. Furth, near Nuremberg, was taken after fanatical resistance, 18–19-April 1945, by the 42nd.

On April-29 1945, the 42nd Infantry Division entered the Dachau concentration camp, the oldest functioning SS-controlled camp in Nazi Germany. On that day, three US Army divisions converged on the camp: the 42nd Infantry, the 45th Infantry, and the 20th Armored. When the three units arrived at Dachau, they discovered more than 30,000 prisoners in the overcrowded camp. Just days before, about 2,000 inmates evacuated on a death march from the Flossenburg concentration camp had arrived at Dachau and the SS guards had forced almost 7,000 Dachau inmates to move southward. The 42nd Division patrols arrested German war criminal Arthur Greiser. Greiser surrendered with Waffen-SS officer Heinz Reinefarth.

On 25-April, the 42nd captured Donauworth on the Danube, and, on 29-April 1945, liberated some 30,000 inmates at Dachau concentration camp. By the end of the war, the division had distinguished itself as the first in its corps to enter Germany, the first to breach the Siegfried line and the first to enter Munich.

After the Germans surrendered in May 1945, the 42nd continued to serve as occupation forces in Austria until its inactivation in June 1946. Harry J. Collins commanded the 42nd Infantry Division during the entire war.

Casualty figures for the 42nd Infantry Division, European theater of operations:

- Total battle casualties: 3,971
- Total deaths in battle: 655
- Days of combat: 106.
- Prisoners of war taken: 59,128.

William LaPosha and the 42nd participated in the following campaigns:

- Ardennes-Alsace
- Rhineland
- Central Europe

Bill earned a Bronze Star in service to our country during World War II. The citation reads:

> Headquarters 42nd (Rainbow) Infantry Division
> Office of the Commanding General
> 29-August 1945
>
> By direction of the President, under provisions of Army regulations 600-45, 22 September 1945, as amended, the Bronze Star is awarded to: William G. LaPosha 37621425, Corporal, Corps of Military Police, Military Police Platoon, 42nd Infantry Division, for meritorious service in connection with military operations against the enemy of the United States during the period 15-January 1945 to 8-May 1945, inclusive, in France and Germany.
> From the period 15-January to 8-May, Corporal LaPosha was a member of the security detail assigned to the division commander. Throughout that period, Corporal LaPosha shoed initiative and enthusiasm in the execution of his duties and accomplished all tasks in a superior manner. On 2-April 1945, near Wertheim Germany, Corporal LaPosha with another man was assigned by the division commander as flank security to the leading elements of the leading battalion of an infantry regiment belonging to the 42nd Infantry division. In order to accomplish this mission, Corporal LaPosha took up an exposed position on an exposed slope overlooking the town of Wertheim, and although exposed to intense enemy small arms fire coming from the town, he remained at this post continuing on his security mission. For over one-half hour, Corporal LaPosha remained in position, under intense fire, so that the division commander's party, which was with the forward element, was secured against surprise attack. His coolness and bravery, under fire assisted greatly in the success of the infantry mission. At all times during this period 15-January to 8-May 1945, Corporal LaPosha has maintained the highest standards of soldierly qualities and efficiency, and his record is in accordance with the finest traditions of the military service. Entered military service from St. Louis Missouri.
>
> Harry J. Collins,
> Major General, USA Commanding

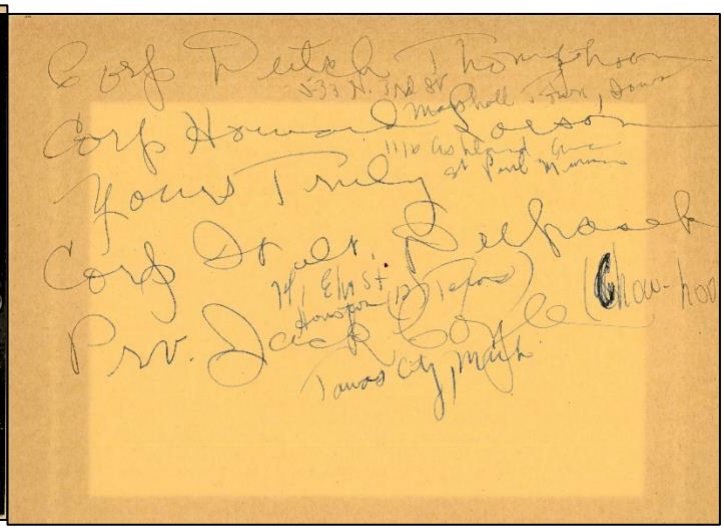
In addition to the Bronze Star, it is likely that William George LaPosha was also awarded:

- Presidential Unit Citation while deployed with VI Corp
- European–African–Middle Eastern Campaign Medal
- American Campaign Medal
- Army Occupation Medal
- World War II Victory Medal
- Good Conduct

William George LaPosha left the Army in 1946 and returned to the Police force in St. Louis. In 1964, Sgt Bill LaPosha was appointed to the Inspection force and Internal Affairs of the Police Department. He was a detective sergeant for 27 years in St. Louis and Northwoods, St. Louis County Missouri. Bill was very active in youth sports and his service. After the war, Bill would continue in baseball as coach in the city winning championships (Beaumont High School) and coach of the year awards on several occasions. He also coached area Catholic Youth Council soccer teams, including St. Ambrose on the Hill in St. Louis.

Police Officer Bill LaPosha with members of the Memphis Red Socks

William George LaPosha died 10-APR 1968. He was 56. At the time of his death, he was living at 7116 Oreon Street with his wife Florence. His funeral was at Ascension Parish in Northwoods, and he is buried at Calvary Cemetery.



Corp Peitsch Thompson
533 N. 21st St
Corp Herman Mayhall Jackson
Yours Truly
1110 Ashley St
St Joseph Missouri
Corp Orval Pelphrey
W. Elm St.
Thomson (Illinois)
Pvt. Dale [illegible]
Kansas City Mo.

About Faces! . . . . . By Freeman

It might look as if having a big jaw was a qualification for getting on the Division's baseball Team. Actually it isn't, it just happens that most of the members lead with their chin. . . and win. Take for instance Pvt. William LaPosha, Co. M, 222d Inf,. who chased crooks back on the St. Louis police force, and who now is practising chasing international crooks over the landscape in squad problems (he was recently chosen as 'soldier of the month' in his company), and at night can be found still chasing things—this time, fly balls! Others on the bench are probably Lombardi, Bosser, and Kluttz.