

Story #914 Herman Roelke

PVT Herman Roelke (1917-1963) was a Mazomanie World War II veteran and a charter member of the Mazomanie Greening – Buelow American Legion Post #437.

Herman enlisted in the Army on February 16, 1944 and assigned to the 350th Infantry “Battle Mountain” Regiment of the 88th “Blue Devil” Division.¹ He went to Europe in August, 1944. Herman was in the strategic Mt. Battaglia Battle of northern Italy from September 29 to October 3, 1944. This important battle on the steep mountain during torrential rain, was under heavy mortar attack with hand-to-hand combat. Later in action in the Po River Valley, he was reported missing for ten days from October 12 to 21, 1944.² Herman was awarded the Combat Infantry badge and returned to America in May 1945.

The following article appeared in the November 9, 1944 local *Mazomanie Sickle* newspaper: “Pvt. Herman C. Roelke, who has served overseas since August 1944 was reported missing in action by the War Department. He is the son of Mrs. Henrietta Roelke, Mazomanie.” The *Madison Wisconsin State Journal* reported him back to duty.

Herman Carl Roelke was born in Woodman WI on March 25, 1917, the adopted son of Roxbury farmer Herman Roelke and second wife Henriette “Etta” Corneil.³ Herman Jr. is first found as a three-year-old with his farming family, living in Roxbury Township at the 1920 US Census. His father has died and he is living with his widowed mother in Mazomanie for the 1940 US Census. Herman is then a gas station attendant. His October 16, 1940 Draft Card listed him living in Madison working for the Ed Friday Dairy. He is 5’-10½”, 165 # with a light completion, blonde hair and blue eyes.

After service Herman returned to Wisconsin and married Luella Catherine Frey (1923-2007) in May 1946.⁴ She was the daughter of Roxbury traffic patrolman Henry Frey and Mary Maier. The marriage did not last long as the 1950 US Census reports Herman living in Fitchburg with his widowed mother. He is now a 33 year old farm laborer. Herman passed away in Chicago on August 18, 1963 and is buried in the Forest Home Cemetery of Forest Park IL.⁵ He worked as a truck driver in Chicago.⁶

¹ *Wisconsin State Journal*, 23 February 1945

² *Ibid*, 8 November 1944

³ *The Roelke Family of Dane County*, 1983, Marcus & Beverly Roelke

⁴ *The Capital Times*, 17 May 1946

⁵ Find A Grave

⁶ *The Roelke Family of Dane County*

