



The Archangel Committee
The Russian Sister City Committee of Greater Portland
P.O. Box 105, Portland, Maine 04112

To: Arkhangelsk Veterans of the Great Patriotic War

Victory Day

9 May 1945 – 9 May 2021

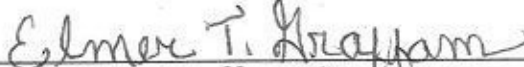
My name is Elmer T. Graffam and I was born on 24 February 1921 and I live in the City of Westbrook Maine in the United States of America.

I joined the United States Army in 1942 and after Basic and Advanced training I was assigned to Battery A of the 243rd Field Artillery Battalion. In preparation for combat, the U.S. Army ordered my unit to receive and operate new guns that were much larger than before. These new weapons were huge 8-inch (203 cm) guns that were towed by tractors and assembled by cranes. After proper training, we could fire these guns accurately 20 miles (30 km).

On 6 August 1944, my unit landed on the beaches of Normandy France and we were assigned to the United States Third Army. We immediately started attacking Nazi forces and fortifications, forcing them to retreat across France into Luxemburg (where we fired the first ground artillery shell into Germany across the Moselle River in November 1944). After we crossed into Germany, the Nazis counter-attacked the Allied forces to our north; we attacked the Nazis on their southern flank and helped drive them back (this became known as the Battle of the Bulge).

We then continued with our attacks eastward deep into Germany and crossed the Rhine River on 31 March 1945. In April 1945, we stopped our advance in the Town of Bayreuth Germany (about 60 km from the Czechoslovakian border) where we were assigned Prisoner of War management operations. By that time, Russian forces had advanced from the East into Czechoslovakia and met with other American forces near the City of Pilsen.

I send warm greetings to all my fellow veterans of the Great Patriotic War and I send my best wishes to the families of all who died in defending against Nazi aggression.


Elmer T. Graffam, Sergeant
United States Army
Dated: 23 April 2021