

Post Script

In 1945 Frederick returned home to his wife Helen. When he got home he and his wife built their own house at 355 Woodlawn Avenue in Ronkonkoma, New York and took over his father's water well drilling business. He had two sons, 7 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren.

After retiring from well drilling in 1983, he began competing in the Senior Olympic Games. He has won over 100 gold, silver and bronze medals competing in race-walking, swimming, shot put and discus events. He won the New York State race-walking championship three times and twice in North Carolina where he now resides in a town called Spot, on the Currituck Peninsular of North Carolina. (No kidding, the town is really called Spot) After having a knee replaced, at 82 years of age he competed in the Currituck Senior Olympic Games in Elizabeth City, North Carolina in 2004 and won a gold medal in the 100-yard dash.

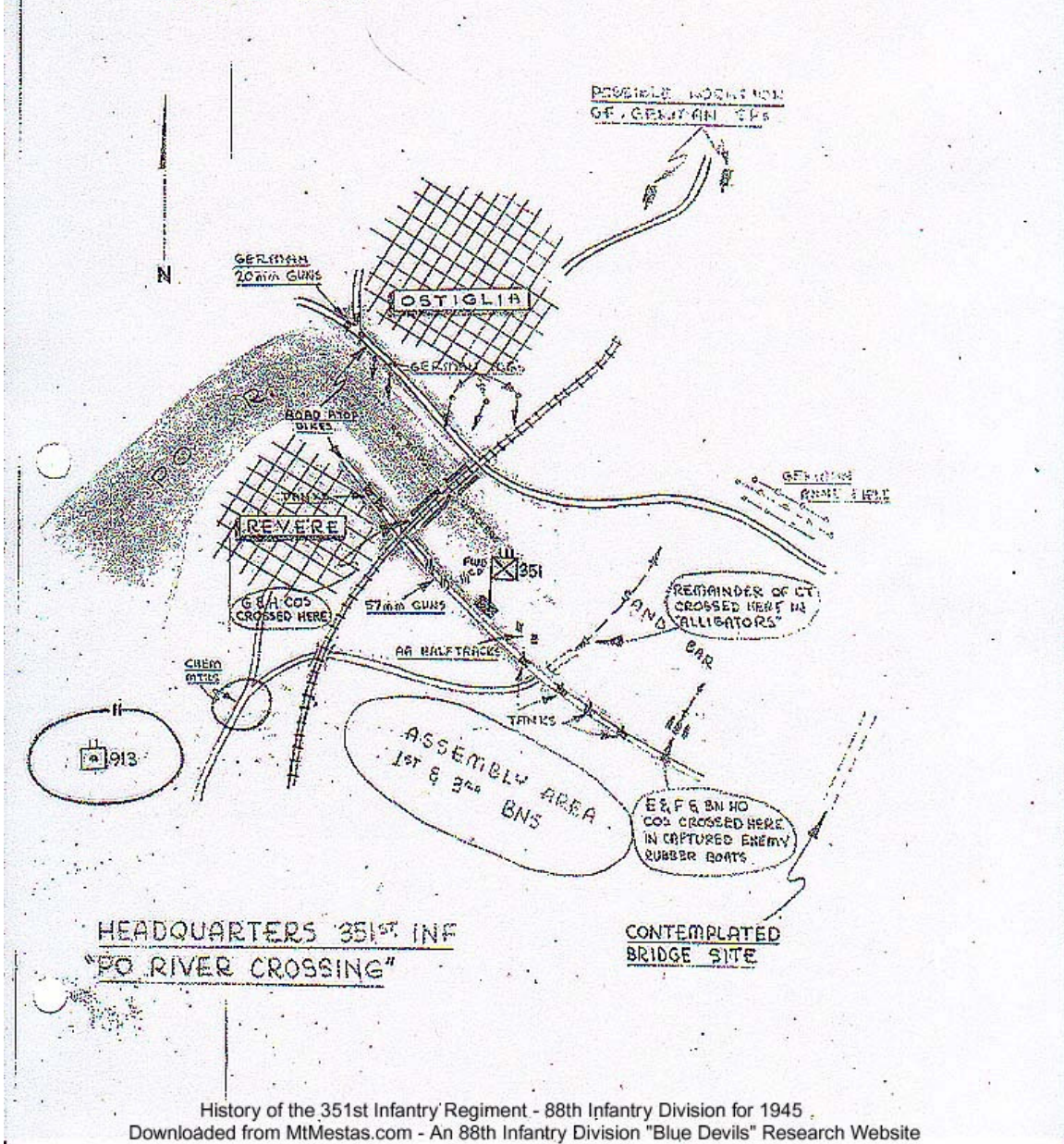


Frederick J. Kraics and his wife Helen in 2005 at Spot, North Carolina

First time contributor Frederick J. Kraics III lives in Manhattan, New York with his wife Barbara. His father, Frederick J, Kraics will be 86 in October 2007 and lives in Spot, North Carolina.

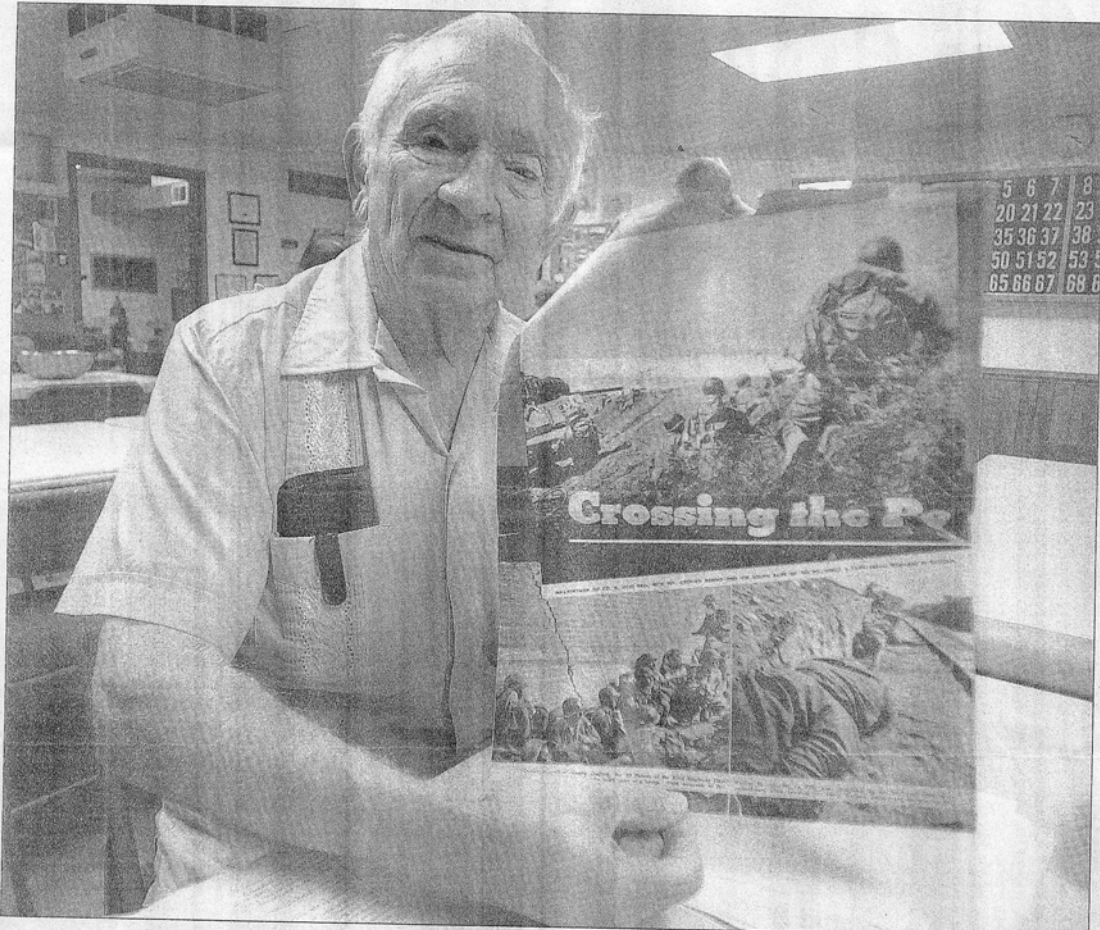
For further reading see, History of the 351st Infantry Regiment, 88th Infantry Division, National Archives original manuscript edited by C. W. Walters, 1976 and "We Were There From Gruber To The Brenner Pass". The latter was compiled by Headquarters Staff of the 88th Division in 1947. From Gruber to the Brenner Pass can also be found on the internet at www.ItalyWW2/Division88

SCHEMATIC SKETCH
TO ACCOMPANY NARRATIVE HISTORY
APRIL 1945



History of the 351st Infantry Regiment - 88th Infantry Division for 1945
 Downloaded from MtMestas.com - An 88th Infantry Division "Blue Devils" Research Website

LT. Kraics positioned his machine gun platoon behind company E and F's crossing of the Po River in the Spring of 1944.



Eighty-two-year-old Fred Kraics of Powells Point holds an old magazine containing a picture of him and his platoon crossing a

river in Italy. Kraics served as a machine-gunner and was awarded four Bronze Stars during the war.

DREW C. WILSON/THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT

WWII: Local events to honor veterans

During the campaign, 2,469 men in that unit were killed, according to Kraics.

Kraics, originally from New York, earned a battlefield commission and was awarded four Bronze Stars,

At one point during this two-year campaign, a captain mistakenly wrote to Kraics' wife that he had been killed. The mistake was corrected within a couple of weeks.

two for his unit's accomplishments and two for his own bravery. There were 156 men in his company at the start of the Italian campaign. With transfers and casualties, Kraics said, he was one of five left from the original group.

At one point during this two-year campaign, a captain mistakenly wrote to Kraics' wife that he had been killed. The mistake was corrected within a couple of weeks, he said.

Another time, an officer told him to crawl around a bend in the trail to make sure

there were no enemies waiting. When he eased around the bend, he came face-to-face with a German soldier. But the soldier was dead, left there with his eyes open as a decoy, he said.

While crossing the Po River, the unit ran into heavy enemy fire. Kraics' machine-gunners were supposed to keep the enemy pinned down while riflemen crossed the river. Bullets were whizzing as Kraics had his men ready the machine guns for firing before going to the top of a ridge, where they would be exposed to the enemy.

The machine-gunners continuously fired 1,000 rounds a minute while soldiers ran up and down the ridge bringing more ammunition to keep the firing going.

"We had to stay up there," Kraics said. "You got your friends out there. Those guns were red hot and smoking like crazy."

Kraics, 82, was in a machine-gun company in the 88th Infantry Division as it battled from Naples, Italy, to Austria in 1944 and 1945.

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Private Kraics in casual attire at Camp Gruber in Oklahoma, 1942.



Private Kraics saluting in front of his barracks at Camp Gruber, Oklahoma, 1942.



Lieutenant Kraics and a fellow GI at the Swiss border. They are standing on the Italian side of the bridge. Across that bridge is Switzerland. Notice the Swiss cross on the building beyond the bridge.



88th Division was on maneuvers in Louisiana in 1943. This is what an army camp really looked like.