Raymond H. Trezise, 88
Navy

Hometown: Frankfort
Rank: Pharmacist’s Mate, First Class
Deployment: South Pacific

James McElroy, 88
Army

Hometown: Orland Park
Rank: Private First Class
Deployment: Europe
Awards: Purple Heart, Bronze Star

Raymond Wilken, 84
Navy

Hometown: Orland Park
Rank: Aviation Ordnanceman, Third Class
Deployment: Stateside

John Quinn, 86
Army

Hometown: Alisp
Rank: Private First Class
Deployment: China, Burma, India
Awards: Bronze Star

James Sweeney, 85
Navy

Hometown: Orland Park
Rank: Signalman-First Class
Deployment: Pacific
Awards: Eight battle stars

Margaret Schneider, 87
WAC

Hometown: Chicago
Rank: Private First Class
Deployment: Stateside

WE GOT THE HELL OUT OF THERE'

James McElroy caught a lucky break when his infantry unit got sent to Normandy a few days after D-Day. It was the first of many close calls he saw fighting across Europe after the Americans made their way up the cliffs.

“There isn’t anything I haven’t seen. I saw guys get blown apart, I saw guys get killed,” he said. McElroy, 88, of Orland Park, served with the Army 29th Infantry Division, 75th Regiment.

Up on top, liking contended with the helicopter's of Normandy. Bombs and tress planted atop dirt mounds or stone walls too thick to walk through.

As McElroy picked his way through one, a sniper caught his guy in front of him in the head. He kept jumping around, then shot him again, more blood squirted out of his head like a chicken with its head cut off, and I couldn’t do nothing,” he said.

Then the commander got hit. Then his replacement. Then he replacement, too. Then we got the hell out of there. That was a close call.

Another time in Paris, in the rain, McElroy found himself alone while his regiment dashed mortar shells. He got ahead of the others and crawled on his belly into an opening in a hedgerow that let on cartoon paper through.

“I had my rifle on the side, it was knocked out, and I stuck in there real fast. I bumped right into a Jerry. He was laughing, and I had my rifle in front of me. And I just shot him right through the chest,” McElroy said.

“I turned around and ran like hell back to my lines. When I got back to my line, it was a bloody mess. What were 100 men now were 20. Once McElroy missed a rooftop bombing in Germany because he went downstatues for coffee. Then two German tanks pulled right up to a trench he was sitting in, narrowing him until it got dark enough to sneak out.

“Do get out of there that night. Tanks didn’t even know we were there. God was with me for eight months or less,” he said. I stayed away from other soldiers. I never climbed up in a bunch. Those are the guys who get hit,” he said.
Casimer Marciniak, 87
Army
Hometown: Worth
Rank: Staff Sergeant
Deployment: Normandy, Germany

John Wayer, 91
Army
Hometown: Mokena
Rank: Private First Class
Deployment: Asiatic-Pacific

George Quebbeman, 84
Army Air Corps
Hometown: Palos Park
Rank: Sergeant
Deployment: China, Burma, India

Robert Larson, 84
Army
Hometown: Burbank
Rank: Sergeant
Deployment: Japan

Casimer Kubicki, 89
Army
Hometown: Oak Lawn
Rank: Private First Class
Deployment: Europe

Phil Carlin, 83
Navy
Hometown: Chicago
Rank: Electronic Technician, 2nd Class
Deployment: Great Lakes, Caribbean