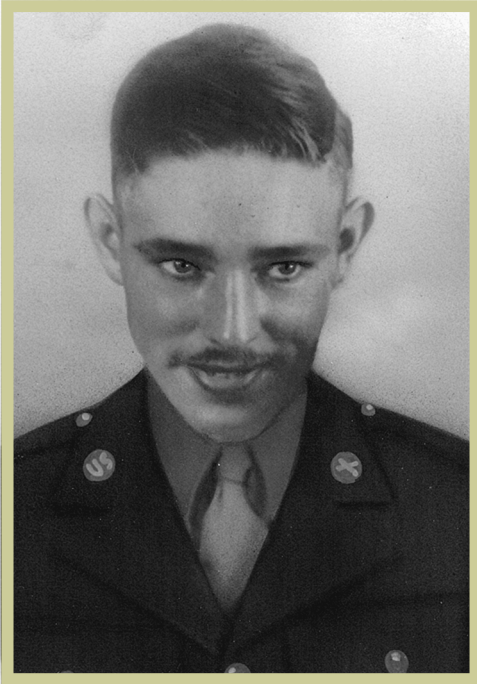


James Powell

U.S. Army

KIA-66th Armored Infantry BTN



Claude James Powell
U.S. Army
With 66th Armored Infantry Btn.
Kia - France

Claude Powell was born at Tallula, Illinois on 6 February 1923, the son of Elmer and Mattie Guffey Powell. He was assigned to the 12th Armored Division, 66th Armored Infantry Battalion at Camp Campbell, Kentucky. The Division staged at Camp Shanks, New York and sailed for England on the 20th September, 1944 under the command of Maj. Gen. Roderick R. Allen. After landing at Liverpool on 2 October, 1944, the Division proceeded to Tidworth Barracks on the Salisbury Plain at Wiltshire, England. Five weeks later, the 12th crossed the English Channel, landed at LeHavre, France and went on to assemble near Auffay, France. Three infantry battalions were assigned to the 12th Armored Division: the 17th, the 56th and the 66th Armored Infantry Battalions.

Moving across France, the 12th Armored Division, called the "Hellcats", paused at Luneville,

France and where Claude's unit was joined by the 572nd AAA and the 827th TD battalions. They remained together throughout the Alsace and Lorraine campaign. On December 5th the Division was near Weislingen, captured the town of Utweiler and on Christmas Day, 1944, the Hellcats ate turkey and opened packages from home.

It was a bitter winter in France. The bloodiest battle of the 12th's combat history was at Herrlisheim, France where the Hellcats paid an awful price in trench foot and casualties. The Germans dubbed the 12th Division the "Suicide Division". The Colmar Pocket was the last German stronghold on the west side of the Rhine River. On March 17, 1945, the 12th Armored Division was secretly transferred from the Seventh Army to General George Patton's Third Army and were dubbed "They Mystery Division". Within three days, they had streaked from Trier, Germany, across the Saar Palatinate to the Rhine River. During that period over 7,000 Nazis were taken prisoner by the 12th Division. It was during those two weeks after crossing of the Rhine River that Claude Powell was killed in action.

Once across the Rhine, the 12th Division split in several directions. The cities of Wurzburg, Schweifurt, Kitzingen, Neustadt, Ansbach were captured under the 12th's relentless attack. The Nazis were on the run as the 12th slashed south and east capturing thousands of Germans. Then they found the horror of Hitler's death camps. Members of the 12th saw the atrocities up close and they liberated camp after camp, including Hurlag, Landsberg and Dachau. In the space of five months, the 12th Division was transformed from a green, untested outfit into one of the most feared fighting machines on the Western front. They captured 72,243 prisoners, liberated 8500 Allied P.O.W.s and an additional 20,000 non-military prisoners held by the Germans. The 12th Armored Division was singled out for commendation by the 7th Army, the 3rd Army, the French First Army and every Corps under which it operated.

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Claude J. Powell, son, husband, father and soldier was returned for burial to his home at Tallula, Illinois, Greenwood Cemetery. He received the Purple Heart and a commendation letter signed by President Harry Truman and the Secretary of War, Harry Stimson. Claude's only child, a son Darrell, has provided the details of his father's life

The WW II Illinois Veterans Memorial at Springfield, IL has a cenotaph that honors the more than 22,000 Illinois soldiers who were killed in action in WW II. Claude Powell is among those honored by the WW II Memorial.

Darrell Powell, Son
Rochester, IL

