

# BUSHMASTERS

The 158th Infantry Regiment was born September 2, 1865, as the First Arizona Volunteer Infantry. The Regiment was drafted into Federal Service for World War I, 5 August 1917 as part of the 40th Division. Reorganization after the 1st World War assigned the 158th Infantry to the 45th Division.

On 16 September 1940, with the declaration of the National Emergency, the 158th Infantry joined its parent organization, the 45th Division at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma. They trained for five months, moving to Camp Barkley at Abilene, Texas, 28 February 1941. After the 7 December



1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, the 158th Infantry Regiment was removed from the 45th Division becoming a separate Regiment. In January 1942 the Regiment embarked at the Port of New Orleans and disembarked in the Canal Zone.

It was in Panama where they trained in jungle warfare. Becoming famous for newly acquired jungle-fighting skills, the Regiment took the name of the Bushmasters after the deadly bushmaster snake, which became the distinguishing shoulder patch of the fighting 158th Regimental Combat Team. The name "Bushmasters" became well-known through the Nation's press. General MacArthur, himself, personally selected and requested that the Bushmasters be sent to his command in the Southwest Pacific Theater. They were on their way to Australia by the 2nd of January 1943, landing two weeks later at Brisbane, Queensland.

When General Walter Kureger's headquarters moved to Milne Bay and on to Goodenough Island, the 2nd Battalion, 158th Infantry became the security force for his headquarters. On Christmas Day 1943 Safford's Company G embarked for Arawe. It was there that the 158th Infantry had its "baptism of fire." A short time later the remainder of the 2nd Battalion arrived under command of LTC Frederick R. Stoff of Tucson, Arizona.

After the landing on Wakde-Sarmi in Dutch New Guinea they fought the Japanese 6th Tiger Marine Division from 17 May to 12 June 1944. The Regiment traded 77 officers and men for 3000 of the enemy. They were relieved on 12 June by the 6th Infantry Division (which spoke well for the regiment as it took an entire division to replace them). With only a brief rest on the morning of 2 July, the Regiment went ashore at Noemfoor with the mission to destroy the enemy and construct an airstrip that would handle B-29 bombers. Fifteen days later the mission was accomplished and General MacArthur landed on the newly constructed B-29 airdrome.

It was at the battle at Lingayen Gulf, where the Japanese invaded the Philippines 3 years earlier, where Co G from Safford, Arizona was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for their action in capturing the 14-inch coast gun which was bringing heavy fire on the invasion force. By the end of the operation on 27 January, 100 Japanese field pieces had been captured or destroyed. General MacArthur "had returned". April 1st, Easter Sunday 1945, the 158th Infantry invaded the Bicol Peninsula in southern Luzon. The Regiment hit the Legaspi Port in a magnificent assault landing with naval landing craft.

After being relieved by divisions in campaign after campaign across the Pacific, the 158th Infantry was selected to spearhead the final invasion of Japan. The Bushmasters were under orders to proceed two days ahead of America's crushing D-Day, to silence Japanese air warning stations south of Kyushu. Timely capitulation of Japan saved the 158th Infantry from what many believed would have been a certain suicide mission. On 13 October 1945, the 158th Infantry landed in Yokohama, Japan. The great odyssey was over. FROM ARIZONA TO JAPAN - IN FIVE YEARS! Members were then shipped home and the 158th was deactivated at Utsunomiya, Japan on the 17th of January 1946.