

## Lt. COLONEL HARRY WELSH

Soldier to Educator

WHEN?  
1918-1995

WHERE?  
Wilkes-Barre, Pa.



EVENT  
World War II European  
Theater

VOCABULARY  
miner  
minor league

Born on September 27, 1918, Harry was the son of Francis Welsh, the Wilkes-Barre Times Leader Sports Editor, and Regina Cannon Welsh. While attending Meyers High School in Wilkes-Barre, Welsh won state championships in swimming and diving before graduating in 1937. He went on to Wilkes University and later earned a master's degree in education from Bucknell University.



After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, he signed up for the Airborne and was assigned to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. By January 20, 1942, he underwent training at Fort Benning, Georgia, in 1942. As portrayed by Rick Warden in the 2001 HBO miniseries *Band of Brothers* Harry Welsh was a recognized leader. That was in spite of more than one setback. He was promoted to Sergeant six times—and demoted or busted for fighting six times back to private (Rizman). Even so, he was offered Officer Candidate School where he graduated as a 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant in May 1943 (Rizman).

Assigned to 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne, 1<sup>st</sup> platoon, E Company 506 PIR (Parachute Infantry Regiment), Welsh jumped with the unit (known as the Screaming Eagles) into France in the early morning hours on June 6, 1944—D-Day. Once he rejoined the unit the next day, he was placed in charge of 1<sup>st</sup> platoon as they prepared to take Carentan a town near Utah beach. He later was selected as the executive officer (second-in-charge) of his unit commanded by Colonel Robert Sink. He fought with the unit through Normandy and Holland until wounded at Bastogne on Christmas Eve, 1944 (Wynn). He sustained wounds during both Market Garden and the Battle of the Bulge, including at Bastogne on Christmas Eve 1944, earning two Purple Hearts. He also received two Bronze Stars for valor and meritorious service—one for his leadership at Carentan and another for bravery at Bastogne—along with multiple commendations for his combat leadership as the unit fought through northern France, Netherlands and the month-long battle at Bastogne.

As the fighting drew to a close, Welsh and the rest of Easy Company found themselves at Berchtesgaden—Hitler’s mountain retreat known as the Eagles Nest. Welsh now had the rank of Lt. Colonel.

When the war was over, he returned home to marry Kitty Grogan. He had sent her his white reserve parachute and she turned it into a wedding dress. Welsh began a career as a teacher at GAR High School and later at Coughlin High School where he also served as Director of Pupil Services retiring in 1983 (Times Leader). He died of heart failure in 1995 and is buried in St. Mary’s cemetery in Hanover Township.

#### ONLINE RESOURCES

[Rizman Band of Brothers](#)

[Times Leader Welsh](#)

[Times Leader Obituary Welsh](#)

[Wynn on Welsh](#)