

# HEDGEROWS IN FRANCE TOUGH, GROCKI WRITES

Staff-Serjeant John Grocki, son of Stephen Grocki of New Britain Avenue, Farmington, now serving with the Infantry in France, has written to the Herald as clear a description of hedgerow fighting across the Normandy front as has yet been published, describing how the Nazis have made formidable fortifications of these natural barriers, and how the Infantry has to smoke them out of their trenches, Sgt. Grocki's letter follows:

Dear Sir; I wish to express my thanks to those who are responsible for my receiving the Valley Herald. Your paper has followed me everywhere; through the States, North Africa, Sicily, England, and during the past few weeks I received my first copies in France. The first copy I received here came when I was hoping I could find something to do, during one of the shelling the Germans were throwing our way.

Of course, there really isn't much for a fellow to do in a fox-hole, but it was just our luck that the mail clerk brought up our mail at a time like that. It was a good day for me as far as mail went, for in addition to the Herald, I received several letters. I certainly have enjoyed reading the hometown news, and learning about the other boys in service as well as happenings back home.

tected trenches five or six feet deep. Every hedgerow has a maze of interconnecting tunnels through the hedgerows themselves — sometimes across entire fields. The Jerries must have lived like rats in these positions.

The Jerry always takes a beating, but he still heeps on. Most of us are wondering when he will finally realize the hoplessness of his cause, awaken from his dream, and give up. The defeats they receive don't seem to scare them, but seem to add to the ferocity of their fighting. To us, nothing can explain such nonsense, defiance and crudelty as we have seen on the part of the Germans since our arrival in France.

The have defied all natural laws and the very concept of natural law. I say these things not from stories or tales that we hear, but from actual experiences and things I have seen with my own eyes. I am at the present time back in England, recovering from a slight injury, but I expect to be able to re-join my outfit in the very near future. Many thanks again for sending me the Herald.

Sincerely,  
JOHN GROCKI

## SGT. J. GROCKI IS WOUNDED IN ACTION 4 TIMES

From 115th General Hospital in England—Special — Wounded for the third time near Aachen by enemy rifle fire, Staff Sgt. John P. Grocki, 22, of Farmington, Conn., is now recovering at this U. S. Army General Hospital in England. He has been awarded the Bronze Star and Purple Heart with two Oak Leaf Clusters.

Sgt. Grocki's ward surgeon states: "Sgt. Grocki, who suffered a fractured left arm, is showing steady improvement, and eventually will be transferred to the rehabilitation station."

Four days after D-Day, the Unionville man landed on the Normandy beachhead, where he was struck by shell fragments in the hand and knee. After receiving necessary medical attention, he returned to his unit the following day. The infantry platoon leader was wounded a second time during the big push for St. Lo, a sniper's bullet hitting him in the right shoulder. He was evacuated to England, where he remained for six weeks before rejoining his unit near Aachen.

Sgt. Grocki and two other men had been on patrol near this town, locating Nazi positions. Early that morning he was wounded by rifle fire in the right arm, his two fellow soldiers carrying him to a safe place. He later walked to a first aid station, where he was treated before being sent to the rear lines. Sgt. Grocki was sent to hospitals in Belgium and France before arriving in England by plane.

He has been in the service since January of 1943. His brother, PFC Joseph M. Grocki, 20, was wounded in the Normandy campaign, and also is in a hospital in England. The soldiers are sons of Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Grocki of Farmington.

**GROCKI, John P., Sr.**



John P. Grocki, Sr., 78, of Stoney Corners, Avon, beloved husband of A. Lucille (Bell) Grocki, died Tuesday (May 22, 2001). Born in Farmington, May

26, 1922, son of the late Steven and Helena (Biedron) Grocki. He was a graduate of Farmington High School where he played football, basketball, baseball and was selected to the "All State" basketball team. While at Davis & Elkin's College, he played football and basketball and was listed in "Who's Who" in American Colleges and Universities. His graduate work was done at Springfield College. He was a highly decorated combat veteran having served with the U.S. Army in the European Theatre of Operations for over three years. His many awards and decorations included two Silver Stars, one with Oakleaf Cluster, the Bronze Star Medal, two Purple Hearts with one Oakleaf Cluster, the Combat Infantryman's Badge and many American, European and African Service Medals. Following his education and distinguished service career, Mr. Grocki was hired by the Town of Farmington in 1948 and served as coach of basketball, football, indoor track, golf, gymnastics and lacrosse and served as Athletic Director for Farmington High School for 35 years, retiring in 1983. His service in education and the community included Coach in Connecticut All Star Basketball Festival, President, Farmington Education Association, Commissioner of area Boy Scouts, Board of Directors for United Way, President of Farmington Recreation Association, C.I.A.C. Official's Committee, Treasurer, Northwest Conference for 17 years, Commander of the American Legion Post #32, Representative, State of Connecticut Soldiers-Sailors-Marine Fund from 1971-1996, Little League Baseball for 10 years, 1978-1996, Hartford Area Retired Teachers Scholarship Comm.,

Teachers Scholarship Comm., 1986-1996, Manager of the American Legion Baseball, 1985-1996, Chairman V.F.W., Voice Democracy Program Post #10361. He was the proud recipient of the following honors for his professional and athletic career, District #1, Athletic Director of the Year, Connecticut High School Coaches Association, Athletic Director of the Year, Connecticut Association of Athletic Directors- Outstanding Contribution, official Citation - State of Connecticut General Assembly, Outstanding Contribution Award- Farmington Town Council, Resolution - John P. Grocki Day-Town of Farmington; on Saturday, September 25, 1999, a field in Tunxis Mead Park in Farmington was dedicated the John P. Grocki Field, Service Award - Farmington Chamber of Commerce, Service Award Northwest Conference, Outstanding Achievement Award - Booster Club, Hall of Fame - Conn. H.S. Coaches Association, Distinguished Service Award - American Legion Dept. of CT, Outstanding Service Award - Veterans of Foreign Wars, 1972 Davis & Elkins College Hall of Fame and 1995 Citizen of The Year- Farmington Chamber of Commerce. Besides his wife, he is survived by his daughter and son-in-law, Deborah A. and James F. Roberts of Bristol, John P. Grocki, Jr. of West Hartford; a sister, Florence Malicki of Southington; a brother, Michael S. Grocki of Farmington; four grandchildren, Tyler and Courtney Roberts, both at home in Bristol, and John P. Grocki, III and Paul M. Grocki, both at home in Torrington. Friends may call at The Ahern Funeral Home, 111 Main St., Rte. 4, Unionville on Friday from 4-8 p.m. Funeral procession from The Ahern Funeral Home, contributions may be made to the Farmington Education Association, John P. Grocki Scholarship Fund, c/o Marilyn Parnell, Farmington High School, Monteith Drive, Farmington, CT 06032.