



CLARENCE E. ROSELAND, JR.
Private First Class (PFC), U.S. Army

PERSONAL INFORMATION: Private First Class Clarence E. Roseland, Jr., service number 36832556, entered the U.S. Army on 28 August 1943, from West Allis, Wisconsin.¹ He was a member of Company M, 3d Battalion, 179th Infantry Regiment, 45th Infantry Division, during the Second World War. On 6 October 1944, PFC Roseland was killed in action near the village of Brouvelieures, in the Vosges Mountains, in France (see Figure 1). His remains were not identified following the war. Today, he is memorialized on the Tablets of the Missing at Ardennes American Cemetery, Neupré, Belgium.² The details of PFC Roseland's loss are recorded in his Individual Deceased Personnel File (IDPF).³



Figure 1. Map showing the location of Brouvelieures, France (red star). (ArcGIS)

CIRCUMSTANCES OF LOSS: In August of 1943, after much debate, American military leaders decided to support an invasion of southern France, then code-named “Operation ANVIL,” as an adjunct to the planned invasion of northern France in 1944. The objective was to eliminate Italy from the war, capture Rome, and secure support bases in the Mediterranean. Allied forces would land in the Toulon-Marseille area of France and use these ports as major supply points for an advance northward up the Rhône Valley. Allied leaders assigned the

¹ War Department, “Report of Death,” 21 April 1945, Individual Deceased Personnel File (IDPF) for Clarence E. Roseland, Private First Class (PFC), 36832556, Record Group (RG) 92: Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, National Personnel Records Center (NPRC), St. Louis, MO

² World War II Honor Roll listing for Clarence E. Roseland, PFC, 36832556, American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) website, <http://www.abmc.gov/home.php>.

³ Warren P. Munsell, Jr., *The Story of a Regiment: A History of the 179th Regimental Combat Team* (New York: [no publisher] 1946), World War Regimental Histories online, Bangor Public Library, http://digicom.bpl.lib.me.us/ww_reg_his/34, accessed 6 August 2021.

landings to a large force, the 6th Army Group, composed of American and French troops. At the beginning of August 1944, fearing that the original code-name was compromised, Allied leaders changed the operation's name to DRAGOON and set the assault date as 15 August.⁴

Major General (Maj Gen) Lucian Truscott, commander of the U.S. VI Corps, chose PFC Roseland's 45th Infantry Division as one of three initial landing divisions. The 45th Infantry Division had fought in Sicily, Salerno, and Anzio, and Maj Gen Truscott was putting its extensive combat experience to use. The division landed east of St. Maxime, to position its drive into France (Figure 2).

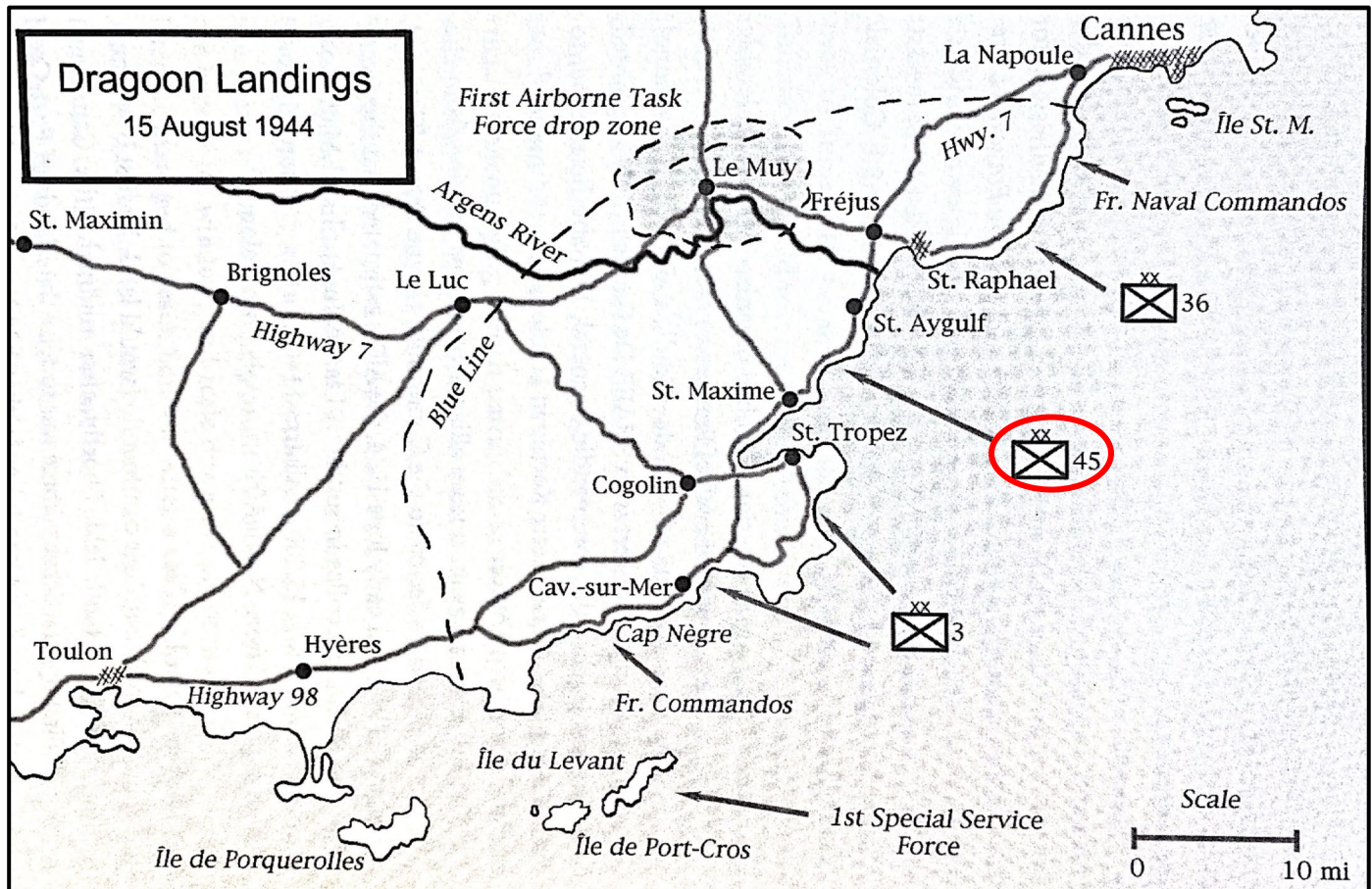


Figure 2. Operation DRAGOON assault plan for 15 August 1944. The landing location of PFC Roseland's 45th Infantry Division (circled in red) was east of St. Maxime, France. (Yeide and Stout, *First to the Rhine*, 28.)

In the ensuing weeks, the 45th Infantry Division fought its way north along the Rhône Valley, into the Vosges Mountains. In mid-September, PFC Roseland's 179th Infantry Regiment led the division north across the Moselle River, near Épinal, and through several small villages: Aydoilles, Fontenay, Méménil, and Viménil, advancing toward Grandvillers. By the end of September, the 179th Infantry Regiment was in thick forest, with its lines running northeast,

⁴ Harry Yeide and Mark Stout, *First to the Rhine: The 6th Army Group in World War II* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Zenith Press, 2007), 12-16.

from high ground a kilometer south of Viménil, to just west of Grandvillers. In the intense fighting, losses mounted, and the 179th Infantry Regiment sustained hundreds of casualties as it seized its objectives, the ground north of Bruyères and the ridge northeast of Grandvillers. On 2 October, the 179th Infantry Regiment pushed the Germans out of Grandvillers; the action was nicknamed “Little Stalingrad,” for its ferocity (Figure 3).⁵

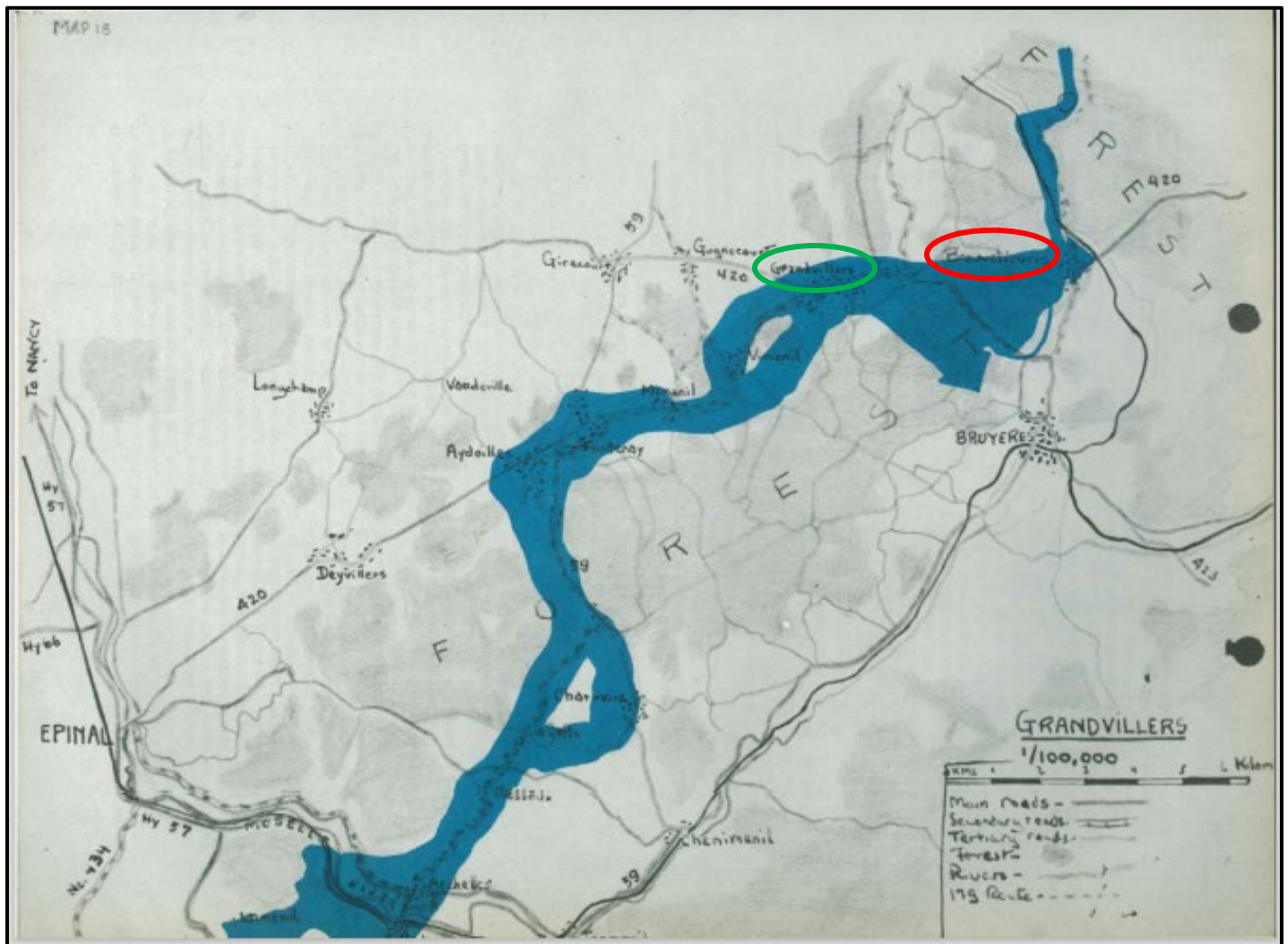


Figure 3. Map of the route taken by PFC Roseland’s 179th Infantry Regiment as it crossed the Moselle River and approached Brouvelieures (red oval). Grandvillers is in the green oval. (Munsell, *The Story of a Regiment*, 88-89.)

On 6 October, the combat near Bruyères was still fierce, and PFC Roseland’s 3d Battalion was thrust into German territory. The battalion held its line despite the dense woods, thick fog, and poor weather. German forces, however, captured the commanding officer of 3d Battalion, and PFC Roseland and other members of his unit moved into a defensive position on high ground

⁵ Munsell, *The Story of a Regiment*, 88-89.

southeast of Grandvillers. Later, the battalion received orders to withdraw to stronger positions farther to the rear. As the unit withdrew, German forces counter-attacked.⁶

As a Company M gunner, positioned near Brouvelieures, just north of Bruyères, PFC Roseland's mission was to fire his heavy machine gun at the counterattacking enemy. At some point in the fighting, his machine gun stopped, and two of his company mates saw him killed.⁷ Shortly thereafter, the enemy overran his position; when American troops re-took this ground later, they could not find PFC Roseland's body.⁸

SEARCH AND RECOVERY: The War Department listed PFC Roseland as missing in action as of 6 October 1944. Six months later, it reviewed the circumstances surrounding his disappearance and determined that he had been killed in action on that same day.⁹ On 21 April 1945, the War Department issued a "Report of Death" for PFC Roseland.¹⁰

Beginning in 1946, the American Graves Registration Command (AGRC), U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps, was the organization tasked with recovering missing American personnel in the European Theater. As part of their work, graves registration units also recovered thousands of sets of remains that could not immediately be identified. Analysts designated these "unknowns" with an "X" and a number, usually followed by the name of the temporary cemetery where they were initially buried. The collected documentation for each such unknown is commonly referred to as an "X-file." War Department analysts routinely compared information for unknown remains with the physical data and circumstances of loss of service members missing in the same area.

On 4 December 1950 and 12 April 1951, AGRC investigators visited the area near Bruyères to find any information they could on the loss of PFC Roseland. During the first investigation, AGRC personnel interviewed the mayor of Brouvelieures, who, after the war, had commissioned two local men to bury all the unburied dead within the territory of the commune. In the process, they had found the remains of three American soldiers, all of which were taken to the U.S. Military Cemetery at Épinal, in 1947. The AGRC later identified two of these men.

The third man, initially identified for unknown reasons only as "Cochrane," was found in a heavy machine-gun position, which was, according to the mayor, supposedly attacked on or about 6 October 1944. Investigators acknowledged that all the circumstances surrounding the death of this individual resembled those in which PFC Roseland was killed. They also suggested

⁶ Colonel (Col) Charles D. Carle, letter to Miss Emmy Lou Roseland, 26 July 1946, IDPF for PFC Roseland; Col Leo V. Bishop, Major (Maj) Frank J. Glasgow, Maj George A. Fisher, *The Fighting Forty-Fifth: The Combat Report of an Infantry Division* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Army and Navy Publishing Company, 1946), 114.

⁷ Howard E. Ephraim, "Narrative of Investigation," 4 December 1950, and "Statement Surrounding Disappearance of Missing Personnel," 22 October 1944, both in IDPF for PFC Roseland.

⁸ First Lieutenant (1st Lt) John R. Hull, letter to Mrs. Clarence E. Roseland, Jr., 24 April 1945, IDPF for PFC Roseland.

⁹ 1st Lt Hull, letter to Mrs. Clarence E. Roseland, Jr., 24 April 1945, IDPF for PFC Roseland.

¹⁰ War Department, The Adjutant General's Office, Washington 25, D.C., "Report of Death," 21 April 1945, IDPF for PFC Roseland.

that two unknowns recovered from Taintrux, roughly 15 km east of Brouvelieures, be compared against PFC Roseland's physical data. There are no X-numbers for these files in PFC Roseland's IDPF, and it is not known if this comparison ever occurred.

In addition, investigators revealed the existence of a "mass grave" at Brouvelieures. The investigator recommended the mass grave be opened and that the AGRC verify the identity of "Cochrane."¹¹ There is no further reference to "Cochrane" in PFC Roseland's IDPF; however, the AGRC later identified Sergeant (Sgt) George R. Cochrane, a member of Company G, 180th Infantry Regiment, 45th Infantry Division, who was killed in action on 6 October 1944 near Brouvelieures.¹²

In April 1951, investigators returned to Brouvelieures. They observed that, since German military personnel had buried the remains, no one in the local community was able to state definitively that Americans were interred there. The team obtained permission to open and check three informal cemeteries; however, all mass graves and isolated burials held German remains. To be thorough, the AGRC team compared PFC Roseland's dental records against the remains it had found, without success. The team instructed the local person in charge of future exhumations in proper procedures and means of identifying American and German deceased. Investigators also instructed local authorities to notify the AGRC in the event that they discovered remains they could not definitely identify as German. The team recommended that PFC Roseland be considered non-recoverable.¹³

On 19 June 1951, a board of AGRC officers convened in Liege, Belgium, to consider PFC Roseland's case. It, too, recommended that he be declared non-recoverable.¹⁴ On 23 October 1951, the Memorial Division of the Quartermaster Corps approved this finding.¹⁵

NEXT STEPS: Presently, the primary effort to locate and identify those service members who are still unaccounted for from ground combat in the Vosges region is through the disinterment of unknown remains buried in European cemeteries maintained by the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC). Historians at the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) are comprehensively reassessing the evidence related to unaccounted-for soldiers killed in the Vosges area between September and October 1944. As part of their work, they compare files for unknown remains recovered from the region to the files of unresolved casualties like PFC Roseland. To date, however, PFC Roseland has not been linked with any unknown remains.

¹¹ Ephraim, "Narrative of Investigation," 4 December 1950, IDPF for PFC Roseland.

¹² IDPF for George R Cochrane, Sergeant (Sgt), 31374091, RG 92, NPRC.

¹³ Harold E. Warner, "Narrative of Investigation," 12 April 1951, IDPF for PFC Roseland.

¹⁴ "Non-Recoverable Board Proceedings," 19 June 1951, IDPF for PFC Roseland.

¹⁵ "Non-Recoverable Case Record of Review and Approval," 23 October 1951, IDPF for PFC Roseland.

As research into losses in the Vosges area is ongoing, DPAA currently considers PFC Roseland's case to be in an "Active Pursuit" status. New information will be communicated through the Army Service Casualty Office.

August 2021