
Contemplation Garden

Honoring the Five Branches of the Military

New Hanover County Arboretum



The New Hanover County Arboretum is constructing a memorial garden honoring the five branches of the military: the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard. This new space, the Contemplation Garden, will be dedicated to Bronze Star Army veteran and past County Extension Agent Durwood Baggett, 92. During his Army service he fought in the Battle of the Bulge in the winter of 1944-45. As Extension Agent, he was instrumental in forming the county's Master Gardener program and the Plant Clinic hot line.

Dedicated to Bronze Star Winner, Durwood Baggett

Fought in Battle of the Bulge

Durwood Baggett was born in Sampson County near Spivey's Corner in 1922. He attended NC State and graduated in June 1943, with a degree in farm business administration. While in college he was selected to attend advanced ROTC.

Baggett joined the Army in August 1943, and was assigned to the 94th Division at Fort Bragg. After training he was shipped to England on the Queen Elizabeth, arriving in France in August 1944, two months after D-Day. One of his first assignments was keeping some



The Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes in the Winter of 1944-45

50,000 German soldiers isolated in Saint Nazaire, France. The military had decided that isolating the Germans was better than attacking them and taking casualties.

In December 1944, the Battle of the Bulge broke out in the Ardennes region of Belgium, France, and Luxembourg. Baggett was sent to the front with the 94th division. He saw heavy fighting during the battle and fought continually until the war ended in April 1945. He recalls cursing General George Patton because Patton kept the troops moving relentlessly into Germany. Baggett was twice hospitalized with frost bite twice, but went back into action both times.

He survived a mortar attack that destroyed a house in which he was manning a machine gun. The mortar went through the roof and exploded on the second floor right above him. "I was knocked out temporarily . . . and really lost my hearing. But I didn't get hit," he remembers.

After the war ended he was sent to Pisen, Czechoslovakia to prevent the Russian Army from taking any more Czech ground. Baggett returned to the United States on the Victory

ship Pontotoc, which was stored in Wilmington before being cut up for scrap.

After discharge he became the Assistant County Agent in Burnsville, Yancy County, NC. In 1949, he applied for and was granted a commission in the Army Reserve. He retired as a major.

In 1950, he became the New Hanover County agent of the Agriculture Extension Service. The title was later changed to county extension director. He retired from that job in 1978. Current County Extension Agent Al Hight said Baggett laid the foundation for the county's Master Gardner program and the garden hot line.



Durwood Baggett

Planning and Fundraising

The Contemplation Garden will feature a paved labyrinth, seating area, and a bubbling fountain, to be designed by well-known pottery artist Ben Owen III. Work on the garden has begun and irrigation has been installed.

The Friends of the Arboretum, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, is raising money for construction and maintenance of the garden. Directed contributions are available, with names of companies, organizations, and individuals to be recognized at the time of the garden's dedication, planned for early summer 2015. Contribution can be made at the Arboretum main office at 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington, NC 28403.

To discuss donor recognition levels, contact Larry Sackett, at lbsackett@gmail.com or call him at 301-518-3166.