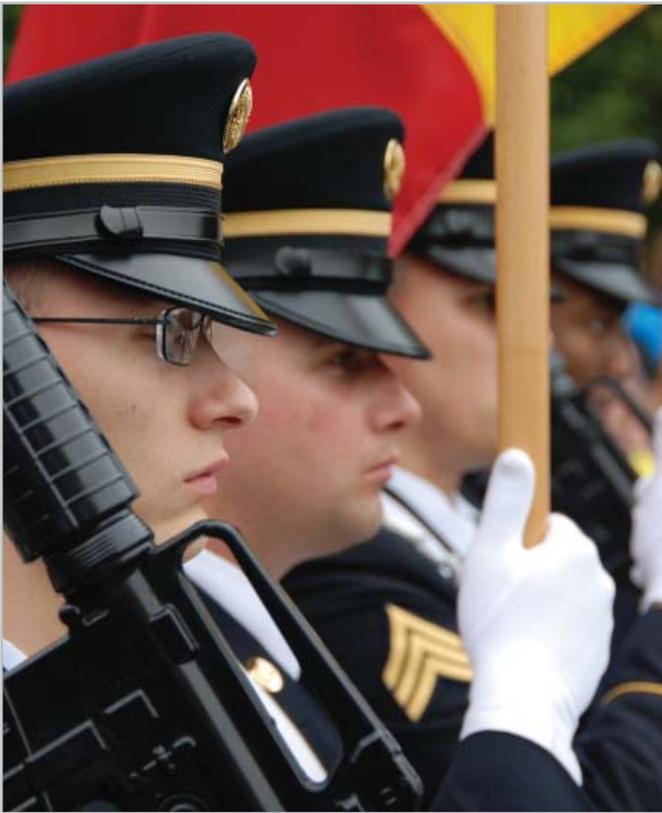


Trenches to Foxholes

Americans, Belgians commemorate WWI heroes



(Clockwise from left) The U.S. Army Garrison Benelux Color Guard — composed of (from left to right) Spec. Devlin Trefethen, Sgt. John W. Webb, Sgt. Joseph F. Quirarte, Spec. Edward D. Chambers II and Sgt. 1st Class Jeremy W. King, NCOIC (not shown) — pay tribute during the commemorative ceremony held in Oudenaarde, Friday, Sept. 29, 2014. • Family members of Pvt. Frank Burke (inset top left) and Sgt. Paul Smithhisler (inset top right) who traveled from the United States, honor and remember their ancestors' heroic actions as each member is about to throw a rose into the Scheldt river. In late October 1918 as the Germans prevented the Allies from building a bridgehead on the right bank of the Scheldt, Smithhisler and Burke, both from the 112th Engineers, 37th American Infantry Division, volunteered to recon the river bank the Germans occupied. They swam to the other side during the night of Oct. 30, 1918. The Germans caught sight of them, and a poison-gas grenade exploded near them. Burke gave his gas mask to Smithhisler so he could run to the unit's headquarters to report what they had seen. The information Smithhisler reported enabled the Allies to eliminate the Germans on the other bank and build three bridges over the river. Burke didn't survive and was promoted posthumously. Smithhisler was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the French Croix de Guerre. The ceremony honoring the two U.S. Soldiers is the only American WWI commemoration outside Flanders Field American cemetery in Waregem where 370 Soldiers who fought in WWI are buried. • U.S. Ambassador to Belgium Denise Campbell Bauer (at center) is surrounded by King, Trefethen, Webb, Chambers and Quirarte at the conclusion of the official commemoration. (U.S. Army photos by Cis Spook).

