



*Robert Mark Baldwin, Sr.
Military Artist of his Time
1925 - 2003*



Robert Baldwin - 1944

His History:

Robert Baldwin was born March 3, 1925, the second son of William M. and Evelyn L. Baldwin in Ridgway, Pennsylvania. He attended school in the Ridgway Public School system and, although he didn't distinguish himself as an academican, he proved quite adept with a sketch pad and paint brush.

In 1943, during the latter part of his senior year of high school, Robert was granted his diploma before the end of the normal school year in order that he might enter his country's service in World War II.

Robert left school February 5, 1943 just before his 18th birthday and enlisted in the United States Army. After completing Basic Training he passed from group to group serving in the infantry, artillery, the aviation cadets and finally ended up in the paratrooper school where on November 24, 1944 he was graduated and assigned to the 507 Parachute Infantry Battalion of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division as a

Private First Class. He was sent over to Europe on January 29, 1945, saw action in the *Rhine Jump* in the Rhine Land of Central Europe on March 24, 1945, and was a member of the first army of occupation in Berlin at the war's end. It was during this period in Germany that the first of his works were painted.

Robert received the following honors: Good Conduct Medal, Distinguished Unit Badge, American Theater Service Medal, EAME Theater, Service Medal, two Bronze Stars, and a World War II Victory Medal. He was honorably discharged from service on January 16, 1946.

Robert was married just before departing for overseas to his childhood sweetheart, Caroline Jean Holt of Ridgway, Pennsylvania. They were married October 14, 1944, in the chapel in the Harmony Church area of Fort Benning, Georgia, where he was stationed at the time. His first child, R. Mark, Jr., was born before his return from Europe. His three other children - Carl J., Jeanne L. and Eric H. - followed during the 1950s.



Robert and Caroline Baldwin - October 1944

After the war Robert and Caroline moved to New Jersey, eventually settling at 1615 Plainfield Avenue, South Plainfield, in 1950. Working from 1946 to 1948 first for the Art Color Company in Dunellen as a timekeeper in a composing room and then as a window designer for the Teppers department store in Plainfield.

A talented artist from childhood, he sought to build himself a career in commercial art. In 1948 he created *The Robert M. Baldwin Company* as a one-man commercial art and advertising agency and set up shop in a one-room studio on 8 Court Street in Newark, New Jersey. Later in 1956 he moved his studio to his residence at 1615 Plainfield Avenue, South Plainfield.

In this same year of 1956 Robert ran for the public office of Mayor and led a Republican resurgence in the predominantly Democratic town of South Plainfield. Robert remained in office for six years until 1962.

His presence was not unfelt in the community. Although not an architect, he was responsible for the construction and design of the Borough Hall and the Borough Library, both of which bear plaques inscribed with his name. He also designed the Borough Seal and developed the original ideas for the New World Industrial Site in the southern end of town and a park on South Plainfield's Spring Lake.

As a politician he was of course a joiner, whether by choice or otherwise. In addition to his work he sat on town bodies such as the Planning Board, Sewer Commission, and many other administrative boards.

Many of his memberships were of a military nature. He was a member of the local V.F.W. Post #6763, The American Legion Chaumont Post #243, and a trustee of the South Plainfield Public Library. He was also a charter member of the V.F.W. Post in Ridgway, Pennsylvania, the Military Order of the Cooties Pup Tent #41 of the South Plainfield V.F.W., the South Plainfield Civic Band, and the South Plainfield Junior Chamber of Commerce, the latter two of

which he organized. And finally he was a member of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church of Plainfield, New Jersey, serving as a Warden from about 1957 to 1959.



Robert and Caroline Baldwin - 1953

His Art:

Robert's artistic talents and interests took him beyond his commercial art and advertising business into the fields of sculpting, molding, painting and caricature drawing.

Around 1970 Robert added a new aspect to his art business. *Baldwin Originals* was created as an adjunct to *The Robert M. Baldwin Company* and specialized in the reproduction of his sculpted work. In many ways sculpting was his greater talent, and most had a military flavor. He sold them as wall hangings and decorative items for around the house.

He also specialized in reproducing military unit insignia such as pins, patches, jewelry and belt buckles. These pieces are not displayed in this collection because of their commercial nature and the fact that most were sold. Among these pieces was an 18-inch-high sculpted paratrooper in full

battle gear about to launch himself through a jump-door. The original clay model of this piece was destroyed and it is not believed that it was ever reproduced.

Robert's artistic endeavors were also strongly influenced by a respect for history. In his later years he and his wife, Caroline, traveled around the country visiting Civil War battlefields and attending military reunions. He became well known among this honored group of veterans during the period from 1970 until his death on December 28, 2003 in his home in Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania. His ashes are buried in the Hillside Cemetery in South Plainfield, New Jersey. He was 78.

He was invited to design a number of memorials for military posts in the United States as well as a D-Day Memorial in Normandy, France and a plaque on a Battle of the Bulge Monument in Houffalize, Belgium. He designed the cover of the book 'We Jumped To Fight' by Col. Edson D. Raff. Probably his most well-know design was *The Airborne Walk* at Ft. Benning, Georgia. He had requested that a portion of his ashes be spread there. But, alas, that was not possible. His signature was discretely applied to all of these monuments and plaques. Look for them some day!



Robert and Caroline Baldwin - 1984

His Collection:

Of course the purpose of this booklet is to introduce Robert Baldwin's 23-piece collection of military paintings and related art. Although they cover periods through Vietnam, the most important pieces were sketched from the period of the 1945 *Rhine Jump* into Germany and during the occupation of Berlin.

But Robert Baldwin wrote too, and some of his reportage is gripping. At this point it might be worth reprinting his first-hand account of the flight into Germany on that March day as captured in a letter to his parents on April 5, 1945:

Jumping into Germany

Looks like the worst of it is over for us as it seems the whole darn U.S. Army is in Germany by now. We've done our share, so guess we deserve a rest.

Germany is a place of plenty and beauty. Honestly, it is a wonderful country (was). I've much to tell you. I sweat when I think about it. It's funny, when death is so near one can actually smell it. It may have been imagination, but the minute I got over the first shock of the jump that nauseating odor hit me. Luckily that was all that did as the Schmizer (ed.- the Schmizer MP 40 9mm submachine gun) and rifle fire seemed thick enough to walk down. I was so loaded with rifle grenades, hand grenades and a Gammon grenade that if I had been hit, I'm afraid I'd just have blown up in mid-air as one poor guy did.

I'm unscathed though folks. So, Mom, your prayers were answered. Will admit I did my share too. Sky was filled with planes as far as you could see. And while in that plane I really was praying.

As we passed over the Rhine and I heard the flack ripping into the side of that plane and Sergeant Sprink yelled "We're over the Rhine". I could see it pass beneath us as we were standing then. After that it was hard to remember. He yelled: "Let's go". I felt myself rushing for the door (willingly, odd enough) then the door to front of me, the prop blast, and I was off, over Germany. My

chute opened and it seemed like I was floating over a gigantic corn popper, occasionally split by the rip of a Jerry Schmizer (machine gun).

Got on the ground, took me an age it seemed to get out of my chute, and get out my rifle. I got up and tried to run. I was between two houses (ed.- see paintings "Look for the Red Roof" and "The Drop Zone" below) from which the Jerrys were blazing away. Had 2 bags full of ammo and grenades strapped to me and in the jump the strap broke and my harness also was tangled up. Well, with all this and my pockets full, I'd stumble a ways then trip and fall, exhausted and my throat parched. I somehow got between those houses and into the woods. Others were not so lucky. How I made it I'll never know.

We live now in houses, cellars, etc. So it's pretty good. I'm fine.

*Love,
Bob*

Robert's mother, Evelyn Baldwin, related further that she had dreamed that paratroopers loaded with grenades, etc. had landed on the hill above her house in Ridgway, Pennsylvania. She related that the dream was so vivid that she wrote the hour down and it corresponded to the above description of the *Rhine Jump*, though she had no idea that her son, Robert, was actually in the jump! Just another of those war-related stories that happen so often.

To recap, a number of the Robert M. Baldwin Collection of battlefield sketches, later turned into paintings, were the first-hand recollections of PFC Robert M. Baldwin, of the 507th Infantry Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division. The pictures in Germany were from his own experiences while those dealing with the South Pacific, Vietnam, Operation Dragoon and his caricatures were from his reading of the events and his own imagination as a military battlefield participant.

The original sixteen-piece art collection (plus one picture) was permanently donated to the Ft. Bragg Airborne Museum by *The Estate of Robert M. Baldwin* on March 26, 2005. *The Estate of Robert M. Baldwin* has archived digital copies of the entire collection and all pieces are copyrighted and may not be reproduced without the permission of *The Estate of Robert M. Baldwin*, c/o R. Mark Baldwin, Jr., 2 Saddle Ridge Drive, Lebanon, New Jersey 08833.

A reprint of the collection with the addition of seven new pieces in the form of cartoons drawn by Robert Baldwin and historic military memorabilia was created and donated by R. Mark Baldwin, Jr. to the *Veteran's Haven North - "The Rally Point"* veteran's facility in Glen Gardner, New Jersey in March of 2015 for the enjoyment of the members of the facility. This was the first reprinted collection ever donated and this booklet presents a summary of the complete collection in pamphlet form.

A web site presenting all of Robert Baldwin's work beyond the military may be found at:

www.collabre.com/RobertBaldwinCollection/Opening.html

His complete personal history may also be located at the web site for www.Ancestry.com by searching for "Robert Mark Baldwin" with a birthdate of March 3, 1925 in Ridgway, Pennsylvania. Search for family trees. He is located in both the "*BaldwinHolt Family Tree*" and the "*BakerBaldwin Family Tree*" - each by "mbaldwin148." The *BakerBaldwin Family Tree* is the more current version.

We hope you enjoy the paintings!

The Estate of Robert M. Baldwin
March 2015