

# Fowler led platoon during WWII attack

■ The father of eight children relocated to Omaha during the Great Depression.

BY ANGIE BRUNKOW

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Robert Fowler crossed Omaha Beach a month after D-Day and led his men to take St. Lo, a city where the Germans had anchored their defenses.

The taking of the town was a key in the Allies' victory in the war.

Fowler, a retired member of the Nebraska National Guard's 134th Infantry Regiment, died Tuesday at Methodist Hospital after suffering a stroke. The 84-year-old Omaha man had been battling bone cancer.

Born in Tarkio, Mo., Fowler moved to Omaha during the Great Depression. He graduated in 1939 from then-Tech High School and signed on with the National Guard.

"He lied about his age in order to get in," said daughter Marianne Loftus of Omaha. He initially spent time in the United States preparing for D-Day, though the men were told only that they were preparing for a mission.

"He went in with 42 men and came out with six. He cried like a baby when he saw how many men he had lost," Loftus said. "He had to pull himself together and finish the job."

Fowler, a platoon sergeant, was in heavy combat for two weeks. He was wounded when a ricochet bullet struck his thigh and groin. He retired from the National Guard in 1966 as a major.

In Omaha, Fowler raised a family and sold industrial equipment. He and his wife, Evelyn, had eight children. He lost two — Mike, who was hospitalized for a tonsillectomy at age 4, and Joseph, who died of an aneurysm at age 36.

He also lost his wife after 50 years of marriage. Fowler later remarried.

In retirement, he traveled to St. Lo and around the United States. He was president of a veterans group and volunteered by driving veterans to appointments.

"He was a man of few words, but ... he loved to tell stories about World War II," Loftus said. "Our mother said he never talked about World War II until he retired. Then after he retired he wouldn't shut up," she laughed.

Other survivors include his wife, Dora, of Omaha; son Robert of Omaha; daughters Kathleen Neill of Burke, Va., Elyse Coyle, Margaret Brooks and Sally Spielman of Omaha; brother Lee Fowler of Omaha; and sisters Rosemary Tessin and Ann McKenna, both of Omaha.

He had 13 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

A memorial Mass will be at 10 a.m. today at St. John Vianney Catholic Church, 5801 Oak Hills Drive.

 **FOWLER**—Robert L., Maj. USArmy (Ret.) of the 134th Infantry Division, age 84yrs, of Omaha. Preceded in death by sons, Michael and Joseph; first wife, Evelyn; brother, James; sons-in-law, Michael Corcoran and Rick Coyle; step-daughter, Glenda Allen. Survived by wife, Dora J.; daughters and sons-in-law, Dr. Kathleen and the Honorable Judge Ed Neill, of Burke, VA, Marianne and Lawrence Loftus, Elyse Coyle, Margaret and Gary Brooks, Sally and Tom Spielman; son, Robert Fowler; daughter-in-law, Judith Fowler, all of Omaha; brother, Lee Fowler; sister and brother-in-law, Ann and Pat McKenna; sister, Rosemary Tessin; sister-in-law, Elise Fowler; 13 grandchildren; 3 great-grandchildren; many nieces nephews, and beloved WWII friends.

VISITATION begins Fri 5pm, St. John Vianney Church, with WAKE SERVICE at 7pm. MEMORIAL MASS Sat 10am, St. John Vianney Church. Family suggests memorials to St. John Vianney Catholic Church, Veterans of Foreign Wars, or the American Cancer Society. Military Honors by Millard VFW Post No. 8334, American Legion Post No. 374, and the Military Order of the Purple Heart Chapter 260.

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