

September 26, 2020

## Centre County Native wins Armed Forces Wrestling Championship

(Pennsylvania Military Museum, J. Gleim, Museum Curator)

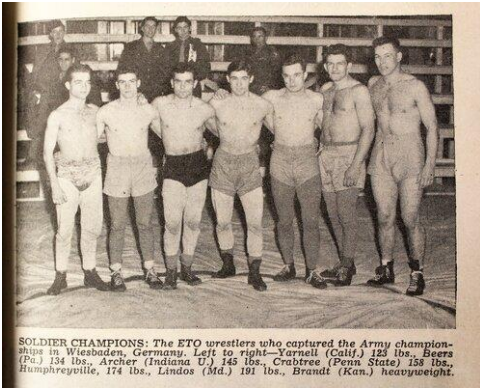


Photo including Crabtree, third from left.

Second Lieutenant Allen Crabtree (1921-2006) wore this robe while competing for the United States Forces European Theater Wrestling Team in 1945-1946. A former Penn State University wrestler, Crabtree graduated in 1943 and entered the Army shortly afterwards. He attended Armored Officer's Training School at Fort Knox, Kentucky where he became a Specialized Tank Instructor in the M24 Medium Tank.

At the end of February 1945, Lt. Crabtree was sent to Germany to instruct soldiers there but the war in Europe ended before the M24 tank arrived. Crabtree was preparing to be sent to Japan when the US dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. With a mainland invasion of Japan cancelled, Lt. Crabtree remained in Germany as part of the army of occupation. He served as a Distribution and Supply Officer in Bremen, Germany.

Following the end of the war, the U.S. established a massive athletics program designed to keep the nearly 3.5 million American soldiers on occupation duty in Europe entertained and out of trouble. The program offered intramural-type competition in every sport available, including baseball, football, track and field, swimming, and wrestling.



Photo of Crabtree's sports-robe.

Lieutenant Crabtree joined the European Theatre Wrestling team in 1945. He became the team captain and trained with his teammates at the American Red Cross Eagle Club in Wiesbaden, Germany. The purple robe seen here was a repurposed Army hospital robe and it was shared between all the members of the team. In 1946, Crabtree fought in the 158-lb weight class and won the Theater Service Competition. He, along with the other first and second place winners of that competition went on to form an elite American team that competed against the French, Belgian, and Dutch national champions.

In the fall of 1946, Crabtree returned home to State College and began working in his family's jewelry store. He remained in the U.S. Army Reserves and achieved the rank of Major. He served as a Battalion Commander of the 491st Combat Engineer Battalion. Allen Crabtree passed away in 2006 and is buried in Phillipsburg, Centre County.