

April 8, 2020

Huntingdon Native Injured by German Landmine, Receives Prosthetic Limb

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

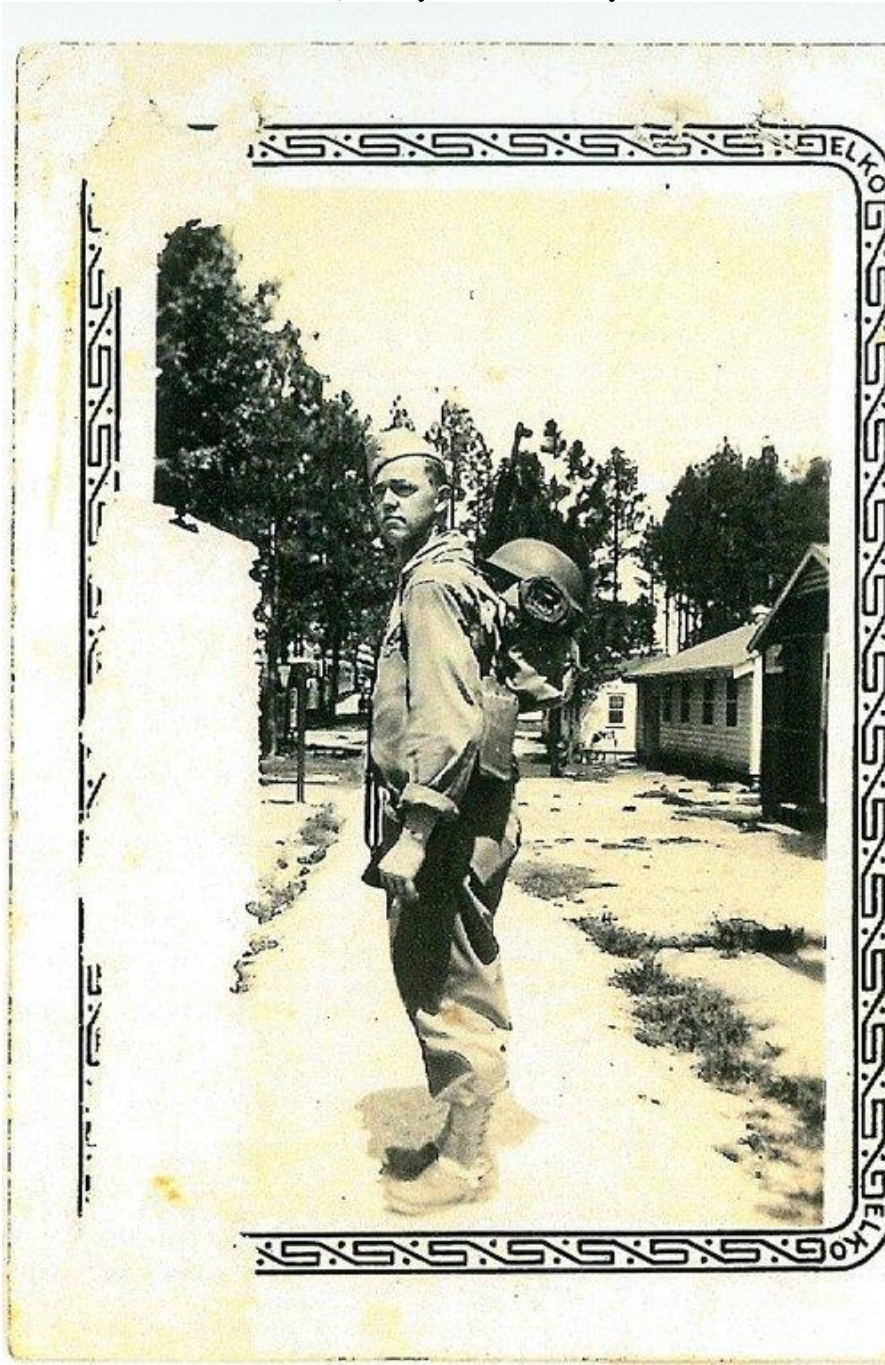


Photo of Kelly during training.

John E. Kelly, of Huntingdon, enlisted in the Pennsylvania National Guard on September 25, 1940. He rose to the rank of Corporal on August 1, 1941. He attended Officers Candidate School and was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 347th Infantry Regiment, 87th Infantry Division as a Motor Transport Officer. For 21 months, Kelly supervised the maintenance and repair of the battalion's motor vehicles and directed the training program for battalion drivers. In October 1944, he departed for Europe and served through the Ardennes and Rhineland campaign.



Photo of Kelly post-op.



In February 1945, one month after the Ardennes Offensive (The Battle of the Bulge), Kelly served as Infantry Company Commander. He was severely injured in Germany when a Jeep he was riding in drove over a landmine, damaging both of his legs. For his service and injuries, Kelly received the Purple Heart medal.

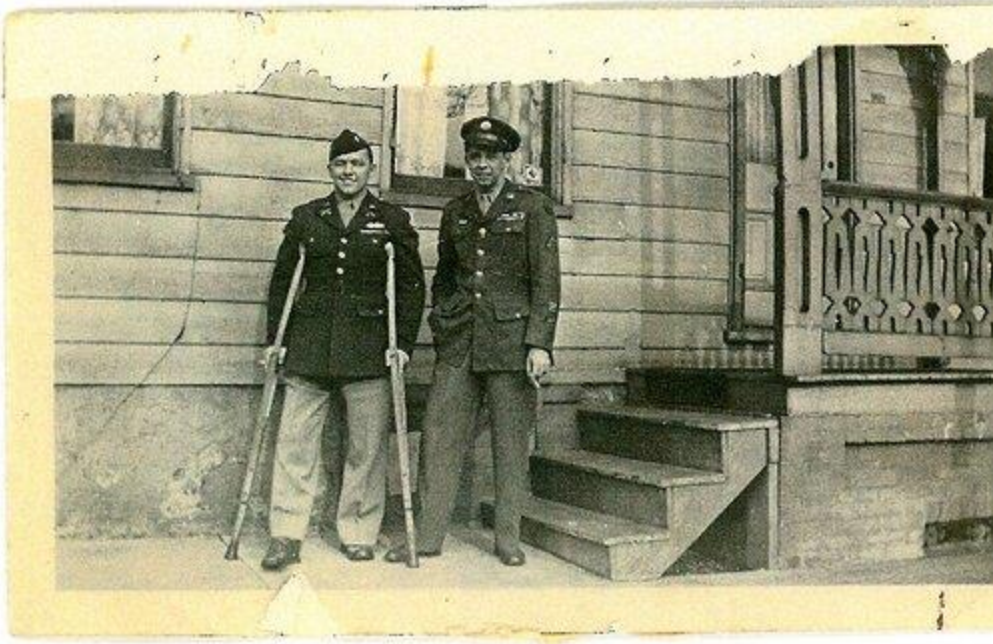


Photo of Kelly on crutches, wearing prosthetics.

He returned home and remained in the military. Over the course of two years and despite more than a dozen operations, Kelly's right leg failed to heal properly. In May 1947, surgeons amputated his leg below the knee and Kelly was discharged from service. He wore a brace on his left leg, and an artificial leg on his right for the rest of his life (pictured here).

By the end of World War II, nearly 17,000 soldiers suffered injuries that required amputation. Prosthetic limb development had not changed much since the creation of the American Orthotic and Prosthetic Association in 1917. Following the war, the US Government provided funding for research and production of prosthetics with improved fit and functionality. Heavy wooden limbs with limited mobility were soon replaced with prosthetics made of plastic, aluminum, and other composite materials.

After his amputation in 1947, Kelly was referred to the VA for continuing care and to be fitted for prosthetics. John Kelly received the limb and brace seen here from the Veterans Administration (VA) around 1970