

Robert E. Bernens Class of 1943 Enshrined 2022



Robert E. Bernens entered Xavier in 1939 and graduated in January, 1943. He was a member of the Clef Club, the Philosophical Club, and was enrolled in the ROTC program during his time at Xavier. He graduated in January, 1943 with a Bachelor of Philosophy and immediately entered active duty to be commissioned at Fort Sill in May 1943.

Bob spent the next year training for various military scenarios before being sent to France in August 1944. He was moved through various units until he was assigned to the 400th Armored Field Artillery Battalion in October 1944. In December, his 400th FA Bn was attached to the 30th Infantry Division and was used to stop the German offensive in the Ardennes forest in what has been known as the Battle of the Bulge. He was wounded during the battle and was awarded the Purple Heart. Having stopped the German offensive, the 400th FA Bn was eventually sent to support units that needed armored artillery support. When the Allies were preparing to cross the Rhine River in

late March 1945, Bob's unit was sent to support the unit crossing the Ludendorff bridge at Remagen. The Germans failed to completely blow up that bridge during their retreat. The bridge was unable to support armored vehicles, so an infantry company, with Bob as the forward observer, crossed the bridge on foot. They were the first Allies to cross the Rhine River. Once across, the infantry unit was positioned to defend against any German counterattack. They held those positions until the bridge was able to handle vehicles, and the rest of the units could cross. Bob was awarded the Bronze Star for his efforts in the bridge crossing and subsequent defensive actions. The 400th FA Bn was actively firing for 229 days out of 276 days in theater.

In addition to his Bronze Star and Purple Heart, Bob was awarded the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with 4 battle stars, as well as other World War II medals.

law, joining Tom Burns and eventually continuing on his own. He was highly respected among his fellow attorneys, and served as President of the Cincinnati Lawyers' Club. He often did title work in the evenings at several savings & loans to help his 5 children through college.

Bob was an active member of Our Lady of Visitation parish. His family believes he served on the Parish Council and performed some pro bono legal work for the parish. He sang in the Church's choir and was involved with the Visitation Scout Troop while his sons were scouts.

Bob's volunteerism centered on Catholic cemeteries. He was a member of the Board of Trustees for St. Joseph's New Cemetery, and he served as its legal counsel for 35 years. In addition to that, was a on the Board of the National Catholic Cemetery Conference, and he served on the Catholic Cemeteries of Ohio Legal Advisory Committee.

Bob travelled extensively to attend reunions with fellow veterans of his unit. It is not known if he belonged to the VFW or American Legion.

Bob was an avid fan of and active in Xavier activities. His children have fond memories of attending games with him. Bob passed way in 2006.