U.S. Army Ordnance Corps Hall of Fame Nomination

NOMINEE DATA

NOMINEE'S NAME: William John Durrenberger

RANK/GRADE: Major General

TITLE AT RETIREMENT: Major General

DATE/PLACE OF BIRTH: March 13, 1917/

DATE RETIRED: 1970

DATE DECEASED: June 11, 2002

LAST DUTY POSITION: US Army Pacific

SIGNIFICANT CITATIONS/AWARDS:

Citations:

Bronze Star Medal
Army Commendation Medal (with one Oak Leaf Cluster)

Promotions:

Temporary	*Permanent*	
21 Oct 40	1 Jun 42	Second Lieutenant
1 Feb 42	7 Dec 44	First Lieutenant
22 Mar 43	1 Jul 48	Captain
1 Jun 44	2 Jul 53	Major
26 Sep 45	7 Dec 61	Lieutenant Colonel
22 Aug 57		Colonel
9 Feb 66		Brigadier General

SIGNIFICANT ASSIGNMENTS/POSITIONS:	**FROM**	**TO**
USAR, not on active duty	Jun 39	Oct 40
Student Officer (Ammunition Manufacture) Picatinny Arsenal, NJ	Oct 40	Nov 40
Property and Transportation Officer Elwood Ordnance Plant, Illinois	Nov 40	Aug 42
Student Officer (Automotive Maintenance)	Aug 42	Dec 42

Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland		
Student Officer (Tank Maintenance) Rock Island Arsenal, Illinois	Dec 42	Mar 43
Maintenance and Repair Officer (Tank) Red River Ordnance Depot, Texas	Mar 43	Jul 43
Foreign Technical Intelligence Officer European Theater of Operations and Office of Army Military Attache (London)	Jul 43	Jan 47
Guided Missile & Rocket Design and Development Officer Office, Chief of Ordnance, Washington D.C.	Jan 47	Jun 48
Technical Operations Officer, Rocket Branch Office, Chief of Ordnance, Washington D.C.	Jun 48	Jan 51
Office of Special Assistant to Chief of Ordnance Office, Chief of Ordnance, Washington D.C.	Jan 51	Aug 51
Director of Projects, Redstone Arsenal, Alabama	Aug 51	Sep 52
Assistant Director, Ordnance Missile Laboratories, Redstone Arsenal, Alabama	Sep 52	Jun 53
Student (Graduate School) Syracuse University, New York	Jun 53	Aug 54
Technical Director, Financial Management System Office, Chief of Ordnance	Aug 54	Jan 55
Executive Officer, Ordnance Comptroller Office, Chief of Ordnance	Jan 55	Feb 56
Chief, Financial Management Office Army Ballistic Missile Agency, Redstone Arsenal, Alabama	Feb 56	Mar 58
Comptroller, U.S. Army Ordnance Missile Command, Redstone Arsenal, Alabama	Mar 58	Aug 59
Student, Industrial College of the Armed Forces, Washington D.C.	Aug 59	Jun 60
Chief, Logistic Plans Branch, J4 Division United Nations Command/U.S. Forces Korea	Jun 60	Aug 61
Deputy Commander, U.S. Army Ordnance Weapons Command, Rock Island, Illinois	Aug 61	Aug 62
Chief of Staff, U.S. Army Weapons Command Rock Island, Illinois	Aug 62	Jul 63
Commanding Officer, Springfield Armory, Springfield, Massachusetts	Jul 63	Sep 65
Commanding Officer, U.S. Army Tank- Automotive Center, Warren, Michigan	Sep 65	Aug 66
Deputy Commanding General, U.S. Army	Aug 66	Oct 66

Tank-Automotive Center, Warren, Michigan Commanding General, U.S. Army Weapons Command, Rock Island, Illinois	Oct 66	Sept 68

EDUCATION:

Civilian
Perham (Minnesota) High School – 1935
University of Minnesota – 1935-1940
University of Maryland – 1951 (BS)
Syracuse University – 1954 (MBA)

Military
British School of Tank Technology – 1943
Industrial College of the Armed Forces – 1960

LIST OF POSSIBLE SOURCES FOR FURTHER INFO ABOUT NOMINEE:

Joint Munitions Command History Office, 309-782-0392, ROCK-AMSJM HI@conus.army.mil

MAJOR CONTRUBITIONS TO U.S. ARMY ORDNANCE:

Major General William J. Durrenberger was born March 15, 1917 in Wadena, Minnesota. He entered the University of Minnesota in the fall of 1935 after graduating from Perham High School in Perham, Minnesota. While completing a six-year course leading to a Bachelor degree in Mechanical Engineering and Business Administration, General Durrenberger volunteered and was called to active duty as an ROTC Second Lieutenant in October 1940.

General Durenberger's early assignments and training were in the fields of ammunition manufacture and combat vehicle development and maintenance. He served for more than three years, beginning in 1943, as a technical intelligence officer in the European Theatre, specializing in combat vehicles. During one portion of his European tour, General Durrenberger was assigned to the military staff of the American Embassy in London and attended the British School of Tank Technology, Military College of Science studying German and Italian combat vehicles.

When the United States was first developing its missile program circa 1947, General Durrenberger, served in the Army's Rocket and Guided Missile Development Branch in the Pentagon. He also spent one year as an Army representative in the Air Force Missile development group in the Pentagon, and in 1951 moved to the Army's new missile center at Redstone Arsenal, Alabama, where he became Director of Projects, and later Assistant Director of the Ordnance Missile Laboratories, an organization which he

helped create. In the latter position, he helped direct the missile research and development team headed by space scientist Dr. Wernher von Braun. During this same period, MG Durrenberger headed a special Army-Navy-Marine guided missile mission to Europe. His contributions the Army missile programs are significant to the technological progress of the U.S. Army and the nation.

Several years later, Durrenberger served a second tour of duty at Redstone Arsenal where he was a member of the Dr. Von Braun German scientist team which developed and launched Explorer I, the first United States satellite. Dr. Von Braun would became a hero to many for enabling the United States to beat Russia to put a man on the moon. Between 1950 and 1956, Dr. Von Braun's work at Redstone Arsenal changed the world. Dr. Von Braun led the Army's rocket development team at Redstone Arsenal, resulting in the Redstone rocket, which was used for the first live nuclear ballistic missile tests conducted by the United States. General Durrenberger had the distinct privilege of working on these special projects. Durrenberger was also a key participant and led in the establishment of what is now the U.S. Army Missile Command.

During his military career, General Durrenberger continued his academic studies which had been interrupted by World War II. He was awarded a Bachelor of Science degree by the University of Maryland in 1951 and a Masters degree in Business Administration by Syracuse University in 1954. Following his graduation from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces in June 1960, General Durrenberger was assigned to Korea where he served as chief of the Logistic Plans Branch, J4 Division of the joint headquarters United Nations Command/United States Forces Korea.

He returned to the United States in July 1961 to assume the position of Deputy Commander of the Ordnance Weapons Command (OWC), predecessor of the present Army Weapons Command. At the Ordnance Weapons Command he broadened his knowledge and expertise of the entire Army weapons program. At the time the OWC was in charge of manufacturing and engineering facilities producing and working on projects like the Davy Crockett Weapon System, an attempt at producing a weapon system to fire atomic artillery shells. The command managed approximately 8000 items of production equipment used to process metal fabrication, welding, heat treatment, plating, tool manufacture, and inspection and testing. The OWC mission encompassed the life cycle processes of anti-tank, anti-aircraft artillery, small arms weapons, and ordnance weapons materiel. During a part of this tour of duty, he served in Washington D.C., on the planning group which organized the Army Material Command (AMC). When AMC was finally established in the summer of 1962, General Durrenberger became Chief of Staff of one of the new AMC major subordinate commands, the U.S. Army Weapons Command in 1962.

In July 1963, General Durrenberger assumed command of the Army's oldest arsenal, Springfield Armory, Springfield, Massachusetts. During his tour at the Armory the installation pioneered significant changes in the fields of air to surface armament through creative research, development, engineering and pilot fabrication of weapons and weapons systems. The Armory was the principal small arms R&D center and pilot

manufacturer. The beneficiaries of these efforts spanned across the Services. At the time Springfield Armory was managed by the Weapons Command, which he would later command. Some of the key products General Durrenberger managed either improvements or developments for during his command included the Springfield M14 Rifle, M61 and M39 aircraft machine guns, M60 machine guns, XM90E1 spotting rifle, XM122 spotting machine gun, subsystem twin guns, linkers, delinkers, weapons mounts and pods, training devices and grenade launchers. General Durrenberger oversaw special mission assignments in connection with small arms include supporting research for heat and erosion resistant materials, surface finishing of materials and processes, and deterioration, preservation and treatment of non-metallic materials. MG Durrenberger can be credited with the technological advancement and modernization of some of the nations most critical weapons. The experience would provide him the expertise and knowledge to command at his future assignments.

In September 1965, he became commanding Officer of the Army Tank-Automotive Center, Warren, Michigan. After this tour he was reassigned to the Weapons Command as Commanding General, U.S. Army Weapons Command in September of 1966 at Rock Island Arsenal, Illinois. The assignment suited him as he had gained the technical expertise, background in weapons life cycle logistics and experience required to manage a major Army commodity. During the same period, he was a member of the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice.

In 1968 he assumed his last active duty position as Assistant Chief of Staff, G4, Headquarters, U.S. Army, Pacific. The position was redesignated Deputy Chief of Staff, Logistics on November 1, 1969. Upon his retirement in 1970, General Durrenberger had been decorated with multiple awards and medals including the Bronze Star Medal, the Army Commendation Medal in June 1959 while serving with the U.S. Army Ordnance Missile Command, and an Oak Leaf Cluster to the Medal in 1963 on his departure from Headquarters, U.S. Army Weapons Command. After retirement, Durrenberger went on to work as an academics administrator. He was appointed assistant vice president of education services at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa in June of 1971.

SYNOPSIS OF CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ORDNANCE CORPS:

Major General Durrenberger's military service ended at the age of 53 with thirty years of experience in the fields of logistics, maintenance, transportation, personnel, weapons system development and management, research and development, missile technology and engineering. He commanded one of the nation's most historic installations, Springfield Armory and garnered responsibility for a major army commodities and the U.S. Army Weapons Command. He had amazing experiences working on sensitive Army projects such as the Explorer I satellite and the Davey Crocket Weapons System. His work in the missile ordnance field advanced the nation's technological progress.

His life is marked with significant accomplishments in the field of ordnance and as a war Veteran. MG Durrenberger served in WWII from 1943 to 1945 as a technical

intelligence officer in the European theater, and specialized in combat vehicles. When the U.S. began developing its missile programs in the 1950s, MG Durrenberger served in the Army's Rocket and Guided Missile Branch in the Pentagon. He directed missile research and development teams headed by leading space scientists such as Dr. Wernher von Braun and was involved in launching the United States first satellite, Explorer I. MG Durrenberger's experience is not limited to missile technology, but extends throughout the ordnance field. MG Durrenberger's influence is apparent in all facets of today's AMC and his impact can be studied in the areas of tank-automotive, missiles, conventional ammunition, and weapons. His accomplishments will be noted as important to the progress and modernization oft the U.S. Army and the U.S. Army Materiel Command.

PHOTOGRAPH: