



MERRITT C. PRATT LT. COL
QUARTERMASTER RETIRED.

Merritt C. Pratt
Lt. Col. QMC. Retd.
2647 N. Albany Ave
Chicago, Illinois,
60647

10 November 1976

Commanding General Fort Lee Virginia.
Attn: Museum: Fort Lee.
Fort Lee, Virginia.

Dear General:

Under separate cover I am sending you one of the 15 copies printed, of the HISTORY OF THE HELMET LINER. This copy was given to me for my efforts in helping to get this program off the ground and to a successful ending.

I am also sending my copies of "E" Awards that were presented to industry for their fine work in helping the Military fulfill their mission during World War II.

I was the purchasing officer at the Chicago Quartermaster Depot that negotiated the purchase of over 32,000,000 Helmet Liners until VJ Day.

I have given my samples of the Helmet Liners to the Museum at Fort Sheridan, Illinois. I am sure that they would transfer them to your museum, should you desire them. They include the first (Fiber Paper type liner) Low Pressure type liner) (First high pressure type liner, (parashute type liner) Jap Steel Helmet) and German Steel Helmet).

The story about the "Helmet Liner", after the end of the fighting is almost as interesting as the start.

I was released to my civilian job in June 1946. The company that I worked for folded up two years later, so I applied to the Civil Service for a job with Industrial Mobilization. I was accepted and I was assigned the item (Helmet Liner) because I had been associated with them all during the fighting. During the planning for the Helmet liner for future use, I found that some company was trying to sue the Government for infringement on their patent for the Helmet Liner. They might have gotten away with it, but I remembered that I had included in one of the files, copies of the patent rights being given to the Government to use without payments, so I went through my old files that were still in storage at the QCMD and found the papers necessary to close the case.

Then the Quartermaster was at odds as to what to do with all the steel molds laying in the manufacturers plants. They were issuing an order that they all be destroyed. They cost the services over \$5,000 each, when they were made, and I am sure that they would cost a great deal more later on. I wrote to the Quartermaster Generals Office in Washington D.C. and suggested that these Molds be placed in storage at the Quartermaster Depot in Jeffersonville, Indiana, with the other molds and tools being stored there for future use. My suggestion was accepted, and all the molds were sent to Jeffersonville Depot. Later on the Industrial Mobilization office, negotiated a contract with Westinghouse Electric Company to check these molds, and to repair and put all those that were good back in order.

801-01
History of the Helmet Liner, 1946

Helmet Liners.

If I remember rightly, the contract with the Westinghouse Electric, Micarta Division, Hampton, South Carolina, was \$1,000 per mold. This amount included, the complete inspection, re-surfacing and chrom plating both halves of the mold, repair all steam lines and fittings, and numbering each mold with the manufacturer's number. The molds were to be returned to the Jeffersonville Quartermaster Depot for storage and safe keeping.

I was sent to Hampton, South Carolina, to inspect the molds, and to pull out those not repairable and to return them to the Jeffersonville Quartermaster Depot for salvage and disposal.

It was established with procurement, to from this period on, all manufacturers using the molds would furnish the Government one new mold, for the use of each 5 molds borrowed, and all used molds were to be re-chromed and repaired, and returned to the Jeffersonville, Quartermaster Depot for further use. This agreement was still in force when I retired from the Civil Service Planning division for Columbus, Quartermaster Industrial Mobilization.

I feel that my being in the Planning section of Mobilization during the period after the end of the fighting, saved the Government many thousands of dollars.

The Quartermaster R & D division experimented with making Helmet Liners of Nylon and other materials, but gave up on them for many reasons not explained to the undersigned.

I am attaching snap shots of one (Inland Mold) that was sent to the Micarta plant for reconditioning. The top picture shows the FORCE or top of the mold. The center picture shows the mold closed, and the bottom picture shows the CAVITY or Female side of the mold.

Westinghouse Electric Company was awarded one of the first new contracts after the War II, and the inspectors sent to the plant were from the Atlanta Georgia inspection division. The inspector was not experienced in checking the manufacture of the Helmet Liner, and was rejecting the production of all the liners. This brought up questions with the bureau of Standards, so they ordered one of their engineers down to the Westinghouse plant, to straighten the inspector out. I too was ordered to the plant from Columbus, Ohio, and between us we set up standards and measuring guides and gages, by which the inspector was to check all helmet liners inspected from his inspection lots. Pictures of these are also attached for reference.

Brigadier General, QMC. Commanding officer of the Chicago QM Depot, recommended me for the Legion of Merit for the exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service. Copy attached for reference.

I also purchased all the "LEATHER TYPE" Gloves for the services. Copy of types and contracts attached. Also, I purchased all the Steel & Canvas Coats, foot lockers, field desks, the first ski's and snow shoes, and many other items too numerous to mention.

I am very happy to say that I enjoyed my assignments and have no regrets that I did not receive the Legion of Merit.

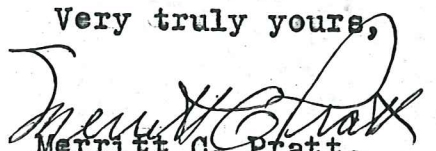
PAGE #3

Helmet Liners.

I am now 79 years old and I am trying to dispose of the many items that I collected during my years in the service, and I feel that the Museum at Fort Lee, would be a better place for the above mentioned items, than to be in a box in our daughters basement collecting dust. They would not understand what they were, should they have them to look at.

Thanking you for taking the time to read this letter. I hope that these items will be acceptable for keeping in the Museum.

Very truly yours,


Merritt C. Pratt.
Lt. Col. QMC. Retd.
0-223693-344-09-5622.

Encl: Copies of reports,
Letters, & Pictures.

SPQDI 201

(Pratt, Merritt C., Major, QMC)

29 November 1945

SUBJECT: Recommendation for Award of Legion of Merit to
Major Merritt C. Pratt.

TO: War Department Decorations Board,
Room 2035, Munitions Building,
Washington 25, D. C.

THRU: The Quartermaster General, Washington 25, D. C.
The Adjutant General, Washington 25, D. C.

1. Under the provisions of AR 600-45, as amended, it is recommended that Major Merritt C. Pratt, O-223698, be awarded the Legion of Merit for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services. From 21 April 1942 to 12 October 1945, he served as Officer in Charge of the Clothing and Equipage Branch (later Clothing and Equipage Section, Buying and Production Branch), Procurement Division, Chicago Quartermaster Depot.

2. During the period of his services in the Procurement Division as Contracting Officer, he made an outstanding contribution of the successful prosecution of the war effort by his solutions to complex problems arising in connection with the procurement of clothing, equipage, and miscellaneous supply items for the Armed Forces. Through the practical application of his wide knowledge of the clothing industry and his sound business judgement, he carried out a procurement program vital to the health, comfort, and welfare of the fighting forces of the United States.

3. Major Pratt was called to active duty on 23 July 1941 in the rank of 1st Lieutenant, from his position as Sales Manager of a large clothing manufacturing firm. He brought to the Army experience covering a period of twenty-eight years in the field of clothing and textiles. He had previously served with distinction in the Illinois National Guard and in the regular Army during World War I.

4. Major Pratt's early assignment in the Procurement Division at the Chicago Quartermaster Depot was in the field of inspection of clothing and equipage procured by the Army. Under his supervision several procedures were established, which expedited the performance of this operation and increased its effectiveness.

5. In the spring of 1942, Major Pratt received training at the Chemical Warfare School at the Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland, in defense measures against enemy attack. Through previous experience and the knowledge gained at this school, he trained key officers and civilians of the Depot Defense Organization,

Chicago Quartermaster Depot, and established necessary measures for the depot's protection. During this period his services were requested by many Civilian Defense units of outside organizations. With my approval, Major Pratt made approximately fifteen appearances assisting in the training of air raid and defense personnel in the Chicago area. His work in this connection was beyond the requirements of his normal duty and was the subject of numerous letters of commendation.

6. In April 1942, Major Pratt was assigned as Officer in Charge of the Clothing and Equipage Branch, Procurement Division. At that time the responsibility for procuring the fibre helmet liner was assigned to the Chicago Quartermaster Depot. Concurrently, a plastic type liner, later known as the Liner, Helmet, K-1, was being developed. Due to the urgency of requirements, for this new liner, it was necessary to fabricate many molds for quantity production. Major Pratt solved this problem by locating properly equipped machine shops throughout the eastern part of the United States and then supervising the fabrication of the necessary molds.

7. Early in the production of the helmet liner, it was necessary to obtain and train inspectors. No such personnel were then available, and Major Pratt resorted to hiring men who had a working familiarity of blueprints and from that point in training them first on the production of the fibre liner and then on the new plastic liner. Were it not for the ingenuity and ability he displayed in this matter, the production of satisfactory liners could not have taken place.

8. The suspension of early helmet liners was found to be susceptible to improvement in several instances. Major Pratt called defects to the attention of the Office of The Quartermaster General with the result that several outstanding improvements were made resulting in increased production, decreased cost, and a reduction in liner requirements due to losses.

9. In the fall of 1943, the procurement of leather gloves was assigned to the Chicago Quartermaster Depot. At this time leathers were in particularly critical supply, but the conduct of this program under Major Pratt's supervision was highly successful. It resulted in such developments as the slip-on type of glove, the adoption of three size gloves, - small, medium and large, instead of hand sizes, and the design of a wool insert glove which can be worn on either hand for use under the glove, shell, leather. Major Pratt made an outstanding personal contribution to these developments.

10. With the inauguration of the Smaller War Plants Program, Major Pratt was designated as assistant to the Officer in Charge of that activity within the depot. He was instrumental in assisting manufacturers in this category in their procurement and production schedules.

11. In addition to his regularly assigned duties, Major Pratt has given freely of his time and energy in the development of management and training techniques within the depot and as an instructor in military training.

SPQDI 201 (Pratt, M. Att. C., Major, GIC)
29 November 1945

12. Early in 1945, Major Pratt invented a combination pistol holster and scabbard which was adopted by the War Department and patented in Major Pratt's name under Patent No. 142,741 dated 30 October 1945. This last contribution was made too late for use in the war.

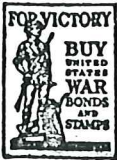
13. It is my considered opinion that this officer has, by his devotion to duty, initiative, and application, conducted himself in an exceptionally meritorious manner and that he has performed outstanding services as compared to other officers of similar rank and duties in this command.

J. E. BARZYNSKI
Brigadier General, GIC
Commanding

1 Inclosure
(Proposed Citation)

PROPOSED CITATION

Major Merritt C. Firth, O-223625, USA, for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services. From 21 April 1942 to 12 October 1945, while serving as Officer in Charge of the Clothing and Equipage Branch, Procurement Division, Chicago Quartermaster Depot, he made an outstanding contribution to the successful prosecution of the war effort by his solutions to complex problems in connection with the procurement of clothing, equipage, and miscellaneous quartermaster supplies, and by other activities in furtherance of the war effort.



HEADQUARTERS ARMY SERVICE FORCES

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

SPGAM 201 Pratt, Merritt C. (29 Nov. 45) Major

FEB 18 1946

SUBJECT: Legion of Merit

TO : The Quartermaster General
Building B, 2nd and T Streets, S. W.
Washington 25, D. C.

1. Reference is made to your recommendation that the Legion of Merit be awarded to Major Merritt C. Pratt, O223693, Quartermaster Corps, for services as Officer in Charge, Clothing and Equipment Branch, Procurement Division, Chicago Quartermaster Depot, Chicago, Illinois, from 21 April 1942 to 12 October 1945.

2. The recommendation has received careful consideration by Headquarters, Army Service Forces and the services rendered were not considered to have been exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service within the meaning of the law governing the award of the Legion of Merit. Recommend award of Army Commendation Ribbon.

BY COMMAND OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL LUTES:

Secretary to
Army Service Forces Decorations Board

201
Pratt, Merritt C.

SPQPO 201 (Pratt, Merritt C.) 1st Ind
Maj., QMC (18 Feb 46)


Armed File
AC/w

ASF, Office of the Quartermaster General, Washington 25, D. C., 19 Feb 46

TO: Commanding Officer, Chicago QM Depot, 1819 W. Pershing Rd., Chicago 9,
Illinois

1. Your attention is invited to basic communication.
2. Request that QMC Form 1191 for Army Commendation Ribbon and possible Oak-Leaf Clusters to the Ribbon be accomplished.

FOR THE QUARTERMASTER GENERAL:


F. C. HOLBROOK
Colonel, QMC
Assistant

SPQDI 201 Pers Div 2nd Ind
(Pratt, Merritt C., Major)

Adjutant, QMD, Chgo 9, Ill., 25 Feb 1946.

TO: Dir, Proc Div.


CTA