

# **Chicago Chapter 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division Association.**

## **March, 2022 News Letter**

### **First Sergeant Leonard Funk**



First Sergeant Leonard Funk was a Medal of Honor recipient and one of the most decorated paratroopers of World War II. He also received the Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star, Bronze Star, and three Purple Hearts.

Funk joined the Army in June 1941. He volunteered to be a paratrooper. After completing his jump training he was assigned to Company C of the 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment. He jumped into Normandy on D-Day as well as jumping into Holland during Operation Market Garden. In December 1944 he fought in the Battle of the Bulge.

On January, 1945, he distinguished himself by gallant actions against the enemy. After advancing 15 miles in a driving snowstorm the company executive officer became a casualty, and 1st Sgt. Funk immediately assumed his duties. Under his courageous leadership the 3d Platoon took 80 prisoners. An enemy patrol captured the American guards, freed the prisoners, and began preparations to attack Company C at which time 1st Sgt. Funk approached the enemy patrol. A German officer order 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt Funk to surrender as he pushed a machine pistol into his stomach. Although outnumbered and facing almost certain death, 1st Sgt. Funk pretended to comply as he unslung his submachine gun, brought the muzzle down and dispatched the German officer. He then fired on the other Germans while shouting to the other Americans to seize the enemy's weapons. During this fire fight, 21 Germans were killed and the remainder captured. 1st Sgt. Funk's bold action and heroic disregard for his own safety were directly responsible for the recapture of a vastly superior enemy force, which, if allowed to remain free, could have endangered the entire attack plan.