

**Cornelius B. Breen**  
**United States Army**  
**1940 - 1945**



Cornelius B. (Connie) Breen was born in September 1918 in County Kilkenny, Ireland. He came to the United States aboard the SS George Washington arriving on November 7, 1930. Mr. Breen lived with his parents in Brooklyn and attended Holy Name of Jesus School. On April 29, 1940 he enlisted in the National Guard and began his active duty on January 27, 1941. He was assigned to Battery B, 186<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery (155 Howitzer) Battalion. The unit trained in the United States until departing for the European Theater of Operations on October 20, 1943. The trip to England was aboard the SS Empress of Australia. Research shows that once they arrived the unit was at St Audries Camp Somerset UK, in preparation for the D-Day invasion.

After arriving in France as part of the D-Day Invasion Forces, Connie Breen was involved in the following battles and campaigns: Normandy, Central Europe, Ardennes, Rineland and Northern France. At the end of the war, he and the men of the Battery B, 186<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery (155 Howitzer) Battalion returned to the United States aboard the Queen Mary and he was Honorably Discharged at Fort Dix NJ on October 8, 1945. He was awarded the Europe Africa and Middle East Service Medal and American Defense Service Medal.

Connie married Ann Hanlon October 2, 1943 and they had three children. They lived on Hoyt Street in Brooklyn until 1958 when they moved to Windsor Terrace. He worked for the Dept. of Sanitation before beginning his career as a trackman for the NYC transit system. After retiring he enjoyed spending time with his five grandchildren. Connie was a member of the American Legion's McFadden Bros Post 1380 in Brooklyn NY. He died on November 19, 2006

Mr. Breen seldom talked about his time in the Army but every now and then would share a tale. A friend recalls a very serious but humorous story Connie told about his trip to Europe aboard the Empress of Australia. "We talked about the trip and where his bunk or sleeping quarters were located. He explained he was assigned to "E-Deck" but never slept there, preferring to sleep on the deck. Thinking it must be cold on the deck of a ship in the North Atlantic during late October, he questioned why not sleep below in your bunk? Connie's immediate reply was "**U-boats**". German U-boats were attacking and sinking our troop and supply ships as they traveled to Europe. If the ship was hit by a torpedo his only chance of survival was to be on deck. Even on a good day they did not escape the terror of World War II.

