

AMERICAN INGENUITY

Lighter Sparks National Search For Owner

(NAPSA)—In 1992, a 50-year-old Zippo lighter, manufactured for military sale during World War II, was found at the company's headquarters. No one was quite sure how the lighter ended up there, but the effort to identify and find the owner sparked a national search.

From the personalization on the black crackle finish lighter, officials concluded that it had belonged to a serviceman by the name of Walter Nadler, and it appeared that he might have landed on the beach at Normandy on D-Day.

Eventually, information from various sources began to converge and the company focused on Walter D. Nadler of Rahway, N.J., who had landed in Normandy on June 6, 1944 with the 4th Division of the U.S. Army. The company's conclusion was confirmed in 1994 by Nadler's sister and son; Nadler himself had died in 1990.

Surprisingly, Nadler's is not the only "famous" Zippo. Others include:

- The lighter that Paul Decker carried with him as part of Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, which saw heavy combat action during the Vietnam War.

The lighter serves to represent the achievements of Bravo Company—a unit that, during its early engagements in Vietnam, was commanded by Capt. Barry McCaffrey, who went on to become a four-star general and, in 1996, White House Director of National Drug Control Policy (better known as the "Drug Czar").

Perhaps the most well-known action involving Bravo Company was the Battle of the Ia Drang Valley, which became the subject of the book (and subsequent Mel Gibson Movie), *We Were Soldiers*.



Over the last 70 years, a popular brand of lighter has been a part of our nation's history.

Though Decker wasn't present at this particular battle, his lighter serves as a reminder of, and testament to, the service of Bravo Company over the years.

- Joan Crawford was one of several legendary owners of Zippo lighters. Hers was a gift from her husband, Alfred Steele, the chairman of the Pepsi-Cola company, and it featured a raised Pepsi bottle cap logo.

Eventually, Crawford gave the lighter to Dore Freeman, a friend and fan. Freeman ultimately built a memorabilia collection of thousands of Crawford items—many of them given to him by the actress herself. However, when Freeman died in 1988, all of these items (including the lighter) were acquired by other collectors and Crawford fans.

Eleven years later, the lighter resurfaced and, after it was authenticated both internally and through the executor of Freeman's estate, was purchased by the Zippo company.

All three of these lighters are now on display at the Zippo/Case Visitors Center and Museum in Bradford, Pa. To learn more about the history of the company and its products, visit www.zippo.com.