World War II Memoirs by Southwestern Michigan Veterans

Stories from the Front Lines and the Home Front

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John Herbert Breinling
Noumea, New Caledonia (1943)

John Herbert Breinling

DOB: July 10, 1916

Wars: World War II and the Korean War

Service Branch: Navy

Term of Service: 6 years WWII & 16 months Korea

Specialty and Rank: Fire Control Technician First Class

Assignment: 40 mm gun mounts, repair work, salvage diving (on the Oklahoma at Pearl Harbor)

I was born in Eau Claire, Michigan, in 1916 and joined the Navy at age 23. Back in 1939 things were hard on the outside, and I was watching the war in Europe and it looked as though we would soon be at war. Because I had enjoyed sailing on the Great Lakes, I decided to join the Navy, and I served on active duty for Six years.

The Cruiser USS Indianapolis at Pearl Harbor and Johnston Island

In 1939, I was stationed at Pearl Harbor as part of what was called the Hawaiian Detachment. We did not have much of a Pacific fleet at that time. We had Ships stationed at Guam, the Philippines, and other small islands and an air strip on Johnston Island, part of the Johnson Atoll between the Hawaiian and Marshall Islands. We were in the Pacific to start building up the fleet, and we did.

On the Friday, December 5, 1941, 1 was at Pearl Harbor on the Cruiser Indianapolis (CA-35), the flagship that carried the admiral. All day that day when we were taking on supplies, Army and Air Corp brass form the island were coming aboard. The crew wondered what was going on. We had taken on board 250 Marines and

The USS Indianapolis, the last ship sunk during WWII in the Pacific.

In late July, following repairs at Mare Island, the Indianapolis made a high speed transit from California to Tinian to deliver atomic bomb components. She then sailed for the Philippines, Shortly after midnight on July 30, 1945, she was torpedoed by the Japanese submarine and sank quickly. Due to communications and other errors, her loss went unnoticed until survivors were seen from a passing aircraft on August 2. Rescue efforts over several days saved only about a quarter of her nearly 1200-man crew.

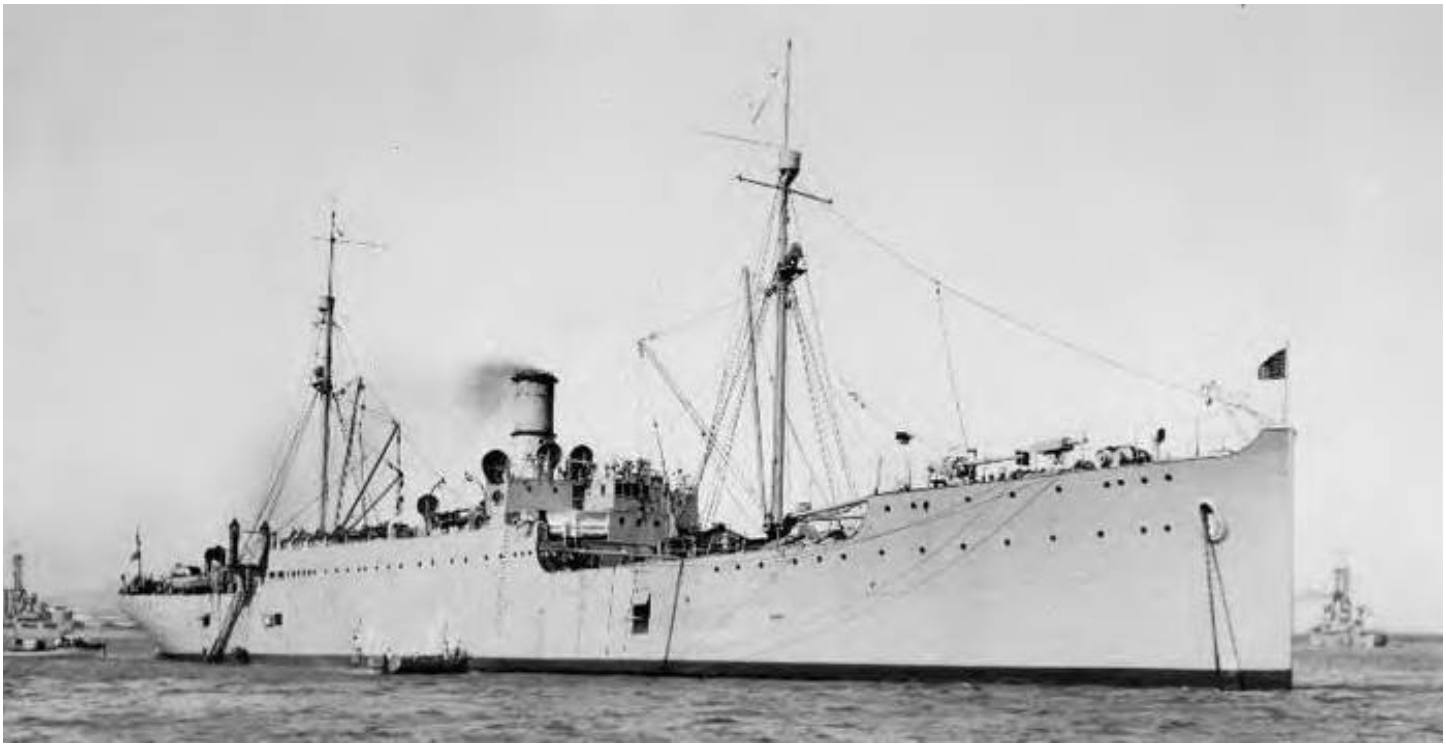
another fifty civilian workers. We had also taken on 2.700 rounds 5-inch antiaircraft ammunition. We left Pearl Harbor and headed for Johnston Island, where we were to lengthen the airstrip. The Marines on board were to strengthen the garrison. No one at Pearl Harbor had any idea that we were that close to war, but later the crew wondered if the brass had anticipated the attack and wanted to get off the island.

After we arrived at Johnston Island and were unloading our supplies, we got word of the Pearl Harbor attack. Shortly after, we got orders to test fire our guns. The five-inch projectiles had fuses that could be set at whatever you wanted. One setting would be used if you were firing at aircraft and wanted the projectile to explode as it approached. Another setting would be used if you were firing at a distant ship. For the test firing we cranked in ten second fuse settings, which meant that it was supposed to explode in ten seconds, but it didn't exploded. All four were checked, and none of them exploded. All 2,700 rounds of the ammunition had been tampered with. We also checked our main battery, the eight-inch guns. The same thing happened, sabotage. All we had operational were 250 rounds of target ammunition. On Wednesday, when a Japanese twin-engine Betty made a run on us, we knocked it down with target ammunition. When we got back to Pearl Harbor that Friday, we had new ammunition waiting for us. With the F. B. I. aboard, we found that welding rods had been attached across contacts that shorted out our main battery. There was a mix of races on the islands and you could not tell the good guys from the bad guys.

Repair Ship USS Prometheus. Salvage on the USS Oklahoma, and Repair Work in the South Pacific

I was on the Indianapolis from 1939 until May of 1942. Then I went stateside and got on a repair ship, the USS Prometheus (AR-3) and returned to Pearl Harbor on the Prometheus. That was when I did salvage work as a diver on the USS Oklahoma for about four months.

The USS Oklahoma was rolled over and at 45 degrees or something like that with only the starboard underwater hull and the starboard propeller above water. About 400 bodies were recovered but most could not be identified. The main purpose of the salvage work was to move the ship so that other ships could use the mooring. The hull had been hit by at least 8 torpedoes and had to be patched, but a hole was cut in the bottom

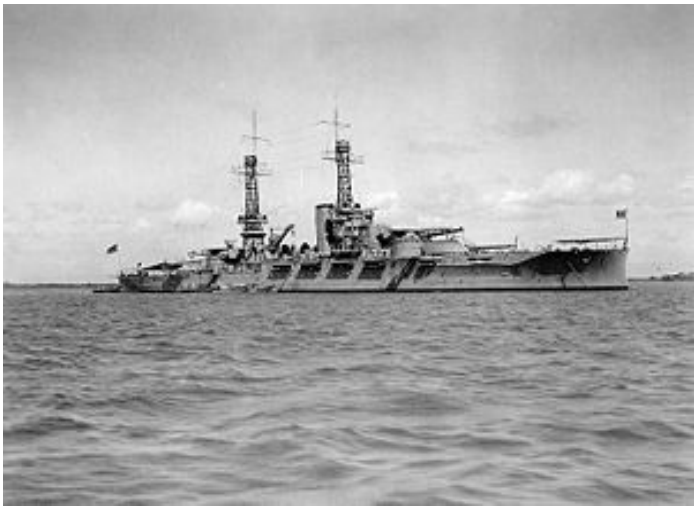


USS Prometheus (AR-3)

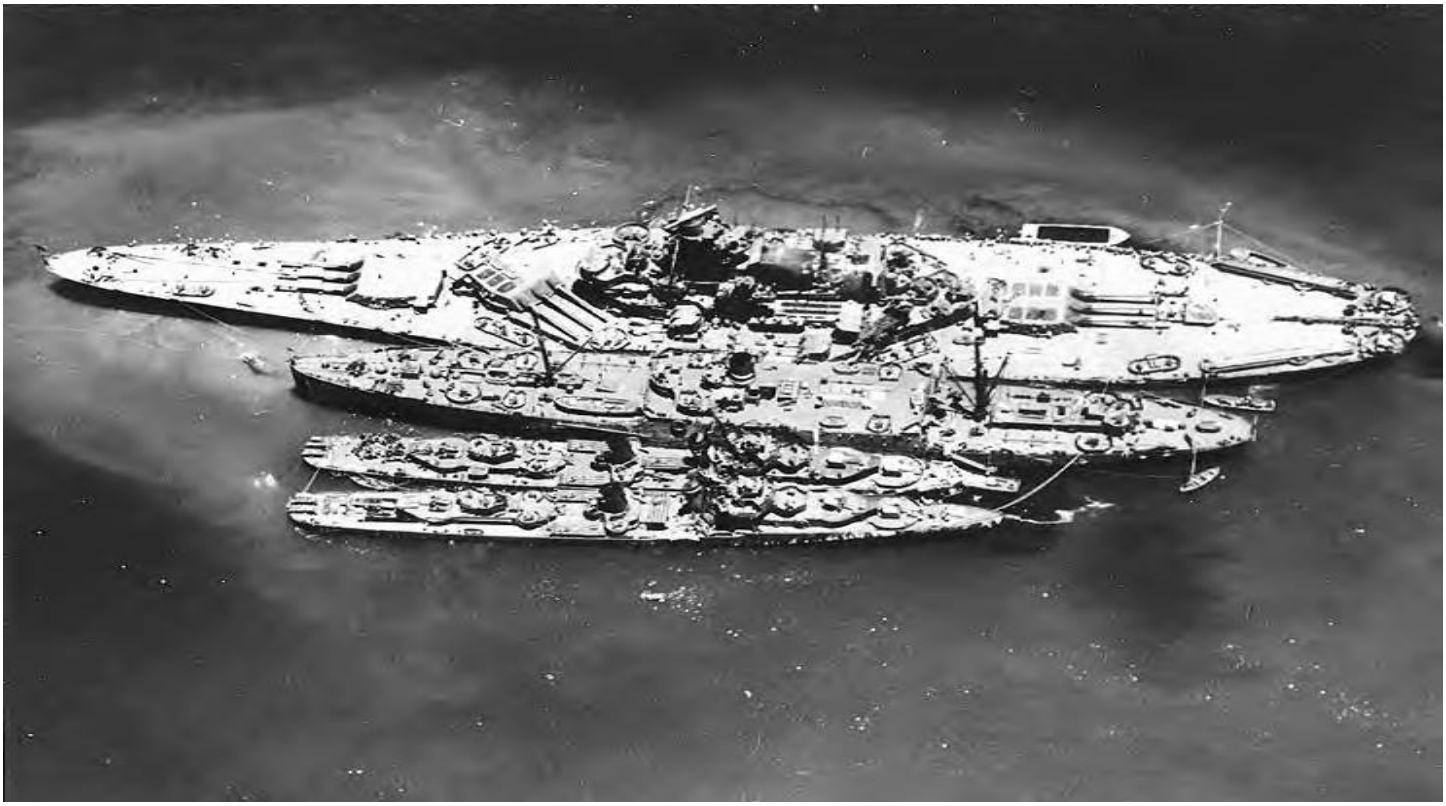
Pearl Harbor, 1942 - The salvage crew is pictured above the access cut in the hull of the USS Oklahoma. John Breinling is the fourth from the right in the front row in the dark jacket.

of the hull to get divers into the ship. We worked to make the ship into water-tight and air-tight compartments by securing the hatches on the top and tying open the hatches in the lower compartments. Making the dives was especially dangerous and demanding work, but we only lost one diver during the salvage operation. Because of the oil and gunpowder and salt water, it was a poisonous environment. Air pockets in the compartment would force water into your cuff, and they claimed that if you took in as little as one cup of water, it would kill you.

After a part of the hull had been opened getting into the ship required descending through six feet of solid oil and gunpowder. I remember once dropping a brass wing nut used to fasten the helmet to the suit and seeing the wing nut lay on the surface. It didn't sink. Wearing the 360-pound diving suits, we were able to drop through the six feet of sludge and get access to the compartments. Each dive lasted about three and a quarter hours. As a Navy diver, I got $10 per month, but because civilian divers working on the salvage operation got $5 per hour our pay was increased to $5 per hour. Before diving, we spend hours studying a detailed plywood model of each deck of the Oklahoma. We had to be able to navigate inside the hull without light and on a ship in which everything was upside



The USS Oklahoma.



The USS Prometheus (AR-3) repairing the USS South Dakota (BB-57) and two destroyers, probably in Noumea, New Caledonia, in November 1942. The destroyers are probably the USS Mahan (DD-364) and the USS Lamson (DD-367).

down and passageways were sometimes clogged with wreckage. During one dive, I felt a tug on the air line and reached behind me to see what it was. I realized I had put my hand in the mouth of a sailor. I could feel his teeth. I thought of one of my friends whose body was somewhere aboard the ship, but I continued to work.

To right the ship, vertical beams were welded on to give leverage when the cables were attached from Ford Island. After the ship was floated and rolled upright, it was made watertight in a dry dock and later sold as scrap. The Oklahoma sank in a storm while being towed to San Francisco in May of 1947, about 800 miles from the Hawaiian Islands.

After the salvage work on the Oklahoma, the Prometheus towed a floating dry dock carrying a 150-foot oiler and a smaller oiler in tow behind the dry dock from Pearl Harbor to New Caledonia. The Prometheus had been used in World War I, but little more than the hull remained of the original ship. We had all the tools and equipment on board that we needed to make repairs, including a machine shop, foundry, forge shop, carpentry shop, optical shop, and weld shop – all with the best and newest tools and machines available. The trip to New Caledonia took 35 days and during that time we were out there all alone with no protection. But we go there and di dour job. Instead of ships going to Pearl Harbor for repair, they would go to the Prometheus and the repair base at New Caledonia. My next assignment was on the USS Cabot, a light aircraft carrier.

USS Prometheus

USS Prometheus, an 8940-ton repair ship, was built at the Mare Island Navy Yard, California, as a collier. She was commissioned with a civilian crew in January 1910 and carried coal for the fleet until 1913, when she began conversion to a repair ship. Recommissioned in December 1914, Prometheus briefly served in the Pacific and then went to the Atlantic Fleet. During World War I, she was stationed at Bermuda and at Brest, France. Returning to the U.S. in 1919, Prometheus supported Navy ships in the Atlantic until early 1923. She then transferred to the Pacific coast and, after over a year of operations there, was placed in reserve at the Puget Sound Navy Yard.

Prometheus was laid up from 1924 until mid-1942, when she recommissioned for World War II service. She was deployed to the southwest Pacific until September 1944, then spent the rest of the War servicing the fleet in the central Pacific and the Philippines. In the early Post-War months, Prometheus moved to Okinawa and to Hong Kong before returning to the U.S. Decommissioned in July 1946 and turned over to the Maritime Commission soon thereafter, Prometheus was sold for scrapping in August 1950.

Attack on the Light Carrier USS Cabot

In 1943, I was returned to the states and on July 24 reported for duty on the USS Cabot (CLV 28). The USS Cabot was one of eight or nine cruisers being converted to light carriers at the Camden Navy Yards. The Navy realized they needed carriers more than they needed battleships or cruisers. The light carriers could get up to 32 knots and could carry 32 aircraft. Between March and October of 1944, the Cabot participated in seventeen major engagements. We did all the advanced bombing at New Guinea and Truk. In the China Sea, the Cabot was the first in with the Attack Group on the China Sea and the last out. Two cruisers had been damaged, and had been taken in tow by other vessels. The Cabot stayed back with two destroyers to give aircraft coverage. At the time though we could carry 32 aircraft, we only carried 24 because parts were not available to make repairs. We learned that we did not have the needed repair parts because some plant in Ohio had gone on strike.

In November of 1944, my battle station on the USS Cabot was on the starboard quarter in control of the twin 40 millimeter mounts. We were at general quarters when we spotted a plane peeling out of the sky at about five-o'clock and making a run on the ship on our starboard beam – the John Hancock on its maiden voyage. I told the telephone talker to check with the bridge. "What's the dope with the plane coming in?" The telephone talker said, "They're talking. They're talking." I said, "Cut in. See what's happening." Instead of waiting, I ordered my gun crew to load and then I swung around and started firing on the plane, which got the attention of John Hancock. It saved them because they started firing on it too and changed course to avoid the plane. Meantime, the bridge was all excited, signaled to cease firing, and started to chew me out because no one had given the word to fire – and I had.

By this time a plane was making a run on us off our stern so I swung around and started firing on it. The quad forty on the fantail had picked up that plane too. The plane flew over the top of us with both wings shot off. It looked like a bomb coming in and had a 500-pound bomb hanging underneath. I thought,

USS CABOT

Ordered as the Cleveland-class light cruiser Wilmington (CL-79). Contract awarded to New York Shipbuilding Corp., Camden, N.J. Laid down 16 Mar 1942. Reordered as carrier and redesignated CV-28, 2 Jun 1942; renamed Cabot 23 Jun 1942. Launched 4 Apr 1943. Redesignated as "Light Aircraft Carrier" (CVL-28) 15 Jul 1943. Commissioned 24 Jul 1943. She was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation and nine "Battle Stars" for service during WW II; damaged by kamikaze 25 Nov 1944. Decommissioned to reserve 11 Feb 1947.

After Pearl Harbor, the USS Cabot was in combat for 17 months. During that time she was responsible for destroying 360 enemy planes, 265 ships, and numerous shore installations throughout the pacific. She won nine Battle Stars for her actions in the Marshall Islands, Western Carolina Islands, Leyte, Luzon, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. President Truman awarded her a Presidential Unit Citation.

The Cabot was one of the "bait" ships that Admiral Halsey used to lure the Japanese Fleet into what he hoped would be one last decisive battle. The Japanese Fleet struck the "bait" with 70 fighter planes against the Cabots eight pilots of the famed "Meat Axe Squadron". In less than 15 minutes, 27 enemy planes had been shot down at no loss to the squadron. Three pilots qualified as ace on this one major action. Bitten by the "bait" the Japanese Fleet ran for cover.

The Cabots last major action resulted in the biggest naval prize of the Pacific Campaign; The sinking of the 60,000 plus ton, largest battleship of the war, the Yamoto.

Her greatest tragedy happened on November 25th of 1945 when the Japanese used Kamikaze against the Cabot. Even though in flames from the Cabot's guns, two of the Kamikaze exploded on the Cabot; killing thirty five sailors, and wounding 67.

USS Cabot (CLV 28) during WW II

"Don't drop now!" The plane hit and the bomb exploded, but the ship had made a hard turn to the right and was able to avoid serious damage. The plane bounced off the flight deck and took off a thirty or forty foot section of the gun tubs, but we lost ten or fifteen sailors over the side. Before that we had another one make a run on the port side. We shot that down. It exploded and the motor flew off the plane and into our hanger deck and slid clear across to the other side. We lost personnel on that too.

They passed word to help carry the personnel down to the sick bay. Down in the sick bay, everything was filled up, and we laid them out on tables in the offices' quarters. The next day we planted or dropped about ten or so young sailors. They were sewed up in canvas, weighted with shell casings, draped with an American flag, and slipped over the side. Hearing taps brings back the memory of that burial service.

Burial service on board the USS Cabot (November 1944)

In December of 1944 the USS Cabot survived a typhoon that lasted 48 hours. The deck was 65 feet above the water, but in the typhoon the decks were tilted enough to hit the tops of the waves. The planes had been tied down with one-inch manila line and half-inch steel cable. Tires were deflated before the planes were tied down and then inflated to make the lines and cables taut, but we lost five planes when the ship rolled to the starboard and four more when it rolled to the port side. The storm peeled the flight deck back at least 65 feet and changed the shape of the three-quarter-inch armored plate surrounding a gun mount from concave to convex. Destroyers rolled so much that water went down the stacks, hit the boiler, and caused an explosion. The seams on some of the battlewagons were 800 feet long and with half the ship out of water, the weight caused the seams to crack and ship would then take on water. We had more injured sailors in sick bay with injuries than during a battle, injuries such as broken fingers, noses, and arms. The events – and the people I met – made these six years the

best years of my life.

Civilian Life After Service

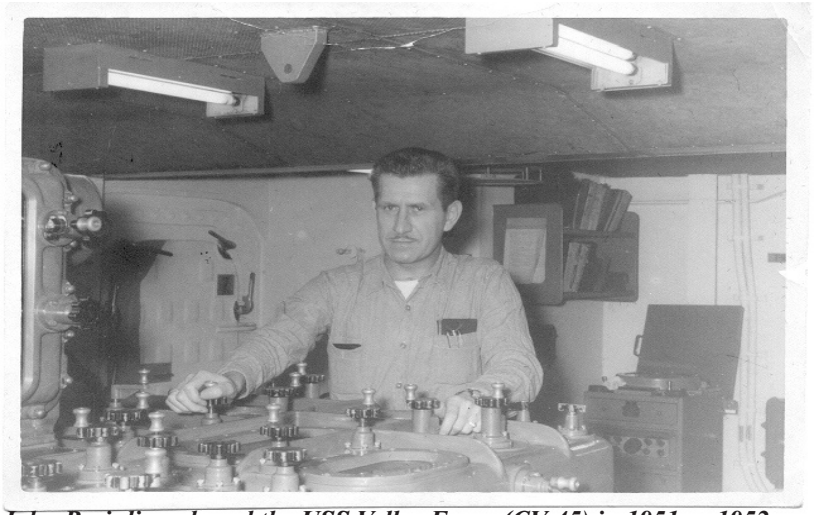
After I left the service in October 1945, I considered going into the marine salvage business, but the person I was going to work with was married, had children, and wanted to do something less risky.

In December 1945, I began working on an assembly line for the Whirlpool Corporation, but was not satisfied with the job. I could not understand why we were using hand pliers to compress springs during the assembly process when powered pliers were available and would have increased production and been less tiring.

When I worked at a different work station on the line, I was able to produce 1,800 units when workers were turning out 850 units. The union steward told me I needed to slow down and make the job last, but I was only interested in doing the job as well as I could. Before I left, I was offered a foreman's position, but I decided that I preferred doing something else.

In April of 1946, I started an insurance agency. I was in the agency for five years when I was called for Korean service. I got a three-month delay to make arrangements to keep the agency going while I was away and then went back into active duty.

Korea 1951-1952 - John H. Breinling (center). The other two sailors are unknown.



John Breinling aboard the USS Valley Forge (CV-45) in 1951 or 1952 - "This was taken in the plotting room. The machine at which I am standing is one of the two with which we solve all air and surface problems and give them the solution topside to commence firing. Just put out by IBM and called a computer, it's about three-feet wide and five-feet long. The little square stand in the background is a scanning radar unit. It has a fourteen-inch screen on which we can see the location of all ships around us up to the horizon and land up to 100 miles." Note: The computer used cams and gears, not electronics.

Korean War Service

I began active duty in the Korean War in July 1951 and served on the aircraft carrier USS Valley Forge until October 1952. The length of the Valley Forge, more than 1,000 feet, made using a scooter to get form one gun mount to another a practical form of transportation. I took the photograph of myself in the plotting room aboard the USS Valley Forge.

Return to Civilian Life

When I left the service in October of 1952, I returned to the insurance agency I had started and have worked at that since then. Though I am retired, I still do insurance work occasionally.

The Military Career of Jimmy L. Butt

Captain, AUS
0-523697

Headquarters Battery
863 Field Artillery Battalion
63rd Infantry Division

The Military Career of Jimmy Lee Butt—O-523697

"To make the enemy bleed and burn in expiation for his crimes against humanity."

The ROTC Experience

My introduction to military service was through ROTC at Auburn. At that I time (1939), all entering male freshmen were required to take two years of ROTC. I looked forward to it because the idea of uniform, drilling, "playing war," appealed to me. At Auburn, there were two branches of ROTC: field artillery and engineers. I was assigned to artillery, which was a much larger corps than the engineers corps. My two years of compulsory were completed in spring of 1941, but I applied for and won acceptance into advanced ROTC. My reasons for doing so were several: (1) it paid $21 per quarter (I think) and I needed money to get through school; (2) I enjoyed military training -- the discipline, the uniform, the guns, the horses (to pull the guns); and (3) I liked the idea of becoming an officer in the reserves.

All of us were taught to ride horses. Apparently they thought World War II would be fought primarily with horse-drawn artillery. This was fun. We would start by learning the basic military gaits—walk, trot, and gallop—in corrals, riding in circles. One day a city boy unaccustomed to riding horses, Duke Williams from Anniston—later killed while piloting a navy plane in the Pacific—happened to get Mae West, the meanest, contrariest horse of them all. Duke was no match for Mae West. As we began walking around the corral, Duke managed fairly well. But then the captain said, "Trot hooo," the command for all of us to pick up the gait to a trot. Mae West decided she preferred to break into a full run, circling the rest of us several times, Duke completely out of control holding onto the horse's neck for dear life, his cap bobbing up and down with every step, but not falling off. After several trips the captain rode alongside Mae West, grabbed her bridle, and brought her to a halt. Duke climbed off and immediately began vomiting. Needless to say, all of us avoided Mae West whenever possible—she would bite, kick, shy sideways, do anything to keep a rider from mounting her.

In the fall of 1941 we began school as juniors and I felt good being in advanced ROTC. Then came December 7 and Pearl Harbor. Suddenly war was upon us, and we all felt we would be inducted immediately, so the temptation to have fun and not study was very strong. My grades plummeted. The PMS&T (head military man on campus), Col. Waterman, called a meeting of all ROTC students to urge that we continue our studies. He told us that he had no idea how long it might be before we would be called into service, and that our interests would be best served if we continued our education. This helped some, but the news about continued Japanese advances in the Pacific, and Hitler's conquering country after country left no doubt with us as to our immediate future.

Our training intensified. Many classmates not in ROTC registered for the draft and some were called. Some fraternity brothers were gung ho—so they went out and volunteered and were rushed into combat in short order. Dee Huggins, one of my favorite fraternity brothers, was killed in less than a year. Many non-college students and adults were also drafted (including Uncle Geechie Davis). Everyone age 35 and under had to register and few were excepted when their names were called.

But the entire nation was behind the war effort. It was an honor to serve. It was embarrassing to young people not in the military as querying looks in effect said. "My relatives are serving. Why aren't you?" The many steps to aid the war effort are well documented elsewhere—gas rationing; "knitin' for Britain" (knitting scarves and woolen head masks (like ski masks) for soldiers in cold areas); scrap iron collections; sugar, and food rationing; war bond sales; patriotic speeches; women becoming welders, and otherwise serving in place of men back home. It was a marvelous, coordinated effort by this nation, one that may never again be experienced.

We were amazed that we in ROTC were not called. Toward the end of our junior year we were told that we might be allowed to graduate before going into service, but we were urged to continue school through the summer so we could graduate a quarter early. Most of us did. So I went right into my senior year in the summer

of 1942 and graduated in February of 1943. But since we had not attended summer ROTC camp, we did not receive our commissions as officers upon graduation: instead, we had to go to Officer Candidate School in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, in lieu of camp. We were to go about two weeks after graduation. So getting to graduate was a real break for us, allowing us to serve as officers rather than as enlisted men, and delaying our entry into combat situations. By the time we graduated, most of our friends were already gone and when our senior term ended, our fraternity house closed, girls from the girls' dorm moved in and the dorms were converted into military-like barracks for students taking specialized training as part of their military development: ASTP (Army Specialized Training Program) I think it was called.

Some of the highlights of the ROTC days included a visit by Eleanor Roosevelt which required us to stand in our woolen uniforms on a scorching hot day for about four hours because she delayed her scheduled appearance. The fellows were passing out in droves as the heat, tight caps, and standing in place got to them. We also had exciting times passing in review on horses pulling the guns and the caissons. Each team consisted of six horses, two abreast: lead team, swing team, and wheel horses in order, front to back. We would go by the reviewing stand four guns or caissons abreast. This sounds easy, but consider that on curves the inside teams had to turn as slowly and tightly as possible while the outside teams had to literally gallop so they would complete the turn abreast. Frequently a team would get out of control and go racing along past the reviewing stand, guns bouncing helter skelter to a mixture of humor and concern by reviewers.

One sidelight: We all had to take physical exams before being inducted. For some unknown reason my urine was tested as having albumen and I was rejected from service. This would have been a major embarrassment so I requested and was granted a retest at Fort Benning. Georgia. This time I passed and was accepted; I have never since tested positive for albumen. The doctor also questioned my ability to walk and keep up with the infantry because of my flat feet. I cited my experience in sports and in walking miles daily checking land each summer, and he changed my classification from a failing to a passing one.

Officer Candidate School Experience

About two weeks after graduation, during which time Jane and I visited my foster mother and told her of our plans to be married after OCS (Officer Candidate School). (My mother had died at my birth and my father died when I was fourteen.) I reported to Fort McClellan at Anniston, Alabama, for induction. There we were sworn in, issued some G.I. clothing, and then shipped to Fort McPherson in Atlanta. We were there 3 or 4 days getting shots, more clothes, seeing indoctrination film, and being lorded over by a bully of a PFC (one stripe). Since we were new inductees, it was presumed that we were buck privates (no stripes) so he had us doing K.P., picking up litter, and all sorts of mundane duties. Then a couple of our fellows determined that, in view of our ROTC training, we were not privates but had been inducted as corporals (two stripes). So we actually outranked the bully PFC! Our guys then gave him a rough time, refusing his commands and otherwise upsetting his routine treatment of inductees. Fortunately, we left about a day later, by train, for Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and the PFC crisis disappeared.

Fort Sill, Oklahoma, home of the army's Field Artillery School, sits way out among rolling hills, in windy county. It is well suited for artillery training since there were few trees so one could target-shoot at great distances with few obstructions. Upon arrival, we were trucked to our "huts" and I was part of Class 70. There were 6 or 8 (I forget) of us per hut originally, but only 3 or 4 by graduation time. I was specially fond of two roommates, Ray Bugaro from New Jersey, who I later asked to be my best man, and Cade, a black, from Baltimore.

Then the shock came! In a matter of days, we went from the relaxed, laid-back, casual life-style of fraternity house living where our house man made the beds and our room could get pretty wild to the strictest of

military discipline! We learned that we had to have our newly shined spare shoes laced up and tied and lined up like soldiers under our beds, our extra clothing had to be hung in a certain order with all buttons buttoned, and coat hanger hooks facing the same way. Our beds, which we had to make, had to stand the "dime test"—drop a dime from one foot and the blanket should be taut enough to flip the dime over. Of course, the hut had to be spotless, cleaned and dusted daily in the dusty Oklahoma environment. And the grounds outside the hut had to be equally immaculate (we swept it smooth daily before going to class).

We marched to all functions—meals, classes, to trucks to go to the firing range. We would "fall in" in front of our huts, with enough huts joining to create a platoon of three squads of about 10 men each. Upon "falling in" we would endure a rigid inspection. We stood at the "brace"-- meaning we raised our shoulders as high as possible, then rolled them back as far as we could, then pushed downward until our chests were protruding in an exaggerated military posture. All buttons had to be buttoned, shoes newly shined, insignia perfectly placed, eyes straight ahead, tummy tucked in. While we maintained this posture the officers would stroll through the ranks looking for violations, trying to catch our eyes following them rather than being focused straight ahead. Following inspection, under the constant surveillance of the officers, we would march to breakfast, still holding the brace and being sure there were "13 wrinkles" under our chins. We would march up to the dining hall door and the person marching the platoon (We took turns doing this.) would command "Column of squads, left squad, column left!" Then the left squad leader would yell, "Column left," the platoon leader would say "March," and the left squad would execute a left turn and march into the mess hall followed by squads two and three. Then we could relax for thirty minutes to eat breakfast.

During the day we would attend classes and about two days a week we would go to the firing range to learn to adjust fire on targets. The classwork was relatively easy for the ROTC fellows because we had studied the same things in college ROTC classes. It was more difficult for those who had entered OCS through the ranks. On the other hand, they were much better at things like gas mask training, taking weapons apart and getting them back together, and setting up campsites. So we helped one another.

Going to the firing range was fun, if nerve wrecking. We would load into 2½-ton trucks for the ride to the range. Upon arrival our instructor, seated in the cab, would hit the ground yelling "Hobba, Hobba! (meaning hurry up) and almost immediately begin identifying reference points in the target area. If you were slow getting off the truck and failed to locate a reference and were called upon to fire, you were in trouble! Next, the instructor would identify a target: "See the small hill to left front? Sixty mills to the right is a black spot. Directly beyond the black spot is a bush, your target [name]." Everyone thought he might be called so we all tried to follow the directions and then calculate our initial commands to the gun crew. (Understand, the guns were nowhere near us so we communicated by telephone.) Once a name was called, all others breathed a sigh of relief though we knew that over a period of time we would all have the same number of chances to shoot.

Some weird things happened on the range. One fellow failed to identify his target, he was afraid to admit it to his instructor, so he fired away at some target known only to him. All of us realized something was wrong and finally the instructor asked the student to identify the target. He couldn't; he flunked.

Nick, one of our Auburn ROTC students stuttered. He was a top student and an excellent singer. But under pressure he would stutter. So when he was firing his mission, he would struggle to give his next command. (All of us knew that he knew what to give.) The instructor would yell, "Hobba, Hobba." Nick would grow more tense, and could not complete his fire mission. He was the only Auburn student that failed to graduate from our OCS class even though there was more than a 50 percent failure rate overall. All the other students came into OCS through the ranks except for us and an ROTC class from Princeton. We did better than they!

During our very first week I was designated "hut orderly" for our hut. This meant that any flaw in our

housekeeping that could not be directed to an individual would be credited to me. For failures, we would accrue "gigs." Twelve gigs were cause to flunk you out. While I was hut orderly, I got nine gigs in the first week! I thought sure I'd flunk out and told Jane so. They stuck me for things like an empty clothes hanger in our hut in the wrong place and—near the front door—a cigarette butt that had not been there when we left as I had personally swept that area. That weekend I had to sign in it at headquarters every two hours as punishment. I had to report to an officer (march in, helmet under arm, salute, and hold until he returned it), and then listen to a tirade about neatness, responsibility, soldiering. An officer must set an example for his men. I accepted the criticism knowing that's what the army expects. Believe it or not, I got no further gigs the entire period I was there. My conclusion is that they were testing me. How would I react under pressure? Would I show anger and fight authority (impossible in a military situation)? I suppose I passed.

In retrospect, I believe the hazing I had experienced in fraternities, Scabbard and Blade, high school W Club, even pranks and ribbings by peers throughout life had taught me to roll with the punches, let it slide off; otherwise, this experience could have been very stressful. As it was, nothing concerned me except the nine of twelve gigs in the first week.

Field artillery training required that one be nimble in math; more specifically, in geometry and trigonometry. Initial commands and subsequent adjustments had to be translated from the observations of the observer to commands for the guns. A simple situation might have guns, observer, and target in a straight line. If the observer were exactly halfway between guns and target, and he measured a 40-mill deflection to bring the next shot on target, then his command to the guns would be "Left two zero" (applying the correction for twice the distance).

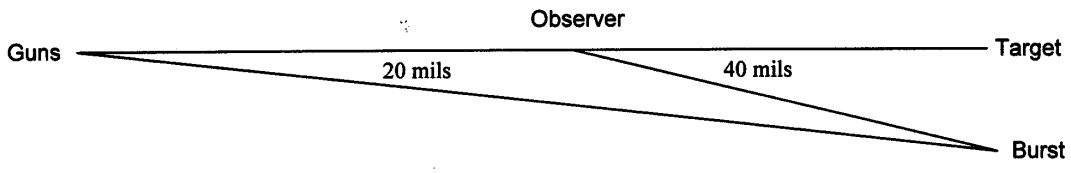


Figure 1: Simple Situation

But rarely were guns, observer, and target on the same line. Rather, they might be offset as much as 90°. So two other types of situations had to be dealt with: Big-T and Little-T. The most common situation was Little-T—where the guns were offset something less than 45°. Here deflections measured at the observation post had to be mentally corrected, by a factor that was based on the first digit of the sine (or was it cosine) of the angle. In addition, the distance differential had to be considered as in the discussion above. If you increased or decreased the range (distance from gun to target), you had to correct deflection or your next shot would be off line. I'm hazy on this now, but I knew it well back then.

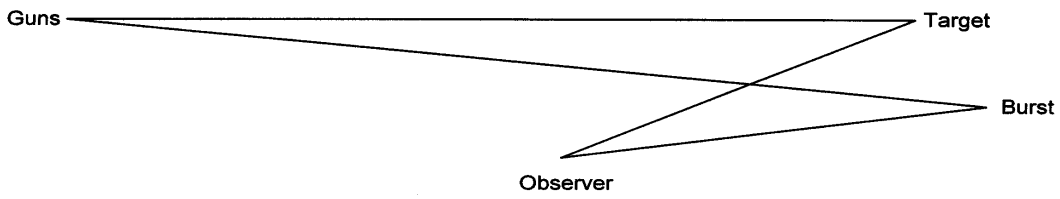


Figure 2: Little-T

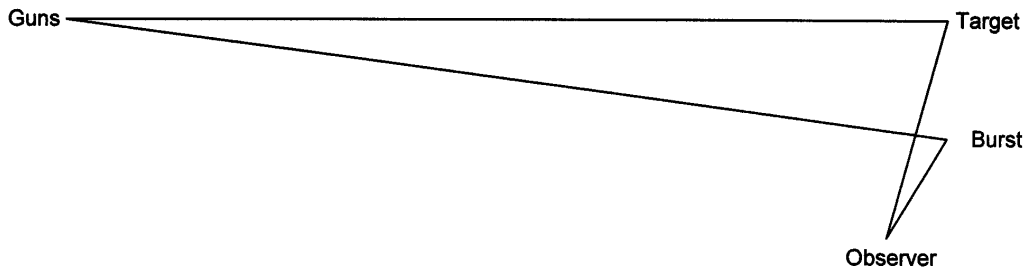


Figure 3: Big-T

Big-T was even more difficult because what appeared to be deflection to the observer was actually a range change at the guns. And a deflection change at the guns produced overs and shorts as viewed by the observer.

These were the more difficult commands that entered into every sensing of a round. But there were a total of nine basic commands: charge, fuse, kind of ammunition, difference in elevation, are examples. I trust that this is sufficient to show that artillery officers had to be pretty good at math and able to make quick and accurate calculations under pressure. That's why the instructors were forever yelling "Hobba, Hobba" and urging the you to react to the previous round and come forth with your next command without hesitation.

Another axiom of field artillery: "Get your bracket." This meant that when your first round landed, the second one should be adjusted so that it was always on the opposite side of the target. Thus you have bracketed (hemmed in) your target and should hit it within the next two or three rounds. OCS candidates would be too timid in their shifts getting three or four shots on the same side of the target (no bracket). They would flunk the problem. It was called "creeping." Enough of artillery fundamentals.

Fortunately, as World War II progressed, improved forward observer (FO) methods of adjusting fire took over. The observer merely had to indicate whether the last round was over, short, left, or right and by how much. His observations would be plotted on the firing charts by the central fire direction center and commands to the guns developed there. This took pressure off the observer (less math) and placed it in the fire direction center which was in a sheltered location, warm, with coffee, lights, and less pressure (usually). These so-called forward observer or FO firing methods were used almost exclusively during the latter part of WWII. Example command: "Left 300! Up 400!"

A Fort Sill Wedding

During my last few weeks of OCS, I was busy on weekends planning our forth-coming marriage. I located a Methodist minister, arranged to be married in the Old Post Chapel—a tiny but historic little church, rented a room in a private home, reserved a hotel room for Jane and Mel, her aunt, who accompanied her and stood with her. Ray Bugaro was my best man and several of my Auburn classmates were there: Tom Corley, Luther Brown, Dewitt Alsobrook, John T.Bryan, James Culpepper, all agricultural engineers, and Rene Bidez, Billy Duncan, Joe Sarver, and others that I cannot now recall. We married on June 23,1943, and I was commissioned on June 24. I told Jane I would always remember our wedding date since it was just one day before I got my commission. She maintained I had the priorities reversed.

When I went to the OCS officer to ask permission to stay in town overnight, June 23 to be with my bride (Mel returned home that day), he gave me a hard time. "Butt, can't you wait one more day?" I got the time

off, even though I had to get up in time to get back onto the Post for 6 a.m. roll call. We lived up to an old army tradition later that morning when my bride pinned the gold bars of 2nd Lieutenant on my shoulders.

We had ten days before my next assignment, which was to attend survey school at Fort Sill. We spent that time on our honeymoon at a nice little resort just out of Lawton. We had planned our wedding to be at Fort Sill, otherwise all our time would have been consumed in travel to Jane's home in Wetumpka, Alabama, and back. Not knowing where I would be assigned after survey school, we wanted time together.

Besides, I only had $80 to my name! I had accumulated about $80 from my corporal's pay while attending OCS, but lost my wallet in downtown Lawton, where I went to buy my uniform (for which I would be reimbursed).I was downcast! How could I take my bride on a honeymoon? How could we even eat the 10 days before I went back on duty? When I returned to my hut there was a letter from Uncle Geechie extending congratulations and enclosing a check for $70! Fate was on my side!

Picture 1: Photograph of Jane and Jimmy Butt (June 1943)

Survey and Post Graduate Schools

After our honeymoon, I reported to Survey School. Apparently they had determined that this was most appropriate for me. Others went to schools such as battery officers school and motor school. In this one-month course I learned a lot more about the arts of surveying and fire direction center. Surveying is the procedure that enables you to tie your battalion's three batteries (of four guns each) together so they can all be directed to fire on the same target. This was done with an instrument called an aiming circle (to measure angles and vertical distance) and a chain (to measure horizontal distances). Thus we could successfully orient all the guns on the same target and even tie into other battalions. This was one of the United States' real terror tactics as reported by captured Germans. Picture 20-40 guns firing at the same spot at the same time!

Such barrages usually preceded an infantry attack. The "rolling barrage" would advance 100 yards every so often to stay ahead of our advancing infantry. This, of course, required careful timing. If the infantry officer led his men too fast, he could catch up with our barrage. Usually this sort of bombardment took the "will to fight" out of the opposition unless they were extremely well dug in.

After the guns were tied together by survey, the traverse was continued up to the observation post. Here a known base of several hundred yards would be measured and aiming circles at each end would zero on one another and then turn the inside angles to the target. As you know, if you have one side and two angles of a triangle you can determine all other sides or angles, and the target could be pinpointed. That is survey.

Fire direction center is the procedure of taking the charts developed by survey and using special scales to plot and measure distances and direction from the gun batteries to the targets. (Remember, the observer no longer had to do this in his head.) This center is an interesting place to be because you hear what is going on, where the battle lines are, what your forward observers are doing, and so on. Most soldiers only know what's happening

within their range of view.

After survey school, I reported back to PG (post graduate) school at Fort Sill. This was a kind of interim program where officers could be taught a few things while waiting for assignment. We studied things like how to command, how to teach (officers are, first of all, teachers), military protocol, some basic tactics, and such stuff. There was no pressure, and we had access to the Officers Club. This was a fun and relaxing time. One of the courses they offered was one of the best I have ever had—public speaking. We gave lots of talks and some of the simplest of fundamentals made worlds of difference in the way we came across. First, we were told to speak in a loud, forceful manner. (I was amazed at how much this transformed a meek message into a commanding one.) Perhaps even more important, speaking loudly gives one more self confidence—and I actually felt I was coming across better. Secondly, the instructor's three steps for having your message understood seem trite and simple, but are oh, so helpful: (1) Tell them what you're going to tell 'em; (2) Tell 'em; (3) Tell 'em what you told 'em. I'll guarantee that if you follow these three steps, and do so in a strong, forceful voice, your message will be respected and comprehended. This course far exceeded my college speech course in value.

Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi

After graduating from Survey School (no pressure, completion was virtually assured especially since I had had surveying in college and post graduate school) I was ready for my first assignment. Apparently the 63rd Infantry Division had need for a survey officer and that's where I was sent. The 63rd was located in Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi—my home state—so I was pleased. We had some time off so we visited my home in Tippo before going to Van Dorn. Jane and I went to Van Dorn, near Centerville (southwest corner of the state) to find a place to stay.

Our arrival at Centerville, Mississippi, home base for Camp Van Dorn, was a prime example of the naivety and blind faith of youth. Centerville was a town of about 2,000 people with no other significant towns within 40 miles. Camp Van Dorn, about 3 miles away, was to handle about 25,000 troops (the 63rd Division, and support base troops). Jane and I took the bus into Centerville twenty-four hours before I was to report for duty with the idea that we would find a place to stay (us and 25,000 other G.I.'s who wanted a place for their. families). What were our odds of finding a place? Upon arrival, Jane took one side of the street, I the other, and we began knocking on doors: "Do you have a room to rent?" After about six houses I knocked on a door, the lady asked where I was from. "Tippo, Tallahatchie County, near Charleston, in north Mississippi," I responded using my best Mississippi dialect. She sized me up for a moment, "Yes, I have a room that was just vacated." The deal was struck, and for $10 per week we had a bedroom with shared bath that became our home from the fall of 1943 until I went overseas on Christmas Day, 1944. The lady was Mrs. Roberts and her home faced down main street of Centerville.

So we moved in and the next day I reported for duty with the 63rd Infantry Division which had just been organized, was now receiving its cadre of troops, who had to be trained before the division would be ready for combat. In view of my specialized training in survey, I was assigned as survey officer and assistant S-2 (intelligence)—more a name than a fact—for the 863rd Field Artillery Battalion, a 105 mm howitzer outfit. The troops had not yet arrived, a fact that no doubt helped our house search. My first duty was to ride in the garbage truck as it made its rounds. Fortunately, this lasted only a few days until the troops began to arrive and our training sessions began. During this stage, officers were basically teachers. I taught the survey team and the fire direction center team. We had classroom-type instruction mornings and went into the field to practice afternoons. In between, we sandwiched in instructions on how to use the gas mask (I was battalion gas officer), the rifle, 20-mile hikes (to test endurance), and other military essentials.

Gas mask drill was fun. We'd assemble a battery (200 or so troops) in a quiet place, with their gas masks, to hear lectures on how to don the mask, purge it of trapped gas, and breathe comfortably with it on. We'd be putting it on, over and over again so the procedure would become rote. We taught that the first person who smelled gas should yell "Gas" and don his mask, others following suit. They learned the difference between mustard gas, phosgene, chlorine, and others, as well as how they would be used tactically. Finally, I would have an assistant slip behind and upwind from the seated troops and pop a canister of tear gas. Meanwhile, I'd continue lecturing as the gas cloud slowly moved downward toward the unsuspecting troops. When the gas was detected you'd get all sorts of reactions! Some would sit quietly, wondering what it was; some would break ranks and run; some would don their masks; occasionally, one would yell "gas" as he should and don his mask. It was an effective teaching technique, especially when you discussed the errors that were made. Later, everyone had to go into a chamber filled with chlorine gas (the real thing), with masks off, and put them on inside the chamber. Occasionally someone would fumble, or drop his mask, then bolt for the exit door. But a big sergeant would be standing there, mask on, barring the exit and pointing at the fumbled mask. The panicked one finally got the message, donned and purged his mask, and learned an important lesson.

But the main thrust of basic and advanced training was to learn how to be a top-notch fighting outfit. For me and my troops, that meant survey and fire direction center. We drilled, calculated, practiced, and critiqued until we knew our jobs completely. Our generals felt we could learn to rough it better if we ate outside. So we quit using our enclosed mess hall and cooked in tents. The troops ate outside, rain or shine, learning to rough it. (We thought this was silly.) In advanced training we went on maneuvers every week, rain or shine, moving into position after dark, using no lights, so we could begin firing at dawn (4-5 a.m.) the next day (no sleep). Our survey team had to locate the gun positions on charts for fire direction center and establish observation posts overlooking the target area so we could mass fire the next morning. The surveys were done at night (pen lights), often in the rain (soggy paper to write on), and we usually got under a tarpaulin and used flashlights to calculate the gun positions and create the charts for use by fire direction center the next I morning. It was exhausting, no sleep, I always developed a "nerve" pain in my left shoulder (from tension) until the survey was proven by actually firing on targets the next morning. I'm pleased that all our surveys proved successful when we tested at dawn.

Social Life at Camp

Jane and I had a good deal during this period. Those of us who had family nearby could get off one evening per week. You simply "signed out," telling where you would be, and you could go into town for the night (be sure to be back for breakfast at 7 a. m.) .But we devised a plan whereby we would ask the Officer of the Day (0. D.) to cover for us by signing us out if something occurred that demanded our presence thus using our one night out. If nothing happened (no sign out), that meant we could go in the next night and repeat the process. Since we were the O. D. (took turns), we helped one another this way. The net result was that I was able to go into Centerville almost every night to be with Jane, knowing that the O.D. would sign me out if need be. The exceptions were the overnight maneuvers described earlier. Most people in military service didn't get a break like this!

There wasn't much social life at Van Dorn. For fun, we would often go into the Officers' Club where an army orchestra played for dancing (big band stuff). Occasionally we'd go to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to see LSU play football (days of Alvin Dark and Steve Van Buren). When we were on maneuvers, the wives usually got together and played bridge. Jane and I often ate at Centerville's one restaurant, Bellepanies, which was a tiny little place. But we had fun because fun, after all, is a state of mind and not things, places, fancy joints, or big spending. So we enjoyed what we had.

Training after Basic

We also did a few unwise and off-the-wall things on post. All artillery officers were encouraged~ to fly with the pilots of our two piper cub observation planes. This was to help us learn to judge distances on the ground so we could better adjust artillery fire from the planes if called upon to do so (aerial observers). One day one of my pilot friends and I were flying for this purpose. We deliberately flew out of sight of the base where he allowed me to experiment with the controls of the airplane—great fun! Then he took over and showed me how to stall the plane, how to make it go into a spin, how to roll it over, even how to loop (not supposed to!). We were having a ball! Then I noticed my stomach becoming uneasy. I told him. He opened the plane's window, ordered me to stick my head outside, told me to place my hand on his shoulder and grip when I felt it coming. Well, he didn't have to wait more than a few seconds. I gripped, and he attempted to make the plane slip so I wouldn't mess up the side of the plane. It didn't work. So we flew home, landed in the motor pool area, taxied up to the car wash area, and got out of the plane. He made me wash it down. Dozens of motor pool soldiers had a good time watching the pale lieutenant do his thing. Afterwards, every time I even smelled the interior of a piper cub I felt slightly nauseated and I was no longer a good prospect to serve as an aerial observer.

One night while on maneuvers we completed our survey about 2 a.m., turned the charts over to the fire direction center, and made our way back to the observation post. We were to be awakened at 4 a.m. to shoot a high burst. (This is a technique whereby you aim your instruments at an imaginary spot in the target area, a single shot is fired that is set to explode in the air over the imaginary target. We were to catch the momentary flash in our aiming circles, record how much it varied from the theoretical target, and make corrections, which in effect adjusted the survey to correct for weather conditions, damp or dry gunpowder, and small errors in the survey. Later shots, thus corrected, should hit the designated targets. This was quite a test of the skill of the survey team because you'd never spot the instantaneous flash of a high burst in the narrow field covered by your instrument unless it was pretty close. We had strung telephone wires to our position so we could communicate from the observation post, and this was how they were to awaken us. Since we had only two hours to sleep, we didn't bother to erect our tent properly. We just lay down in our bed rolls in an old furrow (from the former corn or cotton field), pulled our shelter half (part of tent) over us, and went to sleep. Some time later we heard rain drops falling on the canvas shelter half. It grew heavier, but we were snug and warm. Finally, I felt a cold spot on one side and reached over to tuck the cover underneath. Splash! My hand hit water–which had accumulated in the furrow and found its way into my bedroll. I was wet, all my clothes were wet. It was a cold day, and the rain continued, getting harder and harder. Thank goodness the planned high burst shoot was called off (Perhaps it was too miserable for the generals?) and we were allowed to go back to camp, shivering all the way. I often thought: Had this been an actual wartime situation—no chance to call it off and go back to camp—how would we have fared? These practice experiences do have value in preparing you for the real thing.

Shortly after our arrival at Van Dorn, Jane applied for and won a job on the post as a secretary in the finance office. This not only provided needed income, but it also gave her something to do with her time while I was on duty. Our hours were different so we commuted to work separately, by bus, from Mrs. Roberts'. The extra income enabled us to buy a used Ford coupe that gave us additional freedom.

Do It Over Again

After we had completed advanced training about early spring of 1944, we suddenly received orders to send all of our troops (except a cadre to form the nucleus for a new outfit) overseas as replacements. Then we started over with a new set of beginners and went through basic and advanced training again. The process of determining who should go and who should stay was an interesting one. Naturally, the officers in charge wanted to keep their best people to train the new recruits. This meant that the less desirable ones were shipped overseas. A good example was Lt.____. He was one of those persons who always seemed to goof up. He forgot to unload

his carbine once causing a soldier who was about to clean it to fire the round through the ceiling in the storage room (luckily, no one was hit!). And once I was in a five-man team with him to go through the obstacle course to assault a house. We were to approach the house in a diamond format, a lead man to fire at targets ahead, a left point to guard the left, a right point, and one to bring up the rear. The fifth man was in the center. The rest of us arranged for him to be the guy in the center. He was not to fire at any of the targets that were hidden in trees and in the bushes on all sides along the way. We didn't want him shooting at all. His one job was to occur as we reached the target house when the rest of us would fire into the house to keep the "enemy" pinned down. All he had to do was pull the pin on a hand grenade, rush up close to the house, toss the grenade into the house, and our mission would be over. Everything went well as we worked our way through the obstacle course to the house. We began firing into it. Now it was his turn to do his thing. He pulled the pin, rushed toward the house, reared back, and threw the live grenade—right into an overhead tree limb causing the grenade to fall back toward us! We all flattened out against the ground, held our breath, and heard the blast of the grenade and the fragments whistling over our heads. Luckily, no one was hit. He had lived up to his reputation.

Months later, after he was sent overseas as a replacement, he sent us a card boasting that he had made a direct hit on a German tank. In the first place, it is extremely difficult to get a direct artillery hit on an object as small as a tank. In the second place, he would be the last person to be able to even adjust on a target (he rarely did so in our training sessions), so we concluded that someone else, perhaps an antitank rifle, had hit the tank and he had no idea where his round had landed. Maybe it hit something else, somewhere. Such is war.

Our new cadre of troops turned out to be something special. Many of them had been in training to be air force cadets when the army decided it didn't need any more pilots, so they were sent to the infantry. Most were bright, young college kids, smart and quick to learn. They quickly melded into a top-notch outfit, well equipped to hold their own against any foe.

Back to Fort Sill as School Troops

In fact, our outfit scored so well on our corps tests that our field artillery was chosen to go to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to serve as "school troops," meaning that we provided the guns for the officer candidates. Jane and I loved that summer. She drove our little car all the way out by herself, in convoy with another wife. I had to go by train with the troops. We rented a little house, spent most of our summer at the Fort Sill Officers' Club (real nice), swam in the pool, had a ball! I had to be at the post by 7 a.m., but most days I was finished by noon or a little after. Surveys at Fort Sill were relatively easy because of the lack of trees, so my job was easy.

We did participate in one mass-fire demonstration where a number of battalions were tied together by survey and fired all at once to demonstrate the TOT (Time On Target), a technique whereby each battery calculates how long it takes for its shells to reach the target—12 to 30 seconds—and begins firing at precisely calculated time so that all the shells reach the target at the same instant, thus creating a devastating impact on the enemy).

On another occasion, one of our cannoneers forgot and left all seven charges in a shell when he should have left only five. (Each shell comes with seven bags of gunpowder, or charges, and depending on the range to the target anywhere from one to seven charges might be used and the balance is destroyed.) This created quite a bit of excitement as the projectile went several thousand yards beyond where it should have gone. The officer in charge was reprimanded. No one was hurt. We never found where the projectile landed.

Upon returning from Fort Sill to Van Dorn, I had a little vacation time, so we drove back through Arkansas on what appeared on the map to be a good federal highway, but which turned out to be a terrible corduroy gravel road. Our car had old, worn tires and they really took a beating. We drove all night, stopping in

some little town for a brief snooze in the car. Then it happened. One of the tires blew out! With a large knot on one side, our spare was in even worse shape, but we put it on and continued, holding our breath each time we hit an especially hard bump. (Remember, all tires were rationed and not generally available to the public.)

Luck was with us again and we made it to Tippo knowing that had another tire blown we would have been stranded. At Tippo, Buddy Murphy, my cousin, was somehow able to get the authorities in Charleston to authorize me to buy a used tire to replace the blown one, using the fact that I needed it to get to my military responsibility as the basis. So we then returned to Van Dorn on schedule, back to Mrs. Roberts. She had agreed to hold our room for us. Only the ignorance and naiveté of youth would have dared take such a grueling trip in a vehicle so poorly equipped to make it.

Going Overseas

Finally, it was our turn to go overseas. We were a finely tuned fighting outfit. The tide of the war had turned and the allies were winning in Europe and in the Pacific. It was late fall of 1944. We learned that we were to ship out of Van Dorn on Christmas Day of 1944. But our infantry was sent a month or so earlier as they were needed to help stem advances by the Germans in the bulge and the Colmar pocket. I spent Christmas Eve with Jane, but I had to be on post by 7 p.m. that night. Perhaps the roughest part of the war for me was saying good-bye to Jane at the front gate of Mrs. Roberts and turning my back and walking down the street to the bus station. I didn't dare look back—I don't know how long Jane stayed there. I didn't see her again until a eighteen months later—in August of 1946.

Jane had arranged a ride home with Mrs. Britt, the wife of Col. Britt our battalion commander. Mrs. Britt spent Christmas night at Wetumpka with Jane's folks before continuing to her home in Savannah, Georgia. Jane stayed with her father a while, then found a job in Auburn where we had agreed she would wait until I returned. We felt that I would need to review some of my college courses after the war because I would have forgotten them after more than three years being out of touch. This proved to be a good decision as I did come back, went to school, and got my master's degree as part of the process of relearning the profession I had chosen, agricultural engineering. Jane lived off her income and we put my military salary in the bank. She continued her job after I returned while I attended graduate school on the G.I. Bill plus a small fellowship from the college. Jane lived in a dorm for working girls at Auburn where she shared experiences and spare time with three other wives whose husbands were overseas: Evelyn Evans, "Joe" Fuqua, and Maudine Williams. They reinforced one another as they tried to figure out where their husbands were, based on sketchy news reports and carefully censored letters from their spouses. Knowing that sitting and waiting and wondering is more stressful than being in action, I can readily appreciate the saying: "They also serve who only sit and wait."

On to Europe

On Christmas Day, 1944, all of the 63rd Infantry Division, except the infantry, which had left earlier, boarded trains headed for New York City. We arrived at Camp Shanks where we were to stage for overseas. This took several days, thus we had a chance to go into New York City where I saw "Oklahoma," the popular, long-run musical of that era. I also saw, for the first time the skyscrapers, the lights of Times Square, and sights that were overwhelming to a country boy from Tippo. Soon it was time to board ship. We assembled at the docks, everything we owned on our backs. We boarded a large, fast ocean liner converted as military transport *Mount Vernon*. I think it was the *United States* or the *Washington*. Our entire division (except infantry) plus a regiment of replacement infantry from another outfit went on board—at least 10,000 troops, I believe. We were to travel solo, unescorted because they said our ship was fast enough to out race and elude German submarines. Our only concern, they said, was "wolf packs"—several subs working together to surround us. We would follow a zigzag course—changing direction every few minutes—so an isolated sub could not determine our speed and direction

and launch a long-range torpedo that could intercept us. Out of New York, as we could tell from the stars, we headed almost due south for a day or so before heading generally east.

The Crossing

The Atlantic in January is always cold and rough, they say. We encountered huge waves, some that completely washed over the front of the ship. People began to get seasick. Seven of us junior officers were billeted in one stateroom (meant for two) in three double-decker bunks and a cot. One night the sea was so rough that our bunks toppled over, leaving a pile of lieutenants scrambling to get untangled and getting more seasick all the time. Yes, I got seasick. When we went to breakfast, not at all sure that we were hungry, the scrambled eggs looked as large as Mount Whitney. I began to watch the coffee in my cup. It rocked from side to side, nearly overflowing the left side then the right side. This must have been a mistake because I joined others in making a hasty retreat, dumping my eggs and heading for some fresh air. Fortunately, the seas got smoother the third and fourth days out and we could actually enjoy watching dolphins swimming alongside the ship and, at night, the glow of phosphorus in the ocean where the bow split through the water. We were in total darkness so there was no artificial light to overcome the brilliance of the phosphorus particles.

They even had a small basketball court on the upper deck and they scheduled different outfits to use it for 15-minute intervals. I signed on with our team and that was quite an experience! Sometimes you could jump up for a jump shot, and at that instant the boat would rock down—leaving you ten feet in the air and causing your shot to go way over the top of the backboard. Or if it rocked up as you were preparing to jump, you'd feel as if you weighed twice your normal weight. You soon learned that only close in shots right under the basket were dependable. Besides, the ship's crew didn't like our throwing basketballs way over the backboard and into the ocean. Enemy subs might spot them, determine our location, and radio ahead to a companion sub who might spot us.

Our enlisted men had it much worse than the officers. They were billeted in the holds of the ship, many below the water level. They slept in four-decker canvas bunks only with perhaps eighteen inches between layers of canvas. If the guy on top got seasick, you can imagine the consequences to the three below him. There were large numbers in each hold compartment—perhaps 100 to 200 so someone was always sick. The holds were not well ventilated, so the odor encouraged more sickness. And it was hot down there, and you could feel the vibration of the ship. Those fellows didn't enjoy their ocean cruise one bit!

We officers had to take turns in three-hour shifts staying in the hold with the men. Getting there at night was a frightening ordeal. In total darkness we had to leave our stateroom, go through several hallway turns, go out on deck, feel along the wall counting doors until you reached the right one, enter, and find your way down to the hold where the troops were located. In the darkness you could imagine some enemy slipping up behind you, cracking you over the head, and sliding you overboard. Or maybe a sudden big wave would slap you off your feet and overboard before anyone knew you went over. We had been warned that the ship would not stop for one person. They said that to stop such a big ship would take lots of time, and then to get underway would take more time. All the while an enemy sub could zero in and sink the ship with 10,000 men and a crew of maybe 2,000. So the military decision: Don't risk 12,000 lives trying to save one. They did promise to wave to us, if we went overboard, and maybe even pitch us a lift preserver, not much help in 40°F water of the cold north Atlantic.

As we approached Gibraltar (we were heading for Marseille, France) the risk of sub packs was greater. So about one day out, two destroyers came out to escort us, one on each side. Rumors aboard ship held that they were instructed to intercept any torpedo headed for us, taking the blow to protect us. We also heard that a German sub was resting on the bottom in the Straits of Gibraltar, waiting for us. We passed through without incident,

enjoying the view of the Iberian Peninsula and the North African coast on a beautiful day.

Arriving in Europe

We arrived in Marseille the next morning completing a nine-day trip from New York, departing New York City January 5 and docking in Marseille on January 14—a very fast trip indeed We unloaded onto trucks that took us a few miles north to a bald, cold hill near Aix en Provence.

We pitched tents on this rock-hard hill and camped there while waiting for our weapons to be unloaded and readied. We made one trip into Marseille to see the sights and eat at a small Red Cross restaurant where I first experienced unitoilets. I had to go and I walked into the restroom. To my astonishment, women were in there, so I hastily withdrew. Later, I asked someone where the men's room was and he indicated the same room. So I adapted to the custom of the area and used the facility, women and all.

The cold hill provided the environment for some interesting happenings in the night. It was very cold, probably near zero. Our tents were set in rows, with a "street" between rows. Due to the cold, we'd go to bed early—8 o'clock. By early morning we'd get the urge to go to the latrine—which was located at the end of the street, maybe 150 yards away. The guys would put off going as long as possible to avoid getting out in the cold. But when nature called they would slip out of the warm bedroll, slip on some protective clothing and shoes and head for the latrine. But the cold air had the effect of restricting the bladder, making the urge to go even more acute. So during early morning hours you could hear guys walking down the street--then they'd break into a run trying to get to the latrine before it was too late. Occasionally, you'd hear an outburst of profanity indicating that someone had failed to make it. We all soon learned that the best solution was to have an empty can or bottle alongside your bedroll to handle such emergencies. I've often wondered, in view of current trends to mix men and women together in combat units, how things would have worked out in situations such as I have described in this chapter if indeed there had been integration of the sexes.

After a few days, we received our orders to move into position near the city of Saarbrucken on the French-German border as part of the Seventh Army under General Patch. We would be reunited with our infantry, which we learned had already been exposed to some severe fighting in the Colmar pocket area and had taken heavy casualties. I was part of the advanced detail that headed for the front with a stopover at a hotel in Lyon. It was here—to the amusement of our group of unpolished shavetails—that we were introduced to a bidet, something unlike anything I had ever seen in Tippo.

The Combat Days

We went on line sometime in late January, 1945, south of Saarbrucken, near Saareguemines and were billeted in a little village called Sarrinsming. We took over some of the homes, the natives lived in others, our gun positions were just outside of town, our fire direction center (headquarters) was in town. I found it extremely easy to complete my surveys because the maps were so good. In fact, we could locate the gun positions on the map by inspection, without survey and needed only to align them for direction. We were in a static situation (no movement) due to weather and also to "get ready." So I had almost nothing to do but hang around fire direction where I was in on all the news. We saw German jets flying overhead at night on reconnaissance. We had none at the time and they had only a few. We saw the skies filled with U. S. bombers en route to targets in Germany, literally covering the sky from horizon to horizon. We wrote letters, anticipated the mail, little else.

On our way through southern France, we had seen vast amounts of destroyed vehicles alongside the highways. Most were burned, both German and U. S. vehicles. The wastage was appalling. Everything was

black, somber; the realities of war were everywhere evident.

While in Sarrinsming, we did have some small but vicious skirmishes—"straightening the lines" the generals said. As survey officer, I was not directly involved, but I recall one night after such an encounter forward observer Lt. Ott returned from the front and visited several of us in a small room we had taken over. He was visibly upset and wanted to talk. We just listened. He told of being subjected to enemy fire, how the battle had moved back and forth, and how at night both lines dug in several hundred yards apart. He told of wounded left in no man's land between and of a dying German who kept yelling for "wasser" (water). All the time he was talking, a radio was playing softly, and the music was "Waltz of the Flowers" from *Nutcracker Suite*. To this day, every time I hear the tune I recall that room, and Ott, and the somberness that surrounded us.

Over the next few weeks the "line straightening" (perhaps "probes" would be a better word) continued. On one such effort, a forward observer and aggressive souvenir hunter, got ahead of his infantry troops in his zeal to loot weapons and souvenir bayonets from the bodies of dead Germans. The infantrymen, who didn't appreciate his gruff, haughty manner anyway, decided to teach him a lesson. They began firing shots close to him, pinning him down and preventing his return to his own lines for several hours. This resulted in his reassignment to other duties as an aerial observer. He was later wounded by rifle fire that hit him in the shoulder as he was flying and observing fire.

Also, our good friend Lt. Bauder, also a forward observer, was hit in the arm by a German shell fragment and had to be hospitalized. Then "A" battery was short two forward observers. Since surveys were so easy, any of my men could do the job (well trained, you see!). I was not really needed there, so guess where I was reassigned? You've got it, I replaced Bauder as forward observer! My assignment was made on March 13, I was forward observer 13, and I couldn't help but recall that my birthday was on October 13, my father and mother both were born on the 13th of the month, so with a string of 13s like that I felt it had to be my lucky number. It must have been because I didn't get a scratch.

As forward observer, I reported to C Company of the 255 Infantry Regiment. The infantrymen were licking their wounds from the battles of recent days when Bauder was wounded. One of my first duties was to help the company commander write condolence letters to the families of those who had recently been killed. Talk about depressing! We'd try to say a couple of sentences about the battle, then reassure the families that their soldier was a good one who had done his duty well and that he would be missed. What else could one say?

The Siegfried Line

Then at 2:15 a.m. (as I recall) on March 15—the Ides of March—C Company was to be the lead company for the Seventh Army's assault on the Siegfried Line. The Siegfried Line was a formidable defensive position with interconnecting pillboxes, dragons' teeth (huge concrete barriers spaced so as to stop tanks), trenches, all strategically placed on hills commanding an imposing view of all approaches. Our assault was to be preceded by a 30-minute bombardment by artillery. The rounds would move forward 100 yards, and then another—a rolling barrage. We were to move in where the firing had just ceased, presumably to a stunned, cowed enemy with no fight left in him. The barrage was a TOT (time on target) so all the first rounds reached the target at the same instant. You should have seen the fireworks! The night skies back of us began flashing like several distant electrical storms (the big guns). Then the intermediate range guns began firing, and finally the short range (3-12 miles) 105's. There must have been ten or more battalions (120 guns) involved and the surveys were good as the barrage worked perfectly.

We reached our "line of demarcation" early, and had to kill a few minutes so as not to walk into our own artillery fire. Most of the shells were equipped with the relatively new posit fuse. The posit fuse sent out a radio

signal from the nose cone. When the nose cone is about thirty yards above the ground, the signal bounces back and causes the shell to explode. Thus, the shell fragments would go into foxholes whereas bursts that exploded on impact would send their fragments upward and a person in a hole would be protected. But this night there were so many shells converging on the target that the posit fuses were setting one another off in the sky, and we got a lot of premature bursts over our heads. The G.I.'s had not seen anything like this before and they were looking up at the shells and were also awed by the roar of so many shells passing over, a noise like a train or tornado. I busied myself going up and down the line urging the men not to look up as falling fragments would be deflected by our helmets, but not by exposed faces.

After the barrage ended, our company moved on toward the Siegfried Line until we came upon the first pillbox. Burp! Burp! The familiar rapid fire of German machine guns (our guns fired slower—more like a measured tat-tat-tat-tat)! We all hit the ground and began trying to dig a foxhole. (You would be safe below the ground surface). But this was a gravelly hill and very difficult to dig. I used my shovel as a scraper, dug a slight depression, and then flattened out like a punctured dollar bill. The Germans would shoot flares occasionally and shoot at anything that moved. If you were caught standing, it was best to remain still as movement was easily spotted. There was nothing a forward observer could do in this situation so I spent my time trying to flatten out. The pillbox that pinned us down was only about 40 yards away. It was the infantry's job to neutralize it. They did this by having several riflemen fire away at the apertures to keep the Germans ducked inside while someone ran up to the pillbox and tossed a white phosphorus grenade inside. White phosphorus explodes into hundreds of burning hot particles that burn right through flesh and cannot be put out by water. But this time the Germans fired first and hit the man with the grenade (safety pin already pulled) and he fell and the white phosphorus literally smothered him. This so angered our infantry that when the Germans eventually were routed, no prisoners were taken. The dead grenade thrower was very popular with the soldiers. This is the nasty side of war, the brutality, the reality.

As we were pinned down, follow-on companies moved around us and proceeded to take positions beyond us, leapfrog style. Once freed, we moved ahead in preparation for our next objective, a hill about a mile away which required that we go down a hill, through a bottom, then up the target hill. The fields were open, nothing to hide behind. And as we walked down the near hill we were fully exposed to the facing hill. So we spread out as we should have, no man closer than five yards to any other. Our forward observer radio came in two parts, the radio itself that weighed about 40 pounds, and the battery pack to run it that weighed about 50 pounds. Most forward observers carried these on separate packs, one for each of the two-man team. I, however, chose to keep the two together making a 90-pound package that we would take turns carrying. I wanted the batteries hooked to the radio in case of an emergency. Well, this was the time that decision really paid off!

When our company was about halfway down the hill, a German machine gun began spraying rounds among us. My captain looked at me and said, "Can you do anything about this?" Clearly, there was nothing he could do—this was an artillery problem. My radio was being carried by my man, Blass, at the time. I ran to him, flipped on the switch (had to wait for the old-style radio tubes to warm up) and scanned my map to identify something (target) near where I thought the machine gun might be. Meantime, the machine gunners had seen me move and were bringing their fire toward us. Bits of gravel and dirt were kicked into us. My fire mission was assigned to a Japanese (American) battery. I gave the location of a draw on the facing hill. The salvo (four rounds, one from each of four guns, one after the other, left to right) was only about 50 yards over my target. "Get your bracket" I remembered; so I said "200 over." The next salvo was right where I thought it would be. The machine gun had stopped firing. "150 short" I said, "fire for effect." That Japanese outfit poured round after round right into the area where I thought the machine guns were located until I finally called "Cease fire." We got up, began moving down the hill, no more machine gun fire. We moved to the top of the hill and relaxed while we waited for our next orders. Suddenly, one of our men said, "I'll be _____, would you look at that!" About 50 yards behind us were two Germans. They were standing with their hands on their heads to indicate that they were surrendering. On the ground between them was a machine gun pointed at us. Apparently the

barrage had taken the fight out of them. We were so happy that they didn't fire at us at close range that our G.I.s gave them cigarettes and treated them like old friends. That's war too!

We were now past the outer defenses of the Siegfried Line and could see the dragon's teeth, the main line of defense. Under cover of darkness, we quietly moved into position just a hundred yards or so from the teeth. We were to make a major frontal assault at daybreak. I wanted to be as far forward as possible so I could better observe and adjust fire to cover for the infantry. One man and I dug a foxhole (soft soil this time) and he strung wire to the foxhole. Our radio stayed with Blass several hundred yards back so it would be safe. We would give orders by phone directly into the radio. We finally were all set, and the man and I went to sleep in the foxhole. Having had not sleep for days, we were exhausted. Just before dawn some infantryman walked rearward past us and said "Lieutenant, we've been ordered to withdraw, you'd better come with us." You bet we did! Later we were told that some colonel had decided our mission would have been suicidal and had ordered the retreat. We also heard that the general relieved him of command for doing so. It perhaps saved us from major casualties, for the next day another outfit made the assault and was decimated. War takes strange quirks.

An interesting thing about the man in the foxhole with me. He was of Polish origin and desperately wanted to fight the Germans. He was assigned to some rear echelon outfit where he saw no real action. He went AWOL from his outfit and came to ours wanting action. When we were prepared and trying to go to sleep in our shared foxhole he complained that his shoulder hurt if he slept a certain way. I then learned that he had been hit by a shell fragment and hadn't told anyone. He wanted to fight the Germans. War produces people like that.

Also, the company that led the assault had as its forward observer my friend Lt. Breeding. During their shelling, the company became separated or scattered, several of the officers were killed, and chaos reigned. Breeding, who as forward observer had been in on the briefing before the assault, knew the company's objective. Seeing that no one was in charge, he rallied a dozen or so troops nearest him and led them on to the objective. For this leadership, Breeding was awarded a Silver Star medal for exceptional valor and leadership under fire. War often brings out the best in people.

Our unit then moved through the turf won by the other company and into position on a hill. German 88's immediately began shelling at us. Blass and I found refuge in a shell hole big enough for both of us. The Germans didn't have the posit fuse, so their rounds exploded on impact and as long as we were below the surface we were relatively safe—unless a round happened to come into the shell hole with us. I found comfort with a little arithmetic in this situation. I knew that normal dispersion of artillery rounds was 30 yards over and short (60 yards) and 10 yards left or right (20 yards). So they might hit anywhere in that area of 1200 square years (60 x 20 = 1200). Blass and I occupied only about 3 or 4 square yards; so the odds were 300 to 1 (1200/4) that a round wouldn't hit us. Pretty comforting, eh? War produces weird thoughts.

While we were on the hill we spotted what appeared to be an enemy tank turret on the next hill. So I adjusted fire on it. I got my adjustment, but repeated rounds produced overs and shorts but no hits (the dispersion described above). By now I had concluded that it wasn't a tank, which would have moved, but a turret built in as part of the Siegfried Line. About that time one of our tank commanders heard about my target and since tanks are more effective against other tanks (They have high velocity rifle-like guns that shoot directly at the target rather than lobbing shells at it as is the case with howitzers.), he jumped into our shell hole to get me to identify the target to him. As I was doing so, suddenly we were bombarded by 88's, the German's high velocity guns.

Unfortunately, and unwisely his tank had parked just back of us in plain view of the enemy. After a few rounds, which hit all about us, they scored a direct hit on our tank. There were two men still in it. The gasoline in the tank exploded and fire gushed thirty feet high through the top of the turret. Its shells began to explode as they heated up, sending fragments whizzing over our heads and keeping us pinned in our shell hole.

The tank was only about thirty yards from us and it burned for an hour or more.

Blass, an artist by profession, tried to capture this moment in a painting he did of me with the tank and nearby pillboxes in the background. Mistakes such as the one made by the tank commander can result in terrible consequences. War can be very unforgiving.

The battle for the Siegfried Line produced many other hazardous experiences that I'll mention in passing without detail: The time I tried to join the company alone with the 90-pound radio, got lost, wandered into no-man's-land (our own shells were hitting around me), hid the heavy radio (I was tired) so the enemy couldn't find it, then found the company and went back and got the radio; the time I heard Breeding calling for artillery fire at an enemy who was firing at them and I checked the coordinates and discovered he was about to adjust fire on us, thus learning that our two companies, in the darkness, had lost contact and were firing at each other; the strange odor produced by the burning tanks and vehicles; noticing how cattle and horses, killed by the action, became bloated, causing their feet and legs to stretch rigidly skyward in a grotesque manner; seeing dead soldiers not yet picked up, and thinking that there lies someone's son, or father, or husband, or sweetheart. War is tragic.

Picture 2: Painting of Jimmy Butt (December 1945

The Rat Race

After the Siegfried Line was breached, our tanks broke through and began racing toward the Rhine River. Our infantry loaded into trucks to follow them and solidify our gains. Some Germans continued to snipe at us, but most began surrendering in droves. Some of the hard line SS troops fell back to fight again. And I had a chance to go through some of the pillboxes that had given us so much grief. They had apertures through which German riflemen or machine gunners could fire from relative safety. They had food, ammunition, a place to cook and bunk rooms with double-decker beds. One opening had just underneath it a map of the terrain it surveyed with a numbered grid system superimposed, thus enabling the observer to say "fire grid 63" to bring artillery onto that grid instantly. Each pillbox was protected by several others so an assault on one could be defended by neighbors. Some could be seen—massive, reinforced concrete structures, while others were hidden—covered by earth and vegetation. We knew that at this stage of the war the Siegfried Line was only partly manned. I shudder at the idea of having to assault a fully manned Siegfried Line. The assault on Japan would have been like this.

The next few days were relatively quiet, spent catching up on sleep and eating some relatively good food. U. S. Army tanks continued to race deeper into enemy territory to exploit the breakthrough of German lines as much as possible. The German defense was shattered and chaotic—as you can imagine it would be with enemy tanks disrupting their rear echelons, their communications, surrounding elements of their army. In

time, the tanks reached the Rhine river, the next natural barrier, and, of course, all the bridges across it had been blown. In war, as in a fistfight or sports event, once you have your opponent reeling or off balance, that is the time to press your advantage for the ultimate victory. So when our tanks were stopped at the Rhine, our artillery, along with many others, was dispatched from the northeast of Saarbrucken all the way to the little town of Eich, north of Worms and south of Oppenhem. There we went into position to support some division's crossing of the Rhine near Worms. Heavy enemy resistance was expected and all available artillery was assigned to support the effort.
It was in Eich that I was sitting in my jeep watching hundreds of other artillery pieces go by to get into support position. Suddenly, a passing jeep pulled out of column next to me and this fellow jumped out and yelled, "J. Butt!" It was Bubba Weldon, friend from Wetumpka High School and a fraternity brother from Auburn. He was an artillery lieutenant and his outfit had also been assigned to support the crossing. We had a brief, five-minute visit, the column began to move and he was on his way. Small world.

During the night the engineers installed a bridge across the river, the infantry began to cross and form a bridgehead on the opposite side, tanks then began to cross. Still no opposition. Finally, someone called for fire (artillery) on a suspected position and all hell broke loose. All those artillerymen who had driven some 50 or so miles finally had their opportunity and they really unloaded on the first and only target. The opposition just didn't materialize, possibly due to the quickness of the thrust, or the surprise location for the crossing or maybe the German defense was too confused to get reorganized in time. Anyway, the Seventh Army was now across the Rhine and the Rat Race was on. (Rat Race was a term we used to describe the pell-mell race through Germany after their organized resistance was destroyed and we were racing to occupy territory.) Our artillery went back to the Kaiserslautern area to rejoin the infantry, then turned around and went back to the Rhine bridge where we crossed it and headed toward Bensheim, then Wernheim, and finally to a village between Neckargmund and Heidelberg.

Here we encountered resistance, mainly sniper fire from across the river. And it was here on March 30, 1945, that Blass was wounded. As an artist, he was making a series of sketches of significant events and places with the idea that he would put them into book form after the war and sell copies to division members. There was a blown bridge lying in the Neckar River in the most picturesque setting. Blass foolishly went down to the river bank to find a good position to make his sketch. I didn't even know it. He also wore a white parka he had liberated to ward off the chilly, damp air. This made him look different from the other soldiers, so the sniper must have thought he was an officer of high rank. Anyway, he was shot through the thigh, and he was carted off to the aid station. We kidded about his "million dollar wound" something we all wished for. A million dollar wound was one that got you out of the war and back home, but didn't cause any serious or permanent problem. We learned later that Blass had been hit in a nerve center and that he faced slow rehabilitation—back home.

It was after he was home, that he wrote to Jane for a picture of me so he could complete the painting he had only partially done. (See earlier story about the painting, the pillbox, and the destroyed tank.) That's how the picture was completed and sent to Jane—for which she paid him $10.

I was miffed and angry at the sniper. So I searched out the tallest building on my side of the river and climbed to the attic dormers to search for the sniper. The building happened to be some kind of Catholic facility as it was occupied by nuns who were busy wringing their hands as I occupied their building. After searching in vain for the sniper, I decided to call for some rounds along the far bank. I did so but I never saw what became of the sniper or of any damage I may have done.

Then we were ordered to go upstream a few miles where a bridge had been erected across the Neckar and we crossed to the other side and made our way through Heidelberg. Rumor had it that the mayor (Bergomeister) of Heidelberg had approached our lines in an open car flying a white sheet (meaning peace). Upon reaching the line he identified himself and asked to speak to the commanding general. Upon meeting the

general he guaranteed that we could pass peacefully through Heidelberg if we would not fire upon the town. The story then relates that a deal was struck, we drove right through town without incident to Wiesbach, then toward Heilbron. I have never confirmed that this story was true, but why else would we pack our troops and guns in highly vulnerable vehicles, drive through the city, and not see a single German, only shuttered windows and closed doors? And beautiful Heidelberg was spared.

It was near Heilbron that the 10th armored division relearned the lesson that armor (tanks) should not extend itself beyond its supply line or its supporting infantry. They were terribly mutilated there. I understood that they ran short on gasoline, supply trucks tried to reach them but were picked off by German tanks, their SS troops picked away at the U. S. tanks which had no infantry to protect them. The burned out vehicles and tanks were a sight to behold.

We were pressured relentlessly to keep moving, keep the enemy confused and off balance, go from objective to objective, pausing only long enough to be sure each objective was secure and free of enemy soldiers. This also meant no sleep and no rest day after day. Our food supplies could not keep up. C rations, not normally highly regarded, were a rare luxury. Before heading for each new objective we loaded up on K rations and D bars. K rations came in a cracker jacks-sized box and included some crackers, can of meat and one vegetable, coffee powder, toilet paper, four cigarettes, and a date or candy bar. A D bar was a bar of chocolate candy, high in energy to keep you going in adverse situations, You could carry more D bars (about 1/2" x 2 1/2" x 5") than K rations. So we would fill our pockets with them before moving out toward our next objective. After days of nothing but D bars for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, the inside of your mouth would get raw. But the energy to keep moving was there, even if we did drop off in sleep whenever we sat or lay down for a few minutes.

We had several little skirmishes in the Heilbron, Widdern, Berlichingen areas before occupying an objective atop a small mountain north of and overlooking the town on Forchtenberg across the Kecher river. I moved into position where I could observe the town, searched it for possible targets, but didn't see anything. Then I fell asleep. I was awakened by a radio message asking if I could observe the town. I answered affirmatively, and was then told to adjust fire on the town. So I got out my glasses again and searched even more carefully for a target. The only movement I saw was a woman hanging clothes on a line in her backyard. Moments passed, then another message: "Lieutenant, why haven't you adjusted fire?" I replied: "I don't see anything to shoot at." There was a pause, then: "Lieutenant, your orders are to adjust fire on the center of the town."

The maps were so accurate that I had no trouble bringing the first round just below the center I had selected. Then, to my surprise, German 88's began firing at the hill I was on, but they were shooting perhaps 100 to 200 yards to my left. They had seen something else. Also German mortars began laying a smoke screen between me and the town, a defensive strategy that was obviously planned in advance. There was something in that town. My second round, meantime had come in just over the center of town so I had my bracket and called for fire at the center. Hundreds of rounds went into the town as they moved the barrages back and forth, starting several fires. Finally, the firing stopped, and again I dozed off. Minutes later I was awakened by this thunderous roar and the clatter of machine guns. Startled, I quickly realized that it was a bombing run by P-47's coming from behind my hill, just yards overhead, machine guns directed at Forchtenberg. Many fires were set, far more than had been set by my artillery. The planes made several runs before they disappeared.

Then I noticed a column of our tanks coming down the road from my left, approaching the city. Columns of troops on each side of the road accompanied them with guns at ready. It was 12 April 1945. I had this wonderful "reserved seat" with a beautiful view of a town about to be taken! As the tanks and infantry reached the edge of town I heard shots and saw the infantrymen hit the ground. The lead tank immediately pulled forward a few yards, turned his gun toward one of the houses and blasted it. The infantrymen got up

and began moving into town, tanks alongside. There was additional firing as the troops began systematically searching each house as they went about securing the town. About then we were ordered to load up, travel to the bridge that had been laid. We drove through the town while fires still burned. Wounded civilians were sitting on steps being comforted, the odor of burning homes and vehicles pungent to the nostrils.

Later we learned that there was a factory in the side of a mountain behind Forchtenberg that was making jet engines for airplanes. They were desperately trying to get them flying. Our intelligence must have somehow known this, which would explain why they pushed us relentlessly to reach the city and why I was ordered to fire upon it.

After we passed through Forchtenberg on a nearby hill, there was an autobahn (like our interstates). On one straight flat stretch the center strip had also been paved and painted green. It served as a runway for jet planes. In the woods through which the autobahn continued there were perhaps 25-30 jet planes, complete except for engines, waiting for the Forchtenberg factory to produce. We destroyed all the planes except one which we held for the air force to study.

After Forchtenberg we had minor skirmishes (no artillery targets) near Neuenstein and Waldenburg, then loaded up for a drive through Schwabisch Hall, Geildorf, Schwabish Gmund. The rat race was underway, victory was near, Germans by the thousands were appearing with hands on heads. The fight was out of them. We simply would take their weapons and send them to the rear. We had no way of handling them. We also saw thousands of displaced persons (D.P.'s), who had been released from captivity and were also told to go to the rear. What would they (Germans and D.P.'s) do for food? A new problem was surfacing. We continued on to Ulm. As we approached, we saw only a city of rubble nothing standing, a former street bulldozed of debris to permit us to pass through. From a distance there was one structure near the center of town that appeared to be standing—a huge church with a tall steeple. Everything else was flattened. Was this some miracle? Could this be? As we finally drove by the church we could see that it was also heavily damaged, about to fall, obviously not stable. War spares nothing in its path.

From Ulm we headed south—southeast toward Austria. Except for an occasional sniper, there was no opposition. Now attitudes changed: Knowing that the war was about over, we began to be more cautious, not wanting to be wounded in the final days of the conflict. As officers, we tried to look as much like G.I.'s as possible because sniper targets were usually those who looked different or important. I carried a carbine (rather than just a .45 pistol, my assigned weapon) so as to look "normal." Mud covered the lieutenant's bar on my helmet.

During the rat race we sometimes had a couple or hours before getting to our next objective. Often we would go into a home, tell the occupants "Rouse"; this meant something like "get out." They would frustrate, but would leave—then we'd hop in bed for a few minutes' rest. Sometimes we'd find meat or other food which we would "liberate." Rarely, some bitter G.I. would deliberately destroy something—mirrors, china, crystal—but this was rare. Mostly, we would just enjoy some food or beds, something we had been denied for over three months. The occupants would move back in as soon as we moved on.

One classic scene will live forever in my memory. As we occupied village after village with little opposition the troops got pretty careless. They would search a house for German soldiers. Then they would go to the basement, where wine was stored, and "liberate" as much as they could store in their stomachs and deep pockets. Thus war began to be "fun." The classic scene I recall is that after occupying such a village we were ordered to move out to the next objective, a hill a mile or so away, which was thought to be heavily defended by Germans. So the company began to march up the hill, spread out (no one within 5 yards of another), guns at the ready, anticipating an unfriendly welcome. But one G.I. had liberated a little more wine than he could handle. So there's my classic scene: three G.I.'s moving up the hill into potentially dangerous combat, with the center

one, passed out, being dragged between them, toes down, their arms under his arms. What a war!

After Ulm, we moved through beautiful Bavaria with its mountains, undamaged villages and towns, and for the first time we began to look at what was about us. But this was also where we cut many fences, releasing long imprisoned D.P.'s. One of our units captured Landsberg (west of Munich) and that's where the photo in my album of the corpses stacked like cordwood was taken. Actually, freeing the D.P.'s turned out to be a mistake. They wandered everywhere. They entered remote German homes and raped and killed. They had no food source so they robbed. They were all infected with lice and disease, which they spread. After the war they had to be rounded up and confined again to protect innocent Germans from them and to treat their diseases. But it was not the mission of our combat division to deal with these problems; our mission was to take enemy territory and destroy his will to fight

Relieved of Front Line Duty

On about May 2 or 3 our division was replaced by the 36th Division. For the, first time since February we were off the front line! The next day the 36th captured Hermann Goering, an honor that might have been ours, but one certainly deserved by the 36th as they had been in combat for 3 or 4 years and we had only 3 or 4 months. A day or two later several of us forward observers were given a rest leave to Grenoble, France. On the way, on May 5, we happened to be in Dijon, France, on VE-Day when the war in Europe ended.

The celebration in Dijon was something to behold. The city square was mobbed that evening with thousands of people. An effigy of Hitler swung by the neck from a frame erected for the occasion. A pile of wood and brush was stacked underneath Hitler to a height of perhaps 20 feet. As the evening progressed the fire was lighted and the flames began to lick out at Hitler's feet. The crowd cheered. Soon Hitler's clothes began to burn; the crowd roared. Finally, with Hitler burning all over, his eyes began to spew forth like Roman candle fire works, and the crowd went literally wild. Remember, they had been as if in prison for five years, many of their loved ones had died, many were taken into slave work camps and had not been heard from. This was indeed a joyous time for the French.

A French couple stood behind us three U. S. Army officers. The wife spoke English and explained to us what was going on. At the end of the celebration the lady told us that they had waited five years for this occasion, that her husband had saved some choice wine for the occasion, that he would like us to join them in celebration. We went to their home, enjoyed their wine, thanked them, and went to our hotel. To this day I wish I had the address of that French family so I could again express our gratitude.

We enjoyed Grenoble and our rest leave. Some college kids found us and invited us to a large celebration they had planned. It was fun getting back into social life even though we could not understand one another. They just wanted to treat us nicely. One evening while there a train arrived bringing displaced persons home from imprisonment and forced labor in Germany. The names of the survivors would be read over a public address system and you could hear screams of joy from friends and family members. Thousands turned out for this occasion. Later, as we drove the streets we would often get behind groups of French parading down the streets singing the Marseilles. Having celebrated perhaps more than we should, we would honk our car horns and sing songs like "Beer Barrel Polka," much to their displeasure prompting them to shake fists at us. Not good for international relations, but we felt that we were entitled to relax, to let loose, that we were pretty invincible.

Thus ended the war in Europe. Not enough exposure to feel any long-term after effects, but long enough to experience what war is like, to see its impact on citizens, on families, on physical facilities, on the economy. It is not pleasant, but it is sometimes necessary when the alternative is even worse as it would have been if Adolph Hitler had prevailed. And the world is full of potential Hitlers.

The Army of Occupation

Shortly after we returned from Grenoble we learned that a German underground might be formed to continue the war as guerrillas called werewolves. To guard against this and to maintain law and order, our battalion was assigned an area about the size of a county, and batteries were stationed in the various villages. Since I was assigned to headquarters battery (back to survey, no longer forward observer), we were in the largest town called Heubach. We took the largest and nicest home for our quarters. It was an industrialist's mansion, three stories, huge living room, grand piano, swimming pool, apple orchard, and directly across the street from a riding stable. Our routine was to have breakfast before 8 a.m., stand reveille with the troops from 8 to 8:30, have someone saddle horses by 9 a.m. for a ride into the mountains, return in time for lunch, then go to the pool for the afternoon, then dinner (our chef had once been chef for a major German luxury liner), and then play cards, sing, write letters into the evening (or swim again). (War is hell!) This lasted for several weeks and was a wonderful vacation except for the loneliness. We also had some trips. I went to Paris to study how to organize sports games; to Nurenberg to witness a day in the trial of war criminals headed by Goering, Schacht, Hess, all the top 20; and other shorter trips. There was some work to do. Roaming groups of freed displaced persons were terrorizing the neighborhood. They had to be rounded up and placed back behind fences to control them. Programs to debug them were conducted, dusting them with some kind of insecticide. Most were from Poland, though some were from essentially all of the central European countries, France, Russia, you name it. Most no longer had families or homes and many were afraid to be sent back to their homeland. Essentially, all had venereal diseases, even young 13-15 year olds. I've often wondered whatever became of those people whose lives were utterly ruined by the monster regime Hitler had built. No home, no parents, no friends except casual ones, no education, no money, minimum job skills, diseased, no morality—where are they today?

Some of our people who had a high number of points were allowed to go home. Those of us with few points remained as army of occupation. Points were acquired based on years in service, years in combat, years overseas, number of children, number of battle stars. Many people had far more points than I and deserved to go home first. My memories of the occupation were pleasant ones for me personally, but sad ones to contemplate the plight of the displaced persons and the German economy and all its rubble and ruin and chaos.

Preparing for the Invasion of Japan

Toward the end of the summer our "good life" ended. Our division was ordered back into training in preparation for the invasion of Japan! This was a real shock, as most of us felt that for us the war was over. We were aware of how difficult it was for our troops in the Pacific to invade the tiny islands that were defended by the Japanese—Iwo Jima, Okinawa, etc.—and could only imagine how much more difficult it would be to invade the homeland itself with its short supply lines, citizens willing to die (as in Kamakazi) to defend their shores, the shear magnitude of the undertaking. But the 63rd had only been in combat a short while, so we were one of the logical units to be considered (besides, we were good!).

So we had to move out of our German homes and back into the field where we camped out and began a series of maneuvers much like those at Camp Van Dorn. Morale was not high. The training was pure drudgery and we could not put ourselves into it. Then came the atom bomb! The strikes on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were big news to us. Then we heard that the Russians were entering the war against Japan. Then came word of the surrender and we could celebrate all over again. V-J-Day was a happy time for us. Now we could look forward to going home.

In recent years, some have questioned the U. S. decision to drop the atom bomb. Put me down clearly on the side of those who think it was a wise decision. Yes, it killed thousands of Japanese citizens, including

women and children. But if we had invaded Japan there would necessarily have been tens of thousands of women and children killed as we saturation-bombed all the major Japanese cities in preparation for the invasion. There would also have been tens of thousands of Japanese killed in defense of the invasion and the land battles that would have followed. And tens of thousands of U. S. soldiers also would have been killed in the attempts to invade the Japanese homeland. So all in all, dropping the bomb was an effective way to destroy the Japanese will to fight, bring the war to an end, and save many more lives, military and civilian, than were lost at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

U. S. Military Government Duty

A short time later, the 63rd Division was scheduled to go home, but only those with high points could go with it. So I was transferred into the 36th Division for several weeks. The 36th was a Texas division that had seen action in Italy and North Africa. I heard many tales from them about the Rapido River, the Monte Casino, how the division had tried to take the Casino but was repulsed. That night General Mark Clark ordered them to assault the hill to the Casino again, across the Rapido but the Texas general refused to do so. He was dismissed and sent home. Someone else was put in charge, the assault was undertaken, and was again repulsed with extremely heavy casualties. To that day, and presumably to this, Texans have no love for Mark Clark, and he is not welcome in that state. These were the kinds of war stories we exchanged during our short sojourn with the 36th Division.

Next, I was transferred into U. S. Military Government (USMG), presumably because of my agriculture engineering degree. I reported to Karlsruhe, Germany, and was assigned to the Food and Agriculture Section. My first duty was to visit food processing plants to ascertain, in conjunction with the local manager, the degree of damage to his plant. The objective was to get them back into production as quickly as possible because feeding the populace was a major concern. We would estimate the various facilities as to percent damage. Those that were 90 percent damaged were placed at the bottom of the list for repairs, while those only 10 percent damaged received immediate attention. This duty was short lived.

Then, for lack of something better to do, I was placed in charge of the Karlsruhe USMG Officers Club. I had to select entertainment for our Saturday night parties and choose the beverages for our bar. I was assisted by a Dutchman named Eric who served as translator and spoke seven languages. It was during this time that I got to know Heinz Weiss, pianist, and Hans Weber, violinist, who played dinner music for our late afternoon or evening cocktail hours. Heinz composed the song “Janet” for my wife and I have the original manuscript. He also was a composer with such numbers as ‘”Unter Einen Reganshirm am Abent” (sp?) (Under an Umbrella in the Evening). Weber was concert master of the Karlsruhe symphony. So we had a nice, relaxing facility for the officers to enjoy after work.

Sometime in 1946, the USMG office in Karlsruhe was closed, and we were transferred to Stuttgart. There I was assigned to the center that received incoming mail for our state (Wurttenberg-Baden) and I scanned it and routed it to the proper branch of government. Sometimes I would make extra copies. Our USMG was set up along the same organization pattern as the German state. We helped reestablish normal governmental functions such as law and order, health care, food and agriculture, mail, transportation, and communications. I did this for several months. My job was subdivided into two, and I was offered either one, as a civilian job, if I would sign up for at least two years. Jane and I considered this, which would be a good chance to see Europe, but decided that getting back home for refresher courses, beginning my career, and beginning our family were more important.

Stuttgart was a completely devastated city, nothing but rubble in the downtown area. Our USMG Club was a former embassy building in the mountains on the south side of the city with a beautiful view of what was

Stuttgart—again, the best that was available. I stayed there until I finally received orders to go home, sometime in July 1946. I returned on a smaller boat, to New York City, took a train to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where I was discharged, then a train home to Auburn where I was met by a delegation of one, Jane, who was all I really wanted to see. She had already selected a house, moved in, and I was all set to enter school for a refresher course in agricultural engineering (to relearn what I had forgotten since February 1943), but was talked into going for a master's degree instead.

Postwar Service

I had been in the service for three and a half years, twenty months of which were overseas. In 1950, I was recalled to active duty to go to Korea. However, in taking the entrance physical the doctors learned that I had a recurring eye infection so they recommended my separation from the service, and I was transferred into the Honorary Reserve. That ended my military career.

I must express gratitude for the loyalty of my wife, who followed me from post to post while I was in the States, who wrote me daily while I was overseas (The letters arrived in batches.), who established a home for us in Auburn, who raised our three wonderful kids, and—at this writing—has been my sweetheart for over sixty-three years. No one could ask for more! Thanks, Jane!

Related Information

The mission of the 63rd Infantry Division was to "make the enemy bleed and burn in expiation for his crimes against humanity." This statement was taken from a news release following a meeting of Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin. The division insignia captures this concept with a sword with a spot of blood on it superimposed on a flame of fire on an olive background.

I was awarded a Bronze Star for "meritorious service as a forward observer [who] performed his duty in an outstanding manner, although constantly subjected to hostile fire."

The 63rd Division earned three battle stars: (1) Ardennes-Alsace, (2) Rineland, and (3) Central Europe.

Upon reflection, I shudder to think what Hitler might have done if he had been more patient. He had all the free labor he needed; he had rockets (we didn't); he had jet planes (we didn't); he was months from having an atom bomb (we were behind him); but he unwisely opened a second front, attacked before all these assets were in place in a large numbers, and lost everything. Will we allow another Hitler to happen again?

NORBERT CRAMER

INTRODUCTION

The story of one's military career in WW2 is just a story, allowing for some embellishment, especially when written more than sixty years later. Many of the young men who had been born in the 1910s and 1920s, grew during the Depression years of the 1930s, and saw no opportunity for college. Hitler indirectly arranged that we had something to do. Tojo came along and compounded the problem.

I started work at the Kingsbury Ordnance Plant, LaPorte, Indiana in 1941, and transferred to the West Virginia Ordnance Works, Point Pleasant, West Virginia in April 1942 and lived in Gallipolis, Ohio. I registered for the Draft on June 30,1942 at Gallipolis, Ohio and on September 30, 1942 volunteered and entered U.S. Naval Reserve, before I would be drafted into the Army.

I went through boot camp, Yeoman School and completed various assignments without seeing action. Apparently the empirical rule of 80-20 applied to the military service. That is, 20% of the men saw action and the remaining 80% supported their effort. I did what I was asked to do. I spent 18 months in the South Pacific at advance bases, spent a short time at a Separation Center in California and was discharged on April 1, 1946. The military service was for the young male with a good medical history and a fair level of intelligence. They would teach us, somehow, the rest, discipline, marching, drilling and the Navy way. In the Navy there were three ways to do the job, the right way, the wrong way, and the Navy way.

This story is dedicated to the thousands of Navy men who served in WW2, were shipped from one unit to another every six months or so, never marched in a "Welcome Home Parade," and has never had a unit reunion.

Jim Pruden and I entered the U.S. Navy Reserve, to serve for two years, (were we fooled, when the two year enlistment was up, they just automatically enlisted us "for the duration") on active duty, in Chicago, Illinois, September 30, 1942 as an Apprentice Seaman. Jim and I had been classmates through grade and high school, in LaPorte, Indiana. We had taken our physical a couple weeks earlier and notified when to appear for enlistment. We were sworn-in at the Federal Building and transported to Great Lakes, Illinois, near Waukegan, Illinois, where we were assigned to the Great Lakes Naval Training Station.

The first day we were assigned to the Receiving Station. I remember the first meal. We lined for chow and saw the large stainless steel kettles fbr soup or coffee. The contents were being stirred with an oar just like one used with a rowboat. The food was served on a compartmentalized stainless steel tray and the coffee served in a heavy mug, no handle. What a large cafeteria!

DAS BOOT

The next day, October 1, we became part of Co. 1183-42 and quartered in Building 820, Camp Perry, wherever that is? We started with 120 men and ended with 113 on October 31, under the guidance of Chief Petty Officer, Alfred Nordstrom. The first day we received our clothing, sea bag, mattress, mattress covers, leggings, a canvas hammock, and most important a scrub brush with soap. We were also given about 20 pieces of twine, somewhat like shoelaces, for attaching our clothing to the drying line, no clothespin. How else were we to meet the rule of cleanliness? Our work uniform was a denim trouser, we called dungarees, now known as "blue jeans." We also received a length of rope (line) to lash our hammock, mattress and sea bag, Navy style. We shipped most of our personal items and civilian clothing home. We were not allowed electric razor, etc. We marched to get medical shots. We received the whole series, even if you'd just received one. Next we went for the tonsure operation (haircut). "Just take a little off the top." "Sure we will." "We'll make you good looking." Buzz, Buzz. "How does that look?" "Next."

The most important task for that day was to learn how to assemble, tear down, and reassemble our hammock and mattress. Then we had to stow the rest of our gear in the sea bag. The hammocks were mounted between to horizontal metal pipes, about 5 feet above the floor. If the hammock lines were strung too tight, it would roll over very easily. If it sagged a lot, you would put too much pressure on your kidneys, and you know what that brings on. It was a major task just to get into the swaying hammock. We had been alerted that someone would fall out of the hammock and that prediction came to be true. Almost each evening, someone would hit the deck, at least for the first week. I made it through OK.

The first day we were also busy stenciling, using indelible ink, our name on almost all our possessions, or maybe our Service number, or both. We had to learn the use of the scrub tables, drying room, clothesline, etc. Navy nomenclature was taught; "head," (toilet area) "gangway" (hall), "ladder," (stairs), a "line," not rope, etc. During the month of October 1942, the War wasn't going too good for the Navy in the Pacific. There was lack of men and ships, so all training was minimal, just enough to get by. We spent lots of time drilling and only one day on the rifle range. We had to pass a swimming test, but don't know what would happen if one failed the test. Our Company, was not given the opportunity for Mess duty--gee wiz--like getting aware of the Friday field day and getting ready for the Saturday morning white glove inspections.

We were taught the routine for payday. Line up by unit number, remember your Service Number, and proceed to the paymaster table. You gave him your name, unit number, Service number and the amount you wished to draw, then you were paid in cash. Don't step out of line, wait your turn. A Master-at-Arms with a 45ca1 revolver stood by with a stern look. Two numbers a serviceman remembers, his Service number and Social Security number. We were sure they had made a permanent record of our Service number, by placing it in the form of a tattoo, in the frontal lobe of our brain. One never forgets that number.

Because of the shortage of men, our CPO was also assigned to take various units to other Naval Stations, Schools, etc. During his absence he requested back-up volunteers. Several men of our Company were College graduates with some military experience. Mr. Nordstrom selected two men to each take half the Company for marching, calisthenics, and be responsible to meet our regular assignments, There was little free time during the day, and the evenings were taken with our personal laundry, writing letters, shinning shoes, etc. He needed a volunteer to act as Company Clerk, for mail pickups, duty roster preparation, and whatever the Battalion Commander requested. There were four Companies to a Battalion. Since I could type, this sounded like a good job. And it was. Because Mr. Nordstrom was not around, he lived off base, his room with two bunks was available, also that's where the typewriter was located. I picked one bunk and one of the other leaders took the other. No more sleeping in a hammock, at least for the last three weeks.

Half of our Company was men from Missouri, Arkansas and Southern Illinois. They had been recruited

for a special assignment to staff the newly opened Naval Air Station at Memphis, Tennessee, so they knew where they were going after boot camp. The other half was scheduled for many other assignments, such as Naval Schools, Postal duty, sea duty, etc. Aptitude tests had been given at one training session, from which were chosen those most likely to attend School. I qualified as one, however; I was elected "Honor Man," by the Company, and as such had the choice of School. I really didn't know what Yeoman School entailed, but was informed that the choice opened the door to later clerical assignments. Sounded all right, so I made that my choice. Still I wasn't convinced that I would be given that opportunity. It wasn't until I returned from the one-week leave, after boot camp, that I found my name on the list for Yeoman School.

Jim was assigned to Aviation Machinist Schools, in Chicago, first to Navy Pier for six months, then to a school at 87th and Anthony for the next six months. He was next stationed at Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, north of Philadelphia, where primary flight training activities occurred. He was later transferred to the Jacksonville, Florida Naval Air Station. His next assignment was at the Atlantic City Naval Air Station. Jim was discharged March 31, 1946.

We completed our boot training the end of October~ I was assigned to the Receiving Station, awaiting further assignment to Yeoman School. We were given one-week leave then returned for reassignment. I was assigned to the base Post office for temporary duty. I had sufficient liberty for the first few weeks in November to visit relatives and friends in Chicago. One visit was to see my Aunt Helen at a hospital. I visited her, accompanied by her twin sisters, but wasn't aware of her problem, later found she was terminal with breast cancer. I should have known, since the two aunts, nuns with School Sisters of St. Francis, Milwaukee, were able to be there. I was later informed in January, that she had died. I was so glad I had taken the time to pay her a visit.

SCHOOL DAYS

On Wednesday, November 25, 1942,1 reported for transportation to the Yeoman School at Boston, Massachusetts. A complement of about sixty sailors left Chicago around 5:00pm in two Pullman cars and a dining car attached to a freight train heading east on the New York Central line. This was considered travel First Class , and we enjoyed every minute of the ride. I managed to call home, from the train station, telling them I was going to pass through LaPorte within the next hour. Sure enough, I managed to open the outside door-half and wave as we went by, the family was there and returned the wave. We arrived at Boston the next day, Thursday--Thanksgiving Day around 5:00pm and stopped at the Copley Square Station, a special stop just a few miles before South Station. We had to lug our rolled-up hammock, mattress and sea bag about three blocks to our new quarters, a residential hotel, Hotel Victoria, that the Navy had renovated.

There were six men, using double bunks in a space of 12 by 14 feet. This space included shelving for our clothing etc. I still remember the roommates names—Tommie Cinicolla, Tom Collins, Eugene Croteau, Clarence Cleary, Eugene Carbonneau, and myself. Since we were the second class assigned to this School, our room assignment was on the fifth floor, and positively "No Using," the elevator. Even if we had tried, can you imagine the confusion of several hundred men on the same schedules. No! Climbing the four flights became easy after a while, but you sure had to plan your trips.

The next day, Friday, we got acquainted with the surrounding area, both inside and out. We were allowed to go outside, for a half-hour after evening meal, within a radius of three blocks from the hotel for walking, etc. The Boston Library was within this radius, so we used its facilities a few times. There was also a Subway station less than a block away; that was used once in a while for extra special visiting, boy meets girl. We were kept busy that day, getting acquainted and getting ready for classes on Monday.

Saturday, November 28, 1942, is a day I'll never forget. Tom Collins, from Chicago, and I went on the town that evening, just bar hopping. I believe we took in an early movie, then finding our way around in the blackout-city. After several hours, around 10:00 pm, we decided that our money was running out and we should stop for a sandwich and coffee. As we walked into the Coffee Shop, the counterman told us that there had been an urgent call for all Servicemen to report to a nearby night club for further assignment. The assignment was crowd control at the fire at the Cocoanut Grove Nightclub. About that time, we heard the sirens of ambulances, fire trucks and whatever, since we were only about two blocks away.

We reported for duty and were immediately assigned crowd control, directing ambulances, etc. Within minutes, we were asked to carry stretchers and assist in the removal of "bodies" from the Club. Most victims were burned, others had died from asphyxiation. There were more victims dead than injured. The victims were carried out by the firemen; placed on stretchers for removal to the ambulance, or if declared dead, they were first laid out on the parking lot. Shortly thereafter, a storage garage was opened across from the Club, and we were directed to carry the remains to this temporary morgue. After another short time, we were required to go inside the burnt-out area and down two flights of stairs to the lower level to collect more victims. We had to feel our way down the stairs, since all lighting was out except for the use of flashlights~ or other battery operated lighting. The temperature was below 30F and water was frozen on the street. We had to contend with the stench of burned flesh and smoke of the burned building.

The Catholic Fire Chaplain gave last rites to the bodies as they were brought out of the building. Buck Jones, the fitmous movie cowboy, was one of the victims. There was close to 500 deaths in 12 minutes. The servicemen, most young men, did their job without flinching. There was no panic during the evacuation. Even though no one seemed in charge, the evacuation was quite orderly, calm, cool and collected.

On the following Monday, half of our Class was assigned to the Bryant & Stratton Business School and the other half to Burdett Business College. I was assigned to Burdett, where we had lessons in Grammar, Correspondence, Typing and Gregg shorthand. These courses were equivalent of two-year shortened to about four months. We were in class for an eight-hour day, five—day week. We also had classes on Saturday morning.

Our Company Chief Petty Officer was Chester Gladchuck~ a starting tackle on the Boston College team of 1940. This team was considered as the greatest football team in the history of Boston College. His basic assignment was to march us back and forth to Burdett and to act as our Physical entertainment, Instructor. We would march in formation and usually go in route-step. We went the three-quarter mile almost as fast as we could. He usually had the taller men in the front and the shorter men had to keep up the pace. I remember times when I literally had shin splints and trotted to ease the pain. We made the walk four times a day, through all kinds of weather, our meals. were back at the hotel. Twice a day, we had exercises, push-ups, jumping jacks and run in place, to clear our heads. Chet was a mean guy. Push-ups were to be held until he said "down" and then "up." He would place his size 14 shoe, 250lb and 6ft 4in frame on your back until you followed his commands. He enjoyed his position, because he was only a CPO, I suspect he did not graduate before entering the Service.

Many of our classmates were from the New England area, most just a short distance from Boston. We were often invited to their parent's homes, where we were always entertained and heavily fed. I remember well the Christmas dinners. I say dinners, because we had to visit several families on Christmas Day and join them at the table. The meals were served in several courses, first soup, then a large fish, probably Salmon. We thought the fish was the main course, until out comes a large turkey and followed up with dessert. After resting, we visited another family, many relatives included, and were asked to join them at the tables--several tables. The hospitality was outstanding. Our social life was full, the classmates had plenty of sisters, cousins and friends for all types of movies, roller skating, etc.

Besides doing homework each evening, we would pull Fire Watch, every couple of weeks. Fire watch meant a full hour patrolling the front and street side of the hotel for any possible event. This duty was during the hours of 5 pm to 7 am. The winter weather of 1942-43 in Boston was deep snow and lots of below zero. There were nights that fifteen minutes was almost too much to stand Fire watch. We would get relieved for a few minutes to warm-up inside the door area, then back to the walk. Thank goodness we didn't pull this duty too often.

We were encouraged to tryout for Intramural Sports, to compete with various Naval units in the area. There were quite a number in the Boston area, other schools, etc. I tried out for the beginners boxing and lasted only one evening. Well not even that long, probably only fifteen minutes. One of our roommates competed in the wrestling matches and won. I remember him real well. He was from Ironten, Ohio and he pronounced the word Ironton as "Ironen", in a Kentucky slang (not hon ton). It took those of us from the North, several days to understand where he was from. His name was Clarence Cleary, and he was a mild mannered giant. His name is on a Cemetery Monument in the Philippines as missing in action.

In preparation for graduation, two enterprising men organized a big party for the last liberty night. It was to be held on a Wednesday, with graduation to be held on Friday. They received permission to arrange the entire evening; that was to cost $10 per man. Shortly before evening chow, many taxis appeared and five men to a cab were driven to a nearby nightclub. We were served sandwiches, some type of hors d'oeuvre, and all the beer we could consume. When the party time was over, we had to be dragged out to the taxis and back to the hotel. Getting the men into the cabs was like putting puppies in a box. In one door and out the other, but finally we all made it back on time. The next day we had final tests. I remember the typing test was a full hour of typing, with a limited number of errors allowed, and with typing speed above 40 words per minute. I had a slight hangover, but had my best test, close to 55 words per minute, which was good for an hour test.

CRESCENT CITY

After graduation from Yeoman School, 22 Mar 1943, and promoted to Yeoman Third Class (Y3c), about 15 of us were assigned to the 8th Naval District Headquarters, New Orleans, Louisiana, Most of the class ended up in Washington, D.C. We traveled in one Pullman car and a diner, attached to a freight train. First class travel. We were aboard for over twenty-four hours, moving across several train lines. There was no direct line from Boston to New Orleans. We arrived at the Illinois-Central depot on Canal St. to an early warm evening of March 23, 1943, where we were met with the most pleasant aroma of roasting coffee beans. We found rooms that evening and reported for duty at the Federal Building the next morning. The Federal Building was across the street from Lafayette Square and bordered Camp Street. A Catholic Church was on Camp St., just across from the Federal Building. One Sunday morning, we witnessed a Marriage ceremony, the first and only time I've seen one on a Sunday. The Lafayette Hotel was just around the corner on St. Charles and was used as housing for the WAVES.

Several of the Yeoman were assigned to the 8th ND Communications Activities. My assignment was logging in the messages being received and routed for action. Our department was responsible for the distribution of Naval radio and teletype messages from Gulf states, Florida to Texas, as well as all the Naval vessels within our area. We were also responsible for all the messages from Naval Headquarters, Washington, D~C. that had to be transmitted to each Naval unit. We had about 6-8 teletypes going at all times and eight radiomen monitoring various frequencies and transmitting radio messages, from and to ships, Naval Stations and Washington. Most of the operators used the telegrapher vertical key for sending messages. The real experienced use a horizontal key, which enabled them to send code faster.

In order to work in 8th ND Communication, I was fingerprinted and had to complete a reference application. An employee of an intelligence agency, either FBI or Naval Intelligence, interviewed people who I had listed as references. I had mistakenly listed a neighbor who was in the Service, and I didn't know his address. However,

the interviewer was satisfied when this person's mother said, "Oh, he's a nice boy.." There's a letter in my Service record, from the 8th ND Intelligence Officer, that I was approved for continued assignment.

We had to learn the Naval communication procedures. I learned all the "Z" signals and had to relearn the signals when they became "Q", or maybe the other way around. These signals were short for such sentence as; "I am guard for you," etc. For supervisors, there were several Chief Petty Officers, who had come off retirement and a Chief Warrant Officer. There were enough gold hash marks to cover Fort Knox. Their duty was permanent and I'll bet they enjoyed every minute.

Our watch supervisor was James Gibson, a Chief Radioman. He had been aboard the USS Helena when the German armoured cruiser, also known as a pocket battleship, "Admiral Graf Spee," escaped being captured, by going into the harbor of Montevideo, Uruguay on December 13, 1939. The Graf Spec had been in battle against British ships, Ajax, Achilles and Exeter. Captain Langsdorff and crew left the ship and went into Montevideo, but had three days to leave the neutral port. Gibson said that the Helena crew made several attempts to visit & observe various equipment onboard, especially the electronics. The crew was secretly taken aboard a German freighter and sailed before the Graf Spee was to leave Montevido harbor. The ship was scuttled on Dec 17. Gibson was full of old sea stories, having been regular Navy for many years, and was also the first of our Watch to be transferred.

There were times when we became responsible for holding messages for a ship that had tied-down at the mouth of the Mississippi. The ship would notify us when they no longer were monitoring their radio, and then request that we guard for them. This information came by radio and or by teletype. First it would be in plain language. Then about an hour later we would receive a coded message from the ship. It was my duty to deliver the message to the Code room, where I would tell the code officer what the message was about. I would tell him that ship so-and-so just tied-down. It took him some time to figure out how I knew what was in the message, since he did not see the plain language message. It was a violation of Naval Communication Procedure to send a plain language message and a coded message near the same time. The officers aboard small vessels could not be proficient in all areas. Communication being not of the highest priority.

We had enough personnel assigned to work in four watches. Watch 1, would work from 8:00 am to 3:30 pm, Watch 2, 3:30-11:30 pm, Watch 3, 11:30 pm to 8:00 am. These watches were for three days. And the nice part, Watch 4 was off for three days, then reported in at the Watch 2 period 3:30 and at that time Watch 1 would be off for three days. One would be off duty for twenty-four hours during the change, that is, when you finished the third day at 11:30, you didn't report back until 11:30 the next day for the 11:30-8:00 watch. We were kept quite busy except for the third watch. Not much traffic after midnight. To keep us busy, the yeoman would be responsible for keeping the coffee brewing (lots of chicory) -- always had to have a full pot. I learned to drink coffee black, since we had no refrigeration. I'm sure there was some in the eight-story building, but we weren't privileged to its use. For meals at the midnight watch, the yeoman were also assigned to roam outside for sandwiches. We patronized the worst looking taverns for the biggest and most delicious sandwiches. They too, were inexpensive, like 15-20 cents for the largest "Poor-Boy". French bread with ham, cheese and whatever. We had no problem living on the $90 per month subsistence, plus our regular pay. Best duty ever.

Field Day was held every Friday morning and the Commanding Officer, or his delegate, would do a "White Glove" inspection for cleanliness. Therefore it fell to the Watch 3 to do the major cleaning. Desks were moved, floor tile was scrubbed and wax polished. A buffing machine was used to put a high gloss on the floor. The person assigned to the buffer was usually one who had never used the machine. You do not grab the handles to turn or move the unit. An up-and-down motion is required. Should you grab the handles and attempt to move the buffer, it takes off like a wild animal, bumping into everything. A most embarrassing moment. Once you learn how to use the buffer, it's a snap, the slightest up and down pressure does the trick. Of course, this

task was usually given to the Yeoman, because we weren't tied to our chair. You should have seen the WAVE yeoman running the machine as their part of the initiation. The radiomen could not leave their station for any length of time. Since we were busy working, the crew did not stand personal inspection, clean skivvies, shoes polished, etc.

Our housing was at a house that resembled a small hotel. This hotel was on Carondelet Ave., just one block from St. Charles, and one block from a Public Library at Lee Circle. St. Charles Ave., was a main streetcar line, which gave us transportation throughout the city. Rides for Servicemen were free and we made great use of the transportation system. We were able to do our laundry, using the landlady's wringer unit—better than hand scrubbing. We ate at several different restaurants, and frequently ate at a cafeteria. For special occasions (quite often), we would go to Koib' s restaurant for a real nice steak dinner. Filet mignon, $1.65. We ate our Thanksgiving dinner there and a gentleman paid the check. We found that people were very generous.

One of the radiomen, Luke Secor, was a former Internal Revenue Service person, responsible for estimating the taxes that the night spots in the French Quarter would have to pay, so he was well acquainted with many of the club managers. Since we were ship's company, we had special badges for identification; which allowed us to be out at any time. We were required to only report for our watches. On the nights that we finished the third day at 11:30, we would likely head down to the French Quarter to enjoy our 24 hours off. Luke would talk nicely to the club manager and suggest that maybe we should have some free drinks, and they usually complied.

On August 9, I received a phone call, at work, that my grandfather had died. After the death of my father in 1928, my mother's parents help in raising the three children, while our mother worked in the family commercial laundry. So grandpa was the only real father I knew. I worked out a work exchange with another yeoman, to cover for me if I were to get permission for a three-day leave. The leave was granted for August 9 through. 12th, and I made it to LaPorte in time for the funeral, then back to Chicago and New Orleans.

I had a 10-day leave in July and became familiar with the Chicago Union Station procedures for boarding the train. I was an experience railroad traveler, having been a rider by myself since the age of 9, on trips from LaPorte to Chicago. Not wanting to wait in the long boarding lines, I would look for a train gate that had a train posted to leave prior to mine. I would then go to that gate area and sneak across to where my train was making ready I waited in no line at the station I met a high school classmate that was going to Memphis, and was waiting in line. I asked her to join me and board early. She accepted the invitation and we were company for one another. She was a WAVE assigned to the Memphis Naval Air Station. Her, then husband, was my first roommate at Purdue University, in the summer of 1946.

The time I spent at New Orleans, was not all "fun-and-games". I completed a correspondence course in Communications, through the Naval Reserve Educational Center. I took a test for the Naval Electronic School at Washington, D.C., passed the test and was asked to transfer. However, a requirement for a four-year enlistment went with the transfer. I wasn't sure about being in the regular Navy, even though another carrot was put on the plate. Graduation from the Electronic School assured a Chief or Warrant Officer rating. I withdrew my request. Soon I had another opportunity for the V-6 program at a University. Again, I qualified as first on the list, then the physical. I passed everything with flying colors, except the dental. The dentist marked my chart as having a slight over-bit. The carrot turned into a horseradish. Get to the back of the line. To this day, I don't trust a dentist. The second in line passed and was sent to a University at Lafayette, Louisiana. He later told me that other members of his class were directly from high school, but could not pass the dental test. Once the Navy had you, you were it. I guess I got over the disappointment OK. Heard later that the V-6 programs didn't last, maybe just a semester or two. I was promoted to Yeoman Second Class on September 1, 1944

Outside hotel on Carondolet New Orleans - 1943

Almost every month, the radiomen would say “the WAVES were coming in to replace the Yeoman”, and that would mean we’d be shipped out, to unknowns. At that time there we no WAVE radiomen, so they could” pull our chain.” We would just wait for our three-days off and tour New Orleans again. It was like a vacation every month. Finally, in late November they did come and by Christmas time, we had been alerted to the real thing. About twenty-five men were assigned to Advance Base Personnel Depot at San Bruno, California.

SUNNY CALIFORNIA

The names of some of the men who stayed together for many months: Carlton H. Richards, James Patrick Aitken, Harvey Joseph Broussard, and C. Alex Menuier, We left New Orleans on December 29, 1943 and traveled first class, two Pullman cars and a Diner attached to a freight train. We arrived in San. Bruno, California on December 31, 1943. It had taken a full day to pass through Texas. San Bruno is located approximately ten miles south of San Francisco. The Advance Base Personnel Depot was located inside of the premises of the Tanforan Race Track. The racetrack is no longer in existence. The government had taken over the entire area and first used it as detention camp for those of Japanese ancestry. The camp was later used by first the Army, then the Marines and finally the Navy.

Because it was New Years Eve, several of us requested liberty to celebrate in San Francisco. A two-day liberty was granted and we caught a bus to San Francisco, where we found housing at a Service center. Blackout was not required and we were in awe at the bright lights of the city, quite different than the blackouts at Boston and New Orleans.

On New Year’s day, several of us were standing at the street corner looking like lost souls. A lady and her daughter pulled up in a station wagon and wanted to know if we would like to see San Francisco. We didn’t hesitate, and we later found she was working for the telegram company, delivering messages throughout the city. Quite a free tour and end of story. We got to ride the cable cars, see the Presidio, Market Street, the Seal rocks, etc.

After the most enjoyable two-days, we reported for duty and were assigned to CUB-12, division “H.” We later found that our division included Photographers, Aerographers (weathermen), Yeoman, other ratings and several Seaman. From this we concluded that our assignment would be at an air base and designated as a Combat Information Center. We didn’t have the slightest idea what our duty would entail. We found that we were to be part of the 2nd echelon of CUB-12. The First echelon had already sailed for some advance base in the Pacific, destination unknown.

Our activities were, and not in any specific order: issued all new clothing; high top shoes, pants, shirts, jacket, camouflage parka, hard plastic helmets, a M-l rifle, but no ammunition, (which was taken away after a week or so); we went on all-day marches.

One evening in January, another sailor and I pulled Shore Patrol Duty. We were given a 45ca1 gun with hoister and webbed belt and a billy club. Our assignment was to patrol around the business area of Daly City until midnight. We were to report any disturbance to the SP Officer. No way; with a Y3c badge, short in stature, and weighing less than l4Olb., was I going to look for trouble. We stayed out of the way as much as we could, and kept looking for the Officer in his Jeep. Once was enough, when he did find us, he let it be known that he had to handle one disturbance. Don’t believe he was very pleased with our performance.

Allow me to digress for an explanation of an advance base. Two types of advance bases were planned. The LION was approximately equivalent in size to Pearl Harbor before the War, and the CUB was about one-fourth the size of the LION. A major air base was designated OAK and a smaller base was know as ACORN. LION-4 was staging with us at San Bruno. Later LION-4 unit went to Manus Island, in the Admirality Island Group. Construction Battalions-CBs (also known as Seabees), were established, consisting of men experienced in the building trades, carpenters, men capable of road building, and all types of construction and lead by Civil Engineers. These battalions were supplied with various types and quantities of equipment, road graders, cranes, power shovels, etc. Several battalions could be assigned to work at the same base. One assigned to building docking facilities, others for constructing, housing, mess halls, hospitals, roads, water supply, etc. Additional manpower was obtained through the use of base personal while construction was underway. Base personnel were also used for stevedoring until the base became functional.

Since the war strategy required advance bases to be established as near to the major action as possible, the Pacific area had hundreds of bases performing all the necessary functions to support the Marines, Naval ships and the air power of both Marine and Navy. Each base was assigned primary and secondary functions. As example; ship repair units, docking facilities, air strips, hospital, food supply, parts replacement, tire recap units, aircraft overhaul, etc. These bases would function for a period of time, torn down and moved forward.

OUTWARD BOUND

On 9 February 1944, we boarded the ship MS Japara, a Holland merchant ship, destination unknown. I well remember the boarding. We lined up at dockside carrying our mattress and sea bag, rolled inside of our hammock, Navy fashion. Bucket and ditty bag in the other hand, with backpack and had to climb unto a platform, then up the gangplank. The first step on the platform was almost too high for me and with being loaded in both hands, I had nothing to grab for support. I almost didn't make it. Maybe that was my fault, should have fallen down, then could have missed sailing.

Like every military unit, gossip said we were headed to the Russell Islands. So what, no one had the foggiest idea where they were. We proceeded as a one-ship convoy, with no escort, to the South Pacific and only had an escort when we approached Noumea, New Caledonia. In addition to the Navy personnel, there was a complement of 300 Army men onboard, en route to the South Pacific~ Once on board our division, had the assignment to attend the chow line. Each member of the troop on board was given a metal number tag and we ate according to the tag number. We would rotate the numbers to give each a more fair shake at mess time. Since our division was in-charge, we could sneak ahead of the line, or even repeat the meal. We had a substantial breakfast, sandwich at noon, and a good meal at evening. The noon meal included an apple or an orange, so our division frequently had two noon meals.

With about 3000 men on board, we were also prevented from staying below deck in our sleeping area. This area had to be cleaned and aired during the day hours. Besides that, there was no room to do anything, as well as being too hot below deck. The sleeping area on the Japara was a hold compartment about two flights below deck~ The bunks were lined in aisles two deep and five row high with minimum space between each row of bunks. We had to almost crawl horizontal to get into the bunk. The aisle had to contain the gear for ten men. There wasn't enough room to undo your lashed sea bag, so we lived with the bucket and ditty bag, which contained all of our personal items. Once in your bunk, you stayed there.

Our time was spent, washing our clothes in salt water (the soap made good lather). Twisted lines were placed above the covered holds and our laundry was hung to dry. Even though our clothing was marked with ink, we usually watched while they became air-dried.

Several times a week, an announcement could be heard "Sloop ver der troops," We finally managed to understand the Dutch language, the announcement meant "The drill will be for the troops." This abandon ship drill meant we had to stand by our battle station, with life preserver (we wore the preserver all times) and await muster. Then the armed guard would practice firing the 4-inch guns, with us standing on deck near the guns. We didn't have any way to protect our hearing, other than placing our hands over our ears. The decks would literally shake, we were so close to the guns.

We were able to shower once a day with salt water, usually water from a large hose. Saltwater showers only provided a change of routine, nothing else to do. We had a period of calisthenics to keep us busy and in shape, for lack of any other activity. Each division had their turn on top of the hold covers. Most of the activity consisted of reading, playing cards, and of course, there were sufficient games of chance.

We crossed the Equator on 17 of February and the International Date line on 22 February. We were duly initiated into the "Ancient Order of the Deep" and the "Royal Order of the Dragon."

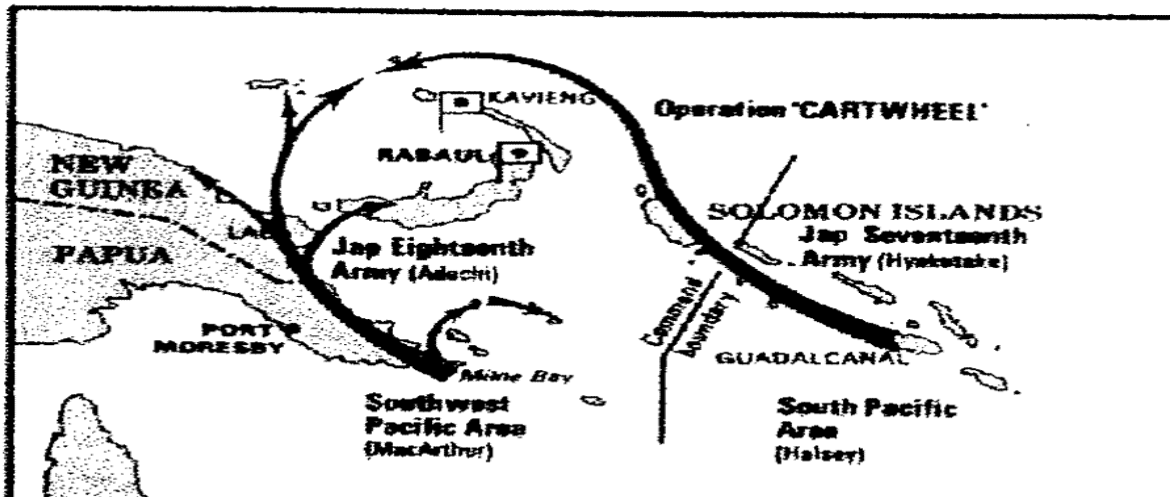
We graduated from a "Polywog" to "Sheilback" sailor. This special ceremony was a very informal initiation usually consisted of wetting down the initiates with a fire hose using high pressure saltwater. Then they were paddled with any form of board that one could handle, smeared with grease, dumped in a water tank, and finally kissed the foot of Davie Jones. Those conducting the ceremony were the old salts; who had crossed the equator on previous tours of duty. We pity the ones who stayed back, waiting their turn. As soon as one kissed the foot of Davie Jones, he joined the rank of the initiators and raised havoc with those remaining poor souls. Since there were many more enlisted men than officers it only seemed as if the officers were always last. A special mini initiation awaited the officers. This ceremony knew no rank and became an official part of your Service Record. Each ship crew established its own version, but there was much similarity. Knowing part of the initiation, one would wear only a pair of under shorts and tennis shoes. The wet shorts made the paddling sting all the more, but you would run through the line as fast as you would dare, the wet and slippery deck not withstanding. We were also awarded the Royal Order of the Dragon for having crossed the International Date Line.

SOUTH PACIFIC ADVANCE, BASES

Our first port of call was Noumea, New Caledonia. The Army personnel disembarked at Noumea, and we proceed northward to Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, where we unloaded a small amount of cargo. We then proceeded northwest, about 60 miles, to the Russell Islands, where we were grounded and taken ashore on pontoon barges. The Russell Islands consisted of many small islands, with two larger ones, Banika and Pavuvu being used by the Navy and Marines. The Russell Islands were either owned by the Palmolive Co., or leased for their coconut farms. The trees were spaced like an orchard, row after row. The farm had to be covered daily by horse and wagon, with natives picking up the fallen nuts. When left on the ground, the husk would soon germinate and start to root. Upon landing we had to open a coconut husk, not an easy job, and taste the milk. The next day, we wondered why we did that. The green milk was a good cleaning agent. Trucks were loaded with men and our gear and we proceeded to where the CUB-12 base was located.

Another trick we learned was "never touch the tent surface," since it would just leak at that spot. It was the rainy season, lots and lots of rain and mud.

The second day, we mustered and lined for a complete series of medical shots, even though we had received the same series in California, just before leaving. I think the only one we missed was the one with the forked needle. We were told to be ready for shipping out within a couple of days. However, the very next day,



we were told that our mission was canceled. We managed to find what the original mission was. We were to establish an advance base at Kavieng, in the New Ireland Islands. However; it was decided in late Februaiy to bypass this area. So now what?

We were the lucky echelon, by the time of our arrival, the mess hail was able to serve hot and cold meals-what they were. We had mutton in one manner or the other. Chops and stew, and quite often. Mutton has lots of grease and the kitchen grease traps required frequent cleaning. Got out of that duty too. The powdered milk was tasteless, that is until some new cooks showed up. Powdered milk became enjoyable when some form of seasoning was added. I believe the major ingredient was powdered onion. Some of the men from the South had grown used to hot pepper type of seasoning, especially Tabasco sauce. Several of the men had coke bottles; with hot pepper and vinegar to spice the mutton, it worked.

We first used our mess kits, for chow, then later were issued a metal tray for food service. After eating, we would dump our tray into empty gasoline drums, with the tops cut off. The drums were filled with hot water, well it was hot for a while. After a few uses, the mutton grease, or other garbage, would start to form a film at the top of the water, and one would hesitate about cleaning ones tray and utensils in this new liquid. The aluminum cups would become stained from the various liquids, especially tomato juice. We had to scour the tray and cups with sand, then clean with water, and hang the trays in the sun light to dry. It's a wonder we didn't have major intestinal problems, just the minor ones.

Our supplies and equipment were being unloaded from a ship, and taken to a large field, stripped of the trees, and made ready for a supply depot. Since the field had yet to be leveled and proper flooring placed, the large crates, gasoline drums, cranes, water tanks, etc. were dumped helter-skelter in what one would call a "dump." We were assigned as stevedores to unload the trucks, drive the trucks and cranes to reassemble this mess. We found we had a 300-bed hospital, a 15,000-population water system, pipes and wooden tanks and lots of air strip supplies. This reassemble took several weeks, a lot of the time being spent in the rain. The gasoline drums would settle in the mud and be almost impossible to dig out. Some of the wooden crates would be as large as 10 x 10 x 12ft. high. Since most of the crates were just unloaded, they would be on top of one another. It was a trick to climb among the crates, connecting the slings and tell the crane operator to move. Before we gave the operator the hi sign, we would need to scramble out of the way, for fear that the crates would break, or swing wildly. We were a bunch of amateurs, but learned fast. I think we moved some of the items several times, but finally the job was completed.

Because our original mission was canceled, and while awaiting further assignment, we were allowed to break out some of our equipment. The mess hall was rebuilt from an open-air tent to an enclosed screened tent. After two months, we opened the ice cream mobile unit, and could have a taste several days a week. The

dentist broke out his equipment and we had dental call on a regular basis. Before that time, one had to go to another unit for dental care. The personnel office set up for operation, monthly reports had to be prepared, the typewriters and some desks were made ready. And, of course, the officers had to have their permanent mess ball, a quonset hut, the one and only. The officers would hold parties with Navy nurses on Saturday nights, which went over big with the enlisted men. One party night, someone threw rocks at the hut, and all hell was raised. "We're going to find who did that." Rocks make lots of noise when hitting the steel hut.

Of course, the most important construction was the theater area, a covered stage with a large background painted white. The projection booth was also permanent. Seating was on logs from coconut trees. Troop morale was of prime importance. We had news each evening before the movie. Movies were scheduled and moved from one base to the other each day. We managed to keep track of the schedules at the various bases, in the event we wished to see one we missed or just wanted to repeat. There were several theaters on the Island. Attendance was by servicemen from many different units and branches of the Service. It was free. We sometimes would carry our own stool, for sitting, and a poncho for the rain. We had lots of rain. Since our base was not the largest, we didn't get professional types of entertainment-no USO units, no Bing Crosby, etc. We did see several amateur programs; which were just as good.

Lighting for the tents was provided by Coleman lanterns, which used white leaded gasoline. We had to learn how to assemble the mantle and light the lamp each evening. The mantle was fragile, so we tried to keep from touching the mantle. The lamps did provide good lighting, just like camping out.

For the first several weeks, water for human consumption and for food preparation was provided from large tanks on trucks, which had hauled the water from another base. The drinking water was in Lister bags and was well laced with atabrine and chlorine tablets. The taste was bad, so we would wait for mess to drink coffee. Our shower water was also hauled in and the water was hand pumped into overhead tanks. Later we were allowed to break out some of our well supplies, piping and pumps and then our water, from a nearby stream, was more plentiful. The pumps were gasoline motor-driven.

After three months, we were allowed to use some of our lumber supplies for tent floorings. What an improvement, but we still had the rats. The photo lab was built, and air-conditioned, since film processing and printing required a low humidity. Because the photographers were part of our division, we managed to obtain a few prints of various areas and events. The prints are the only souvenirs I managed to send home.

From March to August, we had work details, maybe four days a week. The other times were free to roam. We found a beach about a half mile from our base where we waded, wearing swimming trunks and tennis shoes, and looking for shells. Cat eye shells were the most preferred, they made good ring or necklace decoration. We would wade out in the surf and try to ride in on the big waves. Many a time the undertow would take hold, and we would let it take us back out. One could not struggle against the undertow. Most of the time we would skin ourselves on the coral, and get infections.

The climate was ideal, except for the mosquitoes and the fungus growth, inside armpits, toes, etc. A Merthiolate antiseptic was used to control the fungus. The hospital corpsmen were assigned to oil spray any water pool with oil to prevent mosquito breeding.

We organized softball teams, built a playing area and had a form of league play. Our division obtained some purple dye, and we inked out team name "Haba 10" on our shirt. We had the winning number of games through that summer. One member of the team could pitch with either hand, equally well. He and I took turns at the mound.

The Catholic priest assigned to our base, was a member of the Holy Cross priests, from Notre Dame.

He had been assigned to St. Patrick's church at South Bend, Indiana and was familiar with a family in LaPorte. I served Mass for him on Sunday, and we went to at least two other bases each week. I did OK with the Latin responses. On Palm Sunday 1944, he offered three Masses, one at dockside, with a jeep hood for an altar. He was transferred to Green Island and wanted me to go as his Chaplain Assistant. I was more anxious to stay with my friends and await whatever. A few months later, Father Herbert (A-Bear) was assigned as a replacement. He talked one of the carpenters into building him a chapel for daily Mass. The chapel was inside a 1611 x 1611 tent with pews. I continued to serve daily Mass and often had to go to Officer's Country to get him up and at-em. Mass was at 6:30am and be wanted to be on time.

For recreation, we had a closed in area where we could buy two beers or two cokes, two days each week. Most days I traded my chits for coke. We could not take them outside of the area. A continuous adventure was to find alcoholic beverages. Some of the other units on the Island had monthly ration of cases of beer and if one really wanted hard liquor, it could be found someplace. Whiskey went for $50 a bottle and beer around $15 per case.

Division 'H" CUB-12, Russell Islands, Solomon Group - April 1944 South Pacific

One work party was the unloading sacks of cement from trucks and stacking under a tent. This assignment was for 3 hours "on" and 3 hours "off" for about two days. The reason for continuous shifts was fear of rain. A sack of cement weighs around 901b and because of the stacking, two men had to handle each sack. We dressed with only shoes and one pair of shorts. At the end of each shift, we returned to our quarters, quite fatigued and ready for a shower. Did you ever see a caked "belly button?" Because of perspiration, hot climate and working under a shelter, it didn't take long for the button to cake.

We had swimming parties at one end of the island, where boats would patrol for possible sharks. I never heard of anyone seeing sharks, but they didn't want to take a chance. This area was free of coral and made a nice swimming hole, tree ropes included. Another time we boarded a landing-craft and paid a visit to another small island in the area, where a native village was located. The native women and children had been removed from Benika, but the men were used to build palm-covered buildings, churches, etc. On Sunday, the native men would stop at the various bases to sell, exchange, or barter for mattress covers. Our priest was always on the lookout for an ebony cane that he could use while strolling through the Notre Dame campus. He never found a cane, but did manage to obtain some other wooden figures.

One work party was to guard a shipload of beer, at least 1000 cases, down by the docks. We were given a M-1 rifle, with live ammo, and expected not to lose any cases. That stack of beer cases was like cheese in a trap. It was no picnic, men would beg for a case. "Please mister." I'm sure they'd never miss a dozen cases, but we were honor bound to protect the stack. As soon as the trucks were filled with our unit's beer we moved back to our base. Then the fun started. Men in jeeps drove next to the truck and hoped we would pass out a case or two. We couldn't take a chance, since the number of cases was already marked on the shipper. A count would be taken at our food dump. We were no longer responsible for the remaining cases at dockside.

Along the way we managed to scrounge the necessities for making life easier. We ended with one new utensil to make washing clothing easier. This utensil was a metal cone shaped funnel with a stick at the narrow end and was used as a plunger atop the clothes in the wash bucket. A steady up and down motion acted just like an old fashioned washing machine. Don't know how or when we obtained this plunger, but it sure speeded the washing.

The Russell Islands were under MacArthur's Command, and on the main road around the island, there were Army bulletin boards with various types of communication, from movie schedules, unit locations, etc. I remember one posting that we found was rather humorous. It was a listing of various types of equipment that was missing. The equipment was listed with Serial Numbers and type of equipment. There were many Jeeps listed as being missing. I don't believe that was a surprise. All one had to do was to go to dock side and see a Jeep on the main deck of.a merchant ship, sometimes it would be under cover, but not very well hidden. Now one knows that a merchant ship doesn't have a Jeep as part of their property. However, since the ship would tie up next to a dock, the Jeep would provide immediate transportation for the officer's personal business. It's called scrounging. A bigger surprise was the great number of heavy equipment; cranes, power shovels, bulldozers, etc. reported missing. The CB's didn't seem to care how they would increase their equipment, maybe for spare parts, there was ajob to be done, and we'll get it done.

Officers were being reassigned in June and July to other units. With their departures went some of the mail censoring. Several of the first and second class yeoman were assigned the task. Since we had been there for over four months, all the folks back home knew that CUB-l2 was in the Russell Islands. "What was John Smith's middle name?" Now I know, he was John Russell Smith. If one didn't know anyone by the name of Russell, he would have the parents of those who knew, call or write to his folks. There was always a way to know. Therefore, there wasn't much to really censor, just something to keep us busy. I took the test for Yeoman First Class, passed, and received promotion effective September I, 1944.

Reassignment from CUB-12 started in August 1944. On August 24, 1944, Jim Atkin and I were transferred from CUB-12 to Aviation Re-equipment and Staging Depot, Navy 60 (Russell Islands) and on September 25, were transferred to Aircraft Engine Overhaul Base, Base 131, EPIC, (Noumea, New Caledonia). We flew from the Russeils to Guadalcanal to Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides Islands to New Caledonia. The plane was a C-47 or C-54 with no seats--we sat atop the mail sacks. No life jackets and no heat. We nearly froze since we had no jackets, just a light shirt. The plane was operated by NATS (Naval Aviation Transport Service) We had been assigned a very high priority, otherwise it may takes weeks to get to Noumea.

The new base was located on Isle Nou, a small island across from Noumea. We had very little duty, since the entire base was being de-activated, disassembled, equipment crated and made ready for shipment to another area. This base was assigned to overhaul aircraft engines and was to be moved forward as the war effort progressed. The liquor and beer from the officer's club was placed in a large reefer and the doors welded shut. The reefer is a large self-contained refrigeration unit, about 8ft x 8ft and 8ft.

We were not informed as to our new destination. However; since we were working in the personnel office, we arrived at a possible solution. We were receiving transfers into the unit, cooks and officer mess men who's heritage was Chamorro. (Natives of Guam) Ah! Ha! Guess what? Guam. These men had been in the Navy before December 7, 1942 and this was going to be their first return home. As soon as we reached Guam, they were transferred to another unit, we were only transportation for them.

On November 20, 1944 we were transferred to Aviation Repair & Overhaul Unit #4. We boarded ship shortly thereafter and proceeded to Guam without escort. We had Thanksgiving dinner aboard ship, turkey with all the fixings. We stopped for one day of recreation in the Marshall Islands. Those who wished, were allowed to go ashore to an area with covered sheds, for shade, and imbibe a few beers and cokes-no other refreshments. The island was practically empty, only a few feet above water. Going back to the ship was a real adventure, with slightly intoxicated men and having to climb aboard using the rope ladders. We were in a convoy of several ships from the Marshall Islands to Guam.

GUAM

We arrived at Apra Harbor, Guam on December 8, 1944. Then the fun began. First we had to leave the ship by tossing our gear (hammock and mattress, with sea bag) off the ship unto a pontoon barge; a drop of about 30ft, and hope that the gear would not land in the water. The barge could not tie directly to the ship, it was at least 3-4ft away. After a successful toss, we climbed down the rope ladder, to the barge, and recovered our gear. At the dock, we had to climb another rope ladder, with our gear. I don't know how I managed; remember I still had to also carry my bucket and ditty bag. We loaded our gear on trucks, and marched to an area adjacent to an air strip. We later found the name of the area, it was Orote Airfield on the Orote Peninsula, Guam. This air field had first been established by the U.S. Navy, before 1940; and added to by the Japanese during their occupation.

Our first order of business was to find our gear, then to prepare for chow and arrange for sleeping. The first meal was C-rations. Several large crates were opened for our sleeping equipment. The first night was on a cot in the open air, no netting. Early the next morning, we were awakened by a sharp noise, which we found to be the firing of a shotgun shell type cartridge; used for starting an aircraft engine. We had unknowingly parked our cots adjacent to several fighter planes. We scrambled away, not knowing what was to come. No further excitement.

Next order of business, were work details, assisting the CBs in producing facilities for eating, latrines, showers, etc. We continued eating C-rations for about a week; until our temporary mess hall was available. The first hot meal was of a type of SPAM, with pineapple. The best meal in days, well almost. We assembled our tents the second day and lived in them until the permanent housing, quonset huts, was completed. Another first order of business was to set up the movie equipment. The servicemen had to have their movies each evening, top priority. We attended movies almost each evening for news and shows; come rain or shine. We would sit through the movie, even during light rains. The first week-end, Jim and I borrowed a Jeep, and drove to Agana to see what damage still existed. The capital city was still in rubble, having been destroyed during the Invasion.

We were organized into various departments, I ended as head Yeoman of the Engineering Department. Jim Aitkin was assigned to the Personnel office. I had a chance to meet the officers and the enlisted men under my supervision, but still no buildings. We continued with work parties, getting the base ready.

One of the work parties swore that they had seen a Japanese soldier running through their work area. The area was being cleared of brush, rocks, etc. in preparation for one of the housing units. The sighting was entirely possible, since the capture of the Japs occurred almost each day, although no sightings were confirmed in our immediate area. We were cautioned not leave our base, but that was like talking to the wind, curiosity was too much to handle. I think the caution was just to keep us out of the way of the real working men.

I caught a good cold, after a light rain, which turned into bronchitis, and on Christmas day, I was sent to the Naval Air Base #939 hospital; located about a mile away, still near the air strip. We were still eating in our tents but I never got to finish the turkey dinner. The diagnosis was pneumonia, cause unknown. I was given sulfadiazine and I broke out with rashes over entire body. New Year's Eve, December 31, 1944, I became too sick, almost delirious, to even leave my cot during an air raid. I could care less, I was going to die one way or the other. The doctor became so concerned for my health, and seeing so little improvement, decided to try a new drug-Penicillin. He moved me to the officer's tent, where I was isolated from the other patients, and after about 4 hours, my temperature dropped and I started to feel better. It was truly a miracle drug. After two weeks, I was able to go to the showers, but was so weak, I could hardly pull the water valve chain for water. I was discharged to resume duty on January 20, 1945.

I arranged for transportation back to our base and found that a great deal had been accomplished. About

10-15 quonset huts had been assembled, and were in use as mess halls and living quarters. Office equipment found its way so we were able to prepare reports, type letters, etc. All yeoman would "turn-to," to the Personnel office, at monthly report time. We had to prepare several copies of personnel rosters, production progress, etc. The preparation of these reports would usually be done in the evening, after our regular daily duties.

The CBs continued to assemble about 20 or more additional quonset huts for the various shops involved in an aircraft and engine overhaul unit. We had shops for the rebuild of each and every part on an aircraft, from engine, to airframe, to instrumentation. The instrument shop had air conditioning and I found that I had to visit that shop quite often. We had an engine testing facility located in a remote hilly area, never did get to see that facility, just covered the activity in monthly reports. We rebuilt several hundred engines a month; which were then tested, crated and shipped to the Naval Supply Depot, about one mile away. The airframes that had been reworked and the instruments that were rebuilt and calibrated were also crated or packaged for further use.

My immediate duty as head yeoman in the Engineering Division, was the major correspondence, monthly report writing, filing of classified documents, including Secret, and supervision of a Y3c, and a yeoman striker. I also had to be secretary for six officers, of which only one really kept me busy. The others didn't care for much paperwork, thank goodness. I also had to maintain the Bureau of Aeronautic specification books. I remember one of the brand new single pontoon planes had as many as 30 changes that needed to be made, before commissioning. The modifications and changes seemed to come in faster than we could complete the work.

With the War progressing in the European Theater, decision was made to deactivate many units and send men and material to the Pacific area. One of these was an Army P-SI unit. Their planes were placed on the hangar and flight deck of an escort carrier and sent to our base for re-conditioning. Those planes from the flight deck and even those on the hanger deck, had been coated with Cosmoline, a thick grease that hardened and prevented the salt water spray from corroding the metal parts on the plane. There were about 60 planes that were scheduled for the Okinawa invasion, April 1, 1945. We had less than two weeks to make them ready for use.

A steam line, to degrease the planes, was built in an open area, large enough for 10 planes and the work effort began. All the instruments were removed and recalibrated for accuracy. The guns were removed and tested. New tires were installed and the planes passed inspection by another Air Force unit. This rework received top priority and went on for 24 hours per day, until all planes met inspection. Other normal work was put aside for over a week, we met our schedule. On April 30, 1945, we received a unit commendation for "The expeditious manner in which a large number of aircraft for fleet replenishment were re-preserved and commissioned by AROU #4 reflects considerable credit upon the organization and ability of that unit." Signed, J.O. Taylor, Commander Air Force, Pacific Subordinate Command Forward Area.

Our base was adjacent to the Orote Airfield, so planes could be moved to our shops at will. The strip was used as a secondary field, the main naval airfield was located at Agana, however we would see many flights in and out on a daily basis. A most exciting event would be the arrival of a B-29 back from a mission to Japan; that was damaged enough such that they could not chance a landing at the airfields in the northern part of Guam. The airfields in the north had to be approached by circling downward for several minutes. Our strip was just 20 feet above sea level, so the B¬29 had no trouble landing. The Air Force personnel would come down to repair the plane for take-off to land at their field. Those big birds had no problem to take-off. It was amazing how short of a strip they required, especially unloaded.

Since we had a complete Engineering department, including a first-class machine shop, we were asked to produce several special designed circular slide rules. These slide rules were to be used by B-29 navigators in their flights to Japan. The air currents experienced during the trips to Japan, were in excess of what their normal slide rules could be used to calculate various conditions. This new rule was designed by an officer in

the Air Force; and he approached us to build him several new rules. I attended the meeting with him and helped schedule the work in process. We had the men, equipment, and material to meet his need. Another high priority job accomplished, and many thanks.

In April, two new departments were added to our base. One was a tire repair unit. This unit was designed to have a capacity for re-capping and top-capping tires and to make sectional repairs to tires. We had sectional molds and fall-circle molds. We were able to meet the design capacity even though we repaired all the various sizes of tires used on heavy construction equipment, trucks, and passenger vehicles.

Another department was in conjunction with the Air Force, a drop-tank assembly unit. The unit operated two eight-hour shifts, the Navy personnel working first shift. Since this was expected to be a temporary unit, the Air Force personnel were housed in tents, with the Navy personnel residing in the quonset huts. The assignment was to weld the half shells and assemble the tail fins, test, etc. and crate for shipping to a supply depot. Hank Lusetti was the officer in-charge. I don't remember if he was Navy or Army. Hank was credited as the first to use a one-hand jump shot, which completely changed the game of basketball in the 1930. Hank was playing for the Stanford University basketball team 1936-38.

High stakes games of chance were often played, especially the evening of pay-day. One of the men in our barrack, was a constant winner, a real gambler. We became quite friendly, to the extent that he would give me part of his winnings to hold until he could send the money home in the form of a money order. The gambling started right after evening chow and by 9:00pm he would come to me with at least $700, and ask me to hold the money until tomorrow. Then about 9:30 he would return, "give me some back, the game is still going." No, you told me to hold the money. He held back some money to continue and then about an hour later, he would give me some more money to hold. The next morning we would go to the Post office and purchase money orders. There was a limit to how much one could buy per day, some weeks we made more than one trip to the Post office. I even made him use an envelope and immediately mail the money orders home. I wouldn't even let him touch the money orders. I placed the money orders in the envelope and gave it directly to the mail clerk. It's gone.

The games would continue at a high pace for several days, until most of the gambling money was in the hands of only a few men. He was sending money home for his folks to buy a farm. At the price of farms in the 1940's, they could have bought a section of land. I know his total winnings had to exceed $10,000. I've often wondered whatever happened to that money, did the folks get their farm? I have to believe they did. He was from Georgia, and he said for the next war, he was going to hide out in the Okefenokee Swamp, he'd had enough of this one. He called himself a real hillbilly and not a redneck.

Two times during the summer, the Island Naval Command organized an island picnic, by state. The grounds were laid out in a relative shape of the state so the attendees knew where they could reunion with people from the home area. The LaPorte County, Indiana, group was by far, the largest group. From LaPorte city, Don Sensow, Chet Jones, Harold Spaid, Herb Hubner and I. There was a Scholl from Michigan City and three or four other men from the County. Don, Herb and Chet were CB's, Chet being a butcher and cook. I knew Chet from his butchering days at a Kroger store in LaPorte and had visited with Don at his print shop. Chet invited Harold Spaid, who was also in AROU-4, and I to dinner one evening. He saw that we ate at a table next to the galley, special food too.

Eyes and ears were always open for any opportunity. One day scuttlebutt had it that there was a load of caned fruit delivered to a dump. We couldn't resist the invitation, so were borrowed a weapon's carrier and chased down the rumor. Sure enough, we found a big load of cans containing fruit cocktail, pineapple slices and chunks, and some pear halves. The cans were part of a shipment that had become water logged and no commissary steward would chance their use. The cans showed signs of rust and in many cases the labels

were missing. None of that bothered us, we picked out a large quantity of cans of various size, some a gallon size, with minimum rust, and loaded the carrier. Some cases the cans had only pockmarks of rust, showing no evidence of penetration which would spoil the food. Each of us took as much as he could hide around his bunk. We then lobbied with one of the machinist-mates to use the refrigerator in his shop in exchange of a couple of cans. After evening movies, we would have a treat for the barracks.

Several of the survivors of the carrier Franldin, were brought to our base for just a few days, to obtain clothing and various essentials, prior to being shipped back to the States. The first day, they borrowed what they needed, with a promise to pay back. There was no problem to fulfill their requests, we may be in the same boat someday. Those men, who came to our base, were able to get around. Many of the survivors were on hospital ships and already on their way home.

As part of recreation, a couple of us would go down to Apra Harbor on Sunday, take the water taxi, and visit anchored ships. We visited the battleship, New Mexico and the cruiser Nashville, in dry dock. The taxi made trips to the various ships on about a half-hour schedule. Sometimes we would join the crew at mess. We had to be aware of the taxi schedule, to do that, we would request the schedule from the Officer-of-the-Day on duty at the gangplank. We usually had enough time for a visit without being rushed. The Nashville had taken a bomb from a Japanese aircraft right in the sick bay area with a loss of a number of sick. Sick no more. What a mess it was. We were interested to visit the battleship Iowa, since it was of the latest design. The taxi stopped, but the ship was preparing to shove ofl so we were only able to board, then off again.

Jim Aitken was our best scrounger. Working in the Personnel Office, he was always on the watch for an interesting opportunity. One afternoon, Jim came to my office and asked if I would like to go for a ride on a Submarine. The answer was “Yes, Yes, When?” Tomorrow, but we need to get up and be at the Sub base by 4:30 am. Wow, OK. We were given transportation and boarded the Sub in complete darkness, no moon light even. The object for the all day trip was to checkout various equipment modifications. We had the run of the ship, and were instructed as how to use the head, where we could hang-out, etc. The Sub was very crowded, even though they didn’t have full complement onboard. The klaxon sounded and the command heard over the speaker, “Dive, Dive.” Just like in the movies or on TV. We surfaced and were aware of fresh air, but could not go on deck. The trip lasted to the late evening hours. It was already dark when we finally docked. We had not seen the sun for over a day. Truly a real experience. We were tired for several days, probably from lack of fresh air and the excitement aboard the sub.

Three men that I knew, joined AROU-4 during the nine month I was aboard. First, Harold Spaid, from LaPorte, arrived early Spring. I was in high school class with his older brother. Bob Gross, a family friend of Aunt Helen, from Chicago, arrived in May, and finally in early August, Charles Swanson, one of the “C” Street residents, also from LaPorte. Charlie Lehker, another “C” resident, was a radioman at a Navy Communication Base, about 10 miles north near Agana. The base was supposed to be Secret, but I knew what their function was, having been in Communications in New Orleans. I paid him a visit, but he could not leave his area, and they would not allow me to go in, so we didn’t have much time for a visit.

I was rather lucky when drawing miscellaneous duty. My First Class rating was probably the reason. I had Field Day inspection only one time. A yeoman had to trail the inspection officer through barracks, offices, and most of the work stations. Not quite, but almost a “White Glove” inspection. It would be our duty to write down any comments, such as “ditty this or that,” or “this needs to be done,” and “put this man on report.” The inspection moved so fast, that even the officer knew that all the comments wouldn’t make the list. Usually, “put this man on report” would be lost, since it was not usually critical, unless frequently reported for the same reason. In general, the weekly inspections were used just to keep us on the straight and narrow.

Our base had a reputation for preparing the best Sunday noon meal, to the extent that we would

sometimes serve several hundred extra meals. One would see men in all kinds of uniforms, Army, Navy, Marines, and sometimes one that we wouldn't recognize. Our Sunday Mass service was scheduled to start at 11:30 am, and sometimes the priest would be late. Even if Mass were on time, we would be late for the start of the meal, which started at 12:00, and have to get in a long line. There were times that the Commissary Steward hadn't drawn sufficient rations and we would miss the main course. The cooks, were not always too happy having to accommodate this situation, and hustled to prepare something. In fact, the very late ones in line might even have to identify their outfit.

However, in general, all units would accommodate anyone who wished to join them for chow. After all, the food came from the same source, and one could only eat so much. No one starved in the Service, well not very often.

Because our base was one of the larger ones, we were on the entertainment circuit for some of the better shows, not large enough to draw the top notch ones, like Bob Hope, etc., but maybe better than shows by our base personnel. We were never informed as to what group was coming, just told that we would be highly entertained, the only requirement was to get to the movie area early and wait and wait. Music and news filled the time awaiting for live entertainment, which was scheduled at least once a month. Here again we had lots of visitors, men from around the area.

Along the way, I obtained the latest mode of carrying our personal gear, a parachute bag. One air-machinist has set up an enterprise to make these bags from the new, colored green, sea bags. He was a tailor; working with other needed cloth products, and saw a way for extra money. The bag was about the same size as the regulation sea bag, made horizontal instead of vertical and had a heavy 24in. zipper across the top. This extra wide opening made it possible to easily store larger items, some not always personal. This bag also had a heavy carrying strap.

We received our news at the evening movies, and seemed to keep up-to-date with the War effort. We were as surprised as everyone else about the news of the A38 bomb, but didn't really understand its effect. After the second A-bomb was dropped, we sensed that something might occur. The best occurrence came in the form of a letter or bulletin #43 76, from Commander Air Force, Pacific Fleet, Subordinate Command, Forward Area, dated 17 August 1945, issued to eighteen units and titled "Enlisted Personnel - Transfer of." AROU-4 was assigned 5 Yeoman, any class, to report as soon as practicable, to the nearest Receiving Ship or Station on the West Coast of the United States, for assignment by the Commander Western Sea Frontier. Jim Aitken and I were two of the five to be transferred, both having served 18 months in advance base duty.

On August 27, Jim and I were transferred to the nearest receiving ship or station on the West Coast for further assignment and recommended for shore duty. We were also recommended for 30 days rehabilitation leave and travel time. We reported to the USS Barnes, an escort carrier, for transportation, on August 30, and sailed that date.

We bunked on canvas cots, under the wings of a plane, on the hangar deck. We had no duty assignment, didn't have to muster, no reporting to anyone, just enjoy the ride. We had to be aware of various schedules; chow, ship stores, but otherwise we could do as we pleased. Since the complement of the ship crew was much less than normal, we had no problem waiting in lines for food, ice cream or whatever. We had sufficient reading material, reading room top side next to the flight deck. We would sit in the gun turret area or look down to the water and watch the dolphins follow the ship. We did our laundry, but reduced the amount by discarding the uniforms, that had been issued before going over seas. We were on board when the Armistice with Japan was signed on September 2.

BACK IN THE STATES

Transportation was completed on September 12, with our arrival at the dock at Alameda Naval Air Station, Oakland, California. Our arrival was saluted by a small Naval band. After a quick medical check-up, those of us who had not sent their uniforms home, before going over seas, were granted-liberty. After 18 months we deserved one and really enjoyed the few hours off the base. The next morning we reported to the Receiving Ship, Treasure Island, on the island in the Bay of San Francisco. The island is one terminal to the Oakland-San Francisco Bay Bridge.

Again another medical inspection with high hopes that we would be given the 30-day leave as previously recommended. After a few hours, we were granted liberty and Jim & I headed into San Francisco for an evening of entertainment or whatever. The next morning we mustered and were informed that leave was granted, starting tomorrow. When tomorrow came, I had my baggage ready to be placed on board the train, and only needing my travel papers. We mustered and then the shock came, "All Yeoman leaves have been frozen until further notice, please report to the Personnel Office." We reported to the Personnel Office and requested the what for, with no result, just wait. "What about my baggage. Well, you'll have to get it." I raced down to the rail yard, where the baggage car was located, and requested they find my baggage. Sorry it's already loaded. Well, you'll just have to get it off and I mean now. My attitude and the fact that I was First Class, seemed to suffice, they dropped what they were doing and found my baggage. I was fit to be tied.

OK, now what? We mustered again at 1:00 pm for further information, and the only announcement was that all Yeomen were to report to the Personnel office. Ah! Ha! I'm not "all yeoman," and they didn't- say that Norbert should report. Until my name appeared on the bulletin board for further assignment and knowing that they would have to find me, I just faded away looking for something to do, take in a movie, or anything, just to get lost. This procedure went on for a couple of days, muster three times a day, check the bulletin board for assignment, pick up a liberty pass and head for San Francisco or wherever. After a week or so, I became tired of hiding or finding some place to hang out, so I found the Master-at-Arms office and requested some easy job. He said he had one for me, just type up my duty roster each morning, then you're free until next day. He gave me an identification badge, which entitled me to full time liberty, and did I use it. I later found that it would be April 1946, before I would accumulate enough points for discharge. Frozen, declared essential, and points increased, what a mess.

The mess hail at Treasure Island was the greatest. For the first time in 18 months, we ate like kings, all kinds of fresh vegetables, lots of various kinds of fresh fruit, the biggest oranges I'd ever seen. I remember a very large sign facing the chow line, "Take all you want, but eat what you take." There was a Master-at-Arms at the tray return line inspecting your empty tray. One does not waste food. The mess serving line and clean-up line was handled by German POW's

I would go into San Francisco, enjoy an excellent meal, take in the USO and maybe a play. I saw two very good ones, "The Corn is Green" with Ethel Barrymore, and "Harvey" with Joe E. Brown. On October 5, I reported to the Personnel Separation Center, Shoemaker, California, a base near Walnut Creek, just northeast of Oakland, where I was assigned to head the mailroom.

There were two units doing the separation process, about two hundred men each per day. The mailroom was the last stop of the process. All the paper work, medical history, pay records and Service Record Jackets had to be packaged for shipment to the Bureau of Personnel. We were not part of the process where the men being separated would report, unless there was something wrong with his discharge papers.

We had sufficient manpower, so I organized our group into watches, "ala my New Orleans' days. Our work area was a room about 8ft. x 12ft., with a table and mail boxes, just enough for the five men assigned.

The men being separated were organized into Companies, and the paperwork and Service Jackets would start to arrive about one hour after the separation process had started. They came in batches, and had to be boxed according to Company, labels applied and separate shippers prepared. This work for the proceeding day's separation materials could be completed by 10:00 am, then we would start on the work for the next day. At 2:00 pm I would release the man scheduled for the next day's liberty, and those remaining would continue with the next day's work. Hours of liberty were the carrot without the stick. For the married men, this routine meant close to 40 hours with no duty. What a carrot. I too, took advantage, since I could depend on the Chief Yeoman of the Record Section to be my backup.

One of the first days in the mailroom, I spotted a letter, with a LaPorte postmark, addressed to a John Parker. I had gone to high school with an Earl Parker, so I held the letter aside to see who would come to the window requesting any mail. I recognized a man whom I suspected was John and I asked some obnoxious question, like "Where's LaPorte, etc." I then gave him his mail and we continued to become further acquainted. John was married and had been in the Service for only a short time.

One of many decisions we had to make after discharge from the Service was, "Can I take advantage of the G.I. Bill?" I had taken all the Industrial Art classes, Drafting, Printing, Machine Shop and Woodworking, as well as all the College Preparation courses in high school and graduated in 1940. I decided it would be college, so in November 1945, I wrote to Purdue University for admission papers, completed and returned them with the hope to start in Summer of 1946. Sometime in early part of Spring, I was notified of being accepted for enrollment.

I was finally granted a 30-day Rehabilitation leave and a 6-day travel time on November 10, expiring on December 16. Another Yeoman and I had arranged to assist his brother in driving his brother's car to Miles City, Montana. Since the Northern Pacific Railroad went through Miles City, and being able to make reservations to Chicago, I had agreed to another experience. We left Shoemaker, drove to Sacramento, to Reno, Nevada. After leaving Sacramento we encountered snowy weather just before the Doner Pass and discovered a 10ft sign with a posting "Chains required." We had a choice of turning back to buy chains, with money we could not afford, or continue, taking a chance that we could outrun the snow storm. We took a chance, and trouble befell us. The road became so slippery that two of us would have to get out of the car and push just to keep moving. Finally we reached the peak and going down was a breather. We arrived at Reno, had an evening meal; then continued to drive. We made sure that our gasoline tank was full before leaving.

We drove all night, taking turns at the wheel. At daylight, we were in Idaho, sun was bright, and suddenly another problem. I was riding in the front passenger side, taking a couple of winks, when the car started to slip and slide. The driver had lost control on the black ice and we hit the ditch, rolled the car over and stopped just before a drop-off. We scrambled out of the car, unhurt, but now what? We were very fortunate. We could hear a car coming from miles away and waited. Luck would have it. Two men from some construction crew stopped and assisted us in turning the car upright. We hadn't done any damage, except one wheel didn't look right. They told us of a garage about 3 miles away, someone there could look at the car. Fortunately any damage located didn't prevent us from continuing our trip. We drove to Miles City, on the eastern of Montana. Upon arrival we discovered their folks had already heard, on the radio, about the accident, bad news travels fast. I spent that evening with several of his friends and sister went to a road house for entertainment and then stayed at their house. The next morning I boarded the train for Chicago. I had arranged for a Pullman car and was surprised that one was available. We passed through South Dakota and at one stop, the local ladies served pheasant meat sandwiches to the Servicemen.

It was nice getting back to LaPorte after 28 months, to see the folks. Many of the Servicemen had already received their discharge and we had lots of fun telling our sea stories, and let's not forget the stories from our Army and Marine buddies. I was anxious to visit with relatives, especially those who had been in the

Service. I stopped down to my Uncle Mike's dry cleaning business and the clerk, who I did not know, called me Quentin, my cousin's name. He had been in the Navy, was discharged and Lois, his sister-in-law, which I found later, thought I was Quentin. We were of the same build, height, etc. In fact, he suggested I borrow his tailor made uniform for the few more months that I would still be in the Service. The only change was removing his rating badge and replacing with mine. He was an old salt, having been in since March 11, 1941.

In February, John Parker got talking about sight seeing while we were still in California. The subject of Yosemite Park came up and I said let's go. John said it's further than we could go on a single day liberty and exceeded the distance allowed. I told him I would take care of that. I made an appointment to with the Commander and requested sufficient liberty and travel distance. I explained why and he said since I had the nerve to make such a request, "Request granted, but don't spread the word." On March 1, we hitchhiked to Merced, stayed over-night and continued in the morning. There wasn't much traffic, rides were short, but we arrived early afternoon. We rented a cabin and bicycles and toured the Valley. We found the food area, and by that time we decided we'd had enough for the day. Our cabin was a wooden frame building, with a wood burning stove for heat. As soon as the Sun went down, the Valley turned ice cold. We did manage to get the small room heated and retired for the evening. The morning was also like ice until the Sun rose. We continued our touring and returned the next day. Traffic was even less going back toward Merced, but we made it all the way to Shoemaker that day.

Points for discharge were adding up, so in anticipation of leaving the Service, I tried to plan ahead. One plan consisted of sending home items that could be used in civilian life. I purchased quantities of underwear, tee shirts, dungarees, towel, blue serge dress shirt, wool sweater, etc. I even bought a pair of oxfords for myself. I still have the shoes, wore them with my tux, so they don't have much mileage. The quality was the best and the price was right.

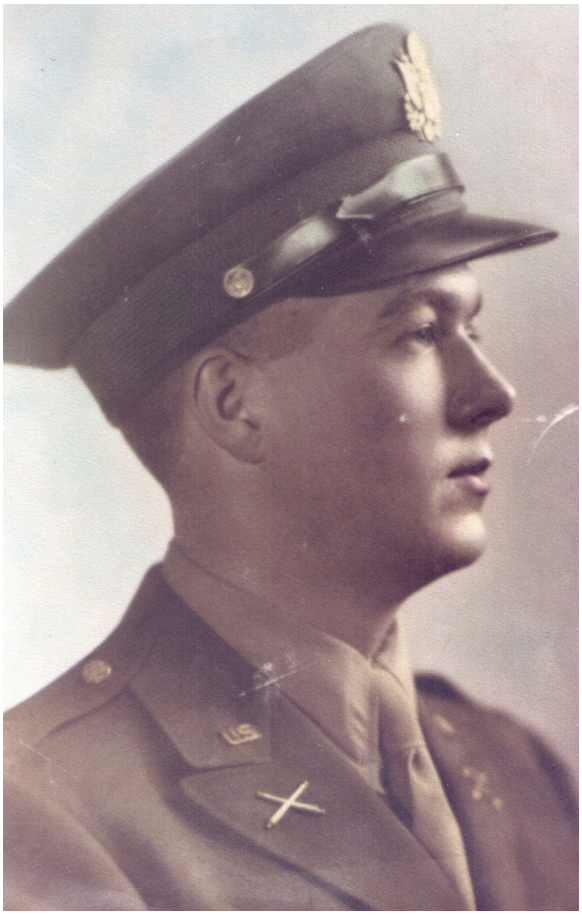
On March 7, 1946, the good duty came to a halt. I was transferred to another unit on the base. The unit was the Disciplinary Barracks, Shoemaker, California. No, I wasn't transferred for confinement, but for duty. I reported to Howard K. Brandel, First Lt. USMCR. Our office was in a building outside the barracks. The housing, chow, and other facilities were inside of a fenced area, entered through a two gates system manned by Marines with side arms. We needed special badges to enter.

Now, why would one want to enter. My quarters were in the typical barrack building. However, since I had a First Class rating, I ranked with the Marine noncommissioned officers, and was assigned to a private room. I guess the Marines didn't want to associate with the Navy. Not only that, for chow, the non-corns ate in a separate room, porcelain dishes, napkins, etc. to which I was included. We could order almost anything we wished, steak-n-eggs for breakfast, etc. There were waiters for serving, first class, and I thought I had good duty previously.

This duty lasted until March 30, when I asked to be to be transferred, since I would have enough points for discharge. The Personnel Officer, another Marine, asked, "Where," and I said, "just down the road." He wanted to know why I didn't want to be transferred to Great Lakes, and I explained that I was going to get a job in California. Another fellow and I had already agreed to hitch hike back to Indiana, but who's to know. We wanted the travel money allotment. He signed the release papers and we were on our way to the Separation Center.

The only thing I remember about the Separation was the medical exam. A beginning corpsman tried to take a blood sample; from veins that standout just by squeezing a fist. He kept driving the needle through the vein, no blood. Finally, after 4 or 5 attempts, I held his hand and directed it to stop, alas, a good sample. I weighed the same as when I went into the Service.

I received an Honorable Discharge on April 1, 1946, after 42 months in Service, still possessing my VA Insurance and rights to the GI Bill. I converted the insurance to a permanent policy and completed college under the GI Bill. I feel grateful for the military experience and thank God for being able to complete my duty.



W. GALE CUTLER

WORLD WAR II EXPERIENCES

I graduated from high school in Avon, Illinois in May, 1939. Throughout my senior year my history teacher (one of the best teachers I ever had – I was delighted to see him again at my 50th high school class reunion) predicted that war was coming in Europe and that the U.S. would eventually be involved. He also predicted that all the boys in the history class would see military duty. It sounded like a great adventure to look forward to--and in some way it turned out to be!

I began attending Monmouth College (Monmouth, Illinois) in September, 1939. Although Germany had attacked Poland, this and subsequent events in Europe were pushed into the background by the activities and challenges of my first year in college. Personal involvement in the war was only a distant thought. As my sophomore year began in September, 1940 the Battle of Britain was underway but still the thoughts of U.S. involvement in direct military action seemed far off. During my sophomore year I realized my funds for college were running low and as I had a sister who would start college in the coming fall, I decided to stay on for the summer term, take practice teaching, and get certified as an elementary school teacher. At this time you could get an elementary teaching certificate in Illinois with 2 years of college and a term of practice teaching.

My term of practice teaching was in the Monmouth, Illinois public schools with students who were in summer school because of failing grades, disciplinary problems, etc… In September, 1941 I began teaching the South Grove Elementary Rural School near London Mills, Illinois -- a one-room elementary school with 22 students ranging in age from 5 to 17. I was only 19 years old. Illinois rural schools had an 8-month year; older boys were needed on the farm in the spring as the war had already brought on a shortage of farm labor. My salary for the 8-month year was $640. At some time in this period – I don't remember exactly when – I was required to register for the military draft.

On Sunday December 7, 1941 I had gone hunting with a friend home from college – when we returned to my home, one look at my Mother's face told me something dreadful had happened. The radio was giving the details of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. I knew immediately we were in the war and that military service for me was absolutely certain. I completed the year at South Grove and the school board was reluctant to give me a contract for the next year as I was now classified 1-A in the military draft. The school board conferred with the draft board and the draft board suggested they re-hire me as I would probably not be drafted until the middle of the next school year and they would have time to look for a replacement teacher. The school board re-hired me based on this recommendation.

I returned to Monmouth College for a summer term to continue working toward my college degree. The 1942 school year began on or about the first of September, 1942. About the middle of September (despite the draft's board earlier prediction) I got a notice to report for my Army induction physical. I passed this and was inducted into the U.S. Army on October 3, 1942. Inductees were given a two-week leave to settle affairs, if

needed. I spent most of this time teaching until the school board at South Grove persuaded an elderly woman to come out of retirement and replace me. Initially, I was a little bitter because I observed some of my former high school classmates –who had not gone to college but stayed home to work on the farm – being deferred from military service as essential agricultural workers.

As I look back now, I am happy I saw military service as it completely changed my life. I reported to Scott Field in Illinois on October 17, 1942 for testing and assignment to some branch of the military – draftees got no choice as to what part of the Army they were assigned. I did extremely well on the AGCT (Army General Classification Test) – thanks to the past summer back in college. I also passed the Army's typing test. When I saw an interviewer for assignment he immediately asked if I knew shorthand. It seems the Scott Field Base Commander was looking for a secretary – if I had known shorthand I would probably have spent World War II behind a desk at Scott Field.

Again, as I look back, fate smiled on me. My assignment was to the Field Artillery Branch of the U.S. Army and I was sent to Ft. Sill, Oklahoma for basic training in Field Artillery. I was assigned to a training unit of medium howitzers (155 mm.). The 155 mm. howitzer was a towed weapon – towed by either a truck or tractor. It fired a 95 pound high explosive shell with a maximum range of about 10 miles. The effect of an exploding 155 mm. projectile is highly destructive to personnel and equipment in the vicinity where the projectile explodes. My high scores on the AGCT qualified me for Officer Candidate School (OCS) at Ft. Sill. After a minimum amount of basic training I was sent to a special 4-week course (called "Prep School") to get ready for OCS. Prep School introduced us to military tactics, officer's duties and responsibilities, etc. and had a heavy concentration in mathematics (field artillery fire direction and control is heavily dependent on mathematics – particularly trigonometry and logarithms (remember this was before computers!). The review of math was very rapid -- one jokester in the class said he dropped a pencil one day and while he was picking it up the instructor covered advanced algebra.

Prep school discipline was more severe than we had encountered in basic training. I entered Officer Candidate School at Ft. Sill in February, 1943 with 400 students in this class. Students were subject to elimination at any time if they failed to keep up with the class – mentally or physically. Elimination meant you were on the way to an overseas depot to be sent to a combat outfit already overseas, it was a real incentive to do well. Up until 1943 the Army had issued commissions as 2nd lieutenants to ROTC graduates from college. Many of these ROTC graduates failed to perform adequately and the Army decided ROTC graduates had to go through OCS before commissioning. Of the 400 students in my OCS class, 250 were new graduates of a 4-year ROTC program at Texas A&M! They were angry at having to attend OCS and to show this they did their best to excel in all aspects of OCS. Talk about tough competition. However, the Aggies were a great bunch of fellows and I formed several friendships that lasted long after World War II was over. I graduated from OCS on May 6, 1943 and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Army. I had excelled in the more mathematical aspects of OCS, My college major was math. I was selected to go to a 4-week Artillery Surveying School.

Artillery does not see its target and firing data is calculated from knowing the position of the howitzer and the target on the map. That's where the surveying comes in – the survey crew of an artillery battalion must locate howitzer positions and targets accurately on a map so that firing data can be calculated. The final exam at Survey School was interesting and challenging. You are the survey officer for an artillery battalion and you are given a survey crew of "school troops" (regular soldiers from Ft. Sill who are not trained in surveying). You direct them in a survey operation to locate a howitzer and target on the map. The howitzer then fires one round using the data calculated from your survey. The grade is "Pass" or "Fail" depending if you come within the necessary distance of the target. Toughest exam I have ever had but I passed.

I spent a couple of months monitoring training of new recruits at Ft. Sill while awaiting an assignment to an Army Division. In August of 1943 I was assigned to the 76th Infantry Division, in training at AP Hill

Military Reservation in Virginia. I became the Reconnaissance and Survey Officer of Battery B of the 364th Field Artillery Battalion. I thought – as did everyone in the division – that we would move from AP Hill to a combat theater of operations, either in Europe or the Pacific. However, a number of our trained troops were sent to combat divisions overseas as replacement for casualties and we got newly inducted draftees to replace them. We were then moved to Camp McCoy, Wisconsin to continue training. In the winter of 1943-1944 we were sent to Upper Michigan (near Watersmeet) for special winter training. We learned how to fight in cold weather. We were sure at this point we would not end up in the Pacific! We tested winter clothing, winter sleeping bags, a special tracked-vehicle the size of a Jeep (called a Weasel), winter food and in general how to survive in severely cold climate. We returned to Camp McCoy in the spring and again gave up many of our trained personnel as overseas replacements and got new draftees.

I was promoted to 1st Lieutenant in February, 1944 and shortly after became the Battalion Survey Officer for the 364th Field Artillery Battalion (a job I kept through the rest of the War). In the early fall we were told we were going to be shipped to England and the completion of training of our newest division members would occur in England and France before we were sent into combat somewhere in Europe. Then came an assignment; and I will never figure out why I was selected. I got an order one day in October, 1944 to report to the G-4 (Service and Supply) at Division Headquarters. I was temporarily relieved of my regular duties and placed in charge of packing all of the division's overseas equipment. Men carried their personal clothing and weapons. Trucks, tanks, artillery weapons were not packed. Everything else – mortars, machine guns, survey equipment, radios, telephones, office equipment, etc.-- had to be packed to withstand rough handling and ocean transportation. I was given a young infantry lieutenant (Lt. Butler – we joked about the Cutler-Butler combination) to assist me and we were told to work 12 hour shifts around the clock until everything was packed.

I have no idea how I was selected for this assignment. However, I got the Army Commendation medal from General Schmidt (76th Division Commanding General) for the job I did. Full time pre-combat training terminated at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin in November, 1944. The 76th Division began moving from Camp McCoy on November 11, 1944. While we were crossing the Atlantic the Germans struck Allied forces in the Ardennes area in what came to be known as "The Battle of the Bulge." We arrived in Normandy, France on January 14, 1945 after a stop of a few days was made in Bournemouth, England to re-equip the Division as the Division's own equipment was still enroute by freighters. The additional training we were to have received in England was forgotten as additional manpower was seriously needed in the Ardennes.

The 76th Division was committed to action when it was moved to a position in reserve near Champlon, Belgium to back up General Patton's Third Army then in the process of reducing the Ardennes "Bulge", created as a last desperate stroke of the Wehrmacht. I was responsible for reconnoitering a route and leading our battalion in a mad dash across France to get to the Bastogne area. The weather was awful – cold, snow and the roads were icy. We drove around the clock, stopping only for meals and bathroom breaks.

One incident I remember in particular, We reached the large city of Rheims, France about 4 am. The streets were very broad but so ice-covered that our vehicles (particularly the tractors pulling the howitzers) were sliding all over the street and little progress was made. I noted that the sidewalks – which were wide enough for vehicular traffic – had been cleared. I immediately gave the signal for the convoy to move to the sidewalks and progress through Rheims on the sidewalks. Within an instant (and I don't know where he came from) I had a French policeman (gendarme) screaming at me in French and waving his arms for us to stop. He couldn't (or wouldn't) understand my English so I drew my pistol (not loaded), pointed it at him and told him in English (which he seemed to understand) to get the H**l out of the way. We proceeded through Rheims without further incident – except for a few damaged park benches and an occasionally wounded tree.

After a brief stay in Belgium, the Division moved to Luxemburg in bitterly cold weather to relieve

the 87th Division and occupy a defensive sector along the Sauer River near Echternach. The weather was a severe detriment and we not anywhere as well-equipped as we had been in Upper Michigan. We did not have heavy winter coats or proper shoes--just combat boots with cloth overshoes ("scrounged" from used equipment in England. No down-filled sleeping bags – just heavy gray wool British blankets. None of our vehicles had been properly winterized for the severe Belgium winter. It was apparent that the Army had concluded the war would be over before winter set in, and the Germans had upset the plan. Frozen and frost-bitten feet were major problems for all troops in the area.

I was approached one day by a member of my Survey crew with a special request. PFC Morgenstern was Jewish and a draftee from Brooklyn – he had been a tailor in civilian life. He asked me if I could get him some additional British blankets -- my initial reaction was that he was being terribly selfish wanting extra blankets. He hurried to explain that he would stay up nights, cut up the blankets and make boot sox for all of our survey crew. The boot sox inside the overshoes were a much better solution to foot protection and we put our combat boots away for use when the weather warmed. We were all indebted to Morgenstern.

In late January, we attacked one of the most formidable sectors of the Siegfried Line. In this assault the 76th Division was one of three divisions participating and was the first division to reach its objective. Patton's Chief of Staff has been quoted: "The 76th was so 'green' that they didn't realize their objective was considered 'untakeable.'"

The bridgehead across the Sauer River (which was at flood stage) was secured when our troops shattered all the counterattacks of which the enemy was capable. For 36 hours, while Engineers were bridging the swollen river and the isolated elements across the river were under fire from hostile weapons of every type, artillery liaison planes were used to drop them food and supplies. The first bridge – a footbridge – across the Sauer River was built under continual enemy artillery fire by men of the 301st Engineering Battalion who were finally called to produce when other Engineering organizations had failed. For the sake of comparison, it is worth noting that at the airfield on Iwo Jima there was one pillbox every 35 yards and that on the far bank of the Sauer River on our crossing front there was one pillbox every 40 yards.

Nevertheless, in spite of all the advantages of this strongly organized defensive position, the enemy's casualties more than doubled our own – and what was more important – we held that bank of the Sauer River. In subsequent operations, the 76th Division continued the attack to batter the vaunted Westwall in the area north of the Sauer River and west of the Prum River.

In this second phase of the Sauer River crossing, the 385th Infantry outflanked and captured from the rear a huge pillbox that overlooked the town of Irrel and extended to a depth of three stories underground. This subterranean pillbox was called the "Katzen Kopf" [Cat's Head], had room for nearly 1000 men, showers, repair shops, and in fact was a "home away from home." It boasted an automatic mortar which could fire 18 shells into the air at one time. To take this pillbox, the 385th found that hand grenades dropped down the embrasure were effective "convincers." ["Katzen Kopf" has been preserved as a World War II memorial and we visited it on a 76th Division reunion tour of Europe.] As the Germans retreated they left behind stores of supplies.

Some of these captured stores were of aid to increase our supplies – some were not. Captured food supplies were carefully inspected and used to supplement our rations. A much worse experience occurred with some captured German soap for washing mess kits. The Army system for washing mess kits was two trash cans filled with hot water – one soapy water and one clean. What we didn't understand was that the German soap dissolved at a much higher temperature than American soaps. All we did was coat our mess kits with soap – and soap is a very good laxative!! Until we found out what the problem was we were busy with other activities than combating Germans.

After securing the bridgehead over the Sauer River and going through the Siegfried Line, the 76th pivoted 90 degrees to the east, assaulted and crossed the Prum and Nims Rivers and then wheeled to the southeast, attacked the Siegfried Line from the rear and ripped it apart all the way to the north bank of the Moselle River at Trier. This action terminated in junction with the 10th Armored Division at Trier. Shortly after Trier fell, the 76th regrouped, defended along the Kyll River and prepared to assault the Kyll. The 304th Infantry drew the assignment this time and following a period of well concealed preparations, the 304th Infantry climbed bluffs which the enemy had believed impassable and captured some of "Adolph's finest" in their bed sacks. The remainder of the division later crossed the Kyll through the 304th's bridgehead and continued to advance across several intermediary rivers to the west bank of the Moselle River at Wittlich. Before leaving Wittlich the 304th Infantry crossed the Moselle at two places in order to protect bridging operations undertaken at Mulheim by Corps Engineers. After a brief pause (time to wash "our socks") the 76th Division was shuttled 70 miles to St. Goar on the Rhine River.

We defended along the Rhine while preparations were being made for crossing the Rhine. Assaulting divisions passed through the 76th and met little resistance. The 76th, following through, assumed the offensive once again, attacking almost directly east from St. Goar. The 76th had advanced several miles beyond Usingen and had taken all assigned objectives when it was halted and directed to move by shuttling to an area in the vicinity of Homberg. The Division had barely reached Homberg when it was again committed to the offensive. This offensive, when combined with that of the 6th Armored Division, formed the spearhead of the 3d Army drive which plunged across Germany to within "spitting" distance of the Czechoslovakian border.
During this drive, the Division advanced so rapidly that in one day 35 miles was covered. The rapid advance was a challenge to my survey team as we had to move just behind the Infantry to survey new locations for our artillery as they moved up. I had an interesting experience during one of these rapid moves – I had checked with an Infantry commander was they moved on from the outskirts of a small town and he assured me the town was clear of enemy troops.

My survey crew was busily doing their work as we surveyed through the streets of the town when one of my crew members yelled, "Look out!"
Out of a nearby house came a German senior officer in full dress uniform and my crew dropped their instruments and went scrambling for their carbines. However, the officer approached me, saluted me ("American style – not 'Heil Hitler'), reached his ornamental dress knife and extended it to me as a token of surrender. We sent the officer back to our headquarters for transfer to a prison compound.

That ornamental knife is my most valued souvenir of World War II. In our progress across Germany we also captured a German flag warehouse . I was able to bring home a battleship-sized Nazi Flag which I have enjoyed exhibiting from time to time. The 76th Division would probably have reached the Elbe River in a few days, but it was stopped by an order to seize and hold a bridgehead over the Mulde River and wait there for a junction with the Russian Armies. When halted, the 76th Division had made the deepest penetration into Germany of any Allied troops .

From Echternach, Luxemburg to the end of the European War, the 76th Division advanced 400 miles

in a little over two months. The Division captured over 25,000 prisoners-of-war, ranging from Major Generals to Nazi upstarts of the Hitler Jugend. Over 5000 American, British, French, Polish ad Serbian soldiers were freed from German captivity. Hundreds of members of the 76th Division who went to combat in Europe never returned. Their deeds were an inspiration to us all; their memory will keep alive our faith that somehow, some day the world will know peace again.

When hostilities ceased in Germany with the surrender of the German Army, the 76th Division was assigned to occupation duties (functioning initially in lieu of a non-existent German government). The 364th Field Artillery Battalion occupied the city of Gera/ Our commanding officer was considered the Chief of Police of Gera. There were few problems. The Germans were sick of war. Gera had been heavily damaged, mostly by Allied bombing. during World War II. As occupation troops we were responsible to start the cleanup of the city, using German prisoners of war as our labor source. Labor crews were organized from the POWs and guarded by our Division troops to see that they worked and didn't try to escape.

PFC Morgenstern (whom you met earlier) was eager to volunteer as a guard for these work details. I was curious at first but eventually found out why. Morgenstern was Jewish and easily recognizable as such. He also spoke fluent German. When he picked up a work detail, he spoke only English to them initially. Riding in the truck with them to the place of work, he listened carefully to their conversation. Many of the German POWs were unkind as referred to him as "a fat Jew." When the group arrived at the place of work, Morgenstern issued the orders for the work to be done in fluent German. The offending POW's then realized they were in for a very tough day of work.

Through agreements reached with the Russians at Yalta, we were subsequently moved further west to Hof, Bavaria. At that point, those of us who had insufficient service to be eligible for discharge were transferred to the 30th Infantry Division to prepare to move to the Pacific Theater of Operations. We moved to Camp Lucky Strike in France and then to Tidworth Barracks in England. We were told that we would be shipped to Fort Jackson, South Carolina where they were building a replica of a beach on the Japanese home island of Honshu to be used as practice for an eventual landing on Honshu. We were scheduled to attack this beach in November of 1945 as a part of an initial attack on the Japanese homeland.

Dropping two atom bombs changed all this. We did move to Ft. Jackson, SC but it was to deactivate the 30th Division. I then spent some time at Camp Butner with the 4th Infantry Division before becoming eligible for separation from the service. I was separated from active service on April 21, 1946 at Camp Grant, Illinois. I was commissioned as Captain, Field Artillery in the Officers' Reserve Corps and served in the active reserve until 1957. For my military service I have the following decorations: Bronze Star medal for heroic action in Luxemburg and Germany, Army Commendation Medal, European Theater Medal (with battle stars for Ardennes, Rhineland and Central Europe), World War II Victory Medal. My military service changed my life – for the better! I learned to get along with all kinds of people, the Army taught me management skills, and I saw some of the world. The GI Bill enabled me to finish my college education and continue on to get a Ph.D. in Physics and Mathematics. My career after World War II was a success because of the foundation the military had given me.

FINAL BONUS – my officer roommate at Camp McCoy was a young lieutenant from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He became like the brother I never had. His wife came to live near Camp McCoy and I also met her. He was injured (not wounded) in Germany and sent home. After I returned home from service, I got in contact with him and went to visit him and his wife in Pittsburgh. In the course of the visit, I met his sister-in-law and we have now been happily married for almost 58 years.

The War Years
1938—1945
by

Marshall Ralph Doak
Chief Pharmacist's Mate
United States Navy

Printed Version
As Told to Jeffrey Wallace, October 2006

1938-1941

Before the Navy

This was the beginning of quite a period. I graduated from Buchanan High School in 1938, having played all four sports, and being raised on the wrong side of the tracks. The depression was in full bloom. The C.C.C. (Civilian Conservation Corps) camps were in operation for the young. WPA was starting for older workers. We rented our home for $15 a month. There was no telephone or refrigerator and no central heat, our cooking stove was a wood burner. The meat we ate was rabbit, squirrel and pheasant that I hunted during the fall and winter school year going to and from school with my shot gun that I stored in my school locker during school hours. This was permitted. Without a telephone we had to walk to talk. How times have changed.

I did not have much to look forward to as far as college or work, but I did have a scholarship to Rutgers University of all places. I never knew who recommended me. One day I decided to go. They said they would give me a scholarship and work to do, so I packed a little plastic bag and started hitch-hiking. I hiked into Canada and got to New Jersey. US Customs wouldn't let me into the United States. So I was sent back to Windsor and my folks had to come and pick me up. They drove an old 1932 Ford and it was quite a trip. It was the only way I could leave Canada, and my folks had to pick me up and bring me home. So that was my endeavor of trying to go to Rutgers.

Enlisting

Probably two or three weeks later, someone told me there was a possibility of going into the Naval Academy Prep School through the regular Navy. I went to St. Joe and applied there with the enlistment officer. I passed the exam, which was very limited. This was the depression period and it was very difficult to get in the Navy, even for that $21 per month. He said, "You're only 17, but with your scholastic and athletic backgrounds there is a good possibility that you'd go in as a Naval Academy candidate." This meant that once I was in the Navy they would give me tutors and eventually I would take the exam for the prep school at Norfolk. About 100 men from the fleet would go to the prep school every year, and this was basically where they got all their athletes. At that time the Navy was more athletically inclined. They had baseball and football teams, whale boat crews, boxing and wrestling. It was quite an athletic endeavor all the way through the fleet. So I agreed to this and it wasn't until November that I was called up. On November 9~ I raised my right hand and I joined

the Navy in Detroit, MI. I was taken to Newport, RI, and I went through my four months of basic training. I got my 10 days leave which meant riding the bus all the way back to Michigan which was quite a long haul on a bus. I spent time at home and returned to Rhode Island, where I was assigned to the USS Cimmaron, a fleet tanker. They then changed this because at that time they had the New York World's Fair and they were looking for someone around six feet tall to do the marching. I was then assigned to the world's fair. That was also changed, and eventually I was sent to the USS Houston. At the end of four months of service I was promoted (automatically) to Seaman 2~' Class, marking a $36 per month pay. I immediately made out an allotment of $25 per month to my parents to help them at home, and I lived on $10 a month.

The USS Houston

I took a trip to Charleston, SC, and I picked it up there. From Charleston we went to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The Houston, by the way, was President Roosevelt's private Navy ship. He had his own elevator on board where he could take his wheelchair and go from the ward room up to the bridge, and to his quarters and so forth. I never saw him on board the ship, but after being on board the Houston for about a month, I was transferred to the USS Salt Lake City, another Heavy Cruiser, at Gitmo.

The USS Houston

The USS Salt Lake City

This was quite an experience. I packed my hammock and sea bag and reported on board the First Division, which is a forward division on board the heavy cruiser Salt Lake City. I checked in with the Boatswain's Mate. He was a pot-bellied individual, and I'll never forget his name. It was Jamison. He was a 2nd Class Boatswain's Mate and I said "Sir, what do you want me to do?" He said, "Store your gear down below and come back and report to me." This I did, and when I got up on top side I saw three or four fellas workin' the starboard side of the ship. I don't know what they were doin', but I think they were shining the bright work while lying on their sides. He said, "Take this can of bright work polish and shine the bright work on the port side." So I whistled right through it man, I worked my fool butt off I shined all that bright work and I came back and said, "Sir, I've done it. Now what do you want me to do?" He looked at me like I was an idiot. He said "I'll tell ya' what you do. You go back and do it all over again." Now, that was my indoctrination into the real Navy. I thought at that point that I'd made a big mistake. He knew that I'd come on board as an athlete and he didn't like athletes. An athlete had their own special mess. He did everything possible to keep me from playing baseball or doing any sports. At times when we were underway, he'd give me a bucket of paint and send me up. He'd tell me to hang on with one hand and paint with the other. He made it really tough on me. He fought me tooth and nail. Finally I got to the point where I went to the Athletic Officer, who also happened to be the Dental Officer. I told him that I had problems and that the Boatswain's Mate threw every objection possible in my way. It was very, very difficult for me. He said, "Let me take care of this." He had me transferred to the medical department and said, "Now, this'll take care of this. You'll have no duties here, but you'll be berthed here. You can play all the sports or whatever. You shouldn't have any problems."
USS Salt Lake City and the Medical Department

In the process of being in the medical department, it became very interesting. I started to work with microscopes, and eventually I was doing duties and duty watches. We eventually reached the West Coast.

We went to Bremerton, Washington where the Marines had a big gunnery range and they sent me over as the medic. That was very interesting. It got to the point where I didn't know what to do. I enjoyed the medical department. I enjoyed the duties and I enjoyed athletics. But I'd hurt my arm and shoulder at one point while catching on the baseball team and I couldn't throw the ball. I had to try to decide what I was going to do. At this time I had three ensigns who were tutoring me for the Navy prep school. Two of them told me they'd never do it if they had to do it over again. So, we were in San Diego when I was called before the Captain. I was greeted with pleasantries and he said, "You've passed the exam and we're gonna send you to the prep school at Norfolk." I hadn't quite made up my mind if that's what I wanted to do and I told him that I wasn't sure. I only had about a year to go on enlistment and I thought maybe medicine was what I wanted to do. He was very upset and within that day he had me off the ship and sent me to San Diego to the Hospital Corps School. He was very displeased to think that someone would turn down the prep school and naval academy. I was influenced by the ensign tutors that I had, and also my desire to go into medicine.

San Diego and the Hospital Corps School

Coming from the fleet to the Hospital Corps School was a problem because there were also recruits coming direct from boot camp. Whenever anything happened in the area that was a disturbance or a problem, why they would come to me because I was from the fleet, I was the one they all looked up to and I would be to blame. For the 16 weeks that I was there I never got off the base. I always had chairs to sandpaper as punishment. The blame was never put in the right spot. They always came to the Senior member and I was it. The good thing was that it made me study and I graduated near the top of the class. I had my choice of duty and I said the Great Lakes.

A Quick Stop at the Great Lakes Naval Hospital and On to Norfolk Navy Hospjtal

This is where I was sent as a hospital corpsman as a HA2. I was there probably three or four months, and I was transferred to Norfolk Naval Hospital at Portsmouth, Virginia where I stayed for probably seven or eight months. I was working in the pharmacy filling prescriptions, and I was working in the genital urinary ward. This was before penicillin and sulfa drugs, and the treatment for gonorrhea and syphilis was very crude. We were actually causing more difficulties. We had valentine irrigators where we were flushing the infection back into the prostate and the bladder. This was the treatment at that time. We also had a lot of gonorrhea of the eyes and arthritis. We used to take milk and sterilize it and give them milk shots which induced milk fever. This would give them a fever of 103, 104, or 105 degrees, and it seemingly helped considerably with gonorrhea arthritis. The treatment for syphilis at that time was IV arsenicals, and it was usually a three to four year treatment also using a heavy metal like bismuth. In those days it was unreal how poor the treatment was. The complications were severe. Now days, they give them a shot of penicillin and it cures it all with no problems. The rest of the period at Norfolk was uneventful.

Back to the Great Lakes

I received my order to go back to the Great Lakes again, to the dispensary and Building 109. I got to meet one of the strongest politicians in the Navy and his name was John A. McCormick. He was a Chief Pharmacist, a Chief Warrant Officer who was in charge of Building 109. All the officers feared him whether they were commanders, captains or admirals. He was a democratic force. When Roosevelt received his nomination for the third term in Chicago, on the front page in the Chicago Tribune there was Johnny McCormick sitting about two seats from FDR at the main speaker's table. There were times I was his private secretary and I would place calls to the White House or the Bureau of Medicine for him. He could have any

officer transferred or orders changed at his desire, and I'm sure there were political obligations involved.

THE USS WAKEFIELD

Commissioning the Wakefield

The USS Wakefield

In the spring of 1941 I was transferred to the USS Wakefield AP 21. It was a troop transport ship which was being commissioned in Brooklyn Navy Yard. There was a period of time of about two months at the yard before we were finally commissioned in June, 1941. Then we did practice landings in the Atlantic with Marines and Army and landing craft. Our ship's compliment was all Coast Guard and we were the only Navy. The Navy was the medical department. The Commanding Officer on the Wakefield was Coast Guard and all the crew was Coast Guard. We had a lot of surf men that manned landing craft. It was a little complicated because the Coast Guard utilized public health hospitals and they couldn't use the Naval Hospitals. That made it complicated, but it worked out.

Departing under Complete Censorship — Task Force 14

Later on in October we were ordered to depart and complete censorship was invoked. We knew not what was happening. At that time there were a lot of things going on in Europe. The British had experienced Dunkirk and the Bismark. The French had surrendered under Petain, and were now controlled by the VC French and Germans. The British were losing in North Africa. They couldn't run ships through the Mediterranean Sea because of German air power. About three days after leaving the East coast we ended up in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Under cover of darkness, the British troop ships came in and they started to come aboard our ships. We were all a little bewildered and wondered what the heck was going on. It seemed we were no longer neutral if we were going to be handling English troops. At this point politically in the United States there were isolationists, chief among them Senator Wheeler and Charles Lindbergh. They wanted the US to remain neutral. But when we saw the British troops come on board, the 18th Division, we knew that whatever we were involved in, we would never be back to the states until we were at war. When the war was over, they had a difficult time finding anything or anyone in the Pentagon that knew anything about Task Force 14. The Chicago Tribune announced it on March 15, 1953 in the headlines. We put to sea with these 20,000 troops and 18 ships. We had the Ranger, two heavy cruisers the Vincennes and the Quincy, eight destroyers, five to six troops ships, the Wakefield, our sister ship the Mt. Vernon, the luxury liner the West Point, the Orizaba, and the Dickinson. We were also issued secret orders to engage the German warships. I have a copy of these orders. These secret orders authorized the U.S. Navy to initiate war with Germany months before Pearl Harbor.

Roosevelt's Private War

We didn't know the code number on the convoy until 1953. It was WS-124 (Later changed to Task Force 14), and it was very secret. Under cover of darkness and complete censorship we left Halifax with this 18 ship entourage. We made submarine contacts all the way and we didn't hesitate to drop depth charges. This was in November of 1941. When we reached the Caribbean Sea, why, the destroyers had to reload on depth charges. A lot of interesting things were happening. We stood to eat on board our ship. We didn't sit down to eat as the

troops and enlisted personnel had to stand to eat. When the British troops came on board they found sugar and butter at the tables. They found that they got fresh fruit at breakfast. These are things they hadn't received in four years and most of these troops were people that had come from Dunkirk. There was quite a mix. There were Cockneys, there were Irish, Scots, and a lot of different dialects. It was very interesting. They couldn't get over the quality of the food they were served, and they'd put the sugar in their pockets. Within two weeks, however, they were bitchin' just like the rest of the American crew. It became normal, it was a typical reaction. I made many friends amongst the British troops. The thing we would see frequently would be a group of Englishmen around one of our southern sailors with a real southern drawl. We had a Pharmacist's Mate by the name of Robert Owen Kincaid, and he was from Mississippi and he spoke with a real slow drawl. The English would be around him just laughing. They weren't making fun of him, they were just enjoying his conversation. They'd never heard anyone speak that slow. Of course there'd be the groups of Americans around the Cockney Englishmen. You could hardly understand him. Everyone got along fine.

Royal Baby's Belly Button

One experience that happened was when we got to the Equator. We had to be initiated. Almost everyone on board was a pollywog, the British too. The initiation was a lot of fun with the exception to the southerners on board our ship. We had a big black ship's cook with a big pot belly and he became the royal baby and everybody had to kiss the royal baby's belly button. The southerners said there was no damn way they were going to do this, to put it politely. They were compelled. Even the captain hadn't gone across the equator, and even he had to kiss the royal baby belly button. All the English troops, and by force all the southern sailors, had to kiss it too. It was a lot of fun. There was a lot of dissension and club-swinging. It was quite a day.

Dr. Donald Callar

I only had a few months to go to be discharged and at that point I was hoping to go to dental school. When the British troops came on board I was a dental technician with Dr. Callar. Callar was from Staunton, VA, and he'd taken his pre-dental at VMI. He and I had become close friends. It was a case of an officer and an enlisted person leaving the ship together which was a little unusual. But we ran around together. He taught me and initiated me into shooting match rifle. I bought a model 52 Winchester target rifle and he bought a Stevens Walnut Hill and we kept the guns in the armory on board the Wakefield. Whenever we got into a port or to a place where we could shoot, we'd take our rifles and either shoot indoors or outdoors. I became a master with large bore and small bore rifles. He also showed me how to load ivory dice with mercury using the dental drill. I learned to never enter a crap game that used ivory dice, only to enter a crap game using see-through clear dice.

Practicing Dentistry

When British troops came aboard at Halifax, they had a Major that was going to come down to our dental office. We had two dental chairs and Dr. Callar told me, "Marshall, I'm not gonna allow the Major to come in. You take the other dental chair. I've taught you. You have all the dexterity and you take the other chair and I'll give you a tech. I'll get someone in here that can help you, but you won't need much help. You can fix your own amalgams, you can do your own mandibular blocks, you can do your own locals, you can do your own extractions, you can do you own fillings. The only thing you don't have is the anatomy and physiology and that's what you'll get at school." This is what we were gonna do, so he gave me a smock and called me Doctor. He said, "You take the British troops. I've got my hands full with our own crew." Lo and behold the first British patient I had was the Senior General. His name was Backaus Smith. He came in and sat down in my dental chair and before we even started he said, "This is great! I never realized I'd have an opportunity to have an American dentist. They are so far superior, over and above, our British dentists." Dr. Callar kind of nudged me in the back

and I went ahead and did whatever I had to do even though I've forgotten now just what I did. When he got out of the chair he was so appreciative and thankful and grateful and he repeated his statement about the top quality of American dentists. He said, "I haven't seen you up in the Ward Room. I wanna buy you a drink and meet you up in the ward room." The British had their own bar. Americans didn't have their own bar, but British were allowed because it was their custom. I said, "Well, I'm so busy with your troops that I don't think I'll have an opportunity. There's about 4,000-5,000 troops I've got to maintain dental care on and I'm gonna have my hands full." He thanked me and said if I did make it up there to please stop in and see him and that he'd appreciate it. So he was on his way and Dr. Callar was punchin' me in the back with his elbow. This is how it went and I had no problems whatsoever. Later on this experience helped me when I was on independent duty out in the Pacific. I always made sure I had Novocain or procaine and various instruments so that in case of emergency I could do dental work.

Toward Cape Town, South Africa and a Burial at Sea

We kept going south and were heading toward Cape Town, South Africa. This was toward the middle of November. An unusual thing happened that was very unfortunate. We had a British soldier die in our sick bay. We did a post-mordem on him and it was tuberculosis. He had tubercies all through his body. So we had a burial at sea and this was the first time I'd ever seen this. They called the sail makers in and there were two of them. They wrapped him in this 10-12 ounce canvas and they weighted the inside of the canvas. It was real tight and they did a wonderful job of sewing. Both of them met at the nose. One came up over the head and one came from down below and they met at the nose. It was the custom for both to go through the nose at the same time with those big needles. The custom being that if one was still alive, why, you would react to the pain of the needles going through the cartilage of the nose. Five of us Pharmacist's Mates were designated as pall bearers and it was very sad. A plank was placed on a railing on board of the ship and our Captain performed the service. There was a bugler and I believe a piper. I know there were two. We had a British flag draped over the body and when the Captain made his closing, "You are hereby given unto the deep," that was our signal to raise the end of the plank. The body slipped off. We held onto the flag. It seemed like it took forever for the splash and the body to hit the ocean. It was very solemn, quiet, and depressing. I'll never forget it.

As we proceeded south there were still submarine contacts and we finally were met by three British ships: the Achilles, the Ajax, and the Dorchester. We found a German sub tender off the southwest coast and the Python and the Dorchester sank it. It wasn't one of our ships that sank it, but there were four subs that were involved and we were having quite a time avoiding them. At one point we had a man fall over board from one of the troop ships and he was never picked up. I mean, we couldn't take a chance. But this was the seriousness of the sub scares. It was a big worry and we knew we weren't getting back to he states before war was declared. I mean, something had to happen.

The Radio Transmissions Leading Up To December 7th

I had a good friend in the radio shack and we talked quite a bit. He was what we call a short-timer like myself. We were proceeding about December 1st or 2nd Every day I'd go up and meet with my friend in the radio shack. It was about the 2nd or ~ of December that he said, "Marshall, let me show you something." The radio messages we were receiving had a lot of information about the South China Sea. We had US spotting subs and they were all over the Pacific Ocean keeping track of the Japanese Imperial Fleet and shipping. On this particular message, the submarines gave the latitude and longitude. Evidently there were three or four subs reporting. There were three big groups of Japanese ships consisting of maybe 80, 90, or 100 ships. These messages had them all listed. They had tankers, troop transports, carriers, destroyers, escort vessels and supply ships of various types, and they gave us the latitude and longitude headings of these three groups. So we took

out a map and checked the coordinates and we found out it looked like one group was going into Malaya. Another group looked to be going into the Dutch Indonesia, and possibly the other group was heading toward the Philippines. This was on December 3, I believe. On December 5th, I went back up and we had new coordinates and maps. We figured they were going to hit the next day on the 6th of December. I went up the next day and my friend was kind of in shock. He said, "Marshall, the radio is absolutely silent. There's not a message coming from the War Department." In those days everything came from the War Department. I said, "Well, they should be hitting today, why wouldn't they be announcing?" He said, "I don't know, but there's not a thing coming through." That night we were called to general quarters and the commanding officer announced over the speakers that the Japanese had just bombed Pearl Harbor. It really wasn't a surprise.

My Conclusions about December 7th

We knew everything that was happening in the South China Sea from the radio messages and transmissions on December 4 and 5. Then to have no radio messages on the 6th from the War Department is frightening. It gives me goose bumps to think about what they did. To be non-neutral starting in October by hauling English troops in Roosevelt's private war through the Task Force 14 secret convoy. Roosevelt's embargo of steel, oil and all natural resources against Japan, and FDR's statement that we needed to let Japan take the initiative in the Pacific led us to believe that this was the day Japan was to be hittin' in the South Pacific. I think I've got a good case that we knew what was gonna happen. There was the USS Ward's sinking of a Japanese submarine at the gates of Pearl Harbor one hour before the planes hit. Later on in the war we found out there were more depth charges dropped on subs one or two days before December 7th. What's disturbing to me is that the commanding officer on the Ward did report to Admiral King and CINCPAC. But CINCPAC had to report to Washington before they could go on alert and it was on a weekend. The only ships left in Pearl Harbor were derelict ships. They were behemoth battleships from WWI. They had cage masts, they couldn't keep up with the task force. Almost every one of these ships had cork installation with their bulk heads plus they had 1 to 11/2 inches of flammable oil based paint everywhere throughout that ship. The only thing of any value was out of Pearl Harbor when Japan hit, in my opinion. The Carriers and new battleships, cruisers, light cruisers and destroyers. There was one or two destroyers in there, yes, probably for repairs. But anything else of value was out of there. The only thing left was Battleship Row and in my opinion they were derelict ships. It was unfortunate we lost 2300 men on this so-called day of infamy. The embargo of Japan, Roosevelt's private war, and Roosevelt's statements give me my own unfortunate conclusions. We lost 2300 precious lives that I don't think ever should have been lost. Radio messages are conclusive.

Rounding the Cape

On December 8th 1941, we were approaching the roaring forties off of Cape Town, South Africa. It's real rough. I think it took us a day and a half to get through. It was so rough in fact, that one of our cruisers lost its spotting plane off the catapult. The safe in the Paymaster's office got loose and it was a huge thing. It was banging back and forth. A couple of fellas got hurt trying to tie that down. We did make it into Cape Town with all the ships in tact. This was a new experience. We were at war. At that point our war ships left. All decisions had been made long before December 7th All our surface vessels left us and we came under British command. We were there re-supplying, getting fuel-oil, water and supplies like fresh vegetables and whatever. I'd say we were there about seven or eight days. Troops had to get off and get some exercise and stretch their legs. I had duty at city hall as a Navy first-aid man. I got to meet the founder of South Africa, Johan Smuts. He was a bearded, distinguished gentleman. I think he led the fight for independence. It was a new experience to work in city hail and have Mr. Smuts walking by every once in a while. He'd say hello and all the police officers saluted, the heels clicked as it was a very military police department. We were losing about a man a night while in Cape Town. The fellas were told where to go and not to go, but they would go into areas where they were not supposed to be and their throats would be cut or whatever. This was just neglect on their part by going into areas

they shouldn't have been in. Eventually we got all the troops back on board and instead of going to North Africa where we were supposed to have taken these troops, it was designated that we should reinforce Singapore or at least make that attempt.

Reinforcing Singapore

We had the Ajax, the Achilles, and the Dorchester with us and they were our escort up through the Indian Ocean. This was a very long trip. We finally made it to the Sunda straits between Java and Sumatra and this is where we had to rig paravanes to sweep mines because of the fairly narrow passage the Japanese had mined the strait. This was a new experience because we'd never rigged paravanes. They were like 20 foot birds with wings. They were heavy and went down in the water with big wire cables. They would then cut the mine cables. We had men on board with rifles that would explode the mines. We made it between Java and Sumatra and into the South China and then to what we call the Banka straits. That was where we experienced our first contact with the Japanese planes and we were bombed. They would stay above the 16,000 foot level because our anti-aircraft fire wouldn't reach above that. They bombed at 16,000 feet but no one was hit. They came close but no one was hit. It was an odd experience. Someone was trying to kill me and I didn't know who it was. But I got over that mental anguish very soon!

One of the hardest things in the Navy is standing four hours on and four hours off. When the war started, we started doing this. You still had to do your work duties. You talk about being fatigued and worn down to frazzle. You get that 12-4 watch. Then you have precautionary general quarters. Then you're up till daylight. Then you do your work and still have to stand watches. Physically it's almost unbearable. We had a Coast Guard Officer who caught a member of a gun crew sleeping while we were on the way to Singapore. He turned him and he was broken down in rate. The crew just kind of chuckled because this Coast Guard ensign, whose dad was an Admiral, also slept. I wasn't more than just about a day or two and they found him asleep on his watch. They just went and got the officer of the deck and took him over there and reported the officer for sleeping. This was quite embarrassing.

The next morning we made it into Singapore which was a beautiful area. There we many very small, green, nice islands. We made it into Keppel Bay harbor and we could see a lot of destruction where we tied up at the docks. We got under an aerial bombardment and then that ceased. We got in later in the afternoon and that night we experienced many bombardments and the troops were still on board ship. My duty was up by the forward gun crew but there was not a thing we could do. We didn't have any anti-aircraft weaponry to speak of other than machine guns and a surface gun which was valueless for aircraft. We received a very heavy dock side bombardment that night and all through the area. I came back down when it was over with and someone said, "What's wrong with your arm?" I looked over there and by god, I was bleedin' like a stuck pig. I said nothing hurts, and they looked up there and it was a splinter. It must have been a splinter from anti-aircraft fire or something and we just pulled it right out and put a compress on it. I'd had my tetanus booster and that was the extent of it. I thought nothing more of it.

The next morning, January 30, 1942, the British troops started leaving the ship and we started unloading the holds and it was just about noon when 54 Japanese planes came in and they were what we call stick bombing. The lead plane would drop the bombs and the others would all drop at the same time so they would cover a massive area. It would really be concentrated in one particular area, and it was really the dock area they were after.

Paul Cronce

I was on topside with a close friend from Grand Rapids, and his name was Paul Cronce. Paul Cronce and

I became friends as he was from Grand Rapids. My childhood sweetheart, Barbara Fowler, was also from Grand Rapids. I thought maybe Paul might have gone to school with her or known her. She lived at 1428 Beaman Street SE in Grand Rapids. Any time I'd find someone's name on the service or health record from Grand Rapids I'd talk to them. He didn't live too far from her but he didn't know her. But at least we could talk and we had something in common. Maybe he would know someone.

Paul Cronce was with me up on top side at the forward gun position when the planes came and the bombs started breaking. We ran down below. I went flat on my belly in the sick bay and evidently he stayed upright. It was one of the most fortunate things I ever did because anyone that was standing was killed. The bomb exploded in the hold and our sick bay was built around the hold. All the bulkheads peeled out and fortunately the explosive force blew the bulkhead over the top of me and I was underneath it and knocked unconscious. The next thing I knew, I came to back in the after-dressing station. Dr. Gillian was there and I couldn't hear very good. I was pretty well banged up. I didn't lose any limbs, wasn't hemorrhaging or bleeding anywhere, but I was shook up and hurt. I was scared too, that's for sure. I tried to help him and at that time we hadn't learned to disperse medical equipment and supply. All this after-dressing station had was bulk gauze, tongue depressors, applicator sticks and plaster of Paris. There was nothing there like sterile bandages or anything else. It was just chaotic and poor planning on our part. We learned from then on to disperse medical sterile supplies. The unfortunate thing was that one of the patients that was brought in was horribly burned with third degree burns. His skin was hanging from everywhere on him and he was screaming so loud. He was in such agony and pain, and that was Paul Cronce. The Doctor had me give morphine to him and then he would give morphine to him. Then he would indicate to me to give more morphine and we were alternating. It was quarter grain morphine syrettes, the little disposable syrettes with a needle on them. I didn't realize what we were doing other than trying to get him to stop screaming. I don't know how many syrettes we'd given him, but he finally quieted down and he passed away. I think it was the doctor's way to say we don't know who euthanized him. This is what we had to do, there was no hope for the man, no hope whatsoever. He had 100% third degree burns over the entire body. I went flat and he stayed standing. It was a scary situation. I was told later by official reports that there was a burial at sea for him and other dead. I don't remember a burial at sea and I should have known if anything like that had happened. I would have known, but there again I didn't sleep for maybe three nights and I wasn't in the best of shape. I should have known about a burial at sea. This was the official report.

There are so many things I don't remember though. I heard later that people were buried at sea and I don't remember burials at sea. I do know that the troops were unloaded. The doctor told me to just lie down and take it easy. This is the unfortunate thing about being a medic. They just have you lie down and monitor you and never admit you to the sick bay. I know I didn't sleep for three days. Everything was bewildering. I mean, someone's trying to kill you. It's a new experience. There is so much I don't remember. I seemed to have lost three days that I cannot account for.

The Last Ship Out of Singapore

Then we started to bring women and children aboard and the other ships in our group left. Everyone left. We could hear gunfire across the Jahore Straits. The Japanese were right there. We were abandoned at Singapore, still burning and not knowing whether or not we could make it out of there. We were waiting on the tide to come in so we could get out of there. You had to depend on the tide to come in at Keppel Harbor. We had 1,500 women and children and we found out later that we had taken aboard Indian troops that were stationed there at Singapore, some dressed as women. We couldn't leave and we were all by ourselves. The Japanese planes were still coming in. We could always tell when the Japanese planes were coming because of the British. The British Air Force consisted of Brewster Buffaloes. They were an American made fighter plane that was absolutely a useless damn thing. It was stubby like a milk bottle and we didn't use it in the USAF, but

the British had bought a few of them. They had three PBY Catalinas and when we saw them take off we knew the Japanese planes were coming. I think they were coming from French Indochina at Saigon at that time. There was a lot of chaos and people killed on the docks during these bombardments. Everywhere you looked there was death. Even in the water there were dead sharks and people floating all around. How these people put up with it I'll never know. We were able to get out when the tide came in. We were abandoned and all by ourselves. I'll never understand whey they left us and I know that they took some key personnel off our ship and put them on the other ships. I found this out later. We eventually got our fires pretty well put out and the tide came in.

The Japanese were entering Singapore as we were departing. We were under heavy bombardment when we left and supposedly, from what I hear, we were the last ship that made it out of Singapore before it fell. The fall of Singapore was one of the greatest embarrassments the British ever had because they had 125,000 troops there and they never did really battle. The Japanese landed on the Malay Peninsula and came down on bicycles. There was very little fortification at Singapore. Everything that was there was pointed at the ocean as they figured they'd get a frontal assault. The Japanese never came that way, they came from behind. They walked and rode their bicycles. The Singapore prisoners were taken to the encampment at the river Quay. Another sad part of this is that when a group of British prisoners left Singapore on a transport ship to go to the prison camp, one of our subs torpedoed it. There were about 2,000 of them that were killed. That was a sad day, but it did happen. In no way could the sub know that it was carrying British prisoners. Just before we arrived in Singapore off the Malayan coast the British lost their two prize battleships to aircraft — the Prince of Wales and the Repulse.

Running From the Japanese

We left the Singapore Harbor and were in the South China Sea with Japanese ships in every which direction. Here we were by ourselves and we would hide in rain squall. The War Department had published in our local papers about this time that the Japanese had claimed to have sunk the Wakefield. The War Department, in all their wisdom, had come out and said the Wakefield was not sunk. They said the Wakefield was at Singapore and it was hit with a bomb in the sick bay and all medical personnel were killed. I didn't realize that my mother had this information until I got her scrapbook after she died in the 1950's. She never notified my brothers or sisters or anyone that I know of that I'd been killed. She never believed it. She was a very strong individual and she just wouldn't accept it. According to my stepfather, she called the War Department but she got nothing other than that official release. Fortunately I'd gone flat and just got banged up good.

We were hiding in the rain squalls and were finally getting down to Batavia and Java. The Dutch were still holding it. There were also Japanese ships that had spotted us by late evening. We could make about 20-22 knots on our own as our engine room was still working good. Dutch destroyers and a light cruiser came out and they did battle with the Japanese. We could see it all as we made our way into Batavia at night. The Dutch ships had intercepted the Japanese ships. There was no way we could get repairs to the bulkhead. They didn't have the materials at the time and they were too vulnerable as they were getting bombed too.

Soerabaya!

We had just lost the heavy cruiser Houston at Soerabaya just north of Batavia. We took one survivor off the Houston. He was a Marine Sergeant that was incorrigible. He was so far gone, but he didn't show any physical signs. All he would do is just keep yelling "Soerabaya, Soerabaya!" He never stopped. It was just incessant. They were sunk by Japanese subs off of "Soerabaya." I'll never forget this Marine. We had him in a private room and he never stopped repeating Soerabaya. The thing that I remember is the smell of cordite. It's absolutely repugnant. Once you experience it and smell it, you'll never forget it. The explosive part of the bomb is so pungent. There were crews working on cleaning up the mess. There was a feeding frenzy off the side of the

ship. The body parts and debris that were shoved off the side made the water look like it was boiling.

We didn't stay there too long. The day after we left the Japanese task force hit Batavia, and hit it hard. From there we left by ourselves to Colombo Ceylon. We were one of the first ships in for months, but we couldn't get repairs because they didn't have the materials or manpower. We were welcome and got water and fuel-oil and spent a day or two. You could pick up sapphires for one or two dollars and the biggest and best ones for four or five dollars a piece. I had probably 20, mainly just to get rid of the people pulling on your sleeve. They had no money. I didn't realize these bloomin' things were priceless until later on, when five or six months later I was with my friend McClean. He had 40-50 of them and we went into the jewelry store. He had a hand full and he showed the star sapphires and the guy couldn't believe what he saw. He said each one of those was worth between $700 and $800 a piece. At that point I'd lost mine when we'd had a fire on board ship and had to abandon the ship.

I was invited to go to the British Consulate and have tea. I thought it would be good for me to get off the ship and I went there. I didn't realize that when you have tea like that you take a walk, a brisk walk. We went through Indian villages with tigers and cobras and all these things. I was a little apprehensive. Of course we never saw anything like that. When we got back from the walk we had the tea and the cakes. We left Ceylon and the day after we left the Japanese hit the dock area. They were after us again.

The American Dentist at Bombay, India

Now we had to run the gauntlet from Ceylon all the way down the Indian Ocean and then on to Cape Town, South Africa. From Ceylon we went into Bombay, India. Dr. Callar and I left the ship together and saw a sign on a gorgeous building that said "American Dentist." He was a little perplexed and said, "Let's go see," and we both walked in and introduced ourselves. The so-called American dentist came out and he was a former Navy dental technician like myself He said, "You've got to come here this evening. I've got a group of people coming and I'm having a dinner party." His building was four or more stories high and the top floor was all dining and formal living area. We agreed and came back and he had two maharajahs. And he had the highest clientele of Indian society there. We had Indian curry and rice and it was delectable. I'd never had anything like this before. They kept passing around a big flask, like a brandy flask. It was about 10 inches in diameter and it had a special beer in it. It kept going around the table all the time. You just took a swallow and passed it, and this kept going throughout the meal. The dentist had at least 14-16 servants and it was unreal. He had the best of everything. When he found out about me, he said, "When this war is over I want you to come back and I'll give you half my practice. You'll have no investment to make. It'll be yours. I'm a wealthy individual and it's been very good to me. To have someone to come in that I could talk to and that could help would be something I'd look forward to. When this war is over, you come back here and you'll have a Bombay practice with me." We left and I've often wondered about that. I never did go back, but I have often thought — what if?

We did leave Bombay after we got repairs of some sort on the bulkhead. They reinforced the side of the ship so they made it a little more seaworthy, and we finally made it down into Cape Town, South Africa. It seemed like it had taken us forever, and remember, all this time we were under censorship. I had no way of sending out letters. No one knew what was going on and my mother thought I was dead. I had a letter from Barbara's mother saying that she wanted me to write Barbara as she was having dreams about me and so forth. But I still couldn't write her because of censorship. In Cape Town we got more repairs and everyone was at wits end and anxious to get back. We'd got our temporary repairs and finally were underway with no escort.

Back to the States

We made the long journey from Cape Town and we went into Philadelphia. We ran aground in

Philadelphia of all things. Finally tugs came out and got us off. We ended up in the Philadelphia Navy Yard and got repairs. At that point I made my phone call to my mother. She was real pleased and said, "I've been expecting your call." I said, "I'll be coming home on leave pretty soon. I'm sure we'll be getting leave soon." We did, and I think it was two weeks. I came home for that time. This was quite an experience and I found out that Barbara had married. She married the pilot that had been teaching her. That was a real blow to me, and I'm sure it was to her too. She thought I was killed. It was a friendly conversation, but I was devastated. I got to see people at home. I returned back to the ship and now we were under a new endeavor. Before I left ship for leave, I was threatened with a court martial if I revealed any information about Task Force 14. I wanted to pay my respects to Paul Cronce's family, but I couldn't give them any facts regarding his death.

New Zealand

We went to Norfolk and took aboard about 5,000 Marines from 1st Division. We started down south not knowing where we were going. We went through the canal zone and into the Pacific. This was a case of one ship carrying 5,000 Marines, but we had enough speed that we could out race a submarine on the surface. With all the zigzagging they figured we didn't need an escort. Plus, they were short on them. We made the trip to Wellington, New Zealand, with the First Marine Division who made the invasion of Guadalcanal. We never got to Australia, but we got to New Zealand and this is where we left the troops. This was a wonderful area with wonderful people. There was steak and eggs for breakfast. We were there about 10-12 days before we made the long return trip from New Zealand back to the states. We went back through the canal zone again. When we went though this time we had food infection and everyone on the lines had to go to the bathroom. The heads were full of people with diarrhea. We made it through and into the Atlantic and eventually to New York. From there we started to take troops on board again.

Back and Forth Across the Atlantic

We were part of about a 40 ship convoy. This was the largest troop convoy of WW II. We had carriers and destroyers and whatever. We were involved with German submarine packs. We made it through and got to Belfast, Ireland. No one was allowed ashore because Ireland was neutral and Germany had a consulate in Belfast and knew everything that was going on. None of us left but this is where we made our first stop. Then from Belfast, we went to Glasgow, Scotland. We were there about four or five days and we let the troops disembark at Glasgow. We worried about buzz bombs and so forth, but everyone who went overnight in Glasgow got bed bugs. We eventually took 1,500 civilian workers on board who had built air bases in Iceland and were going back to the states. They'd been paid off so they had money, a fortune of money on them. We left the British Isles and headed south in the Atlantic back toward the states. There was a lot of gambling. People were even cutting cards for $20 or more. I did take a chance playing poker. I started out with a couple hundred dollars and I ended up with money everywhere. I must have had $8,000 to $9,000 that I'd won. I went back to the sick bay and never counted it. I just kept stuffing it into my locker and I said to myself that I was gonna leave it there. Then it wasn't long, like two or three hours, I decided that maybe I outta go try it again and it wasn't long till I'd lost it all. That taught me a lesson.

The Fire Aboard the Wakefield

When we were about two days out of New York there was a fairly calm sea. We had 10-12 ships with a lot of destroyers and Walter Cronkite was on the Mt. Vernon at the time. We caught on fire. I was the first one to grab a first aid kit and I went forward up to my station at the forward gun mount. There was not too much wind, but most of the smoke was heading towards the stern. All the compartments on this luxury liner were made out of wood and so it spread very fast. I had my first aid kit but at no time did I have to treat anyone. I

was comfortably sitting on an ammunition locker. They were abandoning ship off the stern and I was up there for several hours all by myself. It wasn't long before Captain Bradbury made his way up somehow and said, "What in the hell are you doing here?" I said, "I don't know, seems like the best place to be with all the smoke going aft." He said, "I've passed the word to abandon ship." I said, "Well, I didn't hear it." And he said, "Well, I'm getting off and would recommend you get off too." He went down the ladder and I thought well, if he's getting off maybe I better get off too. I couldn't go to my locker because the fire was started right near sick bay. I had nothing on me. A destroyer, the USS Mayo, came along side while I was on a landing ladder and I jumped over to it and it didn't bother me too much. They gave me a blanket and they had probably a couple hundred survivors off the Wakefield. One funny story came out later on. Walter Cronkite said there was a cat on board the Wakefield and even it was saved. I can guarantee you that the cat was not saved. A cat was never a wanted item on board a ship. A dog yes, but not a cat.

Survivor with a Surprise

That first night on board the destroyer I slept on top side on the deck and I used my first aid kit as a pillow. I also had one of the new CO-2 cartridge life belts. All the destroyer personnel had these K-Pak, these big cumbersome things. At some point during the night somebody had lifted me up and unsnapped my pneumatic life belt and stole it. I must have been that tired because I never knew they had done it. Sometime during the day I decided to take a look in my first aid kit. I didn't have much to do, so I opened it up and looked in there and couldn't believe what I saw. The only thing in that first aid kit was solid narcotics: codeine and morphine. It could only have come from the narcotic locker in the surgical suite, and there were only two or three people who had the combination to the safe. This was a big puzzlement to me. Why would one first aid kit have all these narcotics in it? The only reason could have been that somebody had planned to get off the ship with all these narcotics as they were definitely worth a lot of money. They never figured that somebody else would be there first and take this particular first aid kit. There I am on board this destroyer lookin' at all these narcotics. Should I dump them in the ocean or what? I decided to go to the Captain. I went up on the bridge of the destroyer and I talked to the Captain. I said, "Captain, I've got a little problem here. I don't know why, but somehow I got a first aid kit here filled with nothing but narcotics and this is the first time I've opened it." He just waived his hands and said, "I want no part of this. That's your problem, you take care of it yourself" He would not accept the narcotics or recommend anything. In the back of my mind, I kept thinking someone had stolen these from the safe and set the fire to get off the ship with them and sell them. I had a pretty good idea who it was too. No one wanted to listen. I probably should have just dumped them over the side, but I had now exposed myself to the fact that I had them. If I didn't have them all of the sudden, I've got another problem. I continued to sleep on top side and use the first aid kit as a pillow. I woke in the morning and I still had them. We reached New York City and I had no identification, so they took me to Ellis Island. Now I'm like an immigrant for the first time. I had to go through Ellis Island to be identified with nothing but a bag full of narcotics. I asked to see the commanding officer at Ellis Island. I was given permission and went before him to explain my dilemma. Here I stood in my lucky rag-tag dungarees, and I looked like hell standing with a bag full of narcotics. The Commanding Officer looked at me and waived his arms just like the Captain of the destroyer and said he wanted no part of it. He said, "That's your baby and you handle it." Here I was and it seemed everyone was givin' me permission to keep all of these narcotics. I decided to call the Medical Supply Depot in Brooklyn, New York and try to explain this. I'm sure they thought they had a nut on their hands as I tried to explain this over the phone. They were in disbelief, so I finally asked if they would please send a car for me to Ellis Island to let me come over, explain, and show what I had. So they did and at least something favorable had finally happened. They sent a car and I went to the Medical Supply Depot still wearing the old dungarees with only a bag full of narcotics. I explained the whole story to them and that nobody wanted any part of it. Whoever I talked to said, "OK, we'll take them. I don't know if it'll do any good to inventory them because we don't know what you started with." I thought they should have had an investigation but nobody paid attention to it. It was like it happened, so what?? So I returned to Ellis Island and sat there for three or four more days in my old

dungarees. I was finally sent to Pier 92 in New York City.

Pier 92

I arrived there needing clean clothes and a shave. As soon as I reported aboard, I got put on report for being out of uniform. I was a survivor, but I wasn't treated as such as nobody would listen. Finally I went to the Chief Master at Arms and said, "Something's got to happen here. I need some clothes and I can't move anywhere without being put on report. I know that you've got a tough commanding officer." He said, "Well, we don't have pay records for you." I said, "There all gone as I've lost my ship." Eventually they gave me a complete new outfit. I was there for a couple of weeks around the time of the World Series. One thing you learn in the Navy is to never volunteer for anything. But I said to myself that I had to get out of there and off the base, so they lined us up and asked for volunteers and I raised my hand. It turned out I'd volunteered for shore patrol at the World Series in New York with the Yankees.

THE USS ARAPAHO ATF 68

Commissioning the Arapaho

It was just a matter of a week or two and I got my orders and was sent to Charleston, South Carolina, to commission a new fleet tugboat. It was a 210 foot long sea-going tug. It had probably around 150 men with 10 officers. I checked in at Charleston and got to meet Captain Wootan who was commanding officer. There were a few other personnel there. The Chief Quartermaster was there and I was the Pharmacists Mate. We were the backbone of the ship. A couple of weeks later we got five ensigns on board and they'd just gotten out of college. One had been in two or three days more than the others, so he became the Executive Officer. His name was Alexander Turak. He was a very intelligent young Jewish boy and he was a good worker and learner. He knew nothing about a ship, however. He didn't know forward from aft, but he was the XO and second in command. We got a former tugboat sailor from New York City who worked on small yard tugs whose name was O'Neil and he was the 1st Lieutenant. We had a good Chief Machinist, but I've forgotten his name now. I had a sick bay of my own and I was all by myself with no doctors. I had my own pharmacy, surgery and dispensary and it was quite elaborate. It was also my responsibility of making all the sanitary and quarterly reports. There were plenty of things to do and records to set up.

At that time in Charleston, things were slow. I went over and worked in the Navy yard at the civil service Medical Department where they did physical exams. They had an old doctor there doing them, and they were hiring a lot of help. I was doing all the physicals and taking all the vital signs. The doctor would just sit over to the side or he'd be gone completely. I'd do the complete physicals, accept them, and sign his name on it. This was fine and it was the way the doctor wanted it done. He'd check in every once in a while and I was doing all his work. I was there for maybe three or four weeks while we commissioned the ship. We were there at Thanksgiving time. I saw something I'll always remember. At the Navy Yard we had turkey, dressing and all the trimmings. Also in the yard there was a Norwegian destroyer that had been damaged and they were in there for repairs. At the chow line I heard the Norwegian sailors say, "God forgive them for they know not what they do." The US soldiers took their trays and dumped the extra food into a big trash can. They were just looking at the food piled up around the container. They'd gone through low provisions and people starving in Europe, and here we had an abundance of food and a lot went to waste.

Putting the Arapaho to Sea

The silhouette of a fleet tug is extensive. We're as big as a destroyer and we've got the super structure

with big booms. On our first shakedown cruise we had Navy yard workmen and went out to sea for a couple of days. We were riding high with a small amount of oil and very few provisions. The first night out we took two torpedoes from a German sub that went underneath us. They were set too deep and Captain Wootan just about had a conniption. We had to return to base and the Captain told me that he couldn't take it. I took the Captain by the hand and took him to the hospital and admitted him as a patient. He was our Captain for one day at sea. Then we had to wait for a new one and we got a man by the name of C.B. Lee.

Captain Lee

Lee was a mustang and a fantastic individual. He'd been in the Navy for about 30 years. He understood people and had a good level head. In the meantime, the rest of us were training Mr. Turak, the XO. We were getting quite capable and could handle the ship. Eventually we left Charleston, and I believe our first duty was to go down to Key West to try to locate a submarine we had lost down there. It was sunk with all hands. We were berthed at Key West, but we were trying to pick up the sub with our sonar. We never did find it. We would go ashore in Key West and the Captain would go with us. We might be eight to ten strong and walk into a bar or someplace and Captain Lee would be with us. What a great guy. He was friendly and level headed and we had all kinds of confidence in him.

Working Through a Hurricane

Our next job was to leave for the invasion of North Africa. We were going to be in the second group. We had 90-100 ships and we left out of Norfolk, VA. The weatherman really screwed up because on our second day out we ran into a full blown hurricane. It changed direction and they never planned on it. We had 50,000 to 60,000 troops on very small ships like LCI's. It was almost impossible for them in the hurricane sea. It was so rough and tumble, and they were getting beat up. Finally word came that the entire fleet would go into Bermuda and seek refuge. Being a fleet tug, we were always busy hauling or pulling ships. When we went into Bermuda we were hauling one of the ships that got disabled in the storm. We turned it over to the yard tugs and the signalman started workin'. Lo and behold word came that there was one ship missing. They counted the vessels and we were missing one. We had to turn around and go back out into this hurricane. Everyone else stayed in port, but we had to go back out. We kept looking for a ship. We were not told what kind it was, but just that we were missing one. On the second day out there, we found a ship. lt was about a 10,000 ton cargo carrier. It had no radio, no propulsion, and it wasn't moving and we weren't sure of it's nationality. It was dead in the water. We finally got a line over to it. I don't remember even seeing anyone on board but somehow we got it tied up. We finally made it back. We entered the harbor pulling this ship and about that time there was a signal going and the harbor master was being apologetic. They said, "We miscounted and we're sorry." You were not missing a ship. We said, "What's that behind us?" The one thing that kept coming to mind was the Bermuda Triangle.

Waiting Out the Storm in Bermuda

We probably had another day or two there before the seas calmed down. I got ready for liberty over to Hamilton. We hopped on this boat to carry us on the 40 minute journey. It was hotter than hell and there was a canvas on top of it that kept some of the sun off of us. We were running out of time because we had to be back to the ship by 6:00 and it was 3:30 or so. We might have an hour ashore and then we'd have to turn around and take this long trip back. He couldn't leave the dock until we had a full compliment of liberty people. Finally they announced that not only did they have a full compliment, but they had too many people on board. He said that a couple of us were gonna have to get off. I turned to my friend and said that I was gonna get off as this wasn't worth it. There was not going to be enough time over there and it was just a hassle. I climbed out and got off and he got off. Finally it got underway and it got about 20 feet away from the dock and there was a helluva

explosion and it blew up. The gas fumes had accumulated underneath that canvas and when they started the engines they had a horrendous explosion. We were fishing bodies and horribly flash burned people out of the water. It wasn't a comfortable day. We lost some men there. There were a lot of people injured, a lot went to the hospital, and a lot were killed. For some reason we got off I don't know, something said it wasn't worth it so just get off.

Heading Toward North Africa and the Situation There

We did leave Bermuda and headed towards North Africa. When France fell to the Germans the French President Petain became leader of the VC French. They were very favorable toward the Germans and they practically allowed the Germans to come through, around and over the Maginot line. The British lost tens of thousands of men at Dunkirk because of this. The Germans allowed France to keep their fleet and they also allowed them to keep the French army. When American troops hit North Africa to fight Rommel and the Germans, they didn't fight the Germans they fought the VC French. Their Navy, Army and Foreign Legion. They inflicted heavy casualties on the Americans. A lot of these things have been forgotten. We did fight German aircraft and U-Boats.

Our specific duties were to go into the Mediterranean, but we got into an area we weren't supposed to be in and we were attacked by British mosquito bombers. These were wooden, twin engine, fast movin' British airplanes and they were a jack of all trades. All of a sudden we were fightin' mosquito bombers. Fortunately they didn't machine gun us or drop bombs, but they really looked us over. They were comin' in at about 50 feet. We didn't know what to expect, but we were in an area we shouldn't have been in.

Casablanca

Eventually we turned and were instructed to go into Gibraltar. We made it in and this was a new experience. At night you figured you'd have some peace and quiet and rest, but not so. The I Ties, the Italians, would come in by submarine with their frogmen and plant mines on our ships. We'd have ships being bombed with land mines. The British fought the shallow water divers by dropping depth charges periodically with no pattern. The explosion from the depth charge would rupture the abdominal veins and arteries, and the divers would usually die from hemorrhage. This was going on constantly all night long. Another thing we experienced there was all of our vegetables were coming from Spain. They used human fertilizer and so consequently every vegetable had to be soaked in potassium magnate permanganate solution. This was a cumbersome thing to do. The bread was coming from Spain as well, and it was round and about the size of a basketball. You couldn't cut it with a knife. I never went ashore, but several did and said all they did was run into monkeys.

There was a lot of shipping in the harbor and our main job then was to work on the USS Almac AK-b. The Almac was a 10,000 ton supply vessel that had been torpedoed by the Germans just off the Northern coast of Africa during the invasion. It had made its way to Casablanca and we were given duty to try to get it back to the US.

French Lesson

We went to Casablanca and were there about three weeks. We had deep sea divers, damage control, and fire control people aboard our ship, and the Almac got minor repairs during this time. Usually when we were in a port we never stopped. We worked night and day. I remember Casablanca as being a little different. I'd had two years of French in high school and everyone said they were going ashore with me because I could speak French. When I did get ashore and used my French, the French would all start laughing. I could read their

newspapers, but they all laughed when I spoke French. Finally I got one of them to tell me what was so funny and he said, "You're speaking high Parisian French, and we don't hear it." 'Course I was taught by Mrs. Weaver in Buchanan, and of course she was taught what she was taught. I rode my first horse in Casablanca with a yeoman named Jerry Wheeler. Another thing that happened was that we had the American Red Cross Office in Casablanca. Everything that they had was donated by the union. They had cigarettes, toothpaste, shaving cream, and toiletries, but we had to pay for these donated items. I think all the people in the states thought this was being given to service personnel. I got to have a great dislike for the American Red Cross and so did everyone else. Later on I found out that the War Department said that there was pressure from Britain that nothing be given as the British Red Cross had to pay for it. For the American Red Cross to give things away would be unfair, and so the US agreed.

Locusts

Also in the harbor at Casablanca was a huge French battleship that had been sunk, the Jean Bart. It was resting on the bottom but all the turrets and everything were high and dry. They had maybe six or seven feet clearance of the deck. It was a remnant of showing there was an opposition. I also remember being in Casablanca when you couldn't see the sun, when the locusts came in. The locusts were so thick you couldn't see the sun and all the natives were in glee because they started fires and were barbecuing the locusts. This was a delicacy to them. It was slippery mess on board our ships. They also destroyed crops.

Back to the States

We left Casablanca with the Almac and we had one destroyer to escort us. This was a 10,000 ton ship that we could tow at about 10 knots in good seas. We left for the long trip home of about 18 days. I didn't realize it, but someone found a little German Shepherd puppy and they called it Arapaho. That became our pet. One Seaman had the mumps. He hid the mumps because he didn't want to stay in Casablanca, he wanted to come home. After we got to sea, he checked in with me. His parotid glands were swollen and I said, "You knew you had the mumps. This wasn't something that just popped up today." He said, "Yeah, but I wanted to go home." I said, "You're also one that's susceptible to sea sickness and when you start throwing up with your parotid glands the way they are, you're apt to end up with calcified parotid glands. Then you're gonna have a lot of surgery. You don't realize what you've done to yourself" Basically, this is what happened. He had extensive surgery after arriving in the U.S.

The trip back I had this old lucky pair of dungarees, and I never took them off from Casablanca to the US. We were constantly under sub attack and when our escort vessel would use up all it's depth charges, we'd have another destroyer or something come in and take over patrolling and protecting us as we were very vulnerable. It was a long and scary trip, but we finally made it back into Norfolk. We had a lot of engine work and had different weapons put on like 20mm guns for anti-aircraft. We had a lot of things done to the ship.

THE PACIFIC

Departure and Early Assignments

We soon departed for the Pacific. We left Norfolk hauling a big barge that we took to Panama and left there. We went through the canal and into the Pacific, and that's where we stayed for a long period of time. Our first duty was to go to San Diego and pick up a dry dock and get underway for Pearl Harbor. Eventually we made it to Pearl Harbor and had duty there for two weeks. We then prepared to tow three barges loaded with bombs, and head for the deep Pacific and our first stop was in the Gilbert Islands at Funafuti. We experienced

a lot of air raids and they were always at night. Captain Lee made sure if he could find a provision of beer anywhere he'd find it and get it on board. If we got beer on board we'd take it over to Funafuti and to the airbase and split it with the fighter pilots. They'd take off with the beer and go up to cool it down at 15,000 feet for 30 minutes. Many fighter pilots received much combat air time for cooling beer, but records would show otherwise.

Island Hopping

The first island we invaded was Eniwetok. We then invaded and took over Kwajalein. The fleet was there for bombardments. There was nothing unusual and we had normal amounts of casualties. We were involved with the Makin Islands when Carlson's Raiders came in on subs. We were the decoy. That was a fiasco as the Raiders took off at night from the subs and hit the beach. They destroyed most of the garrison on the island. We didn't realize they were so lightly populated with Japanese. Unfortunately we left 10 Marines at Macon inadvertently. Carlson received a lot of criticism amongst his peers. These 10 that we left eventually surrendered to the Japanese and unfortunately they were all beheaded.

The Couple of Kwajalein

I found a couple of people (a man and wife) on the beach at Kwajalein. I was on the beach and found this couple that could speak English, but they were kind of cowering as they had gone through the bombardment and the troops hitting the beach. They'd been prisoners of the Japanese for some time. The Japanese would tie them at night to stakes on the air strip. They would tie one on one end and one on another and our planes would hit the strip to put pot holes in runways and go after the planes. They'd survived all of this. I found them and they were in sad shape, so I took them back to the ship and gave them some clothing and fed them. They were very happy and appreciative. They were probably 35-37 years old and had no personal belongings. They gave me a grass belt that they had made and I've never opened it up. It belongs somewhere in a museum. I still have the grass string around it the way they handed it to me. It was the only thing they had to give as thanks. They gave it to me and I treasure it, but I don't know what do with it. This couple wasn't on the ship very long. I know they were taken to another ship and then to safety.

Fear at Night

There was another time we had to assist a carrier that had been hit by torpedoes at night. We couldn't find anything and we came under Japanese torpedo plane attack. There's nothing worse than a night torpedo plane attack in my opinion. This is because they see your wake in the water. The fluorescent wake of your screws. You leave a trail and they can see where you're going and where you'd been because that phos-flourescent would be out there for a couple three hundred yards. You couldn't tell where they were except when they went over you and you could see the exhaust. That's the only thing you could see. You could hear, but you never knew just where they were. There was so many of them. I was up on top side with a gun crew while this was going on and what happened at night is that the decks are wet. When you've got outgoing gunfire, it's like lightning. You don't know which direction it's coming from, it goes either way. With all your 20 mms going out, there's a flash and it looks like its comin' right at ya'. It's a scary thing because all the gunfire that's outgoing looks like its incoming. I was standing next to this gun crew and the Arapaho took a sharp turn and knocked me off my feet and down to the main deck. I got hurt but I never put myself on the sick list. The night time air attack is something else.

Shell Shock

Another thing of interest about gun crews. I'd be called to a gun crew as someone was down. I'd get to the gun crew and there'd still be firing going on and someone was unconscious. I'd ask what happened because he wasn't hit by shrapnel or anything. How did he fall? Did he go over quick or did he slide down? "We really don't know, but it looked like he slid down," and I said, "Ok." This is something you run into as a first aid man that you don't like to do because people get the wrong opinion. This is a hysterical convulsion. They're trying to escape. They're trying to get out of reality and trying to escape. They don't want to face reality anymore so they actually force themselves into a convulsion and pass out. What do you do at that time is slap them hard across the face on both sides. When you're doin' this you've got other members of the gun crew lookin' at ya' like, "Whatta ya' doin', doe? What the hell, the guy's hurt." This is the treatment. You've got to pull them outta what they're trying to hide from. I always remember back to the Patton movie when he slapped the soldier 'cause he said he was shell shocked. They wouldn't fall down, they'd slide down. This was the key. You must get the patient back to reality quickly or you can lose him mentally. It's a form of self-induced anesthesia, but you must not allow him to go too deep because you will lose him for good.

Getting Rid of the Doldrums

In the lull between invasions, Captain Lee was one that could realize, and I could realize too, when things got to the point where people were quiet on board ship. When they didn't bitch, then you worry. There was potential danger when the crew was quiet and not bitching. When they're bitchin' and complaining, that's good. I remember Captain would call me up and ask me what I thought. If I said they're quiet, he'd say, "Ok I'll see if I can find some beer some place. We've got to get them together and have a little blast some place on one of these islands." They'd kind of have a beach party, but it'd turn into a battle. The guys would fight. I'd say, "Captain, no matter how I tell 'em not to swim, they're gonna get in the water and in the coral and get cut up and coral doesn't heal." He'd say, "We've got to do something." So he'd get the beer and they'd have a few hours on the beach. There'd be all kinds of fights and this and that. Pretty soon they'd all be arm and arm saying things like, "You sure got me a good one there," or "You got me here." Then I'd spend the rest of the day suturing people and takin' care of coral cuts and this and that. This would get them out of the doldrums. They were buddies again.

Captain Lee's Promotion

Captain Lee came to me and he told me that he was up for promotion and he confided with me that he probably couldn't pass it. I asked him what the reason was, and he that he had prostatitis and wanted to know if I knew of any way he could pass this? I said, "Yes I know of a way you could pass it, but it'd have to be done just prior to when you'd go take your physical. This would be by having a prostatic massage. This is something I wouldn't want to do even though I could do it. The only way I think it should be done is if you have somebody present in the room that you recommend and trust." He said, "I do and would you do it?" I said, "Yes. You tell me when you're going to go and leave the ship to take your physical and then we'll do it." This happened one day. He said "Fm ready to go over." So he had his friend came in. I put on the glove and stripped the prostrate. He left and took his physical. It was probably four to five hours later that he came back to the Arapaho. He had a big smile on his face and he came and looked me up. He said, "Doc, I passed and I wanna thank you, I'm very grateful." I said, "Well, it's a procedure," and I said thank you.

Making Chief

About that same time I was eligible to make Chief. It was probably two to three months later that I was made Chief Petty Officer, a Chief Pharmacist's Mate. I was told later that I was probably one of the youngest Chiefs in the Navy. It was hard to be that young and go aboard bigger ships where you'd have all these Chiefs

with five to six hash marks up their sleeve. I'm walkin' on board and they'd look at me like I was just fresh out of high school. But when they learned that I was on independent duty, with no doctors, I suddenly gained their respect.

The Arapaho's Crew

It was about this time that we got new crew members. We'd look in their service records of all new personnel and every one of them would read, "It is the findings of the general court marshal board" or "it's the findings of the summary court marshal board that you be sent to hazardous duty." We were getting this type of personnel and God bless them! They made terrific sailors. They didn't march to a regular drummer and they'd been court marshaled, but they made fantastic sailors. They did a lot of things, put up with a lot of things and we went through a lot together. I thought we'd have a lot of problems when this started, but we didn't. "Uncommon valor was a common virtue." They typified this statement on the Iwo Jima monument.

Tarawa

Captain Lee was still there for the next big invasion which was Tarawa. What a massive fleet we had. The Japanese had really enforced Tarawa with bunkers and tunnels. One big bunker was four foot thick concrete. The personnel on the island were the best of the crop from Japan. This was their stronghold. The fleet we assembled was fantastic and the bombardments were fantastic, both sea and air.

We had taught Mr. Turak, the executive officer, too well. We taught him that at certain times you air bedding and certain days you do this and he hadn't forgotten this. So here we are a man o war with the fleet and we're the only ones airing bedding. You talk about something looking funny and embarrassing. We had an ancillary group. There was about 10 of us over in one group by ourselves and the main fleet was off a bit, but you could still see them. I happened to be looking on the horizon and I saw Japanese Betty torpedo planes. I went up on the bridge and, Mr. Turak, was bridge officer at that time. I said, "Has anyone reported those Japanese Betty's?" He said, "Where?" I said, "Right over there. There's three of them right there in that one group." He said, "No, those aren't Betty's," and I said, "Mr. Turak, those are Betty's. I've seen 'em. They've been making a big sweep around us." He said, "well they'd be going after the fleet. They wouldn't be comin' after us." I said, "There's two reasons why they'd be comin' over here. Number one is if they were smart they wouldn't go pick on the fleet. Number two is we've got our bedding hanging all over this damn ship and they don't know what we are. It's a curiosity thing, we look different." So he asked if I aired my bedding and I said, "No, I air bedding when officers air bedding." I went down below decks and I put my lucky dungarees on again and pretty soon some of the crew was askin' what I was doin' with those damn dungarees on? I said, "They're my lucky ones and there's Japanese planes over there." To this day I feel sorry because I didn't know how to use one of those 22 mm mounts. I kept watchin' those planes and pretty soon three of them came in on our stern and they were within four to five hundred yards of us. They made the big turn, came out, and dropped torpedoes, and went right over us. About that time all hell broke loose, and the Arapaho made as sharp a turn as they could toward port and fortunately the torpedoes missed. They were so close you could see the Japanese pilot and torpedo man in the forward part of the plane. They didn't hit us and we were lucky. This was the start of Tarawa. I had just experienced being embarrassed, mad and scared. What a combination!

In that first day we went over and joined the fleet. They started bombarding Tarawa. It was a creeping barrage. They'd go from one end of the island to the next, but one big concrete bunker couldn't be broke. The dive bombers couldn't break it either. They kept creeping and finally the first group of Marines went in. It was very unfortunate. It was a sad time because their reading on the tides was wrong. The tide was out yet. We had the Navy Seals and Marines with landing crafts and all they could do was get within 400 yards where they had to get out and walk in knee deep water. They couldn't bring landing craft in. There was two or three Japanese

machine gunners on the pier and they were going in just North of the pier. They didn't take the pier out because they wanted to use it to unload ships. That first group got massacred. I don't think any, maybe one or two, made the beach. There was no place to go once on there anyway. There was maybe 20 feet of beach and then some logs, as a breakwater.

Then the second group went in later that day. The tide was a little better, but they too were butchered because of machine guns and supporting fire from the Japanese. These kids were massacred. The water was bloody. It was a mess. A very few of them made the beach, but there was no protection. They were just huddled up against that log embankment. They were there for the night, and I think there were only a couple of survivors by the next morning.

We were about 400 to 500 yards from the beach, and the next morning they used us as the pivot point. All these landing craft were all around us. They were gonna leave from us and go into the beach. I felt so sorry for these kids. I had about 15 gallons of USP Grade "A" Ethel alcohol in five gallon tins. I thought it was a normal thing to do, and I just started filling canteens. I had some simple syrup and peppermint, and I filled canteens out of my big sink. I went through all 15 gallons of alcohol which I got from the engineering department as I didn't have to account for it then. I had to count for every ounce from the medical department. It wasn't long before they were having to go in. This group had a little different attitude. There was some singin' and shoutin' and a lot of canteens bein' used. They'd seen what had gone on between the two other groups and this group caught a good tide. This was the group that stayed and got reinforced. I never talked to any Marines that had their canteens filled at our ship that day, but this is only one of many stories that should be told, every Marine was a real hero. They all took the deadly long walk knowing what was ahead of them. Many prayers were said.

Tarawa was a bloody mess. In the annals it is written up as such. We lost so many Navy hospital corpsmen with the fleet Marine force on the beach that word came from General "Howling" Smith. He was asking for hospital corpsmen to leave the ships and help on the beach. The Captain gave me permission to go. Right next to us, and not too far from the beach, was a LST hospital ship. The front ramp would go down and we'd bring wounded in on motor launches. This was a surgical ship and the lower part was all surgical suites. I went over on the beach and we were bringing wounded back to the LST only 300 to 400 hundred yards off the beach.

I'll never forget one time one of the surgeons was outside crying and he'd emotionally broken down. I went to him and I'll never forget him. He said, "I can't do this, I can't do it anymore. I'm a baby doctor, I know nothing about this type of surgery. I'm not an army surgeon and I'm inadequate." I had him in my arms and I said, "You can do it. You're doin a helluva lot better than I could do in there, so you do it." I stayed with him for quite a while and he finally went back in.

I keep thinkin' that during that barrage they should have had a few of us master riflemen on deck. The Japanese were just walkin ahead of the bombs. You could see them just walking ahead of them on the island. We could have had snipers and knocked off most of them. The island was finally taken. The island was so small and not very wide. John Ryan, from St. Joseph, was there and he was a fire control man on one of the battleships on the other side of the island. I complained to him later on and said a lot of those big 16 inchers were comin' over the island and hittin' the water by us. Only about 5,000 Japanese troops were there, but they were the top of the line. I remember only one prisoner. He was Korean and he was probably in supply. Then the Sea Bees came in and rebuilt.

We stayed there and worked. The water was filled with bodies and it was just red. We also had problems with the Marines themselves. We actually had fire fights between Marines groups damnit all! About the fourth day after Tarawa was over, we were about the only ship left. There was one destroyer aground and we took it

off. I'll never forget this day because we couldn't see the sun. There were no clouds. The green bot flies were so great because of all the decaying bodies that were carrying the larva for the fly. The sky was black with these big green flies. We had to pull out and it was awful. We stayed away until they started burying all the bodies. In the Marine Corps Tarawa is considered probably the bloodiest of all battles considering the square footage of land.

Majuro

After Tarawa we went back to Majuro. I saw five B 25s come over the fleet when we were all anchored. All these American planes were shot down because they didn't have IF's on. They came over not thinking and they were all shot down.

Guam

From there we went into Guam and made that invasion. Guam was the main encampment of the Japanese. When things got quieted down at Guam, we had a native Officer steward named Jesus Cruz who wanted to go ashore to his village to see his family. Everybody called him "Jesus" and he hated it and would always say, "My name is pronounced 'Yeasus." I volunteered to Captain Lee to go with him and we went. It wasn't too far away. There was still a lot of Japanese on the island, but hopefully not that part of it. I wish I'd never gone up there in hindsight. When he got to his home, he found his one sister had committed suicide and another one had been terrorized and raped. I think his mom and another aunt had been murdered. It was a real sad situation and the food situation wasn't good. Jesus never got over this when he got back to the ship. He was real morose. We did give supplies from the ship and that helped a bit, but it was a sad situation.

At this point in time there was one navy hospital corpsman that had stayed on Guam from the time it fell to the start of the invasion. He stayed alive and hidden all that time. He came out of hiding once the invasion came. I think his name was Head. The citizenry at Guam helped him survive in the mountains.

Captain Gunn

About this same time Captain Lee was transferred and I got my orders to go back to the states. I couldn't leave till I got my relief on board. Once he was in person on the ship, I could turn all my records over and go back. Captain Lee left and he was relieved by another old red-faced Mustang by the name of Aubrey H. Gunn. He was an alcoholic and our problems really started when Captain Lee left and Captain Gunn came aboard. He was a different class of individual. He didn't like Mr. Turak, and never called him by name. Mr. Turak was Jewish and Captain Gunn always referred to him as "Christ Killer" or "Jew Boy." This was on the bridge or no matter where he was on board ship. He'd always use derogatory remarks toward Mr. Turak. He had a dislike for the race and this was one of the things we had to put up with. Also there were certain members of the crew he didn't like. He had many idiosyncrasies that were hard to understand.

Stealing Peaches

Two petty officers had been caught in the jack of the dust locker which is right next to the galley. Food is taken out of the hold of the ship, brought up, and placed in the jack of the dust locker. It's a wired cage to hold food for consumption for the next day or the evening meal. It's brought up and held there. These two chaps had broken the lock to the jack of the dust locker. They sat inside and they'd opened one of these gallon cans of peaches and they were eating them. The Captain caught them or someone did. The Captain was so happy

he'd caught these two rascals and he gave them a summary court martial. He charged them for stealing peaches because they didn't belong to them. He also broken them down from Petty Officers to Seamen 2w'. We had no brig on board, so he couldn't put them in there. Everything had to go to JAG in Washington. I was on board when word came back from JAG. I'd never heard so much screamin' and yellin' from his compartment. The instructions from JAG were "You should have charged them for breaking and entering. So many of the peaches were intended for these men. You should have counted the peaches and found out if they'd eaten too many and took other crew members' peaches." The Captain just blew his stack, but there wasn't a thing he could do about it. This was Navy law and he screwed up. Little things like that would happen all the time and it was an unpleasant time while he was there. He was always inebriated and I'll never know how Mr. Turak tolerated him.

Alcoholic Captain

He knew that I kept brandy on board. When he came aboard he had a lot of his own alcoholic beverages, but when he ran out he'd come to me or send his messenger to me because he knew I had brandy on board for the divers. I had to account for every ounce of brandy. I could lose morphine syrettes, but I could never be off on a brandy count. I'd use brandy when the deep sea divers were down in cold water and they'd come up. It was Navy custom that they were entitled to a shot or two of brandy. He said, "I'm Captain of the ship and I can't see why 1 can't have it." I went to Mr. Turak and he said I shouldn't give it to him. I said, "What am I gonna do? I've got to expend it some way." They only way I could do it would be to use the life rafts. I had brandy on each of the life rafts. I'd go up to the bridge and say, "Captain, I'd like to make a report." He'd say, ~'What is it Chief?" I'd say, "There's a bottle of brandy missin' off number one life raft." He'd say, "We're gonna catch that S.O.B. and Quartermaster make a notation in the log that there's a bottle of brandy missing off number one life raft." Well, the bottle was in his cabin. With the authority in the notation of the log I could go down and write it out of my logbook that it was thievery and noted in the ship's log, and that the Captain had made a notation as well. This kept going on and one day Mr. Turak was standing there when the messenger came down and I knew what he wanted. Turak had been givin' me hell sayin', "You can't give the Captain brandy. He's stone drunk almost every night." I'd say, "He's gonna find something." So this messenger is standing there with Mr. Turak present and I said, "Messenger what do you want?" He said, "Well, the Captain wants more beverage." I said, "All right, Mr. Turak, tell me I can't give it to him." He hemmed and hawed and went through all kinds of contortions. He said, "Damnit all, I guess there's not a damn thing you can do about it. It's impossible." All this time I had my orders to go back to the states, but I couldn't get my relief aboard because we were all over the Pacific Ocean.

Typhoon in the Philippines

It was about this time, the Fall of 1944, that the big typhoon hit the Philippines. The typhoon was so bad that we'd lost two destroyers as they'd been swamped and sunk. They had their boilers blown up as water got in on their smokestacks. One of the carriers had its flight deck bent. We were based at Ulithi at that time. We went into the middle of this typhoon because one cruiser, the USS Reno, had been torpedoed and it was in a sinking condition. Our Captain was on the bridge giving wild decisions. He was stone drunk and jeopardizing the ship and everyone's lives. The XO got a hold of me and said, "Chief~ what can we do?" We called over and said we'd take aboard survivors from the Reno. Personnel on the Reno said that they were safer on their sinking boat than they would be on our ship. Turak and I made an agreement to bodily take the Captain off the bridge, and we took him off fighting and scrapping. We actually threw him into his cabin and locked the door. Mr. Turak took over the bridge and did a masterful job. He finally got what we call a monkey fist over. We got the initial line over and pretty soon we got the two inch steel cable over. We were able to tow it in the rough sea and I think it took us two days to get in back to Ulithi. I have often wondered if our removal of the Captain from the

bridge been considered a mutiny??

Now we had another problem in dealing with the Captain. Turak had saved the Reno. My relief hadn't shown up yet. Turak and I went together. We went up and opened the door to the Captain's quarters and he was there in bed. He got out. Turak pointed his finger at him very threateningly and said, "If you ever jeopardize the lives of the crew of this ship again, I'm gonna turn you in to the Admiral real quick." Captain Gunn said, "Mr. Turak (that was the first time I'd ever heard him say that) I can promise it'll never happen to you again." We left him and within two hours he'd gotten shaved and cleaned up, and got into his motor launch and away he went. Maybe three hours later I was at my desk when I heard the blinker lights on the bridge. This was one of the few times we were anchored in Ulithi. The messenger came running down to Mr. Turak and he said, "You've got your orders."

The Captain had made sure Mr. Turak could not make one complaint against him. Navy law is such that if you're gonna make a complaint, you have to be a complement on board that ship. Once he had his orders, he couldn't make that complaint. Within two to three hours the Captain was back on board and stone drunk again.

Tanker Explosion 20 November, 1944 USS Mississinewa, A059

The USS Mississinewa

Probably the next day, Turak hadn't left yet, we were underway in the harbor. I don't know who was on the bridge. A big fleet tanker got torpedoed and blew up. We were within 600 to 700 yards of it, and the only ship underway in the whole damn harbor with the whole fleet in there. I found out later (in 2005) that the tanker was torpedoed by a new Japanese manned torpedo. I often wondered how a sub had gotten through the nets, but the manned torpedo stayed right on top. They had a little cockpit on the top of the torpedo. I saw the Japanese admit this is how they did it on TV. We were the first ones to the ship and fighting the fire. We were pickin' bodies out of the water. I musta had 15 bodies on board. The ship was still afloat and burning and I couldn't believe there were no survivors. I stacked up the bodies on fantail. A group of us went on board the tanker. I'll never go aboard anything now without a lantern. We got down into passageways and thought we could hear some of the crew tapping. We couldn't get to them. The hatches were sprung and we couldn't get them opened. Then we got word the tanker was sinkin' and now we had to get out. It was pitch dark and which way to run? You start stumbling through. I finally saw daylight and got out and they'd cut the lines because it was takin' our ship down with it. We left men we couldn't get to. I had to make out death reports, Form "N" on these people and a lot of them weren't identifiable. We got rifles out to sink anything on the surface. They kept shooting at one item they couldn't sink. They sent the motor launch over to it. They finally drug it back and it was a small body with the top of the head blown off. Pretty soon another landing craft came over and took all the bodies, but this was only after I'd finger printed and done all the death reports. I believe that the last body found was that of the Japanese pilot of the Kaiten Manned Torpedo. His name was Sub-Lieutenant Sedio Nishina, a co-developer of the Kaiten and a hero in Japanese history. Not knowing this at that time, I assumed he was a US sailor and he was buried at sea with God's blessing and all other honors as an American sailor.

Relief Aboard

A day or so later I got my relief on board and I was so happy. Captain Gunn called me up and thanked me. This was in December of 1944. I was about to board the aircraft carrier, the USS Enterprise, to take me back to the states.

A Medic's Stress

Before the Enterprise I had big personal problems in the Pacific. I was on individual duty as the first aid man, and I didn't know how far I could go. This is a lot of stress on a medic that's all by himself with 150 men and 10 officers. I've done trauma surgery and this and that, but I was always worried about liability. I wrote to the Bureau of Medicine. I wrote to the Navy Department. I never could get an answer from them. One day I ran into Dr. Gilliam out in the Pacific. We were on the USS Wakefield together when the war started. We spent the afternoon talking and that was my main question to him. He said, "Marshall you can go as far as you need to go. There's no limit. After we stop the hemorrhage and shock and so forth is when we make our mistakes as doctors. Now we've got to determine which patient comes first, it's called triage. This is important. Sit back, have a cigarette, and evaluate the situation. Ask yourself, "Where do I go next?" I know you're gonna be criticized for this, but this is where we make mistakes." This was quite an education for me. We had quite a conversation that one afternoon. It made me feel a lot better and I stopped worrying about it. I did what I could do and that was it. Dr. Gilliam and I had to euthanize my good friend Paul Cronce at Singapore. He stated that we alternated the morphine shots so we will never know who administered the fatal shot. He said that you shouldn't feel guilty under those circumstances. It had to be done, and I agreed. A weight had been lifted off my "mental" shoulders.

The Big E

I went aboard the Enterprise, "the Big E", the aircraft carrier that survived the whole war. I was on for transportation back to the states and they were gonna take me as far as Pearl Harbor. On board the Enterprise I was on top side, being a Chief, as I had no duties. They gave me a berth in sick bay which was air conditioned. I'd never been aboard an air conditioned ship before. The planes were takin' off and practice landing and all, and I happened to make a comment one day that I'd love to have the chance to take off and land on a carrier some day. Someone heard me and asked if I wanted to do it. They said, "We've got a group going over to a by-passed Japanese island called Yap and we're just gonna do a practice run so we don't need gunners and you can ride as a gunner." I said, "Let me think about it." I'd always dreamed that if I was gonna get it, it was gonna be in an airplane. As much as I wanted to go, I chickened out. I regret it to this day.

Another Typhoon

We were in another typhoon out there. All of the sudden we moved into an absolute quiet area. Not a piece of wind, nothing. Nothing stirring. I went up on the bridge and said, "What's goin' on? We just got outta hell." They said that we were in the eye of the typhoon and that we were gonna be out of it in another half hour or so. Everything was absolutely still. You couldn't see any disturbance; it was absolute quiet with not a ripple on the water. It was something remarkable to experience.

BACK IN THE STATES

The Stay at Hawaii

When I got to Honolulu, it was cool to me. I was so black from the sun. A lot of the times we didn't have shirts on and really got a lot of exposure to the sun. At Pearl Harbor, while waiting for transportation from there to the states, they sent me out to a "Receiving and Ship" out in a pineapple field way out in the middle of Hawaii. It was so quiet you could hear a mosquito from one end of the building to the other. Here I've just left a ship where the engine rooms were right beneath me. The sleeping compartment temperature on the tug would

run about 120 degrees. We'd be sleepin' in salt, and the sheets would be just soakin' wet. We all had to take salt tablets. We would sleep on topside if we could. Even if it rained we'd stay up there to keep from having to go below decks and put up with that heat. It was so quiet I couldn't sleep. I couldn't hear, or feel, the vibrations of the diesel electric engines. It was just impossible to sleep. Eventually I was assigned to an army ship and I was put in charge of 100 constitutionally psychopathic state patients. I asked what kind of help I was gonna have and they said, "You're it." I asked how could one person take care of 100 mental patients. They said, "That's your problem." I did it.

MY CHOICE OF DUTY

I finally made it back to San Francisco and at that point they asked me where I wanted to go. I said I wanted to get as far away from the Pacific as I could get. So they sent me to the New York Naval Hospital in Brooklyn, NY. Lo and behold, John McCormick was located there. I ended up workin' for him. He was a full Commander at that time. He put me with him in Property and Accounting. All the Chiefs ate with all the officers. We had in our quarters a TV projection set of all things. I was there probably two months and I was doing a lot of things for Mr. McCormick. One day he said, "Marshall, I'm gonna have you transferred." I said, "I don't understand. I enjoy it here. Have I done something?" He said, "No, but I think you deserve this." I said, "Please don't. I'm very happy." It wasn't more than about a week later I was having lunch in the officer's lounge and my orders came through. I asked where I was going. He said, "You're going to Hunter College." I said, "I don't even know what it is." He said, "You must know someone!"

MY NEW ASSIGNMENT

Hunter College is out in the Bronx. It was the waves training station. There were about 10,000 women on board and there wasn't more than eight men on the whole station. So I packed all my bags and went to see Mr. McCormick. He had a smile on his face and he said, "I think you're gonna like that duty. The Executive Officer I know you're gonna like, her name is Helen Jacobs." She was a wonderful person. I got to know her real well. Helen Jacobs was a former Wimbledon and US Tennis Champion. After WWII The United Nations was founded and their first home was Hunter College. Before the war it was an exclusive girls college.

I arrived and they asked me to sign the transfer of medical property and I said, "No, I want to take an inventory before I sign." This was probably one of the best things I ever did because there were complete dental units missing, X-Ray machines missing, podiatry equipment missing, everything missing. There must have been hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of equipment missing. The dental officers on the beaches would just come out and take whatever they wanted. Same with the podiatrists. I made up a formal survey and I checked disciplinary action indicated everywhere. I called the Medical Supply Depot and said that this is what I found and they said to just make an inventory adjustment. I said that I wanted someone from their department to come out and sign the formal survey too. They did so begrudgingly and we got it all resolved.

Hunter College was fantastic and I probably had 100 girls workin' for me there. I found out it was different trying to discipline or get something done with a girl employee. With a man you could say, "Hey, do this damnit!" But you couldn't do that with a girl. You have to use tact and go about it different. Otherwise you've got tears coming down the eyes and so forth.

It was a great period of time in early '45. The girls used to play all kinds of tricks on me. They'd have a new group of recruits comin' through and all of the sudden they'd say, "Chief, we've got a daisy chain down here." This meant they had all new recruits. I'd say I was busy and they'd say, "Yeah, but the doctor wants you down here." So I'd go down there and there'd be about 200 naked women on this daisy chain. They were having fun with me, constantly pullin' tricks. The Chiefs mess was at the end of this great big auditorium up on

the stage. I was the only male chief and there were probably 40-50 female chiefs. I'd hafta walk through this auditorium while there were probably 3,000 ladies eating. It was embarrassing because they'd start clapping every time I took a step until I got to the table and sit down. This went on every day, but I enjoyed it I guess.

There was one police officer Chief there from Los Angeles and her name was Dressler. What a wonderful person. She told me she was gonna have to look out for me because she was afraid I was very vulnerable. She could tell where each girl came from and what her disposition was and whatever. She really knew people. I remember one time I got a call from a girl I'd known and she wanted to see me again. She had just been discharged from the WACS. She was a beautiful girl and I said fine. I told Dressier about her and she asked where we were gonna go to dinner. I told her and she said, "Oh, OK." She asked what time we were gonna go and I told her. So I took my girlfriend to this restaurant and we were seated and were having dinner. I got a phone call. It was Dressler on the phone. She said, "Marshall, I'm sorry to call you but I had to call. Your date is pregnant. I'm a detective. I've been in the police department for years and I recognize certain signs on women and this is one sign you overlooked. I think you're bein' set up so you be careful that's all I wanna say." By God, she was right. That was Dressler. I never got to see her after I left there.

I got to meet some of the professional tennis players that came in with Helen Jacobs. Bill Tilden for one. He was questionable. There were several others that came in, even some of the women. I used to go out with that group with Helen Jacobs and her friends and I got to meet a lot of nice people.

When Germany surrendered 1 happened to be down town as I was still stationed at Hunter College. They took me off the street and put me on TV. I don't remember what program it was, but there was a beautiful girl named Candy that was announcing and conducting the program.

THE WAR WAS OVER

When Japan surrendered they told me they were gonna keep me as they needed me. I found out, however, that I had the most discharge points of anyone in that 3rd Naval District. I said, "I wanna go home." They said that they would give me Lieutenancy or Chief Warrant Officer to keep me in, but I said, "I'm sorry, I'm going home. I've got time. I wanna go back and go into medicine. You try to keep me and I'll be like a log and won't do anything."

I was finally discharged and came on back home and went to the University of Michigan. I'd gotten my credits from school and went to talk to the counselor at the University of Michigan. All my education and credits from the Navy wouldn't qualify me for credit there. They wouldn't accept them. They said, "You're gonna have to go back and take pre-med." I said, "These last seven years have broadened me and rounded my education considerably." I felt insulted. So, I took a special business/ administration course offered to vets and it was very helpful. I always had frustration that I should have gone ahead and got a medical degree, but I never did it.

I found college very difficult. I was constantly arguing with the professor (who hadn't experienced war) and I was very opinionated. The younger college students would have nothing to do with the veterans. The vets would hang out together because of necessity.

When I was discharged from the Navy on October 8, 1945, at Great Lakes I had a speech impediment. That eventually got better but I still cannot speak before groups of people. I have always been a perfectionist (what a cross to carry) and that was difficult for my family to understand. I was never a drunk or a dope addict, but I was a strict family disciplinarian. I had a wonderful family, a loving, understanding wife for 54 years, three wonderful sons who have done well and I'm very proud of them. But two of them told me and their mother that

they would never have children.

Two years ago I went to Washington, D.C., to help dedicate the World War II memorial and the day before I paid my respects at the Iwo Jima memorial, and accidentally wandered into an area honoring FDR. As I stood before "The Day of Infamy" plaque I lost my mental control and anger took over, and I expressed myself vehemently. "That's not the way the war started!" I was led away. Soon after I was diagnosed with PTSD and I now understand my many mood swings with anger. I lost some close friends and accounts that I will never know that caused my source of anger. I never knew, but I know now.

On the 1st of August, 2006, I was taken to the local emergency room having experienced a severe seizure on Lake Michigan. The hospital took an MRI and a cat scan of my brain and there were no recent strokes. But it did show that I had experienced a stroke a long time ago. I never had a history of a stroke, but I stated that I was within 15 feet of a Japanese bomb blast on board my ship at Singapore at the start of the war. I asked if the concussion from the blast could have caused the brain injury that would also account for the three days after the blast that I cannot account for. The doctor said yes. So we never know when or where we will find war injuries. But at least I have answers to problems that I have carried for 66 years, and I am undergoing treatment at the Veteran's Clinic and the Veteran Hospital.

My wife lost her only brother on his first mission on a ff47 Bomber in October of 1944 (Sgt. Edward Ankli). Through 54 years of marriage, Lorraine never complained about my many mood swings but always remained very supportive and understanding. She knew, by instinct evidently, what was causing these swings. She was a very special person, and my sons are like her in many respects. God Bless them all.

Edward “Bucky” Dwan

In January, 1967 Lake Michigan claimed another brave veteran of World War II. Captain Dwan was a former pilot who had spent nine years in the Air Force. He had flown B-24s in 30 missions over Germany and was decorated for heroism. He and his crew went through some pretty tough times during these missions.

One mission was particularly rough. His plane was so battered that it was a miracle that he made it back. His co-pilot did not. His head was blown off during the flight and Bucky had to handle the instruments and controls himself during the ceaseless pounding. For this courageous action he was award the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Dwan was 48 in 1967 and had over ten thousand hours of flight time when he lost his life in a private plane. He had flown with a buddy to Sheboygan, Wisconsin to pick up another plane. The friend made it back in their jointly-owned plane, but Dwan’s luck ran out over the winter lake.

Aerial search was conducted by Michigan and Wisconsin Civil Air Patrol units and Coast Guard helicopters but no trace was ever found. The Muskegon Coast Guard Station reported gusty southwest winds of 30-36 mph with some snow over Dwan’s route.

The plane was a white Swift, 1946-48 model with blue stripes. A ground crewman at Sheboygan reportedly told Dwan that the plane he had just purchased had a tendency to ice up. He advised him to fly over land to give it ample time to warm up before encountering the possible icy conditions over the lake.
Air force planes have a fuel injection system which eliminates the necessity of applying carburetor an automatic heating system to clear the carburetor of ice.

Private planes on the other hand require the pilot to apply heat under certain situations. Perhaps this accounted for his momentary lapse of concentration under extremely difficult weather. Dwan left a wife and four sons.

Submitted by Robert Hatch

The 82nd Airborne Division in Normandy

Bill Giegold, 82nd Airborne Division 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Fox Company

Bill Giegold, WWII Paratrooper
82nd AB, 508th PIR, Fox Co.

Command structure:
Commander: Major General Matthew B. Ridgway (transferred and Gavin took over)
Adjoint: Brig. Gen. James M. Gavin and Brig. Gen. George Howell

Chiefs: Col. Ralph Eaton (wounded June 6th), Col. Ed Raff (June 8-15), Lt. Col. Bob Wienecke

GI Lt. Col. Fred Schelihammer
G2 Lt. Col. Jack Whitfield
G3 Lt. Col. Bob Wienecke
G3: Lt. Col. Walt Winton
G3 Lt. Col. Henry Adams
G4 Lt. Col. Ben Zinn (wounded June 7th)
G4 Lt. Col. Frank Mormann
In charge of:
Communications: Capt. Bob Furman
Health: Lt. Col. Wolcott Etienne (wounded June 6th)
QG: Maj.Don Faith
Chaplain: Col. George Riddle
Civil Affairs: Capt. Peter Shouvaloff

505th Col.. Will Ekman
507th Col. Geo. Millet (captured June 8th)
507th: Col. Art Maloney
507th: Col. Ed Raff (wounded June 7th)
508th: Col. Roy Lindquist
325th gliders: Col. Harry Lewis
82nd: Artillery: Col. Francis March
319th glider art: Lt. Col. James Todd
320th glider art: Lt. Col. Paul Wright
456th paratroop art: Lt. Col. Wagner d'Allessio
80th Bat AT and DCA: Lt. Col. Ray Singleton
307th para eng: Lt. Col. Bob Palmer (captured June 6)
307th med. Officer: Maj. Will Houston (KIA June 6), then Maj. Jerry Belden
82nd QG officer: Capt. Geo. Claussen
82nd Radio Officer: Lt. Bob Neil
82nd Recon Platoon: Lt. Joe Demasi
82nd MP: Maj. Fred Collum
82nd Supply Officer: Capt. Jim Griffin

LETTER FROM A FRENCH CITIZEN RECORDING MEMORIES OF:

June 6, 1944 at 6 a.m.

From: Marie T Lavielle
Village of Pretot (near Picauville) on the Manche (the sleeve-like peninsula of Normandy, France)

"In the heart of the Cotentin region on an isolated farm occupied by my family, I awoke abruptly.

What was happening? I was under the impression that the wall that my bed was against trembled and resounded. Then I heard some voices in the kitchen.

Quickly I got up and discovered an unusual scene. A man - quite bizarre - was seated in a chair in the middle of the room. He wore sort of a khaki uniform, very soft and flexible, with pockets throughout.

On his head, he wore a helmet covered with leaves, while his face was camouflaged in black. He spoke using words that I could not understand. My mother and brothers surrounded him, and were trying to guess what he was saying.

His left hand seemed to support his arm. Without ceasing, he repeated *broken, broken.*

Suddenly, releasing his arm, he pulled out a knife that was contained in a sheath on his lower leg. He then cut a strip from a roll of bandage that had been in a pocket in his pants. And, most wonderfully, he pulled out a chocolate bar that he gave to us.

This man, quite strange, was, thus, our friend.

Broken - this first English word remains burned into my memory.

This paratrooper of the 82" Airborne Division (Bill Giegold) was lost in the country of Normandy, on this morning, and had a broken shoulder. One of my brothers drove him to a place where he was cared for.

As for me, I was 9 years old, and because of this extraordinary experience, I became an English professor, often serving as an interpreter during ceremonies of the Anniversary of D-Day."

Marie - T Lavielle (April 5, 2001 at age 66)

Bridgeheads around la Haye-du-Puit

The objectives of the day I attained, but there were other tasks awaiting the 82nd AB Division. Capturing the bridgeheads concerned us, since these were crossings for our offensive forces. The 82nd launched three4 attacks in these areas: Baupte-Coigny, St. Sauvier le Vicomte, and La Haye-du-Puits. Participating in he isolation of the peninsula by joining up with the 101st AB to speed up Bradley's getting out of the marshlands was the goal pursued by the Major General Ridgeway's (commander of 82nd Airborne) men. The 82nd AB paratroopers advanced to just south of Picauville.

The crossing of the Douve River at Beuzeville ía Bastille on June 13th

During the evening of June 11th, Roy Lindquist, commanding the 508th parachute infantry regiment, reorganized the group while on Hill 30, and found out that the fellows of the 90th
Infantry were pinned down at Pont l'Abbe. This was reported by Lt .Col. Tom Shanley. After hearing this, our ears began to heat up. They certainly didn't like to have the Krauts at their back shooting down on them. "Grab a boat under the cover of night, you're going to the bridge at Beuzeville4a-Bastille!"

The small boat capsized in the marsh, and the patrol unsuccessfully tried to flip it back over. At midnite on June 12, Lt. Goodale at the head of Fox company, after some violent artillery attacks made by the 319th, 320th, and 188th artillery units, the 307th battalion of engineers put together a footbridge for pedestrians which crossed a large bomb crater that had split the road. Footbridge was completed at 8:30. Gielgold crossed at midnite. The boat had wooden sides and a tin bottom. One went over a bank and burnd. A pontoon Bailey bridge then allowed C Company to cross.

Lt. Goodale destroyed two tanks and neutralized all resistance at Beuzeville la Bastille; after about five hours, the entire regiment was on the southern banks of the Douve River marching to new objectives. [Bill Giegold was here] Lt. Goodale was Giegold's platoon commander, commanding Fox company, was hit on July 3th along with Eddy Chitoyen. Goodale was in a hospital in England, and then was sent to the Battle of the Bulge. Here, Goodale was killed by a German while sitting on a log. I believe the German held a prisoner upon approach, and used him as a shielth Bill Giegold was once standing by Lt. Goodale in a French garden when Goodale shot unarmed Germans trying to return via the railroad. He captured many and put them in a garage, and a cook threw in a grenade. Captain Flanders was taken prisoner on d-day. During truck transport he was killed by strafing by one of our planes. Frank Mckee was laying in a ditch, and Bill Giegold made the medics pick him up via a drawn 45. This saved Mckee's life, and everytime Mckee calls Bill, he says "Thanks for saving my life."

Bill slept in a graveyard at Baupte by order of Goodale. He and a second lieutenant, which was later killed on Hill 95, jumped over a hedgerow and saw two German medics. The second Lt.'s false teeth fell out because he was gritting his teeth so hard. Ray Boizier (his brother was an actor) ordered Bill Giegold to mount the rear of a tank, and then Lt. Goodale ordered him off to avoid being killed. Roy was then shot.

Major Warren of the 1st Battalion of the 508th won the town of Coigny with the help of Lt. Colonel Mendez of the 3rd battalion of the 508th who acted as a shield at Taillefer on the right flank. The principal role of the 2nd battalion of the 508th under the direction of Lt.
Colonel Shanley was to secure the southern area of Baupte to join up with the 101st AB Div.
Col. Mendez was an Inca Indian. After the war he married and had 10 kids. He progressed to be a one star general.

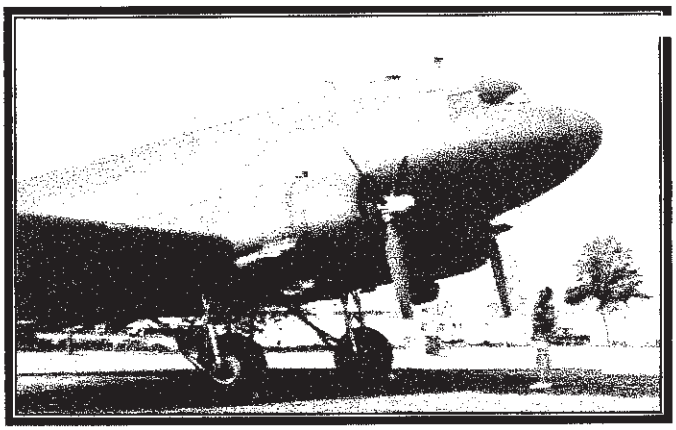
12 Tanks destroyed around Coigny!

Leaving Beauzeville Ia Bastille, the 1st battalion of Major Warren progressed toward Coigny. At about 8 am, the platoon of Lt. Weaver made known two tanks at Cretteville, which were then destroyed. Shortly afterwards, five Renault tanks suddenly came from the castle of Francquetot which were of the 100th Panzer battalion. Around 6 pm, Major Warren seized Coigny, sending out patrols, and organizing his positions. To protect his unprotected left flank, Warren quickly sent Captain Jonathan Adams with two companies and an anti-tank gun to la Hogue at the crossroads of the Vierge. Waiting in ambush, Capt. Adams and his men got five tanks, but lost the command tank who managed to escape.

On June 13th, the 1st battalion of Major Warren added to the hunt a total of twelve tanks in twelve hours of combat. (Bill Giegold was involved with the tank hunt) This number was never exceeded by any other paratroop unit. Where, therefore, was the infantry who was supposed to protect the German tanks? The answer is, without doubt, brought about by the 3rd battalion of Lt. Colonel Mendez who captured some snipers.

Chipman (Wisconsin) , Montgomery (Illinois), and Giegold were crawling along a hedgerow when German snipers got both guys, but couldn't get Giegold because of a tree branch. The prisoners said that more than 100 snipers were dispatched to the front under order to shoot paratroopers until out of ammunition. Among the prisoners it was noticed that the tank crews wore black uniforms. The majority of the prisoners were not German. There were also mercenary artillery units of Mongolians using horse drawn equipment. The officers had deserted the front, leaving the sergeants without provisions. They were out of ammo. Briefly, everyone said the same thing; some were Polish, but all had a terrible fear of American artillery.

During the afternoon, the 3rd battalion of the 508th under Lt. Col. Mendez took defensive positions between Pont-Auny and Hotot. Colonel Lindquist was at Taillefer. The enemy made his front at the line of Sablons-Pretot, where we were face to face with the enemy for quite some time.



C-47 "Dakota/Gooney Bird/5kytrain

I Hit a Tank Full of Fight!

With the second battalion of the 508th, I had embarked to go to Cottesmore and we flew around Normandy when above the Cotentin the flak exploded. We were in a barrage of flak, says Eddie Wenzel. My plane was hit by the exploding flak, and I received some in my right leg, which traversed through a box of rations and my pant leg, but I didn't realize it at the moment.

At the signal of the green light, the C-47 bounced, and we had a bit of sickness while jumping out the door. My parachute opened very close to the ground. I was above two German machine gunners, and then landed in an orchard. At the last moment, I tried to avoid landing in a tree so not to be suspended helplessly in my harness. Then I found myself hilling the ground quite roughly, which gave me a backache. C-47s flew at 350 to 600 fett and the parachute took 72 feet to open. Giegold's C-47 was fatally hit and was falling backwards out of the sky. He stood, headed for the door and slid down the aluminum floor going out the door. He landed in an orchard south of Baupte. He found a kid "Oburn" stuck in a free and helped him out. Oburn was then shot by two Germans at a later point. Bill was south of Baupte on the west side of the Douve River. Baupte was on the east side.

"Shanley was an Irish boxer, and had the mind of a nuclear physicist"
-General James M. Gavin

The Germans were all around me. I waited, without moving, until finally I was found by two buddies. It was difficult to orient ourselves to the surroundings, and we knew we were far from the specified dropzone (DZ). We avoided the Germans, and headed towards Hill 30 where Shanley was. I had a 1903 Springfield rifle and an anti-tank grenade launcher. The 1903 Springfield was bolt action with an attachment to shoot grenades. Other guys carried a 30 caliber Garand which was semi automatic. A "lowly grease gun" looked like a grease gun and shot 38 caliber (9mm) ammo. So, could shoot German ammo. The bazooka used anti-tank round CR's; two pieces put together. It was too long to jump with by parachute. One guy carried both parts. It was heavy, and another guy had to carry the ammo. I also had a good supply of explosives in my pockets, not to mention our standard equipment. It was enough to impose respect!

On June 13, with my platoon, I was one of the guys about to attack Beuzeville and Baupte, advancing with my Springfield rifle. Everything went well to begin with, except that my back was killing me. In a small descent, I saw some magnificent horses and I wanted to pet them. "Tanks!" someone yelled. In returning to the road, I shot at the tank. The tank was hit and this aroused curiosity, followed by a bunch of Germans who got out and began to fight. At this moment another tank showed up on the road; the Germans were running and shooting. In the fight, I received a bullet from a German hidden in the hedgerow. When I opened my eyes while under a bush, I gave myself a shot of morphine for the pain, and then two medics hauled me away on a jeep away from Beauzeville. It was during this attack that Bill Elrich was killed. I was hospitalized and later in the Ardennes I rejoined my regiment.

June 13 was one of the toughest days to befall the 2nd battalion of the 508thof Col. Shanley, with the capture of Baupte, the intersection of the roads through the marshlands. At Sam, the Fox company had cleansed Beuzeville la Bastille and rejoined the battalion preceding the Easy company to attack Houtteville. Two tanks showed up to fight the paratroopers. The guys hidden in the ditch threw some Gammon grenades under the tank tracks, disabling them. All 114 Germans were killed. While moving the dead Germans off of the road, a grenade fell out of one of their pockets, which scared us greatly. *[Bill Giegold thinks Charlie company went to take a small town]*

The Easy company had stopped about two kilometers from Baupte by a violent fire. Col. Shanley told the patrol that artillery and tank forces were in front of them. At 4 pm, the attack began after a shooting barrage. The Dog company put pressure on from the North while Fox company made a move to the right, cleaning the southern half of a village, which entailed an hour of shooting. The Easy company then followed Fox company to penetrate the village to the northeast.

This time the resistance collapsed, but the Germans fought with determination. The paratroopers discovered that they had uncovered the 100th Panzer battalion, including 10 tanks, 50 cars and trucks, and a fuel depot. In addition, to the south, the Fox company would not rest until finding and taking four big DCA guns hidden on railroad track. *[Bill Giegold says they used explosives to blow up the railroad and guns]*

By the evening Col. Shanley had control of Baupte and the surrounding areas. The bridges to the east were destroyed by order and a blockade was held by D company of the 508th covering the road to d'Auvers. *[towards Carentan]*

At midnight, the paratroopers of Major Warren (1st battalion) dug in near to Launay, just to the west of Baupte next to the sector which appeared menacing. Because of the isolation, a counter attack by the enemy could be fatal.

Lot of paratroopers! Stay with us!

It was the cry of the Germans on June 6, recalls Mr. Goubert, mayor of Baupte. All the French citizens of Baupte

had found refuge in the nearby village of Frene by the swamp. The big DCA machine guns shot all night at the C-47s dropping paratroopers. Debris fell all around Baupte. The Germans said, "Stay in your homes! Lots of paratroopers!"

A small group of Americans hid on the Lamberton farm. A Lieutenant paratrooper and his men were killed by the Germans. Five survivors took the captive path, while the other paratroops who were pursued by the Germans took another stand at Appeville.

"Bad misfortune! Maybe our hour has come!" said the German officer at Coigny when he arrived and saw the blood-covered body of the American Lieutenant paratrooper.

Baupte was liberated on June 13, where a German tank commander had ordered all of his forces (100 men, 8 tanks, and some work trucks) to respond to the American attack there. He faced no hope in his defense, because, at that date, the town of Baupte was a definite target of the Americans.

Enclosed in his tank, the German tank commander gave 20 francs to a native for a bottle of cider. Then he engaged in battle in the marshes, in which his tank got stuck, and then was burned. In retaliation, the Germans blew up the railroad bridges at St. Jores.

The Germans lost here and became prisoners, a full company minus 37 fatalities. Two tanks were burned in the slaughter. Despite the fighting, each person managed to eat and offer his services to the others. And in accordance with that on June 13, cabbage leaves were given to the rabbits in the farm buildings!

During the calm, I was quickly going to pick some good cabbage leaves to distribute at the farm building. Arriving at the farm building, I discovered German prisoners sitting on the straw guarded by some paratroopers.

In seeing me, the Germans opened their eyes as big as billiard balls. Already, they regretted the failure of the German war-machine. The paratroopers laughed over this.

Paratroopers pleased to steal German truck!

During the attack on Baupte, we progressed north to a wide open field; both companies were in lines. Suddenly to the extreme left of the field, a rabbit (German soldier) fired on us. This was followed by an assault to the right flank of the company lines. A small rabbit was ridiculing the men of Col. Shanley. With continual combat tension, we had an immense need to relax.

At Baupte, the capture of a truck of the 100th Panzer division made paratroopers quite content, especially for those who couldn't walk. "Ok guys, let's head for Paris!" somebody said. Unfortunately the trip wasn't very long.

On the evening of June 13, the front left Baupte, Frene, Hotot, the crossroads of Vierge, Pont Auny, Taillefer, with a light bend at Francquetot. Major Warren was with his men near to Prieure.

The paratroopers in front of Coigny

On June 13 with two machine gun vehicles and a GMC truck, the paratroopers were guided by a Frenchman to strike a blow in the direction of St. Jorerie to help the other paratroopers, explained Mr. Levesque of Coigny.

On this date, the air support fellows did some bombing on the St. Jores road on the way to Margaleuse. The double fuselage chasers (P-38s) rocked and pivoted like swallows on one wing, their guns opening fire on churned up ground. After bombing, the planes would emerge from a cloud of fire, smoke, and explosions. Dead bodies filled the fields around Margaleuse, as well as Renault tanks. This company, by orders of Major Nicholas who had his Command Post at Francquetot, left to aid the fellows near St. Jores and Periers. The survivors were

stranded at Baupte.

On the morning of June 13, after passing the night in a trench underneath artillery fire, there were paratroopers everywhere. During the night, a German patrol killed a paratrooper in the door of the farm building where I was. Following from June 13 to July 3, the front remained stationary while fighting went on north of presqu'il. The paratroopers continued to rebuild their lines along St. Jores, the first line being near la Judee, which is where I received a volley of shots from Germans while taking milk to the paratroopers. As you can imagine, they really liked the milk. *[Bill Giegold got milk from the farmers, and he really loved itJ*

On the morning of July 3, the 508th division rested for the well-being of the paratroopers. Jeeps, Dodge's, half-tracks, and Sherman's kept going past for many days. It was a preparation for a big attack on Mount Castre (Hill 122). We saw a lot of tanks going through the hedgerows.

During the following days the fellows had to undergo several alerts and to hold and consolidate theft positions in spite of their small numbers. July 14th at 7:30am, an attack came from Pretot which hit the positions at Pont-Auny and the mortars of the 81st made some big holes. On July 15th the alert was given for the morning; the artillery of the 319th pounded for 15 minutes. At about 10:30am, Major Warren ordered a response to counteract the fierce resistance at Pont Auny. At 4 pm, all actions halted; the enemy was weakening. On the evening of July 15th Col. Lindquist established a PC (communications post) of the 508th at the castle of Francquetot, near his three battalions. Only D company stayed at Baupte near a destroyed bridge.

I am very bothered to see two generals climbing up the tree!

During June 15th, I was on observation with my binoculars in the bell-tower at Baupte, reported Zane Schlenimer. Schlemmer uis a Hawaiian and was an 81 mm man. He made his name well-known in Nijmegen, Holland where he was the only mortar man available and eradicated 300 heines. When called he came leading a cow carrying the equipment.

I saw a big group of 50-60 German bicyclists on the road. These 50-60 Germans on the bicycles were machine gunners. Pedaling in the fresh morning air, they began to spin out to the right under our fire. The shooting barrage got all the Germans on the road in a mass of tangled up bicycles. What an elimination of heines at one time. Two were captured. Nine remained stretched out, laying down on the road, and the rest tried to escape. This bicycle formation came from Tribehou to reinforce the forward German posts of Baupte who, for two days, were already taken by the paratroopers. This sudden event made an ending of action for that regiment, which was shortly relieved by the arriving 507th regiment. Giegold was on the other side of town with a machine gunner named Elash. Giegold threw a gammon grenade on a Renault tank followed by a phosphorus grenade. This got the tank, but one man escaped in the smoke, which Elash got. Dash had just cleaned his machine gun and had put one bullet in for testing, and here came the heine.

Zane Schlemmer was at the Pont-Auny front, and I was climbing in a tree to observe and regulate the firing of mortars of the 8Vt. At this moment, an 88 shell passed over us; the bad thing about this was that powder then covered everything including my binoculars, coming from the nose of that famous gun.

Suddenly there was noise below me, and I saw two generals climbing up the tree under the fire of the 88s. I peered through the branches to see that it was Gen. Ridgway and
Gen. Gavin; I was nervously seated between two generals in my tree, under the fire of the
88s.

General Ridgway asked me what I was doing, and I told him that I was observing. He said to direct our mortars onto the presumed location of the 88s. At the moment that he said these words, three 88 shells whistled through the top of my tree at such a terrifying speed that both generals rapidly descended from the tree, to continue visiting our positions.

We were very proud of our officers who were always with us on the front lines with the fellas. After a short stop in Etienville to rest the division, the 508th of Lindquist was ordered to march to St. Sauveur le Vicomte to take a bridge on the Douve River and to take some defensive positions to the south of the village.

June 16th, General Ridgway captures St Sauveur leVicomte

[Bill Giegold was involved here, also James Gavin]

According to Collin's orders, the 82nd had to also exercise their effort to the west in the slicing of the enemy's forces to isolate the peninsula. The 82nd had been assigned to clear a corridor between the 90th and the Douve River; that is to say the axis that runs through Pont I'Abbe and St. Sauveur le Vicomte.

After the taking of Picauville on June 10th by the 358th Infantry Regiment of Col. James Thompson, the next day brought the junction with the parachutists of Shanley, which had been isolated on Hill 30. The 90th, then, renewed its attacking effort, but was stopped at Pont l'Abbe, where the enemy stubbornly fought to defend one of its principal routes to the center of Presqu'ile. Finally, on the evening of June 12th, after two days of bombardment and aerial attack that left many craters, the town of Pont 1 'Abbe was liberated. General Omar Bradley was furious with the 90th, and he immediately relieved the commander of that division.

On June 14, it was at the sides of the men of the 507th and the 325th glider division, that General Manton Eddy attacked in the direction of St. Sauveur le Vicomte and traversed the ruins of Pont l'Abbe. On June 15th after having destroyed two tanks, they took Bonneville while the 325th glider division captured the road intersection at Rauville laPlace (QG of the 91st Infantry Division of Col. Konig).

At midday of June 16th, grace to the applied force of the 746th tank battalion, three parachute regiments took the river side by St. Sauveur le Vicomte; the Germans in complete retreat blew up the bridge. Ridgway was assigned by the PC to be stationed in the castle at Rauville, and he got everyone he could to help in his project of securing the Contentin area. The goal was to get his paratroopers to the other side of the river. He ordered two battalions to the other side of the Douve River. The 2nd battalion of the 505th crossed the river and took St. Sauveur le Vicomte, while the 1st of the 505th went beyond this village about two kilometers. In between time, the 508th, which went to Coigny, was reassembled at Etienville. The 3rd battalion of the 508th relieved the 3rd battalion of the 505th at Crosville, and at 10 pm, the 1st and 2nd battalions of the 508th had penetrated the bridgehead; they took a position to the south of Crosville on the route to La Haye du Puits. The responsibility for the northern half of the bridgehead was given to the 505th, which positioned itself on higher ground 2500 meters around Crosville. The 508th was responsible for the other half [Bill Giegold says the 5O8th was to the north side and the 505th to the south, but he helped guard the southern half of the bridge]

A Bailey Bridge across the Douve River was constructed in two hours which permitted armored equipment to pass to the west side of the river. None of the elevated artillery positions to the east of St Sauveur le Vicomte were able to pound on the retreating enemy. The first Piper Cub observation planes had no difficulty reaching the front. At 11pm the bridgehead at St. Sauveur le Vicomte was solidly taken by the paratroopers of Ridgway. [Bill Giegold was involved in the battle of St Sauveur le Vicomte]

"You can tell Eddy that the road is open to him" was the comment announced on the radio from

Ridgway to Collins.

This advance rapidly dispersed among Collins environment like a bomb; Collins was expecting a rash response from the enemy. Manton Eddy commanded the 9th Infantry Division and placed double blockades, and sent, in urgence, his 47th Infantry Regiment to St. Lo d'Ourville and St. Sauveur de Pierrepont to cross the bridge of Ridgway.

The next day included clearing and reorganizing; company C of the 508th established a barricade on the La Haye du Puit road, and then blew up the bridge of the Prairie Marecageuses (the prairie marshes). Reinforcements from the 90th division arrived. In two days (June 17-18), the Cotentin (peninsula) area had been cut off from the enemy. This left some of the enemy by itself in presqu'ile. The offensive at Cherbourg opened with three divisions to take the big port located there.

Bill Giegold has told me of a Sergeant Funk whom he knew in C company, a guy who shot first, and asked questions later. He was real gutsy, and once upon a time left 5 paratroopers to guard 22 Krauts. Other Krauts came along and retook the situation. Leo came around the corner, told his guys to duck, and mowed all the Germans down single-handedly.

Paratroopers at St Sauveur le Vicomte

Lieutenant Fred Cappa landed in the middle of the village, and was then retrieved by Mr. Raymond Osouf who hid Fred in an attic for six days. After this time, other paratroopers arrived which he joined. Mrs. Delacotte observed dozens of paratroopers who laid dead on the road to the abbey. Lt. Colonel Herbert Batcheller commanded the 1st of the 508th and had assembled a small number of men during the night for a counter-attack. The surviving parachutists (about 20) were imprisoned in the baker's shop just west of the village. The bridge, on June 6th at 9:30am, was promptly destroyed by a group of P-38 Lightnings, which was a titanic spectacle to see.

At this moment, a German convoy of armored vehicles carying men and munitions was crossing the bridge, which was blown up, landing partially in the Douve River, and also in the village. The general public was surrounded by falling debris, which put them at risk. It was a horrifying massacre. The part of the convoy not on the bridge had taken cover within a row of houses on a high point by Meloquerie.

Barred from entering St. Saveur le Vicomte, and being heavily outnumbered (this was seen by French civilian patrols), it impossible for the paratroopers to make any advancement.

Charlie and Able companies were in position on the Douve River to guard the Bailey Bridge that was mined. The others were posted around the locality were taking ineffective gunfire from the Germans. On June 17th, a Focke-Wulf 190 machine gunned our position. On June 19tb, Col. Lindquist was given new orders to move to Etienville on the morning of Tuesday the 20th to pursue a new mission. [Bill Giegold was with this group]

A German 88 hidden in the quarry of Doville fired several shots in the area of the bridge. This killed an MP, and two civilians, Miss Huet and Mrs. Duvall,. Mr. Andres Despres, the brother to the mayor of Portbail, was severely wounded.

The exodus of the good savior of Pont I'Abbe

At Saint Sauveur le Vicomte, on June 12th, while a part of the community was in flames, Doctor Deleau

evacuated the church staff and students to the chapel and farm buildings of Selsoif. The Catholic sisters stayed there for 17 days before evacuating again.

From the good savior of Picauville, while the community was being hit with incendiary bombs, Father Belloir the chaplain, veteran of WWI, said “Evacuate!” “Leave!” About 400 sick folks took to the road: St. Joseph was not evacuated. But where to go!

Where to go? With our sick it was a panic, recalls Sister Marie-Louise Simon. The Germans, in great numbers and wearing camouflaged helmets, passed us on the road on their way to attack Pont l’Abbe. Our pitiful group marched past the Roland farm to Orglandes, and then to the Vallee farm. The farmers then had us rest on the straw in the farm buildings, and gave us bread, jelly, and milk. At Orglandes, a shell landed at the feet of our superior, Mother Jehan. The woman who was next to her was killed. At the Vallee farm where I was in a press (evidently a wine press), a boarding school student was killed. A large millstone, under the force of the intense shelling and burning, trembled all night long.

But where to go? After Orglandes, in full battle, we arrived at the David farm of Bourbesville, and then walked across the fields to the church at St. Mere Eglise, which was already full of refugees. While descending upon La Fiere we saw Germans everywhere sitting in position in the hedgerows, but they were dead. And then we saw that there were both German and American soldiers. Airplane and glider leftovers were everywhere; all the men were burned. It was an atrocity. The soldiers looked us over to deciding who we were, while they were perched in the treetops. A young German said that we must be stretcher-bearers, but what were we going to do with 400 sick people?

The parson of St. Mere Eglise gave us some milk, and then the Americans sent us by truck to Ste Marie du Mont where we stayed for three weeks. In returning, the civil affairs group from the parsonage of Picauville gave us permission to return to Bethany. Of this community, only the walls remained, but by providence only 17 boarding school students out of 800 were killed; what a tragic week of Corpus Christi (means body of Christ, and is a festival in the Roman Catholic Church which celebrates the honor of the Eucharist on the first Thursday after Trinity Sunday).

After having traversed the ruins of St. Sauveur and the Bailey bridge, we returned to Etienville, and an intense traffic of convoys. There we learned that the 3rd battalion of the 508th had crossed the Douve River!

New Bridgehead at Pretot

With the profound advances through the marshes of Coigny and Pont Auny, the Germans concentrated their forces at Pont Auny, the nerve center of action, since this was the main route for tanks, and the counterattacks didn’t accomplish enough. It was for this reason that a second landing was planned to the north of Vindefontaine to establish a solid bridgehead at Pretot.

While the front of Coigny and of Cretteville was at Baupte and held by the 507th the other units of the 82nd withdrew from the bridgehead at St. Sauveur le Vicomte, and regrouped with artillery at Etienville, since this was an important place within the proximity of the bridge there. The 307th engineering division received orders to prepare footbridges and assault boats.

On the evening of June 18th, the 82nd was under the control of Middleton of the 8th Army Corps. At 11:30 pm the 2nd of the 325th glider division under the cover of darkness, crossed the Douve River and attacked near Clainville and Montessy; a mini-assault was launched more to the west before tromping the enemy.

At 2:30am, the other battalions crossed a footbridge at Etienville while the 2nd battalion of the 325th glider guys secured the bridge. At 7:30 am on June 19th, the front of the 325th went from high point to high point

in the marshes, and then went along the borderline of the woods of Limors to Dranguerie, which is to the west of Vindefontaine,. The 3rd battalion of the 508th participated in the attack, planning to make contact with the patrol of the 507th, and was hit with a violent attack by the enemy just before Pretot.

At 6 pm, as soon as the engineers announced the finishing of the Bailey bridge at Moitiers, which replaced a footbridge, tanks and artillery began crossing. A convoy of trucks transported the 505th PIR to relieve those at St. Saveur le Vicomte; they regrouped in a field to the south of Moitiers. At midnite, the 507th also launched an attack to cross the bridge at Cretteville before joining up with the glider guys. Three enemy tanks were destroyed. It is to be noted that the 307th always constructed bridges and footbridges over holes and gaps along the way. At evening, a detachment was sent to keep up the chase at Etienville. The PC of the division advanced, after having been at Feirage, then Neuville, and then crossed the Douve and dug in south of Clainville.

The Capture of Vindefontaine on June l9

On the night of June 19th the 3rd of the 508th crossed the Douve River again under the cover of darkness in assault boats. The patrol of Lt. Moss successfully arrived at Vindefontaine without making noise; the Germans were taken by surprise. The battalion started by firing upon the Germans, which started a volley of shots, and then the Americans used mortars. Many Germans were killed. Our attack was suddenly stopped to the south by a small elevated area with an overhanging area that looked down on Pretot.

During the attack of Vindefontaine, an elderly lady and a little girl were caught between the fronts. The lady received a bullet in the shoulder, and the little girl was trying to save her. Lt. Rex Combs, who was holding the road with his men, yelled at them to take cover because the Germans were shooting. Lt. Combs carefully slipped in, crawled down the ditch, and managed to bring the two back with him to our lines. The little girl was Miss Raymond Holle of Picauville who said, “From Cretteville, I left to search for some bread with Mrs. Coupeaux..” [Bill Giegold had heard of Lt. Combs]

The bridge was blown up, but we were able to go around it through the fields. All of the sudden the bullets were flying around us. The Germans were shooting at us. We turned around and went back.

The poor Mrs. Coupeaux cried out: “Oh, I have not an arm! I have not an arm!”

The Germans shot at us. I saw the bullets creating sparks when they hit the road, and then got my legs stuck in communication wire. I helped support Mrs. Coupeaux as best I could until the fourway road at Asselines. Some paratroopers positioned in the field came to our aid. A bandage was made for Mrs. Coupeaux. We crawled in the ditches until the Sehier farm. I then left by jeep to the Cadot barns where the military post was. The MP stopped us for a half hour at the Beauzeville bridge because of the nearby fighting.

In the ten days that followed, the front remained the same, without advancement. Only the 3rd battalion of the 508th penetrated the interior of the woods at Limor and occupied new positions to the west of the woods. A large offensive was planned for June 22nd where the 90th had received orders to take La Haye du Puits. The attack on Cherbourg would be the distraction, while a similar attack would take place some days after. Already a new unit had arrived; the 359~~~ Regiment of the 9O~ Infantry Division was in temporary encampment at Crettville, ready to relieve as needed.

Pretot in the middle of battle

The front at Pretot was held by the 894th regiment of the KG, which was of the 265th Infantry Division. The Germans were without transportation, and were starving; we named them “the motorists of Hitler” since they didn’t even have donkeys. At the farms, the Germans took milk by the bucketfuls, and also took the horses. Never had we seen anything like this.

Mr. Louis Lefevre, who had 21 parachutists, had seen arriving at his farm 200 starving Germans. He did not have time to hide the eggs brought for the paratroopers in a big pan by the neighbors.

"Madame! You cook these eggs for my men!" said the German officer when he saw the pan of eggs. "But, sir, impossible, and us?"

"Madame! Your lazy chickens will lay more tomorrow!" replied the officer to Mrs. Lefevre.

With 200 Germans and 21 American paratroopers, life was becoming very dangerous. The parachutists preferred to die of hunger, rather than to let hunger give away their presence to the Germans. In the farm building, I learned some of the names of the paratroopers: Sargent Landgraff, Lt. Karl Helge, Corporal Matheson, Sargent Rober Buynes, Sargent George Meibrose, and Private Jasper Armstrong. The others I didn't get to know.

The 200 starving Germans were on the Neufmesnil-Coigny road facing the paratroopers at Dranguerie. My farm was their infirmary, and the moaning of the wounded could be heard throughout. The chief doctor worked every day in the fresh straw at the farm building tending to the wounded Germans. He would say "Oh, mister American Eisenhower, material, material, material!"

The wounded sitting on the straw showed to the others the enormous bandages on their feet. They explained that they were shot by an American hidden in a tree. And then with his head shaking feebly and eyes shut he said "American no correct, no correct!"

Certain regrouped soldiers that had been wounded had arrived from a path in a wheelbarrow. Each night an ambulance came and took them away.

There were some SS officers that went to La Haye du Puits each day. They would return together with some good bottles of liquor. These were the ones who gave the order to the civilians to evacuate.

The 508th counter-attack at Pretot

On Tuesday June 20th on the front at Pretot, at the time of its first attack, the 3rd battalion of the 508th was paralyzed by the artillery and mortar fire of the enemy.

Lt. Col. Mendez decided to renew his assault and went to the front line of his men. Once the village was captured, they prepared a defense.

Sgt. Major Warren Peak surveyed the Moitiers road and saw a German truck quickly arrive with aid to retake the losses. Peak succeeded in jumping up onto the running board of the truck. At the same time, the truck, driver, and contents went up like a whirlwind into the air as it had hit a German land mine. Peak, in all the smoke, watched the truck and contents go around and around over his head. We found him in the ditch all black, just like a coal miner, with only a broken arm.

The pressure of the Germans on our little battalion was strong enough at Pretot that Lt. Col. Mendez decided to reply from 600 meters north of the village. The aggressiveness and the stubbornness of the Germans to defend Pretot explained that this village contained the road that went to St. Jores, and that was an important point to the right wing of their front. At evening, the 3rd batallion of the 508th was relieved by the 507th who launched their patrols in the direction of the woods of Limor.

Already in planning was the grand offensive to romp the front at La Haye du Puits. The Germans had regrouped their best troops on the high points, which we perceived from a distance. And their artillery, night and day, shot harshly at our front.

On the front of St. Jores

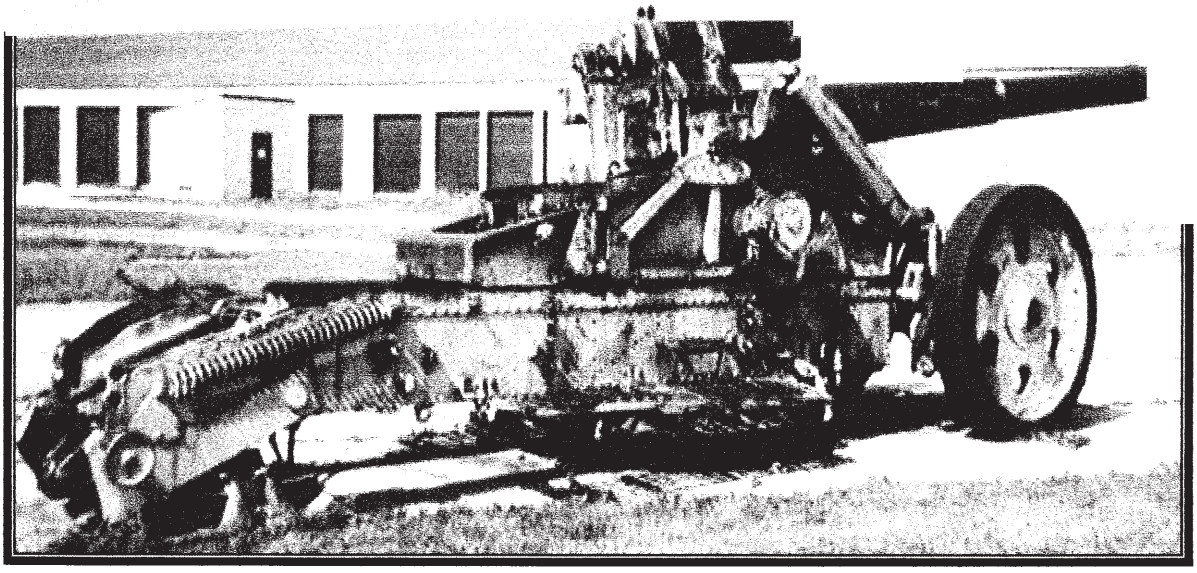
At his farm of Sablons, .Mr. Faudemer had 30 Germans who, with an antitank gun hidden in a woodpile, held the road to Baupte against the paratroopers. They had a great fear of winged torpedoes! The front was pierced on July 3rd by the 90th. The tanks rolled in double columns coming from Coigny across the fields, passing behind St. Jores, and descended on Lastelle.

"My young colt was found in a field at Coigny in between tanks." My goodness, I was fortunate. I had a difficult time retrieving him. At Coigny, he was relaxed. All the Americans who passed him gave him their ration of chocolate. My colt had become their mascot."

"Suddenly one night: shouting, yelling, orders. What chaos! On the morning of July 3, the Americans took to the road, both soldiers and paratroopers. Suddenly one group entered my courtyard and stopped. I recognized the paratroopers who had leaves on their helmets. They stayed there two hours talking to their comrades about the current events of battles, hiding places, and the attack on the castle at Coigny where Corporal Harry Clark was killed. Then they studied their maps, and I left with them to show the way."

At St. Jores, the Germans had constructed a barricade at the church with carts. "While the order to evacuate arrived we had left and passed a bush at bestiaux on the border of the marsh, and then entered a farm building at Gorges where we were literally eaten by the fleas of Mongols."

On the other side of the front, the American artillery had placed 19 cannons at Appeville which pounded Plessis and the slopes of Mont Castre. The Americans drove their wounded to Poignavanterie. Whiile the 90th started attacking Monte Castre, the soldiers who returned from Cosnerie rejoiced. One of them offered his trenching tool.



German 210mm K18 Morserlafette
(notice ground plate system and gas recoil cartridges; the drive system, which elevated the unit, was operated by a vehicle via a chain drive. Required a 10-man team to operate, and replaced the 105mm becoming the backbone of German artillery)

“At Lithaire, the road was blocked by barbed wire. An aerial attack bombed it. Hauptmann gave the order to evacuate Millieres and Pirou. My husband, who was a prisoner at Munich, said Mrs. Delelande, heard by radio of the violent combat and that we had been freed.”

The last week of June, Lt. Vincent Sheehan of the 2nd of the 508th led his patrol at night behind the front at Pretot to report all information. They also were at other places doing the same, without any losses. On the third night, they found that Lt. Sheehan was missing. One week later they found that he was fallen on the border of the road to Dauderie four kilometers behind enemy lines!

More to the north, the engineers were busy building roads through the woods of Limor.

Destruction of the artillery battery at Lithaire

What a nightmare! This famous battery poisoned the American front all the way to Baupte. Every 15 minutes we lived in waiting for another volley of artillery fire. It was demoralizing. After a strong exchange of artillery fire, the Americans decided to consult the French for aid.

Lithaire Battery — notice also strategic elevated defenses on Hill’s 95, 122, 131, La Poterie This made a very good German defense of roads in all directions, accomplished by Von Choltiz

I was a scout with the Americans right up to the moment that Baupte was taken, and then participated in the cleansing of the quarries, recalls Mr. Desmet. But the most difficult for me was to situate myself with my new regime that was quite special, and then I lived solely on battered eggs that we finally got rid of at Calvados. Naturally, I was fully aware of the danger that loomed over the front, called the famous “Lithaire Battery.” It was real horror for the Americans. They were very concerned with the two 88s, which were like the devil in boxes, that came out of tunnels every 15 minutes to shoot their rounds. The situation was impossible. All of the front from Baupte to Coigny lived in throbbing fear of this confounded battery. We were constantly high-strung in waiting for the next rounds.

The officers of the command of Forfaiture wanted to finish this one. They asked me to climb a small hill. I then went up and scraped some circles in the dirt. The battery remained invisible. I offered to the officers to win Lithaire by tranquilly driving a cow on the road with a stick. When I did this, despite all my explanations, the Germans responded to me by saying: “Hey mister, this road is closed! Nicht passer! Nicht passer! Los! Los!” (what are you doing here?) They pushed on the head of the cow with their rifles and to turn the cow around. Seeing that the Germans would not let me pass, I made a 180 degree turn to go back. It was impossible to approach.

The officers decided to settle the matter. Risking damaging the map, I indicated a possible implacement. We plugged our ears. This time the 155 neighbors felt the ground shudder. Afterwards, we never spoke about the battery at Lithaire. At this moment, in a heated state, the noise shortened; the jeep drivers had the beginning of the trench cut off by cables stretched between two trees.

My boy, be careful!

At Coigny, the 3rd battalion of the 508th gained themselves a famous reputation when we learned that the mortar guys had got an airplane; something like a piper cub lost its wing and crashed into the ground.

The moral of the enemy was decreased. Tracts were placed by the enemy guns advertising desertion in several languages, also saying that the Allies would continue to pursue fighting. At the end of June, a German gun

in perfect condition was discovered.

To oppose this, the Germans using "Radio Calais" broadcasted waves of propaganda which addressed the GIs as "Dirty Genie." This was broadcasted everyday on the radio waves. "American soldiers! You fall by the thousands each day in Normandy. Return home!"

In Picauville, at the back of the front, an infirmary cared for the injured paratroops, explained Miss Rachine. We always treated their wounds. When they left for the front, they would ask us to sharpen their knives. The officers crouched on the ground just like the paratroopers; there was no distinction among them in this situation.

The parents of the paratroopers sent bills and coins in their letters for the French. "My boy, be careful! The war is very dangerous" wrote one mother. "In this letter I'm sending a little money for the French civilians because we hear that they are dying of hunger."

Little by little, our storeroom filled with packages for those killed in action, and a jeep came to get them each day. Two parachutists permanently guarded the depot. They were named Brooks and Pearson. One of them was wounded in the hand, and he required assistance to eat.

The battalions in lines moved to Pretot, and Vindefontaine. During a break on Sunday, the men often thought of Father Maternowski, their chaplain who was killed by the Germans at Picauville while he was caring for the wounded. The protestant pastor, Chaplain Elder, had a great reputation for doing his magnificent duties in the shadows of the hedgerows. We said that he was the finest of those who worked in a religious vocation.

Elder was the only surviving chaplain. Bill Giegold knew him well. The Chaplain liked the Dachshund dogs, and got a bunch of them there. The people couldn't feed them, so they were easy to come by. He then started a kennel stateside. Bill saw him with the dogs while being on color guard for Eisenhower at Frankfurt in 1945.

The offensive on La Haye du Puits July 3-5

The St. Lo-Coutances road was a departing point, and this fascinated Bradley. During the last week of June, after the taking of Cherbourg and the cleansing of Presqu'ile, there was no doubt that the grand offensive that Bradley wanted was to launch an attack on Coutances along with the 8th Army Corps of Middleton in order to align the front with the hill of Caumont.

It was the first grand offensive to let the 1st Army Corps out of the swamps. There was a regiment (2000 men) of Germans there, and lots of arms. Bill Giegold says that Hills 131 and 95 were a bit like prairie dog shooting. The paratroops were far outnumbered. A Sgt. Cowlaw was setting up cables to get the German motorcycle dispatches. He got quite a few drivers, but had to go after the sidecar

The 8th Army Corps occupied the front which was tightly confined between the Prairie marshes and the sea. Before them was a lot of horse drawn artillery, the main defended item being the road to La Haye du Puits. A German commander, Von Choltitz, who commanded the 84th Corps, had profitably used elevated areas to solidly establish the front. In order to cushion the shock of the offensive that Choltitz was waiting, some Russian battalions in the center over an area of about 6 kilometers held that line of security. From a birds eye point of view, the Montgardon and Mont Castre (Hill 122) hills were the anchor points of the principal line of resistance, and were lined with the best troops the Germans had, which were reinforced by the SS as needed.

To break the grip on La Haye du Puits, Middleton dispatched 3 divisions. His plan of attack entailed making an immense "V," with the tip of being towards La Haye du Puits. To the right, the 79th, which bore the insignia of "cross of Lorraine," wore halo's after having captured Fort du Roule at Cherbourg, but now had Montgardon as their objective. To the left, the 90th had to take Mont Castre (Hill 122) at all costs, which was considered to be a difficult place to take.

In the center of the V, the 82nd of Ridgway had the mission to prepare a base of attack for the 8th division, who would quickly make its way through to Coutances. Headquarters was established at Ruisseau to the west of Vindefontaine and, after the taking of Mont Etenclin (Hill 131), would move to l'Auvraire. The enemy had made good use of the 11th day pause since the attack on Pretot. The enemies front had been reinforced by with trays and large numbers of mines. The enemy forces consisted of the KG 265th of the 353r DI which assisted the Russian battalions. The SS units were held on reserve.

The taking of Mont Etenclin, 131 meters (Hill 131)

Ridgway's objective in the interior of the V was to take Hill 13120, which overlooked the woods of Etenclin and an ensemble of three small hills called 'the hills of Poterie', which overlooked La Haye du Puits. The first battalion of Major Warren held the front at the woods of Limor, and then were required, at 6:30am, to be prepared for the attack with the neighboring battalions, the 507th to the left along with the glider guys and the units of the 90th.

The Germans had a radio center in a hole on top of the hill, which was blown up. Bill Giegold was the first man up the captured Hill 131; a surrendering soldier passed him on the way down; these were mercenary soldiers being forced to fight; they gave up easily because they did not want to fight. At the base of Hill 95, an American cook had been taking German prisoners out to a place that the Krauts were shelling every 15 minutes (an old Roman road intersection).

Accompanied by the barrage of artillery of the 319th some mortars of the 81st, and from all the batteries in the area, the two battalions of the 508th went beyond the men of Warren and the borders of the woods of Limors. To the left was progressing the 507th under the command of Col. Edson D. Raff.

From the start, the German shells fell around the first wave of Americans to create panic. But the panic was overall with the adversaries in each place they were at. Near Varenguebec the Germans suddenly found themselves in the middle of Americans. Since it rained, the Germans, in their holes under camouflaged coverings, were not aware of the attack in which American paratroopers were already at their back. The 2nd battalion of the 508th took Grand Hameau and the 3rd battalion of the 508th took Dauderie. At 9am, German front collapsed. The 2nd battalion of the 508th of Shanley went to the right to attack a small village on the slope of Hill 131 called Heroderie (Bill Giegold was here)

The Battle for Hill 131 began at dawn and was taken by midday. They were not Germans, but were mercenary soldiers forced to fight that didn't want to. The Germans had underground horse stalls and radio room at Hill 95; these were hardcore German soldiers that never gave up; even after the hill was taken, Pollette had to cleanse additional strongholds. The CO commanded the taking of Hill 95 too quickly; the paratroops never completely took H95; they were relieved. At Hill 95 Col. Warren relieved Capt. Graham (F. company), who refused to mount the hill because of loss of men. Bill Giegold went directly from the meeting on Hill 30 with Shanley to Hill 131.

After the victory of H131, the battle of Hill 95 took place where Bill met Phillipe Vasselin (son: Henri) who helped care for the injured paratroops on his farm. Phihipe now has a museum there with artifacts and a picture of Bill Giegold and other paratroops on the wall.

Hill 95 as recalled by Bill Giegold 43 years later: Bill sat in his foxhole one night smoking his pipe upside down. During this time he threw a grenade to maintain the peace and quiet he was enjoying. After this the Germans set up a booby trap for him. Fortunately he saw the wire by the bocage (hedge) and avoided it, which would have otherwise blown him up. On Hill 95, Bill retrieved both a Cszek rifle of white metal, and a German Mauser. He later sent these home, both of which were 9mm and brand new.

That afternoon, the advance restarted around l'Auvrairie and Conterie. At 7pm, the 2nd battalion of the 508th took defensive positions near the woods of St. Michel du boscq, which faced Blanchelande. To its left, the 3rd battalion of the 508th dug in at the small village of Poterie, just at the entry of Lithaire.

Some blocks of resistance were met throughout the rear. This deep penetration to the interior of the German front demonstrated that the disorganized enemy had lost much of its bite.

To the right, the 505, near to the marsh of Sensuriere being guided by a Frenchman, quietly went around Mount Etenclin (Hill 1311). The paratroopers, by surprise, penetrated between the first Russian guard gates. At 9 am, the 505th had cleansed half of the hill, and had captured 146 Germans. At 2 pm the road to Neufmesnil at Sensuriere was in our hands. To the left, in a line even with Dranguerie Le Fry, the 325th glider guys encountered a considerable number of small arms and mortars. At 4 pm, they were at Faudemer making an ample harvest of German prisoners. But alas, the adventurous men in a minefield protected the principle resistance of Mont Castre (Hill 122). At Dranguerie Le Fry, a Sherman tank rolled over a mine. The other tanks progressed in a ditch, but were stopped when they sank in a marsh next to a railroad track. The men then found controlled, overwhelming rounds of shots coming from Mont Castre (Hill 122). Col. Lewis ordered a stop until nightfall to avoid casualties. At midnite, the glider guys advanced two kilometers and stopped at the foot of the Poterie hill.

Those of the 50th mounted the attack in the smoke

On July 3, we were huddled in the bottom of a cellar with two Germans who left their guns at the door. These men of the 508th were hidden around the village of Heroderie laying in wait for the Germans. Suddenly, recalls Mr. Eugene Eliard a big paratrooper of two meters (6ft) tall arrived on the double, fired some rounds, and captured the two Germans. He seized the two small guns by the big gun, which broke the hold on the road. This had taken 30 seconds. Then the paratroopers arrived and offered us cigarettes. At noon, the artillery opened fire on Mt. Etenclin (Hill 131). The hill, the bushes, the trees: everything burned. Those of the 508th mounted the attack in the smoke. On top, there was a observatory guarded by Russians. Ten Germans were killed in the village in which there was a Feidwebel who had some magnificent boxes.

St. Michel du Boscq was the 508th relief station

We had here many "Georgians" (Western Russians) framed by Germans of the SS. The mail was distributed on the front by a fellow of the SS who had only one arm. All the paratroopers who were involved with the attack on Poterie said that it was a rough time. On the slopes, it was hand to hand combat with use of blades on the gun barrels. A German was found dead attached to his machine gun.

The farm at Boscq was the relief post where the wounded arrived on foot, and by stretcher. The ambulances took the wounded to near Picauville. In the woods of Limor, conflicts between the paratroopers and the SS often occurred.

Mister evacuate! If not we will shoot you immediately!

At Varenguebec the Germans were given the order to evacuate to Roncey. Mr. Raymond Eliard left alone to cross the marsh until Selsoif where the paratroopers led folks to their PC at St. Sauveur le Vicomte. Mr. Joseph Fauvel, who returned from the American front, was stopped by the Germans who menaced him at gunpoint.

At La Conterie, the Germans said: "Mister evacuate, if not you'll be considered independent resistance, and we will shoot you on the spot!" Naturally, there were, throughout, Mongolians who, in convoys, were transporting mines and barbed wire. They consolidated their front to try and hinder the advance of the Americans.

The taking of the hills of Poterie

On July 4th Independence Day, General Eisenhower and Bradley made an inspection visit to Fosse in receiving the QG of the 79th.

For us the attack was to follow. The 505th to the right covered our flank at Neurmesnil. Hill 95 with St. Catherine was the objective. The Germans had underground horse stalls in Hill 95. The Lt. Col. Shanley had been wounded yesterday at Mt. Etenclin [Hill 131]), as was also Lt. Col. Alexander. Shanley stepped on a mine along a hedgerow. Bill Giegold had slept in a ditch using a parachute as a blanket. After the war, Giegold and Shanley met in Fayetteville, No. Carolina at Ft. Bragg. They observed drill 2nd maneuvers of a parachuting tank and 5 guys who dropped with it, and left in the tank. Capt. Chester Graham was at the head of the battalion of the 508th The regiment in its entirety didn't quite contain 1000 men. On the terrain, there was only mud, mire, and sludge. The units spread out and took different roads and paths. Shots were continually fired from Poterie.

At Blanchelande the Germans profited during the night by reinforcing themselves. Our barrage of artillery churned over too much too soon on the left flank; the Germans had already rebuilt so that they could unleash a fiery hell on the paratroopers. Only the 2nd battalion of Capt. Graham launched an attack on Hill 95; the other battalions were nailed down in place. Under the artillery fire, Graham with Fox Company to the right, and Dog Company to the left (Easy was on reserve) encircled the base of Hill 95 grace to Lt. Pollete.

Lt. Pollete was transferred form E company to head up F company which had continually lost its leaders. Lt. Pollete became good friends with Bill Giegold, and gave him some shrapnel which was removed from Pollete's derriere. General Gavin says that Lt. Pollette was one of the bravest officers he knew.

Easy Company then ascended the slope to the ridge when the Germans counter-attacked, and regained 600 meters (1 800ft). Goodale replaced Graham, but was then injured on H95. Then Pollette took over. Goodale was killed in Battle of Bulge while sitting on a log by a German holding an American prisoner. Bill Giegoid went up Hill 95 with Goodale and Chitoyen (radio man). Some Krauts were calling out artillery and both Goodale and Eddie Chitoyen were hit by shrapnel from a shell that hit a tree. Chitoyen had broken leg and arm, and lost his left eye. The radio was blown almost off his back. Bill ran down a hedgerow and made it by a gate to escape, because he knew more artillery was coming. Joe Labuda had went on up the hill by himself, not knowing that retreat was called. He made it back down OK. Lt. Pollette would shoot first and ask questions later; he didn't like taking chances. Once there were 3 Krauts along side of 2 German trucks that appeared to be dead. Pollete approached the truck, spraying them with machine gun fire. After he passed the Krauts, the middle one raised up to shoot him, and Bill got that one since he was standing behind watching, and that is when he and Pollete became very good friends. Pollette was later killed by 7 shrapnel hits at the battle of the bulge. Pollete is buried in Shreveport, Lousiana. His brother was a fighter pilot killed in the pacific.

On the evening of July 4, Hill 95 was cleansed, Contact was made to the south with the units of the 2nd battalion of the 507th under Col. Raff. After the attack of the 2nd battalion, command had changed to Capt. Royal Taylor. Thus in 24 hours, four officers had succeeded to be at the head of the battalion.

The 325th glider guys in spite of the weariness from having no sleep, took their objective. The 507th who had attacked in the direction of the orad of Bocage mounted the hill and made contact with the 508th from the south. But alas, when the day began, Raff's men discovered that they were entrenched in the middle of a German bivouac (temporary military encampment). The gripping heat that followed made fatalities on both sides. The last fighting on Hill 95 took place on the morning of July 5.

During July 4-6, although the hills of Poterie had been captured, the isolated groups of the enemy refused to lay down their arms, and restarted combat. The 319th artillery and the mortars of the 81st fired closely on the groups of resistance. On July 6, a new pocket of resistance was discovered by soldiers on foot on Hill 95. Fox company with Lt. Pollete and three Sherman tanks intervened, putting an end to the stubborn resistatance.

The majority of the patrols said that the ruins of La Haye-du-Puits could be infiltrated, but the orders opposed this, because the honor was to be given to the 79th division. At noon on July 6, General Ridgeway signaled to General Middleton that the hills of Poterie were in the hands of the 82nd AB Division. In four days, the paratroopers had taken their objectives. The upcoming departure to England would be enjoyed from a successful mission, even though at great cost.

On July 8th, the first units of the 8th Division passed the lines held by the paratroopers. The 82nd was relieved from the hills of La Haye du Puits. On July 13th, under the eyes of many hundreds of German prisoners assembled on the beach, the paratroopers boarded their LST's for Southhampton.

IN CONCLUSION

Covering seven kilometers in three days, the 82nd of Ridgway had killed 500 Germans, and had taken 772 prisoners. Among the losses, the 325th glider guys had been the most severely affected. Their attack on the face of Mont Castre (Hill 122) caused the loss of 14 officers and 289 men. The company that had the most men was numbered at 57, and the other 12. The crossfire of the Germans decimated this unit. For the 508th, the men in their foxholes of mud and water knew that the offensive had been attained when they reached La Haye du Puits.

After 30 days of combat since June ~ all contact with the enemy had been stamped out. The men got up in the trucks for the first time and could even sleep next to the enemy's big guns.

For the 508th PIR of Col. Lindquist 25, 2056 men were dispatched of which 1,161 were lost. We know of 307 who were buried in French soil.

It was the first stage for the victory.

As always, during the last offensive, the fate of the fallen men was different. The fatality rate was high in the speed of the attack. The wounded filled the relief posts. We regrouped the survivors around the phantom companies.

Sergeant Zarie Schlemmer, mortar man of the 2nd battalion was hit during an artillery attack on July 3 in departing for the attack on the woods of Lirnor. Put on a stretcher, he was evacuated to Utah beach "After 27 days straight, I now found myself in a navy hospital. Then gave me a bath, hot coffee, peaches in syrup, and some sheets to sleep in. What incredible luxuries! After having slept at the feet of hedgerows, on the bare ground, in the bush for a month, I thought that nothing else existed."

Lt. Rex Combs of the 508th, progressed in a curve behind a small slope with his patrol near to Mt. Etenclin (Hill 131). Suddenly he heard a discussion between Germans. He saw from behind a hedgerow a strong enemy group sitting in a circle in a field getting some type of instruction. Without losing a second, he stood up and emptied three shots from his machine gun, starting a small fire near the terrified Germans. One after the other, they all raise their hands into the air. Lt. Rex Combs had captured 43 Germans.

At the moment that Zane Schiemmer was being transported to the navy hospital, Rex Combs regained his water filled foxhole at the foot of a hedgerow. He came to understand that we were going to recommend him for the Silver Star.

RESOURCES
For more information:
http://jumpto/giegoid (Bill Giegold's homepage)
www.red-devils.org (the 508th parachute infantry regiment association)

82nd Airborne Historical Society
Box 70119
Fort Bragg, NC
28307-5100

82nd AB Div. Assn.
(gliders)
2959 East 123rd Ave.
Thornton, CO 80241

Books:

Zig Borough's Tales of the Red Devils 508th
105 East Cambridge Ave.
Greenwood SC 29649
803-229-2897
$14.00

On To Berlin: A Fighting General's True Story Of Airborne Combat In WWII
General James Maurice Gavin
Bantam Books, New York 1964
ISBN: 0-553-13137-0
(out of print)

Beyond Valor
Patrick O'Donnell
www.thedropzone.org

Night Drop: The Airborne Invasion of Normandy
S.L.A. Marshall (historian of the WWII European Theatre)
Little, Brown
(out of print)

Soldier
Matthew B. Ridgway as told to Harold Martin
(out of print)

The Airborne invasion of Normandy
Napier Crookenden (out of print)

101st AB in Normandy, Mark Bando
Finest color photos by Captain Laffey taken in '44
www.101airborneww2.com

The 508th PIR by Domonique Francois

The Devils Have Landed by Lew Milkovics

History of the 5008th PIR by Sir William G. Lord, II

Airborne by Charles McDonald
Ballantines WWII History book #12

The Paras of June 6th by Philippe Jutras (French)
Published in England.

A Month During The Battle For La Have du Puits
The Memories of Henri Vasselin, honorary member of Fox Company 508th

Served as guide and scout for paratroopers who arrived to liberate his farm.
Personally known by Bill Giegold
(Henri helped his dad (Phillipe) patch up Bill's knee H95)
(at the age of 80 years (2002), Henri has a museum of 1,195 artifacts)

During the four years of the German occupation of France, many entire battalions of German soldiers were housed in my small village of La Haye du Puits. The Nazi companies often marched to the sound of a fife while chanting war songs quite arrogantly. The cobblestones resounded with the "click clack" of the German hobnob boots.

I was just a witness to this misery in my region of Normandy, and like many, I dreamed of liberation and the day the allied forces would invade. This finally happened, grace to those who did it-- those who are always my friends: the American GI's.

The Germans were gone; defeated. The echoes of their war chants no longer troubled me. Unfortunately, all those who remained here lived through some very unpleasant days, of which I wrote many lines. The following lines were taken from my notebook, and cover the period of June 6 - July 8 of 1944.

June 6, 1944

With constant noise all night, I awoke to the sound of bombs falling all over around La Haye du Puits--most likely near the bridges. In going out to look for my horse, I discovered an abandoned parachute. At around 9 a.m., while at my job in town, someone told me that the radio announced the landing of allied forces in the North ... hmmm! Then I saw an Austrian German soldier that I had become acquainted with since he spoke French quite well (He was the principal source of my inquisitions). He demanded to know who was passing, and I said, "Do you not know that they have landed?" He responded by saying "I know nothing — I'm alone since the officers and everyone else have left."

June 7, 1944

This morning I encountered a convoy of six trucks loaded with American prisoners (they had American flags on their shoulders). I succeeded in giving them a friendly salute, as well as to the bearded German escorts. At about 10 a.m., a convoy of both German and American injured soldiers were present in front of this horse farm. A German officer told the stableman that the Americans had landed and were in control of the situation. "All the better," I said. During the evening, tremendous bombardment was done by the Flying Fortresses. Many people were injured or killed. Everyone left the village. My parents, I, and some 20 others departed for the Goutot farm in Mobecq.

June 10, 1944

In the middle of the night at about 1 a.m., a wave of fighters took off to defend the area, and we finished the night in a hollow grouped closely together. Only a child was lightly hit during this time. When the dawn arrived, we returned to our "farm of the desert:" myself, my parents, my sister, and my stepbrother.

All of the days that followed consisted of bombings, machine-gun fire, and rounds of artillery, often heavy, and then light. The Germans took position in the courtyard and the garden of our farm, about two or three meters from our partly underground shelter. They also occupied the house. We were in a bad spot.

In order to attain my freedom a bit faster, I tried to join the folks at St. Mere Eglise who were now liberated. Unfortunately, I had to give up my attempt and remain at the desert farm because all of my attempts took me no farther than the woods of Limor (lee-more) or Lande Maudouit where I struck the German lines and was forced to return.

July 3, 1944

The fighting drew nearer; we heard bullets ricocheting off of the tanks on the other side of Saint Catherine (Hill 95). My goodness, this is going to happen here; the Germans were ready and waiting in their foxholes. There was a mixture of German mercenary soldiers: "Osttrupens [East troops], Russians, POAor ROA-- Rousskaia Osvobaditelnaia Armia--the Russian liberation army of communism [this included Armenians, Turks, and Cossacks], Caucasians (all the regions of the Soviet Union), Georgians, and Mongolian-- real savages.

July 4, 1944

This morning, about 10 a.m., a German soldier stood on top of our shelter to look through a gap in our hedgerow, and received shrapnel from part of a mortar shell in his stomach. He fell with a great struggle and laid there until he died, having received no medical aid. His comrades removed him. Three others were dead near the wine press. Some German parachutists demanded to have our horses that we had hidden, which we reluctantly gave them since they held machine guns to our bellies.

July 5, 1944

Two hoodlum Osttrupens came into our shelter with guns in hand and told my stepbrother and sister to hand over both a billfold and purse. At this moment we were greatly afraid because my father grabbed one of the soldiers by the wrist. I told him to let go since they were still in control of our area.
However, we felt that the Americans were not far from Saint Catherine (Hill 95) in the woods of Brocquebeuf near the town of La Poterie.

July 6, 1944

This morning the Germans were tense. Since yesterday's nightfall, we had a Russian POA huddling at the foot of our hedgerow, while the Germans were standing in the entranceway with their guns aimed towards the gap in the hedgerow just over our shelter where one of their fellow soldiers already lay dead. We sensed the fighting drawing nearer; the Germans were firing mortars (one was just 25 meters from us). They continued shooting until just around 3 p.m. when a tank arrived in the woods of Brocquebeuf, just behind us. We climbed up on top of the shelter to see whose tank it was (It was an American tank with a white star. But then the German near us mounted up onto the top of our shelter, and an exchange of machine gun fire took place, at which point we plunged down into the shelter. Not even five minutes had passed before it began to rain incendiary artillery — probably shot from the tank. This started the barns on fire. The Germans and Russians were at the interior of the encampment. After several minutes of calm, there was a strong volley of mortar fire from the Americans who surrounded us. We were scared, and at that point made our act of contrition, while the dog curled up at the base of the shelter, and was then hit in the paw by shrapnel. Then, after a complete stop, it started again more fiercely than ever, setting the house on fire. We waited, with great fear, in the shelter. The Germans exited in all directions. One of the Germans in the courtyard threw down his arms and tried to join us in the shelter, and my mother, already terrorized, defended the entrance saying that only children and civilians were inside. He entered just the same and said, "Too bad mama, the war is over!" We thought that he had a cut on his wrist; he took the apron from the servant and bandaged himself. He spoke French well, and said that he was an Austrian and a machine gunner's assistant. He and the machine gunner were firing on the tank when they were hit with incendiaries, and the gunner went up in flames. The Austrian felt himself quite lucky to have escaped.

Alphonse, who avoided the STO (Service du Travail Obligatoire [obligated service work to the Germans in Germany]--many young French civilians avoided obligatory work in German war production facilities by changing their identity papers; many of them hid out at the "Desert Farm" of the Vasselin family), said to me: "Look, Henry, you who saw Americans walking along the hedgerows — there aren't any. With this statement there was a GI who came straight towards our shelter. He was relieved to see a woman waving a white handkerchief while saying "French here!" The soldier asked if there were any "boches" [Germans] inside. In one voice we all said "No." And you can bet that the Russian and the Austrian did not move an inch. With his small cutters, the GI unsuccessfully tried to cut the German communication line that passed over our shelter. We gave him our large knife to use; the knife was used to serve the bread and rabbit pate that we had to eat in the shelter. He left us saying "French — don't move," and continued his mission as a scout without doubt, machine gun in hand with finger on the trigger.

Three tanks then began shooting over the hedgerow towards the ditches along the "police path" where there were Germans. Just the same, we risked peeking out the door of our shelter to see the action. Happily no one came near the shelter. Alas!

Because they saw Americans, a visible liveliness was apparent amongst the ladies. I believe that they thought that the war was over and that the danger had departed. The combat was less intense. The ladies asked us to put out the house fire. We did what we could to please them, but we could not entirely extinguish the fire. (I did not initially realize that my part in this included being exposed to gunfire, but I participated to avoid being thought of as a coward). The bullets flew by, and tanks arrived via the hay fields all around us.

Going around the house to where the pigs were at, we tried to reach the pig shed because the pigs had started to burn. We opened the door to evacuate the pigs, whose back hairs were singed. We arrived at the back of the house; two American soldiers with their machine guns poised to shoot suddenly appeared from behind a tank. They addressed us by saying, "French? You cannot remain in your shelter. You must go, because there are still Germans in the house."

We left as a party of four. The soldier said, "Come with us to help carry the wounded to the rear." Without any argument, we left. I and my father carried a wounded soldier; he was in bad shape. He groaned and asked us to write his mother. We traversed the field carrying the soldier under the whistling of bullets. I wanted to go faster, but we were told to go slowly and carefully. Finally we arrived at the woods putting down the stretcher; it was finished.

Bob Jackson

28th Infantry Division – Prisoner of War
Hometown: Buchanan, Michigan

Life changing events happen to all of us. Typically, the significance of the life altering occurrence isn't recognized until some time later when there is more of an opportunity to reflect on our lives and the paths they have taken. Usually, we don't even realize that they happened.

A half century after Bob Jackson experienced his own life changing event, the story he hand wrote of his imprisonment in Germany as a POW was published. The title of the book is KRIEGIE Prisoner of War. (The word Kriegie is a shorten version of the German word Kriegsgefangene, and is the way German soldiers addressed the prisoners of war.) His account of those 101 days when he was held against his will by the Nazis is must reading for anyone interested in World War II, or for that matter, anyone needing to be reminded, as the author wrote, that we live on the margins of an overly active and anxious world. The book is now in its fifth printing and because of the success of his account of that life changing event, Bob Jackson has embarked on a career as a writer. He is currently working on a novel of the pre-Civil War era. Jackson was born in Crystal Falls, Michigan, in 1925. He graduated from High School in 1942 and volunteered for the service during the summer of 1943. He was put in a classification known as Limited Service because of poor eyesight. Very soon after that, the draft board ended Limited Service – draftees and enlistees were either 1A or 4F. Because Bob wanted to be in the military, he memorized the eye chart, passed the eye exam, and was reclassified 1A.

Nineteen is an awfully young age to fight in a war, but that is where the teenager from Crystal Falls was headed after completing training at Camp Blanding, Florida. While in Florida, he received training as a message center chief. Six months later, he was crossing the Atlantic on his way to Europe and the horror awaiting him. "One day as we were out to sea during a time when the troop ship was on alert because of possible enemy submarine activity, I was standing on the deck looking out at the ocean," Bob remembered. "I saw a fin cutting through the water coming directly at the boat where I was standing. To me it looked like the fin of a torpedo. My first thought was 'My God we're about to take a direct hit.' As I watched in horror, waiting for that underwater blast to occur, a dolphin jumped out of the water near the boat and I realized it was just the fin of a fish I saw and not a torpedo. What a relief."

Landing in England, the boy from the Wolverine State discovered that he was one of thousands of soldiers shipped overseas as replacements for the men who were being wounded or killed on the Western Front. He was sent to the 109th Regiment of the 28th Infantry Division, a division which had already sustained heavy casualties.

Bob, along with 20 other replacements, was sent to fill in the gaps in the squads decimated by casualties and in need of replacements to continue the fight against the Nazis. He, like the other replacements around him, was scared and wondered what was in store for him in this place so far away from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

There was no waiting to acclimate himself to the sights and sounds of war. Bob's initiation into the arena of combat was immediate and deadly. The new replacement's first night on the front lines saw him take part in a night patrol where there was contact with the enemy and he had to silence a German soldier with a knife. Things would never be the same again for the young man from Michigan. He survived the patrol that evening, but knew then he was faced with a challenge in his life unlike any other. After the patrol, Jackson became the BAR

(Browning automatic rifle) man in his platoon.

After a few days on the front lines rumors persisted that Jackson's outfit might be moving out. They heard that Aachen, the Ardennes and the Huertgen Forest were all possible destinations. Soon they were loaded into trucks and moved out for another location, another battle. They were transported to a thickly-wooded forest and dropped off in the mud. In the morning, while advancing toward a country village, they came under small arms fire.

I find myself squinting my eyes and tightening my jaw as I run across the open area, searching for meager cover; a plowed gully. Diving into it I can look from side to side, ascertaining my forward progress. I line up with the rest of the squad. Jumping up again, I zigzag toward the houses and finally reach the first squad's position. They, in turn, run forward, taking cover at the second row of houses, Jackson writes in his novel, Kriegie.

The battlefield was fluid, moving from house to house within the village to refuge behind a stone wall outside of the town. Casualties were heavy on both sides. The battlefield's importance was in the proximity of a road used to supply other units and the Germans were not going to relinquish it without a fight.

The battle raged on, punctuated by the sounds of artillery shells and bazooka fire, as German tanks fell victim to one or the other. Screams of men being wounded or killed were everywhere. Finally, the ranks of the enemy infantry were broken and they retreated from the battle.

Medics from both sides of the battlefield retrieved the wounded and the bodies of those who have died, and another day has passed for the young man mere months away from the world he knew in Michigan. Rumors were again rampant, and the latest had the men of the 28th Division heading to Paris for some R&R (rest and recuperation). They were elated!

Moved out via troop-carrying trucks, the men reached their destination and were quartered in a village known as Diekirch, where they awaited rail transportation to the sights and sounds of "Gay Paree." They waited for three days for their R&R, during which time they bathed, shaved and mended their ragged uniforms. The train never came! They were finally told the train had been delayed and to pack up and be prepared to move out. Two days later they were on the front lines again near the Our River, the border that separates Germany and Belgium.

Jackson's final battle was about to get underway. It is December 15, 1944. "We only carried two days of rations and basic ammunition," Jackson recalled. "And there are only 45 of us, without any other company of soldiers on either side."

On a patrol that first night, they discovered German soldiers building a bridge that is strong enough to support men and tanks. It was being built inches under the top of the river water. The water hid the progress of the work from Allied planes and foot patrols. The bridge meant one thing – the Germans were about to come across in force to the side the Americans were holding.

The patrol returned to their posts, reported the discovery to their commanding officer and returned to their foxholes. They were awakened the morning of December 16 by sounds of artillery shells falling all around them. Hours later, when the incessant shelling stopped, the men of Jackson's outfit peeked out from their foxholes to see a line of German tanks interspersed with German infantrymen, poised to attack. Jackson was about to fight in the last battle prior to his capture.

The battle raged for three days and the men of Jackson's outfit endured heavy enemy artillery fire,

withering small arms fire from German infantry, and finally the deadly roar of tanks firing into their positions. After three days, they lost their 30 cal. and 50 cal. weapons and crews, and all of their officers. Their ammunition was all but gone.

"On the third day, with us out of ammunition, the Germans just came at us, foxhole by foxhole, taking prisoners," Jackson recalled. "That was about noon. There were only 18 of us left. They searched each of us and took away anything and everything they found. Before they got to me, I slipped a ring off my finger that belonged to Jean, a girl back home, and hid it in my shoe. I rubbed dirt on my finger so they wouldn't notice the white mark where the ring had been. They didn't find it. The Germans did let me keep a rosary I had in my pocket."

The ring would be used later to barter for much needed food. The POWs didn't know what would happen to them next as they watched the enemy set up a machine gun in front of them. They stood with their hands above their heads as the guards moved away.

"I thought they were going to kill us all," Jackson said. There was no sound as the men stood silently awaiting their fate. Then the machine gun fired – inches over their heads and the men dropped to their knees believing they were being shot. The German soldiers just laughed at their predicament.

"That was the first of many tortures we endured as POWs," Jackson recalled. The prisoners were marched away from the battlefield, not knowing their destination. "We were harassed and beaten with clubs the entire time we were marched – some 24 hours of non-stop walking. We finally ended up in a cold barn. We had not eaten since we were taken prisoner and are only offered a cold cup of water in the barn."

In the morning they heard voices – English-speaking voices – and they were joined by more American prisoners. There were now more than 50 of them. There was no food available. They drank a ladle full of water dipped out of a freezing bucket.

Again the men set out on foot, and as they progressed, they were joined by still more prisoners. By the time they stopped that night, they numbered more than 200. The men were given a cup of water, a slice of hard bread and a used blanket. It was their first food in two days. They slept outside in the cold and snow, blankets wrapped around them providing the only protection from the nighttime weather.

The next day, the day before Christmas, they were herded down a road and again marched all day. On the way, they passed a sign indicating they are in a town called Gerolstein. On the outskirts of town, they are stopped, searched again for weapons and put inside a large warehouse-type building. Outside the building there are towering huge cliffs. Inside there are more prisoners.

"There were more than 600 of us in that building," Jackson remembered. "There wasn't even enough room for us to lie down. We were there for a few days when American planes flew overhead and dropped their bombs, hitting the cliffs outside our building. They didn't know there were POWs inside. Huge pieces of rock came crashing down on us, killing and maiming many of the men inside."

Broken legs protrude from the debris. Pools of blood are everywhere and screams for help cannot be answered fast enough. We work as a team, helping as many as we can. Three prisoners are pounding on the door shouting, Medic! Medic! Doctor! Doctor! Send us a Doctor! Let us out of here! Their cries go unanswered. The door remains locked, Jackson writes.

Later, when the guards opened the doors, the wounded are carried out and put on trucks, never to be seen again. The Americans are forced to go back inside the building and carry out their dead comrades.

At the end of a week in the bombed out warehouse, during which time more American planes dropped bombs on the area, 40 men were chosen to leave and participate in a work detail. They were told they will march 10 miles, be housed in a barracks, given three meals a day and be able to write and receive mail from home. Jackson was one of those chosen.

"We marched for more than 30 miles with nothing to eat or drink," Jackson said. "When we did stop, it was to work at repairing areas that have been bombed by our planes."

The men were given worn-out shovels and had to fill in craters created by falling bombs. They worked tirelessly for more than six hours moving twisted rails and broken concrete before being given a break. Then they were given a tin can of soup and a slice of bread. It was almost daybreak. The prisoners again marched all day and ended up in the village of Heidweiler.

"The building that we stopped in front of in the village was made of red brick and looked like a school house." It was. And that building was what the 40 men called home. The room they had to sleep in was a mere 18 by 24 feet – big enough for a classroom of school age children – but not sufficient in size to sleep 40 grown men.

The men discovered they were going to be a work gang for the Nazis, half going into a forest each day to load fallen timbers on to an ox-drawn sled, the other half into a courtyard to unload and work on the logs. The frozen hardwood logs they had to load onto the sleds were approximately eight feet long and 12 inches in diameter. The other prisoners cut the logs into small blocks with nothing but handsaws, keyhole saws and one old crosscut saw missing a handle. The pride of the operation was a saw-like machine which ran on a low-grade kerosene. The POWs made wood chips that would be used as fuel in wood-burning trucks. The trucks, having a large tank on the side, were loaded with this fuel and it was burnt to provide steam power.

About three in the afternoon, one cold day, with approximately two feet of snow on the ground, the men were still in the woods carrying logs to the sleds when they heard a roar overhead. They looked skyward to see four American planes, their machine guns blazing as they attacked the ox-drawn sleds. The pilots must have believed they were part of a supply line for front line troops. On a second pass, the planes dropped bombs on nearby barns and as the bombs met their target, collapsing roofs disclosed trucks full of supplies inside of them. That convoy didn't make it to the front lines.

The next morning, the prisoners were punished for the attack by the airplanes the day before. They were denied their meager allotment of bread, and as they were marched outside, they saw a pile of shovels awaiting them.

A moment of fright holds the group motionless at the foot of the stairs. The gloating eyes of the silent guards survey the mass of disheveled men. Stacked neatly in the middle of the yard is a supply of shovels and picks. We have heard of men having to dig their own graves and that thought crosses our minds. The guards may have been tormented past the point of reason by yesterday's bombings and now they want to be rid of us. We are marched over to the tools and are told to pick them up. Men's arms reach for the handles that we do not want to grasp. They lay heavy and cumbersome on our shoulders as we march down the road. The left rank is not detoured into the barnyard and at the next intersection we turn right, down a narrow side street. Suddenly my despair turns to delight as I realize we are marching in the direction of the bombed supply trucks.
The men were assigned to clear out the rubble of the attack and fill in bomb craters - a task much more desirable than digging one's own grave.

Then one day, the prisoners discovered that there are Red Cross packages in the recently bombed trucks nearby and they devised a plan to steal food from the parcels – food that was meant for them in the first place

but kept by their German captors. It would be a scene that would make James Bond proud, as the GIs stuffed food cans into their clothing and hid them in a wooden trunk that sat in the middle of the area where the men were working. When they completed their subversive activities, there were approximately 150 – 160 cans of foodstuff hidden for their consumption later. After being without food for so long, it must have been terribly tempting to eat it right away, but the hungry men didn't. The food stayed in the trunk until there was a better opportunity to take it without being caught. They had already been warned by the guards that anyone caught stealing food off of the trucks would be shot. They stole it anyway – that's what starving people do.

The men were beginning to hear the sounds of artillery fire and they knew the Allies were moving closer to where they were being held. That presented a good news/bad news situation; good that the war is being pushed further into Germany and hopefully closer to ending, bad that the prisoners might be transported elsewhere for the safety of the guards, as well as to keep the prisoners from being liberated by their own forces. When the day arrived to steal the food out of the wooden trunk, Jackson discovered a harmonica along with the cans of food. It was rusty and he has not played a tune for years, but he took it anyway. That evening, after the guards passed out the daily ration of bread and the men have settled in for the night, he began to play a song, Home, Sweet Home.

There was silence in the room for a moment as if the men weren't sure what was making the music, but when Jackson played an old Polka song, the room filled with laughter and the sounds of stomping feet. Men who could barely walk were dancing, and for a moment, civilization returned to the prisoners. The men were thankful, and with tears in their eyes, they hummed along as Jackson played, How Great Thou Art.
The guards, hearing the noise and believing a riot was starting, broke into the room, their rifles at the ready. When they discovered the men dancing to the sounds of a harmonica, they left them to their moment of frivolity. Then the feast began and the much needed food the POWs recovered from the wooden trunk was eaten. Afterwards, the cans were stomped on and hidden between the walls.

A few days later, after an aborted escape attempt, Jackson and the rest of the men were told they were being relocated to new quarters. They had been at their location for more than two months and it almost seemed like home to them. The men were marched continuously for four days with no food or water. They ate freshly fallen snow for moisture. Their feet were wet, some nearly frozen, some frozen. When they stopped in a small village similar to the one they left five days earlier, the men discovered a barn with cows inside and snuck in to the stalls and milked the cows for the nourishment it would provide. They milked the cows dry and stole the animals' fodder – old potatoes.

More prisoners were brought in from other small villages where they too provided slave labor and soon there were more than 200 – all in the same weak physical condition. They were all forced into a continuation of their march. Some of them were so weak they couldn't continue and fell along the wayside. When a guard ordered them to get up and they couldn't – they were shot and killed. As other prisoners saw the brutal murder of some of their fellow GIs, they began moving towards the guards and the Germans fired into the group killing 20 more starving, dying prisoners. The men stopped then and were told through an interpreter that the same fate awaited anyone who dropped out as there weren't enough guards to stay with those who couldn't make the march.

As if dying by the hands of the enemy wasn't bad enough – the march took a turn for the worse when an American fighter plane, seeing the mass of men below and probably thinking they were all German soldiers, fired on the marchers, killing and wounding many.

The pilot must think we are German infantry and will not be discouraged from his mission of death. Two more passes completely unnerve us as we scramble farther into the open fields to escape.
I bury my face in the snow and pray as reverently as I ever have. When I finish praying, I raise my head to find

the plane has left. Death is everywhere.

The prisoners were gathered back on the road and the march continued. While there were only 140 left out of the original 200, they were soon joined by other marching prisoners and the numbers swelled to more than 500. They walked for seven more days and shots rang out every day as men who couldn't continue were killed.

After another three days, during which time they endured additional strafing from American planes, the weary men reached their destination – Stalag XII near a town called Limburg. Inside the barbed wire fences were buildings housing different nationalities of prisoners – English, French, Canadian, Polish, Russian, Turkish, Indian, and American. The men believed the compound would be their home for the rest of the war – some three hundred miles from where they began their journey.

Each day saw more prisoners arriving and dying. The camp became overfull and men were forced to sleep and die outside of the barracks. Those who didn't make it were buried in mass graves outside of the camp. Eventually, the German guards begin taking 100 prisoners a day out of the compound, uniting them with thousands of others, and then they were marched away, presumably to another camp somewhere.

On March 17th, the compound was emptied and the men were marched to a railroad yard and loaded into boxcars called 40 x 8 (Designed to hold 40 men or eight animals). Seventy men were packed into each car. The men sat in the cars for hours before an engine coupled onto them and they departed for an unknown destination. Less than a half hour later, the engine uncoupled and the cars were left unattended on a railroad siding. They were sitting ducks for any American fighter plane flying missions nearby, and it wasn't long before the men in the boxcars heard the roar of planes overhead. Our fighters come over. Their attack is deafening. Lead rips up and down the boxcars, killing, tearing and punching death into men like rain.

Screams of agony and fright fill the boxcar accompanied by the well-known whistling of rushing air that is followed by earth shaking explosions of bombs. Men stampede where there is no room to move.
It wasn't over. The planes came again and again for seven days. The men who were still alive were trapped inside the locked boxcars. Death was all around them.

When the German soldiers return on the evening of the seventh day and opened the boxcar Jackson was in, only five men out of the 70 were left alive. Looking around, the men saw that hundreds of boxcars had been destroyed by the airplanes; bodies were sticking out of some, strewn on the ground around others. It was March 24th, three days before Jackson's twentieth birthday.

On March 29, 1945, 101 days since being taken prisoner of war, Jackson and 500 other POWs were still being forced to march down a never ending path to nowhere. The previous day, an American spotter plane flew overhead and that simple activity gave the men hope that the Allies were near.

Around noon, the 500 bone weary, starving GIs had enough and as if on cue, they all sat down in the middle of the road. The guards lashed out at them cracking skulls and breaking ribs with the butts of their rifles – Jackson was hit twice, knocking him almost senseless. The men didn't move from their sitting positions. Amidst the chaos, there was the sound of an airplane and the American spotter was back circling the mass of men sitting on the ground. Then the roar of tanks was heard and then the tanks were seen fast approaching the men.

Spreading out over the fields, the tanks maneuver a flanking position. We run to them, tumbling and falling at every step. A discord of voices holler and sing, tears pouring from our sunken eyes. The tears dam up in our matted beards which refuse to part and let them fall. We hug each other and dance together as the tanks

come abreast of us. Hundreds of us kneel. Bare headed, we bow. I have my rosary in my hands as I give thanks to the Lord for our liberation.

Jackson was hospitalized in Europe and the U.S for seven months after his liberation. He was awarded the European-African-Middle Eastern Theatre Ribbons, two Bronze Campaign Stars for the Ardennes and Rhineland campaigns, Good Conduct Ribbon, the coveted Combat Infantry Badge, the Prisoner of War Medal, and the Bronze Star.

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George E. Jones

Probably the best known casualty suffered in WWII was George Jones. He was killed at the start of the war at Pearl Harbor on December Seventh, 1941. The terrible destruction caused by the treacherous Japanese included the sinking of many of our vessels. They sunk the destroyer on which he was a radio man, the U.S.S Downes. He was scheduled to be transferred the following day to the Battleship California with a promotion to petty officer second class. The California survived the Japanese attack.

George was a ham operator, having obtained his license while still in high school. He loved radio and as a result enlisted in the U.S. Naval radio school in Indianapolis.

After his naval school graduation in 1941 he was sent to San Diego and then to Honolulu. His family was not aware that he was at Pearl Harbor when it was bombed.

George was a well-liked boy in high school, playing the violin in the orchestra. In 1937 or 1938 I asked him if he would make a radio for me to carry on my bike. He obliged and, because of the bulkiness of the parts, ended up handing me a box approximately 1-½ feet square. Needless to say I couldn't use it as a portable instrument, but it worked perfectly well in my home on batteries.

He joined the navy to see what he wanted to do with his life--either stick with radio or go on to college. He never had the chance to make that decision.

The George Jones AMVET Post 88 was named in his honor. They later they offered a scholarship fund of $30,000, the interest from which was to be used to assist students. George was 20 when he died.

Submitted by Robert Hatch

JAMES KVETON
U.S. NAVY (DECEMBER 1942-DECEMBER 1946)
LAKESIDE, MICHIGAN.

TO LISTEN OR NOT TO LISTEN

In February 1943, we had completed basic training and some of us were assigned to a specialized service school at the Great Lakes Naval Base. We would be there for sixteen weeks. After settling into our barracks, a collection was taken up for the purchase of a radio. It turned out to be a table top phonograph combination.

Since learning to play the violin at an early age and all through school, at seventeen I had already become quite a lover of serious music. I became somewhat addicted to its charms.

After the new radio had been with us for awhile and was not being used, I would sometimes attempt to listen to a symphony or concert program. This usually didn't last long upon the awareness by the fellas of the unwanted sounds. I became indignant since I too had contributed to its acquisition.

On one weekend liberty trip home, I found at a local Woolworth dime-store, small seven inch records' with all sorts of classical themes. I bought some to play on the phono at the base, thinking the guys wouldn't be so quick to change what is being played. Well, it worked for awhile, until one day; I found all the discs broken! Someone had clearly kicked into my clean white sea bag where the discs were kept. By this time I was definitely pegged as an oddball. My music listening came to a sudden halt, except for Guy Lombardo, Benny Goodman, and the Andrew Sisters.

Our course of study at school was guns, guns of all kinds, from the standard rifle and pistol on up to the largest naval ordnance. We were instructed in their make-up, repair, and maintenance. Our goal was to achieve the rate of Gunners Mate petty officer. Upon graduation, I attained the top of the class and subsequently was transferred to the advanced gunnery and electro-hydraulics school in Washington
D.C.

Now back to humor in uniform or should I say sorrow? On my next liberty, passing through Chicago, I stopped at the Allied Company store, an electronics firm. There I found a small two-tube open chassis, AM receiver. A very primitive unit for those days, it had a front upright panel with both tuning and volume knobs, and an ofl7on switch. It would need an antenna and a ground wire and a set of headphones to listen which I already had at home from my crystal set days. It was powered by AC household current.

On returning to the base, the hook up was quite simple. The ground to the heating radiator behind my bunk, the antenna to my bunk spring, and a wall plug was near by. It worked like a charm! All the stations from Chicago came in loud and clear. It didn't inconvenience anyone, nor disturb them. I would always disconnect everything and put it away when not in use. Everyone now was sure I was bombed out.

But things went along just fme. While the others played their poker and pinochle card games, bragged about their sexual conquests, and displayed their latest body illustrations that they had acquired when they were bombed on liberty, I did my school homework, read books, and listened to beautiful music. There was the Longines Symphonette every evening, the Philadelphia Philharmonic on Saturday when I didn't have liberty, and on Sunday, the NBC Symphony.

A few weeks went by, and then one day, I was called into the barracks chiefs office. There stood another Chief Petty Officer. I was told to accompany him. We left together and boarded a base shuttle bus at the corner. During the trip I ventured too ask him what this was all about. He replied that he didn't know but that I would soon enough know. After many stops, we got off in front of a large, red brick building with an imposingly high clock tower. This I knew to be the main administration headquarters.

As I recall, we climbed many stairs, both outside and then inside until we arrived before a large and rather old fashioned door with a name plate reading, "Chief of Naval Intelligence". I was told to sit down in a chair and my companion knocked and went in. Presently, he came out and directed me into a spacious office. A heavily varnished desk stood before extra oblong windows, and behind it sat a naval officer with three gold full commander stripes. By this time I could have filled my britches. I stood before him at attention. My escort stood somewhere behind me.

The officer first introduced himself and then addressed me by name, "Seaman Kveton, do you know where you are?"

"Yes sir", I said, turning partly to the right and pointing at the door," it said on the door, sir."

"Yes, well, it has been reported to us that you have been listening daily, in the evening, on what appears to be a short-wave radio", said the commander.

"Yes sir, I mean, no sir," I stuttered. At this point all that had transpired in the last month or so came down on me with such crushing weight I could barely answer.

Between my sobs and tears, he asked me, "Well, which is it? What do you hear on it?"

"B-B-Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart m-m-mostly, sir," I said.

"You mean that you listen to Bach and that is it?" he asked.

"Yes sir," I replied.

Now I was crying uncontrollably. I tried to relate to him about the barracks radio, the broken records, and my solution to the problem. When I finished, he sat there, his eyes were focused down for an eternity. Then looking up at me he said, "You have been somewhat hassled by your shipmates haven't you?"

"Somewhat sir," I stammered.

Then picking up a sheet of paper from his desk, he said smiling "I don't see any problem here, do you chief?"

A reply came from behind me, "Not at all sir."

"By the way Kveton, what is your favorite composer?" the commander asked. "Tchaikovsky sir," was my answer.

"Yes, Tchaikovsky," he mused.

After about a minute of writing he said, "you may go". I made an about face and started for the door. Halfway there Commander Coffee called to me, "Seaman Kveaton, good listening."

“Yes sir, thank you sir,” I said wiping my eyes on my sleeve as I left the room.

I stood outside the door for a minute, collecting myself. From inside, I could hear muffled laughter and the words: “B-B-Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart m-m-mostly, sir.” I thought to myself, “my God, they must have thought I was a spy!”

Robert J. McCoy

World War II was in full swing when I joined the U.S. Marine Corps. in 1943. We knew we would be drafted sooner or later, so when I turned 18, I join the Corps. At 18 we did not need our parents' permission or consent. I left on November 3, 1943 for boot camp in San Diego, California. After Marine training, which I'm glad I had, but which I wouldn't want to go through again, we were sent to Camp Miramar.

This was a distribution center in San Mateo County. From there I was then sent to Camp Pendleton in the Mojave Desert to train as a mechanic specializing in the F4U Corsair fighter plane. I became crew chief of the hydraulic mechanics.

The Corsair was a fast airplane that flew 300 to 350 mph, which was moving right along in those days. It had a Pratt-Whitney engine with 9 cylinders. The pilots were being trained for night flying off aircraft carriers and as a result some of my training was also on carriers.

To quote from Tommy Blackburn's (C.O. of the Jolly Roger) description: "The 2,800-cubic-inch engine was a monster to fire up after it had sat in subfreezing weather overnight. First, it took two strong men pulling on a prop blade to slowly accomplish the minimum revolutions needed to clear the lower cylinders of oil so the start-up could be accomplished in safety. Next, the engine had to be primed with raw gasoline. This touchy enterprise had to stop short of flooding and thus drowning the spark plugs and evade the obvious fire hazard while getting enough vaporized fuel into the cylinders to get the engine to cough to life. Some genius had equipped the Corsair with a shotgun starter in lieu of the heavy electric starter. When all was in readiness, the shotgun shell was fired. Sometimes it went bang and turned the prop through three or more revolutions. Mostly, however, it just went poof and the prop just twitched. Four abortive tries generally overheated the starter, and that resulted in a fifteen-minute stand-down for cooling. So much for geniuses."

A few of the pilots I worked and trained with were eventually killed when the carriers on which they were stationed were sunk--or lost at sea. We were stationed in Hawaii and our monthly pay was $50 a month. Because I was a crew chief, I was making $99 per month. This didn't allow for much frivolous spending but we were far better off than many of our peers who were fighting on the islands. We were stationed there preparing for our next location--Japan.F ortunately for all the service men (and women), the big bomb ended the war in 1945 and I was discharged.

Submitted by Robert Hatch

Robert E. McMullen

When Robert McMullen entered the service on December 19, 1942 he was 22 years old. Because his name started with “Mac” they decided he was of Irish descent and there would be no better place to put him than in the “Fighting 69th“. This was an all Irish outfit and here he stayed for the balance of the war.

He went to boot camp at Camp Adair north of Corvallis in Oregon. After his basic training he was transferred across the country to Mississippi to Camp Shelby in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, probably the swampiest area of the US. Major General Charles L. Bolte, the Commanding Officer had a brainstorm. General Sherman did it, why couldn’t he? Sherman had his “March to the Sea” so Bolte had his “March to the Gulf”. It was a 75 mile march to the gulf to be accomplished in 2-½ to 3 days. He expected to have supermen upon the return of the Division to the garrison. Fortunately McMullen got out of it. The night before they were scheduled to move out, the C.O. informed him and a Sgt. O’Leary that they would stay behind and be in charge of the sick, lame and lazy. Quite an easy job. He just managed to get up at 10:00 each morning.

In October, 1944 he was transferred to a camp on the eastern coast. He no longer had a mailing address to a camp, only an APO in care of the Postmaster. The 69th Infantry Division arrived in England, 12 December, 1944, where it continued its training. It landed in LeHavre, France, 24 January 1945 and moved to Belgium to relieve the 99th division, 12 February and hold defensive positions in the Siegfried Line. The Division went over to the attack, 27 February, capturing the high ridge east of Prether to facilitate use of the Hellenthal-Hollerath highway. In a rapid advance to the east, the 69th took Schmidtheim and Dahlem, 7 March. The period from 9 to 21 March was spent in mopping up activities and training. The Division resumed its forward movement to the west bank of the Rhine, crossing the river and capturing the fortress of Ehrenbreitstein, 26 March. During this march, Mick was walking through the woods with other men. Instead of a holding a rifle, he was carrying his automatic at ready. He came upon a small rise and was startled to face a Kraut who was as surprised as he was. Mick raised his automatic, before the German could react, and fired point blank. The soldier dropped immediately. Mick was trembling and quickly glanced around to see if there were more Krauts nearby. There weren’t, and breathing a sigh of relief, moved rapidly forward. This was an experience of which he wasn’t proud, but he felt it was either him or the German. Bob came home in 1946 and was appointed Postmaster of St. Joseph, Michigan Post Office. He served until his death following complications from surgery in April 1983.
Submitted by Robert Hatch

PART OF MACARTHUR'S RETURN
BY ARDEN PRIDGEON

I was born in Isabella County up in the middle of Michigan, the Mount Pleasant area. I lived there all my life, up until my nineteenth birthday, at which time I was drafted into the army on August 5, 1943. Well, I was overage for the draft so I had to be deferred to finish high school so I was drafted. I was given a deferment to get out of high school.
I was in the service for 29 months.

Prior to going into the service, the army had announced that they had an army specialized training program that would allow soldiers to be students. So I took the exam while I was still in high school, had a qualifying score, and I was told that I would be one of the candidates for the army specialized training program. And from Ft. Custer they sent us down to Ft. Benning GA. And these were all in the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP), the boys who were going to go to college. The infantry school was down there; it wasn't overwhelmed in training us to send us to college, but they gave us a real good basic infantry training.

So the first part of my activity, was as a scholar as part of my army service, so its probably the world's best assignment that you could have gotten, because after basic training, I was sent up to the University of Wisconsin-Madison, lived in a fraternity house, ate in the Student Union, attended classes and got college credit, and things were going good. The University of Wisconsin gave me some credits after the war.

But in March of 1944, Eisenhower said "I need troops" and MacArthur said "I need troops" and they had 200,000 people in this program then, and they said we could get rid of about 100,000 warm bodies overnight, so 50,000 went towards the Pacific, 50,000 went towards Europe, and that was my next assignment.

I was in the basic engineering program. However, it was ill-conceived. As I read in Scholars in Foxholes, "Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War 1944-45 and self-professed father of ASTP, would write after the war that Congress limiting the size of the service, that the army's need for combat soldiers finally became more crucial than its need for college-trained men."

Then, I was sent to the 96th Infantry Division out at Medford, Oregon, as a replacement. The government wanted 2000 new bodies to go overseas and the military were not overjoyed to get 2000 college boys to come in and fill up the ranks. So they tied up every position there was; the only opening was for private, rifleman. Well you could make me a mortar man or machine gunner, but because of my weight, 131 pounds, I was rifleman from then on.

From Medford Oregon we went up and down the coast of California and had what we call amphibious training and went down to San Diego and got on our ship and actually climbed down the ropes and got in the landing craft and landed on an island there and came back to Oceanside California to the Marine base and made a landing on the beach.

We left the United States in July of '44, went over to the Hawaiian Islands, Pearl Harbor. They had so many people coming through they said to load your own ship because we do not have a crew to do it. However, they did put us on a ship there for a week and let us land on Maui and fiddle-diddle around and mock landing and so forth, like the real thing was coming. And shortly after that, we got on a ship departed from Pearl Harbor on September the 15th.

Our destination was supposed to have been the Island of Yap, and this is a little island I finally saw on a

map, but they didn't tell you, but it was the common word it was going to be the island of Yap… located close to the equator, halfway to the Philippines, north of New Guinea. It was a little bit further west than we had been going.

After we arrived September 26th, landed at {Eniwetok?} and then the invasion plans were changed to Leyte, Philippines. This was eleven days later. We would be part of MacArthur's return, and cross the International Dateline. Then we thought, well, we are ahead of schedule, we have to kill time. So we crossed the equator, and went down to the Admiralty Island groups in Manus and went ashore for one day, had some free time, came back on the boat, and on October 14th we left Manus Island, south of the equator and October the 20th was the invasion of Leyte in the Philippines, which was the first island taken back in the Philippines, which was not the biggest or most important, the most critical. They just happened to choose that to surprise the Japanese, I think.

I heard Tokyo Rose on the radio, the only time in my life I ever heard her. She said, "Yes, it's true. American forces have landed in the Philippines, but woe to them. They'll never get off because our fleet's coming in." And this was the biggest battle in the Pacific, Leyte Gulf Battle. Course we didn't know being on the ground; the poor rifleman in the infantry, you don't know what was going on. But later on, I understand, the Japanese said who controlled the seas would control the battle and they finally decided who controlled the air would control the seas and who controlled the air and the seas would control the land and therefore we had wonderful, wonderful, wonderful support by that time because this was in '44 and the United States was in full production, full capacity, hundreds of ships and planes and so forth.

Leyte Island was the first island. Both of the campaigns I was in the Japanese Theatre really didn't offer resistance at the beach. Thank the Lord, because I see these other films where men are going through the water and dying on the beach and so forth. But I didn't see anybody at all getting killed going in.

This was were MacArthur went ashore and so forth. "I have returned." I picked up one of his letters on the beach that said that. I picked up some other flyers that said, "The Yanks have landed, keep away from the air force and the roads and the installations and so forth." We had friendly people there and I understand now that they were Filipino underground troops there giving us advice on the airfields and everything else. So it really was like a training battle even though it was a real battle. We had a couple of people killed, which is unfortunate, but for two months it was declared secure, on Christmas Day 1944, and we were sort of chasing them up in the hills and in the mountains and so forth. It was sort of, like when we would go out on patrols, like going deer hunting, you know. And we would go out and set up ambushes too, you know, on the paths and so forth.

We took very few prisoners. One Japanese prisoner we took… was so skinny and so starved; and they took him back and fed him real good, and I think he died from overeating…

We were there until the middle of March of 1945, and we spent January and February and half of March training for our next invasion, which turned out to be Okinawa, which was by far the largest battle in the Pacific.

1400 ships, battleships, airplanes, April 1st, 1945, Easter Sunday, going into Okinawa. By that time, the Japanese planes knew we were there, the kamikaze planes and so forth. Our battalion was a reserve battalion so I went down below and loosened the chains on the amphibious vehicles to let the people go ashore and then came back on deck for the show. The dogfights, and the darned planes would crash into ships, you know; the kamikaze planes, that was their idea. And every time you'd look up and you'd see one of them guys, it looked like he was coming towards you. So the navy guys said I feel sorry for you guys we're dumping off here, but for a while there, I was sort of happy to be getting off the ship and get onto land. At least I could run for cover. And the resistance there was very low.

I have a casualty list here that shows here how many people were wounded each day of the combat, and it shows maybe thirty or forty on the first and second of April, and the 5th of April was my 21st birthday, and I noticed that on the list, on the 5th and 6th of April there were no casualties in our division.

About a week later, the 10th, 11th and 12th, the Japanese decided that they would counterattack, and I really believe they probably had their most vulnerable green troops up there that they had signals that they would come and rush us and get through the lines and try to chase us off. But it wasn't a very organized kind of attack…. I have a book here on Okinawa that says their last big push was on 0315 on the morning of April 15th. Military time that is 3:15 in the morning. I was on one of the farthest outposts that night, and all of a sudden we had lots of flares going up and most of the fighting went on nights.

All of sudden in this deal they had a real banzai attack. They come running out. I understand later that they had signals - at a certain signal you will come and rush and you will get though the American lines helter-skelter whether you've got weapons or anything else. So they kept running and waving their arms and everything else and I was on an outpost that night. And that was by far the biggest night of my life as far as shooting. I had a 45-caliber submachine gun because I carried a bazooka in. This was a weapon I had never fired, because bazookas weren't part of our training at Ft. Benning at the time.

I've got a write-up on what happened that night and it said some people in my group were injured. It was the evening of the same day that I was going back to get some supplies and ready for the next night and the mortar shells were landing all along, and I hit the ground, and a piece of shrapnel hit me in the neck and cut the chain on my dog tag. And my sergeant said, "You got hit by a sniper bullet." So we put the bandage on, the blood was going down my arm, and I felt that it was warm, and I spit and it was clear, there was no blood, so I had some hopes.

I was evacuated because of my neck injury, they said that you got to go back, can you make it on your own? Sure, I can make it on my own, you know. Fortunately for me there was a first aid camp there, and there was a doctor there that had been on the ship with me on the way up and the fact that we were in a reserve battalion not going in the first few waves, he was excess baggage too with us.

He recognized me and said "Hey, Hi, what happened?"

I said, "Well, I've got something in the neck."

He said, "Well, orders are not for me to monkey with this stuff, but let me take a look." So he took a look, he took tweezers and took the piece out like a little piece of popcorn, and put sulfa powder and bandaged it up good. And he says, "Just keep on going back."

So I went back, got on the plane, and was in the naval hospital in Guam. And they said, has this been looked at by a doctor? Yup. And they said I was a non-emergency deal and let me stay there a couple of weeks and finally took the bandage off and said things are good and so what do you want to do?

I said, "I want to go right back to where I left. Company G, 381st Infantry, 96th Division."

They said you've got to go to Saipan. We've got to fly you down to Saipan to this army replacement center. You've got to go through the rifle course again, the operation course, you've got to go through psychological evaluation, you've got to be properly fit to go back. And boy, I was determined I was going to go back. So they said okay; but finally they put me on a slow ship going back to Okinawa. And these LSTs they were talking about yesterday, well, they were seaworthy, but not much good to be riding in. And basically I got

back on the island about the 1st of June.

I got back on the island and you have to hitchhike your ride, like "where's my outfit?" Course being a rifle company they were way down at the end of the island so I had to work my way down there. And by the time I got there and reported back to my platoon, there was nobody in the platoon that I had left with.

Some of the higher echelons in the company said, "Well, here's an old timer who's come back, we'll put him in charge of the platoon."

The new recruits there didn't know the difference. When I saw one of them at the reunion, he said, "You were the best sergeant we ever had."

I said, "I was only a private first-class when you were reporting to me."

But they took me in on the meetings and I talked about the big flame-thrower training. You can be on the phone on the back of the tank and you'll have people around you to guard you, and we'll go and burn these people out, because at the very end there was no other way of getting them out.

So the fellow, the Japanese came out with this charge in his hand and the people inside the tank said "get him, get him, get him," but he was running to throw that on the tread of the tank. But we got him before he got there; he just blew himself up. So that's the part about being the college student; being the infantryman was the other part. So they're all part of the same package.

I got back to the States; we crossed the International Dateline on December 25, 1945. I got discharged on the 11th of January 1946 at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin. Camp Sheridan was too busy.

I decided with the basic engineering training I had to go to Michigan State to get an engineering degree, which I got in June of 1949. I moved to Benton Harbor in 1949 to work for Benton Harbor Malleable Industries, which was a foundry organization - rough and tough, I'll tell you that, but I got my post-graduate training there, I picked up a Master's Degree from Michigan State in Benton Harbor and Western Michigan University was picking up the foundry program that Michigan State was dropping in 1965 and I was able to go over there and teach and be in charge of their foundry metallurgy program for the next 25 years and retired at the end of 1989.

He was awarded:
BRONZE STAR with two oak leaf clusters
PURPLE HEART with two oak leaf clusters
GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL
AMERICAN CAMPAIGN MEDAL
ASIATIC-PACIFIC CAMPAIGN MEDAL
COMBAT INFANTRYMAN BADGE IST AWARD
PHILIPPINE LIBERATION RIBBON with two bronze service stars
HONORABLE SERVICE LAPEL BUTTON WWII

HARRY B. RIMES
WORLD WAR II EXPERIENCES

The year was 1941 when I was drafted. We were not yet involved in the war but knew it just might be inevitable. My wife, Connie, and I were married in December, 1940, and being young and in Love, it was upsetting to be drafted, especially since we'd just learned we were expecting our first child, due in November 1941.

After basic training in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, I was sent to Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia, where the Fourth Infantry Division was formed. I was placed in the Twentieth Field Artillery of the Fourth Infantry. This was around September 1941.

In November we were sent on maneuvers. The Captain asked me, "When is your baby due to be born?" I replied, "November thirteenth." He asked me if I wanted to go home on leave, to which I replied "Yes!"

After receiving the leave, I walked into the nearest town, about five miles away, arriving around 6:30 p.m. the night of November 11th. A bus was leaving, heading north, and the driver suggested I ride to Washington, D.C., where I could better be able to find transportation heading to Chicago, which would be closer to my home town of St. Joseph, Michigan.

I took a train from D.C. to Chicago. The morning of November 13 I looked out the train window to see a sign that read Gary, Indiana (even closer to home than Chicago). I asked the conductor to let me off because my wife was having a baby that day. It was about 6:30 a.m. The conductor at first said they were on leased tracks and I couldn't get off. Then he came back and asked where my bags were. He took one bag and I took the other and he said, 'When I pull the emergency cord, you jump and I'll throw your bag after you."

After I jumped, I saw the South Shore train depot and was able to get a train to Michigan City, Indiana - even closer! Then I hopped a bus home to St. Joseph, Michigan. When I arrived, my mother was on the telephone trying to reach the Red Cross to have them contact me to come home, as my wife was in labor. When she turned around and saw me walk in, she said, "Never mind, he just came home!"

Our baby boy was born at 12:37 p.m. that very day, November 13, 1941! Was this a God-orchestrated miracle connection, or what?!

I still could have gotten out of the army because I wasn't supposed to have been drafted at the time I was, since there was no war yet and I was a married man. However, by the time this confusion was finally cleared up, along came Pearl Harbor in December, 1941, about one month after my son was born - and of course, they weren't about to let me out of the Army after that!

I ended up being in the army for four years and took part in the landings at Normandy on D-Day with the Fourth Infantry. I made it through that and on into Belgium and the Battle of the Bulge. Thank God, I lived unscathed through it all, but I could tell many more stories of those experiences!
Sgt. Harry B. Rimes

Connie Rimes, Wife of Sgt. Harry B. Rimes

It was after January 1944 and I left Columbia, South Carolina as the Fourth infantry division was shipped over to England. This was my husband's division and I had a room with "kitchen privileges" so we could be together. I was at the camp while the soldiers were spread out on the lawn waiting for their troop train. My eyes filled with tears and I sobbed all the way back to our room. Would I ever see my husband again?

A few days before I put a sign up at the serviceman's center with our phone number, offering a ride back north. Two women called for a ride, one to Ohio, and the other to Michigan. Neither of them could drive, so I drove all the way back to St. Joseph, Michigan, delivering my riders to their destiny.

Harry and I already had our son Don, who was being cared for by his mother and I was pregnant for our second child. Don was two years old by then and I taught him his Daddy's overseas address, which he could recite by heart. I bought him a pair of high top shoes and took a photograph~ of him, pulling up his pant legs to show Daddy his "combat boots."

This was World War II. Harry had been drafted. We were already married and I was pregnant with our first child at the time. They did not give money to wives or for children. Our folks helped me. Harry sent some of his pay to me but I couldn't afford to live alone so I lived back and forth with our two families so I wouldn't be too much trouble. I would write my husband 2 and 3 times a day. I still have one of his v-mails (a reduced copy of a letter).

HARRY SARNO

Mr. Sarno was a Technical Sergeant in the Army Air Force, 405th Fighter Squadron, 37Vt Fighter Group, 9th Air Force during World War II (European Theater).

When I knew I'd likely be drafted, I decided I didn't want to go into the infantry. I wanted something more progressive, preferably the Air Force. At that time, of course, the Air Force was a branch of the Army. I thought that if I could get into the Air Force, I'd rather be a pilot than a grease monkey. I checked with the recruiters and they told me that to go to flight school I'd need two years of college, which I didn't have. So I went back home and figured I'd wait to be drafted. That was around October of 1941. In December, of course, Pearl Harbor was bombed. Suddenly the Air Force was looking diligently for pilots, so they lowered their standards. So I checked on it, and they said if I passed an examination, I could go to flight training school. I did pass the exam, but by then thousands of boys had signed up for the same thing. They told me the schools were full and that I should go home and they'd call me when there was room for me.

Well, by the spring of '41 I was drafted into the regular Army. I was sent to Fort Sill, Oklahoma and to train with a field artillery outfit. I was in basic training there for about fourteen weeks. At that time they started a new Infantry outfit, the 87", which later became part of the Tenth Mountain Division, called "Mule Pack." They needed people with experience, so they sent six of us over there from Fort Sill. I was there till about October, and finally my initial desire to go to flight school was finally recognized. I spent seven months in flight school and washed out. I didn't quite make it.

At that time I had some choices to make. I could go back to my old Mule Pack outfit, but I had no idea where they were at that time, as we were fully involved in the war by then. I wasn't so sure I wanted to rejoin them. There were other schools I could go to, but they were either full or I didn't qualify. Finally they sent me to Denver, Co. to Armament School (guns, bombs, etc.) From there they formed the 3715t Fighter Group, and I went over with them, stayed with them through the war and came back with them.

When I first left for war, we were sent to England (around January 1944). On June16 (my 25th birthday) I landed at Utah Beach (about 9 days after the initial landing on D-Day). I was in the First Air Force Group and we were sent to St. Mare Eglise, France, the first town in France to be liberated. From there we moved from base to base to base as the war progressed. I was a Crew Chief of A-Flight. I was over about six men and anywhere from 6 - 10 airplanes, which we were responsible for as far as maintenance on guns, bomb racks, cameras, and bomb sites. The planes were P-47 fighter/bombers.

About D-Day: Oh, we knew something was up. I went over on the Mauritania, which was a sister ship to the Queen Elizabeth. We passed 3-4 convoys, which travel slower, so when we saw that, we knew something big was coming. On the way over we zig-zagged a lot, trying to avoid German U-Boats. It took the German subs 20 seconds or more to get a bead on us, so that's why we kept turning and moving around a lot. You couldn't just take a straight route or you'd be an easy target. Later on the Germans formed a "wolf pack" where they'd line up six or seven submarines and they'd all take a shot at you, figuring at least one of them would hit their target. On our trip we did see other ships burning after being hit.

When we got to France - many gliders tried to land there before us. What they didn't expect was so many hedgerows and the big poles in the middle of fields that the Germans put there to wreck planes and gliders that might try to land. When I got there, there were still some parachutists still hanging from the trees. There

were a lot of temporary graves with just dog tags and rough-hewn crosses to mark the graves. At the time we usually stayed on the beaches during the day. The pilots took the planes back to England at night because there was still a lot of danger, and we'd still see some signs of Germans shooting at our planes. Anyway, when I saw those parachutists still hanging in trees and saw the temporary graves, all I could think about was those boys' mothers and wives and how terrible it all was. Later we'd sometimes see convoys of trucks with white crosses on them, which wasn't very reassuring. Men would dig up the temporary graves and get the bodies organized into the grave sites you see today. Some mothers and wives wanted the bodies sent home, which the army would do for them.

Once in England, we knew something was up, of course. They grounded all our planes and had us paint black and white stripes on their bellies in order to identify them for our gunners on the ground. In Italy our gunners would sometimes shoot down our own planes, thinking they were the enemy, so they decided to put the stripes on so our ground crews wouldn't shoot at us! I went up in one of those planes only once, just as a ride - we'd go over and strafe something and they'd bring us back, just for the experience.

The planes are very small inside and it's hard to maneuver inside them. I was actually too big to be in one all the time. The B-24 is larger than a B-I 7. A B-I 7 is all bomb bay, and you had to weigh about 90 pounds to be a tail gunner in one of those. If there was any damage or you were wounded, you couldn't get back out till you landed, and they had that thing underneath the turret that if you lost your landing gear or lost their hydraulics, when the plane landed it basically landed right on you. It was a terrible thing.

After landing in France, I went all over. But I was in Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge. I've been back to Normandy twice since then and have visited the cemetery there and the one for the Battle of the Bulge. My son married an exchange student who lived in Belgium, so he has connections that help when we visit. When you visit Belgium, you meet some really nice people. The people over there are very friendly and very accommodating. More than once, families went out of their way to show us around and take us to special places that had meaning for us. I was there on the 60th Anniversary of D-Day and they had all kinds of events going on. It was very crowded. They had a parachute drop of 100 men who'd taken part in the initial landing 60 years earlier! It was very dramatic and moving. 500 more parachutists dropped who were currently in training.

The Belgians are such wonderful people. The younger people there still put fresh flowers at memorial plaques and special sites where American soldiers were killed. When I go there I look for the names of pilots I knew were killed or came up missing.

On one trip to Normandy I got to see President Bush when he gave a speech there. We met the Secretary of War personally. He came up and shook our hands. There was too much security to get close to the president.

As far as stories from the war, by the time we landed at Normandy, the German air force was becoming fairly depleted. I think if they had known we were coming, though, we would have had it good from them—so, I guess we surprised them pretty good. Before the landing we were exchanging gunfire across the Channel. Little did the Germans know that if they had lowered their guns a little more, they could have wiped out the armada coming across the Channel. Later we were at a place called Nancy, France, near Luxembourg, where a unit like ours was completely obliterated by the Germans not long before. That made us feel pretty vulnerable because the Germans could still do a lot of damage. Our unit did get strafed and bombed occasionally, but not heavily. Sometimes the Germans would wiggle their wings at us when they flew over, indicating their radios were out, and they'd shoot at us, but usually it was nothing serious.

I was at Stuttgart, Germany, when the war ended. A few weeks later we went to Nuremberg for a while. They took most of our planes to send them to the other theater--Japan. They were putting rockets on them that we didn't have before, and were putting on different bomb sites. We were sent to Austria and became part of

the army of occupation. There were hundreds of thousands of us there in Europe and not enough boats to get us back, so they had to take us out in groups, the oldest first. I was with the 371st through the whole thing.

We went to Buchenwald Concentration Camp for a short while. By the time we got there most of it was cleaned up, but you could see what had been going on. Yes. There is no denying what happened. All displaced people had numbers tattooed on their arms.

We lost a lot of pilots. All of them were accounted for later on. . One, named George Simmons, flew 7 or 8 missions and got shot down and was a prisoner of war. Two years ago at a reunion we had a fella' come who said he'd been a prisoner of war. He was a wing man to one of the pilots who happened to be at this reunion. In the incident, their plane caught fire and they tried to make it to the American side of the fighting but they didn't. The wing man said he was bailing out. The lead pilot circled around and couldn't see the wing man's parachute and assumed he was lost (dead), because a lot of those who bailed out were shot on their way down. Then he showed up all those years later at the reunion. The lead pilot was there. They had never communicated all those years, so it was quite a reunion for them. That often happened - men got sent to other outfits and never saw each other again until they attended a reunion. That's part of the reason I go to the cemeteries, to see if any of the names of some we never heard from again might be there.

When we got to France - many gliders tried to land there before us. What they didn't expect was so many hedgerows and the big poles in the middle of fields that the Germans put there to wreck planes and gliders that might try to land. When I got there, there were still some parachutists still hanging from the trees. There were a lot of temporary graves with just dog tags and rough-hewn crosses to mark the graves. At the time we usually stayed on the beaches during the day. The pilots took the planes back to England at night because there was still a lot of danger, and we'd still see some signs of Germans shooting at our planes. Anyway, when I saw those parachutists still hanging in trees and saw the temporary graves, all I could think about was those boys' mothers and wives and how terrible it all was. Later we'd sometimes see convoys of trucks with white crosses on them, which wasn't very reassuring. Men would dig up the temporary graves and get the bodies organized into the grave sites you see today. Some mothers and wives wanted the bodies sent home, which the army would do for them.

The main thing I remember is that we figured what we were doing was just part of our life and we were there to get the job done. We all worked as hard as we could and according to our abilities. Our unit had about 60-6 5 men and a lot of them couldn't even drive because they were so young. Some of us who grew up on farms could drive because we drove tractors and all that, so we had to teach some of the others how to drive.

I saw Eisenhower once. He came onto the field and talked to Patton and we watched them meet each other. Patton saluted Eisenhower. That was after the war ended. I also saw President Roosevelt once. In Washington D.C. at one of our reunions I shook hands with President Bush once. Because of us being WW II vets, we got a lot of perks and special treatment. Bush was getting ready to go to Camp David, but he got off a helicopter and said he heard there were a "bunch of old fighter pilots" there. He came over and shook our hands. We got a tour of the White House, too, places the average tourist doesn't get to go.

I came home into Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania. From there I got a train to Chicago and an uncle picked me up in Oak Park. My wife (at that time my fiancé) was in nursing school there at St. Luke's Memorial Hospital, so he brought me over to where she was going to school. Her father was there and she wanted to get out of that program because the war was over, so we went back to Covert and got married.

I was single when I joined the Army, but I had a girlfriend. She was too young to get married when I left, and I also thought it was wrong to get married before going to war. I saw a lot of guys get killed, and I'm glad I waited till I got back. When I came home from the war in November 1945, we were married one month later,

December 15, 1945. She waited a long time for me.

There were four of us Sarno boys. I farmed before I left for the war, but when I got back to Covert, Michigan, I didn't go back to farming. I worked construction a while, but later I became a rural mail carrier, which I did for 25 years. My wife taught school after our kids were all older and in school. Later I went into real estate.

During the war, we had a good mail service. I had an uncle who would send me newspapers, so I kept up on the local news pretty good. The town board in Hartford got the names of everybody in the area who was overseas and they sent copies of the Hartford Day Spring to all of us. So I got that paper once a week. We couldn't get radio there from home, but once in a while the USO would come into camp and play local music for us or put in a pool table or let us play cards and things like that. Sometimes mail came in spurts and I'd get a bunch of it at once. My sister sometimes would send me chocolate chip cookies. Sometimes they arrived all smashed, but the guys and I would eat all those crumbs.

One funny story - I used to get kidded about spaghetti and meat balls because I'm Italian. The guys would tease me and ask me to make them spaghetti and meat balls. So I wrote my sister and asked what the chance was that she could send me some spaghetti and meat balls. Wouldn't you know - I received a canning jar of spaghetti and meat balls. She packed it real good so it wouldn't break. I opened that two-quart jar of spaghetti and meat balls and we heated it up and I shared some of it with the other guys - so we had our spaghetti and meat balls over their in Europe - sent all the way from Covert, Michigan.

Things aren't that different for the military itself. I'm not sure if they should bring back the draft. What I didn't like about the draft was that guys would skip the country to get out of it, or if they had enough money and influence, they could get out of it. I feel every man should take his turn. My dad asked me once if I thought about getting out of the war, but I felt I should take my turn like everybody else, so that's why I tried to enlist in the air force, but I didn't qualify so I did end up getting drafted. I didn't mind taking my turn.

We've had 18 reunions in a row and I'm the only one who attended every one of them. There were only 6 at the first one. Two have since died and two more are either sick or for some reason can't come any more. More have come at different times - about 55 at the most at one time. Last year there were only 9 there. One man started it all. He sent out a questionnaire to see if we'd all be interested. Anyway, he didn't realize how long it would take for his mailing to reach us because of moving around, and you need to know about a year ahead of time to get on the roster. It's pretty organized now. We meet in St. Louis, MO. We all had different jobs in the service, so we all have a lot of different stories to tell each other - a lot of memories.

A SOLDIER'S STORY - WORLD WAR 2

PETER HAROLD SCHRADER AS TOLD TO HIS SISTER, JUANITA PHILLIPS

I was only about 7 years old when my brother Pete went in the service. I hope to share what it meant to the whole family to live thru those years and an understanding that it was not a glorious thing for the common man who had to go to war. I can remember my mother and father both crying when he left for service in October, 1941.

There was rationing on sugar, rubber products, meat, gas, nylon, cigarettes, and anything else that could contribute to the war effort. I remember me and my twin brother, Bob, taking newspapers to the waste paper place to sell. They also bought anything metal too. At school, we could buy savings bonds. We could buy 10 cent stamps each week. We were from a poor family, so that 10 cents took a lot of saving.

Well, enough of my view of the war. This is going to be Pete's story from going into the army to when he returned home.

Pete writes, One day I got a letter in the mail which said, "Greetings.Your friends and neighbors have selected you" (Selective Service). From then on it was all over. I think that there were 21 of us from Niles and the first batch went to Ft. Custer for indoctrination, uniforms, physicals and shots and then we shipped out for Ft. Walters in Texas. We had passes to Ft. Worth and Dallas and had a good time.

We had 8 weeks of basic training before we were shipped to Ft. Shelby, Mississippi, which was a pretty bad place as far as accommodations were concerned. It was all preambular tents. The whole division had coal stoves and there was coal dust all over when they were all burning.

On December 7th war broke out. The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and the army loaded us on trucks with wooden guns to Biloxi, Mississippi. We did some training there. Then we were shipped to Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania for awhile. We thought we were headed for Europe but all of a sudden they shipped us cross country to San Francisco, California where we departed for Auckland, New Zealand. It took us 18 days to get there and we had some training there.

Then we were shipped to the Fiji Islands, specifically Suva, Fiji. It was Christmas time and that was a beautiful island. All islands were beautiful there. But anyhow, we dug a lot of holes along the coast because they didn't expect the Japs to stop at Guadalcanal. We had a good time there.

I remember one Christmas Eve, we were staying in a schoolhouse on a hillside and there was a Catholic church beside it. I was standing guard beside it on Christmas Eve when I heard the most beautiful song, Ave Maria, sung by a Fijian girl. That memory will always stick out in my mind. Even though there was a war going on, it was a reminder of what we were fighting for.

We spent quite a bit of time in the Fijis. The people were great there. It was almost a vacation, except for guarding the coast. We shipped out for Guadalcanal and landed there a day or more after D-day. I really don't remember for sure. It was pretty rough there. There was bombing every night, strafing going on, and air raids all the time.

We did a lot of patrol duty in the mountains. One day they sent me and my patrol up Mt. Austin to knock out a Jap search light that was guiding the Japanese bombers to Henderson Airfield. We sat up there one night and watched while the Japs snuck in the bay between Savo and Guadalcanal and sunk a bunch of our ships. We watched a lot of dog fights over the bay. It was as though we were watching a movie. I saw a Jap plane dive bombing a destroyer and three American planes following him all the way and the American ships shot down all the American planes and didn't get the Jap plane. He got away!! That's the way things go in the war. The American planes were not supposed to be there. They were supposed to meet him outside the ring of fire. But they were doing what they thought was best.

Then we were ordered to saddle up and we marched 29 miles through the jungle. We got to the shoreline as the Japanese troop ships were disembarking and we wiped them out, taking no prisoners. There were thousands of Japanese killed in that battle. The sea was so full of bodies that you could walk across them.

There were a lot of things going on every night, bombings, patrols and Japs everywhere. In fact, the Marines were there and did a good job, but the army had to do all the mopping up and the dirty work because we were attached to them being the army, but everything worked out all right.

One day we were on patrol and we had lost all our guns and clothes in the Torakina River. We had made rafts out of our shelter halves (pup tent), guns and bayonets and put all our clothes on them and shoved them out into the river, but the current tore them away from us and we were left without anything guns, clothes and everything. We were left STARK NAKED! That was the coldest night I ever spent in those mountains. We sure got a lot of ribbing going thru the lines in the camp.

We had just got into camp when someone told me that a marine was looking for me and right away I thought it must be my younger brother, Richard. Floyd Riddle (a buddy from Niles) and I decided to go looking for him down at the other side of the island. We decided to hitchhike down a gravel road we had built and we got down a little ways and we ran into a guy standing in front of a motor pool and it was Jimmy Saratore from Niles. Jimmy said to wait and he would hunt up a jeep and we would go down and hunt for Richard. We got there and we found him just as they were loading up their boats to raid New Georgia. We were due to ship out that night too and Richard was running toward the ship. We didn't get to talk to him much. Anyhow it worked out. They left and we went back and got on our boats and headed for Rendova Islands.

Rendova was Jap-infested and we had some skirmishes there overnight, and then jumped on landing barges to make a beachhead on New Georgia to coincide with the Marines coming in from the other side. The Marines got slaughtered on Rice Anchorridge and so did we. But we kept pushing on.

There was a battle on Horseshoe Ridge which we called Suicide Saddle Hill. Once I lost all of my squad - quite a battle all the way through and we got to the bottom of the hill just above Munda Air Strip. Going down that hill, the Japs were shooting anti-aircraft guns and pouring everything at us, we captured Munda Air Strip. I can remember when we got to the beach, everyone took their clothes off and went swimming. We were so hot and dirty. We never had a bath and or anything to drink because at night the Japs would get the water boles and we would have to fight to get them back the next morning.

Just as we were swimming out in the ocean, here came 3 or 4 Jap planes strafing us and you should have seen us hunting a shelter!! They did that every once in awhile. We didn't stay there long. They loaded us on a ship to Vena LaVe Ila Island, a little island that you didn't hear much about, but the Japanese were strafing and bombing. It was a wicked battle.

Then we went back to Guadalcanal to regroup and outfit and take replacements and stuff. I ran into a group of men from Niles. Just to name a few: Davey Jones, Floyd Riddle, Bert Bierwagon and Bob Swain. That was all of the Niles guys and we all got together. Davey Jones and Bob Swain were from the Air Force and Davey knew of a Harry Wolters who was an ace from Niles down at Henderson Field. We made a date to have

dinner with them, on Sunday. We went down and couldn't find Harry. Finally the CQ told us that Harry didn't come home the day before. He was shot down over Kola Mun Cara. So we missed a good dinner. He is buried in Silverbrook Cemetery in Niles, Michigan. I looked him up and he has a very nice tombstone there.

From there we came back to Guadalcanal and got equipped again. It wasn't very long and we were on boats for Bougainville. We entered at D day plus 2 at Empress Augusta Bay and from then on it was a tough battle, worse than we had ever been in except for New Georgia which was pretty tough. Well, they all were in the jungles but to make a long story short, that was about the end of my Pacific duties - 29 months down there--in fox holes most of the time.

Once back to the States, I spent two weeks at home at Christmas time. Then the German General Vonrundstatt made a breakthrough in Europe and they shipped a bunch of us Combat Sergeants to Europe. We went into the lO6th Division which really got beat up in the battle of the Bulge, Mt. Verne, and St. Bliss, but they were credited with stopping General Vonrundstatt in his tracks. We paid the price for it. I think one regiment was left with very few survivors, I think it was the 424th which took the worst beating because Vonrundstatt knew enough to hit the green troops instead of the experienced ones. The guys fought a hell of a battle and stopped him in his tracks. They were credited with stopping him or he would have pushed us to the sea again. We stopped him from getting to his ammo dumps. He got a lot of our guys and we were pretty well depleted.

After it was over, we had to take care of the prisoners. They assigned prisoners there in the compounds. The compounds were built for 5,000 and I think there were about 25,000 in each one. There was a lot of starvation and freezing in them and every night they would take out 25 or 30 bodies. We kind of finished up the war there doing guard duty.

Then we got to playa little baseball. I always liked to play baseball and we run into quite a few professional players there. We were playing the First Armored Division for Wodd Army Championship and they dedicated the Ardenne Stadium to the 106th Division, called the Lion's Division.

We were playing the championship and I come to bat and there was this guy pitching and he threw his hat and he came up to me and asked me, "Aren't you Pete Schrader? I'm Tony McKenzie from Niles." I knew him from Niles and we got reacquainted again. I met a lot a Niles guys over there - I can't remember them all, my memory isn't what it used to be.

While attending a USO show in Paris an entertainer from Niles, Vic Heide, "The One Man Band" was on stage. What a kick to see someone on stage in Paris that I had seen on the street at home. Vic told the audience that he was from Niles, Michigan and, "In case you don't know where that is, its five miles east of Buchanan so now you know right where it's at"!

Incidentally the 106th division had a lion head patch on the shoulder and the South Pacific was the 37th Division which they called them the Heavy Weights down there and the 37th division was the Ohio State Seal which was a real red center with a white border on it. Just a round patch - some called it the "flaming assholes." Some called it the 5 Bs - Bobby Beetler's Battling Buckeye Bastards". Another name for the patch was the fried egg patch. They had 4-5 names as they had for most divisions.

Well, to go back to Bougainville, we were on Hill 700. We were the ones that got beaten and slaughtered there. I lost my whole squad in about ½ an hour on that hillside. I remember some 3 star General came up to me before we started the attack and he gave us a speech about, "this is the time to make the Supreme Sacrifice" and all that. "Take your men and run up that hill as fast as you can and try to get to those pillboxes and knock them out". Well, that was pretty hard to do without any artillery or anything else at that time. We didn't make it. I remember looking down the trail and everybody was rolling down the hill - everybody was hit. They were coming too slow, they should have come faster because the Japs were throwing their grenades over us from

the pillboxes and hitting the guys below us. I and a guy named Georgie Janowski made it to the top and we were in a trench between two Jap pillboxes - all night, we stayed and I got one with a bayonet because he came sneaking down the pathway and he didn't know we were in there. Outside of that we got out and we finally got over it, they counted over 3,000 Jap bodies and buried them in big grave with bulldozers. I can remember truckloads of American bodies being hauled out on semi trucks. Bodies were loaded on them like cordwood. That was the toughest battle of the whole bunch that I was involved in.

When I got out of the army, I went to South Bend, Indiana to the Blue Moon with an army buddy Chuck Womble. I met the most beautiful girl in my whole life. On June first of this year (2001), we were married 55 years. I didn't think I would ever forget a lot of things about the war but I am 83 years old now and can't remember a lot of things about it, but I guess it was all worth it. I've had a good life.

Incidentally, one battle I forgot. Suicide Saddle on New Georgia was a tough one. I lost all my squad there on Horseshoe Ridge. Floyd Riddle and I were the only two guys to come off it alive. When I came out, I walked back up a trail back to the rear lines where we came from and there were two Japanese machine guns on two corners shooting crisscross on the trail and they never hit me and I never ran. I was walking but they didn't hit me. I took some shots thru my shirt collar and my canteen was shot full of holes. I got back to the rear field and it was getting pitch dark and I stayed in a slip trench. When they are shooting at you, you will lay in anything. They stopped at night and just about daylight I could see a Jap mortar section down below me aiming in at someone. Wasn't me, but I shot a couple of them and they disappeared and I never heard from them again. I heard the awfulness crashing in the brush and I got my gun ready to shoot toward the noise and here comes a guy up the hill and it was my buddy, Floyd Riddle. He hadn't got hit either and I think we were the only ones left out of that massacre. The next couple days we went back after they had leveled it with artillery, bombing and ships off the coast shelling it. There was not anything left, not even a blade of grass. Just before he got killed Benny Nemic (a kid in my squad who was kind of an outlaw, but the best fighting man in the whole bunch) found a flamethrower. I stuck it in the Jap pillbox and he used the flamethrower and he backed and fired it. We killed a lot of Japs, but almost immediately they got Benny. That's where Al Sayers and other kids from Niles got killed. It was pretty gory. We went back over the hill two days later and it was awfully hot and Al was laying there with his beard lying beside his face and his face was full of seething maggots. I never told his folks the whole story. I went to his funeral when they brought his body back a couple years later. They are some pretty bad and gory stories of war, but you learn to live with it although you don't ever forget. There was another guy that was on Hill 700, Pat Manzie, from Ohio. He was standing by a tree holding his guts in his stomach and I didn't have time to do anything and I asked him how he was doing and he said, "Oh. I'm all right". I continued down the trail a little ways and I came back and he was laying there dead. That was pretty terrible.

Suicide Saddle was on New Georgia and Hill 700 was on Bougainville. There were some good write-ups in the Yank Magazine. I can recall one night we were loading up for a surprise raid on a converted Jap destroyer on Bougainville and it all happened so fast we didn't know what happened. They just ordered us on board when we went up the coast about 28 miles and raided a Japanese Headquarters. We were there about 6 hours and we killed everyone on it--anyhow all we could find. Probably a whole regiment and we got back on board and came back, because it was a surprise raid. Sometimes those things happen. You just follow orders.

The first day at New Georgia, the guys coming down out of the hills (the ones that had gone before us when we made the beachhead) were coming back in a line each one holding a stick leading the other. They were suffering "shell shock". The effect of war on individual people is indescribable. Out of each group, there were not very many that did not suffer this in some way or another. There were not very many that could handle it. Anyhow they put my squad on a sniper spot and we were guarding a bulldozer of the 37th division engineers. They were trying to make a trail to get the wounded out. The jeeps would bring them out. The Japanese snipers shot 7 of those guys on the bulldozer. One would get shot and another one would replace him. Those engineers had a lot of guts. Finally we got one of the snipers. He was hanging in a tree. I spotted him when he pulled his

gun up and I got him. It was a suicide mission for the Jap snipers because they were tied in the trees and they stayed there until they got shot. They finally got the wounded through and I think that there were about 98 back on the beach waiting to get transferred back to Rendova to get another ship. The Japs infiltrated and killed everyone of them, doctors, medics, and all. The Japs slaughtered them all. We got back there and got the Japs. They were in trees and all over the place.

I think after the first part of the war they furnished the squad leaders with tommy guns, but the rest of the squad had Ml rifles and we had one B.A.R. gunner. Avery Haynes was my B.A.R. gunner. He was from North Carolina but he moved to Niles and married Beverly Belding. When they put him in my squad he was a real big husky guy and I handed him the B.A.R. and he refused. The Captain happened to be standing nearby and said that I better make him take it. If he doesn't take it, shoot him. I'll get you out of it. Make sure they do what you tell them. It cost me a carton of cigarettes. He was a lazy s.o.b. so I cocked my tommy gun and told him to pick it up or he was a dead man. From that day on, he followed me around very faithfully! You had to have complete control of your men so that they would follow orders.

A B.A.R. is a browning automatic rifle and they were good guns and whenever you found one in the jungle, you grabbed it. They were a fast gun and fired a lot faster than the regular rifle. We set them up so they'd shoot 40 instead of 20 bullets. It was a heavy gun and we had a man carrying ammunition for the B.A.R. man.

One day I went out on patrol and Floyd Riddle went with us. He was in our company but he was a machine gun sergeant which was heavy weapons. He didn't have to but he always went with me. He was a good soldier. I will say that. He lost his leg in the Post Office in Manila.

I got picked for rotation so I didn't have to go to Manila and I'm glad I didn't have to go there. That was a wicked battle. The guys that went there said that was worse than all of the Solomans. I still cannot, after all these years, figure why someone would buy something that was manufactured in Japan.

I read someplace that if we went to war again, we couldn't furnish our clothing as it is all made overseas. I bought a South Bend fishing rod from one of my friends and it was a South Bend rod (made in China). It's a nine foot rod all fixed up. THINK I'M GOING DOWN TO THE RIVER AND GO FISHING---¬

Chronology of Staff Sergeant Peter Schrader

Drafted and entered the army in October 22, 1941, 37th Div. 145th Infantry,

Company B, attached to 3rd Marines, 4th Raider Battalion

Basic training, Camp Walters, Texas

Basic training, Ft. Shelby, Mississippi

Left the states on May 26, 1942 Arrived in New Zealand June 12, 1942

Left New Zealand July 12, 1942 Arrived in Fiji Island July 15, 1942

Left Fiji Islands April 2, 1943

Arrived in Guadalcanal Islands April 6, 1943

Left Guadalcanal Islands July 12, 1943

Arrived in Rendova, July 13, 1943

Left Rendova, July 15, 1943

Arrived in New Georgia on July, 1943

Left New Georgia on Aug. 30, 1943

Arrived in Vella La V elia on Aug. 31, 1943

Left Vella La Vella on Sept. 25, 1943.

Arrived back at Guadelcanal Sept 25, 1943

Left Guadalcanal on Nov. 16, 1943

Arrived Bougainville on Nov. 19, 1943

Left Bougainville on Oct 14, 1944

Arrived on Guadalcanal on Nov 5, 1944

Left for United States on Nov. 30, 1944

Home for the Christmas holiday December 1944

Back to the European theatre

Landed in France with the 106th Infantry

In France to Germany for the remainder of time.

Mustered out October 10, 1945 at Ft. Meade, Maryland

THE WAR YEARS

By Franklin H. Smith

I am writing this account at the request of my children and my wife. Primarily it will be for the use of my grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I was born on a farm located on Hilltop Road in St. Joseph Township, St. Joseph, Michigan. My parents were Thomas Henry Smith, Sr. and Elizabeth Marie Koch Smith. At the age of seven I moved with my parents to Chicago, Illinois and over the next several years we went back and forth from the farm to Chicago. I came back to St. Joseph in the eighth grade, attended and graduated from St. Joseph High School. I then went to Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana and graduated in 1941.

While at Indiana University I played varsity football in the years 1938, 1939 and 1940. Before I graduated I received orders from the War Department in Washington D.C. advising me that upon graduation and receiving my Lieutenancy in the army, I was to report on July 7, 1941 at Fort Custer, Michigan to join the 5th Division. On July 7, 1941, I reported to Fort Custer, and was assigned to I company of the 11th Infantry Regiment of the 5th Infantry Division. Shortly after reporting we went on maneuvers to Louisiana and Texas where the 2nd Army was opposing the 3rd Army in these maneuvers.

We were part of the 2nd Army under the command of Lt. General Ben Lear. The 3rd Army was commanded by Lt. General Krueger. This was quite a workout for we spent a lot of time in swamps and wooded areas and slept on the ground. We managed to survive until early September when we returned to Fort Custer. At Fort Custer we continued our normal training and spent a lot of time on the rifle range and machine gun range. I was range officer for two or three weeks at a time. The troops would come and fire the different weapons. I realize now this it wasn't very good for my ears but no one thought of anything like that at the time. I was ordered to go to the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia in January of 1942.

On January 17, 1942 I married Marguerite Barnes at the Methodist Church in Benton Harbor, Michigan. This was a very quick marriage because I didn't have any time off from the Army and I had to get back to camp. The wedding was squeezed in because the war had broken out. We had been attacked on December 7, 1941 at Pearl Harbor by the Japanese and from that time on we were pretty much confined to camp and were under wartime footing. Leaves were granted only for emergencies but I did manage to get three days off after returning to Fort Custer and at the end of those three days I was to be in Fort Benning, Georgia to attend the Infantry School.

There were no quarters in Fort Benning at this time, so Marguerite had to return to her parents who were living in Austin, Minnesota. I told her that as soon as I could find some place for her to live, I would call her and bring her to Fort Benning. This was no easy task as the various officers that were attending school at Fort Benning always promised their quarters to someone else from their own outfit who were coming to the school. I kept checking each class and I finally found someone who had not promised his room to anyone from his own unit who was coming down. I managed to rent it for $30.00 a month and it was located in Columbus, Georgia. When Marguerite arrived and we went to move in, the man told me that he couldn't rent it for $30.00 a month that I would have to pay $40.00 a month. So I said, "Well, just let us in." And then on top of that there was a heater in the room and he said, "Oh, the fellow who was here before asked me to sell this heater for him, so I'll have to have $11.00 for the heater." Well, I think this was just $11.00 in his pocket, but I gave him the money and he allowed us to move into our quarters.

It just happened that shortly after Marguerite's arrival she became ill and was confined to her bed. During that time, I was ordered to report to my unit immediately. This was in March 1942. I had to call the doctor and he said that she probably could move but if she gets sick on the train, they'll just have to find a place for her to lie down. So we managed to get on the express train that was going from Miami, Florida to Chicago. They flagged it down and said that they had a couple of Army officers to put aboard. We managed to get on the train, unfortunately without our baggage and away we went toward Chicago. I talked to the train conductor and told him our baggage was still in the station at Columbus. He said that he would wire back and ask them to put it on the next train.

We arrived late at night in the city of Chicago and the train station was very quiet and of course the desk was not staffed. I had trouble finding someone to tell my story about my baggage that had missed our train. There were some fellows in the back of the room and they were not paying any attention to us. I had called to them several times and they ignored me. I told Marguerite that I was going to beat on the metal counter until someone comes, whether it is the police or whoever. I beat on the counter and they came running out to see what was going on. I told them about the baggage and told them I was reporting to my unit and asked them to look for my luggage and get it on the first available transportation to Fort Custer, Michigan. Marguerite was very tired and could hardly go on, but I said we must go on to Benton Harbor because I have to go to Fort Custer.

We managed to catch a late bus out and finally arrived in St. Joseph. The next morning I immediately went to Fort Custer, having borrowed my brother's car. We spent all Saturday and Sunday getting our equipment loaded on the train and getting rid of company fund equipment. Civilians came out to the post to buy pool tables and whatever else we might have to sell. On Monday morning around 6:00 a.m. we went down to the trains and prepared to load. We had an English Pointer who had been with us on maneuvers and Captain Weaver had the dog on a leash as we approached the train. I remember they said that dogs were not allowed on the train so Captain Weaver handed the leash to a man standing there and asked him how he would like to have a nice English Setter. Of course the man was very glad to get him. We loaded the troops on the train and pulled out for Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania.

After arriving we unloaded off the train into big trucks that took us out to the post. We spent a few days there making sure that we had underwear and other necessary equipment and getting everything in shape for shipment over seas. We were pretty sure we were going to Iceland although nothing had been said but the two other regiments from the 5th Division had been sent much earlier and we were pretty sure that was where we were going. We sailed out of New York Harbor in early April 1942. We were in a small convoy with three troop ships and one of them had Canadian troops aboard. Our escort was six United States Destroyers and one heavy cruiser, which I think might have been the Philadelphia.

THE ORIZABA

Our first general quarters alarm sounded just as we were getting out of New York. When the alarm went off, I was in the navy laundry trying to talk the guys into doing my laundry that I had brought up from the south when I came from Infantry school. Those sailors went out like they were shot out of a gun, for they all had an assignment. I also had one, but I wasn't used to moving that quickly. I went to my assignment, which was to go to the back of the ship and bring I company out of D-hold, which was the bottom hold on the boat, the Orizaba. The Orizaba was an old fruit boat that had been taken out of service but was needed to haul troops and was put back in service in WWII. It was owned by the Army and was run by the Navy so all the officers in charge were naval officers. We all went to the abandon ship locations and stood there for a while and then the all-clear signal was given so we went back to our normal duties.

I was in charge of a guard that was spaced around the ship. There were two-man teams from I company that had field glasses and were stationed all around the ship to watch for periscopes of the enemy submarines. The

men took turns and each man would watch a certain sector on the water for five minutes at a time and then pass the glasses to the other man. One of the things that were favorable to us was that we were in a fairly rough ocean with the biggest waves that I had ever seen. The waves would hit the ship and throw water all over the decks. Of course we had a number of people who were sick and didn't feel very good. We were about five days out and I had inspected the guards and had returned to my room around 11 p.m. My roommate was Lee Robards, a fellow 2nd Lieutenant. He was already in his bunk and was sleeping. We were in a very small room, which had three metal bunks. There were only two of us because one of our members had been left behind to have an operation.

As I was sitting on the side of my bunk all of a sudden there was a big explosion. It rocked the whole ship and a metallic sound rang out. I thought we had been hit and I had a sinking feeling because there wasn't enough lifeboats or rafts to go around. If you were a 2nd Lieutenant or down into the enlisted ranks you were going to be in the water with your life jacket on. I thought that if this ship goes down I was going to be on one of the life rafts because I wasn't ready to die. The explosion did not wake Lt. Robards so I hollered at him to wake up. There was a little thing above the door that looked like a smoke detector which was the general quarters alarm. It came on just as I finished telling Robards that we had been hit. It sounded something like Whak Whak and it brought me to my senses and I realized that I had a job to do. I had to go to the back of the ship and bring I company out of D-Hold. Of course everybody was running in all directions on the ship and trying to get to their assigned stations. D-Hold was at the bottom of the Orizaba and we had to wait for the other holds to clear before we could go up the metal ladder. It seemed like it was taking forever for the other men to get out. I had to stand there and watch and wait until I could tell my men to start up the ladder. I had to be the last one out to make sure that it was all clear. We went up on the deck and stood in our assigned positions for approximately two hours. The destroyers were running everywhere and finally after about two hours the all clear signal was given and we were allowed to return the troops to their hold and I went back to my stateroom. I was told that we probably got hit by a dud torpedo, but to me it sounded as though it had gone off.

ICELAND

We kept on moving and eventually arrived in Iceland after zig zagging through the water for eleven days. We arrived in Reykajavik on April 11, 1942 and while we were debarking there was an alert for an air raid. We hardly knew what to do. Our troops were carrying their bags and equipment and the siren was blowing for enemy aircraft overhead. It created a lot of confusion but we finally cleared the dock. We went to a ship that took us to Borgarnes, Iceland, which is in the northwest sector and was a very small town. We went to relieve the British who occupied the area. We came into the area and had to wait while the British assembled their troops and lowered their flag and marched out. We immediately took over their barracks and had our men establish themselves in the Nissen huts. We were not able to fly our flag because there was an agreement with the Icelandic government. It always bothered me because Iceland always had a wind blowing and I used to look at the flagpole and think how nice it would be to have our beautiful flag flying from the flagpole.

Some of our troops were located farther north at an area called Reykaskoli and some were at Blondous. The troops at Reykaskoli and Borgarnes were the rest of our battalion. I company was stationed at Borgarnes along with a company of engineers, artillery battery, a quartermaster, paymaster, a postal officer and various attached services. Supplies would come into Borgarnes by Reykaskoli. The trucks that we had at the time were British three-ton lorries driven by British drivers. After awhile we did get our own trucks. We created a lot of traffic with our big trucks, which were six-wheel drive, one and a half to two ton trucks. When it began to thaw in the spring, the roads began to go out and we had muddy chuckholes that sometimes were seventy-five to one hundred yards long. I was assigned to take a road crew and fill those large holes with stone and keep the traffic flowing. We had to clean all the mud out of the chuck holes, put large rocks in and break them up with hammers as best we could. We would get fine gravel out of the streams and haul this gravel up and put it on top. It was a very laborious task. Many times while we were working, loaded trucks would come along on their way to Reykaskoli.

We would have to push them to get them through the muddy roads. When they came back they were empty and it was a little easier for them to get through. The Icelandic government had a man out to watch what we were doing and give us advice on how to repair the road. Since the Icelanders normally used horses, the road was only one track and the area was sparsely populated except in the town itself. Reykaskoli was not really a town but it had been an old school that was abandoned. We spent quite a bit of time working on the roads during that spring.

Captain Frank M. Weaver was the Company Commander of I company. John Acuff was the Executive Officer. The Lieutenants were Cameron, Hreha, Lowery and myself. One day Captain Weaver was called to a meeting at Reykjavik. General Parker told him to submit a written plan for our garrison at Borgarnes to come to the support of the group at Akranes. When he returned to Borgarnes, he called me in and said. "Smith, I have a job for you. I want you to write up the plan which we must send to Division for their approval." This involved our own company, the engineers and the artillery battery. I had never done anything like this. I had to incorporate all details: time of breakfast, time to leave our camp, equipment, line of march, route to be followed, etc.

I submitted my plan to Division and it was approved with a few minor changes. I had chosen the shortest route over the high ground. Snow was on the ground so I checked the route daily for about three days before the plan was to begin. Captain Weaver was to be in command. We got up at about 4:00 a.m. and discovered that heavy snow was falling. Captain Weaver decided that as Sub-Sector Commander (a post he had originated) he would be an observer and he put Captain Bernie Blank, the artillery commander, in charge of the movement. At the first break he said: "Smith, you are the senior line officer, you are to be in charge." So now, I was in command. It was the first time I had seen jeeps stopped by the heavy snow. We hooked chains from the big trucks and dragged the jeeps though the snow. The engineers furnished a half-track vehicle to lead the way. When we started up the high ground, the half-track threw off one of its tracks and continued to do so. We were bogged down in the heavy snow. I told Captain Weaver that I was going to radio the General and tell him about our situation and ask for permission to return to our camp. It was already late in the afternoon. Captain Weaver told me to send the message but to say that I would await further orders.

General Parker's radio message was to proceed to Akranes by the next available route. There were other routes on the map but they were all covered with snow and were not visible. It was very difficult to turn our column around, but we did it. I took the column back to the flat ground and proceeded toward Akranes along the fjord. I had sent a rifle squad in a truck far to our front as security. We had just stopped for a short break when I saw headlights approaching in the darkness. It was my security group returning. The squad leader jumped out of the truck and ran over to me and said: "Lieutenant, we just ambushed the General. He was impressed with our action but he is mad. I hurried back to warn you." The General pulled up in his jeep and I reported to him. He said: "Where have you been?" I said: "We have been doing our best to get to Akranes." He said: "Damn it, when a man is given an order he should carry it out." He then asked where he could find Captain Weaver. He conversed with Captain Weaver and told him to return to Borgarnes, which we did. Later, there was a critique at Division Headquarters and Captain Weaver sent Lieutenant Cameron as his representative.

A West Point Lieutenant Colonel, who had joined our force as an observer, started to say something about Captain Weaver. Lieutenant Cameron told us that the General told the Colonel to sit down because Captain Weaver was acting under the General's orders. He had taken a liking to Captain Weaver and shortly thereafter, promoted Captain Weaver to the rank of Major as Sub-Sector Commander. General Parker had not discussed the promotion with our Regimental Commander, Colonel Yuill. Major Weaver, at a later date, was sent back to the United States as part of a cadre of officers. I always liked Major Weaver. He was a lawyer by profession and quite a diplomat. He later returned to Europe as a Lieutenant Colonel in a military government unit.

WINTER WARFARE SCHOOL

I was assigned to go to Reykjavik to Herskola, which was a base school for training in various tactics. During the summer of 1942 I twice attended Herskola. I was a graduate of their Armed Forces Tactical School and the Bomb Reconnaissance School. This assignment was to attend the Winter Warfare School that was being run by the Norwegians. The man in charge was Colonel Stenerson and Major Lonavig was his assistant. These two men were regular Norwegian Army officers. They had both fought against the Russians as volunteers of the Finns and had fought against the Germans when they invaded Norway. They had managed to escape after Norway capitulated. The British picked them up along with other Norwegians and gave them English uniforms and put them to work. The only way you tell they were Norwegians was the word NORGE on their cap and the same NORGE symbol on the side of their shoulder. These two, along with a number of sergeants and privates, were running the Winter Warfare School. We had a month of training in Reykjavik.

In the morning we would have class work on skiing and living in the cold, wet snow and all the various things that the Colonel thought we would need to know. In the afternoon we would go out for physical conditioning. We would usually go across country, making a tour of twenty to twenty-five miles every afternoon to make sure we were in good physical shape. This training continued for approximately one month. We then loaded onto an English trawler, which was a two thousand-ton boat and sailed around the Northwest Sector up to the town of Akeuri. Outside of Akeuri, there was a glacier called Vindaheimjokull, which means 'Home of the wind in the ice cap'. We put all of our equipment on our backs and felt like packhorses as we started up the mountain to get to the area that we were going to occupy for the next month. This was pretty hard going with the equipment on your back, which included skis and snowshoes. Even though I was in perfect physical condition, I felt tired after ten yards because of always stepping up as we climbed toward the glacier.

When we got to a point where the snow was to deep to continue, Major Lonavig who was in charge of the group told us to put on ours skis and follow the Norwegian instructors and if we had not skied before to put on our snowshoes and follow Lieutenant Polich . Lieutenant Polich was an American Officer from Iron Mountain, Michigan. Not only could he ski, but he also was good at snow shoeing. I later found out that the Norwegians were not any good at snow shoeing because they spent all their time on skis. Of course it was snowing and the group on skis left us and moved off fairly rapidly and we put on the snowshoes and started climbing up the mountain. It was difficult to see because the snow was hitting us in the eyes. The snowshoes had leather thongs and the thong was loose on one of my feet. I decided to take them off and put them on my back and carry them. I found out what a different situation I was in as I had never been in snow that deep before. I was waist deep and couldn't get out of the snow especially with all the equipment I was carrying. I had to put the snowshoes back on securely tied and then was able to start up the mountain again. We were climbing along the side of a valley and I happened to look down to my right and could just barely see that there were some tents down there. I called to Lieutenant Polich and told him about the tents. Of course that was our objective and we had almost passed them by because of limited visibility.

Those tents were going to be our home for the next month. We used British four man mountain tents. I never could figure out how to put four men into one of these tents. We put three men in one tent and they were crowded. They were silk tents that were double so that there was dead air space between the inner and outer tent, which allowed you to keep the inside warm. We also had British Primus stoves, which were little stoves that were used to heat whatever food you might have and to warm up the tent. Those stoves really did the job. The tent came to a peak and there were some strings up there to tie things to so we would tie our wet clothing, socks and boots at the top and the hot air would dry them in no time. The first night we had a snow slide and the Norwegians were in the area where the snowslide occurred. We wound up losing one of the tents because the Norwegian Sergeant had cut up the tent to get out through the snow to free himself. It turned out that he as a college graduate of Oxford in England and was the radio operator for our group. We had to do a little shifting around because of one less tent and Lieutenant Polich asked me if I would mind having a Norwegian Sergeant as my tent mate. He name was Knute Mustoe from Oslo, Norway. I was working on my tent trying to get a little more room by tightening up the ropes when Knute walked up, introduced himself and offered to help straighten out the tent. He knew more about it then

I did and between the two of us we got the maximum room out of it. Knute and I got along very well. He was one of the instructors and always kept an eye out for me whether he was instructing me or not. He always wanted me to do well.

At night we would lie in our sleeping bags, as you couldn't move. You could just crawl on your knees into the tent and immediately get on top of your sleeping bag and that is where you stayed. There was no moving around in the tent because there was not enough room. We had the little Primus stove in the middle of the tent and we had British Mountain rations to eat. The main ration was something called Pemmican, which was dried meat. If you cooked up some shoe leather, that is what it tasted like to me. If you made soup out it, it was the same way. If you cooked your shoe, it would be the same as Pemmican soup. There was a chocolate bar in the rations and that was the best thing. There was also powdered milk so with the chocolate bar, the milk and melted snow we would make hot chocolate and it was very good.

We started out as a class of thirty-two men and at the end of the class there were eighteen of us left. The rest of them had all been injured usually with damages to the lower parts of their legs. The skis were both for cross-country and down hill and they had Kandihar bindings and these bindings did not release. If you took a fall you either broke the skis or broke your ankle and our group took a lot of falls. I took a fall one day and thought it might be the end of me but fortunately I was ready to go the next day. The Norwegians had rigged up a ski jump made of snow. After they had finished the day's work they would go off this ski jump that wasn't very high. One day I thought I would ski down the area but not actually make the jump. I went down the slope very rapidly and when I hit the bottom where we had been walking with skis and snowshoes and our own boots, it was very hard like a wood floor. One of my skis went to the right and one went to the left. I fell forward and my head caught between my skis and I was still going forward. I went right across the valley pounding the back of my head and I ran right into the bank on the other side, which finally stopped me. The Norwegian instructors came running because they thought they had a casualty. They pulled me out and asked if I was all right. I was okay and did not even get a headache.

Another little incident occurred during training. When Major Lonavig was with us, he was very careful with the class. One day he stayed in his tent. I think he really just wanted a little rest although we were told he was doing paperwork. We came down to a spot where the Major usually had us take off our skis if we hadn't skied before or if we were new. I was one of the new ones so when we came to that spot I asked the Lieutenant if we should take off our skis. He said no we would go right in. I happened to be the first student in line so I started going down the slope of the hill into the valley where our tents were pitched. When I hit the bottom, I realized that I hadn't been taught how to stop so I ran right across the valley and up the other side. I knew that would stop me and I ran up the other side and lost speed. I came to a complete stop and then I fell over in the snow. Everything was a learning experience. We were up there for thirty days and then class was over and we were to leave. We had an ice storm the night prior to leaving the glacier camp. There was a glaze of ice over the snow so skiing was very difficult with all the equipment we were carrying. The Norwegians had taught us to ride the ski poles in this type of situation. One of our fellows broke both of his ski poles so he had a problem. He was a guy that was not very well liked. I took pity on him and told him that he could use one of my poles until we got down to the supply spot where he could then get some replacements and return mine. The supply spot was where Icelandic horses were used to bring up supplies and we had to send sleds down, load them and pull them up to camp. We managed to get down to that area and it was not easy with one pole each. I wanted to catch up to the two sergeants that I had been skiing with on the way down. They had gotten way ahead of me. Because of light snow conditions in one area they had made a half circle going to the camp area where we were going to stay that night. I decided that if I cut the hypotenuse, I would be able to catch up with them. The snow was a little light in the area I was skiing though and I was going quite rapidly. We had been given very cheap plastic type glasses and I couldn't use them because they were so terrible. My eyes were watering from the wind and all of a sudden both skis hit a bare spot and I flew right between both skis and landed on my stomach about twenty yards down. I thought I had broken both legs and I was frightened. I lay there for a minute before trying one leg and then the other. I pulled them up

and took the skis off and decided to walk because I was shaken by the fall. After walking twenty or thirty yards I began to feel better so I put my skis back on and caught up with the sergeants before they got to camp. We stayed at camp that night and had an award ceremony where I received an award for placing second in the ski race and second in the snow shoe race.

The following day we boarded a Norwegian fishing trawler to go to Reykjavik. We ran into a tremendous gale off the northeast coast of Iceland near the Arctic Circle, which I thought for sure would sink the ship. Fortunately, we were in good hands with the Norwegians and they knew what to do. We had gone up to Akreyri, Iceland in thirty-six hours on the English trawler and it took us three days coming back on the Norwegian boat. I returned to my unit in Borgarnes and went back to the normal functions of trying to survive and fight the snow. It was the worst winter that the island had in twenty years and we were constantly battling snow. I got a call that a winter warfare school was going to be formed in the southeast coast of Iceland at a glacier called Eyjafjallajokull, which means 'One beautiful icecap'.

Originally I was to be one of the instructors, but G-4 section had to furnish an officer to handle all the supplies, set up the camp and keep it going. Major Townsend and Colonel McKee selected me. Captain John Acuff was now in the G-4 section and he recommended me to Colonel McKee. I got a call that I was to report to Division Headquarters to get ready to work with the winter warfare school. I told Major Townsend that I was already ordered to Herskola as an instructor. He told me they had gone to General Parker and had him sign papers rescinding that order and ordering me to the G-4 section. I was told to get trucks and supplies and go down to Storamork, which is a small gathering of about five homes right at the base of the glacier area. I checked out five two and a half-ton long wheelbase trucks and loaded them with supplies, tents, equipment Icelandic horses and materials to build a metal hut.

We started out to go to Storamork, which was approximately one hundred and ten miles away. The trip took us about thirteen hours. We got down to Selfoss, Iceland and came up to a bridge that spanned the Olfussa River. There was a sign on the bridge that said the load limit was five tons. The trucks weighed about two tons without the equipment so I was pretty sure I was over the load limit. I hardly knew what to do and thought that I was given a lot of responsibility for a Second Lieutenant. I took some time to consider my options, like unloading the horses, but then I told the drivers that I would go across in the first truck and if I made it then all the rest could come over. We all crossed the bridge without unloading and without incident. It was dark when we arrived in Storamork in January of 1943. We were making our way cross-country to the area selected for the camp. Around midnight we came to a small stream that was about ten yards wide and it was frozen over. I did not know about the stream and it wasn't on the map so I was not sure what to do. The stream was blocking us from the area we needed to get too. I told one of the truck drivers to move out and see if the ice was strong enough to hold the truck. The ice was not strong enough and the front end of the truck fell through it and the engine died.

We were dragging the truck back out with one of the other trucks when an Icelander appeared on the other side of the stream. The Icelander lived in one of the houses that were located near the base of the glacier. He waved at me and indicated that he wanted me to follow him along the stream. I followed up to an area where they forded the stream. They didn't have any vehicles but they did have horses and carts. We took the trucks up to that area; crossed the stream, set up the camp and got things going. Engineers came down and built the Nissen hut. We used sixteen man tents for supplies and other things until the hut was built.

Later on troops arrived and they were sent on up to the glacier to start their winter warfare training. When I was up north we had proper equipment but in the south I had to requisition officer's small wall tents and these were tents for summer use or mild winter. We sewed one of the ends up and tried to use this type of equipment for winter warfare. It was a failure because we could not get it warm enough in this type of tent to dry the equipment or the men's shoes. We had a big meeting over this issue. I had been reporting the truth to Colonel McKee and Major Townsend. Colonel Matte, who later was sent down to be in charge of the base camp, was sending up radio

reports that everything was beautiful and I was telling them that everything was not beautiful. As a result the Division pulled the troops out and the winter warfare school ended.

If we had the proper equipment, we could have continued and had a good winter warfare school. Trying to improvise with cold weather and a lot of snow and wet equipment that could not be dried out just did not work. The troops were brought out at the time when a tremendously big snowfall came down. It was a seven foot snow fall and the Norwegian officer in charge decided to have the men get on their skis and he brought them out of the glacier and down to the base camp. That snow really helped end the whole thing. We lost a lot of equipment and I had to put that down on a proper government statement as equipment lost to bad weather. Later I was told that some of the Norwegians went up later that summer and retrieved most of the equipment.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF "K" COMPANY,

I then worked out of Division Headquarters in charge of unloading coal that came to the island and having it distributed to the various camps. Colonel McKee also sent me out to do camp inspections in the area. After awhile I asked Colonel McKee if I could return to my own unit. He had wanted to keep me and said that he would get me a Captaincy, but there wasn't any way that he could as they were all filled. So he told me that I could go back to my unit which I did and I returned to my normal activities. In June 1943 we left Borgarnes and moved to Reykjavik prior to our leaving the island to go to England. I was then transferred form I company and became the Executive Officer of "K" Company, which was commanded by Captain Robert Altman.

We arrived in England and went to Tidworth Barracks in Tidworth, England, which is located in Salisbury Plain. We immediately went into very hard training in England and there was some talk that maybe we were going to Italy. It was quite a nice move for us and it was almost like going home for we were in a country where they spoke our language. We got along well with the people and they dressed like we did. It was a nice change from Iceland. The stay in England ended in October 1943 when a decision was made to move the 5th Division to Ireland.

IRELAND

The units were broken up in Ireland and we had two battalions stationed at Ballykinler in Ireland. Ballykinler is not too far from Downpatrick, Ireland. We went into training again doing all kinds of problems like one regiment would attack two regiments, or one battalion would be attacked by two battalions. We would be out in the field for a week at a time. We would usually start a big problem with part of the unit marching about twenty-five miles and the other unit marching ten to fifteen miles. We would have a neutral zone of five miles between the units and then at a certain hour we could begin to patrol and continue the fighting that we were doing to train us better for combat. The training in Ireland was great training and helped to prepare us for France.

In February of 1944, Doug Hargrave and I received leave orders to go to England and also to Scotland. We went to Belfast, Ireland and after we arrived there all transportation from Ireland to England was shut down. There was some leak of information and because southern Ireland has a Japanese Ambassador and a German Ambassador, they thought something was going on. We happened to bump into an Air Force Captain and he said that he was stationed in England and I asked him about giving us a ride. He said because he was a pilot for two Generals, he really couldn't give us a ride. However, he did say that if we wanted to go out to the airplane early in the morning and get aboard, the Generals wouldn't know and we could get a free ride back to England. Since this was our only way to get back we said we would do it and at 6:00 a.m. we went out and found the plane. It was called the Michigan Flash because the pilot was a University of Michigan graduate. There were seven bombs painted on the side of the B17 as he had made seven bomb raids over France. Around 10:00 a.m. a staff car came

out and said the General was not going to go that day. The Captain told us that if the General didn't go, he didn't fly but we were welcome to try again tomorrow. Doug and I came back the next day, climbed into the nose and around 8:00 a.m. the staff car came, the Generals got out, climbed aboard and away we went to England.

While we were in England I noticed patches of many different divisions. I knew that England had been loaded with American Divisions and there was no question that there was going to be an invasion that year. In 1943 there was talk of an invasion but I knew it was ridiculous because there were only two American Divisions, the 29th and the 5th. There were also a few other units on the island. If the Germans had invaded in 1943, we would have been lucky to stop them. That was not true in 1944. There were plenty of American Divisions now stationed in England. While we were there visiting a Red Cross building the air raid siren went off. I went out to see what was going on. The Germans has sent what they called Pathfinder Planes over and they were dropping parachutes with flares on them to light up London. That was so they could see the big balloons that were up over London on steel cables. They had figured out how they could light it up so that the bombers would not have any trouble when they flew over. The bombers came and started bombing London and the anti-aircraft was firing like crazy and everything shook. I was standing there and no one else was out when all of a sudden an air raid warden came by. I thought he was going to 'give me the devil' and I said "Good Evening". He said "Good Evening" back to me, and kept on walking. After the raid was over I went back into the basement of the Red Cross and that was it. In the morning paper it said the anti-aircraft had knocked down six aircraft. I didn't see them knock any down, but I am sure that they did.

One day I bumped into the Dean of the Indiana Business School, Arthur Weimer, who was an Army Major in the Educational Branch. He told me that John Mee, who was Director of Placement at Indiana University, was a Colonel in charge of the Air Transport Command in London and he told me that I should get up to see him. Arthur Weimer was leaving that day to go back to Washington. Doug and I went over to the Air Transport Headquarters and asked to see Colonel Mee and were told that he was in his hotel room getting ready to go to Washington D.C. for temporary duty. I told him I was a personal friend so he called him and I was told I could go right over. When he saw me Colonel Mee said: "Gee, Frank, you are still a First Lieutenant. If you want to come over with me, I can make you and your friend a Captain right away." I was happy to join the Air Transport Command so I agreed and so did Doug. Colonel Mee told us that he was going to Washington D.C. for thirty days but before he left we would meet at his office in the morning and arrange for my transfer. The next morning we were in the Colonel's office and he called in a Major and told him that he wanted to get us transferred into his headquarters. The Major took our names, ranks, serial numbers and other information and went out to make his phone call. Colonel Mee told me that the Major was calling SHAEF and I could pick up the phone and listen in to the conversation. The Major called SHAEF, which was Eisenhower's headquarters and exchanged pleasantries with his friend and told him that he had two officers that wanted to get transferred into the Air Transport Command Headquarters in London. The Colonel he was talking with took down our information but when he found out that we were with the 5th Infantry Division, he said: "That's dynamite, that outfit is going to war, what's the matter with those men, don't they want to fight?" He said that he did not want to transfer us unless we had our release from the 5th Division. That if he transferred us without a release and it happened to be two officers that the unit wanted to keep, there could be repercussions all the way to the top at SHAEF. He said he could lose his head over that and to tell us to go back and get our release and once he got it the transfer to Colonel Mee's Headquarters would be immediate.

Colonel Mee didn't see it as a problem but of course he wasn't a West Point Officer and also he did not know Colonel Yuill, who was our Regimental Commander. Colonel Yuill was a tough old guy who had become a machine gun company commander in WWI. He was a little disgruntled because he had been passed by. He had been a classmate of General Patton. Colonel Mee told me to go and get my release. I told the Colonel that he didn't know my Regimental Commander and if I asked him for a release, not only would he not give it to me but he would be so mad he would give me every lousy detail he could think of. I had to tell Colonel Mee that as nice as it would have been to be with him, I couldn't do it.

That evening Doug and I got ready to leave London and we were trying to catch a cab, which was very difficult especially at night. A cab happened to stop that had an American Air Force Officer in it, who asked us where we were going. When we told him, the train station, he told us to get in, he was going right by it. About that time the air raid siren sounded and I thought we were not going to get to the station because we were the only vehicle on the street and I figured the cab driver would want to pull over into some safe place but he kept going. After we arrived at the train station, he would not continue any further even thought the American Air Force Officer wanted him too. The cab driver said he would not go on until the air raid was over. Fortunately the train left on time because as the agent said, it was safer to leave than to stay. Inside the train was blacked out as everything was in England, you couldn't see any light from the outside but on the inside we had lights. We pulled out of the station while London was being bombed and headed for Scotland. It was an over night trip and we arrived in Edinburgh in the morning. We found a place to stay at the Royal Hotel. We took in the sights of Edinburgh and Glasgow and then we had to get back to Ireland. We went over to the airport and talked to an American Air Force Officer who said he would get us on a plane. We flew to Belfast and eventually got back to Ballykinler. We found out that while we were gone, General Patton had inspected the 5th Division. Of course it was typical Patton as he had them line the division up on an air field and then he rode back and forth standing up in his jeep and you could see his pearl handled revolvers. He gave a talk to the entire division. (Many of you probably have heard this in the movie, Patton) He said: When your grandchildren ask you what you were doing in WWII; you can tell them that you were killing Germans that you weren't shoveling shit at Fort Polk, Louisiana. The soldiers got a big kick out of this but they told me that the chaplains and nurses were all hiding their faces at times during his speech.

AMPHIBIOUS SCHOOL

I was then assigned to go to amphibious school. At school we were having sand table landing operations when General Eisenhower's car came in. Our Colonel reported to General Eisenhower and the General came over to the sand table and listened to what was gong on. I was only about five or six feet from him. I kept looking at the sand table but I was also looking up at General Eisenhower. We had heard that he was going to be in the area so I had told the Executive Officer of my Company to have each platoon doing different types of training in case he went to our camp. It so happened that he did go there and inspected every one of the platoons of I company. The men were really impressed by him. By that time I was the Company Commander of I company and I censored their mail. It was a job that I didn't like, but it had to be done. All the letters were talking about General Eisenhower and what a wonderful man he was and how he impressed them. This was true of every soldier in my unit who wrote home about him. The way he handled himself made a tremendous impression on those of us in the lower ranks.

THIRD ARMY UNDER GENERAL PATTON

When Doug and I returned from England, I told all of our guys that there was no question that there was to be an invasion because of all the different units and equipment in England. In June we were sealed off in our camp in Ireland. We had gotten the word that we were going to be build-up troops. This meant we would not be in on the initial invasion but as soon as there was room to get us in, our Division would go. The 1st Army was the invasionary force and we felt we were 3rd Army under General Patton. There was a kind of secrecy about General Patton and where he was going to come ashore with his troops. They were trying to mislead the Germans in thinking that he would be leading the main attack at the Calais area, which is the closet point between England and France. We all knew the main thrust was the one the 1st Army made in the Normandy area. We moved sometime in July to Belfast and were loaded on ships to go to France.

On the ship, I company occupied the rear hold. At that time I had 245 enlisted men and 6 officers including myself. We were really jammed in the rear hold of the ship. I thought we had a bad situation until I went to the

next hold forward and there were two companies in that hold. They were even more miserable and crowded than we were. We had practiced in Ireland how we would land and what we would do when we came ashore. The idea was that we would reassemble on the beach and move in as a complete company. The company commanders were called together at a meeting on shipboard and we were told to forget all prior instructions. We were being told that as you came to the beach we were to move instantly off the beach and to follow the marked lines and be guided inland. They did not want to have any troops bunching up on the beach.

We arrived off the coast of Normandy either the 8th or 9th of July 1944. Our ship began unloading on July 10th. We were anchored about one mile from shore and we had assault type landing crafts that were to take us ashore. I personally was on a larger landing craft and it had an Ensign on board to run the ship. We had climbed down the nets off of our ship into these landing crafts. The Ensign took our craft into the shore area and tied up to a floating dock, which was being pushed down into the water by other people who were on it. They were closer into the shore and we couldn't exactly see where the tracks went. Some of my men started falling through. They were carrying all of their normal equipment plus a bag with their personal gear. Out beyond us, trucks started to unload and they were blowing their horns because the floating dock was sinking. I wouldn't let the trucks proceed because I did not want them to run over my men and as far as I was concerned, the trucks could sink.

The Ensign came forward and called to me to try to get the men back on the landing craft. He wanted to back off because there was so much confusion. We were able to get about one half of the company back on the landing craft. The other half were scattered on other landing crafts. We came in on the next tide and it was dark. I wondered where we would pick up the rest of the company. As I proceeded to the beach my men came running from different locations where they were hiding behind things that were piled on the beach and told me they had been waiting for me. Even though they were not following orders, when I left the beach I had one hundred percent of my men with me.

We kept moving inland, and the first signs we saw said: Achtung! Meinin! which meant Attention! Mines! in German. We finally arrived at an area where we were moved into a field to stay until further orders. I got an order to send a patrol down to guard a bridge in the area. They came back in the early morning and I was lying on the ground sleeping. The patrol leader shook me awake and told me that they had a prisoner. Sure enough they had a German prisoner! I looked him over and looked in his pockets and saw a picture he had of someone in a sailor suit. I later learned that he was a Marine and was lost from his unit and the picture was of his brother in the Navy. There was a black Quartermaster Soldier with my men and he said the German owes his life to your men. They wanted to capture him, but I shoot first and ask questions later. I told our Colonel that I company of the 11th Infantry took the first prisoner in WWI and I company of the 11th Infantry actually took the first prisoner in WWII. It wasn't recorded as such because our Colonel said he was a deserter and he did not want credit for him. He told them to give the credit to the Quartermaster unit of the black soldier and he told me he would give me a lot of opportunities to be a hero so I said nothing more.

UTAH BEACH

We landed on Utah Beach, which was the beach that had received some fighting although the heaviest fighting had been on Omaha Beach. I had read that one reason that the fighting was not as heavy on Utah was that the units had not landed in the exact spot that they were supposed to land. We assembled in the area around ten miles inland, repacked and cleaned up and got all of our equipment ready to go while we waited for further orders. On the night of July 12, the Company Commanders were loaded into a truck and taken to the Caumont area. It was quite a trip, a little like All Quiet on the Western Front. We would go through areas where it was very quiet and other areas where tanks were moving up and there was a lot of activity going on. It was something that you realized all of a sudden – you were in the war and from here on it was going to be tough. There was shellfire and everything you might imagine going on in a war zone. I had Sargent Hudson with me and he told me not to

worry, that he would take care of me. It so happened at a later date, his actions saved me from becoming a prize of a German machine gunner.

On July 13, Lieutenant Lowery who was my Executive Officer had brought my company by truck into a rear area behind the position we were to occupy. During the day of July 13, I was making reconnaissance of the positions on the left side of the American line with one of the officers of the 26th Infantry Regiment of the 1st Division. I almost got hit because I took off my field glasses to look through a hedgerow and apparently the sunlight must have reflected on the glasses. Very shortly an 88mm gun picked us up and started throwing shells very close to where we were located. It was my first experience at being directly shot at, particularly by an 88 which makes a terrible sound and just rips everything on the ground when it hits. There was an anti-tank gun position that was dug in right near us so the officer from the 26th Infantry Regiment and I crawled down into this gun position and stayed there until that 88 finally stopped firing. For a short time, my blood was running cold. Later we were moving across the back of the hillside and that 88mm threw some more shells right over our head and they landed behind us. The shells landed tearing out some trees.

Being shot at is not pleasant and it does not give you a good feeling. We heard other guns going off and I had never heard that type of gun before. It sounded like the shell was tearing the inside of the barrel out of the gun. I was told that they were Nebelwerfers, which the Americans called "Screaming Meemies." While we were making reconnaissance of the positions that we were going to occupy, I had gone to Battalion Command Post with Captain Jack Jester and two other soldiers, one of whom was the driver of the jeep. We were leaving the house that was the Battalion HQ and were going down the driveway when a shell exploded. One big shell fragment came sliding right up to our jeep. It was kind of scary to look at that big piece of metal and think that it might hit you as it could break bones and all. I finished my reconnaissance so I would know exactly what I would do with my troops when they arrived. I went back to the rear area and the company had arrived and was in a peach orchard dispersed under various trees.

All of a sudden we heard an airplane overhead and I looked up to see a Focke Wulf 190 diving at our position. As it turned out he was chasing a Cub spotter plane that had been spotting for the artillery and the Cub had dropped so close to the earth I wasn't able to see him. The Focke Wulf was going so fast that he was coming right at us. Our first instinct was to hit the ground, which we did even though he was not firing at us. The sergeant who was in charge of our 50-caliber machine gun for anti-aircraft duty ran to his gun and immediately cranked it up, but he didn't hit the FW190. It was over in a hurry but it again was another indoctrination to war. That night of July 13, my company left that orchard and came forward to relieve the company of the 26th Infantry Regiment.

One of my squads had gotten lost coming up during the night so they were quite late in arriving. I heard a rustling on the hill behind me and was waiting to see what it was. We used passwords and replies that were changed every night. I called out the password and pretty soon the voice said: "Captain, it's me, Sergeant Burke, I've forgotten the password." He was fortunate that I recognized his voice. It struck me as kind of funny because here we were in the dark, in the front lines and he had already forgotten the password, which could have been dangerous for his health. We received a lot of shellfire from the Germans who were across the valley from us and we would return that fire. We patrolled against them and they patrolled against us. I had some outposts out in the front and also some observance posts. One of the observance posts was for our 60mm mortars. One morning when a relief group went out, as they usually did to this observance post, they ran into a German patrol and received some casualties because they had been surprised.

We also had some casualties when men stepped on what we called mustard pots. They were very small mines that if the tip was stepped on caused the can to explode and usually shattered the foot or part of the lower leg. When that happened, the war was over for that person. We also received a lot of mortar fire from the Germans. My Battalion Commander was Major Bill Birdsong and he liked to fire 50-caliber incendiary bullets at the Germans. We were all hooked up on a telephone communication system and whenever we heard him call back to the heavy

weapons company and ask them to load the incendiary bullets in the machine guns, we prepared to duck. The Germans did not like those incendiaries bullets and as soon as they would start firing them the German artillery would start firing and we would have shells coming in all over the area. One night we were shelled when we were having a hot meal in the rear area. One squad at a time would go back to get the hot meal and the soldiers would have to keep spread out about five yards apart. When they finished eating they went back to their positions.

I was back there one evening and was in line to get my hot meal when the artillery shells came flying in. I ran for a trench that had been dug in that area and dove right on top of my supply Sergeant Jack Lyons.

He said: "Captain, you should have known better than to try to beat me. I am the fastest man in this company in hitting the ground."

Another night I was out in front with a small patrol to inspect one of our observation posts. It was a very quiet night and even my dog tags with tape on them seemed to be ringing like bells. Somehow a German 88, apparently on a tank, started firing in the area where we were located. I told the other fellows that we would go back along the general route, which we did. Every time a shell came in and we would hit the ground and after the shell landed we would move again. I remember thinking that we weren't going to get out of there, but we did. We changed direction and moved away from his line of fire. Later that night I went to the Battalion Command Post and bumped in to Captain Jack Jester. He had also been out in that area doing some checking and he felt that the same gun was firing on him. I don't know who made the noise, or how the gunner picked us up, but he gave us a hot time for a while which seemed like an eternity.

The British Forces were on our left and they were to take the city of Caen. They were under General Montgomery who believed in using a lot of artillery fire. Every night the Brits would be firing shells into Caen, and they fired a lot of them. It took them a while to take the city and I don't know what the city looked like when they did. On July 17th around 5:30 am, we received a tremendous artillery barrage such as you might lay down before you have a general attack. The artillery must have fired for close to twenty minutes to a half-hour and as the artillery let up, small arms fire started coming our way. Much of it sounded like machine pistols (rapid-fire guns).

It was a very foggy morning and was very difficult to see so it caused a lot of confusion. All of a sudden I noticed some men running for the rear. I recognized one of the men but couldn't remember his name. I knew he was from L company and he used to put on a Casey at Bat Show. I remembered that and screamed out: "Casey, where are you going?" He said that his company was gone. I told him that if L company was gone, I needed all the extra men I could get and they were now part of I company. A little later I saw Casey on the ground and he was shooting to the rear and I asked him what he was shooting at. He told me he thought he had seen somebody. I told him that he was shooting in the wrong direction that he was shooting at American's. A few days later I ran into our supply officer who said that one of my men had tried to kill him the other morning. He said he was going towards the Battalion Aid Station and one of my riflemen opened up on him and had him pinned to the ground. I told him that it was not one of my men, it was Casey from L company. I told him that I was probably the one that saved him because I had found Casey shooting to the rear.

Back to the morning of July 17th, the action was apparently German reconnaissance in force. I had told my men that I didn't care if they ran, even though I did, but if they ran I was not going with them. I told them that I was going to stay put because if we go to the rear area and the Germans occupy our position, we will have to attack back and retake this position which will be worse than holding. I noticed that my First Sergeant, Warner Massey was gathering up a bunch of grenades so I asked him what he was doing. He told me that if I was staying, he was staying and we needed all the grenades that we could get. I thought it was kind of funny at the time, but it certainly proved his loyalty to me and he never wavered. We were also receiving fire from two tanks that seems to be throwing shells only into our company area. No one else in the battalion or regiment seemed concerned with

those two tanks.

I complained about them and I got our own artillery to fire a couple of times but then they wouldn't fire anymore because they were trying to conserve ammunition. Someone got word to the commander of the M8 armored cars about the tank situation so he came up to talk to me. He was a Lieutenant and he had two M8 armored cars that he could use. He looked at the situation and I pointed out where the tanks were located. He told me he would bring up his two M8 armored cars in the morning before daylight. He would run one of them down to a barn in the forward area and leave the other one up on the hill. As soon as it was light enough to see, his plan was to open up on the two tanks then back up over the hill under the protection of the other armored car. It sounded pretty hazardous to me but I was willing to go along with it as long as it got rid of the tanks.

Colonel Yuill, our Regimental Commander, got wind of the plan and cancelled the whole thing so the tanks continued to throw shells into my area. I decided to do something on my own and decided to use 60mm mortars. I called the observation post on the wire line that was run from my command post forward and asked if they could observe the tanks. They told me they knew where they were and that they were under a camouflage net. I told them I would like to try to hit them with 60mm mortars. I told Major Birdsong what we were going to do and he told me to keep in touch on the wire line and he would be listening to what was going on. I told him that we would have one gunfire and try to get zeroed on the tanks and that the other two guns would keep adjusting so that we could get the proper range and location. We fired the first gun and the observation post immediately called for a correction and the gunner made the correction and fired again. He called for another correction and after we fired about the third or fourth shell he told us that they were taking down the nets. I told him five rounds all guns and Major Birdsong said to give them ten rounds per gun. We threw about thirty rounds in and those thirty rounds ran those tanks out of the area. I supposed they thought the small guns had picked them up and next would be the big stuff coming in. That was the end of those two tanks. It was kind of a joke to think that 60mm mortars could drive off a couple of tanks. Actually they would not hurt the tanks but would hurt any personnel on the outside and maybe we did wound some of them. On July 20th our group had six casualties with one killed. They were all wounded from shrapnel and machine pistol.

It was common knowledge that the 5th Division was part of the Third Army. We knew that before we left Ireland but the Third Army had not been activated in France. There was always this fake information to try to make the Germans believe that the Third Army under General Patton would be making an attack in a different area of France. They tried to keep Patton's presence quiet and nothing was said about the Third Army. We had been attached to the First Army in Normandy.

In July they were getting ready to get the Third Army together and any troops attached to the First Army were being given back to Patton so he could get his army moving under the Third Army Battle Flag. Sometime around 11:00 p.m. on July 23, the entire regiment was being relieved by the British and we slowly went out of the lines as they moved in. I think we were the first company to be relieved and we walked back down through the rear area. We were walking behind the lines in a sunken road when all of a sudden someone hollered "Halt". The way he hollered "Halt" I knew that we better stop or we were going to be shot. I stopped my company and went over to try to find out who had halted us. As I walked through the darkness I kept calling for the sentry and a man's voice would tell me to come a little closer but I didn't actually see him. I thought I heard someone say, "Pass on" so I went back and got the company moving and the voice again, cried out to halt. The tone of his voice meant that if we didn't halt, he was going to shoot us. I told my men not to move and went back to look for him and I kept calling out. Each time I called out for the sentry, he would tell me to come closer. This went on for three or four more times with my replying to him and his replies to me. All of a sudden through the darkness, I came upon a big gun emplacement, which could have been anti-aircraft or general artillery. I identified myself and asked him if he had been notified that there would be troops passing behind his position. He said he had not been told and he appreciated the information. I told him that the whole regiment was moving and the troops would be going through here all night long. We then were allowed to move on and were picked up by trucks later, taken to an area

about six miles northeast of the St. Lo area and put in an orchard.

PLANNED BREAK OUT OF NORMANDY

It was in the early morning of July 25, 1944 that droves of bombers came over and started a heavy bombardment of the front area. The ground was shaking and my men were nervous because they didn't know what was going on. I began to think that maybe the Germans had counter attacked and the 8th Air Force had been called out to help stem the attack. Actually it was the planned break out of Normandy a coordinated attack between the ground troops and the 8th Air Force, which was flying out of England. They were bombing on a designated line and the waves of airplanes that were following were bombing on the smoke. General Leslie Mc Lear had been up the forward area and some of the bombs were dropping short. The smoke had blown back across the American lines. The later wave of bombers started to drop their bombs on the smoke line and they were dropping them on American troops. General Mc Lear was killed in that bombing.

The breakout was handled by a couple of infantry divisions attacking and when they bogged down, they sent a couple of tank divisions through them and broke the German lines. That afternoon, company commanders and battalion commanders were called to a meeting with Colonel Yuill. It was explained that the 3rd Battalion was being given to the 2nd Infantry Division. An extra division had been requested from Corp Headquarters and they were told that a regiment could not be spared. The best that could be done was to give them one battalion. They had heavy casualties in taking Hill 192 and when they attacked again on July 26th, they would have an open right flank and were afraid the Germans would hit them. My battalion, the 3rd, was selected to be given to the 2nd Infantry Division and orders were given to us by Major Birdsong. He said that I company would be in the middle, we would be farthest out and on our left would be "K" and L company would be on our right. It sounded like a hairy proposition and we thought we would get a lot of artillery fire out of that. I explained to my platoon leaders and tried not to convey my fear about the situation.

That night around midnight an automatic weapon went off in the orchard. I started to run toward the firing. My supply sergeant was located under a peach tree and hollered at me not to go over there. I realized that I didn't have a gun and I hadn't put on my helmet. I went back, slammed my helmet on my head, picked up my gun and started to move in the darkness when I heard a man moaning. I hurried over to see what was going on and found a Lieutenant lying on the ground who had accidentally shot himself with a German machine pistol. He said he had been sleeping and he always laid the gun on his right side with his hand on the trigger. He got up during the night to relieve himself, reached up for the gun, touched the trigger and it went off. I wondered how he hit himself in the left foot when the gun was on the right side.

I had to appoint Lieutenant Lowery, who was a little grouchy because it was so late, to make a complete investigation. Two or three times I was told by Major Birdsong that Colonel Yuill wanted me to prefer Court Martial charges against this officer for shooting himself but I told him that I was not sure that he did it on purpose. It could have been an accidental shooting because that is what the lieutenant had told me. I finally told him that I would not prefer charges against him but that if he or Colonel Yuill wanted to prefer charges against me, that would be fine because I knew that if I went to Leavenworth Prison I would come out of there alive but I didn't know if I would come out of the war alive. I guess Major Birdsong told Colonel Yuill what I said because that was the end of anyone telling me that I had to prefer charges against that officer for self-inflicted wounds. I felt that the man might have shot himself on purpose because when he first joined our unit in the Caumont area as a replacement, he was full of fight and was ready to go after the enemy.

When the first big shells came flying in it took all of that bravery out of him. One of my very good sergeants came to see me one day and asked me what exactly was a platoon leader's job. I knew then that there was something wrong with the lieutenant. The sergeant told me that he was scared to death and that he was hiding

all the time. I told the sergeant that I would speak to him and when I had the opportunity I asked him if he was having trouble. He told me that when he came up here he was ready to go but he didn't know what he was getting into and he was frightened to death and hardly knew what to do. I had a talk with him and told him that we were all frightened and scared but he was an officer and those bars meant he was going to lead. I told him that he was in a more difficult situation that I was in because the men knew me but because he was new they were watching every move he made because he was supposed to be their leader. I thought I had given him a good pep talk and maybe had helped him out. I knew he was still frightened so the shooting was very suspect but I still didn't know in my own mind for sure that he did it on purpose. That was my reason for not preferring charges against him.

I started to move forward with my company somewhere after 5:00 am. We were plodding along when all of a sudden there were explosions to the right and left of us and we all hit the ground almost instantaneously. After a few minutes I figured out that the 155mm guns were opening up on the enemy positions to support the 2nd Division in their attack. I reassured the company that everything was all right and got them up on their feet. We were walking in a sunken road and two guns were on each side of the road. We got tremendous impact between the noise of the guns on either side of us. It did scare all of us, including me. We continued to move up to get to a certain position and then we got the word that things were going badly and we were to move up immediately and get in a position on the right flank of the 2nd Division. I ran forward and left the company with Lieutenant Lowery and went forward very quickly to scout out what was going on. I told Lowery to bring the company on forward. When I was going up the reverse side of Hill 192, I started running into men who had been wounded. I had three or four of my runners with me and we stopped and started to patch the wounded and reassure them that everything was all right. They were telling me that the enemy had attacked and they were being wiped out. This is generally what happens when things go wrong and a man is going to the rear whether he is wounded or not. He thinks everything has gone badly and you really cannot believe anyone who is going to the rear. Finally I told my runners that I couldn't help take care of any more of the wounded because I had to go out in front and find a place to take my company in. I ran down in front and there was a tank battle going on. I made a quick reconnaissance of the area and decided where each platoon would go, ran back up the hill and there was Lieutenant Lowery who was bringing the company up the hill near the crest.

We got into position as quickly as possible but we were not to be in on the attack. We were to dig in and hold the hill in a counter attack. We dug in on the hill side and the worse thing that happened to us was from our own planes. The attack was being supported by P-47 bombers. All of a sudden four P-47s went over and they dropped three bombs on our position. We had been issued orange smoke grenades and the instructions were that if we were ever attacked by our own plames we should throw them.

I had my command post in a farm yard and our jeeps were parked in the general area so I ran out to one of my drivers, Smitty, and asked for the smoke grenades. They were in the bottom of a trailer covered with shovels and ammunition and we had trouble locating them. Meanwhile the P-47's had gone beyond our positions and had turned around and were coming back for another run. Smitty and I made a run for it and took cover.. When the bombers made the first pass our battalion realized that we were being bombed and they sent a message to the rear that the planes were bombing their own troops. The explanation came back that they did not see any troops on the ground. They were after a tank that did not have a red cover on it. The tank turned out to be an American tank and fortunately was not hit.

Its red cover had been pulled off. Apparently, in this attack, the 2nd Division had arranged with the Air Force for red covers to be put on tanks so they would not mistake them for the Germans. I did have some men who had to be sent back for concussions as they were in a gun position near one of the bomb hits. The 500 pound bombs made quite a hole in the ground. Later on I was talking to Lieutenant Hazam, our anti-tank officer who was to our rear up on the hilltop and had seen the planes go over and bomb. Our machine guns had fired at the P-47's and it was not possible to stop them. I later asked why the men were shooting at the planes, and their answer was, they were bombing us. It was funny after it was all over, but it was not funny at the time. That night the

German planes bombed us with anti-personnel bombs. I had my command post in a farm house and I could hear a German bomb approaching. At that point I wished that we were in a slit trench. The bomb hit the end of the house and fortunately it was an anti-personnel bomb. Our machine guns were firing at the enemy but didn't hit them. Around midnight, after the bombing I went to look for my weapons platoon leader, Lieutenant Smith and his platoon sergeant. They had been sleeping in a 500 gallon barrel, which they had padded with straw, but they were not there. They finally showed up and told me that they had left the barrel which was in a shed behind the house. They showed me the holes in the barrel that had been made by the anti-personnel bombs. They were lucky that they had decided to change their sleeping location.

The 2nd Division released our battalion and we rejoined the regiment around two thousand yards north of Vidaville. Our regiment was in division reserve. On the afternoon of July 29th, our battalion was ordered to fill the gap between the 2nd and the 10th Infantries near Lambeville. One of our regiments had been held up and the other one had gained quite a bit of ground so there was a gap between the two. Major Birdsong gave the order that I company would fill the middle part of the gap with "K" Company on one side and L company on the other. We were the ones who projected the farthest out into the gap. We finally got into position the next morning. I heard sporadic rifle fire on our left flank. I heard our left flank open up and start firing and I began to think it was an all American fight and of course, that is what it was. It is hard to stop these things when they happen because you have to take care of yourself and see that you do not get wounded by getting in between the cross fire. The 2nd Infantry Regiment had been shot up pretty good and as they were moving forward, they were firing across the ground in front of them.

One of my platoons happened to be extended out into the area where they were doing sporadic firing. My platoon turned around and started firing back at our own men because they were being fired upon. It was an accident that should not have happened. After the 2nd Infantry had moved past us, we pulled back and then on the night of July 30th, I was advised that my company had been selected to do a night attack with bayonets. The 10th Infantry had a position along a ridge line and when they had attached down on the ridge line, they had received very heavy casualties from the Germans wo were dug in on the reverse slope of the hill in a sunken road. They were not able to move forward. division headquarters made a decision to have two rifle companies attack with bayonets to dig the Germans out of their positions. As luck would have it, my company was one of those chosen along with Captain Gerrie, who was commander of "F" Company of the 2nd Battalion.

I suggested to Major Birdsong, who was in charge, that we have minesweepers come up and sweep the road that was going to be between Gerrie's company and my company. The Major thought it was a good idea. The attack was supposed to go off around 2:30 am and it was July 31st. The mine weepers did not get up to our position so the attack was delayed. Finally Major Birdsong said we could not wait any longer, that we must go ahead with the attack. (In a night attack, all of the men are in a single line about double arm length from each other with rifles locked and bayonets fixed.) Around 4:30 am we finally pushed off expecting strong resistance. As we moved down the slope of the hill I was waiting for the Germans to hear us and start firing. We reached the objective, which was about one thousand yards or less and we found that the Germans had withdrawn from their positions.

The holes were dug in the sunken road, but the enemy was gone. I figured this was a trick on the part of the enemy and was expecting to be attacked in the flank but it did not happen. I reported back on the radio that the enemy had withdrawn from the position and was given the order to keep moving through the darkness with bayonets. This was an unusual order because a bayonet attack had a fixed objective and is usually not more than a thousand yards. We moved forward through the night and I kept thinking that the German's had something up their sleeve and they would eventually hit us in the side, but nothing happened. The reason for this was that the break through had occurred a few days prior to this and the German lines had been broken. The enemy, that was in front of our division had been given the order to pull back. The delay that we had in the attack waiting for the minesweepers just gave the enemy enough time to get out and pull back while we moved forward. Later in

the day we changed formation and I company was in the lead on the road while "A" Company was to cover our front. "A" Company was to be spread out across the front to pick up the enemy. I company was to move across the initial point and as I remember it, around 4:00 p.m., when we did so there was not anyone at the initial point. This was most unusual because always in training it was usually the whole staff and other people standing around watching you pass the IP. As we moved down the road I saw about five Sherman tanks backing down the road. As our column came up along them a captain came over to talk and I asked what was going on. He told me that there was supposed to be 11th Infantry out in front of us and he had run into enemy fire down the road and that they do not operate without infantry. I told him that now he had infantry, a whole company right here. I told him to put his tanks in my column and go with me, which he did. It wasn't too long after that we came under enemy fire.

Sniper machine gun fire and mortar fire coming in from the front and the right flank. As the shelling increased, I began to wonder what was going on and I wondered what had happened to "A" Company. About that time Major Birdsong called and told me to hold up my advance because I had passed "A" Company. The tanks began to pull back and went back down the road. I had dispersed my company so that we were in a position that wasn't bunched up. I sent one platoon, commanded by Lieutenant Nicholson and Platoon Sergeant Frank Crawford, to the right flank. I was going to try to find out what happened to "A" Company but Sergeant Baker stopped me and said that he would go because I was much more valuable to the company than he was. We were coming under a lot of heavy shelling and it was getting close so I crawled in among a bunch of cows. I thought the cows might absorb some of the enemy shells that were being directed at me. While in this area, I noticed four or five Sherman tanks coming back down the road. It so happened that these were tanks from the 2nd Infantry Division and a captain was in charge. He told me that they knew we had advanced up into this area and they were over on our right side. They had been held up in a little village by enemy fire and he was coming around with his tanks to bring fire on the village. His tanks opened up and were shelling the village to our right when not too long after I heard someone running down through the area shouting, stop that firing. It was an American Captain from the 2nd Division. The 2nd Division forces had moved forward and had taken part in the village and their own tanks were throwing shells into their own troops. The firing stopped and the tanks withdrew. These accidents do happen, not very often, but they do occur in wartime situations.

On August 1st we moved back behind Hill 211 on the map and this was a corps assembly area. I think the Twenty Corps was being assembled and it was part of Patton's 3rd Army. While we were there we did see two USO shows. On August 4th we were moved by truck to a town called Comprepous and then on August 5th we moved to a new position six miles southeast of St. James. On August 6th, we were alerted that we would move out and we moved out about midnight. We arrived in Mondraun around 5:00 am. We were again alerted that at noon we would move to take the city of Angers. Our regimental combat team was to be a spearhead to take Angers. Our battalion arrived in the area about midnight. The 1st and 2nd Battalion had arrived earlier and was fighting to take the town. We started to bivouac and about 1:30 am I was called to the Battalion Command Post. I was told by Major Birdsong that Colonel Yuill had sent orders to him to send me on a special mission. A small patrol from the reconnaissance platoon had supposedly gone down through the area and into the town of Bouchemaine. The patrol leader had reported that there were not any Germans in the town, so with that knowledge, Colonel Yuill had prepared a special mission for I company. I was given extra units to reinforce my rifle company and I was given a machine gun platoon and a mortar platoon from "M" Company.

I probably had three hundred men or more when I moved out. We had lots of machine guns and mortars. I was to move to Bouchemaine and seize the bridge at that point and I was to leave one platoon at that bridge which was on the Maine River. Then I was to move south to where the Maine and the Loire came together and I was to leave one of the infantry platoons at that point to keep any Germans from using that bridge to come north. I was to take the remainder of my company, move to the rear of Angers and cut off two roads that lead to the southwest. The map that I was given only went to the town of Bouchemaine. When I crossed the river I was to be absolutely on my own. I took some coordinates off a map in battalion headquarters so if I did get into any trouble, I could call for artillery fire using the map coordinates, but it was pretty hazardous work. I questioned a sergeant

and asked him if he had been to the bridge, and made sure that he really did not see any Germans. The sergeant said he would have no trouble leading us there in the darkness. I was very suspicious about the whole thing and I didn't think it could be carried off. For once we got across that bridge, if we ran into any tanks and used up what bazooka ammunition we had, we were dead ducks as far as the tanks were concerned and it would be too far for any help.

But orders were orders and I was going to try to carry them out. I put the sergeant from the reconnaissance platoon with my 1st Platoon and we were following them at a distance of two hundred yards. Between the 1st Platoon and the head of the company I had a couple of men. The platoon stopped and we stopped and I asked the sergeant who was guiding us what the problem was. He said he thought he had gotten us on the wrong road so we had to back track and turn the vehicles around. We had a number of jeeps with their machine guns and mortars and we also had a wire line that was being run for communication to the bridge at Bouchemaine. After we got back on the right road, we began moving again. Soon the column had stopped and one of my privates, Anthony Antononi, came back and told me that the sergeant was lost and doesn't know where he is. I thought that I had better have a talk with him so I got the sergeant off to the side and asked him if he knew where we were. He told me that he wasn't sure that he had not really actually gone down to Bouchemaine like he told Colonel Yuill and he had never been this far forward. He had only gone as far as the railroad tracks that were way behind us. I told him to get out of my sight because he has jeopardized the lives of a lot of men who could have been killed or captured.

While we were stopped some bullets came high overhead. They were aerial burst and my men started muttering. I didn't know what they were and I thought maybe Hitler had come up with some new kind of secret weapon and this secret weapon was causing these aerial bursts. They seemed to be coming from quite some distance and they made the men nervous because I couldn't tell them exactly what was happening or what they were. I then got Lieutenant Lowery and we took out my map and got down on the road under the blanket and turned on a flashlight and tried to find out where we were. I then sent out a couple of patrols to look for road crossings. After they found the crossings I was able to determine our approximate location. I told my 1st platoon leader what was going on and that we must be much more careful because no one had been up through this area before, we could run into the enemy any time. After giving this information the lead platoon started moving forward and I followed the lead platoon at a short distance and the company was following again at a couple of hundred yards. It was about 6:00 am as we were coming over the hill that starts leading down into the town of Bouchemaine, when firing started.

We had hit the German outpost line and they were going into action. We were getting fire from the front and mortar shells. Then we began to get machine gun fire from our right flank and I had to get the platoons moving and we got the machine guns in action. I was in front with the 1st platoon and was going to go back to circle the company in just like the wagons did in the Indian days. As I ran up the road past some of our jeeps that had trailers loaded with ammunition, there was a big explosion to rear on top of the hill and a great big black cloud went skyward. I thought for a minute that an airplane had dropped a bomb on us. I looked up and I could not see anything in the sky so I kept running towards the rear and ran face to face with a German armored car. I was able to recognize it instantly because it had the typical German camouflage painting on it. I thought about trying to get through the hedgerow but if I got stuck I would be a goner. I made an instant decision to turn back down the road to run where there was an opening into a field. As I ran down the road the armored car was machine gunning and also opened up with a bigger gun on our jeep trailers.

As I was running I was screaming "Bazooka, bazooka!" Private Paige, our bazooka-man arrived and I pointed out what I wanted him to do. Unfortunately, machine gun fire hit him on the right side of his head and it spun him around. I gave him a slight push to get him out of the line of fire and other people began to arrive and also some other bazooka men arrived and they started to go into action. Lieutenant Cody arrived with my extra platoon. I told him where I wanted him to put his platoon into position. My 3rd platoon had gone in on the rear. We got hit by German tanks in the rear and they managed to blow up two or three trailers and a couple of jeeps.

One of the trailers had white phosphorus mortar shells in it and these shells were going off. We were also getting shelled from the front and it was a bad situation. I was going around with a couple of my runners telling people what to do and some mortar shells came in very close to us. We ran into an area with a very small ditch and dove in. We lay there and the shells came in so close that dirt was being thrown over our backs. I could hear the mortars that were firing those shells and I could actually hear the shells leaving the guns. Then came a pause and I realized that perhaps they had run out of mortar ammunition. That was going to be our break to get out of that particular ditch.

I heard seven shells leave the guns. I heard boom, boom. boom, seven times then there was a long pause and I said to the men to do as I do, when I get up, follow me. The seven shells landed and fortunately all went off so that I could count seven shells and when they hit around us I jumped up and we ran across the field into a sunken road on the other side. This is where I set up my company headquarters. The Germans did get a direct hit on one of our mortars and we had men killed and wounded. We finally got the situation under control. I had withdrawn to the high ground , circled my company and talked to Colonel Yuill. He said for me to hold the ground that I had and he was going to release the 3rd battalion to come up and help me out. I must mention that one of the bazooka men did knock out the armored car. The others on our rear finally withdrew so what we ended up with was an enemy to our front and to our right flank. There was sporadic firing and finally as evening came firing stopped and everything was quiet. During the night Sergeant Robertson showed up and I was surprised to see him and asked him where he had been. He had gotten too far to the front with his men so he laid low until it was dark and then they crawled back. The Germans had fired some flares up in the area prior to his arrival. I was wondering why they were firing flares and lighting up the area. I think they were firing the flares because they could hear the movements of Sergeant Robertson and his men but could not determine exactly where they were. The funny thing that happened when Sergeant Robertson was talking to me was when he asked if we had any chow and of course we didn't have any.

MAINE RIVER

On the afternoon of August 8th, the 3rd battalion was advancing towards the Maine River and I could see some Germans that were firing at them. I wanted to bring artillery fire on the Germans. The remainder of the battalion was about a mile north of my location. I was able to direct artillery fire on the Germans and give them some help from my particular position. That night L company made a crossing on the river around 10:30 p.m. They crossed the bridge that was built for a narrow gauge railway. L company went across the bridge and they were in a firefight with the Germans that night. After "L" and "K" went across, two battalions of the 10th infantry went across the bridge and proceeded on beyond the positions of "L" and "K". On August 8, 1992, the French dedicated the bridge to the 5th Division. My wife and I attended the ceremony along with a number of others from the 5th Division.

A funny thing happened on the morning of August 9th. My men had stopped a French woman who was riding a bicycle toward Bouchemaine. I went over to talk to her and tell her that she couldn't ride down the road to Bouchemaine because there were forces down the road and she might get shot. I was using one of my soldiers, who could speak French, to talk to her. She was very agitated and she said she had a child down in that town and she wanted to go to the child. I could see that as agitated as she was, it would take about five soldiers to hold her. I had to figure out what we could do. I told her to get off her bicycle and walk slowly in the middle of the road and we wouldn't fire and I felt the Germans probably wouldn't fire. We watched as this woman slowly walked down the road and after she got a long way down the road she got back on her bicycle and rode through and on down into the town without a shot being fired. The total casualties that I had in this encounter numbered thirty including both dead and wounded. Private Ukasick was killed there. He would have given his life for me and his death was a great loss to me.

On the afternoon of August 9th, Major Birdsong called me on the radio. He told me to withdraw from our position and come to Pruniers to the rear battalion command post for further orders. We arrived at the rear command post that was staffed by Major John Acuff. He told me that I was to cross to the other side and report to Major Birdsong. He told me that they were short of ammunition on the other side and asked if we could carry some machine gun and mortar ammunition. I secured some "K" rations for all the men and issued them three boxes for the next day and they put them in their shirts. We also picked up mortar and machine gun ammunition. Each man carried two boxes of machine ammunition or two mortar shells in addition to five bandoleers of rifle ammunition. Around 5:00 p.m. we left the area of Pruiniers and followed the narrow gauge railroad tracks around the bank to arrive at the river. When we arrived at the river's edge, at the beginning of the bridge, an engineer officer was there and he asked me where we were going. He told me that the bridge was under fire and he didn't think we could cross it. I knew we had to get across, so I thought that I had better not talk to him anymore and get my men even more fearful.

I hollered to my company to go so we ran out on the bridge and the Germans started firing. I was out quite a way in front of the company and my rations fell from my shirt. I turned around and ran back to pick up the box of "K" rations and saw the men coming at me. I didn't want them to stop so I left the rations and ran toward the other side. When I came off on the other side, I realized we were on a steep embankment with bricks going down each side. For a minute I didn't know what to do for if we kept on running we would be like ducks in a pond so I decided to run down on the right side and of course my men followed me. Some tumbled, some fell, but we got through it pretty well. I did lose Lieutenant Smith who was my 4th platoon leader. He was hit and was wounded. That was one of our casualties at that crossing. A couple of light tanks followed us across and when they got across, they didn't know where to go. I had to run up and signal them to keep on going until they could get down to an area where the tanks could get off. A couple of anti-tank guns with vehicles pulling them came across. The first one made it but as the second one cleared the end of the bridge the Germans had apparently pulled a big gun into position, fired and hit the vehicle. There was a big explosion and a fire started. This ended anyone else coming across.

"L" and "K" Company had been fighting the Germans since the crossing on August 8th. They both had a number of casualties and both of them had lost some of their lieutenants. I remember that Lieutenant Hardee was killed after he had crossed the river and Lieutenant Keller was killed at the bridge area. I reported to Major Birdsong who was back in the wooded area. We unloaded the machine gun and mortar ammunition that we had been carrying. Major Birdsong told me to take my company back beyond his command post and more or less be a rear guard for that night. I was to report to his command post early in the morning around 5:00 am for further orders. I knew that I was going to attack through "L" or "K" Company in the morning. When I went forward to meet with the Major, I instructed Lieutenant Lowery, my Executive Officer, to bring the company forward to a certain line that I had pointed out. I told him to have the 1st platoon on the left, the 2nd platoon on the right and the 3rd platoon in reserve. That was gong to be my attack formation. I knew that Lieutenant Lowery was very competent and would do exactly what I had instructed him to do. I reported to the command post and the Major began giving the attack order. "E" Company of our 2nd Battalion had been attached to the 3rd Battalion. The plan was for I company and "E" Company to attack through "L" and "K" and hit the line of departure at 6:00 a.m.

Prior to that the artillery would fire on the village that we were going to be attacking. The company commander of "E" Company had his company on the rear also, so I asked him whether he had his company moving to get into position. When he said that he did not I told him that he had better send a runner back and tell his Executive Officer to move the company up. I told him that he wouldn't be able to get his company ready to attach at 6:00 a.m. unless they were moving up. Major Birdsong continued with his order and a short time thereafter I asked Lieutenant Brown, who was commanding "E" Company if he had sent word back to move his company up and he replied that he had not. I told him that he should so he would be ready. I was concerned because I did not want to attack with a right open flank. My left flank was going to be on the river. I wanted to be sure that when the attack jumped off, "E" Company would jump off with us at the same time. I had no more

than said that when Lieutenant Brown fainted. I thought, what a predicament this is the company commander has fainted and he is supposed to be attacking on my right. I moved up at the line of departure and was ready to attack at 6:00 a.m. The artillery was firing on the village, "E" Company was no where to be found. I called Major Birdsong on the radio and told him that "E" Company had not moved up so we delayed the attack for about a half-hour until they moved into position.

Even then I did not see the company commander. I went over to look for him and could not find him. I talked to one of the sergeants in charge of the left side of their company. I company jumped of at 6:00 a.m. and began firing at the Germans who were firing at us. They had 20mm anti-aircraft guns that they were using like machine guns. There was a wall near the village that was going to block our advance. We had two light tanks attached to us so I talked to the tank commander and told him that I wanted him to move the tanks down to a certain area and then open up and knock a hole in the wall that we could run through. The platoon leader got wounded in the leg by a shell and I told him that he would have to go back to the aid station. He told me who was in charge of his tanks so I contacted the sergeant and told him what I wanted done. He jumped up on the back of the tank and as he swung through the turret, a German machine gun opened up and bullets hit the tank. I ducked but I could see that the sergeant had fallen from the turret. I ran around to the front of the tank and the driver told me that the sergeant had been hit.

I thought about getting up in the tank but knew that the Germans would shoot me too. I told the driver to pull down the road until he got behind a house and I would direct him from the front. When the tank got behind a house I jumped up on top of the tank, reached down into the turret and pulled the sergeant up. The machine gun burst had broken his arm. He had a compound fracture and his arm was dangling. The sergeant told me that Private Jones would now be in charge of the tanks. This private had never expected to be in charge of the tanks and was frightened of the whole situation. I told him what I wanted the tanks to do and how to support us. That private got the tanks into position and put that hole through the wall. I ran to the left side to check on the 1st platoon but I couldn't find their leader. I went forward along the left side and came up along side one of my men. He pointed out a gun emplacement with a 20mm gun manned by four or five Germans. They were about ten yards from us and couldn't see us because there was a little bend in the road and we were pressing ourselves against the bank. I called up one of the soldiers who had a rifle grenade and asked him if he could hit them with the first shot. He said that he could. I told him that if he missed they would turn that gun around and blow the bank and us right out of here. He fired and had a direct and then started firing his rifle and that was the end of the gun crew.

I didn't even walk up there to look because I knew they had all been killed. Right after that, back behind me, one of my replacement soldiers was peeking up over the bank through a small hedge. He asked me if we had a gun up here and I answered that I didn't think so. I asked one of my veteran soldiers to climb up and verify what the other soldier had seen and he called back that there was a house and another gun crew in the corner of the house. I climbed up the bank and peeked through the hedge and sure enough there was another gun crew waiting to see what they could shoot. I thought that maybe I could give these guys a break and give them a chance to surrender. Even if they opened up they were not going to be able to hit us because we were down below the bank. I hollered out in German: "Commen sie herasu du schein hund du mit hans hoch," and they jumped up immediate and threw their hands up. I called: "Mach schnell" and they came running. I exposed myself a little bit so they could see where I was and they came over and I had them jump down the bank. One of them could speak a little English and I asked him if was a Nazi. "Nein, Nazi", he said and indicated that if he had been a Nazi, he would not have surrendered. They were pretty well beat because we had been pressing them very hard. I told a couple of the soldiers to take them back to the rear where they would be interrogated. I went around to check on the platoon on the right side of my company and they were having problems advancing. They were under fire and I had to jack them up a bit. I told them that they had forgotten about fire and movement, they needed to get going.

We got the light machine gun to cover and moved forward. I kicked over a fence and got them fired up and they got into the attack once again. I then started looking for "E" Company and they had not even left the line

of departure. The "E" Company sergeant said that he didn't know what to do and he had not been able to find the company commander. I told him that I would be the one to give the orders, to go up there and start firing on the Germans. I told him not to stay at the line of departure to get moving with the whole platoon and keep going until we get in that village. They started moving off and getting into the firefight. I had no idea whether they continued or not, but I had all I could do working with I company to make sure they kept going. My 2nd platoon had reached the wall that I spoke of before. The tank had knocked a hole in the wall as I requested. I got up along the wall and told a soldier carrying a Browning automatic rifle that I was going to go through and when I did I wanted the rest of them to come through behind me. I took his automatic rifle and started firing the gun before I jumped through the wall. As I jumped through the wall I was spraying the shots around and the men came through behind me. I heard voices in a basement and my men wanted to fire rifle grenades through the window. I thought that there could be women and children down there so we had better hold up.

I had a young private who was a replacement with me who could speak German. We got behind a tree very close to the house and he hollered in German to come out and that we would not shoot. Nothing happened so I called up Private Casteran, who could speak French and told him to tell whoever was in the basement to come on out, that we would not hurt them, we were Americans, they would be safe. Castern gave them all of this in French and shortly thereafter a little old man jumped out with a white flag tied to the end of a pole that he was waving. He jumped back into the basement and I knew they were not German soldiers but civilians. It turned out that there were some old people, young women and children who were hiding. I am not sure if that was true of some of the other houses in the village.

We got to a certain point and then I got an order from Major Birdsong to stop my advance because he wanted to change the line of attack. He wanted to replace "E" Company with L company on my right flank and we were to continue the attack around 5:00 p.m. with I company still on the left and "K" Company in reserve. I don't know what he did with "E" Company. It is possible that they returned to their own battalion. 5:00 came and we jumped off and immediately ran into German resistance again. I was out on the road and there was a deep cut that went down in back of the village. Firing was going on and pretty soon out came some of my men. One of my very best sergeants, his name was Baker, had been wounded. He had been shot right through from front to back. I had brought him along from the time he was a private and he had moved up to be platoon sergeant. He was one of the most valuable men we had in the company and he was a very loyal soldier to me. I laid him down on the road on his stomach and I was afraid he was going into shock so I started talking to him and I told him that he was going to be all right. I had sent another soldier back to bring one of my company's jeeps forward so I could move Baker out as fast as possible. I noticed that he was bleeding from his mouth and I knew that he was badly injured. I wanted to get him to an aide station as soon as possible. When I was talking to him he wiped his hand across his mouth and of course he had blood on it and he said to me, "What the hell is this? Water?" I told him that it was blood but he would be all right. The jeep driver who I had great confidence is, was a veteran driver who I called Smitty. He got him to the aide station and Baker did live. He lost a lung but he lived quite a long life. I read in a Chicago paper that died in 1995. Our quickness in getting him out paid off.

GERMAN PRISONERS

We took a number of prisoners and one of them was a German captain. They had surrendered and the reason they had surrendered was because we had them trapped. They were either going to be killed or wounded because of the position they had taken in a washout. They threw up their hands and surrendered. I had the captain out on the road and asked him if he spoke English, which he did. I knew that he could hear the men say that they wanted to kill him. I told him that I had no reason not to let them do that. I knew all along that I was going to send them all back as prisoners, but I wanted to frighten him a little. I asked him why he though his life should be spared when he stayed and fired at us until the last minute. He looked at me and said: "You are an officer, orders are orders. You would have done the same as I." I thought that was a pretty good answer and I had no reply to

that. I sent the officer and his men to the rear area for interrogation.

Then a funny thing happened. One of my men came back and said that even though he knew that he shouldn't he had taken a lot of French Francs from the officer and he thought he had better tell me. I didn't count it, but he had a big roll of money. I told him that I would have to send it back to regimental headquarters to Captain Campbell and he would take care of it. I sent the money back and at a later date it was returned to me with a note from Captain Campbell saying by the time the money got back to regimental headquarters, the German Captain was gone and he didn't know what to do with it. He said he was giving it back to me and it was my problem.

We continued on and finally routed all the German resistance. It was dark and I got a call from Major Birdsong. He said since all the resistance had been eliminated, he could move forward and go into Angers. I did have one little problem. I had two light tanks and after it got dark the private was afraid to move the tanks. It was around 10:00 p.m. and we had to move through a wooded area. The private told me that the lieutenant never moved the tanks after dark. I told him that we had too. I told him that he was with the infantry and we would take care of him and see that nothing happened to the tanks and that he wouldn't fall into any tank traps or holes. He was still frightened so I got the major on the radio and explained the problem to him. I handed the radio set to the private and Major Birdsong told him that he had to follow me and do whatever I told him to do, that we would take care of him. Finally his fears calmed enough and he was ready to follow orders.

We moved into town around 11:00 p.m. and the other battalions that had been fighting from the west had also moved into the area. The 11th Infantry kept moving to the north and east. We were on the right flank of the 20th Corps, which had been attacking to the northeast. We were headed toward the town of Chartres. Sometime during this period we had been moved by field artillery trucks to the northeast. Somewhere around August 15th our battalion was in an assembly area and we thought we would be there for a few days. On August 17th, Captain Johnny Acuff came hurrying down to where I was located with I company and said that we would have to move out on the road and go to take the city of Chartres. The 7th Armored Division had reported that they had taken Chartres and some high-ranking officer went up there and got wounded and the Germans were still there. It was some sort of SNAFU. We were told that we had to hurry as we had to get on the road and start moving on the city. We received opposition south of Chartres at about 7:00. We had moved out about 10:00 a.m. and it was a rather warm day. A few of the soldiers had gotten a hold of some cider and one of my aide men named Mario, had too much to drink. As we marched down the road toward Chartres, his helmet would fall off and roll around on the road and Mario would fall behind. Then he would come running up to me and say that if I wanted someone to fight, he was my man. I was a little bit irritated but I also got kind of a kick out of his behavior. By the time we got to where we encountered opposition, Mario had sobered up between the marching and the heat of the sun.

L Company and my company got a little bit crossed and were firing at one another. We finally shut it off and shut down the operation for the night. On August 18th we managed to get into town. There was some resistance on the southeast and we got it cleaned up. I actually took several small French motorcycles, which the Germans had abandoned. We used them that night to patrol the town. Later on I kept on or two of them and they finally disappeared and I never knew what happened to them. On August 19th I had been moved to the east of the town but I was called to come back into town to guard some warehouses. The Germans had stocked these warehouses with furniture, dishes, utensils, aviation suits and many other items. The French knew where these warehouses were and of course they began to loot. There weren't any rear echelon troops to guard them so we had to use combat troops. I was called back to take over two of the warehouses and the instructions were that no one was to take anything from them unless I received an order from Major Birdsong or Colonel Yuill.

I had to leave the warehouse temporarily and when I got back the men were holding a truck loaded with dishes and all sorts of items. They had let them get in, but they wouldn't let them go out. I would not allow the captain to take the truck out of the yard. He left and then a colonel showed up. The colonel said that it was okay to let the truck go but I told him with all respect to his rank, my orders were that nothing goes out unless I receive

orders from Major Birdsong or Colonel Yuill. The colonel told me that he was G4 from 20 Corps Headquarters and he was the one who put out that order. I told him that I understood and while it was probably true, I had orders and repeated what I had said before. He asked where he could find Major Birdsong and he left. I got a call from the major and said that it was okay to let the truck go so we did.

CROSSED THE SEINE

The next day I left Chartres and moved north of the city to await further orders. At 8:00 on August 21st I was instructed to move the artillery area and ride with the service battery. We left at 1:00 and arrived north of Gerondville at about 11:00 p.m. I forgot to mention that the Germans had a big garage in Chartres and it contained a number of vehicles. There was one big Cadillac that Major Birdsong decided to send up the line and it eventually was sent to General Patton. I got a Cadillac pick-up truck out of the deal. My men quickly painted a huge white star on the hood so it wouldn't be bombed. We used it to carry extra ammunition and whatever shovels and other things that we needed. On August 22nd my company again rode with the artillery and about 11:00 that night we ended up in a place called Milly. About 8:00 on August 23rd we started for Fontainbleau. The 2nd Battalion had crossed the Seine about dusk the night before. There was a heavy downpour of rain on the night of August 23rd. On August 24th I crossed the Seine and was waiting for my company to cross. The engineers put in a Bailey Bridge, which would hold vehicles. Some tanks that were to join the 3rd Battalion had gone across. Most of the 3rd Battalion had crossed before my arrival. When my company came across about 6:00 that night the bridge area was under fire. I called for my men to run even though I knew that we were not supposed to run on bridges. They started running and then they stopped. I hollered again and they all came on the run across the bridge. When I asked why they had stopped they told me there was an engineer officer who told them not to run across the bridge but when I yelled the second time they disregarded what he said. I didn't want them exposed out there and I wanted them to get off and on the other side. After we got over we started to move up to Major Birdsongs location. When we got there I found there were several medium Sherman tanks in the area.

The major called me and said they were in the woods and did not want to bring the tanks and they did not want me or my company to come into the woods. I put my men on top of the tanks and we started to go to the other side. Some Free French came up and said there were a bunch of Germans up in one of the houses and they needed to help to get them out. I sent on of my platoons up to help them out and they cleared the house of twenty Germans. Of course they took the guns from the Germans and they gave them to the Free French. As I was moving around to the other side a funny thing happened. Captain Altman was across the river and had gotten of by himself and he began to think he was the only one over there. He was trying to call the major and could not get through. I picked him up on the radio and asked him what the problem was. He asked where everyone was and I told him to have no fear because I company is here. I told him what the situation was and that seemed to calm his fears that he was all alone.

On August 25th, I attacked at 8:00 a.m. east from the river through a woods. I had one platoon on each side of the road and a third platoon in reserve. We were getting quite a bit of fire from the front. I had a light tank with me and a enemy anti-tank gun drove the light tank off the road and it retreated. We kept firing and moving forward. I told the company that no one was to cross this road except me because I wanted to move from one platoon to another. I was lying out in a ditch by the road to observe what was going on. My executive officer kept calling and asking why we didn't use the 105's. I didn't understand what he was talking about when all of a sudden the light tank and a medium tank came down the road. Both of them were firing machine guns like crazy. When they got up to where I was lying in the ditch, they stopped and a medium tank had a big 105 on the front of it. It fired that gun at the road junction where we had been getting anti-tank fire. The muzzle blast swept everything up and blew debris all over me which kind of scared me. We continued the fight and reached our objective, which was to take the road that was beyond us. We had killed a number of Germans and left them laying on the ground. That's war.

The next day I was to attack in another direction and we ran into fire. We came to a very small village, which was just a small grouping of houses. An incident happened there between a young woman and an older woman. The older woman came walking up and she had a German helmet in her hand. When she got close to the young woman she smashed her on the head with the German helmet and started beating her. I had my soldiers separate her from the young woman. I had my French speaking soldier tell her that I didn't allow any of that. He found out that the night before the Germans had come to the older woman's house and had taken about fifty of her chickens. They had killed the chickens and made the young woman cook them. The young women had no alternative. When I had my back turned the older woman grabbed the helmet and started beating her again. I had to have the soldiers separate them again and told her to go back to her house as this had to be settled by rear echelon troops. Finally we had to leave the area and prepare for the next day.

I hesitate to make this a part of my record, but on August 25th when we had secured the objective after crossing the Seine, there were a number of dead German soldiers on the ground. I noticed that on of my soldiers had his bayonet was sticking the dead in their rear ends. I asked him what he was doing and he answered that he was making sure they were dead so they couldn't shoot him in the back. I couldn't argue with him on that point. When we were fighting for our objective on August 26th, which was the first road that was east of the Seine and ran parallel with it the Germans beyond that area were blowing down trees and dropping them on the road beyond our objective. I knew that we were going to stop after we had secured that road crossing and I was kind of chuckling to myself. It turned out that when we came back and moved out on August 27th, we were to cross this same road that was parallel with the Seine. I was given the advance guard to pick up the enemy again. We weren't sure how far they had withdrawn after we had beaten a number of them and put the rest to flight. I moved out with my company at 8:00 a.m. about a quarter of a mile. Someone else had pulled those trees that had been downed off the road and shortly after the trees were moved. I was picked up by trucks and rode for about seven miles and encountered no enemy in that area. We positioned ourselves that night at a place called Metz-Sour en Seine.

On August 28th, the 11th Infantry combat team and perhaps more of the division were going to make a motor move principally to the north. I was assigned with my company to go back to service battery, which carried the ammunition for all of the division artillery. They had a number of trucks but no big guns. When I got back to the service battery position, the battery commander was not there. He had gone forward with the colonel of the artillery and there were five lieutenants with their command car and their trucks. They asked me if I wanted to ride in the command car with them because I was the infantry captain. I said that I was going to ride with my supply sergeant in the Cadillac pick-up, which we had taken from the Germans back in the city of Chatres. I had some things that I wanted to read and I thought I could do that very well in the Cadillac.

We loaded the men up on the trucks and moved out about 6:00 p.m. Prior to my leaving I had a meeting with Major Birdsong and he showed me a map which had the route marked out. I took an overlay of the map on a piece of paper and marked a number of little towns so I had a picture of what was going on. We were moving along very slowly when all of a sudden I noticed that Sergeant Lyons, the driver of the Cadillac was moving along at a good speed. When I looked up, I could not see anyone in front of us only a road that seemed to stretch on for miles. I asked the sergeant if he was on the right road and if he was still following the command car. He told me that the command car was still in front of us so I continued with my reading. A little while later I felt we were moving quite fast so I put down what I was reading and again looked down the road and again I did not see a thing. Sergeant Lyons again assured me that we were behind the command car.

At that time I saw a sign of a little village and recognized it from my overlay. I told the sergeant that I thought we were going east and we should be going north. I told him that he had better step on the gas and catch up to the command car. He floored the accelerator on the Cadillac and we really took off. After some time we saw the command car and started blowing the horn so they would stop before going any further. Once they pulled over I got out and went up to ask the lieutenants if they were sure they were on the right route to which they responded

that they weren't sure. They said they were following the 449 anti-aircraft vehicles and when they came out of town, way back there, the MP turned them this way and they hadn't been able to catch up to them. So that is why they had been driving so fast.

I told them that I thought a mistake had been made, that we should be going north, not east. I suggested that we turn the vehicles around and I would go back and check with the MP in town to see which way he was turning the 5th Division vehicles. They thought it was a good idea . I told them that if I was correct I wouldn't come back to meet them. I would be waiting in town for them to arrive with their trucks. I got back into the Cadillac with Lyons and told him to step on it and get us back to town to find out what was going on. We were going down the road wide open and I could see my jeeps coming in view and the trailers bouncing on the road. They were trying to catch up to us with the jeeps. We were probably running ninety mph or better and a jeep can maybe go sixty mph.

I told Lyons to just blow the horn and go by on the right hand side. I could see the jeep drivers taking quite a look like, 'What's going on here?' After we got down the road quite a distance, I could see the big trucks coming into sight. They were driving at a high rate of speed because they were following the jeeps in front of them. They had no idea other than that as to where they were going. My soldiers were on the top holding on for dear life and I knew they were all wondering what in the world was going on! When we got back into town and saw the MP, I noticed he was from the 7th Armored Division. I asked him which way he was turning the 5th Division troops that were coming through and he said he was not turning anybody any way, he was just giving the right-of-way. I knew then that a mistake had been made and Lyons and I just sat back in our Cadillac waiting for the command car, jeeps and trucks to come back into town. When they finally arrived I explained to the lieutenants what was going on and I said that we had better get back on the route. It was around 11:00 p.m. when we finally arrived at the designated area. The Service Battery Commander, Captain Mitchell, and his colonel were standing in a wooded area when we finally pulled up. The lieutenant asked Captain Mitchell if he was worried about them. Captain Mitchell replied: "Hell no. With and infantry captain and five artillery lieutenants I figured you could find your way up here." The Colonel was silent. I thought that was a pretty relaxed way to handle it

RHEIMS

On August 29th I was standing by with my company to move to the assembly area to cross the Maine. The crossing was being made behind the 2nd Infantry which had already gone across. I finally crossed with my company at approximately 1:00 a.m. on August 30th. On August 31st my notes said that I rode with my company to Beins and went on a defensive position. "K" Company was near by. Captain Altman contacted me and said that he would like to go back to Rheims that night. I said that I would like to see Rheims because I had read a lot about it and the Cathedral. We went back to talk to our commander, Major Birdsong and see whether he would give us permission. The major said that he would like to see the Cathedral so he would go with us and turn the Battalion over to his Executive Officer. We had to go see Colonel Yuill and request permission. The major had a captured car so we piled in and went to regimental headquarters.

We had to report to Captain Bruce Campbell who was the adjutant and we told him we wanted permission, if possible, from Colonel Yuill to go to Rheims. The Captain said he wanted to go too so he went back into a tent to talk to the Colonel and he came out with a long face. He told us that Colonel Yuill had given permission for the three of us to go, but not for him. We took off for Rheims and arrived at the Cathedral which was locked. Some of the windows had been removed and it was sandbagged very high. All we were able to do was to walk around it and look. We saw a hotel that had a small restaurant so we decided to go in and see what was going on. We were hoping to have a sandwich and some coffee. We were in this little restaurant and some Frenchmen came over very quickly to tell us that there were some snipers outside and some shooting was going on. We said we were off duty

and he would have to get someone else to handle the situation. This was sort of peanuts to us and we did not want to get involved. In fact, if I remember correctly, there were some other soldiers who seemed to be rear echelon troops that were in the restaurant. We told the Frenchmen they should talk to those guys and let them handle it.

VERDUN

As the Germans retreated across France, they would usually defend an area at a time. We would attack them and put the pressure on them and they would fire at us. We would catch artillery and mortar fire and we would respond. Usually during the night the Germans would start a withdrawal to the next little village or town and take up their defense again. We would have to catch up with them and start the same thing all over again. This was the picture as we moved across France. Our combat team's next objective was the town of Verdun. Some of our troops had all ready moved in and occupied Verdun. I was moved by truck to an area call Regret about one and a half miles west of Versailles. I had loaded on 21st Field Artillery trucks at 5:30 p.m. and arrived around midnight. I went into a defensive position in the rear of the regimental command post, which now was in the hotel in the center of Verdun. I had set up my headquarters in the yard of a big farm in that area. On the morning of Sept 1st a farmer came out of his house and told me that he would be willing to run warm water from his house by hose to his horse trough to let me soldiers wash up. I told him that it would be very nice because the soldiers had not had any opportunity to use warm water to clean up with.

A number of my soldiers were standing around listening to the conversation and the farmer told me that I could come into his house and use his bathtub. Of course it was impossible for all these guys to take a bath so I said that I would wash up at the trough with my men. The men near me told me to go in and wash up and they made a big deal of it so I said that if they thought I needed a bath that bad I would go in and take one. The farmer ran the hot water out and the men came a few at a time. Some of them were making the most of the hot water and were shaving and cleaning up. It was the first bath I had since I arrived in France and I felt like a million bucks after enjoying such a luxurious experience. The farmer wanted to take me to one of the cemeteries of WWI. He was very proud of it even though the American government paid for the up-keep; the French had to do it for us. He said it was a beautiful cemetery, but I had to stay with my company in case something happened.

We had moved into the Verdun area very quickly and the Germans were coming from the south to shut us off. They started shooting up our trucks to our rear. "K" Company was sent back to a town called Clermont to clear out the Germans and make it safe for our trucks. They were getting their tires shot up and some of the trucks were running around with one tire when there should have been dual tires because the other one had been hit by bullets. "K" Company moved back and that was where Captain Altman was shot. He had been lying on the ground and someone had managed to get a bullet under him. He was not badly wounded but he did have a permanent wound.

As I remember the day of September 1st was a fairly quite day for us but that night German planes came over and were bombing the area around Verdun. It made the soldiers nervous. There is not much you can do about it except remain calm yourself. Verdun was being hit pretty good. Fortunately the bombs were not dropping right in our area. September 2nd I was called to headquarters and told that I was to move out about ten miles east of Verdun to outpost the area with my company. In the meantime my driver had been down to the kitchen and found that they were cooking steaks and chicken that had been taken from the German headquarters. They also had a large supply of liquor and wine. Our staff people had taken possession of this entire larder and I was told my share was ten cases of wine. I asked how I could move ten cases and some one said take it or leave it. I said I would take it but didn't know what I would do with it.

When I left headquarters, my driver said he had arranged for us to have chicken dinner right here in the kitchen. I told him I was sorry but we couldn't do that, we had to get moving. He grabbed a couple of pieces and

we had a bite anyway. I still didn't know what to do with the wine so I got in touch with Captain Johnny Mitchell of the 19th Field artillery. I told him that I had ten cases of wine in the hotel and if he could pick it up he could have two cases for his men and I would get the rest later. He said he would take care of it. I got my company and moved out to the outpost line. My men thought they were getting a bum deal as they were being shoved out in front and I agreed with them. At 12:14 a.m. on September 3rd German planes flew over again and were bombing Verdun and all surrounding areas. We could hear the bombing and really could see what was going on for we were on a high ridge. I told my men that we were lucky to be out of there. If we were back in Verdun we would be getting bombed. One of the German planes dropped his bombs in our area and really gave us a scare. I remember that I looked at the sky and said, "You coward, you are supposed to go over Verdun and drop your bombs and you dropped them here. You will go back and say that you dropped over Verdun." The night of September 2nd, I must have been especially tired for I find in my notes that I said I had a particularly good night's rest. It must have been quiet on September 2nd. Usually we were quite tired and did not have much trouble sleeping. It usually didn't take long after I had my company organized with our defenses set that I would fall asleep. It had to be something special that I would make that note that I had a good night's rest. I was told to make contact over in a small town with a company from the 2nd Infantry Regiment. I had previously met the officer in Iceland so I went over to this town to find him. The town was primarily houses on one street and they had been badly bombed on the night of September 1st. It seems to me that this was a Sunday morning and these people were out cleaning up the rubble of their wrecked homes. I could not figure out why they were bombed because there were no Americans their to my knowledge. Maybe the 2nd Infantry Company moved in, but as my driver and I drove down through the street the people did not look at us, they did not wave, they were not glad to see us. I think they probably figured we caused them to be bombed. We drove to the end of town and there were not any Americans there so I told my driver to turn around and get out of town. There was so much destruction and the people were not friendly and we were the only Americans there. If there were other Americans there, they had left. I never did find out.

The people in that area were almost afraid to be friendly with us because they were afraid of the Germans returning. In fact, I remember in some areas the people said the Germans told them not to be too cocky because they would be coming back. They kept them frightened.

I had started to move east with my company spread out along quite a long line. I didn't know exactly where the Germans were at that point. I got a call from Major Birdsong who told me to stop our advance and not go farther. He told me that he wanted me to move back to the high ground behind us and he would give me further orders. We started moving back and as we were moving back to the west, I came upon a small grouping of tents. My company was about two hundred yards east of the tents and I told them to hold up and stay because I was going to walk over and check the tents out. I went over and saw that the tents were a small field hospital. I went inside and talked to one of the soldiers and asked who was in charge. He told me that major so and so was and I asked to see him. When the major came out I asked him how long he was planning to stay in this position. He told me that they would be okay because the 11th Infantry was out in front. I asked him if he could see the line of soldiers in that field about two hundred yards to the east. I told him that was the front line of the 11th Infantry and when I walk past his hospital it will be the front line of this area because I was going to the high ground behind us. He asked if I minded staying until he could call on the radio. They must have told him that the 11th Infantry would be out in front of him because he replied that he was talking to the captain of the 11th Infantry and he is telling me that he is the front line and they are moving to my rear. So he came back and asked if we would stay there while they took down tents and moved. I told him that we were not in any particular hurry and would stay until he got the tents down and moved their small field hospital out of the area. Then I moved on back to the high ground. There I met Major Birdsong who told me that they were short of gasoline and were going to have to hold up on our advance. We went into a defensive position with the rest of the battalion. Looking at my notes I apparently found some French woman to wash some clothes for me. My notes also say that on September 5th we had a little rain and I led my company to an area around Marchville. Around 5:30 p.m. I went into defensive position and my command post was in a barn. I had been given an order for September 7th because my notes said that I had a big mission for the next day.

GERMAN OUTPOST LINES

The gasoline shortage was really something. I had an indication from Smitty, my jeep driver, who had told me a few days prior to this time that something was wrong, it was hard to get gasoline. He used to borrow it from the tankers because they carried a lot extra but they wouldn't give him any. He went back to the dump where we normally picked up our gasoline and they did not have any either. One of our jeeps was almost empty. What had happened was that gasoline was almost shut off from the 3rd Army and was diverted to the 1st Army in the north. We were told that Patton had a fit over that and said it would cost him 10,000 men by having his gasoline supply literally shut off. I knew what he was talking about. We had the Germans off balance and if we did not make any contact with them for some days, it would give them an opportunity to get set up again in a defensive position. On September 7th, my twenty-fourth birthday, the 5th Division was to have an objective of seizing the town of Metz and the immediate objective of the 11th Infantry was to drive out the Germans and get a bridgehead on the Moselle River. I was to be the advance guard for the 11th Infantry and to move out toward the Moselle River at 8:00 a.m. We were moving across country with no idea of when we would pick up the Germans. I had one platoon out in front covering and I was walking behind them with my radio operator and some machine guns that were mounted on the dash boards of the jeeps. I had two M-8 armored cars and their commanding officer was a lieutenant and he was riding in his jeep. Approximately five hundred yards behind us was I company in column. The platoon leader of the 1st Platoon was Lieutenant Kozlowski, a replacement officer. He asked me several times to check the azmuth as we were moving cross-country through open fields. There were trees and wooded areas and it was kind of hard to tell whether you were heading in the right direction. You had to believe the compass. We came to an area that had a ravine behind it and as we got ready to go up the hill, the vehicles could not get through because there was a wash out. I told them to go down to our left toward the 7th Armored and when they found a spot to cross, they could come up on the other side and rejoin us. I told my radio operator that he might as well jump into one of the jeeps and ride to the other side. I wanted to give him a little rest from carrying a sixty-pound radio. The vehicles all took off going to the left through the open field. I could see the 7th armored units to our left and I felt there would be no problem for the jeeps. I climbed up on the hill on the other side and there was a wide-open field and to our front was a big woods, which also swung around to the right hand side. Some of the platoon had already crossed the road that we were approaching and some of them were still on this side. The platoon leader was on the other side of the road. There was a little shed in the area. I had two or three of my runners with me and they were men from different platoons. If I wanted to send a message to a platoon and the radio wasn't working, I could send it with the platoon runner. I walked up to this little shed and opened the door. Thinking back, it was a dangerous thing to do, but I did it. There were about ten freshly skinned rabbits hanging there and I thought it was strange because the shed was sitting all by itself. I felt that there was something funny going on so I called the platoon leaders and told them to be alert because someone had some skinned rabbit here.

I had no more than finished saying that when fire opened to the front from the Germans. They opened up on the leading platoon. There was shooting all around but no one was shooting at me. I was standing there trying to figure out my next move and wondering how heavy the fire was going to get when Major Birdsong came up along side of me. He said he had been trying to call me on the radio and could not get me. My radio operator was not with me and had turned off our radio. The major had heard all the firing and had hustled up to see what was going on. To this day he thinks that I had the map but I did not have a map of the area, he did. As we were looking towards the woods he opened up the map and said something like: "Orient me."

We were oriented very quickly by a machine gunner from the woods who hit one of my runners. He was about six foot, three inches and the bullet hit him in the thigh and he was badly hit. That was about the height of the bullets at that time. Firing was going on to the east and then started from the south. The major and I dropped to the ground. The field was very flat. The German kept firing at us and we had no one to fire back. There were no

machine guns in the area. Just as this happened the platoon leader of the armored cars arrived in his jeep. All this firing was going on and he had no idea what to do. To protect himself and his driver they jumped out of the jeep to take cover. The jeep was left sitting on the road between my leading platoon, the major, me and my runners with no one in it to fire the gun. I guess he would not have known what to fire at because it took him by surprise. The German machine gunner kept firing at Major Birdsong and myself and his fire was getting very accurate. We were calling out for someone to man the machine gun on the jeep. I was lying ahead of the major and he was slightly back to my rear. One burst went by and I knew that it had just missed my left ear. I looked ahead and I could see a small dip in the ground and I decided to crawl to that small dip.

If you ever saw Will and Joe cartoons, one of them is saying; "I can't get any closer to the ground because my buttons are in the way." That was exactly my position. I had gotten as close to the ground as possible. As I started to move the major said that he thought he had been hit. I crawled back a little and looked up and that burst which had just missed my ear had gone to the top of his right shoulder. It shredded his field jacket from the top to the bottom. I couldn't get up and take a good look at this shoulder or I would have had my head shot off but I looked the best that I could and I did not see any blood. I told the major that I thought he would be all right. It did turn out the shot nipped him in the right shoulder but fortunately, not severely.

We kept yelling for someone to man that machine gun and finally Sergeant Hudson, my communication sergeant, jumped up and ran over and gave a double load on the machine gun. It usually takes two pulls for the bullets to enter the chamber. In a combat situation we kept the guns so that one pull would start it firing. We called that "Halfload". Sergeant Hudson was not familiar with this gun so he gave two quick pulls to make sure it fired. He knew the location of the German machine gun and he swung around started firing. That immediately stopped the bullets from popping which meant the gunner was taking a little cover himself and his shells were no longer as accurate.

This allowed Major Birdsong to get up and take to the rear and allowed me to get up and get control of the situation. I ran over to find the jeep driver and told him to drive the behind a monument that was in the area. I told Sergeant Hudson to keep firing at the woods to protect me. I went back to look for the rest of my company. I saw Lieutenant Marshall lying back over the hill and he was signaling me by his hand that the company was behind the hill. I had them swing one platoon around to the right to come up to that woods. I was going to send one of the M-8 cars further down the road but it was a good thing that I didn't. There was a bazooka man down there with a big bazooka and he would have knocked that M-8 car out if it had come in range. It was very hectic for a while but we finally got our situation straightened up a bit although we did end up with a few casualties. Five men were killed and five men wounded. We killed fifteen Germans and captured two. One was a lieutenant and he had a map. I looked at the map and he even had their positions drawn out on it. This was the German outpost line that we had hit. I lost Private Rukstala there. He had been with me from the time I joined I company in July 1941. Big John was a man about six feet, three and a fine soldier. He never took any leadership role, but he always did his job and had a beautiful baritone voice.

I failed to mention that Sergeant Hudson started firing his gun so that Major Birdsong and I were able to get on our feet. The first thing I did was run over to the area and I hollered for the driver of the jeep. Once I found him I told him to get in the jeep and drive it behind a monument that was in the area. I told Sergeant Hudson to keep firing all the time so that I could run around and get some things done. The situation was quite hectic. I looked down the road to the east and I saw one of the sergeants out on the road. I was going to holler at him and tell him to get off of the road but he was a very good sergeant so I decided not to yell at him. Unfortunately, almost at the same time he was shot and killed by the Germans.

I instructed Lieutenant Kozlowski to put his platoon on both sides of a path that led through the woods toward the east in the direction of the Moselle River and attack the Germans. Shortly after he moved out with his platoon there was a great deal of firing. Lieutenant Kozlowski appeared back on the road and he had been

wounded. He told me that he had done exactly what I asked but he and his runner, Private Rukstala, got hit by a German machine gunner when they went down the path. He said that Rukstala was wounded and still in the woods. I told him to proceed toward an aid station and that was the end of Lieutenant Kozlowski. I directed some men to go in and get Rukstala out of the woods. I was busy doing other things because there was firing around on the front and the flanks. Shortly after my first sergeant caught up with me and asked me if they could get Rukstala to the aid station. I told him that I had already directed some men to get him but he told me that Rukstala was still lying back there in a ditch. I ran back to the ditch and I could see that John Rukstala had gone into shock. I had known him since 1941 and he had been a good soldier. He always did what he was supposed to do.

About the time I was looking at him, two jeeps went by on the road. I called for them to stop. There was a captain in each one of the jeeps from the 7th Armored Division. They said they were going down to the Gorze. I told them they couldn't get there because there were Germans in the area. They said their commander had told them that the 11th Infantry had cleared the area. I told them that I was the company commander of I company and this was the leading element of the 11th. I told him that men were getting killed and we just had some men killed on the road to the south. I told them they were liable to get killed too if they went down there. They were very disturbed that they had been told that the area had been cleared when it had not. They were going to return to their organization so I asked them if they could take Rukstala to the aid station, which they did. A few days later I learned that John Rukstala died.

When we captured the German Lieutenant with the map I learned that we had hit the German outpost line. The map indicated that they were the outpost lines for the area to the east toward the Moselle River. We continued to push toward the east and the Germans were withdrawing. We would get sporadic fire but we finally got to the high ground near the Moselle, which was our objective. When we got there we found a German First Aid Station which was underground.

Some of the soldiers had gotten hold of some bread somehow and in this aid station was a jar of honey. The men asked if they could put the honey on the bread but I was afraid that the honey might be poisoned. We had routed the Germans out of the area and I didn't really think they would have had time to poison it so I said we would use the honey for our bread. I also found some nice Sheffield straight razors there and put them in my little bag. I had expected to have them yet today but when I was evacuated the bag was stolen and the razors disappeared. September 7, 1944 was my 24th birthday and the whole day proved to be very exciting. We were very short of maps of the area until I got the one from the German Lieutenant. Plans were being made to cross the Moselle River at Dornot.

I remember when Colonel Lemmon was talking about the crossing, I said that we would be going into the Great Forts. He said that Colonel Yuill had said that they were nothing but some houses. I wondered why the map said Great Forts? He did not pay particular attention to what I was saying. The plans were made for the 1st Battalion under Colonel Lemmon to cross on the morning of September 8th and the remainder of the troops would follow as the bridge was broadened. It was quite a mess at the crossing site because the 7th Armored Division was also supposed to put in a river crossing to the north of Dornot and for some reason they got down in the Dornot area and had a number of their vehicles there. It made if difficult for the 1st Battalion. Eventually, it was all worked out and the armored was to cross father up the river and the 1st Battalion was to cross and attack the forts, Somne and Blaise. There was a big one to our left called Driant, which proved later to be a very big stumbling block. I was up on the high ground south of the crossing line and I told my machine gunners and mortar men that we were not in the crossing but I wanted to go forward with our guns and give them extra protection.

I had not been told to do so but I felt that anything I could do to help in the crossing would be beneficial for the others that were crossing. I took my light machine guns and mortars and we moved up to the edge of the high ground overlooking the river and started firing at a town called Corny, which was on the high side of the river. There was a small church in Corny and I suspected the Germans were using the church so I told my machine

gunners to open up on the church, which they did. The Germans came streaming out and started running up through the town and headed east from Corny. They had to proceed over a large area of open ground to get beyond the hillside on the other side of the river. We were doing the best we could with our mortars and machine gun fire to make it uncomfortable for them. I could see that apparently as we lowered the mortars to get more range out of the 60mm guns, the Germans could hear them coming. They were all spread out and they would hit the ground before the mortar shells landed. I could not see whether we actually hit anyone, but we gave them a hot time for a short period until they got beyond the ridgeline. About the time the German soldiers were hitting the ridgeline, we got picked up by two tanks that were in the woods on the other side of the river. They were up on the high ground south of Corny. These two tanks started firing shells at us and I could see that we were in big trouble. I had to figure out how we were going to get out of this mess. I told the gunners to leave the guns and to follow me and do exactly what I did. I stood up so that the tanks could see me, and the men stood up. We ran about a hundred yards to the west away from the river. Then I turned and ran approximately one hundred yards to the north and then got down on my stomach and started crawling back to the edge of the high bank overlooking the river. The men were doing exactly what I was doing. We all crawled back and stayed near the edge of the bank. It worked out exactly the way I thought it would. The tanks seeing us run to the rear thought we would continue to run to the rear and would elevate their guns and throw the shells further back. After the finally ceased their fire, we crawled over, retrieved the guns and crawled back away from the river. When we got out of their sight, we got up and walked on back to where the rest of the company was located.

The 449th anti-aircraft guns, big truck tractor drawn units, had pulled up in our area. When we got back, they were gone. I asked the men what happened to them. They said that when the shells came flying back, the 449th said they had gotten to close to the front and had to get out of there. Our radios were all on the same frequencies and I could listen in on what was going on with the 1st Battalion. I heard Lieutenant Drake, who was one of our company commanders talking to Colonel Lemmon. He said they had reached the one fort and could not get it. There was a fence or something around it and shortly thereafter someone came on the radio and said that Lieutenant Drake had been killed. They started to have a number of casualties. I moved down into the town of Dornot with my company because if everything went well, we would also be crossing at the Dornot site. “K” Company of our division was selected to go across and join the 1st Battalion. Steven T. Lowery who had been my executive officer at one time was commanding “K” Company. He had done an excellent job for me and I bragged about him to Major Birdsong and as a result he made him a company commander.

I walked down into the area in front of Dornot near the Moselle River to wait for “K” Company as they came down to cross. When “K” Company was moving across the ground, Lieutenant Lowery appeared and we stood and talked for a few minutes while the company moved down and were getting ready to get into boats for the crossing. We ended our conversation and Lieutenant Steve Lowery moved out to join his company. Just as they got into the boats, the enemy came down with a very heavy artillery concentration on the river area. I knew it would be tough getting across. Lieutenant Lowery had a lot of guts and I knew he would get that company to the other side, and he did. He had not been on the other side very long when I heard on the radio that he had just been killed. The Germans concentrated a lot of artillery fire on our area and kept firing on the town of Dornot. In the street was a burning half-track vehicle that I think belonged to the 7th Armored Division. It had been hit by shellfire coming from the other side. We had asked for air support to try to bomb the forts and the weather was bad so the planes could not come to help. In fact, to my knowledge, they never did get there.

I was given orders to place one of my platoons to the north of Dornot to protect the left flank. I directed the platoon leader to get his platoon in position and he had difficulty doing so. He asked if he could do it some other way that the way I had suggested. I knew he was having problems so I told him he get them into position in whichever possible way. A short time later he returned and broke down in front of me and began to cry. He had combat fatigue and I had to send him back to the aid station. Our assistant regimental commander, Colonel Merrill, had come up to Colonel Lemmons command post and said: “Well, that job at Camp Polk wouldn’t be so bad, would it?” It kind of broke everyone up and created a lot of laughter for a few minutes because we all

knew what he was talking about. On September 9th it was still rough going. There was a lot of small arms, fire and artillery fire at the bridgehead and up into town. I had gone over to the battalion command post and Captain Doug Hargrave was there with his runner and a Frenchman who had been assisting them since Normandy. This Frenchman was dressed in an American uniform so I did not know that he was French. The runner and the Frenchman stayed in the yard.

Captain Hargrave and I had started to leave the command post when I had to send my runner back for some reason, so I was by myself. As Captain Hargrave stepped out onto the porch area, artillery came in and hit the building and some trees. The two men with him were killed outright. I was in the doorway and Captain Hargrave wheeled around and put his arms on my shoulders and said, "Smith, they got me." He and I had been good friends for a number of years. In fact, he had been my company commander at one time. I hauled him back through the hallway and past the room where the command post was. I took him to an empty room laid him on the floor and started cutting his clothing so I could see where he was hit and give him first aid. Also wounded in the command post was Captain Herman Schell and there were probably some others who were also hit. Major Birdsong came into the room where I was working on Captain Hargrave. He told me that we were leaving but I did not want to leave Hargrave and I told the major that I had to take care of him. The major said he would send someone back to tell me where the new command post was located and I could come after I took care of Captain Hargrave. I continued to patch him up and it looked like he was going into shock. I was worried that I would lose him so I shook him and kept telling him to wake up. He had told me that after the war he wanted me to come up to his farm and he would have his mother do all kinds of good cooking for us. I told him not to pull any fast ones on me and I told him that he was just trying to get out of having me come for dinner. He finally opened his eyes and we had a conversation and he seemed to be back to normal.

An aid man showed up and he was able to assist me and we got Doug patched up and in pretty good shape. There was just the aid man, Captain Hargrave and myself in the house. I told Doug that I had to leave him and I would leave him in the hands of the aid man. I told the aid man that he must promise me that he would not leave Captain Hargrave but would be responsible for getting him to the aid station. He said he would handle it and not let me down. After I left them I went to find the new command post. As I was going down the street some of my men who were in a house called to me.

The way they said "Captain, Smith" I knew there was something wrong. I went into the house and asked what they wanted and they told me that Private Bud Hill was in the house and he had been hollering my name and something was wrong with him. Private Hill was my runner and he carried my radio for me. He was one of the men that I had sent from the command post on an errand. I had them bring Private Hill out into the hallway. He wrapped his arms around me and he was shaking and was in very bad condition so I asked what happened to him. He told me that when the shelling came in he was on his way back to the command post when a man came running up the street yelling that all the officers were killed and when he asked if Captain Smith was killed the man replied yes. He said he looked in the yard and saw two men killed and one with his head torn off and something inside him snapped.

I thought I had calmed him down but then some more artillery shells started coming in and he started shaking and was back in the same condition. I knew I had to get him back to the medics because he needed treatment and rest. So Private Hill was sent back and I went on over to the new command post which was on a side street in the town of Dornot. The situation in Dornot was pretty bad and Colonel Lemmon had requested that Colonel Yuill allow him to withdraw from the bridgehead. Colonel Yuill had been given orders by the division to hold the bridgehead at all costs and that is what he told Colonel Lemmon. It was costing the Colonel a great loss of officers and men in his battalion. Others around the area where losing men too. On the morning of September 10th, Colonel Lemmon said: "Smith, you have one platoon that is not being used and they are in a basement here in town." I told him that was true. He said that we have so many wounded on the other side, we are unable to get them out. The engineers were supposed to keep the bridgehead open and evacuate

the wounded but they have been unable to do so. I had heard that the fire was so intense they were unable to stay down there and evacuate the wounded. Colonel Lemmon said that we are not going to get any of them out unless someone who knows them can get them out. He asked if I thought my platoon could get some Red Cross flags and walk down there.

I did not want to send them so I hedged on my remarks. In the meantime, a new lieutenant well dressed; looking like a million dollars came into the command post looking for Colonel Lemmon. He reported to him and told him that he was sent with his platoon to work at the river crossing. Colonel Lemmon asked him if he or any of his men had any combat experience to which he replied no. The colonel told him to put his men in the basement of one of the buildings. We couldn't use them in this operation.

He did not say anything more to me but I realized that we had a lot of wounded down on the other side of the river. I decided not to ask my platoon leader to do the job, that I would do it myself. I made a decision that not matter what went on that either I would bring those wounded out or I would not come out myself. I took Lieutenant Bitney's platoon and proceeded to go down to the river crossing. There was a boat there with a rope on either end. I signaled to the men on the other side that we wanted to bring the wounded out so they started loading them in the boat on the far side and we pulled them across to our side. Those who were able walked to the aid station and we carried the ones that were unable. After I got the situation under control at the river crossing they started to rush down litter bearers to carry the wounded so the operation was going very smoothly with the exception of the artillery fire that was falling all around us. My company on the flanks was protecting us from the small arms fire but it was a hectic operation. I told the men we were lucky that the Germans were throwing their shells too far over the river and weren't getting them down on us. We managed to bring over all the wounded that they had on the other side.

I would have been able to leave the crossing site but Captain Geary got in touch with me and said he needed ammunition. He had tied a wire line to the boat and put a telephone in the boat. I had been jumping down in the river which was about knee deep to assist in getting the men out of the boat. I jumped down at the river's edge and got the phone and the wire line, hooked it up and started talking to Captain Jack Geary. As I was talking I walked back to the edge of the lagoon behind the river. I told Jack that I would get more ammunition for him. Just as that time the Germans happened to get their artillery bracketed right over our heads. The barrage came in and hit the trees and so forth. Unfortunately I got hit and down I went. There was a little lagoon behind the strip of land that we were on. This strip of land was between the river and the lagoon and we had a boat in the lagoon.

WOUNDED

My men were putting some of the wounded that couldn't walk into the boat and taking it around to the other side. Litter bearers would pick them up over there. When I was talking on the phone, I was right by this boat. There were two soldiers in the boat and the shell that hit me killed them outright. They weren't seriously wounded but they must have been hit in very vital areas. There were two aid men close by when I got hit. One of them had also been hit and had a small hole in his lower calf. He wanted to leave but I told him that I couldn't let him leave because I would need him. The aid men helped patch up my leg which was broken and badly damaged. We got the blood stopped and they put a tourniquet on my leg. I had learned in first aid class that you should release the tourniquet about every fifteen minutes so I looked at my watch to check the time. It was 12:15 when I got hit and I felt like I was going to pass out. A rushing came over me and I could feel that it was taking me.

I didn't want to pass out because I thought that if I did everything would go to pot. I felt that I would die. So I put my fists down at my side and told myself to hang on. The rushing came to a peak (like a pyramid)

shuddered a few seconds and then I came back to normal and I knew I was not going to pass out. After we got my leg patched up I had to figure out what I was going to do next. Of course some other men were wounded and they were hiding by the bank and the shells kept coming in.

I had plotted where the artillery was firing from by lying on the ground and I could hear the four guns firing. I plotted a line and sent one man and told him to go and tell them that the guns were firing from behind the hill in our directions. I wanted him to tell them that if they didn't get me out soon the guns were going to get me again. So Private Marino went back and that was the end of that, as I never heard from him again. I had to decide what to do and it was now after 2:00 p.m. Lieutenant Briney appeared and I told him that he was in charge. I told the aid men to pick the dead men out of the boat and to put me in. There were a couple of holes in the boat but I told them I would put my hands over the holes. We had two other wounded men and I told them to get into the boat. I told the two aid men to jump in the water and push the boat to the other side. When we got to the other side I told the other two walking wounded men to run to the aid station. The aid men asked the wounded men to help in getting me out but I told them to go on, that we would work it out. As I was sitting in the boat looking up at the bank I noticed a litter lying in some bushes. I told the two men to climb up and get the litter, which after some struggle they did. They got it under me and managed to lift me up out of the boat and up on the bank and started to the rear with me.

We had to go up over a railroad track and as we started up the incline a German machine gunner started firing from the other side. The aid men dropped me like a hot potato and they were gone. The machine gunner probably could have hit me but he stopped firing because a wounded man is more of a problem to an army that someone who is dead. I sat up on the litter and looked around to see where the two aid men could have gone. I saw an area where I thought they might be hiding and I knew they were very frightened. I had to use a very commanding voice to get them under control. I said: "All right you two men. Get out from under that cover and come over and grab this litter and let's get out of here." They came scooting out and grabbed the litter and over the railroad track we went. Down on the other side of the track was an ambulance jeep that apparently had been waiting for me. When we broke over the top I heard someone holler, "Here he comes."

They quickly strapped the litter to the jeep and away we went through the town to the aid station. As soon as I arrived at the aid station, Captain Di Loretto, a medical doctor, was there to work on me. It was 3:00 p.m. when I arrived at the battalion aid station in Dornot. I had a tankers jacket that I had bought in London and I was very proud of it. So when Captain Di Loretto took his knife to cut the sleeve of my jacket I protested and did not want him to cut it. He told me there were many more jackets where that came from and took his knife and slit right down the arm of the jacket so he could give me blood plasma right away.

While I was taking the plasma, one of my soldiers came in to see me and ask if he could do anything for me. I asked him to go to the jeep and get my raincoat because I had bought it in London and it was brand new. When he came back he had the artillery observer's raincoat. Eventually he came back with my raincoat but he had the artillery officer's liner. That was too bad but I had to take his liner and he had mine. Colonel Lemmon came to see me and he had been given an order to withdraw from the bridgehead that night. The 5th Division had been successful in going about three miles south of us and putting a bridgehead in on the Moselle River and were ready to withdraw our bridgehead. He said that they were going to have men swim the river. They did not want to use any means of communication that the Germans might pick up. He told me that he was gong to ask for a couple of volunteers to swim across the river that night with the withdrawal message. Most of the men were to throw their equipment into the Mossell and then swim back. He asked me about the terrain situation and I gave what information I could to be as helpful as possible.

Then they got me ready to go to the rear where an ambulance could pick me up to take me farther to the rear. They strapped the litter on top of the jeep and we left the town of Dornot. As we were going to the rear, we passed one of my jeeps and I waved to the driver. He followed the ambulance jeep back to the drop

off point where they put me on the ground at the side of the road. I would have been there by myself if Smith, my company's jeep driver hadn't stayed with me. I asked him to get my bag with my personal items from his jeep. He stayed with me until an ambulance came to take me to a clearing hospital. I was picked up by a regular Army ambulance and then taken back to the 5th Division Clearing Company. The two doctors at the Clearing Company were doctors I had been with in Winter Warfare School in Iceland in 1942 and 1943. One of them was Dr. David Dunn and he was in charge of the Clearing Company. Dave went right into action as soon as he saw that I was the patient. They had moved many patients through and at that time I was the only one. He immediately started to give me more blood plasma so he must have thought that I was in a weakened state.

We chatted and he told me that a number of my friends had been through. He and the other doctor talked as to which field hospital they would send me to because they wanted to be sure that I got treatment as soon as possible. They didn't want to send me to a field hospital where they had sent the last group of wounded. They made the decision where to send me and after I finished with the plasma I was loaded in an ambulance and taken off to a field hospital such as you have seen in the television show Mash. It was late in the afternoon or early evening when I arrived at the field hospital. They had a number of wounded in the tent hospital and they were on the ground on their litters. A doctor came out and checked me and put a tag on me. I don't know what it said because I didn't read it. I was just lying there on the ground on a litter and it was around 10:00 p.m. when I finally got into the operating room. There were three or four doctors who were operating under bright lights. They put me on the operating table, then one of the doctors thought for a minute and said to take me back out and bring the other patient back in. I went out and was back on the ground again for a short period of time when they came and took me back in. There were a couple of nurses with this particular doctor and I told one of the nurses that my foot was killing me and that my shoe must be tied to tight. Of course it was nerve pain that I was getting in my foot. I asked them to please untie my shoe.

While I was talking the other nurse gave me a shot in the arm and the next thing I knew was when I woke up the next morning. I was in a full body spica cast from the tips of my toes to under my armpits. My legs were spread and I had a board between my legs and I was still taking blood plasma. I had never seen such a contraption. That was the start of my time in the hospital. EVACUATED

Around the 11th of September I was put on an airplane and evacuated to England. As we were flying I was in a lot of pain. The nurse came back and asked how I was feeling and I told her about the pain. She gave me a shot that must have been a full load because I felt like I had drifted off into never-never land and I had the feeling that I wanted the plane to fly on forever. We landed in England and I was unloaded and taken to a hospital in Redding. I can't remember whether they did anything there but I don't think they did anything except prepare to move me farther north. I was moved to a hospital in Liverpool. I went in for a change of cast and a debridement (cleaning of wounds). At this hospital they cleaned the wounds and put a new cast on me at least two or three times. I was bleeding rather heavily and the cast would get all full of blood. The first time they took me in they talked about putting me in traction but when I wakened I was back in a cast.

I asked the doctor why he didn't put me in traction and he told me that my wounds were too big in my right thigh and he couldn't do it. The first week was very difficult. I felt like a tiger that had been captured and put in a cage. Then I began to loose my appetite and at one point I didn't want to eat any thing. The doctor came to see me and said that there must be something that my mother gave me when I was sick as a little boy. I told him that she would make me eggnogs. So they made me eggnog but I couldn't drink it. The doctor asked if there was anything else that I could eat and I told him that I used to like Hershey Bars. They got me Hershey Bars but I couldn't eat them either. I was listed as a priority patient to be moved to the United States because of my severe wounds and also, I guess, because I had lost my appetite and was going down grade.

They wanted to move me by air to the US but the weather was bad and they told me the aircraft were not taking any wounded. One day the doctor asked me if I was willing to go home by any other transportation.

I told him that I was willing, that it didn't make any difference to me so they sent me by boat. I believe it was sometime in November that I was taken down to a train and was loaded to go to Scotland to be put on the Queen Mary. I had my muzette bag and I also had a bag with the German Sheffield razors that I had taken out of that German aid station and I had some other items that I wanted to keep.

When we got down to the train site, they told me that I couldn't take both of the bags on the hospital train. I told them that I didn't want to give them up because I knew I would never get them back. Finally they got the captain who told me that I couldn't take both bags. I told them not to load me then and we had quite a discussion. Finally the captain had the soldiers carry me over to the opening of the train and he showed me how crowded it was. I could see that they had a number of bunks and that space was at a premium so I gave up one of the bags. Of course I never saw that bag again and that bag had the razors in it as well as some other items I really wanted to hang on too.

QUEEN MARY

The train took us up to Scotland and we were loaded onto some small boats and taken out to the Queen Mary as she sat in the Perth of the Clyde River. The men got a workout as they carried me and they had to stop and rest a couple of times. Even though the Queen Mary was not a hospital ship it was used to get some of the wounded home. They loaded one thousand patients to go back to the United States. There were two hundred litter cases and eight hundred walking wounded. The Queen was carrying eighteen thousand that time from the United States to England but they didn't want to put too many patients aboard in case an enemy torpedo hit the ship. I was still bleeding badly and my cast gave off a foul smell. They put me in a stateroom with about twenty other wounded people and I guess they complained about the smell and said it was making them sick. So they moved me and another officer in a cast into a very small stateroom with another man who was also a complete invalid with a serious head injury. They assigned two soldiers to take care of us. These soldiers were normally stationed in Iceland and were being given leave time in the United States. They had gone to England to catch the Queen Mary for transportation to the US. We were the first wounded men that had seen and they were very kind and good to us. They did whatever we asked them to do.

The enemy submarines that were left were supposed to be in the north so we went to the south. The Queen Mary did not have any escort as she could run a speed of around twenty-eight knots and outrun most of the submarines. It took us about five and a half days and as we came into New York harbor, these two soldiers were up in the port hold giving us a blow by blow report. We could hear the music coming through the porthole from the band on the dock. All the walking wounded were unloaded and about 10:00 p.m. I was unloaded. It was a dark and dismal night and there was no band, just an empty area of the docks with one exception. There were two Gray Ladies there and they came over and asked me if I would like a cup of coffee and a doughnut, which I did. The thing that really impressed me was that these two women had stayed there until the very last one of us was unloaded, and I happened to be one of the very last. We were taken to Halloran General Hospital and when we checked in we were told we could use the telephone to call home. My turn to use the phone didn't come until the next morning.

I called Minneapolis and talked to Marguerite's mother and she told me Marguerite was in Chicago visiting Sylvia Legg Borneman who had been her roommate in college. They had kept in touch during the war years and would get together a couple of times a year. Her mother told me the name of the hotel so I called and Marguerite answered. I guess she was half asleep so I asked her if she was the wife of that famous soldier, Frank Smith. In a daze she said that her husband wasn't in the Navy that he was a soldier. Finally I told her that I was her husband. She hadn't heard my voice for two and a half years and it was a shock for her to be talking to me because she had no idea that I was coming home. I told her that my stay at Holloran was a temporary stay and that I would be leaving for some other hospital and I would call her when I knew which one it would be. I

suggested she go to Chicago and stay with my sister, Marge and I would call her there as soon as I knew where I landed. Because I was in a cast that had a lot of blood all over it, the doctor at Holloran decided to change it. In fact, the doctor said they were going to put me in traction. I told them that I didn't think they could put me in traction because they were going to in England and didn't do it. He seemed to be a kind of 'know-it-all' doctor and I didn't argue with him any more. Every other time they had changed my cast I had been put out with some sort of anethestic, but Halloran just took me in and this doctor got the cast cutters. He was very rough and it was hurting me as he was cutting.

I said; "If I could get my hands on those cutters, I would hit you right in the head". He was careful that I didn't get hold of the cutters.

When they opened me up I saw the bad shape I was in and it really discouraged me further. When he got a look at my condition he realized that he couldn't put me in traction, so it was necessary to put me back in the full body spica cast again. This was about the fifth or sixth time that I had a cast change. A few days later I was put on a train and it took me to Louisville, Kentucky where I was admitted to Nicholas General Hospital, which was a temporary Army Hospital that had been set up just outside of Louisville. I immediately called Marguerite and told her where I was located and she made arrangements to come to Louisville.

The doctors there told me that they were going to have to close some of my wounds with grafts from my backside and they set me up for this operation. I thought they were going to take this skin off my back but they took the skin off my seat. They brought me back to the room and when I became conscious, I told Marguerite that my seat was hurting. The reason being they had taken all my skin to cover the wounds. I was very fortunate that all the graft took and my wounds closed. They then measured me to make a brace for my right leg. The metal would go all the way from the shoe to my hip so that when I walked I would not be walking on the leg. I would be walking from my hip down to the shoe. They got this all fitted up for me and the first time I put it on and stood up on the crutches, I felt like I was ten feet tall. I walked to the back of the ward in the hospital and when I turned around I wasn't sure I could get back to my room. When I made it back I was so exhausted by the short trip to the back of the ward I flopped into bed and didn't get up again that day.

We wanted to buy a car. Marguerite was able to get stamps to buy a car because I was a wounded soldier. She was able to buy a second hand Oldsmobile that had been a former police car. We got ready to leave the hospital and go home for Christmas. First we were going to Chicago and then on to Minneapolis. We left about 5:00 a.m. I was sitting in the back seat with my leg up on the seat and Marguerite was driving. We also had a soldier who was going to ride to Minneapolis with us. We were crossing the bridge from Louisville to New Albany when the car began to cough and I knew we were in great trouble. I said that if we could get to the other side of the bridge we needed to get to a filling station, which we did. The filling station wasn't open until about 6:00 a.m. and the man said that he didn't know anything about automobiles, he only pumped gas.

The police station was across the street so Marguerite went across the street to tell them about our plight and see if they would recommend someone to help us. They called the fire department as a mechanic had been assigned to the fire department. They told the police that the mechanic had been on the night shift and had already gone home. The police came over, pushed our car down to the mechanic's house and he came out. Then they pushed our car back down to the fire station, took out the fire engine and put our car into that space. The mechanic went to work on our car and got a few parts. It took most of the morning to get the car repaired and when he got it running I asked if he thought the car would make it to Minneapolis. He said that it would. The other firemen had polished our car until it was in beautiful shape. The mechanic didn't want to take any money for the work he had done. I asked him if I could at least pay for the parts he had bought and he agreed. From that day on I have had a soft spot in my heart for the police and fire department of New Albany, Indiana.

We left New Albany and had no problem getting to Chicago. We visited there and then went on to Minneapolis. The car was a southern car. There had a big snowfall in Minneapolis and cold weather set in and the darn car wouldn't start the next morning. We eventually got it started and it held up for the time in Minnesota and back to Louisville where I reentered the hospital. The last operation I had in the hospital was to remove as much of the grafted area as possible. They were able to sew the leg together. I still have some grafts in my leg that they were unable to get out at that time. I had a broken leg, a smashed knee joint, torn sciatic nerve, a damaged ankle and I guess that is about the sum of it. I received the Purple Heart for being wounded in action against the enemy. I was also decorated with a Silver Star for gallantry in action at Angers, the Bronze Star for distinguished heroism for my action at the river crossing at Dornot and the Combat Infantry Badge.

When I was leaving the hospital I asked one of the doctors how much longer I would have to endure the pain I was having. His answer was all my life. This was discouraging to say the least. My army days were over in December 1945. At that point I went to work for the Aetna Casualty and Surety Company in Indianapolis, Indiana. Marguerite, Sally and I made a trip to Europe in 1970 and I was able to take them to most of the places where I had been in 1944 and give them a picture of what happened. In 1992 some members of the 11th Infantry were to be honored by a number of towns that they had liberated. We spent two weeks in France and some time in Luxembourg and it was a great trip.

While we were actually planning to go for just one celebration, our guide said that when she was setting up accommodations for us she limited it to six days because everybody wanted to have a celebration for us. We had three solid days of ceremonies in France and three days in Luxemburg. People welcomed us as heroes. We were kept busy from morning until after midnight every night. The reason we were able to break it up at midnight was that we watched for an opportunity to tell them what a nice time we had and thank them and bring the evening to an end. Otherwise, we would have been there until 1:00 or 2:00 a.m.

Our Division in the European operation had twenty-five thousand casualties, half of which were non-battle casualties. The 5th Division also made twenty-five forced river crossings. The Division was brought home with the intention of sending it to Japan. Fortunately, the dropping of the Atomic bombs saved them from further bloodshed. The Division did serve in Vietnam and was finally deactivated in 1992. In September 1999 we were honored in the Dornot area. Alain and Elizabeth Gozzo were our hosts. They were wonderful people and again we were treated as heroes. They will be our French friends forever.

Delavan Wayne Sipes

United States Navy, 70496 65, Electronic Technician's Mate, Second Class, reporting to my children and grandchildren in the year 2001.

This is my story, beginning with my enlistment as an Apprentice Seaman in the United States Navy Reserve, through my promotions to Electronic Technician's Mate 2/c, and at long last, my Honorable Discharge. Though my combat participation in WWII was insignificant compared to many, it was a time when I began to become aware of people and their different beliefs, attitudes and thoughts. It was a time that was quieter. Television had not yet become a commercial reality. Movie theaters and radio were our prime sources of entertainment. Whether teen aged children should be allowed to drive their cars to school was an issue of serious debate—there were perhaps eight in our high school, which enrolled approximately 800 students. Most of us were isolated from the seamier side of humanity. I learned much in the three years I was on active duty. This is my story.

It was mid-spring of 1943. That June I would graduate from high school. A Lt. Commander Naval Recruiting Officer visited Cooley High School. A general assembly was called for all male students. The officer explained this wonderful new program for educating naval officers. It was called V-12, and it was designed to educate young men with four years of college in about two years. Each graduate of the program would be commissioned as Ensign. The recruiting officer gave forms to all of us who were interested, to take home to our parents to give their approval for enlistment in the Navy (many of us, including me, were only seventeen years old). I thought it was a great idea. My stepfather had tried to enlist early in the war, when the upper age limit was around 30 (he was forty). He was quite annoyed with the enlistment officers. I recall him saying rather disappointedly, "They don't want me. I was too young for WWI and I'm too old for this one."

Then I came home with this bombshell—I wanted to enlist, and I was enthusiastic about it. After all, it had been 1 months since we had been attacked at Pearl Harbor by a nation whose ambassador was talking peace with our Secretary of State in Washington. I was tall, and other people sometimes asked, "Why aren't you in service?" I could only reply rather sheepishly, "I'm not old enough."

My mother, stepfather and I were in the living room when I broached the subject of enlistment. My stepfather pointed a question to my mother, "You didn't raise your boy to be cannon fodder, did you?" Angrily I almost shouted, "Neither did 150 million other people." (That was the population of the United States at that time.) I don't remember much else about the so-called discussion, but my mother signed the permission papers. I enlisted in the USNR on May 15, 194 with the understanding that I would not be called to active duty until I had graduated from high school. I graduated in late June. On July 1, 1943 I reported for duty at the University of Michigan as a student in the V-12 program.

V-12 PROGRAM

The first few days were indoctrination into the routine of living. Rise at 6:00 AM, jump into athletic clothes, run down three flights of stairs to the courtyard for morning exercises, then shower and breakfast and report to class at 8:00 AM. We had one navy military class that was taught by a full Commander with steel-grey eyes that could drill holes completely through your thoughts. From him, we learned basics. I mean, really basic. Ships (not boats)-- Starboard is right side—port is left side; forward and aft were front and rear as were bow and stern. Except they weren't pronounced that way. Starboard was starbd and Forward was fo'wd, and wouldn't

you know that the forecastle was actually the fo'csl. And no modern ship had a fo'csl. Which way do you turn the rudder when backing a ship into dock if you want the stern to move to starbd?

We also got a rather thorough explanation of the various parts of the ship. After about one week on campus, we were given the order to wear our dress whites as uniform of the day on the next day. I think we were all astounded at the sea of white that blossomed across campus that day. I don't think we realized how many of the men on campus were actually in the Navy and in the V-12 program. Each of us held the lowest rank in the Navy, apprentice seaman. From that day forward, I wore only a uniform until after I was discharged three years later. We were never allowed to wear civilian clothes, not even on liberty. Our pay was to be $29 per month. It was the same base pay as all lowest ranked military personnel, but our first month in service, Congress hanged the base pay to $50 per month.

For the first time in my life I found that I was free to do as I chose when I was not actually on duty. I discovered the astronomical library and observatory building near the University Hospital. I opened the door and walked in. It had a musty smell from the hundreds of old books that lined the shelves. I loved poring through them—hours on end. It seemed as though there seldom was anyone in the building, though I could sometimes hear sounds of someone stirring about in some remote part of the structure. I also found a section of the main library on campus to my liking. I read one book which I now realize must have been someone's doctoral thesis. It was a small book, that attempted to show mathematically why an angle cannot be trisected using only a straight edge and a pencil compass. I wasn't convinced, and a few years later would spend many hours, over many days working on the problem. Another book described Ernest Lawrence' cyclotron in general terms. It was one of the more fascinating books I have ever read. It had been about a decade since the invention of the cyclotron.

Somewhere in there I found time to date a girl almost as tall as I. Her name was Jane Scholes. We only had one date—went to a movie, but I was quite impressed with her beauty and her intelligence. The first semester went by too quickly. I learned that I had spent too much time in the libraries and not enough time studying. It was October when I flunked out.

BOOT CAMP

I was sent to the United States Naval Training Center north of Chicago. This was boot camp. I'm sure my mother must have been devastated, but she never said a word to me. Boot camp was a melange of close order drill, repeated tours of the obstacle course, manual of arms drill, standing watch, and standing in line. (War had created a need for physically fit young men. At Cooley High School we had an obstacle course. Our gym time was spent trying to improve our time on the course.) It seemed like most of our company of 135 men were hillbillies. In the evening, many of us would gather at one end of the barracks, mostly just to listen to these unbelievable, wild tales that these hillbillies would tell. Tales of swiping watermelons from a farmer's field, tipping over an outhouse with someone in it, and some excruciatingly banal stories that made me wonder what sort of men these were. One had a story to accompany the birdshot that was still under his skin. Once in a while one of the shot would work its way toward the surface and he would dig it out with a knife (I assume to show how macho he was).

There was a military need to introduce us to "standing watch," so there were miscellaneous posts created—at every entrance and exit, in the boiler room (that heated the building) and a walking patrol through our barracks. All of us equipped with rifles. If you drew night watch in the barracks you were treated to a chorus of snores, coughs, sneezes, farts, and footsteps groping their way to the head. Various body odors accompanied the midnight cacophony. Twice I drew the boiler room watch, midnight to two. It was December and the boiler room watch was unmerciful. It was so hot that it was difficult to stay awake, even standing up. I opened the

door and found it bitter cold, with a gentle snowfall. I stood in the doorway, freezing one side of my body and roasting the other. It was there, with harmonica in hand, that I learned to play "White Christmas" on the harmonica that my grandmother had given me when I went in service.

About midway through boot camp we were subjected to a battery of tests. After the results were available we were interviewed. The petty officer that interviewed me said that my scores were high enough for radio technician school—would I be interested? I said, "Yes, that sounds interesting."

I'm not quite sure why, but I was assigned to office work, half days, for my last four weeks of boot camp. It was there that I met Joan Szelicki, secretary in the WAVES, (Women's Auxiliary Volunteer Emergency Service). After boot camp, I was sent to Wright Junior College (in Chicago) for what was then called "Pre-Radio Materiel School." It was four weeks of intense review of algebra, a bit of trigonometry and learning to use a slide rule for electronics calculations, along with some fundamentals of electricity. I dated Joan once or twice during that time. Her mother lived in Milwaukee—I think at 101 South 10th Street. One weekend we went to her home. For the first time ever, I was offered a piece of cheese cake. "Cheese??? Cake?", I questioned. She encourage me to "Taste it, it's good." With a fork, I cut off a small bit from the wedge. I'm not sure what I expected, but I was sure it was not going to be good. What a taste delight that turned out to be.

On liberty from the school, I met Dolores Langosch. We dated. I don't know what it was about her that I found attractive. Maybe it was nothing more than she was someone new that had no connection to anything I had ever done. I saw her one time after I was discharged as I passed through Chicago.

When we completed the program in Pre-Radio School, we were all promoted to Seaman, Second Class. Some of the class was sent to a school at Farragut, Idaho. We joked about the naval base that existed in the midst of dry land. I had a different destination. It was late January, or early February, when I joined a Navy troop train made up of some old passenger cars from WWI. There was a small pot-bellied stove at one end of the car—it was the only heat that was provided. Most of the car was deathly cold.

We did not know our destination. As with all Troop Trains, the route was deliberately deviant so that the enemy would not be likely to ascertain our destination. From Chicago, we went south to St. Louis, then west through Wichita, Amarillo, and Albuquerque, north to Salt Lake City, and then west through the mountains. We were delayed as we approached the Rocky Mountains. There had been a heavy snow storm, which was still piling up on the landscape. An additional engine was put on the train. We followed a huge railway snowplow at a snail's pace as we wound through the mountain pass. At one point we left the snowfield behind and entered a long tunnel. We had been through other short tunnels, but this one must have been nearly a mile long—it took ages to get through it.

When we came out of the tunnel, it was as though we had stepped into a fairyland spring. The sun was shining on verdant, rolling hills. It was so unreal that it reminded me of a painting—a painting in which I could not see the detail of blades of grass, but just a mass of smooth green. It was an awesome sight.

Del Monte, California

Not long after this tantalizing view we arrive in Sacramento. From there, we went south to San Francisco where many of the sailors disembarked. The Radio Material School troops went on to Salinas. We left the train and in a gentle rain boarded a bus which took us to the Del Monte Hotel just outside of Monterey. It had its own address—Del Monte, California. The hotel had been taken over by the Navy. It had been a $35 per night hotel that had been popular with movie stars and other well-to-do patrons. The rooms were quite small. Two of us were assigned to each room. There were bunk beds and two desks in each room. Outside there were

two swimming pools, one filled with fresh water and the other with salt water. There was a swing set and flying rings and a trapeze in the yard.

Mess was held in the huge ballroom. It was a sit down affair with civilian waitresses, whom we were forbidden to date. One of the waitresses for our table was named Mickey. The other was Peggy Faunce. She had to be the most beautiful girl I had ever met up to that time. She was part Indian, brown eyes, black hair, smooth as silk skin, lovely figure. After a couple of months I dated Mickey once, and maybe a month later Peggy. We went to a movie in town and then walked back to the hotel and down to the beach on Monterey Bay. We sat on the sand talking about our lives, listening and watching the ocean in the moonlight, exchanging an occasional kiss, and in general just behaving ourselves. I talked to Peggy on the phone once after I was discharged. She said that Mickey had married a guy from one of the classes and had moved to Detroit. I talked to her briefly on one occasion.

One day I was outside, goofing around on the flying rings when this pretty little girl came up and started talking, 'What're you supposed to be—a monkey, or something?" I was embarrassed. She was personable, and attractive. She appeared almost every day after that. I liked her. We talked about all sorts of mundane stuff, and then one day she invited me to dinner. I entered the house she introduced me to her mother and dad. He was a Lt. Commander and I, an enlisted man. Boy was I uncomfortable. At dinner, I learned they were from Traverse City, Ml. We dated twice after that, then I found out she was only thirteen. There was no way I could take the embarrassment my buddies were prepared to foist on this "cradle robber", so I quit seeing her.

We were Class # 1 at the Del Monte Training Center. In School we were learning about radio waves. Each of us built a superheterodyne radio, which the instructor then bugged and we had to find the bug, using test equipment and logic. Our overall knowledge of electronics was expanded to include radio wave propagation, antennas, heterodyning of frequencies, detection and amplification of radio frequencies and audio signals. Studying both transmitters of low and high power and compatible receivers. I didn't have quite a high enough score at the end of fourteen weeks (again too much time spent doing things other than study), so I had to repeat the last weeks of training. This put me in Class # 3.

I was really beginning to appreciate being in the Navy. For the first time in my life I felt a freedom to do as I chose (when on liberty, of course). Basically, there were no constraints on my off duty time, other than the need to study. When on liberty I could come and go where I pleased. I often went to Carmel. It was my favorite place to go on liberty. One day I was in an open air market at the top of the hill on Carmel's main street went I saw a beautiful, young blond carefully choosing produce. Somehow I got up the nerve to talk to her. She asked what I was doing. I told her that I had no plans. About then a Lt. JG walked up—it was her husband. She introduced me, talked briefly with her husband and then they invited me to have dinner with them. She served artichokes—I had never seen one, much less eaten one. She explained how to eat them. I thought they were really a strange vegetable. It really turned out to be a nice evening. I never saw either of them again.

Sometimes, on Sunday, I found my way to the Church of the Wayfarer on Main Street. It was non-denominational and the minister was interesting. I went there on Easter Sunday. Leaving the church, after the service, I saw a tall, attractive woman dressed in a pastel blue suit with pink trim. She walked toward downtown to an ice cream parlor. I followed in the hope that I would get to talk to her. She broke the ice, and we did talk, and she wanted to know what I did. I explained I was in the Radio Materiel School in Monterey. She told me that she had a radio at home that was giving poor reception and a lot of static. She wondered whether I could fix it. I said I'd try. We walked up the hill and turned right—maybe a block or so, then right again. The house was almost completely buried. It was built mostly underground. We walked down a few steps to get to the door. She opened it and we walked in. I questioned it not being locked. She said they never lock it. She and her folks lived in San Francisco, and this was a place she loved to come. Her name was Natalie Albertson. The radio was a small table model, with vacuum tubes, of course. The sound was heavy with static, and quit annoying. Tubes

always got quite hot when the radio was on. It was the nature of the design of the tubes. Some of the tubes had a metal cap connector on top of the tube. The gunk that held the cap in place would deteriorate and the solder that connected the internal wire to the cap would sometimes melt, making a poor connection. I found that this was exactly what had happened, though at the time I didn't know it was a common occurrence—I had never seen it before. I managed to wrap the external wire around the wire projecting out of the tube—AND IT WORKED. I was ecstatic—my first real trouble-shooting was a success, and Natalie was delighted that her radio worked again. Our day was cut short because she had to head back to San Francisco. On another liberty, I stopped by the house in the hope that she would be there, but she was not. It had never occurred to me to get her address, and we never saw each other again.

Another time, my buddy, Frank Shreider and I were on liberty in Carmel. We were walking on the beach when we met Susanna. Susanna was much older than we. She had been a nurse during WWI, and had lost an eye on the battlefield, serving in the German Army under Kaiser Wilhelm. Now she was an American citizen. Susanna was a vivacious person. She spoke with emphasis and with a firmness that never left any doubt as to what she meant. She really wanted to do nice things for American service men when she had the opportunity. She invited us for Sunday breakfast, and then told us, "You go. Spend the day as you like. Come back to my house tonight. You can sleep there. Tomorrow we have breakfast."

Frank and I typically had no other plans—we just meandered about soaking up whatever seemed appealing, so we agreed. We returned to her house on the beach around sundown. We talked for a long time—none of which I remember. Frank and I slept on the floor in her living room in full uniform. When we awoke, the table was set for breakfast. We started to sit down.

Susanna spoke, "No, no, first we go for a walk on the beach. We already knew she loved to walk on the beach, but we had no idea how much she liked to walk on "her" beautiful beach. She took off at a brisk pace that even we had to work at—today it would be called power walking. After a time we asked how far we were going. She informed us that we would only go about a mile down the beach today, and then return. Needless to say, we were famished when we returned. Her frozen grapefruit in rum was the highlight of the breakfast. Susanna was a neat lady.

At the Del Monte Hotel there was a middle-aged telephone switchboard operator. I have no idea how we ever got started talking, but she was so interesting that I often stopped and spent a few minutes with her. She had two sons in the army, and she lived within walking distance of the Hotel. One time she asked to see my hands—specifically, my palms. She offered, "My, you have heavily lined hands for a young man. You must be a very old soul." No one had ever said anything like that to me before. I wondered—old soul? Do souls have age? What do the lines in my hands have to do with my soul? Good Heavens! I had never really given much thought of any kind about my soul. It was quite an eye opener.

One time she invited me to dinner at her house and I spent the night there, and she told me more about her sons. She treated me like I'm sure most mothers would like their sons treated. She missed her sons, and though she never voiced the thought, it was clear from her conversation that she worried over their safety.

RADIO MATERIAL SCHOOL

When I graduated, I was promoted to Seaman, First Class and was transferred to the Radio Material School at Treasure Island, San Francisco for weeks more of intensive training on radar, sonar, 1FF (Identification Friend or Foe), new types of cathode ray tube displays (A scope, J scope, Plan Position Indicators). We spent half a day in the classroom studying the principles of the equipment, and half a day

in laboratories becoming familiar with the equipment and learning to troubleshoot a variety of problems. We learned about magnetrons, derived from Ernest 0. Lawrence's cyclotron, which had been invented some ten years before the war. The highest frequencies readily available with existing technology were less than 500 MHz, with one exception—the newly invented Klystron operating on a principle of timed-clustering of electrons, which generated GigaHertz frequencies, though we didn't use the prefix "Giga" at the time. Waveguide was a new concept. We learned about magnetostriction and its application for sonar transducers. We studied different types of antenna systems depending on the frequencies for which they were use. We were sworn to secrecy as all of this was classified as top secret. When we finished training we were not allowed to take our notes or our schematic books with us. When we were finally assigned to a ship the notes and books were sent to us.

Frank Schreider was in the same company as I. We often went on liberty together, and we often double dated. One time Frank and I went to see the stage play of "Arsenic and Old Lace." At one time we were both dating girls from the Lindner family, who lived in Oakland. He dated Folly and I dated Gloria. After the war Gloria married and moved to Ann Arbor. She and her husband came to visit a few years after the war when I lived on Chatham.

One time I went to a theater on Market Street. The show had just started. The girl selling tickets and I got to talking and we decided to meet after the movie was over. Actually, we saw most of the movie together, because it was the last movie of the evening and she very shortly finished working. She seemed quite nice. I asked her whether she would like to see a stage play. She said yes, but I wouldn't have a chance to pick up the tickets before my next liberty, so I asker her if she would mind getting them. She said she would. I gave her ten dollars to pay for the tickets. She gave me her address and we agreed on what time I should pick her up.

The night of the play I walked up one of San Francisco's ridiculous hills, and as I approached the place where she lived, I saw her cross the street. I went on to the address she had given me, knocked on the door. A woman answered. I would guess it may have been her grandmother. I asked for the girl by name. The woman said, "There is no one here by that name." I tried to explain. She just denied that any such person was there. I had no idea which building the girl had entered on the other side of the street. I don't think the older woman lied, because the girl was not there, but I never saw either of them, or my ten dollars ever again.

Another time, Frank and I were on liberty when we met a cute little girl in downtown Oakland. In the conversation that evening we wandered from topic to topic. At one point she said that her mother was Mexican and Catholic and her father was Jewish. She went on to explain that the different religions created some serious problems among her parents. Frank asked the girl whether the two religions in the house bothered her. She said, "Not really, I just wish my parents could get along." It had never occurred to me that differences in religious belief might be a source of disagreement in a marriage.

Then there was the time I had made a date with a WAVE. I stood on the agreed-upon street corner in downtown Oakland waiting for her. A chubby man about 10" stopped a few feet away. He looked at me, and then looked away. A few moments later I realized he was sizing me up. He minced over to me and asked, "Are you waiting for someone."

"Yes," I responded.

"I'm waiting for someone, too," he said. "If they don't show up, I don't know what I'll do. I'm the pianist in that little bar in the next block." He pointed at a sign that hung over the sidewalk. "If your date doesn't show up, come to the bar and I'll play your favorite piece. Well, even if she does, you can stop by." I didn't take him up on his offer even though I was stood up by the WAVE.

In Oakland, across the bay from San Francisco, there is a lake. There is a walking bridge across the middle of the lake. One evening after sunset I was leaning on the rail looking at the reflections of a multitude of lights. Two young women walked up and spoke to me. Our conversation lasted quite a while as we all stood gazing at the lake. They shared an apartment and invited me back to the house. It was on a street with older houses crammed together on small lots. The talking meandered through many subjects. One of the girls, speaking more to her friend than to me, was complaining about the lousy treatment from her former landlady. She said the "old bat" owed her some money and somehow she was going to get it back. Then she made up her mind she was going down there "right now." She asked whether I would keep her company. "Sure, why not?" I responded.

We only walked a block or two. She knocked on the door. There was no answer. We went to the side of the house. The back yard was enclosed with a tall wood, vertically planked fence, with a matching wooden gate which was locked. There was a washing hanging on the line. My companion said, "I'm going to get some of that for what she owes me."

I was stunned when she hiked her skirt and climbed over the fence. I said, "Hey, you know I can't get involved. If the police would arrest us—I would be court martialed—the newspaper would talk about another sailor giving the Navy a bad name.) She was already in the yard when she answered, "Yeah, I know you can't. I can get it myself, anyway." She yanked two sheets from the line and climbed the fence again.

We took off down the street. The girl laughed and said, "There. That'Il teach the old bat to keep my money. Needless to say, I was glad to disengage from the situation. Another time I had met a girl named Trudy in San Francisco. She took me to introduce me to her mother. We entered a door of a small single room that had obviously once been a store front. The windows on the street side were covered. The back side of the room was separated from the front with white sheets hanging from a line strung from waIl to wall. The furniture was old. The arms on the couch were tattered. There was a small battered table at one end of the couch. Her mother greeted me warmly. She was nice looking. Both she and her daughter were quite well dressed. She was very pleasant to talk with, and told me that her husband was overseas and she was working in San Francisco. I don't recall much else, except that it occurred to me that people put up with some real inconveniences during the war—moving hundreds of miles from their homes, living in make-do- accommodations—just to get by, and wait for their loved ones to return.

Sometime while at Treasure Island, at the USO, I met and fell in love with a girl named Joan Longnecker from Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. She was in the WACs (Women's Army Corps). We dated quite regularly for perhaps two months. One day she packed a picnic lunch. We spent a beautiful, sunny day in the mountains, playing, laughing and just enjoying being with each other. It was getting close to the time I would be finishing school and I knew I would be sent overseas, so our time together was important to us.

There was another woman who worked regularly at the USO. She worked hard, and seldom smiled. She seemed quite pleasant though I had never spoken to her, but I wanted to. There was something about her that puzzled me. I asked Joan if she knew why the woman was so quiet. She told me that she had married a Chief Petty Officer and after a brief honeymoon, he was sent overseas where he was killed in action.

My heart went out to her. I wrote a poem to give her. I never had the courage to give the poem to her. That is one of the regrets of my life. I never did talk to her. Bill Sunday suggested I call it Memory-Hallowed Love:

Yes, you are gone now—I'm trying to forget
All the things that remind me of you,
And~yet, each corner, each shadow,
The softness of this room

With songs of the centuries whispering from the wall,
"Memories bring us closer."
And though the moon waxes lean, then fills again
Your warmth is no nearer
Except when memories call.
—Delavan Sipes 18 November 19

RADIO TECHNICIAN MATE 3RD CLASS

Finally, school was over. I was promoted to Radio Technician Mate 3rd Class. (There was no Electronic Technician Mate classification until just before I was discharged.) Without warning our chief walked into the barracks and ordered us to bring our gear, "FaIl in out front in thirty minutes." Outside, in ranks, we were called to attention and marched directly to the overseas pre-embarkation center, which was inside a chain link fence with guards outside.

I desperately wanted to contact Joan—even though it was forbidden—so that night shortly after dark, I jumped the chain fence (planning to return) and landed within ten feet of an armed guard. I was taken back inside where the officer of the day made me quite miserable over the next half hour with a barrage of questions. My explanations, as I tried to tell him why I wanted to see Joan, didn't seem to make much impression on him. He pointed to a bucket and a mop and told me to mop the floor of the office. I made that floor shine. The officer returned in about minutes, seemed satisfied with the floor. He didn't say anything for about fifteen minutes, then he said he was going to give me permission to see Joan—one hour—then he wrote a pass with the time limit on it, and admonished me not to be one minute late. I thanked him and ran to the USO center. We had our brief hour together and she walked with me to the pre-embarkation center. The next day I was on a troop ship, sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge and went to sea for the first time.. . and promptly became seasick.

By the second day at sea, my gut calmed down. We were on the USS Bergen, APA 150. I was walking along the deck when I saw a small crowd gathered. As I approached, I saw a black sailor standing in a doorway. His face was beaded in perspiration. He watched intently the white sailor who was talking to him. I had never really seen prejudice in action. I was frightened, partly for the black sailor, and partly for myself. Not one of the white sailors tried to stop the harassment, nor did they encourage it. All of us just watched. I felt I should do something—but didn't know what, so I just watched. Finally, the tension subsided. The crowd dispersed, and I was embarrassed for not doing something. All of my previous experiences with black folks had been pleasant and interesting. This was all new to me.

After about a week on the ocean, we arrived in Hawaii. I was assigned to Camp Aiea, which was just outside of Honolulu. Actually, it was just a temporary holding assignment, but for me it turned out to be a good deal. Bill Sunday and I got a temporary assignment as baker helpers. We were awakened at three in the morning. Our duty consisted of slicing bread with a bread slicing machine, moving baked goods, washing equipment, and other menial tasks as assigned. One day I would work until noon and Bill was off duty at nine. The next day we would exchange hours. As baker helpers we were given special privileges—like liberty every day after work. There were so many sailors on Oahu at the time that liberty was generally limited to once in seven days.

I remember one day, when Bill and I decided we wanted to see the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. It was a magnificent building, and I think it was the only hotel on Waikiki Beach. If it wasn't the only one, it was certainly the most impressive. Pink outside with a tower in the center. The hallway in the lobby had marble floors. We knew sailors weren't particularly welcome, but we ventured inside just a little way—just to stare in awe at the grandeur. I didn't see the Royal Hawaiian again until 10. It was still there in all of its original

grandeur, dwarfed by monstrous hotels towering into the sky on each side. Even so, it would be a shame to ever give up the land and tear it down. It is a priceless tribute to the grandeur of the past.

On another day, four of us learned that behind the camp there was a volcanic lake. We decided to go swimming. The mountainside was rough, stony, densely covered with cactus that seemed to poke thorns at us with each step of the climb to the lip of the crater. The water was a lovely, azure/turquoise blue—much like the outflow from glaciers. There was no shore, just a precipitous drop to the water's edge, which then continued downward toward the mouth of the volcano. I was not a very good swimmer at that time, so I decided against the venture. I think just one of the guys actually went swimming.

As we started back down the mountain we heard grunting, snorting and something running through the cactus. We had disturbed a wild boar, and one of the guys had heard unfavorable stories about the temper of wild boars and proceeded to enlighten us as rapidly as he could. We dispersed in all directions until we could no longer hear nor see the undesirable beast.

After three or four weeks of this rather idyllic life, I was assigned to the Mine Assembly Base at Pearl Harbor. Our CO was a Chief Warrant Officer. I think he was either ticked off that he couldn't get assigned to the fleet, or he was an outright opportunist. He was building a marine railway to launch his boat, using military supplies and military personnel. Bill and I became two of his personnel. We spent our days in the water, using jack hammers to cut through the coral to lay the rails for his marine railway. The coral easily captured the chisel tools of the jack hammer if we weren't careful.

Sometimes the chisel would break through the coral into a hollow beneath. The coral would expand around the shank of the chisel and then it couldn't be removed without using the other jack hammer to cut it free. We laid bags of concrete along the newly defined line where the railway would be. It was hot work, and we occasionally stopped for a brief swim. Invariably we would find ourselves facing some of the effluent from ships' sewers bobbing along in front of our noses.

One day I was walking down the main road of the Mine Assembly Base. The day before, there had been a large pile of lumber stacked in an out-of-the-way place near the road. There had to have been enough lumber there to build a house, but the day before, it had burned. It seems that the Navy had no use for it. It couldn't be sold to anyone. It was in the way—so it was torched. I was sick over the gross waste of such an action.

We tore down an old shack one day—under orders, of course. At the time, I didn't know much about scorpions. I had heard they were deadly, and when we remove the old floor, it seemed like they were scampering everywhere. We were dancing about trying to avoid them. Years later, I learned that Hawaiian scorpions are not deadly, but they can cause a painful sting.

Another sunny day as I walked down that main road of the Mine Assembly Base same road, the base public address system came on. An announcer said, "We have just received word that the president of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, has died." I stopped in my tracks. Chills ran over my body. I'm sure my mouth must have dropped open. I can still hear the announcement. It was an experience that chilled my soul, not to be experienced again until John F. Kennedy was assassinated. It is not easy to describe such feelings—they are more than familial, but lacking the warmth of family. I don't think it's patriotism, nor love. It's just such a shock to realize that your foremost leader is as mortal as yourself, and they do sometimes die in office.

Finally, on the April 23, I received orders to report to the USS Sustain, AM, a tiny auxiliary minesweeper. We arrived at Eniwetok on May 4th and then continued on to Guam where we arrived on May 8th An Hispanic fellow and I stood watch together, night after night, on the bow of the ship. We were lookouts for ships, submarines—anything that moved on or through the water. The weather was comfortable and balmy.

We talked about many things and became friends quickly. He taught me how to say I love you in Spanish "Yo te amo", but then he said if you really mean it, if you really want her to know how deeply you care you say "Te quiero". This led to his teaching me the Spanish words to the song "Amor". We stood at the bow of the ship, scanning the dark ocean for the enemy, singing softly...

Amor, amor, amor
Nacio de ti
Nacio de mi
del esperanza.

Amor, amor, amor
Nacio de Dios
Para los dos
Nacio del alma.

Sentir que tus besos
Anidaron en ml
Saber que tus besos
Se quedaron en ti
haciendo en tus labios

We talked about learning to speak Spanish. I asked him where would be a good place to learn. He suggested Loyola University. I tucked that away a useful piece of information. I had no idea that there were other places where it might also be learned.

USS BREESE

I was transferred to the Receiving Barracks on Guam on May 10th and subsequently to the USS Diploma, AM 221. We left Guam on the 21st and arrived at Saipan/Tinian the same day. We left there on the 24th and sailed to Kerama Retto off the southern coast of Japan. There, on the May 30, I transferred to the USS Breese, DM-18, a Destroyer Minelayer from WWI vintage. It would be my home until the fourth of October. The ship was 310 feet long and 30 feet wide. It had four smoke stacks.

There were several like her in the mine fleet, and all were affectionately called "four stackers". There was one five inch gun forward of the bridge, a fifty caliber machine gun on each side amidship, and twin anti-aircraft guns near the stern. The engine room was located amidship. The hold just aft of the engine room was filled with ammunition. She was powered by steam boilers heated with diesel fuel. She could run at 33 knots continuously. She carried six life rafts and a motor whale boat. Signal flags were on the port side, just aft of the flying bridge. The radio shack was located starboard and the radar room was on the port side. Our radar operated on the 10 centimeter band. There was a rectangular steel building above deck near the stern.

It housed the sea water showers and the head on the aft side and the emergency radio shack on the forward side. The emergency radio shack was my baffle station. Should we need assistance, I was to fire up a transmitter and send an SOS and any other pertinent information. There were crew's quarters fore and aft. Mine were in the second compartment aft of the bow. The first compartment was primarily the chain locker for the anchor.

The Breese was designed as a mine layer with a track on each side of the deck that ran from amidship to the stern. Mines were attached to a cable which was coiled inside of a steel box on which there were four wheels. The mines could be rolled along the track so that they would fall off the stern. Before they were launched, the cable depth was set so that the mine would float below the surface, but close enough to the surface to contact a passing ship. The cable box fell to the ocean floor, paying out the preset cable length and then acted as an anchor for the mine.

The Breese had been through every major combat from Lingayen Gulf in the Philippines to Okinawa. She boasted several markers identifying ships and planes that the crew had destroyed. Not one single person on board had been wounded. The only casualty was the man I had replaced, a guy called "Whitey" who was in rehab for a nervous breakdown.

The following quotes from my diary may seem rather terse, but in general I will simply read them. Occasionally, I will add additional thoughts that I recall from that time.

On May 31st I boarded our motor whaleboat and made a trip to the USS Mona Island to secure a transformer for our BN radio. Saw Mack, RT2/c. He had been assigned to the USS Terror until she was sent to the states. He is now assigned to the Coast Guard Flag Ship USS Bibbs, but has temporary duty aboard the USS Mona Island.

On the 12th of June we left Kerama Retto on sweep operation "Zebra" near Saka Shima. Because we were now on the offensive, the Breese was no longer functioning as a mine layer. Instead we carried buoys to mark the line at the end of the sweep operation. The design was much the same as the mines. The anchor consisted of a square box that payed out the anchor cable which was attached to buoy. The box dropped to the ocean floor as the floating buoy pulled cable from the box. It was our job to periodically drop these marker buoys as we followed behind the lead ship of the mine sweeping fleet. It was also our job to dispose of the mines that were cut loose by the ship ahead of us.

I was fascinated by the cutting loose of the mines. The minesweepers attached a cable to a planer board which was then dropped over the stern. The angle on the planer board was such that with forward motion the planer board was pulled far away from the side of the ship. On the cable that kept the planer board in tow there was a cutter. When the planer board cable came in contact with the cable that anchored a mine, the mine cable slid along the planer board cable until it reached the cutter, where the mine was cut loose and it would bob the surface. Once on the surface we used our 50 caliber machine guns to blow them up. Some times they didn't blow up—they just sank. The mines had to be within a special range from the ship, so that when they blew up, we were far enough away that the shrapnel didn't reach the ship, but we couldn't be so far away that we were out of range of the machine guns.

We always had a bow lookout who would intone, "Mine off starboard bow," or "Mine off port bow." This day, he shouted, "MINES, DEAD AHEAD!!!" There was no time to change course. We simply continued forward. Along with some other crew members, we ran to the side of the ship and saw two mines floating within six to twelve feet of the ship. We ran to the other side and saw three mines. One was terribly close to the bow. We watched with horrified fascination as it rolled away and then back against the ship.

We could hear the clunk.., clunk clunk clunk as the deadly prongs repeatedly bounced off the hull. They soon swirled away in the wake of the ship. We did a slow turn and went back to destroy them.

The sweep operation was carried out on a massive scale. There were fifty to one-hundred minesweepers traveling in a row with overlapping planer cables. They were followed by ships whose job it was to destroy the mines that were cut loose. At the end of the row of ships, we followed the lead minesweeper and laid marker

buoys to identify where the field had been swept. At the end of area to be swept, all ships made a port turn and traveled to their new positions to sweep a new portion of the mine field. We held our position and followed the new ship that was now following our marker buoys.

As they swept in the opposite direction, the marker buoys were now cut loose and we fired on those and sank them as well as the mines. In the meantime, one of our sister ships was following the lead minesweeper at the other end of the row and laying marker buoys.

One day at sea, the only disturbance on the water was the wake from our ship. The sea was a flat as it is possible for it to be. The sun was shining. A fine mist filled the air. Suddenly, there was a rainbow, and then another, and another. Three rainbows. We had all seen an occasional double rainbow, but this one was triple. They all reflected in the ocean, and the arcs went directly under our ship. Three complete circles of rainbows and we were at the center. It was the most beautiful natural sight I had ever seen. Maybe that's why, to this day, I find the rainbow colors from a prism to be so beautiful.

On 15 June—General Quarters in early afternoon. One lone Jap. Chased off by our eight plane fighter escort. Nip outran our fighters.

17 June—General Quarters twice today. Results same as on the 15th

19 June—Returned to Kerama Retto.

Sometime in June—General Quarters—this one isn't in my diary, and I am not sure why. I was at the Emergency Radio Shack—my assigned GQ job. Three Jap planes came over the mountains toward the bay. One of them circled high above the bay—probably picking out a target. One plane dropped low over the water and came directly toward our ship. Our 40 mm ack-ack and our 50 caliber machine guns were firing on him. He hunkered down close to the water and kept coming toward our midship. At the last moment he spotted a cruiser lying beyond us, decided that was a better prize, raised up, flew over us and did the kamakazi thing into the cruiser. The other two planes dropped bombs and tried to run. One of them headed toward the mountain off our fantail.

Over the radio came a message from a carrier at the far end of the bay. "Hold your fire. We're sending planes aloft. Hold your fire. We're sending planes aloft."

The Jap plane disappeared from view with our plane in pursuit. Smoke trailed our plane as it, too, disappeared over the mountain. My heart was heavy—we had all taken plane recognition training—still, someone in the fleet had shot down one of our own planes.

21 June—I was writing a letter to my grandmother when I heard an explosion in the northwest section of the harbor. A plane flew directly overhead, circled to the north, and suicided into USS Curtiss (AV-4). Almost simultaneous with the first explosion another bogey suicided into the USS Whiting (AV-1). The bomb (first explosion) sunk the LSM-59. Another bogey took a kamikaze ride into the USS Barry (APD-29) approximately five miles out of the north anchorage. Three planes plus one bomb equals four ships. Nice score Nippon.

22 June—Departed from Kerama Retto to finish the Zebra operation

24 June-- Returned to Kerama Retto at dawn.

27 June—Hey, we had a recreation party on the beach. We were each allocated two beers. I didn't drink, but one of the crew wanted them, and he paid me for them. That was OK, because I could buy gedunk (that's ice cream) when we got back on the ship. Though the island was secured, we were cautioned not to go in any caves, because they may be booby-trapped, and there might also be a few Japanese soldiers left on the island. So three

of us, Garrett and I and another guy, explored part of the island unofficially, anyway. We were unarmed. We followed a path up a mountainside. As we rounded a curve in the path, an acrid, rotten smell greeted us. A few steps farther and we discovered a dead Japanese soldier. His uniform was a bit ragged. His skin appeared to be intact, but the insects had gleaned most of his flesh from the bones. Bacteria were doing the rest. Garrett threw up. From that day, we called him "Nails" Garrett. A bit farther, and we found a cave. To enter, or not to enter. That was the question. We decided to chance it. We entered slowly, looking for any signs of a booby-trap—wires, sticks arranged in a trip manner, whatever. We saw none, but were still a bit anxious as we slowly crawled deeper into the cave. We had not gone very far when the cave was swallowed up in darkness. It didn't seem prudent to go farther. I had found two small dishes which I eventually took home with me.

4 July—Beginning of "Juneau" sweep near the center of the China Sea.

15 July—Returned to Okinawa to logisticate and refuel.

18 July—Typhoon Warning. Mine fleet sent to sea for safety.

21 July—Returned to Okinawa to refuel and get tender availability. Juneau operation continued without us.

One day in July, our radar conked out. We traced the problem to the antenna. The antenna is attached to a bracket on the yardarm. The yardarm is 90 feet above the water, 20 feet below the tip of the mast. With my fellow tech in the radar shack monitoring the situation, I climbed the mast. Before I could do anything I had to get "comfortable". Now getting comfortable on this yardarm is not easy. It consists of three steel pipes with their ends welded to the mast in an equilateral triangle. The pipes are about eight to ten inches apart at the mast and the top pipe gradually approaches the other two as they extend outward toward the tip. I can't quite get a leg between these pipes, so I have to try to sit on that single pipe with my legs wrapped around the other two. The ship rolled gentle on the swells. I'd find myself over water, then over steel deck, then again over water. I tied a line to myself and around the yardarm. Then I tied a line around the antenna housing, removed it and lowered it to the deck. Then I checked the connections at each of the waveguide junctions. Carefully, I tightened each screw. There really wasn't much else to check up there. After reassembling the housing, I left my bird perch and descended to the deck. Apparently, it helped because we were getting better power transmission and less noise in our return signal.

27 July—Availability cancelled.

28 July—At sea to aid in completion of Juneau sweep.

31 July—Completion of Juneau. Return to Okinawa. Fourteen days anchor availability.

1 August—Typhoon offshore. Water in Buckner Bay extremely rough. A new inch hawser had been installed in the davits used to hoist the motor whaleboat aboard. The boat was being lifted with two men on board. We could hear the new line creaking as though fibers were snapping—the sort of thing that comes from dry rot. Suddenly, the line gave way and boat dropped to the ocean. Charles Lee (Tex) Privitt was thrown between the boat and the ship. The next big wave threw the boat against the ship crushing Tex. He dropped from sight. We knew he was either killed by the blow, or drowned.

4 August—Tex's body was recovered this morning. Some of our crew identified the body and he was buried on Okinawa. The next day, on the island, a memorial service was held for Tex. Many of us attended.

9 August—Anchor availability cancelled. Degaussing gear calibrated.

10 August—New sweep operation to begin between Kyushu and Shanghai. We have a full load of Dan Buoys to use as markers. We were probably not more than eight to ten miles from Okinawa when it was announced, "We have just received unconfirmed reports of Japanese surrender. For the celebration, look toward Okinawa."

The night was dark, but the island was outlined in a white glow from the wild gunfire from every gun battery on the island. It was chilling and yet uplifting sight along with the thought that the war was over.

11 August—Ordered to return the Buckner Bay, Okinawa. The sweep operation is temporarily cancelled.

12 August—Anchor availability until 1 September. Damn! We don't get to sweep Tokyo Bay. Guess we aren't good enough—the dirty bastards.

15 August—Japan accepted the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA peace proposal on our terms "Unconditional Surrender," with the stipulation that Nippon may keep Emperor Hirohito, but he will take orders directly from our military leader placed on occupational duty in Japan. That leader will be Supreme Allied Commander General Douglas MacArthur.

USS Missouri

18 August—Tender availability until 1 September.
2 September (Sunday) 195—As I write this the Japanese are signing the unconditional surrender peace treaty aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay. General Douglas MacArthur gave a short speech of two or three minutes before the signing began on the decks of the Missouri. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz marched out side by side with General MacArthur. The signing is now complete.

Coincidentally, but somewhat symbolically the sun has just come out from behind a cloud. In the words of the news commentator, "And—so now—we have peace in the world."

President Truman is now speaking from the United States of America. It was but a few months ago that President Franklin Delano Roosevelt died, but not until his great work on this earth was complete. No, not entirely complete, but he had constructed a mighty foundation for the world peace that must eventually come. God has been kind to guide us through the greatest crisis the United States has eve known. God willing, we will not forsake principles with which the Allied Nations are bound together.

Never has the "Star Spangled Banner" rung so sweetly in my ears as it does this morning. Thank God, for the world does not now belong to one nation, or a group of nations, but to all nations. May peace eternal reign. Amen.

04 September—Censorship of our letters ended today.

06 September—Today we began to ferry buoys from the USS CAPE TRINITY to the USS WEEHAWKEN in Buckner Bay.

10 September—Finished the buoy ferrying operation. We kept sixty aboard for sweep operation beginning on 15 September.

14 September—Left Okinawa for sweep operation in the Van Diemen Straits off the southern coast of Kyushu.

15 September—Laying marker buoys for DMSs in the sweep operation with us.

17 September—Typhoon warning—2 knots average wind speed, gusts up to 9 knots. Center expected to pass twenty miles from Buckner Bay, headed northeast. We set sail to the south to attempt to pass around the main violence of the typhoon. The storm curved eastward and we were forced to head directly into it as a matter of self-preservation. The Dorsey, the DMS-1, and an SC dropped back, unable to maintain course and speed. The Dorsey had trouble with its steering engine. We had an inclinometer in the storeroom. One of the guys said, "Look at this." We stood there watching the inclinometer as the ship rolled in the heavy seas. Our maximum port roll from vertical was 57 degrees. Our maximum starboard roll was 44 degrees. Supposedly the Breese will take a 65 degree roll before capsizing. Waves are higher than the flying bridge—troughs stretching endlessly. Three- and four-foot waves and foam rode easily on the monstrous waves that might easily sink our ship.

We were now passing directly through the center of the typhoon. I was miserably seasick and all I could think of, "How beautiful—waves and foam remind me of how beautiful the Rockies are." Hell of it was, I was serious with myself. I told you the ship was 310 feet long. Picture this. We are headed directly into the storm, perpendicular to the waves. This is the safest attitude a ship can have in a storm. The ship rides up on an incoming wave, which is perhaps a thousand feet from trough to trough. The bow rides higher and higher above the peak of the wave until the center of gravity of the ship is out of the water. Then the bow slams down into the far side of the wave. The ship slides down the wave, burying the forward third of the ship into the bottom of the trough of the next wave. The ships buoyancy causes the bow to pop free like a cork released underwater. Then begins the long climb to the peak of that wave and a repetition of the crash and bury on its far side. This went on for hours.

Anyway, here we are riding out this typhoon when the radar transmitter quits working. Maybe you don't think you have much use for radio in a violent storm, but along with us, there were a few hundred other ships out there trying to survive this typhoon, and the island wasn't far away. At Guam, I remembered seeing an LST high on a cliff not far from shore—the result of an earlier hurricane force weather pattern. There were two of us repair techs on board and we went to work trying to get that transmitter functioning. We worked on it for several hours, and both of us were seasick. Not throwing up seasick, but not feeling well at all. We went over the schematic diagram. We tested every part that could be causing the problem. We replaced some parts that seemed the more logical as causing the trouble. We worked at it all night. We had reached a point of no progress. We would turn on the transmitter power. Look at the meters. Turn the transmitter off and look at the schematic, all in an effort to determine what we may have overlooked. Shortly after dawn, my partner flicked the power switch on. No change. In frustration, accompanied with a few profane oaths, he kicked the transmitter. The meters leaped to their normal readings. The radar operator yelled, "Hey, it's working. What did you guys do?" We looked at each through bleary eyes, then burst out laughing. Fifteen hours of effort was resolved with one swift kick.

We got out of the typhoon on the eighteenth. That's today. Only two days, but it seemed much longer. The water barely ripples tonight and the moon lends the ocean some of an inland lake's beauty, not for romantic reasons, it's just wonderful compared to last night.

19 September—Damage assessment. We lost two life rafts in the storm, two others barely hanging on (only have six on board). Number three stack is torn loose from the deck, but she didn't topple into the sea—most amazing. Our steering engine had been under water for more than eight hours. A deck plate in the forward engine room buckled slightly. Bulkhead torn from the hull in a compartment aft.

There is water in the radar/sonar parts storeroom. Also in sickbay, the wardroom, the crew's compartment aft—these were the more seriously hurt. Most of the gear belonging to the crew in the aft compartment was lost because it was oil- and water-soaked. They will have new issue. All but two of the ship's compartments had at least some water in them.

21 September—Learned that we are the only four piper capable of getting under way. The Tracey was towed into Tokyo Bay; Southard ran aground, Hopkins has tender availability; Dorsey has no steering engine. Two have to go in drydock for repair before they can even leave the harbor. The remainder I do not know about—Correction: that's all of them—the Preble is now an AG.

22 September—Received news that we may be headed for the states soon. The skipper, while on the USS Terror saw a dispatch requesting the release of all four pipers from COMINPAC.

22 September—It's belated for her birthday, but I wrote my sister a poem today.

Happy Birthday, Sis!
To a lovely sister whom for years I didn't know,
A sister once a phantom, a dream I longed for so.
I wanted her to love me, I wished for her affection,
But all I ever had was the previous recollection.

God foresaw my plight and now you're always near me.
My dream has faded way and made for me reality,
And as I smile and turn my face to thank Him above,
I know there's one girl in my life whom I'll always love.

28 September—And today I dedicated a poem to Mary Ellen Finn

Blue-eyed girl with sparkling smile--
Blue-eyed girl with your gift of love
In living life you understand
Why happiness is at your command.

Blue-eyed girl with heart sincere--
Blue-eyed girl with cheering love
You cannot live but understand
Why happiness is at your command.

Sparkling spirit; gentle love—Shine from you're radiant face
And understanding from your heart beyond the commonplace.
Soft spoken words—encouragement with strength to guide the world
All are host to your gift of love—a banner not half unfurled.

Blue-eyed girl with your radiant life,
Blue-eyed girl, wise beyond the mortal,
In living love you understand
Why happiness is at your command.

Diary from 4 October thru 11 August

A day or two later, one of my shipmates wrote a poem to his girl friend, and sent the poem to her along with a dozen roses that he had somehow ordered to be delivered in his home town. I'm not sure why I have it written in my diary in his handwriting, but here it is.

Darling Elaine,
Today there are words I would like to say
A message of love to you.
But Webster himself lacks the words to convey
Such a message of love to you.

The moon up above, perhaps he could bring
This message of love to you,
But I'll trust red roses, and hope they will take
My message of love to you.
Don F. Johnson
Route # 1
Shelley, Idaho

Don came aboard the Breese some time after I. He hailed from Shelley, Idaho. I found him to be quiet and thoughtful. He was a devout Mormon and had already served his required time as a Mormon missionary. We talked of many things, but I questioned him about many aspects of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. We became good friends.

One night in the forward crew's quarters some of the guys were talking and joking about sex. Someone said something about being offered a beautiful girl and before he could finish someone else jumped in with, "I'll tell you what I'd do," and what he would have done was the obvious. Don spoke up and said, "I would never do that." That in itself was quite a statement to make in an all male crowd, most of whom (if any) had likely never thought that way.

"You mean that if a beautiful, naked girl walked out here right now and offered herself to you, you wouldn't take her to your bunk? Why not?"

"Because I don't believe it's right. I believe I should save that part of my life for marriage, and my religion doesn't believe in sex before marriage."

As a bystander, I was impressed. I had never heard an individual stand up for a belief before. I had heard folks talk ABOUT beliefs, but never STAND UP for a belief. I thought back to the Negro on the transport ship, where no one had stood up for a belief. The conversation went on for some time. Don was badgered by numerous questions, and he steadfastly held to his beliefs. Wow!

I wrote to Don once after I got out of service, but I never received a response.

04 October—Detached from the USS Breese. Reason: She's sailing for the states and I have neither the required 41 points nor 9 months overseas. I have 2 ½ points and 7 months overseas. Assigned to the USS LST

804.

06 October—Met Ensign Walter Scholey this morning. He's assigned to the YMS (Yard Mine Sweeper). Scoop—Bud Rankin practically engaged to Betty Zacherman. Fred Fisher wounded in Germany—now discharged. Chuck Perry expects discharge any day. Wally was home in June, was assigned to the YMS in Hawaii. His haunts were Kailua Beach over the PaIi. He flew here from Oahu last Monday.First time I've seen Wally since we graduated from Cooley High School in June 13. Both of us enlisted in V-12 in 1943, only he made it through.

07 October—Typhoon warning. Put to sea aboard the LST 80

08 October—In the outskirts of the typhoon. This old scow rides like an obsolete railway coach. With each pounding wave she shivers and shakes like a wet puppy. At night one bounces as if his rack were a trampoline—about six inches maximum bounce (no exaggeration). One can stand on the fantail and watch the ship bend in middle and vibrate much as a springboard might. She's built to bend seven inches, but it looks to be well over a foot. The rippling deck plates gave out like Gene Krupa on his drums, averaging seven "booms" per large wave. Nice accompaniment for a night's sleep. I don't feel as safe on this ship as I did on the Breese, even though we are experiencing less violence. The Southard and Dorsey four pipers are on the rocks.

11 October—Returned to Buckner Bay

15 October—Went ashore trying to find Richard Cain, my step-sister's husband. Port Director—no help! Field Intelligence—no help!! Red Cross Locater—no help!!! Inquired of everyone I met as to Sixth Marine whereabouts, but no luck. I didn't find him. Missed any and all boats that could have taken me back to the ship. Bunked down ashore—typhoon warning.

16 October—All small boats secured. Again bunked ashore.

17 October—Water taxi at Brown Beach returned me to the LST 80. Executive Officer assigned me to ten hours extra duty for not returning Monday evening. Ten hours of chipping paint. Nuts!!

22 October—Went to AKS on GSK work party. Saw Ensign Scholey. He is temporarily attached to the flag aboard USS Bibbs. YMS 90, his former ship, is on the beach from the last typhoon. From this, and the last typhoon of 17-18 September there are approximately 35 ships on the rocks, reefs or beach. (Good authority—Beach based commander).

3 November—Assigned to CoMinPac Flag Allowance, Transferred to LSM 2 for transportation. Left Buckner Bay at 1000 hours.

5 November—Arrived at Sasebo Naval Base, Japan. Transferred to USS Terror CM-5, flagship of the Pacific Mine Fleet. Began installing Mike-Nan 5s (FM receiver-transmitter units) on LOSs (Landing Craft Fire Support), which are to be used for mine demolition during sweep operations to clean up the ocean for ship traffic.

18 November—USS Panamint AGO 13 (communications ship) tied up alongside the USS Terror. Flag records and gear transferred from the Terror.

20 November—Moved my personal gear to the Panamint.

22 November—U5S Terror pulled out for Pearl Harbor Navy Yard for repairs. During the typhoon of 8-

October the USS Mona Island rammed her and knocked her starboard screw out of alignment.

2 December—Received a letter from Mother. First mail since October third. She told me of Grandmother's passing. The cablegram which she sent through the American Red Cross on November first never reached me. After receiving the letter, I applied for an emergency leave. Next day, with my gear, I boarded a PBY seaplane. The plane was overloaded with gear and personnel. As I recall there were seventeen of us on board. The water was quite choppy when we prepared for takeoff. The pilot gave the engines full throttle and we bounced down the bay for an eternity—we began to question whether we would be able to take off with the heavy load. The distant mountains in front of us began to loom large, and then the plane lumbered into the air and then smacked the wavetops again, but immediately lifted off. We were airborne.

NAGASAKI

The flight was supposedly to Tokyo. I have no idea why we landed at Nagasaki, but there was a two or three hour layover there. Another sailor and I decided to go exploring. You may recall that the second atomic bomb had been dropped on Nagasaki in August. Partial shells of one or two buildings survived the blast. Nearly everything was blown into rubble. Devastation existed in every direction as far as we could see. Years later, after I had spent an entire summer at the Oak Ridge Institute of Nuclear Studies on a National Science Foundation Grant, I realized that at the time we walked the streets of Nagasaki it had to have been highly radioactive. Not much was generally known about radioactivity in those days. We flew on into Tokyo. Again, we had a layover, and again we decided to explore. As we walked down a street a tall Japanese man in a business suit approach us. He was smiling.

"Herro, how are you?" he asked.

"Fine," we answered.

"My name is (whatever it was he said). What is your name?"

Each of us responded appropriately. He asked us several more questions, gave his answer to the questions and then waited for our answers, which we willing gave him. This went on for perhaps five minutes, all the while he kept pace with us.

Then suddenly he said, "Herro, how are you?" My name is _____. What is your name?" I looked at my buddy, "This guy's practicing his English, but he doesn't understand a word we have said." We left him behind and continued walking. We saw two or three women working in a field. A little boy, or girl, (we couldn't tell which) stopped and relieved him/herself in the ditch beside the road—no one paid any attention. We saw one person carrying a huge bundle of small branches (faggots they would have been called then), presumably for fuel. An elderly man in a cream colored cotton kimono approached us. In very broken English he invited us to see house. We weren't sure this was a good idea, but we eventually decided to go. The houses were wooden, uninsulated, and small with only a wooden wall between adjacent houses. I only recall two rooms. They were very plain. The walls were unpainted. There was no electricity. Nor did we see any sign of a lantern or candle for lighting. On one wall hung a sword. In the middle of the room was a small hole in the floor. Dirt and ashes were visible through the hole. The man explained that was where they built a fire to heat their home—the heat would spread under the floor and keep the room warm. There were two mats rolled up and placed on one wall against the floor. These were unrolled for sleeping. The old man was very proud of his home and seemed pleased to have been able to show it to us.

We flew out of Tokyo on a larger plane. I don't remember what it was. We flew to Marcus Island and then on to Midway. From there we flew to Hawaii. It had taken about 2 hours from Tokyo. In Hawaii, I boarded the USS Colorado, a battleship, for the trip to San Francisco. A friend of mine from RI school had been assigned to the Colorado. I tried to find him, but he was home on leave. It was strange being on a battleship, which is huge compared to our destroyer. Further, its roll in the water was much slower than the destroyer. The sea legs that I had acquired on the Breese were useless on the Colorado. It took the better part of the first day to learn to walk on the huge deck.

After arriving in San Francisco, I boarded the Twilight Limited train for the 2 ½ day trip to Chicago and then Detroit. I did not have any orders to follow my 30 day leave, and I had not heard from the Navy. I wondered whether they were going to leave me at home until I was eligible for discharge. Two days before my leave was up, I received orders to report to the Naval Air Station on Grosseile—in the Detroit River. I was there almost two weeks and again wondered about my assignment. Then I was sent to the Bremerton Naval Base in Washington. It rained most of the two weeks I spent there.

One evening I rode the ferry to Seattle. You've heard of "bedroom eyes" I'm sure. I talked to a young woman on the ferry who had eyes like that. They were enticing. They exuded warmth. Ah, well. She was meeting another man at the dock.

One morning I received new orders to report to Port Discovery Bay to the USS Manderson Victory (AKA 230). I wondered why the ship was located in such a distant isolated bay. I saluted the colors and reported to the duty officer. He assigned me to quarters, and then I found out that I was on an ammunition ship—a Victory ship with all five holds filled with explosives. Yikes. What an assignment for after the war is over. In a day or two, I was eligible for discharge. I informed the captain. He informed me that I wasn't going to be discharged because I was the "only Electronic Technician he had."

Shortly thereafter we sailed out of Port Discovery Bay headed for the Gulf of Panama. Two or three days out of Panama, there was a sudden blast from the fire alarm, followed by the announcement. "Fire in number three hold. Fire in number three hold. All crew to their fire stations. All crew to their fire stations." The hair on the back of my neck stood up. A chill engulfed my body. A fire on an ammunition ship? Fortunately, it was an oily rag that had been ignited by an arcing relay, and it was easily extinguished. A day or two later, the fire alarm sounded again. Fire in the captain's cabin. The captain had thrown a cigar butt in the waste basket and it ignited the paper. The same event recurred one more time before I left the ship. Fire is not something you want to hear on an ammo ship. I learned that the captain had been the skipper of this ship through several invasions. Under the tension, he was known to drink. Both events occurred after drinking.

We lay at anchor off the city of Panama for two or three days while we got permission to take an ammunition ship through the Panama Canal. Before the end of the war it would have been an impossibility. Now, it was just difficult. While we were waiting we had liberty in Panama. I don't recall anything about the town, rather unnotable at best. The trip through the canal was fascinating. I had never seen locks in operation, and the cruise through the lake was quite scenic. The concept of raising and lower ships from one level to another using gravity as the motive force intrigued me.

We anchored in the bay off Colon at the east end of the canal (which is actually west of the west end). All I recall of Colon was that it was not an attractive city. In retrospect, I guess it was a sailor's town. Ship traffic was its source of being. I remember walking down one street with some buddies. The wooden front buildings were strung together. There were no steps into the buildings and the floor was about two feet above the sidewalk. It was characteristic of the area that there were two four foot wide doors, painted leaf green, which were open—into a small room. A dingy light bulb hung on a cord that dropped from the ceiling. A wood chair and an iron frame bed were the only pieces of furniture. A huge woman in a flimsy white dress sat on the

chair at the edge near the sidewalk. One of our crew was talking to her. He went inside. She closed the doors. I had my camera. When he came out, I took a picture of him—he was still engaging the thirteen buttons on his uniform. We developed the picture. First we were just going to tease him about it, then we decided to put it on the bulletin board next to a prophylaxis poster. At the time, we thought it was fun. I wish I hadn't done that.

We sailed away from Colon, headed for San Juan, Puerto Rico. In San Juan I was assigned shore patrol duty in the red light district. We had one bar which had been put off limits by the Navy because there had been some sort of ruckus a few night before. Periodically, we had to check and make sure no Navy personnel were in the bar. The whole area was a hubbub of contrasting humanity. I stood at the entrance to the bar. My partner stood on the other side of the door. A tiny woman with a nice figure and two huge swollen, purple growths on her face came up to me and smiled. She dragged her hand across my pants as she entered the bar, assuring me she would "see me later." Perhaps two minutes elapsed. As she came out of the bar, I could hear her saying, "My poor boys. My poor boys. What are they going to do?" She saw me, walked up to me and spat on my uniform and then informed me that I was not only the son of a dog, but that I was also an illegal son.

Across the street, a young woman in a light cotton dress, picked up the hem, waved her skirt in the air disclosing what was no longer covered and cried out, "Yoo hoo. Sailor. Sailor."

As we toured the other bars to help ensure that none of our crew got in trouble, we saw the seamier side of humanity displaying various techniques to entice drunken men to accompany them to some hidden place for sex. Laughter and liquor flowed in equal quantities until a deal was made.

In one relatively quiet bar in a hotel, I saw a beautiful woman. She was smartly dressed, and her blonde hair was carefully combed. She sat with her knees together and her ankles crossed. She had a demure look about her. She did not try to catch anyone's eye, nor did she speak to anyone first. All this in contrast to the not so clean women, who sat in chairs with the legs spread wide and their skirts half way up their thighs, beckoning to the sailors with their eyes and encouraging them vocally. I wanted to ask the blonde how she had come to be in this place. I didn't have the courage to speak to her. Later in the evening I saw her going off quietly with one of our crew members who was slightly sloshed.

The next day he said, "Del, I met the most beautiful girl. I'm in love. I'm in love." My shore patrol partner and I tried to tell him that she was a prostitute, but he didn't believe us, and for two more days (until we left San Juan) he insisted he was in love.

We sailed to the island of Vieques, which is about twelve or so miles long and three miles wide. On this island there was a Navy Ammunition Dump (a storehouse for ammo). We unloaded our ammunition, moved to another dock on the island and picked up a load of sugar.

In the few days we were at Vieques, we had liberty nightly. The only place that we could go was the little town of Isabel Segunda. There was really only one night spot. It was a small building with a dance floor, a band and a bar. There were also some grass shacks behind the building, which we were given to understand were for "private" use. There were quite a few local girls who gathered there to dance with the sailors, and some of them made use of the private shacks. However most of them would have been considered "nice girls." One of the nice girls, Zoraida Bermudez, and I hit it off pretty well. She asked me to dance. I said that I didn't know how. Her girlfriend kept bugging me, "She'll teach you," she said. Finally, I submitted to being taught how to rhumba. Talk about a stiff legged dancer—hoo ha! For the next few evenings I worked on limbering up those stiff legs. Zoraida told me that her girlfriend wanted to get married and move to the United States. One afternoon, Zoraida took me to meet her grandfather, Tomas Gonzalez. He was a handsome, gray haired, vital old man. After the introduction, Zoraida disappeared. Tomas and I sat in this sunny little room, bare of furniture except for two chairs and a small end table. Tomas was baby-sitting his infant grandson, who was toddling

around on the linoleum floor. He wore only a T-shirt.

I asked, “Why no diapers?”

Tomas answered, “It’s easier to wipe up the floor than to wash diapers.” Sounded practical to me.

I took some pictures of the old man and his grandson. Later I developed them on board the ship. The pictures came out well, but the fixer was too warm and the film surface became badly reticulated. When I touched it, the entire image sloughed off.

By the time I developed the pictures, we had left Vieques and I could not replace them. Zoraida invited my buddy and I to come to the plaza on Sunday after church. We went, and there were many of the town’s young folks. At first, we didn’t quite understand what was happening. Everyone was walking around the plaza. Most of the girls carried fans. Sometimes they coyly looked over the fan at a young man. We started walking, too. One of the girls told us we were walking in the wrong direction. One of Zoraida’s friends explained, “On Sunday, the young people come to the plaza. The men walk around the plaza in one direction, and the women walk in the opposite direction. That way they get to look at one another. They can flirt a little bit, and decide who they like, and eventually get to know one another better. I wrote to Zoraida after I left Vieques. I don’t remember whether she answered.

We sailed into New York Harbor, past the Statue of Liberty and on to Philadelphia. We docked there to unload the sugar. The captain was now willing to release me for discharge. I requested to be sent to Camp Shoemaker in California for discharge. I had served two years, eleven months and eleven days when I was discharged on May 5. I was awarded the American Theater ribbon, the Asiatic Pacific ribbon with one star (for participation in the Okinawa invasion), and the Victory ribbon. If I had completed three years, I would have been eligible for a Good Conduct ribbon.

I spent a few days with Mary Ellen Finn (remember the poem) at her folks’ home before I returned to Detroit. Our relationship became serious. She came to Detroit for a few days later that summer. In the meantime I had met Betty Hawkins and my connections with those I met in service were shortly severed.

I found two pages in my diary, dated August 15, where I recorded some quotations that seemed worthwhile to me. Quotes from then:

The Rising Sun began to set at noon—noon was in the South Pacific. Night has come.
Delavan Sipes—that was my version of the end of the war.

Tools belong to the men that can use them.
“Kindred of the Dust” Peter B. Kyne, Chapter III

It takes a year to make a friend—you can lose one in an hour.
Chinese Origin

Loyalty and Courage are the basis of patriotism.
Courtesy is the basis of proper administration.
Diligence and thrift are the basis of efficiency.
Obedience is the basis of a sense of responsibility.
Orderliness and cleanliness are the basis of health.
Knowledge is the basis of usefulness to mankind.
Good will and kindliness are the basis of harmony.

Perseverance is the basis of all achievement
Generalissimo Chiang-Kai-Shek

" The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."
Franklin Delano Roosevelt

And there my dear children and grandchildren is an overview of my years of service in World War II. We have been involved in 2 wars since that time, some of them only lasting days. None have been so horrendous, nor involved so many people from so many different nations. In some ways we have left you a better world. In others, perhaps we have left you a worse one. What you do with what you have is what you will leave your children. You have many gigantic tasks for your generation and subsequent generations to tackle.

The environment sorely needs your attention. Clean energy sources not yet discovered by science must replace those which pollute. Disposal of trash and garbage must be guided toward 100% recycling just as nature does. Pollution must become a practice of the past.

The problems of peace among nations need be addressed with honesty and complete openness, and with sincere efforts by all, not to be instigators of war—it is our true friends whom we trust. Nations must strive toward a trust that does not involve treaties, but only agreements to strive for common goals that support all of humankind.

Differences of cultures must become the essence of the very diversity that makes for peace. The greatest power lies in cooperation.

Economics that permit exploitation of some countries for the elevation of other countries cannot be allowed to endure. If capitalism is to survive as the primary mode of exchange, then it must be recognized by the common people that business and industry will always seek sources of labor that are less expensive. The elevation of poorer societies and the degradation of wealthier societies will continue as long as companies seek wealth and power devoid of ethical concerns for humanity.

Enjoy the next fifty to one-hundred years. They are yours. You may use them to improve human life on the planet for the long term, or you may use them to improve human life on the planet only in the short term. Make informed decisions wisely.

My love to all of you.
Delavan

"Lest We Forget"

by

John Stancik, Jr.

Serial # 36735638
Tech 4 Sgt.
H.Q. Co. – 1177 Engineers

Written 2-24-2007
St. Joseph, Michigan

*NOTE: *** The photo with John Stancik's story in the book actually features a friend of his who was known as "Zuke" ****

These World War II Memories of events and dates were gleaned from 162 letters that I had sent to my girlfriend – Kay Carroll – during 3 years of World War II service.

She is now known as Mrs. John Stancik – my wife of 59 years.

"Ain't Love Grand."

I entered the military service in Feb. 1943, and was discharged in Feb. 1946. One year was served in the U. S., and two years in the South Pacific – namely – Guadalcanal, Manila, Philippines, Kyushu, and Nagasaki, Japan.

The Decoration and Citation section of my Discharge Records state that I qualified for 3 Overseas Bars, American Campaign Medal, Asiatic – Pacific Campaign Medal with a Bronze Star, the Philippine Liberation Ribbon with one Bronze Star, the Good Conduct Medals and the World War II Victory Medal. The Discharge Records also indicate that I qualified as an Expert with a 30 caliber machine gun, and Sharp Shooter with the M-1 Rifle. And finally, the army paid me $100.00 mustering out pay, and $4.40 travel pay to go from Camp Grant, Ill, to my home in Chicago.

I must tell you that even though I qualified as an expert on both weapons, I never had to shoot at the enemy, nor did they ever shoot at me. The 1177th Engrs. was a construction group that built bridges, road, docking facilities, quarter master depots, and landing strips for fighter aircraft. My rank in the survey party was that of instrument man.

Here is a picture of Stancik with Filipino movie star Leta Munoz. Actually Munoz's little brother Manuel said, "I want to be your Boy? By that he meant he would take care of my tent, clean my shoes and take my dirty clothes home to be washed."

Stancik discovered 40 years later--at Gilepsie's Drug Store when he ran into someone from the Phillipines that Leta Munoz had become a famous movie star.

Our group left the U. S. from San Francisco on March 6, 1944, and arrived March 26, 1944 at an island in the South Pacific called Guadalcanal. The 20 day ocean trip was quite an ordeal for a 19 year old city kid. The first shock was while I was at the ships rail, watching the shores of the U.S.A. fade in the distance. As I was looking at the water, I spotted 2 periscopes following our troop ship. Fortunately they were U.S. subs escorting our ship as we went to sea.

After 20 days at sea, I was glad to see land appear on the horizon. It was a nice green color and had low white puffy clouds over the island, and I began to visualize a welcoming committee of natives, dancing on the beach in their grass skirts, doing the Hula, and serving Mai-Tais to the G. I. Joes!

Reality set in after we worked our way down the ships cargo netting into the landing craft, and headed to the beaches of Guadalcanal. The only reason American fought for Guadalcanal was for a strip of land no bigger than Ross Airport, located at Benton Harbor, Michigan. The Japanese had cleared one of the few sections of flat land available, capable of building an airstrip to accommodate their fighter aircraft. It was a first priority that America use all its might to defeat the Japanese, to gain possession of that airstrip, which we later named Henderson Field.

When our outfit landed, the airfield was a mess. Our battleships and dive bombers had blasted the airfield and surrounding areas. The airstrip could no longer service the Japanese Air Force, and they had to give up this prime piece of property on Guadalcanal. Our Construction Co. took over from the Navy Seabees and completed restoration of Henderson Field.

Our first camp area on Guadalcanal was a swampy area next to Fighter Strip Runway #1, and was across the road from the cemetery for those brave souls who died in combat. It was a battle field cemetery, just mounds of dirt with a rifle and helmet marking the graves of kids like myself, only they never got home.

After Henderson Field was capable of accepting aircraft, our regiment's priorities shifted to bridge construction, road maintenance, and building medical facilities.

It was at this time that I was transferred to a new H.Q. Company. The H.Q. 1177 Engr. Regt. was located on part of the island known as Edson Ridge, or Bloody Ridge. This was an area of high ground

overlooking the jungle below. History reports that the battles fought here were the turning point of victory over the Japanese in the Solomon Islands. The U. S. Marines, and the Army Infantry will always be memorialized for their gallantry during the Battle of Guadalcanal.

I mentioned that one of our projects was building bridges across the three main rivers on Guadalcanal, namely the Tenaru, Lunga, and the Matanikau. We had to use the trees growing in the jungle for piers, decking, and bracing material. Most trees were coconut, however we also used mahogany trees.

While our bull dozers were clearing an area for a proposed Quarter Master Depot, we discovered a mahogany tree approximately 10' across. Our dozer operators decided to excavate on 3 sides of the base and build a ramp on the 4th side, hopefully to climb the ramp and buck the tree at a higher point and push the tree over. No luck!! Then the engineers drilled holes under the tree and packed them with dynamite. A lot of coral was blasted from under the base, but the tree didn't budge at all. Finally, the dozer went up the ramp. This time the tree came down!! The only problem was that this gigantic mahogany tree landed on top of another bulldozer working in the area and smashed it into scrap metal.

Once the tree was down, an Australian group had a huge saw mill capable of providing enough 12" x 12" x 12', and 3" x 12" x 12' timber to use as bridge supports and decking. I could have made a fortune if I could have shipped that mahogany back tot he states. We even used mahogany to build a small church on Bloody Ridge.

I didn't like my one year on Guadalcanal. It was either raining hard all day, or extremely hot and humid the next. Severe headaches and weight loss were common. I developed a case of malaria, with a temperature of 105°, from working in the jungle.

One day our project was to survey the coastline of a remote area on Guadalcanal, which was to be used as a firing range for the Army Artillery. As in many cases during wartime, a misunderstanding in orders place our survey crew downrange of a battery of 105 mm Howitzers. When the firing stopped, the beach sand had waves indicating the muzzle blast of the guns. The ringing in my ears didn't stop for 3 days, a common symptom of exposure to loud sounds. The result of this incident was 2 ruptured eardrums and permanent hearing loss in my high frequency range of speech sounds.

The war against Japan was going very well. We had victory after victory along the chain of islands, starting from Guadalcanal all the way to the Philippines.

Our work on Guadalcanal was finished, and on July 1, 1945. The 1177th Engr. Group left for parts unknown. After about 10 days at sea, we finally arrived at Manila, in the Philippines.

The Manila Harbor was a mess. All you could see were sunken Japanese ships, troop ships, battleships, destroyers and a small aircraft carrier. History states that the Army, Navy and Marine Corps air pilots had a field day shooting down Japanese aircraft over Manila. In fact, they call this encounter "The Turkey Shoot."

The City of Manila was in ruins! The street cars had all been burned by the Japs, and most of the railroads were destroyed. It was here in Manila that I saw the after-effects of the war. After getting to our new camp area late, after duty off-loading our equipment, I noticed one little Filipino boy about 8 or 9 years old watching me eat. I called him over and offered my mess kit which consisted of C Rations and some crackers. When he was finished eating, he said, I want to be your Boy? By that he meant he would take care of my tent, clean my shoes and take my dirty clothes home to be washed.

His name was Manuel Munoz. When he returned the next day, my dirty fatigues were spotless, and had

creases ironed in. Manuel was always at my tent at Reveille. After my morning chow, I'd bring back a mess kit of whatever was available for Manuel's breakfast. Life was good for both of us!!

One day Manuel said that his mother wanted to meet me, so one evening he took me to his home, which was just ½ mile from our campsite. When we arrived at his house we were greeted by a beautiful girl sitting on a couch, so I said "Good evening Mrs. Munoz." Manuel interrupted and said, "That's not my Mom, she's only my sister!"

"Life in Manila was getting better!" We did go on a few dates, however it was a custom to have a chaperon go along with the couple. Guess who I asked to be our chaperon? Manuel was my pal!!

Our outfit stayed in Manila about 3 months, during which I saw the greatest build-up of Army, Navy, and Marine forces in preparation for the invasion of Japan. As we all know now, after the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the invasion was not necessary. Japan surrendered.

Our commanding officer was a West Point man, and all the guys in our outfit had a suspicion that he wanted our outfit to be part of the occupation force. So here I am again, sitting on a beach on Lingayan Bay in the Philippines, waiting for the L.S.T.'s to take us to Japan.

This trip proved to be the most life threatening of my 3 years in the service. A group of about 5 L.S.T.'s pulled off the beach on Oct. 7, 1945 and set sail for Saseabo, Japan. On Oct. 9th, 1945, we ran into the heaviest seas in my entire army service. I later learned that a typhoon developed in the Caroline Islands and was expected to pass north of Taiwan in the East China Seas. However, on Oct. 8th, the storm took and unexpected turn veering north, directly toward Okinawa.

The typhoon's eye passed over Buckner Bay, where ships were presumed to be in safe harbor. Instead, the area received the storm's full fury. Winds gusted to nearly 140 mph, and 35' waves battered the military ships. "In all, 36 people perished, and nearly 150 more were injured or missing. Twelve ships sank, 32 were severely damaged, and 222 ships were grounded." (This last information was taken from an article in the Chicago Tribune by Chief Meteorologist Tom Skilling, in response to a request by a World War II sailor who was in the Typhoon area.)

ASK TOM WHY

Dear Tom,

I was in Okinawa in 1945 and remember a typhoon passing directly over us. Can you provide any storm details?

A.W. Schmidt
(ex-radioman 2nd class U.S.N.R.)

Dear A.W.,

You had the dubious honor of being in the direct path of Typhoon Louise. The storm developed in the Caroline Islands on Oct. 4, 1945, and was expected to pass north of Formosa (Taiwan) in the East China Sea.

However, on Oct. 8 the storm took an unexpected turn, veering north directly toward Okinawa. The typhoon's eye passed over Buckner Bay, where ships were presumed to be in safe harbor. Instead, the area received the storm's full fury. Winds gusted to nearly 140 m.p.h., and 35-foot waves battered the military's ships. In all, 36 people perished and nearly 150 more were missing or injured. Twelve ships sank, 32 were severely damaged and 222 were grounded.

Write to: ASK TOM WHY, 2501 Bradley Pl., Chicago, IL 60618 or asktomwhy@wgntv.com (Mail volume precludes personal response.)

MONDAY, JUNE 20

Newspaper article on typhoon.

The L.S.T. that I was on is a flat bottomed ship that did not cut into the waves, but went high up over and then slammed into the trough of the wave! After taking a lot of stress, the deck developed a split from rail to rail and the sailors on duty had to weld ½" metal bar stock to prevent further damage. I had a ring side seat of the action because the area of the L.S.T. used for bunking GI's was full when I came aboard. I slept in the back of a jeep, anchored topside, and could observe all that was going on. Some GI's below deck panicked and started abandon ship procedures.

I watched in humor as one extra fat GI got stuck in the narrow passage-way because he inflated his CO2 life preserver while has was still below deck. This of course created panic below deck, until someone behind the fat guy took out his bayonet and punctured the life preserver. 62 years later, I still laugh at this funny

incident during a very scary voyage at sea.

After landing in Japan, we traveled about 50 miles to Fukuoka, which was the location of the Japanese Naval Academy. The buildings were all first class construction, except for the toilet facilities, and no shower facilities.

Bathing was done in a separate building that consisted of a 30′ square pool of clear hot water, about 3′ deep. On the outside of the pool were several wooden buckets which were used to dip in the clean, hot water, pour it over your body, lather up, and then rinse by dipping the bucket back in the clear water. "That's the Japanese way." Our guys all jumped into the pool of hot water, took a bath, got out and toweled dry. Can you imagine what that pool of water looked like after 50-75 GI's took a bath, after being at sea for 2 weeks?

Fukuoka was situated about 60 miles from the atomic bombed city of Nagasaki. Our Engr. Survey Group did some work in Nagasaki, and I have never forgotten what it looked like. Nothing was left except the grid pattern of streets. There were no building structures standing. We did see a few blobs of molten steel, which formerly were shopkeepers' safes.

On Dec. 11th, 1945, I was transferred to a higher headquarters, the 5201st Engr. Construction Brigade, and promoted to Sgt T-3, Survey Party Chief. Maybe this was a good sign for me, because my home address in Chicago was 5201.

I wrote Kay, my girlfriend, a letter on Dec. 23, 1945, that I had enough points to start my discharge journey home. On Feb. 6, 1946, I sent Kay a telegram from Seattle, Washington: "Arrived safely, expect to see you soon! Don't attempt to contact or write me. Love Johnnie."

On Feb. 12, 1946, the U. S. Govt. gave me $4.40 travel pay, for train fare from Camp Grant, Ill, to Chicago, Ill.

Other Memories

1. George Hucko
   High school pal, inducted together. Separated at Camp Grant, and reunited 2 years later in Manila (See photos.)

2. Corky Corwin
   Always talking about his girlfriend in Pasadena, Calif., who was going to be a Movie Star. A letter he let me read started, "Dear Sweetheart." Poor Corky.

3. Zukarelli
   The Don Juan and Mr. Clean of our barracks. Butt of numerous pranks.
   1. Who put Jap skeleton parts under his neatly made cot blanket?
   2. Who saturated his cot with Evening in Paris Cologne. (It was his girl friends favorite cologne.)
   3. The Salami his mother sent him, which arrived covered with green hairy mold, due to the Guadalcanal heat and moisture. (As his buddy, I volunteered to dispose of it properly, so he wouldn't have to touch the mold.) Boy was it ever delicious!

4. Elmer Fleiman
   Got bored working with our survey group on Guadalcanal, and volunteered for combat duty. On our

way to Manila we found Elmer working the docks, loading ships on which we were heading for combat areas.

5. Leta Munoz
   Forty years after leaving Manila, I learned that she was a movie star after the war. This was verified by email computer obtained by my grand-daughter, Kelly Nowicki.

6. Tommy Noonan
   Exact replica of the Notre-Dame Mascot, or the Sad-Sack character in Cartoons. The smallest GI issued clothing was 3 sizes too large for Tommy. Always had stories to tell.

7. Cesspool
   A stray dog that adopted our company on Guadalcanal. His favorite trick was to pee on your leg, while you stood at attention during inspection. Cesspool and Stancik pulling guard duty at 3 am, serenading the troops. I sang and he howled!! No sleep for the troops that night.

DOROTHY (HAGUE) STOUT

I was born in Mimico, Ontario in 1919 and grew up in the village of Swansea, Ontario. Both are suburbs of Toronto which is now part of the whole city of Toronto. I had two sisters and two brothers. Ah, my mother passed away when I was 2 years old. And my father remarried. Consequently, I was raised by my stepmother whose name was Dorothy Wells.

I grew up, as I say, in the village of Swansea, went to Swansea Public School; then ultimately to Runnymede High School and finally Weller Business College. I graduated from there in 1939 just shortly before the beginning of World War 11.

Well, the war started in 1939 and in the first part of January, I went down to the Steel Company of Canada and applied as a secretary. I was accepted and I worked there as a secretary until I ultimately took a man's job and. interestingly enough, I got a man's salary-- $35 a week. My job primarily was to expedite the orders. The plant where I worked made the nuts and bolts and rivets and that type of thing so it was very important to get those products to the manufacturers. The interesting thing about that was, at the beginning of the war, because of the variety of threads of the nuts and bolts, it was important to standardize the number of threads in them. Which they did. They had a meeting in Pittsburgh and standardized the threads of all the nuts and bolts at that time.

Goodness, I was there until 1944 when I saw an ad in the paper for a secretary in New York City. I answered it, and with my mother[1]s help, I filled out an application longhand in those days - and sent it in. I later received word that I had been accepted. Plus the fact that, to my surprise, I had been cleared by the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), which I didn't realize was part of the whole program. I found that out from a neighbor of mine. I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't know what I was getting into. All I was doing was answering an ad in the paper. As time went on, of course, I realized what it was all about. I finally got my act together. I got my passport, the ticket, and, on the weekend, headed for New York City.

I got on a train-- of course-- in those days, I think I had a lower berth and landed in New York City over the weekend and took a cab to the Henry Hudson Hotel on west 57th Street. I checked in and was told that I was going to share a room with three or four other gals. It happened to be the bridal suite up on the 22nd floor with a beautiful view of the Hudson River. In addition, we had a good view of the Queen Mary and the Queen Elizabeth as they plowed back and forth across the ocean transporting the troops.

On Monday morning, we got a cab, all of us, and went down to Rockefeller Center. We took the escalator up to the mezzanine floor, walked down the hall and into the office where we were met by the supervisor. She gave us the basics as far as what we would be doing . We were trained for approximately two weeks. None of us had a clue what we were doing. The first thing she taught us primarily was to keep quiet. Those were the first words that we heard.

"Under no circumstances or anything else were we to divulge what we did, where we did it or how we did it. When asked what we did, we should just simply say we were secretaries. And if asked for whom we worked, it would be the BSC which is British Security Coordination."

(The British Security Coordination (BSC) Office headed by William Stephenson, headquartered in Rockefeller Center, became an umbrella organization that would, by the end of the conflict, represent MI5, SIS

(Secret Intelligence Service) and other British agencies. The BSC worked closely with William Donovan who led the Office of Strategic Services (OSS)–the precursor CIA.)

The two of them (Stephenson and Donovan) worked closely. They basically had access to Churchill and Roosevelt on, you might say, a minute's notice. They were well respected and they traveled back and forth, frequently across the ocean during the war, collaborating information and all that types of thing.

Interestingly enough, Rockefeller was generous enough to allow us to use the mezzanine floor free. Consequently, that was where we worked, and so it was too far to bring help or assistance from England so because Canada was a part of the British colonies or empire We worked around the clock. Our shifts were 8 to 4, 4 to 12, 11 to 7, and graveyard, 12 to 8.We got paid on a weekly basis.

The office itself, I guess you'd say in a way it was similar to a classroom. There were a battery of women. Probably, twenty or thirty women, all approximately the same age. First of all, our training period consisted of learning the Morse Code--as well as what they call a bi-post tape. That was your teletype tape. The information would come across the wire on a very narrow tape about three quarters of an inch wide and it would be in Morse and it would come just come across and we had to type that up in a standard form. Instead of typing words, you would type a bunch of letters or words or a combination of both. It did consist of five, I say, five letters, or five numbers, or a mixture that would be a word and they would be five of those across on a sheet of paper and there would be five down and that was the form in which we typed them up. Then we had to check that and it had to be perfect. You could not make a mistake. We would type it and that would be transferring some of it onto tape, what they called a five pulse tape and that was probably, well, not quite an inch wide. And it had five pulse because the code was made up of five little dots up and down, that came across and the tape we would type up the tape. The tape, it would come down on the paper but at the same time there would be a tape connected with it and that tape would be put on the teletype machine and that would be transmitted to wherever it was supposed to go. And that's the best way I can tell you because beyond that nobody gave us any more information.

I can't tell you where it came from except to say that it would show up. And if there was a lot of action going on, we had tape till it was coming out of our eyebrows because it would be coming in from all over–wherever the agents were. We would just get this tape or the information and it would be in Morse and then we would type it up, go teletype and then it would finally be decoded. And that was that was the process of which you were just one little cog, really, but we had to have it right. There was no allowance for any mistakes.

Consequently it was a very demanding job. I sometimes wonder now how I did it, but nevertheless, as time went on, and I'll just inject this, because when you are typing stuff that doesn't make any sense and your finding it all over, it never mattered whether the boss made sense or not. After that, let alone the punctuation. But, no, we worked around the clock and I don't recall that there was much but we did have a rest period, though, but it was not very long, it was just one of those things, you know, that sort of relieved the stress. That would be about the size of it.

Ultimately we made friends and a couple of us left the hotel. We were only allowed to stay there for a month. We found an apartment, not too far from Rockefeller Center, so that we could walk to work. However, at night, they provided us with cab fare to take a cab home or go into work.

We did get a break for meals, depending what shift you were on. I have to say I saw New York City at just about any hour of the day or night. It was sometimes as late as 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning when some of us would venture out to find someplace to eat. Wasn't a terribly great thing to do, but we would do it just the same, just to get out.

Because we were located on the mezzanine floor, we had a bird's eye view of all the parades. We were right across from St. Patrick's Cathedral and all the parades, Santa Claus, you name it, why we got to see all of it.

They didn't encourage us in any way, shape or manner to become attached to, pardon my saying so, the American group. The whole point is that, Canadians were hired for this job because we were in the war in 1939. Stephenson had this whole operation going before that. He recognized the importance of information getting to the place and consequently there were many people fleeing Europe came to the United States or to Canada. And they were anxious to go back and do what they could to defeat Hitler; with the result that the whole operation came into being and the United States at that time was not in the war.

Interestingly enough, Rockefeller was generous enough to allow us to use the mezzanine floor free. Consequently, that was where we worked, and so it was too far to bring help or assistance from England so because Canada was a part of the British colonies or empire.

I'll be honest with you, and excuse me for saying so, but I had a good time. It was a big quite an incentive those days to go down to New York City Plus the fact that it was more money than what I was getting even though I got a man¹s salary at the steel company. I climbed the Stature of Liberty--I can¹t tell you how many times. Friends would come down and we would arrange to see New York. Of course, Easter, it was gorgeous in New York City. It was everything that you kind of saw in pictures.

Another highlight was one evening, about a half a dozen of us, all who worked together were all part of the group who were entertained by a group from Canada at the Roosevelt Hotel. We were entertained for dinner and dancing there and Guy Lomardo was very gracious when he found that Canadians were there and he came over and spoke with us and autographed the menu, which I still have. It was a beautiful evening and of course we couldn't stay very long. We told him that we would turn into pumpkins if we didn't get away before 12 o'clock. We went directly from there to the office.

When some of the Canadians were returning from overseas, we got up about 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning. Carol and I did, and went down to the station and passed out, coffee. So we were we very definitely connected with the military. I enjoyed a beautiful Christmas party which was a formal ball by the Anzac Club which was what you might see Australian, New Zealand--just like the USO. That was another very lovely thing.

On the whole, I was pretty lucky. Most of us took advantage of the things to see in New York. At Easter time it was absolutely glorious. Fifth Avenue was all decorated with gorgeous hydrangeas in all the windows. It was just absolutely gorgeous. And we really, Carol, when we had time, we took advantage of that and because it was the wartime my friend, she couldn't quit smoking and I remember we had our apartment and it was a cold snowy night and she wanted a cigarette but didn't have it so we went down to the local drugstore and she bought loose tobacco and papers. We sat on the floor in the apartment and she struggled to roll a cigarette. Well, it was a disaster. That's all I can tell you.

I remember lining up for nylons. They were at a shortage. And we found out they were being made available, I don't even remember exactly where, but I remember lining up to get I think we were allowed one pair of whatever it was so anyways I remember doing that. The dreadful rayon ones? I remember wearing those, too. Oh, they were awful. When they got a little spot of water on them. They were terrible they would blow up like a little bubble. Yeah! They were they were awful.

We had ration coupons and you just used them as you could Uh, yeah, I when I think back, I don¹t remember having coupons. I'm sure we must have to get certain things, but on the whole we really managed very nicely and there was a grocery store by and, uh, we seemed to we worked very well together and it didn't

seem to pose any problem.

They didn't encourage us to become involved with pardon my the fact with the Americans. I do recall one instance. You got to remember that it was a quite a bag of gals and all in a lot of ways we were from all over. There were some from out west in Canada. Some of them had never been away from home. I do recall one situation and we were told right off the bat that we must not talk about our jobs or do anything that would jeopardize the thing. This one gal, I think she was from out Winnipeg or someplace and when she came down, why, she decided she was going to have a good time. Well, sadly they didn't encourage that, so they found she was doing a lot of partying and they went up and they packed her up and sent her home just like that.

Fairly stringent rules. They didn't waste any time and they didnt want to risk anything just the smallest thing. You just didn't talk about it. Just kept very quiet about that. Seriously, in all honesty, in fact I don't think I saw a newspaper during the whole time I was down there. I'm not saying I didn't, but I don't recall any. There was no television at that time, so consequently whatever news there was it was over the radio. Personally, we didn't take a newspaper. They weren't part of your everyday life

After Easter, I went up to Camp X. My job stayed the same at Camp X. Now Camp X was set up by Stephenson and Donovan and the whole group. They had to find a place, I mean an isolated spot, where they could train spies, agents to go behind the lines. This is where many of those who came from Europe volunteered to go up to the camp where they underwent very, very strict training. They didn't foster friendships among them. You were there to do a job and when you left there you went to your assignment.

Most of the agents, I have to say, hardly any of them came back. Some of them were prominent people. I can't remember off the top of my head, but they would be people from Poland and France all your European countries and, yes, from the Far East, from India and all those countries. Because when England declared war, then the whole British Commonwealth was automatically involved. Australia, New Zeeland, all of it, They were all summoned. We were all in this period. So it was in more sense a global, really a global war.

As far as Camp X is concerned. It's still there. I mean it's located between Toronto and Oshawa on Lake Ontario. It's right on the shores and it's a little, probably about as far as from here (Buchanan, Michigan) to Grand Rapids or that distance. It was an army camp with all the rules and regulations attached. They set up the transmitters and, in fact, the towers are still there. You can still see them. We were not allowed to leave camp without permission. We were under army rules.

We were the only two women civilians on the, on the base. There were men who were civilians; some who actually operated the decoding equipment right there, and that consisted of a room about this size with all the stuff in it. Huge. We followed the same pattern around the clock work. The only thing was, because it was the last one, there wasn't anything to do when you had time off. No, because we were on Lake Ontario, some of us did brave going swimming once in a while, but it was awfully cold. It didn't seem to matter what the weather was, summer or not. We did have one sad occasion. Somebody went in and drowned.

Talk about weddings, as a matter of fact there was one couple that got married while I was at, up at the camp It was an interesting wedding. I think it was an Armenian wedding if I'm not mistaken. It was a little different, anyway. But this was up at the camp, this was not in New York. They were both part of the operation in that sense and they were both Canadians.

When I would go home I had to get permission. When you went into Oshawa by jeep and took the bus to Toronto or wherever and there, of course, you would get picked up and that's it. Presumably they didn't know where I was, but I'm sure you don't have be very smart to take somebody down to the station to take a bus to Oshawa. Nevertheless, because of its isolation, you really had to do a little looking, you know to find it. And

that, in itself, took a little time, let's put it that way.

One time, I'll tell you this, I went home and I forgot something. So I took the bus back to Oshawa. I didn't dare call a cab or anything so I walked from Oshawa to the camp. I think it was five miles. Oh, my goodness. And when I got there I was duly reprimanded for having done it, but I had to get what I needed, but they forgave me. In any case I didn't upset anything too much. But that in itself was another experience.

I recall on VE Day when everybody was celebrating and we were isolated out in the boonies. And I remember when I came over the wire, suddenly everything just went "Plop!" We all quit and we went down to the mess hall and fortunately the chef was in a good mood so he cooked us a special dinner and we had a big time, we got up on the tables and we danced. It was the only thing we could do.

Later that night I think we walked down the railway tracks because there weren't, we knew there weren't, any trains going by. But that was our celebration. On the other hand, VJ Day, as I recall, I was home at the time. I had gotten leave so I knew when I went back to camp that it was all over, I mean, just the whole operation quit just as fast as it started. It disappeared just as fast as it started.

Let's see, VJ Day was in August and I was home and, so I didn't have a job. then I was trying to make up my mind what to do. Having been away from home it wasn't so simple to go back. Of course in those days, why, it just wasn't the proper thing for a young lady to get her own apartment or anything. So, again, I saw an add in the paper for a secretary in Ottawa in the Department of External Affairs and because I had been cleared and gone through the whole rigmarole, I was accepted almost like that.
So I went to Ottawa and I lived with my uncle and I started work, as I say, at the Department of External Affairs. At that time they were beginning to open up, re-open, the embassies around the world and allocating different ambassadors to those places. Consequently they needed secretaries for the whole thing so again I underwent a period of training, such as how to, prepare passports, and everything that goes with it.
Many of my friends, some went to Russia; some went to Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. All around at that time. I did have an opportunity to go to Czechoslovakia and also to Bogotá, Colombia. I wasn't interested but I wanted to go to the Far East because then I'd get a trip across Canada and down the west coast and I'd end up in Tokyo. When the opportunity came along, in the summer of 1946, I accepted an assignment to our Canadian Embassy in Tokyo and I left Ottawa and then went by train across Canada to Vancouver and down the west coast to San Francisco.

I had to get all the shots for malaria, the whole bit, which I did. I arrived in San Francisco and I had a couple of days. I arrived in Vancouver and I had a friend there and I spent a couple of days with her and then went down to San Francisco and I had a couple of days there, uh, finally boarded, it was a converted troop ship. It was the General Gordon.

It was a troop ship a converted troop ship. I shared the cabin with I think it was 16 other people and uh, we stopped in Hawaii and I managed to get a bus tour and zoomed around Hawaii and saw the, the blow hole and all those places. I had a marvelous time. I ate bananas. Stuff like that. Then, of course, I got a lei and arrived in Yokahama. We went through the tail end of a typhoon, which was interesting. The ship went up and down and down and up and there were only so many lifeboats and they said, "Well, you'll have to swim for it."

Anyhow, we got there and arrived in Tokyo and, at the time there was nobody there to meet me. The guy, Dr. Patterson, was late, so my American friends, dear souls they were, said. "Don't worry, Dorothy. We'll take care of you."

And they did. We drove to Tokyo. Along the main drag and at that point it was just one long series of factories. All that was standing were chimneys. Oh. Chimneys of the factories and so that's all that was left from

Yokahama to Tokyo. And the station, the main station in Tokyo was badly hit. Trying to think of who it was that did it--the Flying Tigers and Chennault, the head of the Flying Tigers. Anyway, they showed us where he was just buried and taken out different areas in Japan.

I arrived in Tokyo and I was eventually taken to the Maranuchi Hotel which was, and I think today, is a very beautiful hotel although the room was probably, well really not much bigger than a good sized clothes closet. We had a basin and a clothes closet in the room and I think that was all. The other facilities were down the hall. And they were public. If you wanted to take a bath, the whole thing, it was down the hall. That was the way it was.

Eventually, I was taken out to the Canadian Embassy, which even today, is considered one of the loveliest there is there. It was basically built and underwritten by a very wealthy Canadian. I don't recall his name. But it is still very beautiful. Golden ceilings and all that good stuff. Beautiful. The office that we worked in was very pleasant. The whole compound, plus the fact that we had guards at the gates, too. Not just anybody got in there. It was very hot during the summer and no air conditioning. We had one of your old style fans that didn't do any good. It did move the air from here to there but that was the extent of it.

And I have to say that my tenure in Tokyo was interesting because I used to see General Macarthur pretty much on a daily basis because we were driven to and from the hotel to the embassy over brick roads so we literally bounced and let me tell you, the jeeps had no springs so consequently you got the full benefit of the road.

There were only, if I recall, three gals at the embassy. There was me and a gal by the name of Betty Brown and another one, Mabel McFarland.

She was a great help because her father was a Canadian and her mother was Korean. Mabel spoke Japanese and she was, interestingly enough, she was repatriated on the Gripsom. When Japan took over the embassy and they had to stay in the Embassy at the time and then they were brought back to Canada on the Gripsom. But to get back to my stay, there were always parties going on.

There was the 4th of July US celebration. And we celebrated the 1st of July so we get two holidays. Very nice. Then, of course, we had Labor Day and then we had two Thanksgivings because the Canadian Thanksgiving was the second Monday in October and the American is in November. So that was interesting. And while I was there I had the opportunity to attend the war crimes trials. I saw Tojo -and I saw the other boys that were involved in the war. They were an interesting bunch. They didn't have a lot of the old, you know, big stuff, whatever you want to call it. They were pretty humble as much as the Japanese ever is, particularly the men. I got to see as much of Japan. I went skiing up in the Japanese Alps. At the same time, I went down in the southern part to, what was the name of the place, well, anyway, down in the southern section there for a weekend and I rode one of the trains at that time and didn't you took your food with you.

You slept in Japanese style, whatever it was. I remember sleeping on the floor. Tutomi- sleep on the floor. And a little Japanese gal, of course, knocks on whatever, and she's got tea for breakfast and this type of thing. I did get to see Hiroshima. I saw Kobe which was a big naval base. I swam in the sea.

I saw as much of Japan as I could. It didn't cost me anything, which on the other hand was good except that the meals were iffy. You didn't know whether you were going to eat or not, but at that point you don't worry very much. I got to saw, to see, the big Buddha at Komakura, I guess. I think that's where it is. But it's one big Buddha. You might say its something like the only way I can explain it is probably the attraction is probably the same as the Statue of Liberty. People even climb up inside it.

It's not too far from Tokyo and Yokahama. I was there almost two years. I was lucky to, as I say, I got to see a lot of the ambassadors. The French were always having parties and we would get invited primarily because we were the only Canadian women. Women were a shortage. Always a good thing. So we used to get to go to most of the parties and they were beautiful. In fact, when the present queen, I think it was when she became engaged, anyway, the British Embassy had one of the most beautiful parties I ever attended.

They literally rolled out the red carpet and I do mean it and they had two or three bands and that was my first experience with macaroni salad. I never tasted macaroni salad, but nevertheless, I can recall particularly going to the dance and you had to bring somebody. I think I had a little New Zealand guy. He was a colonel, whatever. It doesn't matter. Driving up to the door and jumping out. Have you ever tried to jump out of a Jeep in a long dress? It was kind of interesting, but we made it and being announced, "Miss Dorothy Hague of the Canadian Embassy."

Oh, it was formal, very, very formal. Very beautiful. This is Queen Elizabeth? Yes. The present one. Before she became queen. Yes. She was a princess at that point in time. It was just in honor of her. This was a celebration.

I remember Christmas particularly because the embassy, as I say, is very beautiful. Well it had the ballroom with gold leaf ceilings and it had a beautiful dining room. I don't know how many of us were at the dinner and it was beautiful just and all the people, oh Canadians generally, were invited for dinner for Christmas Eve and they had one big room had two great big fireplaces, one at either end. We had dinner. It was a very formal affair and then those who wanted to go to the evening service, why, we were driven to service at the theatre.

We went to the Imperial Theatre. And that was absolutely beautiful. I never saw anything like it. It was just absolutely gorgeous. Of course, being an Episcopalian, why the robes were really something.

Another experience I had was Dr. Normand who was the ambassador at the time we all went to the theatre to see Gilbert and Sullivan. It was the one where the little Japanese gal. Anyway, there was some controversy over whether they should show it or not because of the culture and again, it was interesting because, at that time the Japanese didn't clap to show approval. I'm trying to remember just what they did, whether they stamped their feet, but anyway, they didn't clap. It was a marcato. And again, oh, the costumes were so gorgeous. Everything was just, you know the brocade and everything just so beautiful. I'll never see anything like that again. But that was really a rare experience. I also attended a bunraku. It is a form of theatre and there again, the actors, those who participate are life-size puppets that are manipulated by people who are all dressed in black. The show was all day. We went at 10 o'clock in the morning, and the Japanese, of course, bring their lunch and then it begins again around three o'clock in the afternoon. I think we got home about 5 o'clock. A big day it was. That was another experience. The other one was I went to a movie. One of the littlest Australians or whoever was with me, but I remember going to the Ernie Pyle Theatre In a rickshaw and we pulled up to the theatre and my friend got out and the guy is on the bicycle, he got out and I ended up in the road.

It just went right up, you know, with me up in the air. Of course there were apologies all over the place and I got out and we still went in to the movie. And the thing of it was, because the Japanese basically are small people, the seats are small and there's no space in front for your feet, so we used to sit up in the gallery and put our feet over the top of the of the seats in front and put them on the seat ahead of us.

I was home for awhile, and again I wasn't sold on staying home and so I have, or had, a sister that lived in Carmen Hills near Chicago out in one of the western suburbs, so I decided to come down here. And, so, again, that was interesting because in today's society I had to produce some proof of my health. They took an x-ray of my lungs, I had to have a passport, of course, and I had to have a written deal to prove that I would not

be a ward of the state from my brother-in-law who wrote the letter and said that he could take care of me if I couldn't find any work. And I was given $100 in US currency plus twenty-five in Canadian. And I arrived here, I think, it was on a Friday and on Monday morning I went downtown in Chicago to Denter's Placement Center and they looked at my overall and sent me to two or three places and I ended up as a legal secretary to the vice-president and general consul to the Chicago Northshore and Milwaukee Railway Company.

I started to work there and, ah I worked there for a period of time. And then I decided to change jobs. I ended up living at McCormick YWCA up 10 Hundred North in Chicago and I went to work for McCormick Estates at that time which was a company which handled the McCormick family, the reaper family business and the whole works. That was interesting.

Following that I went to work for Chicago Rawhide Manufacturing Company over on Goose Island and I worked for an engineer, a sales engineer. And to back up a bit, uh, working for the vice-president of Offshore Railway. We got married. I married the boss. However, we didn't get married; we became engaged, and we didn't get married, however, until 1954, and my, sort of my reason for moving, changing jobs, was nobody knew we were engaged. We weren't about to tell anybody; it was none of their business, so consequently we did get married I know it was a period of time that there were certain circumstances that had to be resolved, and so I ended up, as I say I ended up marrying him and if you want to know how I got to Buchanan

Well, my husband, in his lifetime, he, when he come out of law school he went to work for the law firm of Goodrich, Fitch and Bradley, and, as time went on, it ended up that, the one that I knew was Mr. Bradley. He was the last of the original firm, and, uh, they had no children. And they were a very wealthy family. He and his wife. She was wealthy in her own right. She came from out in Iowa. And the Bradleys were well, you, know, well off. And Fred would accompany them around. They kind of adopted him in a sense.. After she passed away. I remember him. And I remembered her because I came over to see her. And she always wanted him to have this home here in Buchanan. It was a vacation home down. They had a home on Martha's Vineyard and they decided that that was too far to go so they bought this place which she used a summer home. Well, as time went on, why, as I say, she always wanted Fred to have it. Fred kept saying, no, he didn't want it and everything. And then I met her and then, of course, after we were married he was telling me and I said, "Well, I said, If she ever asks you again, don't say no."

So that's how we ended up because after she passed away, we basically inherited the property and along with it, of course, we had to take it all apart and put it together again and we although we got it in 1950. I think she died in 1956, we moved over in 1960. And my son went all the way from kindergarten all the way through high school at the high school up here. And that's pretty much how we got here. He's grown up and he's doing his thing and I'm doing mine. Thank you so much. Have I covered the whole plate?

DEAN C. SWEM (1917-2005)
"A GREAT PATRIOT, A LIFE SAVED FOUR TIMES"

Dean Swem was born and raised in Galien, Michigan, and he resided there until joining the US Army in 1942. After his wartime service, he returned to Buchanan, Michigan. He resumed what was to become a long and distinguished career with Clark Equipment Co.
The following are excerpts from chapters of his book.

Enlistment February 1942, Basic Training June 1942, Parachute School July 1942

Pearl Harbor had just happened. A patriotic impulse sent me to South Bend, Indiana, to enlist in what I hoped would be the US Marine Corps. I thought that it had the best-looking uniforms of any of the services. As I entered the door, I saw two of the fattest gunnery sergeants that certainly ever existed.

"What the hell do you want?"

I replied, "What do you think? I want to join the Marines."

"Nope you don't pass, you've got malocclusion."

It was much later when I learned that all I had was a very common overbite of the front teeth. I went down the hall to the Navy Recruiters.

"What can I do for you," I was asked.

When I said, "I want to join the Navy" I was told to take off my shoes and socks.

"Sorry buddy but you've got a transverse metatarsal, the Navy can't use you."

I must be a human wreck, I thought. I spotted the US Army Recruiting office and entered," I want to join the goddamn Army!"

The sergeant with a kindly smile replied, "You've come to the right place."

I breathed a sigh of relief. At least the guy acted civilized.

"We have just the right thing for you. A brand new outfit is being formed at Ft. Benning GA. It's called the parachute troops."

I asked suspiciously, "What do those guys do?" "Why, they jump out of airplanes."

"Wait a minute" was my reply, "I don't believe I want any part of that business."

"You haven't heard the rest, these soldiers are going to be the elite of the services. They live in the permanent bricks at Benning. They never pull KP or walk guard duty and they live like kings."

Basic Infantry Training begins and ends at Camp Croft, SC

The troop train bearing the contingent of personnel drafted or enlisted at South Bend, Indiana, chugged along from the Terre Haute comfort stop to Camp Croft, South Carolina--a place no one aboard had ever heard of. The parachute school volunteers hung closely together. They had been called aside earlier and addressed by a real live paratrooper from Ft. Benning He explained that we were to expect very, very, hard physical training at Ft. Benning and would be subject to extremely demanding discipline.

He concluded with the remark, "If you have heard that West Point is tough, just wait, that is a kindergarten compared to the Parachute School!"

The basic infantry trainees had learned much in their three months stay at Camp Croft. They had good and patient officers and NCO instructors from whom they learned the intricacies of Army life. They had learned how to make a bed, with the hospital fold, military discipline, close order and rifle drill, calisthenics exercises, how to use the mail, laundry, war bond purchases, etc. They had heard lectures on the code of military conduct, personal hygiene, army regulation, had an IQ test and an aptitude test. They had by virtue of all this been awarded a certificate stating that they were indeed a "Qualified Infantryman" and could represent the "Queen of Battles" (as the Infantry is called) in armed combat.

Parachute School, Ft. Benning GA – June-July 1942

The platoon of parachute volunteers had entrained at Camp Croft for the one day ride to Columbus GA and Ft. Benning. Ft. Benning was the home of The Infantry School and is to this day. As the school later expanded, it became known as The Airborne School. Volunteers had a minimum height of 5 ft 6 inches, with a maximum of 6 ft 2 inches. They could be no more than 185 pounds and must be free of any heart of blood pressure problems. After off- loading at the Fort's railhead, the group was trucked to two story barracks just above Lawson Field.

Training included jumping off eight foot platforms, jumping out of a "mock up" door of a C47 airplane fuselage to make a proper exit for jumping from a plane in flight. The wooden landing training tower, 34 ft tall was next; then the long anticipated 250 foot towers. Other training included the wing machine and chute packing. Then came the long awaited qualification week wherein the class would jump once each day until the five qualifying jumps were completed. Most of the Indianapolis group was ready and eager to get to it.

This jump was the culmination of all the hopes, dreams and desires that had commenced when they heard the qualified parachutist speak at Camp Croft. Swem earned his wings with his five jumps in five days yelling "Geronimo" after kicks on the leg by the jumpmaster. What exhilarating feelings Swem had! Graduation day had finally arrived! The culmination of all the hopes and dreams of the candidates who had gone through such a long and arduous training program to get there. It seemed almost anticlimactic that it had really come about. Polished boots glistened as legs swung in a brisk cadence. Once inside the platoon was ushered to the front and middle sections of seats, overseas caps removed, and the troopers sat in respectful silence. It was a solemn occasion with no applause until all had received their wings. Then as the ceremonies were completed and the Colonel and his aides left the stage, a tremendous roar went up, each man holding his certificate over his head, waving it wildly and yelling like mad. The platoon would next move to the dreaded Flying Pan area south of Lawson field not far from the Chattahoochee River

504 Parachute Infantry July 1942-November 1942

The new graduates were indeed going to the Frying Pan--a barren, treeless area completely at the mercy of the hot Georgia sun. It was also quite remote from the Main Post of Ft. Benning and a good long run from Lawson Field. The platoon bitched loudly in true GI tradition and immediately dubbed the area as "the a-hole of creation." Swem was granted a furlough and wasted no time in packing. When he changed into his class A dress uniform replete with the coveted silver parachute wings and glistening jump boots spit shined to perfection, grabbed his barracks bag in one hand to turn into the company supply room for safe keeping, grabbed his ditty travel bag in the other and off he went. Once in South Bend he made a phone call to Buchanan and in about fifteen minutes in walked his fiancée Geneva Babcock and her sister Ruthie. What a joyous occasion as they met the soldier, now a super-duper paratrooper that they had last seen six months before. Talk about a very, very lucky guy! The furlough flew by filled with visits to old friends and relatives. After Geneva got off work, it was party time down at and along the shores of Lake Michigan.

Swem made the deadline back to base with literally five minutes to spare. The unit had moved to the Alabama area across the Chattahoochee River a few days prior. After the harrowing experience on locating his unit following furlough, Swem and his fellow troopers began to sense an upbeat tempo in the intensity of training. The Alabama area was not too much of an improvement from the Frying Pan. The training was routine, except for additional training on the light (30 cal) machine gun. Since Swem was promoted to Corporal one week after return from furlough, he was assigned as an assistant squad leader. A subtle sense of urgency began to be felt by the troopers in the training schedule. There were more night problems with the squad as a team and for individuals. It was taught that darkness is the friend of the infantry man for cover and concealment. Compass problems had to be mastered, no exceptions. Knife and bayonet use were emphasized. Finally the word came down. "Get your gear in shape. We are moving out soon to FT. Bragg NC." Soon the word came down that Swem was to go to Jumpmaster School, a big surprise for him! The initial chore was to ride the door in a C-47, pull in the static lines after jumpers exited and look for any deficiencies in the jump routine. The word soon came down to draw new stencils for barracks bags and other personal gear. Shots, too, were scheduled for the next day. This could mean only one thing, a big move was coming! In a few days of feverish activity it became clear that the 504 regiment was shipping out overseas. Swem, however. being slated for OCS, was sent out as a cadre to form the 501st PIR and organize at Camp Toombs GA. Others were called from Swem's platoon, and to his amazement, Swem was going as a First Sergeant.

501 Parachute Infantry November 1942-May 1943

The cadre train for the 501st Parachute Infantry steamed out of Fayetteville, NC in early November 1942 headed for Toccoa, GA. None of the cadre had ever heard of the place before. Later, many wished that they had never heard of it. At all. The non-coms were asked which company that they would prefer to be assigned. Swem and pals Tippit and Field chose CO G, as they had been in that company in the 504th. The trucks dropped the cadre men off at a large drill field where the new commander addressed them. The recruits began to arrive at Camp Toccoa. Later this group formed the nucleus of the 501 PIR that were surrounded at Bastogne to make history there. As the spinal meningitis quarantine wore on after Christmas, the end appeared to be in sight. Swem decided to risk detection and call his fiancée, Geneva, for her birthday on January 5, 1943. Along with this call came a marriage proposal. She scurried to make plans, to quit her job and make travel arrangements. Swem found a room with Mrs. Hattie Walter of 47 Forrest Ave. in Toccoa. Mrs. Walters made arrangements with Rev. Dr. Patterson of the First United Methodist Church, and Geneva arrived on the train on January 8th for the wedding on January 9th. Swem marveled at her fortitude and faith to take all this on. She would leave her childhood home, travel all that way to a future that could be uncertain in wartime.

Back to Ft. Benning with the 501 Parachute Infantry

The rigorous training phase had drawn to a close. Now it was time to take the unit to Ft. Benning for the Jump School portion of becoming full fledged paratroopers. The tough mountain basic training at Camp Toccoa had hardened the recruits physically to the point that Jump School offered no real physical challenges. Their initial jump from the mock tower on arrival had conditioned them fairly well. The word had come down that the 501 PIR was moving to Camp Mackall NC; really the rear end of Ft. Bragg nearby. Mackall was named for a young paratrooper from that area between Southern Pines and Rockingham NC who was killed earlier in Europe.

Replacement Depot and 513 PIR August 1943- November 1945

Swem, on track to graduate from OCS after ninety days, was derailed by the "buddy sheet" where candidates rated each other. Written up by a slovenly buddy for "excessive cursing" Swem was denied his commission by a grossly overweight, "retread full bird" Colonel who denied him the opportunity to face his accuser. Little did the Colonel know that later some good old-fashioned cursing would get some scared troopers out of the snow and on to fight and seize the objective at the assault on Flamierge Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge. Most of the other "bust-outs" shipped out to a Replacement Depot at Camp Wheeler near Macon Ga. Assignment from here was to the newly activated 513th PIR, 3rd battalion Co. I. (Swem would remain with CO I until V-E Day.) The company ran well--all things considered. The men were pulling assigned details by the duty roster, going on pass as promised and shipping out as the orders came down from Headquarters. The Casual Company had been close out satisfactorily. The only ones of the 513 PIR to join the Regiment now firmly ensconced at Ft. Bragg were Swem and two others. The orders had come down for them to entrain at Columbus for Ft. Bragg just out side of Fayetteville, NC. This would be sort of homecoming for Swem as he had been there with the 504 PIR when it joined the 82nd Airborne Division. CO I seemed to settle down and go about soldering as they should.

The Great Tennessee Maneuvers

Shortly after Christmas in 1943 the 513 PIR departed Ft. Bragg for nearby Camp Mackall. Before the 513 PIR shipped our there was more rugged training in store. Light marches of ten and sometimes twenty five miles with full field equipment became fairly routine as did a heavier calisthenics schedule. Little did the troopers know that this experience of the huge "Winter Tennessee Maneuvers" would somewhat prepare them for the Battle of the Bulge later on. They were about to depart for deployment overseas to the ETO (European Theatre of Operations).

Ship out Overseas August 1944

It was obvious to all Co I 513th PIR that it was on its way overseas. Not only did the physical and technical training become more rigorous, full showdown inspections became more and more routine. Finally the word came down the unit was head for the POE (Port of embarkation) which in this case was Camp Miles Standish in the Boston, Mass. area. This involved, of course, another long troop train ride, not an exciting prospect to be sure. For the trip overseas, the luxury liner *Manhattan* was converted to the troop ship the *USS Wakefield*. The ship docked at Liverpool, the troop area thoroughly policed and it was now time to debark. It was a long day's ride to the destination which proved to be the Tidworth Garrison near the town of Lugershall. Soon however all was in order and Co. I carried on dutifully in anticipation of its call to a combat area.

Flight over the Channel; The Bulge Breakthrough Calls

The English winter had arrived cold and damp. The troopers were fairly comfortable awaiting whatever might be planned for them. However, in mid-December 1944, the Germans had broken through the lightly guarded American lines in the Ardennes Forrest in Belgium. A mad scramble to get the breakthrough under control affected all the Allied troops out of that area both in Europe and England. The 513th was no exception; word came down they were to proceed with combat gear and get ready to go. Immediate departure to the break-in lines near Bastogne, later well known as "The Bulge," was ahead.

World War II Battle of the Bulge (Ardennes Campaign) - December 1944-January 1945

Life Saved No. 1

The largest battle ever fought by the US **Army, Co I's** worst single day of combat was on January 7, 1945, at Flamierge Belgium, five miles northwest of Bastogne - "Dead Man's Ridge." Swem"s 17th Airborne division was part of the counter attack made by General George Patton.
Swem and Lt. Common were sharing a foxhole. An artillery round hit the foxhole. Lt. Common was killed. Swem lost his left eardrum. In freezing weather, knee deep in snow and with no artillery support, 3rd battalion was ordered to charge a ridge defended by German Tanks and infantrymen. Flamierge was taken, but 3rd battalion and Co. I had horrific casualties. They had been ordered to advance too far, and the next day found themselves surrounded by German tanks. Before daylight on January 9th, they withdrew from Flamierge by crawling between the tanks. By the end of the Battle of the Bulge, Swem's company was reduced from 170 to 35 men, and the 3rd battalion reduced from 735 to 250. Swem never forgot the anguished screams of well-trained comrades as explosions fell them in their tracks. (When the Battle of the Bulge ended, Swem received a battlefield commission and was promoted to 2nd Lt. of the 3rd platoon, but did not receive his Bronze Star for twenty years).

Drop into Germany (Operation Varsity) March 1945

Life Saved No. 2 -

The rebuilt company readied for its trip to the marshaling area and the ensuing Operation Varsity, also known as the Drop on the Rhine. They had made two training drops in France out of the C46 airplane, a new experience for them. The supposed advantage of this aircraft over the durable old C47 was reputed to be the doors on both sides of the aircraft to allow for more troops to make a faster exit. As the Platoon Leader, Swem was the last man out of his C 46, and the plane exploded after he jumped. This was the only time that the C46 was used in a combat jump. Twenty two of them were shot down.

Stretched across the sky, as far as one could see, this was the largest sky armada ever assembled. The entire column was two hours and 18 minutes in length: 226 C47's and 70 C46's carried parachute troops, while 906 gliders were towed by 610 C 47s. Teams parachuted into Germany in the vicinity of Wesel, 10 miles into enemy territory across the Rhine River.

This drop across the Rhine into Germany was a feat that has been remembered by historians as one of the truly great military maneuvers of all time. The 513th landed in the wrong area in the midst of the heavily fortified town of Hamminklen. Regardless, the 513th began conducting frontal assaults on the entrenched German positions as British Gliders started to land practically on top of them. By midafternoon on 24 March

1945, the 513 PIR had secured all of its objectives including the capture of 1100 prisoners. Swem's 3rd Battalion lost 185 (1/3 of its strength) in day one. Another 1/3 was lost by day 7.

Life Saved No. 3

On day 7, March 24, 1944, Swem was standing inside a barn door where his platoon was pinned down. Sgt. Marvin Grant walked in front of Swem to look out the door and was immediately killed by a sniper bullet that had been aimed at Swem.

After the fighting ended in Europe, Swem was separated from his company and assigned to join the 17th Airborne Division for the invasion of Japan. He was on the liberty ship *J.W. McAndrew* in the Atlantic when the atomic bombs were dropped and Japan surrendered. The ship in front of his continued to the Pacific and those men did occupation duty in Japan. Swem 's ship was diverted and he was discharged within a few weeks.

Afterward

Swem returned to his Michigan community to build his faith, family, career and community. He served in the Army Reserves and Michigan National Guard retiring as a Major with 25 1/2 in the service. For over 50 years he organized an annual reunion of the Troopers of Company I. Always remembering the veterans, he was active in the American Legion, VFW, and spoke at Memorial and Veterans Day programs in Buchanan, Galien, and other places in Berrien County.

In the introduction to his book, Swem wrote, "It all could not have happened without the protective hand of God almighty who allowed me to live through it." Dean C. Swem died on January 20, 2005.

FLOYD TURNEY

My name is Floyd Turney and I live in St. Joseph, Michigan. I was raised in Higden, Arkansas. When I turned 18 in February of 1943, I signed up for the draft. In the middle of the summer, my twin brother Lloyd and I were drafted into the Army and were sent to Bend, Oregon for basic training as part of the 804th Aviation Engineers.

During the six weeks there, not only did we learn to shoot different types of handguns, but we learned how to drive different types of trucks and heavy equipment and do other things such as build pontoon bridges across rivers. After basic training, we got to go home for a couple of weeks and then had to go back to Bend. By that time, it was winter and we weren't ready to be shipped out yet so the Army put us to work. We'd go up into the mountains where we assisted in bringing down logs for the Army's sawmill. We would dig a small trench under each log so that we could get a chain under it, hook the chain to a bulldozer which would drag it to a truck, and then we'd repeat it. That was one cold job. Finally, we were told to load up on a transport ship and were taken to Hawaii. From there, we loaded up on a Landing Ship Transport (LST) along with all kinds of our heavy equipment such as bulldozers and trucks for the invasion of Saipan.

After arriving at the island, we had to weigh anchor in the harbor since there was still a lot of heavy fighting on the island, particularly at the airport. It seemed that our Marines would wrestle the airstrip away from the Japs during the day and then evacuate it at night. The Japs would move back into our trenches during the night and then the process would repeat itself the next day. This ended after a few days when the Marines stopped leaving the trenches at night. During this time on the LST, we came under several air attacks which were one of the scariest times for me. Couldn't run anywhere and couldn't shoot back. Fortunately, the Japs would only strafe us and hadn't started doing kamikaze missions yet; like they did at Okinawa. After a few days of boredom highlighted by a few minutes of sheer terror, we got the OK to proceed and approached the island. We opened up the big doors which made up the bow of the ship, and unloaded all of our equipment for the trip to the airstrip.

Even before Aslito airstrip was secured, we were in action. The airstrip was supposed to be secure, but wasn't. Japanese snipers were all over and there was still occasional mortar fire. Aslito was renamed Isley Field after Navy Commander Robert H. Isely who was killed June 13th while strafing Aslito. His name was misspelled, but it stuck. My first duties at the airstrip was manning a .50 caliper machine gun for protection from both air attack and infiltrators from the hills.

I remember when I first got TO Saipan, we had our tent over by several pieces of 105-howitzers artillery pieces. They'd be blasting away 24 hours a day at various hotspots on the island. For the first few nights, I couldn't sleep at all with all that banging. However, after a few nights, I learned to adjust to the noise and sleep right through it.

The second detail that I was assigned to was extending the airstrip for the B-29s. We'd go out with blasting dynamite, drill holes into the high ground at the end of the strip, and blow up a section. We'd then load up the dirt in trucks and use it in the low areas of the airfield. My favorite job on the island was going off into the mountains and hauling back crushed coral that was used as a top layer on the airfields. The only problem with this job was that you'd still cross paths with the occasional Jap straggler. They would cross the road in front of you as they tried to get from one part of the island to another. The only time I saw one, I just gunned the truck to try to run him over. There was no way I could ever get the rifle out in time to shoot him, since it was fastened between the seat and dashboard. Fortunately for both of us, the truck wasn't fast enough and I missed.

On each side of our tents, which held 4 men, we would dig long trenches about 2 or 3 feet wide. We would then cover most of the trench with sheets of wood and then stack dirt or sandbags on top of it to protect us from bullets and shrapnel. We'd arrange it so that all we had to do is roll off our bunks and land in the opening and scurry to the covered side. We felt reasonable sure that this would save us from all but a direct bomb hit.

The Japs would spring air attacks on the airstrip every couple of nights, often with only one plane circling overhead with an out-of-tune engine. He would drop an occasional bomb but mostly was just a nuisance. One evening at dusk, a couple of Jap planes came in low and strafed our campsite on the way to the nearby airstrip. We were all trying to get in the trench but with time running out, I just hit the ground next to the sandbags covering the trench. As I lay there, I could hear sand spilling out of the bag. When the attack was over, I found out that a string of bullets had hit the sandbags next to me, barely missing me. A close call!

The Japs would always concentrate on the nearby airstrip, trying to blow up our B-29s. During the early part of the air campaign against Japan, we would stage daylight air raids. That meant that the ground crews would perform maintenance on the B-29s at night and both refuel and rearm them for the next day's mission. One night, during a Jap air raid, a bomb struck a B-29 on the far side of the airstrip from us that was being loaded with fuel and bombs. The explosion lit up the sky like it was the middle of the day and killed quite a bunch of ground crewmen.

Shortly thereafter, we had a group of P-61 Black Widow night fighters arrive on the island and they would provide constant coverage over the airfield during the night. They would work two shifts with one starting before dusk and landing after 4-5 hours and the other taking off to cover the rest of the night. After a few times of seeing a flare up in the sky meaning that the P-61s were finding their mark, the Japs pretty much stopped bothering us.

However, there was one airplane that didn't miss. It put me in the hospital for about 6 weeks. Unfortunately, it was one of our own planes. Along with a detail of other shirtless grunts (summer temperatures would be blazing hot), I was working on extending one of the airstrips at Isley Field. There was still fighting going on at Saipan and the other surrounding islands so P-47 Thunderbolts, which were single engine fighter-bombers, would constantly be landing, refueling and rearming, and taking off again to support our troops. To assist with the work that we were doing, a bulldozer with an overhead winch mechanism for the front blade (they didn't have hydraulic blades at that time) was at one end of the field.

I always kept a leery eye on these planes, and on this particular day, I could hear a plane's engine wailing away as it attempted to take off with a full load of gas and napalm. It was practically standing on its tail in an attempt to get enough altitude to clear the bulldozer which had ignorantly moved out onto the path of the P-47. Everyone scattered as it became evident that the plane wasn't going to make it. When the P-47 hit the bulldozer, the overhead winch just sliced the tail section of the plane off like it was paper.

With a roar, the plane crashed, sending a big ball of fire everywhere. Me and another guy ran in one direction, which turned out to be downwind, and everyone else ran upwind. The initial blast knocked everyone down. The other worker and I panicked and got up to run. The wave of intense heat produced by the fireball, covered us both in severe back burns. The pilot and bulldozer driver fared much worse.

I spent around six weeks recovering from my wounds and remember the pain from the burns, especially the first few weeks. One problem I had was ants coming into my cot during the middle of the night to feast on the dead skin. I finally had someone come in and they lifted my cot up and banged it down sideways a few times. A horde of ants living in the rungs of the cot where the support frame was at came tumbling out. My

rescuer said “I’ll fix them!” and filled four tin cans with kerosene and placed the legs of the cot in these, thus eliminating any future ant invasions.

I had a lot of my buddies come in to see me while I was in the hospital. On the very first day, one of them came and asked if I knew that my brother Lloyd was also in the hospital. I said, no, what happened? Apparently, that same day he was working around a campfire and it wasn’t going hot enough for him so he took a can of gas and threw it on the fire. Of course, the ensuing flare up followed a path right back to my brother and he ended up getting minor burns too. What a coincidence, twin brothers being burned on different parts of the island at the same time, both by “friendly fire”. No Purple Hearts for this family.

Talking about plane crashes, I saw my share of them while on Saipan. I remember one P-47 Thunderbolt that was returning from a mission and was coming in for a landing. On final approach, he ran out of gas and crashed on the airstrip. Those P-47s were so heavy that they flew like a rock once they lost power. However, it didn’t seem like the military worried too much about losing airplanes, or pilots for that matter. I also saw a P-51 Mustang run out of gas once while I was training on a halftrack which had quad .50 caliber anti-aircraft guns on it. On a hill overlooking the airstrip, we were training how to rotate and elevate the guns. We tracked our own aircraft as targets. Luckily for the airmen, we weren’t allowed any bullets.

As I was tracking the P-51 through the range finder, I saw a little object leave the aircraft. It was the pilot who parachuted into the ocean along with the P-51. I also went to the crash site of a B-29 shortly before I was scheduled to leave Siapan. At this time, the war was over and many servicemen where being sent home in any transportation available, including planes. This B-29 had 20 soldiers on board and had taken off but later ran into bad weather. It returned to Saipan which was also having bad weather and ended up crashing, killing the crew and all 20 passengers. I took a picture of the scattered remains of this sad event.

Every day, you’d have a punch ticket to get either a bottle of coke or can of beer. Since we wanted beer and one beer just wasn’t enough to quench our thirst, I worked out an arrangement with a buddy so that we could get enough beer to make it worthwhile. I’d get beer for 3 days but give it to my buddy. He’d combine my 3 beers with his 3 days worth of beer so that he could drink a six-pack. We would then reverse this so that I could have a six-pack 3 days later. Even then, the beer was so watered down and the weather so hot that the alcohol never really had any effect on you.

One time when I had a few days off, I decided to take a trip over to Guam to visit a buddy of mine. Bo Martin was a Marine from my Arkansas hometown. I found out from my dad’s letetrs that Bo was nearby. I went down to the airfield on Saipan and asked if they had a plane going over to Guam. The guy behind the desk said sure, there was a B-29 Superfortress out there on the strip which was headed over to Guam and if I hurried, I could get on. They said sure, hop on and we’d be there in no time. I sat back in the bubble section of the fuselage which the gunners would normally occupy for my first plane ride ever. Soon after taking off, the pilot announced that one of the engines was running rough and he would have to shut it down (a common occurrence on the early B-29s). He said not to worry since the plane would fly fine on just 3 engines. What a first plane ride!

When I landed on Guam, I asked where Bo’s section was stationed. He was way over on the other side of the island. After a combination of walking and hitchhiking, I arrived in his camp in the early evening. I found his tent and snuck up behind him as he was typing on a typewriter. I covered his eyes and told him to guess who it was. After naming off several names of guys stationed on the island, I let him see who it was. He was surprised. One of his tent mates was going to be away that night so I slept in his cot that night.

The next morning, I found an airstrip much closer than the one I landed on and caught a ride on a B-17 Flying Fortress. I rode back in the fuselage section where the .50 caliber machine guns pointed out on each side

along with a couple of Merchant Marines. As we flew over the harbor at Saipan, they breathed a sigh of relief since their ship was still weighing anchor. The day before, they wanted to take a joy ride in a plane and a pilot agreed to take them for one. What he didn't tell them was that it was a one-way trip to Guam. By that time, there was nothing for them to do but enjoy the ride. My friend Bo survived the war but was killed shortly after getting back to Arkansas in a farm tractor accident.

Another time when I had a few days off, I decided to go see a buddy of mine on the other side of the island. I checked out a truck--the standard truck which had a six foot long bed and 10 tires, 8 of them dual-mounted on 2 axles in the back. I told my tent mates that I'd try to get back sometime before the next day. After visiting my buddy all day, I started back when it was starting to get dark. Most of the route to the other side of the island was through territory in American hands; but there were one long cut between hilltops visited by the occasional Jap sniper.

Just before I arrived at this cut, one of my front tires went flat. Well, I wasn't about to stop in this cut in the evening dusk to change this tire so I just gunned the truck and kept on going. Soon after making it through this cut, I came upon an American campsite and pulled over. One of the guys asked what I wanted and I said I had a flat tire and needed help in changing it. We had to take one of the outside dual tires off the back, put it on the front, and throw the flat tire in the back. I then returned to camp and checked the truck back in. The next day, my Sergeant came down to our detail and growled for me to report to the Fleet Captain who was madder than hell at me. The Captain wanted to know who had ruined HIS tire and saw that I had last checked the truck out. After explaining why I didn't change the tire as soon as it went flat but instead choose to continue to drive on it, he decided that he'd let me off this time and wasn't going to charge me for a replacement tire. I never could understand why a pilot could crash an expensive plane without any repercussion but a poor GI had to plead his case to prevent from having his pay deducted to replace a flat tire.

Around October of 1945, I received orders back to Hawaii. I boarded a C-46 along with my brother Lloyd and a few other guys. Inside this transport plane was a huge tank of fuel which took up the majority of the space. Due to the heat, they had left the door and window open with the door just lying inside the plane. As we gained elevation, it started to get cold so we decided to button up the ship. I had squeezed between the large fuel tank and the side of the plane to close the window when I heard a big crash and screaming. I turned around to find Lloyd hanging out the open doorway, clutching it with one hand and desperately holding on to the door outside the plane with the other hand. In his attempt to install the door, the suction just pulled the door right out the opening. He was afraid to let the door go since there was a strong possibility that it would hit the rear elevator and make us crash. We were able to finally drag both him and the door back inside the plane and decided it was better to be cold than to crash. Afterwards, the pilot wanted to know what all of the racket was about and when told, he said "You should have just let it drop". Guess he wasn't too worried about the plane crashing.

Another interesting thing happened during our flight. I was sitting on one of the benches eating my C-rations when I looked over at my buddies who had been sitting on the floor of the plane. To my amazement, they were 2 or 3 feet off the floor, suspended in mid-air! I then realized that I, too, was suspended in mid-air. We had hit some turbulence which made the plane drop about 500 feet, enabling us to drift in zero gravity. That came to an abrupt end when we bottomed out in stable air, and I mean, bottomed out. With a crash, all of us slammed into the floor of the plane along with our food and anything not tied down, including life rafts, cargo, and several years of dirt and grime. Quite the painful experience.

After a refueling stop at Eniwetok Island, we were ready to take off and I took the opportunity to stand behind the pilots to view our takeoff. Compared to the long runways we built on Siapan for the B-29s, this field seemed awfully short. I watched as the end of the strip--only a few yards from the ocean--came closer and closer. With a big sigh of relief, we finally lifted off for the last plane trip of my life. We proceeded to Hawaii

where I ended up bunking down at the 1933rd Engineers barracks on Wheeler Field in Honolulu.

I was able to eat three great meals a day (no canned rations!) but only if you were fully uniformed, including a tie. The barracks were airy and cool and in some areas, still pockmarked with bullet holes from the Japanese surprise attack back on December 7, 1941. I was put on a detail where we painted the mess hall during the night and slept all day. Since we had the mess hall all to ourselves, one of us would go into the freezer, carve off a hunk of ham, steak, or pork chops, and cook up a real feast while the rest of the crew painted. We'd take turns between painting and cooking, what a sweet deal. It was the best we ever ate while in the Army.

In January 1946, I was officially discharged and ordered to report on board the USS Tuscaloosa, a New Orleans class heavy cruiser commissioned in 1934. Along with about 500 other passengers heading stateside, we left Hawaii on January 10, 1946. Except for the crew quarters and the bridge, we had the run of the ship. They gave us hammocks to sleep in but I still choose to sleep on the deck. This turned out to be the last official cruise for the Tuscaloosa. After dropping us off, she went to the east coast where she remained in reserve until she was sold as scrap in 1959.

We arrived at Pier 45 at Angel Island in San Francisco on January 15. I was glad to be on solid land again. The Navy can keep their ships. We were given train passes to a city nearest our destination. Before we left, they lined all of us up in a line and made us discard all of our uniforms except for what we had on our backs. It about killed me to have to give up my dress jacket. We then had to wait at the train station for our turn to load, which was going to take several days due to the number of soldiers being discharged.

A lot of the guys, my brother Lloyd included, didn't like waiting around the station so they'd go goofing off somewhere until their scheduled time came. I, however, waited right by the ticket booth where they would name off who was to be getting on board next. When they called the name of someone who was goofing off and not present, they'd just go down to the next name. I was therefore able to leave a couple days sooner than my brother. When it's time to go home after being gone for 3 years, it's every man for himself. So, I stopped being my brother's keeper!

REX WELCH

Paratrooper Recalls Sacrifices of Victory during WWII from the Journal Era November 2007

Rex Welch of Berrien Springs, not only served in World War II, but also in the Korean War. Welch served in WWII as a paratrooper with the men of the 505 Airborne Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, and faced death and destruction, but ultimately victory, in the fields of Sicily, Italy, France, Holland, Belgium and Germany.

He parachuted as part of the initial assault into Sicily, Italy, France and Holland and was sent to Northern Ireland and England. He fought in many battles including the Battle of the Bulge. Welch earned several medals including three Purple Hearts during WWII. He was wounded twice during combat in Normandy at St. Mere Eglise.

Welch was originally from Chickasaw County, Mississippi and worked with his family in "truck farming" involving corn, sweet potatoes and more. "My little story begins at Fort Benning, Georgia in 1942," Welch said. "In 1942, I had almost three years in the Army and I'm thinking I may be going home after my first hitch in this man's army – a hitch being three years. Then, after Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt extended all present active duty military personnel for the duration. It took the guesswork out of what I was going to be doing for the next three years. To top it off my buddy, Homer Gill, rounded off the picture.

Gill said, "Rex, if we don't get ourselves Airborne Qualified, that war in Europe is going to be over without us being able to go overseas and see some more of the world."

We did get ourselves airborne qualified, joined the Airborne Regiment, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, then 82nd Airborne Division for the duration. Learning how to be a paratrooper was not hard for Welch.

"We practiced packing parachutes and taking them apart," he said. "We put it back together and took it apart. We practiced landings from a platform into a sawdust pit. They hauled us up 250-foot towers and turned us loose in a parachute. We learned how to jump out of an airplane and how to land on the ground. There were seven jump commands to exit the plane. We were also taught how to recover from being dragged. We jumped as a company and most of us missed the field and landed in trees," Welch recalled. "They were out there in wreckers to get the parachutes out of the trees. We 'pruned the trees' as we were coming down 14 to 22 feet per second."

Welch was assigned as a gunner to the mortar platoon of the 2nd battalion, 505 Parachute Infantry Regiment. "I was qualified in just about all infantry weapons," he said, adding that they were all soldiers and that being a paratrooper was just the form of transportation. Each soldier carried all of his weaponry when he jumped. This included a fragmentation grenade, field glasses, compass, first aid kit with morphine, cartridge belt and ammunition for the type of weapon that was carried. Some carried pistols, carbines, and or M-1 rifles. His regiment was dispatched to a large tent camp in Oujda in Africa and participated in invasion training or airborne warfare. Kairouan was the assembling point for their assault on Sicily. Colonel James M. Gavin stood on a beer barrel and lectured the troops.

Welch recalled that he said, "You have come a long way since Cotton's Fish Camp (Alabama), men of

the 82nd Airborne Division. The German High Command has seven million men ready to die for their country. Your mission over here is not to die for your country, but to help that SOB realize his life's ambition."

With that, Colonel Gavin stepped off the beer barrel and we loaded aboard the planes – C-47's, and headed for Sicily. The 82nd Airborne Division was on its way to the first large scale Airborne operation in history, the first for any American Division, and the first night landing on record, according to 82nd Airborne history, as recorded by the military. The year was 1943. Welch stated that the second night their sister regiment, 504, departed Africa for Sicily and "our Navy, not being alerted that they were flying over the coast of Sicily shot down a number of our aircraft." "We lost…. good men," he said, in the friendly fire incident.

"The regiment consisted of three battalions," Welch said. "One landed in Vittoria, the second in between Gela and Vittoria and our battalion was in Gela. In our jumps we were sort of scattered over the terrain – in Sicily we missed our intended drop zone by about 35 miles and did not do much better (later) in Italy; however, battalion units were dropped together and were very effective fighting units. It was midnight when I hit the ground and I never heard so much automatic fire and artillery going off," Welch said. "It seemed to me like every weapon was pointed directly at me and I calmly assembled with my unit and the unit proceed to form a defensive perimeter."

He noted that there were rock walls that had been built along the terrain and that one young man with a Ph.D. from the University of Arizona came in on the parachute drop and hit one of those walls with his feet, "driving his knees into his boots." He was given morphine by his fellow soldiers immediately and later evacuated. "We assembled and moved into our defensive position," Welch said, recalling that his leg pockets burst when he landed and he had to give his K-Rations to a Medic. "We started digging in by a fence by this barn and machine gun fire started causing us to dive into our one-foot holes. We had to secure the entire area and I took my group down to a pillbox and eventually seven Italian soldiers surrendered. They asked us for cigarettes. We took them into the center of town and there was a little statue in the middle of a fountain," he said. "We had them pile up their weapons around the fountain."

Vittoria became the first large Axis town in Europe to surrender to the 82nd. Welch added that there were American ships in the Mediterranean Sea, such as the Battleship Missouri. "2,100 pound projectiles were fired over our heads and they sounded like freight trains," Welch said. "They were firing at a mountain. The whole mountain exploded as if it was an ammunition bunker." The 82nd was fighting both Germans and Italians in Sicily. Patton and the British were trying to keep the Germans from escaping. Welch eventually ended up in Trapani and had dinner with the mayor and his wife. The Italians had surrendered but the Germans were still fighting and General Patton and the British commander were chasing the Germans in an attempt to get to Messina Straits before they did.

A treaty of surrender was dictated by General Ridgway to Italian Admiral Manfredi at Trapani, which netted a total of over 5,000 prisoners according to the Army's written account:

"In each of the two phases of its participation in the Sicilian campaign, the Division had served effectively. In the first, it was prevented from achieving its specifically assigned mission; but at the cost of many casualties it successfully engaged, harassed, delayed or destroyed elements of the Herman Goering, 15th Panzer, 4th Livorno, 54th Napoli, and 206th Coastal Division.

Major General J.M Swing, Airborne Advisor to General Eisenhower, declared that the work of the airborne troops advanced the progress of the beach assault by two days. German General Kurt Student, leader of the Nazi jump on Crete, was even more complimentary saying that the work of the 82nd saved the beachhead from being thrown back into the seas. In Sicily, as in succeeding jumps, there seemed to be sure fire counter measures for airborne landings. The opposition during the second phase was considerable lighter. The division

suffered only 23 casualties. But, during the six days of the second phase, it advanced 150 miles through enemy territory, principally on foot and took prisoner or occupied territory in which it later rounded up prisoners totaling 15,475 officers and men. The 82nd captured a total of 23,191 prisoners during the entire Sicilian campaign, but this number does not include several thousand turned over to other units for processing in the early stages of the campaign before the Division had assembled as a tactical unit.

There is an American cemetery in Sicily as a result of the war. Welch's group returned to Africa. During this time he contracted malaria and was hospitalized for 46 days. His group was in the process of preparing for a jump into Italy. The second combat mission of the 82nd Airborne was begun at Salerno and ended at Anzio. Welch recalled that many were killed and wounded as they battled Germans and Italians. "The average age of the soldier was 19," he said. "I was older- they looked at me (for help) and I told them to take it easy." He noted that they buried many in Italy, also.

"On September 29, the 505th was attached to the British 23rd Armored brigade and moved toward Naples," according to Army historical accounts. The next day, 82nd 505 men and Division Reconnaissance elements led ground elements into Naples, the first major city to capitulate in Axis Europe. We eventually arrived in Naples," Welch said. "I paid a 10-year old boy (in cigarettes) to keep singing Ava Maria. It brought tears to your eyes."

According to Army accounts, "During the division's stay in Naples, the 505th again was attached to the British and given a ground-infantry mission of pushing northward to the Volturno River. The 505th swept northward from October 3 to October 9 with British Armor, cleared the Germans from the flats and canals near the Volturno, moved up to the river and held its southern bank. Patrols of the Regiment were the first troops to cross the river." Welch noted that they were then ordered back to Naples and policed Naples for the next 40 days.

We kept the Italian civilians from looting the areas. One lady wanted us to take her two daughters to America. We saw many hungry people – we gave them whatever we had – these were human beings who did not start the war. Naples was one of the most pathetic cities I think I have ever been in – for squalor, but it had the most beautiful park along the Mediterranean with the harbor. At night we could see the smoking top and flashes of fire coming out of Mr. Vesuvius. Pompeii was uncovered and some of the men walked through that…."

"The 82nd Division, less the 504th, the 376th Field Artillery Battalion and elements of the 307th A/B Engineers, left Naples in November for a new station in Northern Ireland," according to Army accounts. Welch recalled that they tried to sneak into the base camp in Northern Ireland, but on a propaganda channel for the enemy, it was announced that the 82nd Airborne Division (devils in baggy pants) had landed. He added that it was quite an ordeal to get there and while aboard ships and trains they continued to play a game of pinochle. "We put that particular hand in our pocket and then continued to play," he said. "We felt if we could keep that up there was longevity to that." They spent time in Ireland and England preparing for the assault on Normandy.

"In North Ireland we continued our weapons training, assembly training and physical fitness training," Welch said. "In England we continued the same thing, only we continued to jump out of an aircraft. Fog prevented them from continuing that practice and then they started jumping out of moving trucks."

Part 2
NORMANDY 1944

Rex Welch, now a squad leader and a paratrooper with the 505 Airborne Infantry Regiment, 82 Airborne

Division was headed for the U.S. and British invasion of Normandy during World War II.
"D-Day: the 82nd Airborne Division comprised of the 505th Airborne Infantry Regiment and attached 508th Airborne Infantry Regiment, taking the place of our sister Regiment 504th Airborne Infantry Regiment which was left in Italy to head up the Anzio Beach Head landing, with components of the Division, i.e. Artillery, Engineers, Signal, etc., boarded our faithful C-47s and headed for Normandy, France," Welch recalled. The 325th glider infantry regiment remained in England awaiting the return of the C-47s to tow them by glider into Normandy.

"My third combat jump (another night jump), Sicily and Italy was being made at night. I'm beginning to feel like an escapee from the law of averages. We were lifted off for the invasion from our Air Base in central England about 9 p.m. General Ike had made the decision, and the word was 'Go.' About midnight on June 5th, my unit landed on the turf of France around the village of St. Mere Eglise, and set up a defensive perimeter," Welch said.

"Like my parachuting buddies I landed on the ground, got out of my 'chute, assembled my M-1 rifle from its violin case, sans trigger group – most embarrassing, and proceeded to roll up the stick of jumpers. Each jumper had a "cricket," a thing that would make a clicking noise to your buddy. You click, your buddy clicks back. As I rolled up the stick, I heard a noise in a bramble thicket, and I clicked. No answer. I clicked again, and still no click returned. Then I started moving my finger along the underside of my faithful M-1, and guess what, I didn't have a trigger group – I left it with the violin case. Then I heard a grunt – no one made grunts like that but one, O.J. Young.

I said, "O.J.?"

He said, "WHAT?" So loud. I knew he was a bit upset.

I asked, "Why don't you cricket me?"

Then I threw my useless M-1 at the sound of his voice. Well, the next objective was to set up some all-around security for my little group, and then at daybreak, introducing myself to the locals in my area.
Welch said. "One of our men was introduced to their local outdoor toilet facility – it was about 50 to 60 feet in diameter, about 5-feet high with shovels around it. He landed on top of it and he was not hurt, crawled off with only a minor problem. He didn't smell very good."

One of the men went to get a drink out of a stream nearby (just 150-yards from the outdoor human manure pile) and was told by a Medic not to drink the water until he had purified it with the Halazone tablets each soldier had been given.

Welch stated that the fighting was pretty fierce for a couple of days and then American sea-borne forces made contact with them at St. Mere Eglise, which was the first town to be liberated on the Western Front. It was captured by the Third Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry, 82nd Airborne Division, on June 6, 1944, hours before the beach landings.

"These initial hours cost us some of our finest," Welch said. "As I recall 12 of my immediate unit were killed from the action by D+ 3 (June 8, 1944). No finer ever graced a military unit. Some of these men I had dug fox holes with, dreamed with on what we were going to do after this war.

One of my men was like a babe. He said to me once, 'I don't feel so good. Do you think I ought to see the Medic?'

I asked him, 'Do you think you ought to?'

He said, 'I don't know.' End of conversation."

He added that all of the men he fought with had the priority of looking out for their buddies. "We saw a lot of dead and dying there in Normandy – some so young," Welch recalled. "Our average unit age was 21."

He recalled that besides those who came in by parachute, others came in by glider. Gliders are vehicles that are towed into the air and continue to be towed until they reach their destination and are let loose by the glider pilot. The gliders would glide down and land but many hit large stumps in the hedgerows. The gliders carried men and equipment such as jeeps and weaponry. "One hit the tall tree stumps in the field, killing the pilot, but leaving the co-pilot slightly injured," Welch recalled. "Another soldier, who was in the plane, was suffering and was given morphine. However, (due to the wreckage), we did not know his arm was not attached to his body and thus (the morphine) did not give him any relief. He died the next morning." There were many examples of that type of situation -- soldiers gravely injured that were evacuated eventually by Medics -- some made it, some did not. However, the impact of watching them suffer, of seeing them look at you and knowing you could not help them is never forgotten by soldiers like Welch. Sometimes the only thing a soldier could do was to hold a fellow comrade as he lay dying.

His group advanced, killing Germans, and headed west across the peninsula to establish a defensive line to prevent German elements in the capital city of the Cherbourg Peninsula, from moving south to get out of the peninsula.

"The objective was to cut them off and destroy them," Welch said. "The fighting was brutal. I just wanted to get back home to Mississippi." He noted that he carried an M-1 rifle, which he had picked up from a wounded soldier that had been evacuated; a 38 pistol, several grenades - that was my luck," he said. "Don't mess with an individual that is well-armed."

He recalled that when airborne artillery (75mm) was dropped in, soldiers could assemble it and fire an aimed shot in two minutes. A 75mm weighs approximately 3,000 pounds, he said. Welch noted that they were not only fighting Germans but those who had been inducted into Hitler's Army–including those from Poland, Russia, Austria and the Italians.

There were some as young as 15 or as old as 60 in the Germans' people army," he said. "There were an estimated 80 bodies in one ditch," recalled Welch. "We spent 32 days in Normandy before we were relieved," he said. "We crossed the peninsula, loaded aboard trucks. We had to walk on foot part of the way to Omaha Beach where they loaded us aboard an LST (landing ship tank) and took us back to South Hampton, England, to be later redeployed."

Omaha Beach was a sight Welch will never forget. "There were American bodies in the water," he said. "A lot of individuals drowned as they got off the LST's and landing craft, or were killed on the beach. It was a quagmire." Welch explained that the LST's would hit a sand bar and unload the tanks and men, but many were too far out in the water and soldiers, loaded down with their equipment, found themselves in deep water and unable to make it to the beach. They drowned.
Welch has a certificate of appreciation from the French government for his contribution to the liberation of France during WWII.

Part 3
Waal Holland

According to U.S. Army accounts, the sky invasion of Holland on September 17, 1944, when the U.S. 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, with the British First Airborne Division, were to clear the way for the British Second Army's drive into Germany.

Welch recalls parachuting into Holland, "It was noon and a beautiful day," Welch recalled. "I looked up when I hit the ground in the rhubarb. The sky was full of parachutes of all different colors. Each color represented a different type of equipment. Ours was orange for 81mm mortars. Communications was multi-colored, etc."

While his unit was landing, a plane came in smoking, hit the tree line and exploded. The Germans were set up four square, surrounded by sandbags and firing at the troops coming down, Welch recalled. "One of our soldiers pulled a pin out of a fragmentation grenade and casually tossed it toward the Germans," he said. "Some were killed, other surrendered. We rolled our stick up, gathered and secured our equipment and moved to a defensive position," he said. "Three battalions were there. I was in the second battalion and we assembled and moved toward Nijmegan."

Welch recalled that one of their missions was to secure the highway bridge crossing the Waal River. "The Germans had blown one section of the railroad bridge, and if they destroyed the highway bridge it would stop us from moving our tanks," Welch said. "The 82nd and the British had a mission to secure all bridges from France and Belgium into Germany so nothing would impede the movement of armaments and supplies."

Germans were killed defending the bridge, which was known as the largest single span in Europe. Welch recalled the destruction of a German "88" which was knocked out in the Roundabout near the bridge.

"We ended up fighting through the city," Welch recalled. "We ousted the Germans from the city – we pushed those that did not surrender out of the city. There was a train headed for Germany and our troops opened up with machine gun fire and stopped the train. We captured some of the families of the enemy and weapons."

Welch recalled that in Arnhem, the British jumped in right on top of a 20,000 man armored German unit with a high loss of life among the British. After securing the bridge, Welch's group took up defensive positions east of the bridge.

"The Germans continued to try to blow it up using jet fighter aircraft," he said. "Our anti aircraft guns were firing at the sound but the plane was two to three miles in front of the sound they were firing at. The bridge was saved, but every day the Dutch wanted to know if it was still standing. It was. We crossed the river and took up defensive positions east of the river to the village across from Nijmegan," he said. "We were there for three to four days in a defensive position and then pushed the Germans back across the German line into Germany. We lost quite a few troops and ended up with a lot of casualties. This was house to house, street to street fighting. We took shelter in the bomb shelters with civilians. We dug in at a graveyard and dug into foxhole positions. One individual opened a casket and took out a skull and put in on a grave marker. This provided some humor during a bad time."

Welch recalled serving with Tiny Horvath of Pittsburgh, Fearless Johnson of Maryland, Odom of Texas and Marshall Jackson of Mississippi. He can also remember seeing the British lined up for meals when a round came in and exploded. Three British were hit.

"One man said, 'I say Medic, over here!' and they continued to get their food," Welch said.

Welch also recalled when the British picked up the mines American soldiers had placed in the roads and moved them up to a command post. They did not have the safety pin pushed back in. Welch showed them what they needed to do so they would not blow up. "One of those could cut you in half," Welch said. "I saw a The high ground from Grosbeek to Bergendahl was a hard won objective for the Allies. For action in Holland, the 82nd Airborne Division was awarded the Netherlands highest decoration, the royal order of William Nassau, thus becoming the first foreign unit to receive such an honor.

Welch's group was relieved by some of Patton's unit and his group returned to Rheims, France for rest and German catch one and it blew him in half in his tank."

We were sitting in a theatre, watching a movie, when we were ordered to return to our barracks and our units," Welch said. "We were immediately issued ammunition for every weapon we had. At 6 a.m. we were loaded aboard trucks and headed for 'The Bulge' in Belgium. This was our fifth campaign and we were moved by truck into the north sector of the battle zone of The Bulge. We stopped the Germans from continuing to expand north and west," he said. "The 101st went into Bastogne. The Germans moved up artillery and troops. We established a point and relieved elements of the 106th Infantry Division. They had lost 78 tanks. We moved forward in a wooded hilly area. Our goal was to be the northern defense element of the Bulge, which we did," Welch said.

According to General James Gavin's personal report (a general who Welch saw many times – he also saw General Patton and witnessed him throw his helmet on the ground because Welch's unit was not wearing their steel helmets), Welch's group is mentioned several times in his account of the Battle of the Bulge: "Farther to the south and east, the 505th Parachute Infantry was having very hard fighting with the remainder of the 1st SS Panzer Division. The 505th had initially sent a covering force east of the Salm River in the vicinity of Trois-Ponts. Through sheer weight of numbers this small force was finally driven to the river line where it held. Being very much overextended, the regiment managed to hold by diagnosing or estimating the point of German main effort from time to time and then marshalling all available infantry as quickly as possible, beating off the attack at that point. This process was repeated, where necessary, day and night until finally the German attacks waned in their intensity about December 23."

Welch recalled that when his unit moved to cut off "The Bulge" they entered the Hurtzen Forest filled with snow, bitter cold, and Germans. "While we were moving south through the forest, other units were moving north," he said. "We took prisoners along the way. This is where my good buddy Moose and I were digging a ditch into the ice and snow and an artillery round burst off to the right in a tree. Moose stayed down and I told him that prayer time was over, but he did not move. I told a soldier to nudge him and he said he was dead. A splinter from the tree had hit him in the head."

This was a brutal time and Welch can remember the tanks running over a frozen German in the road, exposing his bones. Welch's group hit a lot of little towns and farmhouses, including one German command post that had fine champagne and whisky in its loft. He then recalls reducing Aachen to rubble behind advancing artillery.

Welch and his unit received new weapons in the city of Cologne, which had been bombed into ruins. From historical accounts; "Almost 400 yards of river separated our boys from the Germans across the Rhine. It was a feeling of security the 82nd had known in no previous campaign. Daily artillery and mortar barrages were exchanged, keen eyed outposts snipped at anything that moved across the river and patrols crossed each night but otherwise the situation was quite pleasant. Between stints on outpost guard along the river, the troopers patrolled the city of Cologne routing out hidden 5th columnists and spies, watched the civilians and

enforced the curfew. During their spare time Airborne ingenuity came forth as the troopers entertained themselves in a thousand different yet very simple ways; orchestra, sightseeing, fixing abandoned motorcycles, a touch of beer, Rhine wine or Dago Red. But the war along the Rhine would not always be so quiet. Across the river was a German army still very much alive and actively engaging American soldiers wherever they met around the perimeter of their circular defense known as the Ruhr Sack.

The barrier on our side of the Sack was the Rhine River. We were ordered to cross in a diversionary attack that proved to be one of the bloodiest small scale engagements of the war." Welch recalled that his unit crossed the Rhine River in British Buffaloes into Germany and continued west. "Our part of WWII ended across the Elbe near Ludwigfest,"

Welch said. "We were about 75 miles north of Berlin when the war ended. The 21st German Army group surrendered to the 82nd Airborne Division. I was laying on the side of a hill near our defensive position 75 miles north of Berlin," Welch said, remembering where he was when the war ended. "A C-47 passed overhead, headed east, unescorted and this was very odd. A few hours later our command post informed us that the war was over. The men were relieved, I felt good."

Welch, who had been made a platoon Sargent in Holland, was given the task of writing passes for all Germans who had transportation that enabled them to move back west of the Elbe River. Remaining east of the Elbe River meant that they were going to be in Russian controlled Germany, Welch said. He noted that many of the Germans spoke English and that he was able to live in the mayor's house as he worked on this task.

Ammunition was thrown into a large ditch, 15-feet across, six or eight feet deep and guarded by the Allies. Welch recalled that he was able to see the beautiful horses of the Hungarian Calvary. "They (the Germans, Hungarians, etc.) wanted to go west and get out of the area that was going to be controlled by Russians," Welch said. "If they had a wheelbarrow, a bicycle…..that was transportation. They could go. They were desperate to get out of the Russians' grasp. They felt their life would be in jeopardy if they remained in that part of the world."

In June, Welch, who had 161 points, was sent home. He recalled that at the very start of the war, a fellow soldier, Thomas Charles Whitted, who was singing "They All Crowded the Floor" as he passed the Statue of Liberty, on their way to war in the European Theatre of Operations in Africa. Whitted said he would not see the statue again. He died in Normandy. Welch was able to see Her again.

Welch spent a total of 21 years in the U.S. Army. He served in WWII as a paratrooper and served in the Korean War as a platoon leader with the 5th Calvary Regiment, First Calvary Division, and retired as a captain.

Welch remembers the brotherhood of the experience, the suffering and the loss of life. "Most memorable is the attitude of the men that I was serving with," he said. "They were these individuals, they were brothers, and they were more than brothers. I was completely comfortable with them whether we were sleeping or engaged in a firefight. The most disturbing (element) of the war was when one of your close friends ends up shot. The only comfort you could give them was to hold them in your arms while they die. I thought that would be the war to end all wars, but if we were going to have another war, those in the high seats of government – I would hope they would be the fodder of the artillery that my buddies got…."