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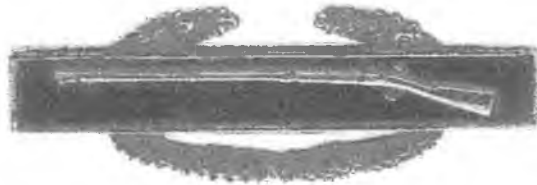
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It was a time of learning, a time of fun, a time when neighbors knew each other's families and survived the depression and a war by helping and caring for one another. It was a time of innocence, a time of struggle, a time that shaped the next generation and helped make this the great country it is today.

Steven E. Danish, is a young writer and an associate member of the Long Island VBOB Chapter, where I met him, who wrote these very fitting lines in his book "Growing Pains with Grandma" about the years before and during World War II. This is to me, a brief and accurate description of those years from the depression to the outbreak of World War II.

R. F. M. 2-8-03

THE INFANTRY



The rifleman fights without the promise of either reward or relief. Behind every river there's another hill and behind that hill, another river. After weeks or months in the line only a wound can offer him the comfort of safety, shelter and a bed. Those who are left to fight, fight on, evading death, but knowing each day of evasion they have exhausted one more chance of survival. Sooner or later, unless victory comes, this chase must end on the litter or in the grave.

- General Omar Bradley



70TH COAST ARTILLERY (AA) REGIMENT



**AMERICAL INFANTRY DIVISION
WORLD WAR II
23RD INFANTRY DIVISION
POST WORLD WAR II**



290TH INFANTRY REGIMENT
75TH INFANTRY DIVISION
U. S. ARMY



**75TH INFANTRY DIVISION
UNITED STATES ARMY
WORLD WAR II**

'DOG TAGS'

Identification Tags
"Dog Tags"



1941
Enlisted



1943
Enlisted

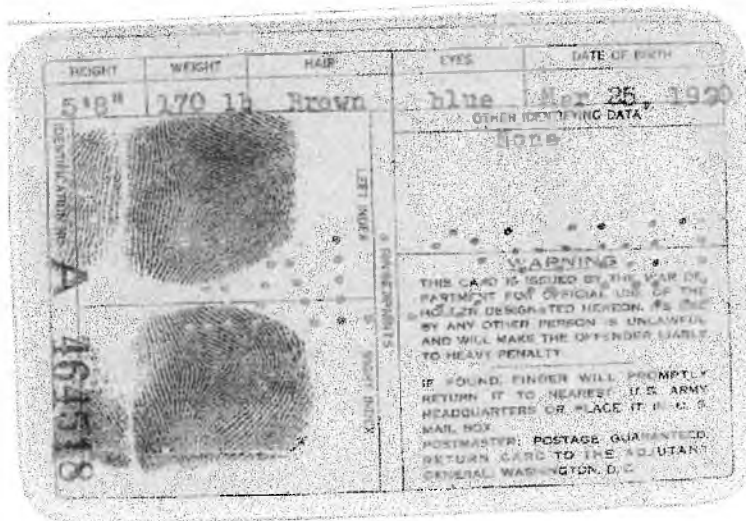


1944
Officer Tags

WW II U. S. ARMY OFFICER'S IDENTIFICATION CARD



FRONT



BACK

INTRODUCTION

After several revisions and rewrites of my military service story it occurred to me that something should be included about the years leading up to the war. Many young people have asked me what life was like in this country as we slowly moved closer to becoming involved in the war. At the time, I had the impression that most people were sympathetic toward the British cause, but that doesn't mean that they wanted this country to become actively involved. There existed a strong vociferous anti war and isolationist movement

It was a long series of events that started a few years after the end of World War I, through an economic depression and up to our involvement in World War II. Life just prior to our entry into the war was improving economically because of a boom in manufacturing of war material for the participants. The buildup and equipping of our own military forces that started in 1940 also contributed to the improving economic situation. Economically our lives were improving in many ways, and that made it possible to purchase so many things that seemed to be far beyond the reach of those who were most deprived of the necessities of a satisfactory life style during the depression years.

October 29, 1929, the stock market crash brought on the depression. In little more than two or three years the unemployment rate reached a staggering 25%. The depression spread throughout the entire world. One of the biggest problems was deflation in most of the world. In Germany it was runaway inflation that started even earlier. The inflation became so bad that it required millions of deutschemarks to buy a newspaper. The value of the mark decreased drastically from one day to the next. The situation got worse with each passing day. People tried to buy items that might help them to deal with the constantly falling value of the deutschemark. Radical political elements of both the left and the right caused turmoil in an attempt to win over the people's support for their party's platform to end the runaway inflation. The Nazis and Communists engaged each other almost daily in violent street fights. The Nazis tried to take control of the government in a putsch. Many of the Nazis ended up in prison because the putsch failed. Hitler wrote "Mein Kampf" while in prison. The strangest thing about "Mein Kampf" is that it laid out in detail exactly what Hitler was going to do to accomplish his aims, including future military objectives by throwing out the restrictions imposed upon Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. The western nations failed to look upon Hitler's writings as a document to be believed. Maybe World War II would never have happened if they had believed that it truly was his plan.

It was during the early 1930's that Japan's Army began its military adventures in China. There were a number of occasions when the western nations came close to clashing with Japan's Army in China. There was an incident when the Japanese attacked and sank the USS Panay in the Yangtze River. The USS Panay patrolled the Yangtze River to protect American citizens engaged in commercial enterprises in China.

The average German resented what they considered the unjust rules and costly reparations payments to the Allied governments imposed upon the nation by the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. Little by little Hitler and the Nazi Party gained seats in the Reichstag. The economic situation continued to deteriorate to the point that the Nazi Party was able to gain sufficient seats in the Reichstag to gain control of the government to the extent that Hitler was able to get laws passed that gave him dictatorial powers. Hitler soon violated the Treaty of Versailles by increasing the size of the army beyond what the treaty allowed.

1936, Hitler in defiance of the treaty ordered the army to move into the Rhineland. The Allies loudly protested but refused to physically attempt to force Germany to recall the army to the east bank of the Rhine River. Too late to do anything about it, the Allies later learned that the German Army had orders to retreat back to the east bank of the Rhine if the Allies marched to stop them. The Allies had only to read and heed what Hitler had written in "Mein Kampf". There would never have been a World War II if the Allies used military force to force the German Army to retire from the Rhineland. It might well have been the end of Hitler's regime. This could almost be considered the beginning of World War II

October 24, 1931, the George Washington Bridge across the Hudson River, connecting New York and New Jersey, opened to traffic.

March 4, 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt became president and occupied the White House. The president energetically pushed an economic program to get people back to work. Many public works were started to provide job openings across the nation and reduce the number of people on welfare. The

inability of men to adequately provide for their families was robbing them of their manhood and many became alcoholics. I saw this in my own family and heard many similar stories from my army buddies who grew up during those days. In some families, sons were urged to leave home and fend for themselves. I heard these stories over and over while serving in the Army during World War II.

October 30, 1938, a very realistic radio play "The War of the Worlds", aired on CBS and caused some panic among some rather gullible listeners. The play included some rather realistic sounding news bulletins about some Martians that supposedly landed in New Jersey and were killing some of the locals who encountered them.

In 1939 the United States Army only numbered 160,000 officers and men and was sixteenth in size among the world's armed forces.

January 1939, I graduated from high school, the first one in the McElroy family to earn a high school diploma. 1939 was the first year of the New York World's Fair. Jobs were still scarce and it wasn't until April that I was hired by Standard Brands to work at their restaurant and theater at the 1939 N. Y. World's Fair. The fair reopened the summer of 1940. That is the year that I started to work for the Long Island Rail Road.

September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland and in support of the treaty between England, France and Poland the Allies declared war against Germany. Thus World War II began. At that time, I was working at the Worlds Fair. Everybody was shocked by the news. The White Owl Cigar Company had an exhibit where they handmade cigars and had a news ticker tape projector displaying the news all throughout the day. The fair workers and visitors jammed the exhibit to keep up with the latest international news. The president's economic programs started to improve the growth of business enterprises and opened up employment opportunities in the private business sector.

September 5, 1939, the United States declared that it would remain neutral.

September 8, 1939, the president proclaimed a limited national emergency as a result of the war in Europe. One of the things that began to jump-start the economy was the war business selling military hardware to the combatants. This was mostly selling to England and France since the Allies were able to blockade the shipping routes to Germany and Italy.

October 1939, the Yankees won the World Series against Cincinnati four games to none. Except for the war in Europe things began to take on a normalcy that was last known before the depression. Things had improved to the point that my family was able to buy a house. We hadn't lived in a home of our own since 1932. We spent a few years living with relatives. Life wasn't too pleasant, at times, because of minor incidents that caused friction between families.

April 1940, the "Sitzkrieg", or the so-called "phony war" came to an end when Germany invaded Holland, Belgium and France. Until this time both sides just stared at each other across "no man's land." The Germans advanced rapidly into the Allied countries. In June, France was forced to surrender and the British were forced to evacuate their trapped army from the continent over the beaches at Dunkirk, Belgium. The British Army lost all of its heavy equipment. The German Army seemed to be unstoppable and it would be sometime before the British would be able to hold their own against the Germans.

1940, the movie "Gone With the Wind" premiered in Atlanta, Georgia. The book was a best seller and everyone was looking forward to seeing the movie. It was quite an extravaganza in full color, very unusual in those times. Things seemed to be returning to what was assumed to be normal, despite the war in Europe. Men were returning to work in great numbers and people were spending their money for things that they once couldn't afford. The job market was definitely starting to improve, especially for those with trade skills.

1940, Cincinnati beat the Detroit Tigers in the World Series 4 games to 3.

September 14, 1940, the first peacetime draft law was signed into law. Bills were passed by Congress to expand the Army and Navy and to provide all the arms and equipment that they needed.

January 5, 1941, the president proclaims the "Four Freedoms" in a speech before Congress.

March 11, 1941, the Lend Lease Act was signed into law. Great Britain was running out of money to finance their war effort. The United States was committed to helping England's cause in spite of the president's promise not to send "our boys to fight in foreign wars."

May 27, 1941, the president declared that an unlimited emergency was in effect.

June 21, 1941, Germany launched an all out Attack against the Soviet Union.

July 7, 1941, the United States Army occupied Iceland, relieving British Forces there. The United States Navy was guarding convoys that were carrying war supplies to England, part of the way across the Atlantic.

August 14, 1941, Roosevelt and Churchill announced the "Atlantic Charter."

October 1941, the Yankees beat the Dodgers 4 games to 1 in the World Series.

October 27, 1941, the Chicago Daily Tribune dismissed the possibility of war with Japan, editorializing, "She cannot attack us. That is a military impossibility. Even our base in Hawaii is beyond the effective striking power of her fleet." The majority of newspapers sarcastically called the owner of the Tribune, Colonel Blimp. He was given an honorary commission in the National Guard of a neighboring state and considered himself to be an authority on military matters.

October 31, 1941, a German U-boat torpedoed the destroyer, USS Reuben James, off the coast of Iceland with the loss of 115 lives even though the United States had not yet entered World War II.

November 12, 1941, I was sworn into the United States Army at Camp Upton, New York. At this time the Army had grown to approximately 1,000,000 members strong.

Thanksgiving Day 1941, while I was in the Army, stationed at Fort Eustis, Virginia, was the last Thanksgiving Dinner that I was to eat in the United States until four years later in November 1945

R. F. M.

August 31, 2001

There is a young fellow, an associate member of VBOB, who attends the monthly meetings of the Long Island VBOB chapter and has written a book ("One Soldier's Memories: World War II") about his veteran father who was a participant in the "Battle of the Bulge" and a second book about life in the United States prior to and up to World War II. I particularly found his description used to advertise his book about those times. His book is called "Growing Pains with Grandma", his name is Steven E. Danish. His description of those times follows;

"IT WAS A TIME OF LEARNING, A TIME OF FUN, A TIME WHEN NEIGHBORS KNEW EACH OTHER'S FAMILIES AND SURVIVED THE DEPRESSION AND A WAR BY HELPING AND CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER. IT WAS A TIME OF INNOCENCE, A TIME OF STRUGGLE, A TIME THAT SHAPED THE NEXT GENERATION AND HELPED MAKE THIS THE GREAT COUNTRY IT IS TODAY."

Steven E. Danish

R.F. M. 8 January 2003

MILITARY SERVICE
of Robert F. McElroy

25 March 1941, I was required to register with my local draft board #270 upon reaching my 21st birthday, for possible military service. In July, I was told to report to **Fort Jay, on Governor's Island, N.Y.** for a physical exam.

24 September 1941, the draft board notified me that I was classified 1-A and shortly after sent the infamous letter with the words, "Greetings, You have been selected by your friends and neighbors to represent them in the Armed Forces of the United States." Some friends and neighbors, who needs friends like these?

12 November 1941, I was inducted into the Army of the United States after being sworn in at **Camp Upton, N.Y.**, on Long Island. The camp was about fifty miles east of my hometown. The first day was a busy one, with swearing in, interviews, physical exams and shots. You name it; I was probably inoculated against anything you can name. The officer who led the swearing in ceremony mentioned that he always had a good feeling when he did it. It was several months later before I realized how unusual the oath was, in that you were called upon to "uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies whomsoever." It did not call for loyalty to the president or any other government leader or to the nation as such. The oath called for a loyalty to defend an idea.

During the following days I was issued uniforms, and then sent to the post tailor, for proper fitting and alterations. After the war started, I got the impression that this practice was no longer followed (the troops arriving at Fort Eustis just before Christmas were fitted out with uniforms that weren't anywhere near fitting them). The first time, (a day or so later) decked out in full uniform, as I stood in formation for the Retreat Ceremony I fainted. The Retreat Ceremony is the lowering of the flag at the end of each day. Throughout my life I have never fainted; before or since.

18 November 1941, we boarded a train at about seven a.m. for **Fort Eustis, Virginia**. The train arrived at **Fort Eustis**, in the late afternoon. **Fort Eustis** was the basic training center for the Coast Artillery Corps (Anti-Aircraft). About two years later anti-aircraft artillery became a separate artillery branch of the Army. At **Fort Eustis** I was assigned to the Artillery Mechanics School because of my civilian occupation, machinist apprentice on the railroad. I was excused from a lot of field training while I was at school, but I often received weekend duty assignments instead. I was taught how to repair many types of weapons, from the 45 cal. automatic pistols to the 3-inch gun, at that time, the largest artillery piece used in mobile anti-aircraft gun batteries. I received training in musketry (that's what the Army called rifle training), machine gun gunnery, and as a member of a 37-mm. automatic anti-aircraft gun crew. This gun was already obsolete, but it was almost two years before I saw the 40-mm. gun that replaced it. We were finally equipped with the 40 mm. guns while I was in the South Pacific Theater, just before we went to Guadalcanal.

7 December 1941, I was assigned weekend duty as charge-of-barracks which

made me responsible for maintaining the fires in the heating and hot water furnaces. I wanted to go to the post theater, to see "Sundown", starring Bruce Cabot and Gene Tierney. It was about World War I in colonial Africa. I arranged for a guy, in our platoon, to take care of the furnaces, while I was at the movies. When I returned to the barracks, after the movie, both fires were out, (nobody noticed it since it was a very warm day for December) and I couldn't find the guy who agreed to tend to them. There was nobody in sight, but I could hear a radio on the second floor. This was rather unusual for a Sunday afternoon. After restarting the fires, I went to the second floor to see who was around. There were about five guys huddled around a small radio, listening to a broadcast to which I paid no attention. When I asked where everybody was, they told me that they were all trying to call home. When I asked how come, I was told that they wanted to assure their folks that they were safe. Why I asked, would everybody find it necessary to assure their folks that they were safe? That's when I was told about the attack on Pearl Harbor. At first, I refused to believe them. The radio program, that they were listening to, confirmed that what I thought was a crude joke, was really the truth.

8 December 1941, training was put on hold so that we could listen to President Roosevelt, asking Congress to "declare that a state of war between the United States and the Empire of Japan was in effect from December 7, 1941." Our training was accelerated, and in our case was shortened, by about two weeks.

11 December 1941, Germany declared war against the United States.

17 January 1942, two training battalions, an automatic weapons and a gun battalion, were sent to Baltimore, Maryland, to bring the **70th Coast Artillery (AA) Regiment**, a Regular Army, unit up to full-authorized strength. They had been on a mission to protect the Martin aircraft plant, against possible air attack since December 7. As if any enemy had the capability to accomplish such an attack, at that time. That's an indication of how nervous the country was in those days. Upon our arrival in **Baltimore**, we learned that the regiment was preparing for overseas deployment. I was assigned to **E Battery**, in the communications section. There was no vacancy for an artillery mechanic in the battery. All that they needed was bodies to bring them up to full-authorized strength. One thing that shocked me was the condition of the men's uniforms. Everything was spit and polish at Fort Eustis. Their dress uniforms were filthy with food stains, dirt and grease. These men were sleeping on the floors of the hangars in the aircraft plant. It was only after joining this outfit that I learned what a soldier's life would be like when serving in the field as a member of an active military unit.

18 January 1942, we boarded troop trains for **Fort Dix, N.J.**, where we received more shots, and were issued personal equipment, such as brand new **World War I** steel helmets, cartridge belts, bayonets and canteens. It just occurred to me, that I never knew if another anti-aircraft unit replaced the **70th Coast Artillery (AA) Regiment** at the Martin aircraft plant. One unusual item we were issued was a military passport, probably a standard peacetime practice that the Army had not gotten around to eliminating.

19 January 1942, we left **Fort Dix** by train about 3 P.M., for the **New York Port of Embarkation, Fort Hamilton, N.Y.**, to board the **USAT John Ericsson**. This was the former Swedish ship Kungsholm that was taken over by the U.S. Government. We arrived at the **POE** after dark. When we left the train we walked a short distance to the pier to board the ship. It was dark and foggy, so the ship wasn't visible until you reached the gangplank and the entrance to the ship, even then, only the gangplank and the ship's entrance were visible. I had the eerie feeling; because of the dark and fog that nature was helping to keep our departure a secret. As I reached the gangplank, I answered to my name with my Army serial number, and was handed a brand new heavily cosmoline M-1 rifle. The supply sergeant was waiting for me to read the rifle serial number to him. It was almost impossible to see it under the heavy layer of grease. No one in the outfit had even seen an M-1 rifle before. Only the Infantry was issued M-1s prior to the outbreak of the war. It would be months before we received slings for these rifles.

We were the first troops to board the ship. Workmen were still installing bunks in the ship's holds. The work wasn't completed until a day or two later. This was a lucky break for us. We were quartered in cabins usually occupied by crewmembers that were no longer needed on a troopship. Each of these cabins had four bunks, so that we had more privacy and space than those men assigned to bunks in the holds.

The next morning, after breakfast, I went up on deck to watch the workmen mount the various ship's guns. Several 50 cal. machine guns and 3-inch guns were mounted on the top decks, and a 4-inch gun on the fantail. Meanwhile, troop trains were arriving throughout the day, with more troops to board our ship and the others loading at nearby piers. This went on for another two days. The **USAT John Ericsson** when fully loaded carried five thousand troops. It wasn't until the convoy assembled in Lower New York Bay that we saw all the ships that were assigned to it. There were five troopships and a freighter that made up the convoy. The troopships were; **USAT John Ericsson**, **SS Santa Rosa**, **SS Santa Helena** (both former Grace Liners), **SS Brazil**, one unidentified small troopship and an unidentified freighter.

23 January 1942, the convoy set sail on a clear, sunny and cold morning. The convoy was designated, "**Task Force 6814**." The troop commander of **Task Force 6814** was Brig. Gen. William I. Rose, commander of the force's **51st Brigade**, (I never was aware that any part of the force was a brigade) while Brig. Gen. Alexander M. Patch, Jr., the assigned Army task force commander, remained in Washington D.C. to monitor the situation. The ships joined up with the Naval Escort as the convoy left the harbor. Our escort consisted of a light cruiser and six destroyers. We headed south out of sight of land. During the daylight hours there was always a land based plane or blimp overhead. No one seemed to know our destination, or else he wasn't talking.

Just before sailing, **E Battery** was assigned to man the ship's 50 cal. machine guns, weapons that were a large part of the battery's normal equipment. **B Battery** manned the 3-inch guns, which were that battery's standard weapon. The 4-inch gun was manned by a seacoast defense Coast Artillery Unit. Traveling on a troopship, there is little to do once everyone gets settled in. The only things to be seen are the convoy ships and the Naval Escort vessels. Manning the guns in six-hour shifts helped to pass the time. Neither the Army nor the Navy was prepared to assign trained gun crews to merchant

ships this early in the war. The gun positions were ideal places to see all the ships that made up the convoy. If anything unusual occurred, we had grandstand seats and we also didn't have to participate in all the lifeboat drills. There were times when deck cargo, mostly gasoline drums, fell overboard, from one of the ships. When that happened, we fired the machine guns at the drums to sink them.

Toward sunset, a few days later, when we changed to a westerly course, blinker lights flashed from the shore as we passed the Florida Keys. Now, the rumors started to go around the ship as to our possible destination; was it Panama, Hawaii, or some remote Pacific island? There were even rumors that it might be the Philippines. Military secrecy is a real rumor generator.

31 January 1942, the convoy docked in **Colon, Panama Canal Zone**. Most of the field grade officers left the ship. This generated more rumors, that maybe we had arrived at our destination. It was hot and steamy when the ship left the pier and headed for the entrance to the first canal locks. Now, there was something interesting to watch. The whole operation was fascinating. From the ship's gun mounts it was possible to observe all the ships in the convoy, as they moved from lock to lock. To speed up our passage through the canal, our convoy used both the east and westbound locks. When the ships reached Gatun Lake, showers were set up using fresh water pumped from the lake. Water was strictly rationed on troopships. Troops normally had to use salt water to shower, so we were provided with salt-water soap. Anyone who has ever bathed in salt water, using salt-water soap, can appreciate how great it is to enjoy a fresh water shower. Passing through Culebra Cut was an awesome experience, with its high cliffs towering over the ships as they sailed through.

1 February 1942, the convoy assembled in **Crystobal Harbor** prior to entering the Pacific Ocean. A new Naval Escort from the Pacific Fleet replaced the ships from the Atlantic Fleet. The new Naval Escort consisted of seven destroyers plus a light and a heavy cruiser. Each cruiser was equipped with catapults and at least two float planes. One of the planes was in the air at all times during daylight hours, throughout the remainder of the voyage. The light cruiser was the USS Honolulu, a ship the Japanese claimed to have sunk at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. The heavy cruiser was the USS Salt Lake City. The convoy was only a few miles out of the Canal Zone, when destroyers raced around the convoy dropping depth charges on what we assumed to be an enemy submarine. We were never told anything about the incident or if they had really engaged an enemy submarine. Things soon settled into a normal routine. The ships sailed along a zigzag course that was changed at random intervals.

It may have been a week or more later when one of the planes, flew out of sight to the north. Naturally, this again started the rumor mill going full blast. The plane returned just before sunset. The next day the same thing happened, everyone assumed that we must have been nearing our destination. Later in the day, blinker lights were visible on the northern horizon, but the source of the lights wasn't visible. Our Naval Escort exchanged signals with whomever was to our north. After we reached our destination, we were informed that a carrier task force had been sailing on a parallel course to ours from the time that our convoy entered the Pacific Ocean.

A few weeks later the convoy sailed into a violent storm. The ships were tossed about like toys. Our ship rose and fell as it moved through the enormous waves. Sometimes it seemed like the ship wouldn't rise under the weight of the seas covering its bow. As it started to rise it shook like a dog trying to dry off. We could see the propellers of the other ships rise out of the water and spin wildly. The same thing must have been happening to our ship, because there were times when the ship would vibrate violently. Later we were to learn that we were in the Tasmanian Sea, off the east coast of Australia, a body of water notorious for violent storms. During the storm, which only lasted one day, many of the troops became seasick. It was the normal practice on troopships to serve only two meals a day, because of the large number of people to be fed. An awful lot of time was spent, standing in chow lines, even though each unit was provided with a meal schedule. It was my good fortune, that I was never bothered by seasickness. During the storm, so very few people were able to eat that those who could, didn't have to stand in long chow lines. We were even encouraged to take second helpings

28 February 1942, the sun was shining and the sea was calm. In the late afternoon, the ship tied up to a pier in **Melbourne, Australia**. It was summertime "down under" and the sunset was quite late. There was an air raid alert, so we were quickly disembarked from the ships. We marched to an open field, a few miles from the dock area and bivouacked for the night. After more than a month at sea, it was good to be on dry land again. Some American P-40s flew over just before sunset, but we didn't see or hear any signs of an air raid. The next morning we ate C-rations for breakfast. The Army had not yet developed K-rations. That morning while we were breaking camp, we apparently aroused the curiosity of the people passing by on crowded commuter trains. We could see people on the trains crowding to the windows trying to get a good look at us. We were the first large group of American troops to reach Australia. We soon packed up and marched a short distance to board waiting troop trains.

A railroad employee told me that there were nearly thirty thousand troops in our group. It took the train about an hour and a half to reach the town of **Bendigo** located in a hilly area north of Melbourne. Australian officials met the trains at the station. They were there to assign us to billets in the homes of the local residents, two men to a family. Ralph Marciano, guy from Brooklyn, who was drafted with me, and I were assigned to a family who had a six-year-old boy. The room that we shared was very neat and clean. We ate our meals with the family. The meals were appetizing and delicious, especially after the food that we ate on the ship. The people knew that we were coming three weeks prior to our arrival. I thought of our Constitution, which forbids the billeting of troops in private homes. Prior to our arrival, the local newspapers had run articles about our eating habits and food preferences. Apparently our coming was no secret to the people of this town; they knew of our destination long before we did. The people were paid for our room and board. They really made us feel welcome in their homes. Most of their army was fighting in North Africa. England had to release the Australian and New Zealand troops at the request of their governments, so they could return to defend their homelands against the Japanese, but the return of their armies would take awhile. This must have been one reason for the welcome that we received.

5 March 1942, we left **Bendigo**. The whole town was at the railroad station to see us off. The families were instructed to provide us with a box lunch for the train ride to Melbourne. The family that Ralph and I stayed with, corresponded with our families some time after we left. We loaded back onto the ships for our still unknown destination. This time, **E Battery** was assigned to the **SS Santa Rosa**. As soon as the ship was loaded, it pulled out into the harbor and dropped anchor, until the rest of the ships were loaded and ready to sail. While at anchor, we ate our evening meal. After I washed my mess kit and headed to my assigned quarters, I was pleasantly surprised to run into a hometown friend, Harold "Happy" Mills. We were on different ships when we left the States. He was in the 57th Combat Engineer Battalion, formerly a part of the 26th (Yankee) Infantry Division. The ships were reloaded in order to place the regimental and battalion units on more than one ship, so that the sinking of a ship wouldn't result in the loss of an entire battalion or regiment. There were signs that we might be heading into harm's way. **E Battery** was again assigned to man the ship's 50 cal. machine guns and our gun batteries manned the 3-inch guns. The Infantry set up their heavy and light machine guns, along with their BARs in all the lifeboats and manned them around the clock. It was apparent that we were prepared for a fight if it became necessary.

6 March 1942, the convoy set out to sea from Melbourne, Australia, for a still secret destination, somewhere in the Pacific. Again, rumors were making the rounds of the ship. Could it be the Philippine Islands?

7 March 1942, Brig. Gen. Alexander M. Patch, Jr. flew from Washington D.C. to **Noumea, New Caledonia** to await our arrival and resume command of **Task Force 6814**. His orders were to hold New Caledonia against attack in cooperation with other Allied forces. The only other Allied force was a small French Army unit.

12 March 1942, we could see a mountainous island on the horizon. The convoy first headed toward it, and then appeared to turn away. After awhile, the convoy once again turned toward the island and it soon became apparent that a long reef was the reason for the course changes. We were inside the reef and entered a harbor hidden from view, at sea, by a smaller high hilly island. The Naval Escort ships lined up to seal off the harbor entrance, while the rest of the convoy sailed all the way into the harbor. Some of the ships tied up to piers, others, including the **SS Santa Rosa**, dropped anchor close to shore. Some barges, towed by very small tugs tied up alongside our ship and we climbed down cargo nets onto the barges. Each barge was large enough to carry our entire battery. Some months later, I received newspaper photos of our landing at **Noumea, New Caledonia**, a French colony, almost two thousand miles from Melbourne, Australia. The photos showed us landing from the barges wearing the old World War I steel helmets. The first day and night we were initially deployed as an infantry unit. A day or so later, when our 37-mm. and 50 cal. machine guns were unloaded, we were assigned to a position on a high hill that overlooked the harbor. The day that we landed my pay increased from \$21 to \$30 a month, or so I thought at the time. This was a normal increase after four months service in peacetime. A month or so later when I received my first pay overseas, I protested that I was given too much money. The pay amounted to almost \$160 for three months, a lot

more than the \$81 that I expected. We were never told that Congress gave all servicemen a pay raise, plus a 20% bonus for foreign service, shortly after the beginning of the war. Everything was retroactive to 7 December 1941, or to the day you left the country for overseas service.

27 March 1942, **E Battery** left **Noumea** for **Plaines de Gaiac**, more than a hundred miles to the north. Because of the narrow roads through the mountain passes the trip took all day. It rained throughout the trip so that we were soaking wet due to the heavy tropical rainstorm long before we arrived at our destination. The Army was building a bomber air base there. It was a very remote and lonely place, inhabited by a few French farmers and Melanesian natives. All of the US and Allied Forces on the island were under the command of the US Navy. **New Caledonia** is one of the few places, in the tropics, that doesn't have a problem with malaria. The natives said that it was because of the gaiac trees that grew throughout the island. **E Battery**, a reinforced rifle company from the **182nd Infantry**, a field artillery battery, and some Army engineers were there to protect and build the bomber base. **E Battery** deployed 37-mm. automatic anti-aircraft guns and 50 cal. machine guns all around the perimeter of the field. We filled thousands of sandbags, building field fortifications to protect our weapons and gun crews. A runway that was able to handle small planes was ready by the end of the first week. The finished runways were topped with iron ore, solidly packed down to form a hard surface. The iron ore deposits were located a few miles from the field. The dust from the iron ore soon coated everybody and everything with a red rusty color. We, our weapons, tents, clothes, trucks and everything else that we owned had a red coating on it that was almost impossible to remove.

One of the advantages that we enjoyed was the fresh meat available because of the large herds of deer in the area. When regimental headquarters heard that we were eating fresh venison, they wanted in on it. It was a ten to twelve hour trip from Noumea, so they radioed a request for enough deer to feed the rest of the regiment (about 2600 men). We sent out a hunting party, and in only a few hours, we had at least fifteen or more deer gutted and ready to travel. Each truck had two drivers, so they were ready to leave as soon as the deer were loaded.

It was about this time that I started to correspond with the girl that I would eventually marry. Sometimes good things do happen during a war. It was during our stay at **Plaines de Gaiac** that I was startled to learn that maybe ten percent of the men in **E Battery** were totally illiterate. I became aware of this sad situation when mail from home began to catch up with us. One of these guys came to me and asked if I could or would read a letter from his wife. I couldn't figure out if I should feel embarrassed or honored because of his request. A letter between a wife and a husband can be extremely personal. He thanked me very profusely and acted as though he wanted something else and was reluctant to ask. It suddenly occurred to me that he wanted to answer his wife's letter. He provided writing material and we sat down together while I suggested that he answer the questions in his wife's letter and I also reminded him to tell her that he was in good health and to let her know that he missed her very much. One other thing that I learned from this experience was that the Army had started a school for men like these to teach them to read and write, but the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor brought an end to this lost

opportunity for these men.

April 1942, the **164th Infantry Regiment** arrived and joined the **132nd** and **182nd Infantry Regiments** as part of Gen. Patch's command.

4 May 1942, the Navy alerted us that what would later be called the "**Battle of the Coral Sea**" was about to take place. We were told to prepare for a possible attack against New Caledonia. The Navy would try to stop any advance towards us. If the Navy failed to stop them, we were told to expect to see enemy ships off the island's coast within seventy-two hours. We made preparations for a possible enemy attack. If we were unable to prevent a landing, we were told to take to the mountains, where we would fight a guerilla war until help could come to our aid. We maintained a state of readiness for the next three days until the Naval battle ended. Most people considered the battle to be a draw, but we felt otherwise.

Sometime, possibly in late May or early June a battalion from the **182nd Infantry Regiment** landed on the south coast of **Guadalcanal**, for a reconnaissance in force. This is one of those incidents that very few people ever heard about. I was able to confirm that this mission took place after I returned to the States. This landing was about three months before the Marines went ashore on the north coast on 7 August 1942. The **182nd** was unable to stay and carry out their mission, because so many men became sick with malaria. Medical supplies to treat the disease were scarce at that time. Naval vessels were sent to evacuate them back to **New Caledonia**.

24 May 1942, the War Department secretly directed that an Army division be activated from the troops stationed in **New Caledonia**. Three days later when the division was activated it was named the **Americal Infantry Division**, for American troops in **New Caledonia**. The **Americal Infantry Division** was one of only two divisions during World War II that was not assigned a number. After the war the division became the Regular Army **23rd Infantry Division**. The division still follows the wartime practice of headlining orders with the division's name at the top. The division's number appears on the second line.

4 June 1942, the "**Battle of Midway**" began. Again, the Navy gave us seventy-two hours notice to prepare for a possible enemy attack. **New Caledonia** was now a major naval base for the **South Pacific Fleet**. A large Japanese Carrier Task Force was approaching Midway Island in an attempt to capture this important air base, west of the Hawaiian Islands. This island base was important for protecting the supply lines to Australia and all the Allied Forces in the Western Pacific Ocean Area. Unlike the "**Battle of the Coral Sea**", there was no doubt about the Navy's tremendous victory. This victory was the first of the four major battles, ending with the Russian Stalingrad victory that put the Allies on the road to victory over Germany and Japan.

7 August 1942, we received the news of the 1st Marine Division's landings in the Solomon Islands, on Guadalcanal and adjacent islands. This was the second of the events in the war that put the Allies on the road to final victory. The Solomon Islands were

governed by Great Britain, prior to the war. The Japanese were building an airfield on Guadalcanal that would soon be operational. This was the first offensive action by United States ground forces, since entering the war. The initial landing, near what was to be named Henderson Field, was unopposed. It was the Japanese practice to pull back from the beach landings to avoid heavy losses from large naval guns. The Japanese later counterattacked in great strength. The landings on nearby Florida and Tulagi Islands were strongly opposed in the initial Marine assault. There, the Marines wiped out the enemy forces within a few days. On Guadalcanal, the Marines were in for a rough time holding onto the airfield. That they did hold on against the enemy's many attempts to recapture the field was a major miracle.

13 October 1942, the **164th Infantry Regiment**, was the first unit, of the **Americal Infantry Division** (formerly **Task Force 6814**) to arrive on Guadalcanal to reinforce the battle weary Marines. It was the first Army unit to go on the offensive in World War II. My regiment didn't move to Guadalcanal until some months later. The Army Infantry was initially placed in defensive positions among the Marines, around the perimeter of Henderson Field. The enemy launched simultaneous attacks, at several places against the perimeter. The Army Infantry was equipped with the M-1 rifle, while the Marines were equipped with the old M-1903 bolt-action rifle. They believed that it had no equal for accuracy and reliability. When the Marines saw what a great and effective weapon the M-1 was, especially in the defense against a banzai attack, they literally screamed to be equipped with the M-1 rifle. It took a battlefield demonstration by Army Infantry to convince the Marine Corps to give up the old M-1903 rifle.

11 November 1942, the local French population was celebrating Armistice Day, the ending of World War I, when we heard the news of the North African Invasion by American and British Forces that took place 8 November 1942. This was the third of the four battles, considered to be one of the four major turning points in the Allied march to victory. Most of the time the news that we received was about two weeks after the event. This time the news was only two days old, which was unusual. Our battery headquarters requested that regimental headquarters, in Noumea, send us daily bulletins by radio, so that we could follow the progress of the North African Campaign. Even regimental headquarters didn't always receive news on a daily basis, in spite of everyone's interest in the North African Campaign's progress.

27 November 1942, after being relieved by a New Zealand Army Unit, **E Battery** rejoined the rest of the regiment in **Noumea**. When we arrived in **Noumea**, **E Battery's** guns were deployed on the hills surrounding the harbor, which was now a huge naval base. Our gun section was set up on a high hill on the east side of the harbor, on Ducos Peninsula, several miles north of our position at the time of the initial landing. This position provided a view that enabled us to see the entire harbor. It was also possible to see ships approaching **Noumea**, while they were still far out at sea. Many major naval vessels were based in **Noumea's** large sheltered harbor, between battles with the Japanese Navy. Among the ships based here were; the aircraft carriers, USS Saratoga and USS Enterprise; the battleships, USS North Carolina and USS Massachusetts; hospital ship,

USS Solace; cruisers, USS Helena, USS Porto Rico and USS Columbia; many destroyers; Navy combat troopships, **USS President John Adams**, USS President Andrew Jackson, USS President James Monroe and USS Crescent City. The Navy also based floating dry-docks and various repair ships in this huge sheltered harbor. The batteries of the **70th Coast Artillery (AA) Regiment** ringed the entire harbor. This was also the main support base for the Solomon Islands Campaigns.

One day when we were on the beach, filling sandbags, I met up with Reggie Crotty, a fellow machinist apprentice who worked with me on the railroad. Some of the crew of a light cruiser was ashore, on this deserted beach for a beer party. I could tell by the dark gray color of the ship that it was from the Atlantic Fleet. Talking with the crew I learned the ship's name, USS Columbia CL-56 and I asked if they knew a Reggie Crotty, and sure enough they did. Launches were sailing to and from the ship bringing more men and beer ashore. With the sergeant's permission, I went out to the ship. I boarded the ship and told the Officer-of-the Deck the reason for my being there. He was unable to tell that I was from the Army, because of the mix of uniforms that I was wearing. The pre-war fatigue uniform was blue while the new one, which we didn't have, were green. He asked for some identification. We always wore our dogtags, but for some unknown reason I didn't have mine with me. He said that I had to stay on the quarterdeck while his runner searched for my friend. The runner returned and told me that he had gone ashore for the beer party. He handed me a carton of Milky Ways and refused payment for them. While I was waiting for a launch to return to the beach, he was telling me how lousy the Officer-of-the Deck was. I wondered why he was telling me this about him. As the ship's launch neared the beach, I could see my friend waving and jumping up and down trying to get my attention. We greeted each other and spoke about how we were both amazed at this unusual meeting. It was then that I learned that the Officer-of-the Deck was Robert Montgomery, the movie actor. A few weeks later I was to meet Crotty once again. His ship had been in a battle near Guadalcanal and had received some minor damage. Somehow, when his ship returned to **Noumea**, he was able to get a note to me. He had been operated on to repair a hernia and he was in the ship's sickbay. I asked for a pass and given the reason, my request was granted. While I was waiting for a boat to get to Crotty's ship I heard a bos'n call out the name of the USS Flusser DD-368, a destroyer. Another machinist apprentice, from the railroad, I knew was on that ship. I went out to the Flusser and met Gene Eisemann and told him about Crotty, and that I was on my way to see him. Eisemann's ship was on twelve-hour standby for sailing orders. He decided to chance it, and go with me without asking for permission, to see Crotty. Here the three of us got together in the USS Columbia's sickbay 12,000 miles from home by an odd trick of fate.

9 December 1942, the **Americal Infantry Division** assumed overall control of the operations on **Guadalcanal**.

3 January 1943, General Patch assumed command of the newly formed XIV Corps, composed of the Army **Americal** and 25th Infantry Divisions and the 2nd Marine Division. The XIV Corps ended the Guadalcanal Campaign 9 February 1943.

23 April 1943, I was asked if I would consider applying for an appointment to OCS. The request really surprised me. Our battery commander let everyone know that he would only consider requests from NCOs. **E Battery** didn't offer any opportunity for promotion to privates, since members of the Regular Army held every authorized rank from private first class to first sergeant. These men all had from three to more than twenty years of service. Many had served, during peacetime, at one or more overseas posts. I applied for an appointment, because it seemed like the only chance to get home before the end of the war, without becoming seriously wounded or very sick. If there was any rotation plan under consideration the troops in the field weren't aware of it. Two weeks later, I was interviewed by a review board composed of field grade officers, (majors and higher) who questioned me about my knowledge of mathematics, military training and the military situation throughout the world. Fortunately, I had taken all the math courses available while in high school, including calculus. My answer to a question about the situation in North Africa drew a smile from all of the board members. The next question was; when did I last see a news bulletin? The last news bulletin that I saw was about two weeks old. The ranking board member, Lt. Col. Romlein, my battalion commander, informed me that I should be happy to know that the Germans had surrendered a day or so earlier. He told me that my answer was correct for the date of the last news bulletin that I had seen.

16 May 1943, E Battery left the position it occupied on Ducos Peninsula in preparation for the move to Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands.

18 May 1943, I was informed that the board had approved my application for OCS. That same day, the **70th Coast Artillery (AA) Regiment** received orders to prepare for redeployment to **Guadalcanal**. I assumed that this ended my chance to attend OCS. While in **New Caledonia**, the regiment was attached to the **First Island Command**, a Naval Headquarters command that also included the Solomon Islands. I was not aware that I would still be under the same command after we left **New Caledonia**. Admiral Halsey was the overall commander of all United States and Allied Forces in the **South Pacific Area**. While the regiment waited for further orders, we reloaded all our 50 cal. machine gun magazines with newly issued ammunition. Sometime later, I was unable to find my wallet, and after searching everywhere I assumed that it was gone for good. It was at this time that the battery was equipped with the new 40-mm. guns to replace the obsolete 37-mm. guns that we brought with us from the States. The new guns were transferred to us from the 14th Marine Defense Battalion. We never knew why these guns were transferred from the Marines, instead of receiving new ones.

26 May 1943, we loaded our equipment on and boarded the **USS President John Adams APA-19**, a Navy combat troop transport. Until we sailed we practiced climbing down cargo nets to board landing craft or climbed over the ship's railing to board landing craft hanging from the ship's davits. Each time we did this we waded ashore on nearby beaches. We practiced landings both during the day and at night.

At this time we had a new battery commander, **Capt. Raleigh Cole**. He was the battery 1st Sergeant when I joined the outfit in Baltimore. Just before we returned to

Noumea in November 1942 he was commissioned with the rank of first lieutenant, because he had more than twenty years of peacetime service, many of them at overseas posts. Because of his age, he was offered a commission in in the Quartermaster Corps, which he refused. He was very highly regarded at regimental headquarters. He wanted to serve in a combat unit, preferably with the **70th Coast Artillery (AA) Regiment**. The regimental commander must have put in a good word for him and secured for him what he wanted. Cole had been a tough first sergeant, so we didn't expect things to get any easier under his command. Raleigh Cole's promotion to captain came through about two weeks before we were to move to **Guadalcanal**. I think the old NCOs were glad to have him as battery commander. Personally, I had to be convinced that it was a good idea, but he had to be better than the bigoted Waycross, Georgia, high school principal, Capt. McCollum, who was our former battery commander. Everyone in the battery disliked Capt. McCollum.

6 June 1943, shortly after sunset the convoy set sail from **New Caledonia** for **Guadalcanal**. The attack transports were the **USS President John Adams** APA-19, **USS President Andrew Jackson** APA-18, **USS President James Monroe** APA-17 and **USS Crescent City** APA-21. The four vessels were sister ships. The only way to tell one from the others was by their APA numbers; they were as alike as peas in a pod. They were referred to as "The Unholy Four". The four of them usually operated together, carrying troops and supplies between New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands. The crews had a lot of combat experience. Capt. Cole offered to have **E Battery** man the ship's 50 cal. machine guns. I was surprised that the skipper would agree to let an Army unit man his ship's guns. Maybe, it was because we would man the guns full time. The Navy usually only manned a ship's guns when a "Condition Red" was in effect.

9 June 1943, just after sunset, as I was relieved from manning a machine gun, one of the escort destroyers fired its 5-inch gun and set off its attack alarm. The convoy was under attack by Japanese planes. I ducked under one of the ship's landing craft so that I could watch the action, but a Navy sergeant-at-arms saw me. He was a big guy. He grabbed me by the collar and the seat of the pants and tossed me down a hatch and dogged it down behind me. In the troop compartments there was nothing to do but lie in your bunk, listening to the ship's guns banging away. I soon fell asleep, and didn't know until morning that the enemy planes repeatedly attacked for almost four hours. Because we had experienced so many alarms and alerts for more than a year, I believe was the reason that nobody in the troop compartments displayed any signs of nervousness. It must have become routine to us, or we had a lot of confidence in the United States Navy. During my tour in the **South Pacific** I never saw any signs of jealous inter-service rivalry between any of the military branches.

12 June 1943, the convoy dropped anchor off **Koli Point, Guadalcanal**. After a very early breakfast, **E Battery** loaded into the ship's landing craft and went ashore. Once ashore we were assigned to work details. My detail was assigned to unloading the battery equipment from the landing craft when they reached the beach. A number of landing craft shuttled between the ship and the shore. The loaded battery trucks were the first

equipment brought ashore and were unloaded by another detail at our assigned assembly area. The unloaded trucks returned to the beach and we reloaded them with equipment as it was delivered by the landing craft. It was hard and heavy work under the hot tropical sun. The unloading went on all day. The Navy was anxious to get the ships unloaded as rapidly as possible because of the constant danger of an enemy naval or air attack. The only meal we had was an early morning breakfast before we left the ship. By late afternoon, we had used up all of our available water and were so tired and washed out that no one would move when the landing craft came ashore. The sergeants were unable to get the men to go back to work. The Navy was having fits and complained to our regimental commander. The colonel listened to our complaints and promised to supply us with water and food as soon as possible. We literally staggered back to work. The colonel kept his word and soon we had water and sandwiches brought to us. I believe that loading and unloading ships is the hardest work I have ever done, especially under miserable tropical conditions. General Omar Bradley once said that combat troops should never be used to perform heavy labor unrelated to combat action, because they are too inefficient in that role. It was close to dark before we finished moving all of our equipment to our assembly area. I was pleasantly surprised to have my lost wallet returned to me. It was found in one of our 50 cal. machine gun magazines that we had reloaded back in New Caledonia before we boarded the **USS President John Adams**.

15 June 1943, we were once again loading battery equipment aboard a ship. This time we were loading onto an **LST**. We set up our 40-mm. guns on the upper deck so that they would be able to add to the ship's defensive firepower in case of attack. We did have an air raid the previous night. We finished loading the ship by early afternoon. Now, we had another problem, the ship was unable to get off the beach, even with the help of a Navy tug. The Navy even had destroyers race back and forth, close to the beach, making waves in an effort to free the **LST**. All the time we were afraid that we would have to unload some of the equipment to lighten the ship. Shortly before dark, it seemed that the Navy gave up in their efforts to free the ship. That night we had an air raid, but the enemy's attack was directed against the airfields. We slept alongside of our guns, just in case.

16 June 1943, sometime late that night, I woke up when I felt the ship move. I can only assume, that a high tide was all that was needed for the ship to get off of the beach. That morning the enemy launched one of their biggest air attacks against **Guadalcanal**, about 125 planes. Enemy planes could be seen flying east, as we sailed west. Army, Marine and Navy fighter planes broke up their formations and were knocking them out of the sky right and left. Very few enemy planes got passed them. Throughout our trip, we could hear machine gun fire overhead in the clouds and we could see enemy planes falling from the sky. That morning our regimental commander went down to the beach to see if the Navy would get our ship off of the beach. When he got there, he saw a bombed out **LST**, where our ship had been. At the time he thought that he had lost **E Battery**.

About noon, **B, E and F Batteries** arrived in the **Russell Islands**. Once again we were unloading a ship, this time on Banika Island. Most of our equipment was on the

battery's trucks and we worked in the shade of the coconut palms, out of the hot sun. We were able to unload the ship by the middle of the afternoon and enjoy (?) a meal. **B, E and F Batteries** were under the command of Lt. Col. Romlein, the **2nd Battalion** Commander. Both **B and E Batteries** were assigned to a special task force, for the invasion of the **New Georgia Islands**, one of the **Solomon Islands** groups. We were to land behind a Marine Raider outfit. Some guy in one of the batteries started a rumor that we were the "Romlein Raiders". Men from other outfits came around to ask about our unit. Of course, we told everybody that our outfit was a secret unit and we couldn't talk about it. It was amazing how the story grew bigger and bigger as it spread throughout the island. While preparing for the **New Georgia** offensive, there were air raids every night and sometimes even during the day. We weren't deployed to provide any anti-aircraft defense. We spent some time practice firing at low altitude rocket targets. The ranges to the targets were never greater than a thousand yards. The short ranges and the fast target speeds made it almost impossible to hit them. Lt. Col. Romlein let us know that he was satisfied with the target practice, even though none of the targets was knocked down. These targets moved from left to right and because of their very high speed were only within range for little more than 30 seconds. It took a few seconds to pick up the target and get the gun director to follow it and then let the gunners know when to open fire.

21 June 1943, in "**Operation Toenails**" Marine Raiders landed at Segi Point from old four stack World War I destroyers that had been converted to fast light attack ships for raiding Japanese held islands. On New Georgia Island an Australian Coast Watcher named Kennedy, formed a native defense force that he trained and armed, mostly with captured Japanese equipment, and held onto Segi Point at the eastern end of New Georgia Island. This native force constantly ambushed and harassed the enemy. Using native drums, Kennedy was able to send and receive messages from one end to the other of the **New Georgia Islands** within twenty-four hours. The Marines were to march overland to attack **Viru Harbor** from the landside, while **B Company 103rd Infantry** was to attack from the sea. Some of Kennedy's natives went along with the Marines as guides and scouts. The Marines had encounters with Japanese patrols on several occasions. Fortunately, no serious casualties resulted from these engagements, but they were unable to keep to the schedule called for in the initial operational plans.

28 June 1943, our battery boarded two **LCTs**. Most of the battery equipment was on trucks so there was very little physical labor involved. We sailed after dark for the invasion of **New Georgia**. The convoy consisted of several **LCTs**, carrying two reinforced infantry rifle companies and **E and B Batteries**. **LCTs** were large flat bottomed landing craft capable of carrying half of **E Battery's** trucks and towed guns. They were not what one would call seagoing vessels. They were manned by a crew of five or six men and were usually commanded by a Petty Officer. They were much too large to be carried on a ship's davits like the smaller landing craft. The Naval Escort vessels were three wooden minesweepers that looked like small fishing trawlers. The escort ships were armed with nothing bigger than 20-mm. automatic anti-aircraft guns. Well before dawn, the seas were getting rough and it started to rain heavily. There was no shelter from the weather for the troops on these landing craft, so we became rather wet. The only food was our own C or

D rations. We were crossing more than seventy-five miles of open sea. LCTs ride very low in the water. At times, we were unable to see our escort or the other landing craft as the seas grew higher. By this time we had become real sailors from all the times we spent on various ships and landing craft. I don't recall of anyone getting seasick.

29 June 1943, late in the afternoon our convoy landed at **Wickham's Anchorage, Vanguna Island**; part of the **New Georgia Islands Group**. One of the reinforced rifle companies, half of **E Battery** and all of **B Battery** debarked here. As these units were landing, a Japanese two-engine bomber flew over at a very low altitude. It came out of the clouds so suddenly that no one fired at it. Two of our fighters came out of the clouds, right on his tail. The three planes were soon out of sight, so we didn't see if they shot him down. The Jap was flying west toward the enemy base at Munda. While the unloading was under way, a column of troops was seen double timing along the beach towards us. The troops were two companies from a Marine Raider Battalion, that was supposed to be inland keeping the local Japanese forces away from the beach area. It turned out that the Navy put them ashore about seven miles from where they were supposed to be.

The Marine Raiders immediately moved inland and were ambushed by the Japanese. The Marines were taking casualties as they tried to extricate themselves from the trap they were caught in. Fortunately, the reinforced rifle company that arrived with us went to their aid and trapped the enemy between the two units. Both units were able to wipe out the enemy force, so that everything turned out all right. The next morning the Marine major formed up the two companies and gave them a tongue lashing for getting themselves ambushed. He told them that the worst thing was that they had to be rescued by the Army. Even worse, in his eyes, the unit that saved them was a National Guard outfit.

The rest of **E Battery** and the other **reinforced rifle company** remained on the LCTs for the night, since we were to proceed to our own objective the following day. Our LSTs anchored overnight in Oliana Bay at Wickham's Anchorage prior to heading for Viru Harbor the following morning.

30 June 1943, **B Company 103rd Infantry** arrived at **Viru Harbor** (this was our planned destination) as scheduled, but were driven off by enemy fire from a 75 mm. gun that intelligence was unaware of. It became apparent to **B Company** that the Marines had not arrived as planned, for the combined assault and the surprising knowledge that the enemy was equipped with artillery. Radio silence was in effect, so that the enemy would be surprised by the units that were on the island prior to the scheduled D-Day, 1 July 1943. The strict radio silence left **B Company** in the dark as far as what might have happened to the Marines. Until put ashore, all Army and Marine landing forces took orders from the senior Naval Officer with the landing force. **B Company** went to Segi Point to follow the same route taken by the Marines. I never found out if the Infantry felt that they might catch up with the Marines or were going to their aid.

1 July 1943, D-Day for the invasion of New Georgia, the remainder of **E Battery** and a reinforced rifle company from the **103rd Infantry Regiment** left **Wickham's**

Anchorage, Vanguna Island before dawn, headed for **Viru Harbor**. It was a perfect day for a sail, if it wasn't for our reason that we were there. Shortly before noon we could see Navy or Marine planes dive-bombing a land target almost directly ahead of our small convoy. It aroused our interest and had us wondering what was going on. Again due to the strict radio silence we could only make some vague guesses. Before we got any closer the planes flew off as we continued on a course directly toward the point of land that they had attacked. When we saw a break in the coastline we realized that we were entering **Viru Harbor**. As we approached the harbor entrance we could see a man trying to signal us with two rather dirty rags. We later learned that he was a Marine trying to signal us not to enter the harbor. The Navy signalman was unable to make out what he was telling us. The entrance to the harbor was almost invisible until you reached it. The narrow entrance to the inner harbor had tall cliffs on both sides, that were more than fifty feet high. As we were midway through the entrance toward the inner harbor a single rifle shot rang out. We spotted a man on top of the cliff to our left, just before he disappeared from sight. The inner harbor was surprisingly large. Our small convoy, minus the minesweeper escort, dropped anchor well out in the middle of the harbor. We soon became aware of small arms and machine gun fire in the surrounding jungle. A Marine appeared on the east shore of the harbor, where he found a native dugout canoe and came out to us. He had orders for us to stay out in the harbor and wait for orders for when we were supposed to land. The only thing that he wanted was water. Meanwhile, it was quite obvious that his buddies were involved in one hell of a firefight. We could hear hand grenades and mortar bombs exploding, as the firefight intensified. Things soon quieted down and we were told to come ashore. Only recently (during the year 2000), I read that most of the Japanese fled overland to the enemy base at Munda. About one hundred seventy-five survived out of the enemy battalion. I don't have any idea what the normal strength of a Japanese battalion of what we called Imperial Marines was. What we called Imperial Marines were usually Koreans. They were noticeably taller than the Japanese. The Japanese called these troops Special Naval Landing Forces.

When I went ashore, the first Marine that I met seemed to be too old to be a part of the Marine Raiders. He asked me for some water, so I offered him my canteen and told him to drink all that he wanted. He looked to be in a bad way, but he only took two mouthfuls and told me that I would need it for myself. I later found out that this old Marine was their chaplain. He was the first man that I ever saw with the thousand-yard stare. It was not very long before I was to see it on a daily basis. The individual seems to be seeing something beyond and through you. The Marines told me that the chaplain was always going out of his way to see that they had movies and a fair share of beer when it was available. He didn't have to go on this mission, but he felt that his presence would be comforting to the men. While most of **E Battery** manhandled our 40-mm. guns to the high ground, a few men went into the jungle to assist the Marines in bringing out their dead and wounded. They had about eight KIAs and fifteen WIAs. I remember one of the wounded men was smoking and joking with his buddies, but in a few minutes he was dead. Even today, I see this gutsy guy whenever my thoughts go back to that day. Before sunset the Marines buried their dead comrades with the usual ceremonies; three rifle volleys followed by Taps. The Infantry and Marines set up a perimeter defense. The next day a Navy Construction Battalion (Seabees or CBs) landed to construct a PT-boat base.

A few days later, we were surprised to find some men from **B Company 103rd Infantry's** scouts in our midst. They marched over the same route as the Marines. They were an amazing outfit. Not only were they able to avoid enemy patrols, but they also carried 81 mm. mortars and ammunition with them. The Marines had told us that it was almost impossible to carry 60 mm. mortars over that trail. These Army scouts were able to infiltrate through the Marine defenses. They said that they had to notify their company commander that friendly forces occupied **Viru Harbor**, because they were ready to fire the 81-mm. mortars at us. All this wasted effort, because of radio silence rules. American Forces had also infiltrated at several other places, prior to the main effort against the Japanese at Munda Airfield, at the western end of New Georgia. **B Company** had arrived off of **Viru Harbor** on D-Day ready to assault the beach and assist the Marines in their landside attack, but was driven off because the Marines were a day late in reaching **Viru Harbor**. The Marines were late because they ran into enemy patrols along the trail.

4 July 1943, a large bomber force (200 planes) assembled almost right above us in the preparation for the assault against the Japanese air base at Munda. Until then, I was unaware that there were so many B-17s in the **Solomon Islands**. This was the biggest air attack, up to that time in the **South Pacific Area**. The battles to capture Munda were considered to be one of the most fouled up campaigns in the Pacific Theater. At one point two American Infantry companies fought a battle against each that lasted a few hours. In the jungle you can be almost face to face with the enemy and see little more than the flashes from his weapons, when he opens fire. It has been estimated that friendly fire causes about 10% of the casualties in any war. There are many who believe that it might be closer to 20%.

20 August 1943, **Viru Harbor** was abandoned. The Navy set up their PT-boat base further west, south of Munda Air Base. Our part of **E Battery** moved to **Wickham's Anchorage** to join up with the rest of the battery. All of **E Battery** and **B Battery** were part of the eastern defenses for Segi Point, which was now a Navy and Marine fighter air base. **B Battery** was equipped with 90-mm. anti-aircraft guns that were radar aimed. **B Battery's** radar was not equipped with IFF, which identified targets as friend or foe, especially at night. One night, a flight of Navy planes flew too close and was fired upon. In less than one minute **B Battery** fired one hundred and one rounds at them; that's from four guns. The planes were flying at low altitude, which made it easy to load and fire rapidly. We heard that the planes very nearly didn't make it back to Segi Point. Before the week was out **B Battery** was equipped with an IFF unit. This kind of equipment problem was not all that unusual. When **E Battery** left the United States we were not supplied with slings for our rifles. It wasn't until Maj. Gen. Patch visited us at **Plaines de Gaiac, New Caledonia** and saw that we were using rope for rifle slings that we finally received them, in spite of submitting requisitions, almost on a monthly basis. The day after the general's visit the slings were delivered by plane. It seemed as though the Services of Supply needed a kick in the rear end to make them do what they were supposed to do in the first place.

5 October 1943, once again **E Battery** boarded two **LCTs**. During the month of September, all enemy air raids were successfully repulsed by **B Battery**, while they were

at **Wickham's Anchorage**, on **Vanguna Island**. There was one night when enemy planes came in so close that **E Battery** had to open fire in support of **B Battery** to drive off the enemy raid. **B Battery** also left **Wickham's Anchorage** a day or so after **E Battery**. We moved west to a small island due south of Munda Air Base, which was now fully operational. The Army Engineers and a Naval Construction Battalion (Seabees or CBs) were expanding the runways and revetments. It became a bomber and air transport base. All the services had aircraft based on the field. **E Battery** was attached to a Marine Defense Battalion that was responsible for coordinating the air defense of the base and surrounding area. **E Battery's** gun sections were scattered over a number of small islands. **B Battery** was also located somewhere nearby.

6 October 1943, **2nd section 1st Platoon** was put ashore on **Lombari Island** where the PT-boat headquarters was located. It was impossible for our battery to supply our meals, unless the Navy carried the meals to us from **E Battery's** field kitchen, located about two miles away on **Kokorana Island**. That was a real good break for us. We ate at the Navy mess and ate Navy chow. We even received the same beer ration as the Navy crews. The Army never supplied us with beer unless we paid for it. We were the envy of the rest of the battery. We ran telephone wires under the water for communications with our battery headquarters.

These were the same PT-boat squadrons that Jack Kennedy, Robert Montgomery and Buckley (the PT-boat skipper who took General MacArthur out of the Philippine Islands) were members of. Buckley was the commander of the entire group of squadrons. One of Kennedy's crewmen used to visit us almost every night, and he told us about their rescue after a Japanese destroyer cut their boat in two. He had only good things to say about Kennedy. The enemy launched a number of air raids against Munda Air Field, which was about three miles north of our position. Several members of our battery were from Kentucky and Tennessee and they all knew how to brew up a batch of moonshine. Being isolated from both battery officers and sergeants, we always had a batch of an alcoholic beverage of some kind brewing. One night, our gun crew was sitting around singing, accompanied by a harmonica and a guitar, when someone suggested that we break out some of the refreshments we were brewing. The last thing that I remembered was our phone ringing and anti-aircraft shells exploding overhead. The entire gun crew was lying on their backs out cold, that brew was really strong. I was unable to get to my feet, but I remembered what had happened. The next morning I told our corporal about the raid and the phone ringing. The first we did in the morning was to make up a story that we had manned our guns, during the raid, even though the phone was out and how we found and repaired a broken wire. Fortunately for us, the enemy attack never came within range of our guns.

29 October 1943, **E Battery's Headquarters** informed me that orders were received for me to go home to attend OCS. I had to arrange for the Navy to take me to **Kokorana Island** where **E Battery's Headquarters** was located, to receive my travel and transfer orders. When I arrived there, I was told that the **70th Coast Artillery (AA) Regiment** was to be reorganized as two separate battalions. The first battalion (90 mm. gun **Batteries B, C and D**) would be called the **70th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion**

(Gun). Batteries E, F and G would become **Batteries A, B and C, 925th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion (AW)**. This was in line with the new standard organization for the Ant-Aircraft Artillery. We would no longer be a part of the Coast Artillery Corps. In today's Army all artillery is part of a single corps. Usually, (during WWII) the automatic weapons battalions were attached to, but not an integral part of armored and infantry divisions. The **925th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion (AW)** was attached to the **Americal Infantry Division** for most of the remainder of the war. The gun battalions were under direct control of the tactical corps headquarters.

When I arrived at the battery headquarters, I was told to report immediately to Capt. Raleigh Cole, to receive further instructions. Capt. Cole wanted to talk to me and to tell me how I was to get back to the States. The relationship between battery commander and private was suddenly radically different than it had been in days past. Capt. Cole even offered me a drink or two while we chatted about my appointment to OCS and our service together as members of **E (A) Battery**. The conversation was very pleasant and even enjoyable. He informed me that I would be promoted to corporal, since Army Regulations required this when a private was to attend OCS. My platoon sergeant, had asked me to ask Capt. Cole if there were any orders for him, since the previous battery commander had accepted and approved his application to attend OCS. This sergeant had about fifteen years service in the Regular Army. When I asked Capt. Cole about him, I was really surprised at his response. He and this sergeant had served together for a number of years. He reminded me that I had to know what this sergeant was like, since I served in the same platoon under him. He told me that this sergeant would not be going to OCS, because Army policy didn't approve granting commissions to individuals who were as cruel and mean as this sergeant was to his subordinates. I was never a fan of Capt. Cole when he was our first sergeant, because he was a very demanding man, and difficult to please. I have to say, that he treated everyone alike. We all had to toe the line, or else. When he held an inspection, it was the toughest than I ever experienced, even in OCS, where inspections were really chicken and petty. Capt. Cole never told me about his part in my appointment to attend OCS. I wasn't to learn of it until about two weeks prior to graduation. More about this later.

31 October 1943, was the last day that I saw the men of **E Battery**, as I sailed away from **Kokorana Island** aboard a Navy landing craft on the way to **Munda Air Base**, to catch a flight to **Segi Point**, where the forward regimental CP was now located. **Segi Point** was at the extreme eastern end of **New Georgia Island**. At **Munda Air Base**, the Army and Navy ran a joint operation, called MATS and NATS (Military Air Transport Service and Naval Air Transport Service) that provided transportation between the many airfields throughout the **South Pacific Area**. I presented copies of my orders at the operations shack to the noncom in charge to get a seat on a plane to **Segi Point**. I was told that I had a low priority and would not be able to get on a flight out that day. They told me where I could eat and sleep until there was space for me on a plane for **Segi Point**. Knowing the Army, I stayed out of sight of the NCOs where I was staying to avoid assignment to a work detail.

While I was hanging around the operations shack, I spotted a Marine Squadron number on a truck that seemed familiar to me. It suddenly dawned on me, that a friend

from my hometown was a member of that squadron. After confirming that I wasn't likely to get on a flight out that day, I spoke to the Marines and verified that it was his squadron. I hopped on the truck and rode off with them. It was a short ride to the Marine camp, where I was able to find my hometown friend just as he was going to chow. I joined him and his buddies and we ate lunch together. We swapped war stories and I told him that I was on my way home. Fred Biederman gave me a message for his father. He asked me to quietly let his father know that he was expecting to be rotated home sometime soon. This was the first time that I had ever heard of anyone going home on rotation. Maybe it was only done in the Marine Corps. Fred was the fourth person from home that I met, while serving overseas in the **South Pacific**. No two of us served together in the same unit and in some cases not even in the same service. Before I was able to leave **Munda** I had to sit out an air raid one night.

1 November 1943, I boarded a C-47 for the trip to **Segi Point, New Georgia** for the first stage of my trip home. When the plane was taxiing to take off there was standing room only, on that plane. I've been on crowded New York City subway trains that had more room per person on them when crowded, than this plane had. I was standing near a seated lieutenant colonel that recognized and remembered me from my appearance before the review board in **New Caledonia**. He asked me if I was Pvt. McElroy and when I told him that I was, he asked me to sit down after he and the officer with him made a space for me. It was the first time that I personally got to know my battalion commander, Lt. Col. Romlein, on an informal basis. It was then that I learned he was a reserve officer whose home was in The Bronx, N.Y. He was a very pleasant person and promised that he would be traveling with me all the way to **Guadalcanal** and would see to it that I traveled by air, from island to island, even though my orders called for FAGWT (an Army acronym for, First Available Government Water Transportation).

4 November 1943, the enemy raided **Segi Point** twice while I waited for further orders and transportation to the rear regimental CP on **Guadalcanal**, to receive my promotion and final orders for the trip home. Enroute to **Guadalcanal**, our plane landed in the **Russell Islands** and I was amazed to see some B-25 bombers armed with 75 mm. pack howitzers pointing out the front, below and to the left of what had been the bombardier's position. What a great idea, I assumed that it worked, but wondered what kind of mission these planes were used for. Later in the afternoon, after our noon meal, our flight continued on to **Guadalcanal**, where we arrived in time for the evening meal. Except for some occasional night air raids, **Guadalcanal** seemed like any rear area base. Which it had almost become.

5 November 1943, with processing completed I boarded the **USS Pinkney**, a Naval attack transport at **Lunga Point, Guadalcanal**, at about 1800 hours. Within minutes after I was aboard, the ship set sail for Noumea, New Caledonia on the first truly definite leg of my trip home. I was finally leaving an active combat zone. Our escort was a single destroyer that left us on our own just before dawn, the following morning. These attack transports were fast enough to outrun enemy submarines and were very well armed. Shortly after the ship set sail, there was an announcement over the PA system for all those

individuals traveling alone to turn in their records jackets to the executive officer. I knew that this meant an assignment to work details, so I buried my documents at the bottom of my barracks bag. I was determined to travel in an easy style on this voyage. The executive officer was aware that not everyone turned in his papers. Just after the ship docked in Noumea, he called once again for everyone to turn in his papers. Since I would soon be leaving the ship I decided to follow orders.

9 November 1943, I'm back in **New Caledonia** at a Replacement Depot. Most of the troops there, were fresh from the States; headed for the **Solomon Islands**. Each morning we were assigned to work details, unloading ships. Before the trucks got past the front gate, all the guys returning from the **Solomon Islands** had jumped off of the trucks and were soon back in their quarters. When the sergeants found us back in our quarters they raised hell, but it had no effect on the returning guys. Everyone told these NCOs to get lost. The NCOs threatened that they would have our orders canceled. They were threatening the wrong guys. We knew that our orders were issued by a higher command than theirs. A few days of this and they left us alone.

19 November 1943, I boarded the **USS General George Squiers**, a navy troopship. There were a number of us returning home to attend OCS, and because the only Army and Marine officers aboard were badly wounded, all those going home to attend OCS were assigned to officers' quarters and put in charge of the enlisted men casualties who were traveling on the ship. On board were more than six hundred battle fatigue casualties; almost all of them were less than twenty-one years old. One time I asked an Army psychologist about my observation of the young age of these battle fatigue casualties. He told me that my observation was basically correct because at their young age it wasn't readily apparent that they might breakdown under the stress of combat. In older men there might be some indication of a possible future breakdown. There were two guys with us who were going home to be discharged for rather unusual reasons. One guy was going home because he was only seventeen years old. His mother found out that she could request that he be discharged because he had lied about his age. The other guy was a World War I veteran, who was a volunteer and a new Army Regulation allowed any enlisted man upon reaching thirty-eight years of age to request a discharge, if he wanted it. What made the circumstances of these two guys unusual was that in spite of the fact that the younger guy had been in combat, the Army required that a mature adult had to take charge of him, because he was a minor. He was placed in the custody of the older guy, who had to personally return him to the custody of his parents. The Army would sometimes display a rather unusual concern for one of its soldiers.

20 November 1943, our ship set sail from **Noumea, New Caledonia** for the good old USA. A destroyer escorted our ship until sometime after sunset. The next day we were all alone and far out at sea. The ship was quite fast; according to the crew it could do twenty-six knots when necessary; well able to outrun any submarine. On Navy ships, the area where officers were quartered was called officers' country. A Marine guard was stationed at the entrance to that part of the ship to keep unauthorized personnel from entering the area. We really had it made. There were some small deficiencies that had not

been corrected before the ship set out on this, its maiden voyage. There were a few times when dense black smoke poured out of the stack and when this happened, in daylight, the crew was called to general quarters; "condition red". The smoke made the ship's presence visible over a wide area of the ocean. It sometimes took the crew several hours to correct the problem. One other time, the crew was called to general quarters when, what must have been a neutral ship was encountered. The ship had a black hull and a white superstructure. I suppose that it could possibly have been a disguised enemy raider. The Germans did this on several occasions during the war. I don't recall that the Japanese ever did this. It was the first and only time that I ever saw a ship during the war that wasn't wearing a coat of gray or green paint. The LSTs and LCTs were generally painted green. Our ship circled this vessel with all guns pointed at it, as if to attack. Our Marine guard said that the skipper was an old line officer called back from retirement and that he wanted to command a warship, rather than a troopship. We must have circled this ship two or more times before we returned to our normal course.

We had a good Thanksgiving dinner on board ship. This was my third Thanksgiving Day away from home. The Navy cooks did a good job; I'm fairly certain that everyone on the ship enjoyed the meal. For most of the trip the weather was sunny and the sea was calm. Two days out of **San Francisco** we ran into a violent storm. The ship was lightly loaded and rode high in the water. There were times when it sounded like the ship was going to break in two, as it plowed through the rough seas. It was impossible to sleep because you had to hang onto your bunk, with both hands, to keep from being tossed out onto the deck. When morning came you were muscle sore and tired from the lack of sleep. As usual, I didn't suffer from seasickness so that I was able to eat whatever the cooks were able to prepare under the circumstances. In order to eat, it was necessary to stand and lean against the bulkhead with your feet spread wide and as far as possible in front of you, while holding your food in both hands. All the tables had been taken down and lashed to the bulkheads. Under these conditions, all we ate was sandwiches and coffee. A lone Navy blimp was our escort for the last two days of the voyage. Even the blimp was having a hard time. One minute it would be real high, and then it would drop almost to the tops of the waves.

5 December 1943, the seas calmed down late in the afternoon and we could see the Golden Gate Bridge. It was close to 5 PM when the net tenders opened the submarine nets at the **San Francisco** harbor entrance to allow the ship to enter the harbor. Everyone was on deck for the first sight of the good old U.S. of A. Just before we sailed under the bridge, we could see some girls on the bridge waving to us. Naturally, all of the GIs waved, shouted and whistled at them, and apparently the skipper didn't like this; an announcement over the PA system told everyone to knock it off or we would not be allowed to stay on deck. Just as it was getting dark, the ship pulled up to a mainland pier and a group of rather young guys in civvies, boarded the ship. Later we found out that they were FBI or CIC men who questioned anyone who was a radar operator, and searched his baggage for any written or printed material concerning radar. After dark, the ship was moved to a pier at **Fort MacDowell on Angel Island**. It was about 11 PM and everyone was tired and excited about being home. We were assembled in a gymnasium for a short arm inspection. For the uninitiated, this is a physical examination to find out if

anyone had contracted a venereal disease.

At this time a check of the passenger list showed that two men were missing. No one had seen them after the ship ran into the storm. After questioning those who knew them, it was assumed that they may have fallen or jumped overboard because they could not take the stress due to the storm. I spent almost two weeks on Angel Island. I was issued a new winter uniform, which I badly needed because **San Francisco** felt very cold to me, after such a long time in the tropics. We were all given thorough physical and dental examinations. When I entered the Army, I had no dental cavities. As I sat down in the dentist's chair I could hear the bugle call for the noon meal. I told the dentist that I would come back after chow. He told me to stay where I was and that I wouldn't miss chow. He was a big red headed Irishman, and true to his word he drilled and filled seven cavities in a little more than twenty minutes.

It was more than a week before we were given passes to go into **San Francisco**. **Fort MacDowell** was almost as much of a prison as Alcatraz, located out in the bay. The Army boat that plied between **Angel Island** and **San Francisco** was the only vessel allowed to go near the prison. This boat also carried the prisoners and visitors to Alcatraz Island. There were two government boats that constantly circled the island prison.

It may be that the West Coast was under a modified martial law, because no bar in the city was allowed to sell any alcoholic drinks to a soldier before five o'clock in the afternoon. The local service command threatened to shut down any bar that did. This restriction didn't apply to Naval personnel. The city was a pretty good leave town, in spite of the drinking restrictions. The service clubs were the best that I found anywhere. At a USO Club, one of the ladies sewed on my corporal stripes and overseas bars. She knew all the official measurements for placing insignia on a uniform. I had not written a single letter since the day, 29 October 1943, when I was told that I would soon be on my way home. While I liked to receive letters, I hated to write them. Of course, I had no idea that I would be in transit for so long a time, or I would have written at least one letter.

17 December 1943, I was handed my orders and railroad tickets to **Camp Davis, North Carolina** for travel via New York, with a ten-day delay en-route. So far I was in transit for a month and a half and would soon reach home. The train ride was very pleasant and enjoyable. It was the Christmas Season and everyone was very sociable. The only thing that annoyed me was the meal tickets, issued by the Army, which limited my choices of the items on the dining car menu. After some of the meals that I ate overseas, one might be apt to think that I had suddenly become rather fussy.

Our train made a short stopover in Denver that caused a minor problem. The train dropped off one of the coaches and when we returned to the train the GIs riding in that car couldn't find their baggage, so they complained to the conductor. The train was already a few miles out of Denver when the conductor stopped the train and had it backed up to the station and located the car so the GIs could recover their luggage. The train was almost five hours behind schedule when it once again departed from Denver. The next morning, we were told that the train had made up two hours of lost the time. The train was traveling so fast that the telegraph poles almost looked like fence posts.

21 December 1943, the train reached Chicago only about an hour late. I had to go

across town to board a Pennsylvania Railroad train for New York. It was a good thing that my baggage was checked through from **San Francisco** to New York City. If I had been delayed picking up baggage I would have missed my connection. I boarded the train just as it was pulling out. After supper, in the dining car, I was soon asleep in my berth for most of the trip to New York.

23 December 1943, the train pulled into Pennsylvania Station, New York, about 1 PM EWT (Eastern War Time). I was about an hour from home if there was a train scheduled for the final leg of my trip within the next few minutes. It was almost exactly two years since I had been home and I was anxiously looking forward to walking into the home that I left so long ago. It seemed that I had been away for a very long time. I must have had to wait awhile before I got a train to Bellerose, my hometown. It was close to a mile from the railroad station to my home. I always used to walk from home to the station when I went to work before the war, so it seemed to be the normal thing to walk home on this occasion, besides I could look at the old hometown and see if anything had changed since I left. It was a cloudy day and late in the afternoon as I walked home. The only thing that I can recall about that walk is meeting a little girl within a block of my home. This little girl, Mary Lia, would become my sister-in-law four years later. She was the only person that I knew and saw on the walk from the railroad station. When I spoke to her, I wasn't too sure that that she was the right person. She just stood and looked at me, never said a word then turned and ran. I walked the last fifty yards to our house. No one was home, but as usual the doors weren't locked. I walked in and made myself comfortable. I have no memory of what my feelings were like as I sat down to take it all in. I suppose that I found it difficult to believe that I was finally safe at home again. Somebody must have seen me and told my mother. When I went to the front door just to look at the street that I remembered so well, I saw three or four women with kids in tow running toward our house. In the lead was my mother ahead of the pack of women and kids. All that I can say is that the next few minutes were kind of noisy and hectic. The house was full of neighbors and family friends for the rest of the evening. It was quite a party. I also remember my future father-in-law coming in the front door giving me a hug and without saying a word; he just walked out the back door. I assume that he walked down the street to his own home.

I don't know whom my mother knew, but she had received information that I was on my way home a week or more before I arrived. She also knew whom to contact to have my brother, in the Navy, to be sent home on leave. As soon as things quieted down she sent off a telegram to the proper authorities for him to come home on leave. My brother was stationed in Florida aboard a patrol boat. He had just returned from a leave at home, but his skipper gave him another leave to come home again. I found out that my mother sent the request for the leave to the Naval District Commander, in Florida. The reason given for the request was my return home from combat duty. Anyhow, it worked. Jimmy, my brother arrived home on Christmas Day. I never did learn how he made the trip from Florida in such a short time. There was another surprise that my mother had for me. My fellow apprentice, Reggie Crotty, who I met up with while in the **South Pacific**, was also home, and without saying anything to me she had invited him over to our house.

2 January 1944, all good things do have to come to an end sometime. I had to report in at **Camp Davis, North Carolina**, to attend Officer Candidate School. While on leave at home knowing that I had to return to duty, it seemed that I was more than ready to return to the Army. At that time, I had this feeling that that was where I belonged. I've mentioned this feeling to other veterans, and they recalled that they all had that same feeling. Maybe, it had something to do with the fact that all your fiends were away and there was no one your own age to hang around with. Life in the Army was busy from reveille to retreat at Army bases and overseas life was continuous activity around the clock. It just didn't feel right to be loafing around with nothing to do.

On the train to Wilmington, North Carolina en-route to **Camp Davis** I met another hometown acquaintance, Murray Siegel, who was in the Marine Corps. His family owned a local stationery store with a soda fountain; which was standard in those days. Murray used to play in the infield on our player organized baseball team. He was a pretty good fielder and batter. He was on his way to Camp Lejeune, which was only a short distance from **Camp Davis**. It's really amazing how I was always meeting up with friends so often, while far from home.

When I was assigned to my OCS class I made many new friends, a few of whom I am in contact with, even to this day. I was assigned to **Class 100**, the last OCS class to graduate from the **Anti-Aircraft Artillery School**. Our initial Tactical Officer was a 2nd Lt. Pfeiffer who was almost as tough on us as the Regular Army noncoms that I served with in the **70th Coast Artillery (AA) Regiment**. The first few weeks were very physical, but I had no problem with the physical demands imposed upon us. My almost two years of foreign service was preparation enough for the rigorous physical training thrust upon us by our Tactical Officer (we referred to him as our "bird dog"). A few weeks later we were assigned a new "bird dog", 1st Lt. James E. Hollahan. He had been a Regular Army sergeant before he received his commission. He was very different in the way he treated his subordinates, compared to the sergeants in the **70th Coast Artillery**. He was also a definite improvement over our initial bird dog. After three weeks of emphasis on strenuous physical activities we started attending classes. The classes covered administration, military protocol, small arms target practice, basic mathematics, and familiarization with the weapons and aiming devices used by anti-aircraft artillery units. Later, each Officer Candidate was given the option to pick the weapon that was to be his specialty. I opted for Gun Gunnery, because I wanted to expand my training beyond my experience with automatic weapons. The other available options were automatic weapons or searchlights. We spent several days firing the weapons that we specialized in, on a firing range, located on the beaches overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. .

Many men were afraid of the Gun Gunnery classes because of the mathematics that was a major part of the course. It was a bit tough for me because we were marked on a curve and I was competing with the ROTC men who were recent college graduates. I was surprised that I was able to keep up with them. The largest group of washouts was among those specializing in Gun Gunnery. I really enjoyed the training, in the classroom and in the field with the big 90-mm. guns and the associated radar equipment. In addition to our primary mission, we also were trained to use this gun for both field artillery and anti-tank missions.

A week or so before graduation I was unexpectedly called out of ranks during the

usual hour of close order drill, and told to report to an officer standing off to one side of the parade grounds. I was very surprised to find myself reporting to one of the E Battery officers that I had served with in the **South Pacific**. He had a Polish name that I dare not try to spell. He told me that he had been at the **Coast Artillery School** for a while and was following my progress in OCS. He was reporting on my progress to Capt. Raleigh Cole. He then told me of Capt. Cole's part in my appointment to OCS. Apparently there was a lot of pressure on commanding officers to find and to recommend men that they felt might be officer material. Since the battery commander before Capt. Cole, would only approve NCOs for consideration, he wouldn't have given any consideration to any application that I might have forwarded to him. In the search for possible officer candidates, the regimental commander ordered the adjutant to check service records to identify every man who had an IQ of 110 or more, which was the minimum requirement for acceptance to OCS. The lieutenant told me that I had an IQ of 144, the highest in the regiment. The former captain still refused to recommend me for an appointment to OCS. Capt. Cole was a first lieutenant and the battery executive officer at the time, but he offered to recommend me for an appointment, if I would apply. It was because of Capt. Cole that I was asked if I wanted to try for a commission. I always knew that he was highly regarded at regimental headquarters. His recommendation carried a lot of weight. This was the first time I learned of how and why my application was accepted and approved at the first level so that I could receive an appointment to attend OCS. Until I heard this, it didn't mean too much to me whether or not I succeeded in gaining a commission. I always thought that Capt. Cole was unnecessarily tough on his troops, but now I knew that I had to graduate. He went out on a limb for me, so I had to live up to his recommendation that I was told had nothing in it but praise for me as an exceptional soldier. The lieutenant felt that it would have been highly unlikely that I would have received an appointment to OCS without Capt. Cole's great recommendation. He regretted that he didn't have a copy of Capt. Cole's recommendation to show me. From what he told me I got the impression that he had seen and read it. I have a hunch that he might have aided Capt. Cole to write it because Capt. Cole seemed to me to have had a very limited formal education. Until this officer informed me about this, I was totally unaware of Capt. Cole's part in my appointment to OCS.

25 May 1944, I received a commission as a 2nd lieutenant Anti-Aircraft Artillery, in the **Army of the United States**. The men who were in a college ROTC program received commissions in the Officers Reserve Corps (ORC). The **Army of the United States** included the Regular Army, the National Guard, ORC and everyone else on active duty during the war. Upon graduation, the entire class was transferred to the Infantry and given a ten-day delay en-route home on the way to Fort Benning, Georgia to attend a Special Officer's Infantry Training School. Only one member of the class stayed in the Anti-Aircraft Artillery, and that was because of his age. After what I had observed in the South Pacific this was almost like receiving a death sentence.

5 June 1944, after ten days leave at home I, and two other men from my class drove together to **Fort Benning**. The car belonged to a fellow graduate, 2nd Lt. Don Langlois, who lived in Connecticut. He picked up 2nd Lt. Jack O'Brien and me outside

Pennsylvania Station in New York City. Each of us took turns driving during the long trip to Georgia. One advantage to traveling by car was that the Army allowed for more travel time to reach an assigned destination. When we stopped at a hotel for the night in Columbia, South Carolina, two of us went up to our room, while Lt. Langlois, who owned the car, parked it for the night. When he came up to the room, he told us that he thought that he heard something about the start of the European Invasion from newsboys hawking the headlines of extra editions. Newspapers no longer publish extra editions these days of instant news bulletins via television and radio. It was about 2 AM and we were tired, so we went to bed without trying to find out if it was true. The first public announcement of the invasion, oddly enough, came from the Germans.

6 June 1944, we started out early in the morning, after finding out that the long expected assault upon what was called "Fortress Europe" had begun. As we drove through town after town, we saw crowds of people walking to churches. We hadn't heard President Roosevelt's radio speech, asking for everyone to pray for the men and the success of the invasion. Apparently, almost everyone else, but us, must have heard the President's radio speech. The crowds of people heading for churches were very impressive. The whole world knew that it was coming, but when it happened it was almost anti-climactic. We still had well over a hundred miles to go, but even up to the time of our arrival at **Fort Benning**, around mid-afternoon, the crowds were still heading to the churches.

When we arrived at **The Infantry School, Fort Benning**, we were surprised to find that hundreds of officers, from all branches of the Army, were there to attend the same classes as we. Many branches of the Army were no longer in need of more officers and men. What the Army needed was fresh replacements for the **Infantry**, and the best place to find them was in those branches that did not suffer the high losses of men as the **Infantry**. The training lasted two months. I often wondered why I was almost always assigned as a participant in the demonstrations for the classes. I was usually assigned as a machine gunner or the gunner on a mortar team. We used live ammunition in all of these demonstrations. I know that very few of those attending these classes had been overseas. Maybe, it was because I had been overseas, and that I was used to handling live ammunition. The terrain at **Fort Benning** makes it possible to duplicate and demonstrate the tactics of real battles from almost any war. They had a patch of forest that made me feel like I was back in a South Pacific jungle.

Each of us was called upon to write about one of our experiences in the service. I wrote about my experience in the invasion of **New Georgia**, in the **Solomon Islands**. Perhaps I should have known better, because I was later asked to speak before the hundreds of officers that were attending the same classes as I. I'm not enthusiastic about public speaking, but I did find out that if you are familiar with your subject it isn't too nerve wracking. As I wrote previously, I mentioned that the Army landed on the south coast of **Guadalcanal** before the Marines went ashore on the north coast a few months later. Much to my surprise, a lieutenant colonel instructor pulled me aside and asked me how I knew of that landing. He was surprised that anyone who was not a participant in the landing knew anything about it. He told me that he was the commander of that battalion, and I was the first non-participant he met who knew of the landing. He told me that my

story was essentially correct.

4 August 1944, I completed the **Special Officers Infantry Training School** classes at **Fort Benning**, and received orders to proceed to **Camp Breckinridge, Kentucky** for assignment to an **Infantry** regiment in the **75th Infantry Division**. A few days after I reported in at the division headquarters I was directed to report to the adjutant of the **290th Infantry Regiment**.

7 August 1944, when I reported to the adjutant, **290th Infantry Regiment** I was told to report to the captain of the Regimental **Anti-Tank Company**.

12 September 1944, SO (Special Order) 190 Headquarters **290th Infantry Regiment** made my assignment to **Anti-Tank Company** official. I believe that it was my good fortune that I had specialized in Gun Gunnery in OCS. The other officers from my OCS class were all assigned to rifle companies. **Anti-Tank Company** being a defensive unit didn't have to be in the lead during an attack. The first company commander was a Capt. Brown, who seemed friendly enough. He was very soon promoted to major and became the regimental S-3. Capt. Lawrence Gillen, who was called Rudy by everyone who knew him, replaced Capt. Brown. The executive officer was 1st Lt. Woodrow Fisher, a nice guy, and an excellent training officer. He was very good at his job and popular with almost everyone in the company. The 1st Platoon leader was 2nd Lt. Dalton D. Raze who had served in an anti-aircraft unit in the Canal Zone. He joined the company at the same time as I did. As a second lieutenant I was the platoon leader of the **2nd Platoon**. The third platoon leader was 2nd Lt. (Nick) Bill Nichols. These three platoons were gun platoons each equipped with three 57-mm. anti-tank guns. The fourth platoon was a mine platoon that had the job of laying down mine fields and the nastier job of removing them, both the enemy's and ours. 2nd Lt. James (Jimmy) Vosters was the mine platoon leader.

The company headquarters section later included Capt. Lawrence (Rudy) Gillen, the company commander, 1st Lt. Woodrow Fisher, executive officer, 2nd Lt. Charles (Charlie) Grose, recon officer, 1st Sgt. Orland Parsons, Sgt. John Heiterer, company clerk, Sgt. Edward S. Stewart, communications, S/Sgt. Robert Pack, mess sergeant, S/Sgt. William Groves, supply sergeant, Sgt. John Denegre, motor sergeant, and a number of tech ratings, and privates first class.

After serving with the **70th Coast Artillery (AA)**, the first thing that I found out was that all the men in **Anti-Tank Company** were literate to a degree that amazed me. Except for the sergeants and a small number of the privates most of the men had some college and for the most part they came to the **Infantry** from the ASTP or Air Cadets. The ASTP (Army Special Training Program) was a favorite program of the Secretary of War, Stimson. There was an Army joke that ASTP meant "always safe till peace." The Army was having a tough time keeping the Infantry units up to strength because of the heavy casualties suffered on the battlefields in the ETO. Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall had little sympathy for the ASTP that kept many able bodied young men in college when the Army needed bodies to fill out and replace the casualties in combat units. Only God knows what Stimson had in mind for all these well-educated soldiers. General Marshall saw this program as a source for infantry combat casualty replacements and was

finally able to convince Stimson that there was a greater need for these men on the battlefield. In both the first and second platoons, the officers and noncoms were not educated beyond high school. Had most of these men been originally trained in a combat unit they might very well have been promoted to an NCO rating. They were all over qualified to be infantrymen..

As I previously mentioned the first three platoons were equipped with 57-mm. guns that were a British design that they called six pounders. They classified field artillery pieces by the weight of the projectiles they fired. **Anti-Tank Company** was a regimental company that was not a part of the three battalions that made up an Infantry Regiment. The gun platoons usually operated as attachments to one of the battalions, to provide additional support to the battalion anti-tank gun platoon. That platoon was a part of the battalion Headquarters Company. **Anti-Tank Company** never operated as a company unit. While we were at **Camp Breckinridge**, we spent everyday training and I was getting to know the **2nd Platoon** NCOs and men. Needless to say, I was well aware that I was being evaluated by the men in the platoon.

One night the entire regiment went on a twenty-five mile march. There was some duty that I was involved with that caused me to be excused from the march. The odd thing about this is, that when any outfit I was a member of scheduled a twenty-five mile march, something always came up that caused me to be excused from participating in the march. At no time while I was in the Army did I ever get to go on one of these marches.

It wasn't too long before we heard rumors that the division was preparing for deployment overseas. It was my good fortune that the **2nd Platoon** had two outstanding sergeants, in Technical Sergeant Don Rice and Staff Sergeant Paul Graves. T/Sgt. Rice was the platoon sergeant, second in command. S/Sgt. Graves was the 1st Squad Leader. S/Sgt. Claude Eaton was the 3rd Squad Leader and was also good at his job. I wish that I could say the same for the 2nd Squad Leader. The platoon headquarters section included; T/Sgt. Don Rice, my jeep driver, Pfc. Owen Sellars, radioman Pfc. C.T. Grimm, platoon medic Pfc. Franklin Emberry, and myself. Prior to Pfc. Sellars assignment as my driver, there was another man, who became a casualty because of a severe case of trench foot a few weeks after we became involved in the **Battle of the Bulge**. I regret that neither I nor anyone else, from the company, can recall this man's name. Sellars was not only the smallest man in the platoon, but may have been the oldest, a year or two over thirty. Because most of the enlisted men were so young, anyone who reached the age of thirty was called pop, so Sellars was always called pop by the rest of the men in the platoon. The medic, Pfc. Franklin Emberry might have been the youngest man. He was a good medic and turned out to be the best of all the medics assigned to our company. Cpl. Kenneth Gardenar was the first squad gunner, a very likable guy and good at his job. Cpl. Joseph Golic was the gunner for the third squad. It always seemed to me that Joe had a smile on his face, no matter how rough things were. The second squad gunner was Cpl. Robert Clark, a rather quiet guy that maybe was because of the influence of S/Sgt. Ray Lindenmuth, his squad leader.

10 October 1944, we now knew for certain that the **75th Infantry Division** was about to be deployed overseas. We were not informed which overseas theater we were headed for. Each company in the **290th Infantry Regiment** had a farewell party for the

company members and any guest that they wished to invite. Many wives and girlfriends who lived in the nearby towns came. Among these guests were Lt. Bill Nichols' wife Martha (Marti), Lt. Charley Grose's wife, Mary and Lt. Jim Vosters' wife, Jane. All of the officers were acquainted with these officers' wives, since we spent all of our off duty time together every night at the "Regimental Officers' Club". All of the women got along very well together. Both the Vosters and the Nichols were married soon after they were called to active duty. The rest of the men were either accompanied by a local date or were alone. All the rest of the officers were alone. 1st Lieutenant Fisher was married, but his wife remained at home to care for their two children. Most of the officers had come to **Camp Breckinridge** only a short time before.

Lt. Dalton Raze and myself were the only company officers who had prior overseas service. The wives were curious about what foreign service was like. What could I tell them without causing them a great deal to worry about? I remember trying to reassure them that I had survived two years of overseas duty, but I wondered to myself if I wasn't stretching my luck, since this was to be my second trip overseas. I didn't mention that the infantry suffered almost all the casualties. The first time after the war that Marti and Bill Nichols attended a reunion was in 1996 at Hampton, Virginia. When Marti asked me if I remembered our conversation at the going away party, I assured her that I hadn't forgotten it. I asked her what it was like for her and the other wives when they went home after we left **Camp Breckinridge** for Europe. She and Mary Grose traveled part way together, since they lived west of **Camp Breckinridge**. While I don't remember the details of her story, I definitely got the impression that it wasn't a happy trip for them. They were separated from their husbands for about two years, while I returned home about a year before them as a result of my previous overseas service.

14 October 1944, the **290th Regiment** boarded trains for **Camp Shanks, N. Y.** as we started the trip to the New York Port of Embarkation. The trip to **Camp Shanks** was an overnight train ride.

15 October 1944, we arrived at **Camp Shanks** just before dark. It was close to the Hudson River, just south of the United States Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. During our short stay there almost everybody was able to get a pass to New York City. Some, like myself were close enough to go home to visit our families. When I told my mother why I was home, she was able to describe the convoy and its organization and when it was to sail. It bothered me that somebody in the neighborhood had a big mouth. My mother wouldn't tell me how she came by this information. At the time she worked in a defense plant. Maybe some military officer assigned to the plant had access to such information and told her.

20 October 1944, we traveled to Weehawken, N.J. by train to board a ferry boat that sailed down the Hudson River past New York City to piers on Staten Island. The city looked beautiful from the ferry, all lit up at night. It didn't look as though there was any kind of a wartime blackout in affect. We arrived at the Staten Island piers about dawn, where we boarded the **SS Brazil**. It was the same ship that carried troops in the **Task Force 6814** convoy that I sailed with on my way to the Pacific, more than two years

before.

22 October 1944, our convoy set sail early in the morning. It was a bright sunny day as we set out to sea. The officers had it much better than the enlisted men on troopships. Even though several of us shared a stateroom on the upper decks we didn't feel crowded. We were served meals in the ship's dining room on tables covered with tablecloths. Waiters served our meals, but I'm not certain if we were given a menu to select entrees from. The officers also ate better than the enlisted men, but had to pay for all their meals. We were given a meal allowance of about \$25 a month which was used to cover a part of our mess fees. There was even music, played by enlisted men, during the meal. During this trip the thought crossed my mind, that maybe I was overstretching my luck, especially since I was now in the infantry. My previous overseas tour made me fully aware of the high casualty rates suffered by infantry units, compared to the casualties in all the other arms and services. The infantry was normally only about fourteen percent of the total army manpower, but suffered more than ninety percent of the battle casualties.

3 November 1944, the **SS Brazil** docked in **Swansea, Wales**, in a harbor that was equipped with locks, because of the extreme tidal range. **Swansea** was both a seaport and a coal-mining town. There was some visible air raid damage to some buildings near the docksides. We boarded trains to take us to the seaside town of **Porthcawl**, not too many miles from **Swansea**. Our company officers were billeted in a real old fashioned inn with stone walls more than a foot thick. The enlisted men were quartered in tents and Quonset huts on the edge of town. We were issued new company equipment, trucks, guns and kitchen supplies. We traveled to a British firing range to test fire the newly issued 57-mm. anti-tank guns. There was a minimum amount of training, and everybody had an opportunity to go to **London** on a three-day pass.

9 December 1944, the regiment left **Porthcawl** for **Southampton, England**, by train and motor convoy. Those who left by train crossed the English Channel aboard two British ships, the *Monrovia* and the *Invicta*. The motor convoy arrived after dark in Southampton and stayed overnight at a nearby British Army Camp. During the nighttime part of the trip we saw many blue flashes toward the northeastern horizon. I must have seen nearly a hundred or so of these flashes. British Soldiers told me that these flashes were from exploding V1 or V2 missiles.

10 December 1944, during the early afternoon, we finished loading our company vehicles and guns aboard a **U.S. Coast Guard LST** and after sunset set sail for France.

13 December 1944, the motor convoy landed at **Rouen, France**. We received a very warm welcome from the rest of the company when we arrived at the muddy field, that was the company assembly area, outside **Yvetot, France**.

14 December 1944, the regimental assembly was finally completed while we were at Yvetot.

19 December 1944, most of the **290th Infantry Regiment** left the assembly area by train. The motorized companies and the motor vehicles assigned to the various headquarters and line companies traveled together in a motor convoy. All the members of **Anti-Tank Company** traveled in the company's vehicles. On the way to Belgium, I remember seeing mile upon mile of burned out and wrecked German vehicles alongside the road in the vicinity of Mons. It must have been a slaughterhouse judging by the large number of burned out enemy vehicles, artillery and armored equipment along that road. Our motor convoy arrived at the **Ninth US Army Headquarters** where we stopped only long enough to find out that the division had been transferred to the **First US Army** because of an enemy breakthrough in that area.

20 December 1944, we arrived in **Charleroi, Belgium** where we were billeted overnight in Belgian Army Barracks, located within the city.

21 December 1944, the **290th RCT** left **Charleroi** for **Hasselt, Belgium** to move closer to the front.

22 December 1944, we left **Hasselt, Belgium** before midnight, it was a miserable ride. It was raining cats and dogs, and because we had orders to travel with the tops down on all the vehicles it wasn't very long before we were cold and soaking wet. The regiment moved in three parallel columns in order to provide flank protection for the main column. At this time during "**The Battle of the Bulge**", the front was so fluid that it made this precaution very necessary. Higher headquarters had only a very vague idea where the head of the advancing enemy columns were. I'm not certain, but I believe that my platoon was part of the right flank column. Sometime during the night the driver of a Cannon Company truck, ahead of my platoon, must have fallen asleep during one of the many stops. The column moved slowly for the most part, alternately stopping and starting. Suddenly we were going very fast and the driver of that truck would turn his headlights on and off, probably looking for the truck that he should have been following. Somehow, I became aware that I was missing two of my gun squads when we crossed the **Meuse River**, at **Huy, Belgium**. I pulled the first squad out of the column to search for the two missing squads. I had no maps or even any knowledge of what town was our destination. At the MP traffic control point, no one could or would give me any information about the column's route. I told the first squad to pull off the road, and not to move until I returned, while I searched up and down the road south of the **Meuse River**, looking for the missing squads and to see if I could find the column that we were assigned to. At one point we were stopped by a paratrooper, who demanded to see my officer's ID card. He had his M-1 rifle pointed right at me. My radioman, Pfc. Grimm, said to the paratrooper, "There's three of us, we could easily blow you away," or something to that effect. I felt like telling the trooper to do me a favor and blow Grimm away. The trooper said to take a look behind us if we wanted to try it. There were three more troopers standing nearby, all with their rifles pointed at us. After I convinced the trooper that we were legitimet, he told me that they were looking for enemy troops in American uniforms, thought to be in the area, and that it was their mission to try to find them. A few days later Grimm couldn't understand why I refused to pass a letter he was sending to a stranger in Switzerland. I

began to wonder if Grimm was going to be a problem.

We were now close enough to the front that the distant rumble of artillery fire could be heard. Shortly after sunrise I saw a column of trucks from the ***898th Field Artillery Battalion**, a part of the **290th RCT**. One of the battery commanders let my jeep and my first squad truck into the column. Whenever the column stopped, as it did quite often, the Belgian people would run up to our vehicles offering hot coffee and sandwiches on thick slices of homemade bread. The sight of a long column of troops moving toward the front must have boosted their morale, since most of the news wasn't very good at that time. Before our arrival they must have witnessed long motor columns of service troops going in the opposite direction. Service units were ordered to move to the rear, probably to clear the roads in order to provide room so that combat units could maneuver. It was just before noon when I saw Capt. Gillen standing beside the road. He was looking for us. Capt. Gillen told me that the **2nd** and **3rd Squads** had arrived much earlier and nobody was able to tell him what had happened to us. One lesson that we learned from this, is that the officer should follow the last vehicle in his group rather than in the front for better control.

We moved into a nearby Belgian farmer's house. We just took over the family's home without a by your leave, but the family was very pleasant towards us. That night, while sitting in the farmer's kitchen as we were talking, he in French and we in English about the war, I asked him what was the difference between us and the Germans in the way that we just took over his home? In spite of our language differences, we were able to communicate with each other. He understood and demonstrated the difference. Walking to the door, he said, "Le Boche", he closed the door, and then kicked it open. He strode into the room, rounded up his family and pushed them into an adjacent room, then closed and locked the door. He brought his family back to the table where we were sitting. He then said "Le Americain", and walked out the door, knocked on the door, walked in and introduced himself, politely greeted everyone, made himself at home, but he didn't chase any of the family from the room. It was a great pantomime act on his part. We spent a very pleasant evening with him and his family.

Later Sgt. Rice came in to tell me of an incident that occurred while he was out checking on the men who were guarding our vehicles. Some MPs captured three or four men nearby, whom they identified as Germans dressed in American uniforms. Sgt. Rice told me that they took them into the nearby woods and shot them. Those paratroopers who stopped me weren't far off of the mark in their search for enemy infiltrators. We were only a few miles from where they had stopped me and asked to see my ID card.

23 December 1944, the **1st Battalion 290th Infantry** was attached to **CCB** (Combat Command B) of the **3rd Armored Division** in the vicinity of **Manhay**, a few miles east of where the rest of the regiment would be deployed. It was the first day of good flying weather since the start of the enemy attack and from shortly after sunrise until sunset the sky was full of all types of Allied and enemy aircraft. The sky was white with contrails from highflying bombers and below them there were dogfights between large numbers of fighter planes. This was the first really clear day that the Air Corps was able to help the men on the ground in the many furious battles that were taking place.

24 December 1944, the early morning was bright, clear and cold with a light snow

cover on the ground as the **290th RCT, 2nd and 3rd Battalions** with the **629th TD Battalion** and **Company B 750th Tank Battalion** attached, moved closer to the front. The **290th RCT** and attached units were, in turn, attached to CCR (Combat Command Reserve) of the **3rd Armored Division**. About midday the regiment set up a defense line a mile or so north of **Soy**. A regimental CP was established in **Biron**. A field artillery battery was visible, to our front near **Soy**, firing at targets somewhere to the south. Overhead the sky was again filled with planes of all types, bombers and fighters, friendly and enemy. As happened on the previous day, many of the fighters were engaged in dogfights. A number of planes from both sides were falling from the sky. T/Sgt. Don Rice later told me that he counted eighteen B-17s shot down. The saddest thing of all that we saw happen, was when a P-47 flew across in front of us at less than five hundred feet above the ground get shot down by a German fighter on his tail. This was the second day in a row that the weather was clear enough for the Air Corps to come out in large numbers in support of the hard-pressed ground forces. In mid-afternoon I was called to our company CP, located in **Ny, Belgium**, to receive my orders. The **2nd and 3rd Battalions** were to jump off in an attack sometime before midnight. My orders were to move to a position to the east of **Soy, Belgium**, on the **Soy-Hotton Road** to defend the regimental left flank against a possible attack by enemy armored forces. My platoon was deployed as an attachment to the **2nd Battalion**. When we left the company CP (Command Post) on the way to the **Soy-Hotton Road** we were startled to see about fifty dead Germans just off to the right of the road. Soon after we drove onto the **Soy-Hotton Road** on the way to our assigned position, the regimental commander was standing in the middle of the road and flagged us down and asked me if I understood my orders. When I told him that I did, he repeated the same question at least two more times, before he allowed me to proceed. The situation was unreal. He never asked me what my orders were. When we reached our assigned position, just before sunset, we found that a towed gun Tank Destroyer Platoon and a Sherman M-4 tank were also assigned to defend the same road junction. I assumed that they were battle-experienced veterans. At the time we didn't understand why they were so elated by our arrival. It didn't take long, after talking to them, to realize that these men had been engaged in a fighting withdrawal over several days that to them seemed to be a losing battle and any reinforcements were a welcome sight.

On Christmas Eve one of the company headquarters sergeants brought the evening chow to the **2nd Platoon** and asked me where the **3rd Platoon** was. I indicated to him, on my map, where they might be found. I knew that they were to the west of us in the vicinity of **Hotton**. I pointed to the **Soy-Hotton Road** on my map, and he sped off down that road to Hotton, which was on the regiment's extreme right flank. What I didn't know, at the time, was that the enemy was very close to, or blocking the road between **Soy** and **Hotton**. Later when I saw the sergeant, I asked how he had made out that night. He told me that the directions were great and that he had no problem finding the **3rd Platoon**. I never told him how lucky he was that night. On Christmas Day I remember eating my Christmas dinner lying in the snow under a truck, for protection, during an enemy artillery barrage.

The regiment was now attached to **CCR of the 3rd Armored Division** commanded by Maj. Gen. Maurice Rose who insisted that our regiment had to attack as soon as possible, without any chance to make a reconnaissance of the terrain where the

attack was to take place. A night attack is difficult enough for experienced troops, but to issue such an attack order for a green unit to execute should be avoided if at all possible. The attack was to be made without any artillery preparation fire. The **2nd Battalion** was at the (LD) Line of Departure well before H-hour waiting for the **3rd Battalion** to move into position on the right flank. The **3rd Battalion** was very late in reaching the LD, so the **2nd Battalion** was ordered to go ahead with their attack to the south toward **Wy, Belgium**, without them. The movement of the two battalions to the LD before midnight was a real rat race. Gen. Rose wanted the attack to be executed as soon as possible, because the enemy had surrounded and cutoff one of his armored task forces a few miles south of the LD. The way things turned out the attack could have waited until daylight.

The **2nd Battalion** reached its objective, **Wy**, with very light casualties. The **3rd Battalion** jumped off later when they finally reached the LD. The **3rd Battalion** had to attack a strong enemy position atop a hill overlooking an open slope more than five hundred yards long without any artillery preparation fire. The battalion had to advance up this slope with only the darkness to conceal its movements. The **3rd Armored Division** was unable to supply the attackers with a normal ammunition load. The battalion captured its objective, but was unable to hold it against the inevitable enemy counterattack, because they ran out of ammunition. The situation was extremely serious and called for a renewed attack against the enemy position as soon as it was possible.

25 December 1944, the **2nd Battalion's** reserve, **F Company**, was attached to the **3rd Battalion** to make up for the battalion's heavy losses sustained in the first attack. Captain Stewart, **F Company's** commander, was very candid with his men before the new attack. He personally told me that he informed his men that if they were on maneuvers the umpires would say that they were all dead at the very beginning of the attack. The renewed attack took place in the bright sunshine of Christmas Day. From where I was, on a high hill that overlooked the battlefield, I was able to see everything that took place there. It looked like the entire **3rd Battalion Staff** was also there, on the hill, to follow the action that was taking place in front of us. This time the artillery fired on the enemy positions to soften the enemy resistance to the attack. The attack was preceded by an intense artillery barrage, called a TOT (Time on Target). Usually, when a TOT is called for, most of the artillery batteries within range of the target are called upon to provide additional artillery support for the attack. In this case more than a hundred guns were involved. The artillery is told the exact time that their shells are to strike the target. Each artillery battery calculates the time of flight from its position to the target and fires at the precise time necessary so that all the shells from all of the batteries involved arrive on the target together. In this case the impact was almost unbelievable when all those shells fell on that hill. The top of that hill disappeared from sight in the smoke and flames from the explosions. It was an awesome sight to see when all those shells almost simultaneously exploded over the target. Tall pine trees rose up out of the smoke turning end over end. This TOT technique was developed and refined by the U.S. Field Artillery Corps until they had it down pat. The field artillery fired on that target for maybe five minutes or so. It didn't seem possible that anybody could survive and come out of it in a sane state of mind. Yet, there was still some resistance to the attack. The **517th PIR (Parachute Infantry Regiment)** also participated this time in the attack on the left flank of the **3rd Battalion**.

It's hardly necessary to say, that the enemy casualties were heavy. This time the attack was successful, and the objective was taken and held. The enemy did not counterattack. The next day, a Belgian citizen, Florent Lambert, counted one hundred seventy American bodies from the **75th Infantry Division** collected by a Graves Registration Unit. He must have assumed that they were all from the **75th Infantry Division**. There were several other American units engaged in battle in the same area for at least two days before we arrived. The **290th Infantry Regiment** actually sustained about seventy KIAs. What a Christmas Eve and Day we experienced. Lambert personally counted one hundred fifty-five German bodies at the top of the hill. . He counted many more dead Germans in the surrounding area, for a total of close to eight hundred. Many more must have been wounded. The usual ratio is about three to four WIAs for each KIA.

The **Anti-Tank Company 1st Platoon** was attached to the **1st Battalion**, which was not under regimental control on the first day, but was attached to **CCB** of the **3rd Armored Division**. The **1st Platoon** had one KIA (**Pfc. Carl Sieg**) and one WIA (**Cpl. Niklos Uremovich**). These casualties were the result of a strafing and bombing attack by a flight of P-38s. Friendly fire? The platoon picked up both men and rushed them to an aid station. It wasn't a very joyous Christmas Eve or Holiday for the **290th Infantry Regiment**.

26 December 1944, the trapped armored task force destroyed and abandoned their trucks and tanks. The medics stayed behind with the wounded men. The rest of the force walked out, passing so close to enemy artillery batteries that they could hear them calling out firing commands. We had been alerted to watch for them when they reached our lines. Unfortunately, one of their men was shot and killed by one of our sentries. All the rest reached the safety of our lines.

27 December 1944, the **1st Battalion** was returned to regimental control. The regiment went over to the defense and strengthened all positions to hold the ground that had cost us so many lives, until orders came from Field Marshal Montgomery to return to the offensive to drive the enemy back to his starting point. Field Marshal Montgomery, at this time, was in command of all the US Troops on the northern flank during the "**Battle of the Bulge**." Later that day Lieutenants Nichols, Raze and I drove to a spot south of **Soy** to look over the ground where the **3rd Battalion** fought its first battle against the enemy on the 24th and 25th of December. The sight had been a front line on a forward slope. The new MLR (Main Line of Resistance) had been pushed forward beyond the top of the next hill. We were walking ahead of our jeeps down the slope when we suddenly came under fire from enemy mortars. There's only one thing to do when under mortar fire, and that's to beat a hasty retreat out of there. We shouted to the jeep drivers to beat it and not wait for us to return to the vehicles. The first round landed quite close to me and the blast knocked me down. Just as I got to my feet, a second round exploded very close to me and I was actually lifted into the air and landed on my back. Once again a round exploded close to me and tossed me into the air. Some days later I was to see an enemy 50-mm. mortar round knock a man off of a bicycle without harming him. All this time we were all desparately trying to get the heck out of there. This time when I got to my feet the next round was not close enough to knock me down. We had no idea that the enemy

was able to observe us since the MLR (front line) was beyond the hill in front of our location. Miraculously, no one was injured. All's well that ends well.

Later about 1900 hours, the enemy laid down an intense artillery barrage that seemed to last for hours, but it probably lasted no more than five or ten minutes, at the very most. It seemed to us that the barrage would never end. We could hear the shrapnel hitting the tree trunks, cutting down the branches and feel the ground shaking from the explosions all around us. I was lying on my stomach in the bottom of my foxhole and with each explosion my stomach muscles would contract so violently that my entire body would bounce. The **1st Squad**, across the road, about one hundred yards from us, had one round land on the forward edge of their gun position and plow a furrow in the ground as it bounced into the air but luckily failed to explode. When the barrage ended a head count showed that no one was hurt. One of our trucks took some shrapnel through the radiator and a box of hand grenades was hit but didn't explode. Sunset was about 1600 hours due to the latitude and with overcast skies the night was extremely cold and dark. Except for the men on guard, everyone was deep down in his foxhole trying to get some sleep. We were aware that the enemy was able to observe us, because we drew fire anytime that we left the concealment of the woods where the **2nd** and **3rd Squads** were dug in. The enemy probably had no idea what type of unit that we were. I assume that their artillery decided that it was safe to try to knock us out under the cover of darkness. When they opened fire during the daylight hours we usually had an artillery spotter plane in the air that would spot them and call in counter battery fire or fighter-bombers against their position every time that they opened up. Our control of the air made it dangerous for their artillery to fire during the day.

28 December 1944, during the pre dawn hours the enemy launched an attack against the **289th Infantry Regiment** off to our left flank. There was a gap of more than two hundred yards between them and our regiment. The only thing that we could hear was enemy burp guns. These were similar to the Thompson sub machine gun, but had a much higher rate of fire, almost 800 rounds per minute. That's all that we could hear. It sounded like they were overrunning the entire regiment and were headed our way. We didn't hear any return fire from the 289th. It was very unnerving. The **2nd Squad Leader** begged me to pull out of our position. We were all very nervous because of what we were hearing, but there were no enemy troops visible to us. I was having a tough time trying to calm the sergeant down. He was convinced that we were about to be overrun. The thing that was most disturbing was the lack of any discernable response from the **289th Infantry**. We stood firm, ready to defend ourselves if it became necessary. There was a change in the men of the **2nd Squad** that was not apparent until some days later. I don't know what Sgt. Lindenmuth was telling the men in his squad, but they always seemed to be extremely uneasy. None of the men in the other two squads seemed to be anywhere near as nervous as the men in the **2nd Squad**. It is quite normal for men to be on edge when there is nothing between them and the enemy but the muzzles of their weapons. We had only been in action about a week when we tried to understand what was happening on this particular night. Sgt. Lindenmuth and I got into a serious argument when he started to insist that we should pull out of our position. It did no good to point out to the sergeant that there weren't any enemy troops that we could see that might be a threat to us. I will admit that

the entire platoon, including myself, was somewhat jittery hearing only the enemy's weapons and what sounded like our sister regiment was failing to resist the enemy's attack. It also didn't help that when we talked to our company headquarters on the radio that they had no information about anything that was happening at the time. The truth is that the **897th Field Artillery Battalion** fired 4700 rounds in less than four hours that was not heard by us. They were firing so fast and so long that they had to stop firing every once in a while to throw water over their guns to cool them off. The real story of what occurred that night can be found in the addendum "**The Battle for Sadzot**". The story of the battle for **Sadzot** is in Addendum-B on page 1B.

29 December 1944, our regiment fought off desperate enemy attacks when he tried to resume his drive to reach and cross the Meuse River. Initially we were assigned to the **XVIII Airborne Corps**, commanded by Maj. Gen. Matthew Ridgeway, who removed our division commander. On this date we became a part of the **VII Corps**, commanded by Maj. Gen. "Lightning Joe" Collins, who had commanded the 25th Infantry Division in the Solomon Islands when I was there.

One day we could hear some kids laughing and having a real good time. These kids were sleigh riding between the two opposing armies. Fortunately, it was all quiet along the regimental front at the time. We watched these these kids as they enjoyed themselves playing in the snow that made life so uncomfortable for us. The enemy troops were most likely looking on this bucolic scene just as we were.

1 January 1945, on the dot of midnight our artillery let go with a heavy artillery barrage to welcome in the New Year.

2 January 1945, the **290th RCT** was relieved from attachment to the **3rd Armored Division** and attached to the **84th Infantry Division**.

4 January 1945, S/Sgt. Paul Graves and I fought our own personal war with the enemy. I was given an order to check a certain bridge to find out if it looked strong enough to support tanks. I have always wondered why the **1st Battalion** wasn't called upon to check the bridge, at **Forge a la Piez**, since it was supposed to be in front of their position. We tried to get to the bridge through what I was told was their position. We never saw anyone from the **1st Battalion** anywhere in the town that they were supposed to be holding. This was highly unusual since troops always sought shelter in towns because of the cold and inclement weather. We headed down a road that led in the direction of the bridge, but soon decided that something was wrong. There were four of us in the jeep; S/Sgt. Graves, Pfc.s C. T. Grimm, my original jeep driver and myself. There were no traces in the snow that anyone had been in that area. When we came across abandoned enemy personal equipment lightly covered by snow, I decided to turn back and make a new approach, through the area held by the adjacent **289th Infantry Regiment**. This was about a six-mile ride to reach a road that led to the bridge from the east. We went past the front line positions of the battalion nearest to the bridge. S/Sgt. Graves and I left the jeep driver and the radioman parked as close to the bridge as we dared to drive. The snow on the road was packed down real hard as if there had been a lot of foot and vehicle traffic

over that road. We walked at least two hundred yards along the road when I caught a movement out of the corner of my eye, amid the brush in the ditch on the left side of the road. When I turned my head I was looking down the barrel of an enemy rifle pointed at me from a foxhole, not more than fifteen feet away. As I shouted a warning to S/Sgt. Graves, the enemy fired at me. He missed me as I dropped to the road. When I raised my head to get another look, the enemy again fired at me. I called to the sergeant to throw a hand grenade. Neither of us had one, which was very unusual for either of us. The German rose up in his foxhole to throw a grenade at us. S/Sgt. Graves fired his rifle at him and hit the handle of the grenade and it fell onto the road about ten feet from us. We were both lying on the road with nothing to shield us from the explosion, but neither of us was hurt. The sergeant asked me what were we going to do? I told him to move back about twenty yards while I fired to make the enemy stay down. S/Sgt. Graves followed my instructions, and then he fired so that I could retreat. We continued to retire in this manner until we felt that it was safe to stand up and walk back to the jeep.

The poor jeep driver and radioman didn't know whether to get out of there or come to our aid. Very soon a lieutenant colonel came up to us and wanted to know what happened. I explained why we were there and what we ran into. He asked if I knew that his battalion was going to attack across that road the next day. I informed him that I was not given any such information.

The road was curved in such a way that from our position we could see behind the brush where the enemy foxholes were. While the colonel and I were conversing the jeep driver spotted a German crawling behind the brush, unaware that we could see him from our present position. Sgt. Graves and I immediately opened fire on him. The sergeant's first round was a tracer that I saw bounce off of the enemy. The enemy soldier started to get to his feet. The sergeant had an M-1 rifle, and I was armed with an M-1 carbine that held fifteen rounds when fully loaded. The sergeant fired all eight rounds and was reloading when I fired and saw the enemy go down. A moment later another German jumped out and dragged his buddy back into the brush too fast for us to open fire on him. We then returned to the Regimental CP where I explained to the colonel why we were unable to reach the bridge.

5 January 1945, when our part in the counter offensive began, our **1st Battalion** soon captured **Magoster**. Later that night **2nd Platoon** moved to a new position to reinforce a roadblock manned by six riflemen. They were really out on a limb with no support on either flank and nothing but the muzzles of their rifles between them and the enemy. They were most likely the remaining survivors of a normal twelve-man squad. That night when we received our chow it included a large quantity of leftover Christmas turkey. It seems that the rifle companies found that it was easier for them to eat C and K rations that they could heat rather than receive a meal that was cold when it arrived and impossible to heat with the equipment that was available to them. Our mess sergeant traded our C and K rations for their turkey. Our company was better able to deliver hot food to our platoons on the front line because we were fully motorized and we were usually some seventy-five or more yards behind the rifle company foxholes. We received so much turkey that we offered quite a lot to the riflemen who were on the roadblock with us. These poor guys were overwhelmed by what they assumed was our generosity. We

had received enough turkey to feed two platoons. Throughout the night the men of my platoon kept informing me that they were hearing movements by the enemy's horse drawn artillery.

Shortly after sunrise the **84th Infantry Division** launched an attack right through our roadblock position. Some light tanks supported their attack. They soon advanced over and beyond the hill to our front. When the tanks returned to pick up more ammunition they would drop off wounded men at our position. Pfc. Franklin Emberry, our platoon medic, put on a fabulous demonstration of just how good a medic he was. He had almost half of the **2nd Platoon** following his directions and assisting him in caring for the half dozen or more casualties from the **84th Infantry Division**.

6 January 1945, **C Company** captured **Beffe**; all units were engaged in continuous patrol activity for the next two days.

7 January 1945, the **3rd Battalion** attacked and advanced to the vicinity of **Devantave**.

8 January 1945, the **290th RCT** successfully attacked all along the front against strong enemy resistance.

11 January 1945, the **290th RCT** was relieved from attachment to the **84th Infantry Division**, and returned to control of our own, **75th Infantry Division**. The relief came about when a number of the regimental officers were assembled to receive a new attack order. It was rather unusual for other than the battalion commanders and the company commanders to be assembled to receive an attack order. I was surprised to be present when this order was read to the assembled unit commanders. After the order was read, Col. Carl Duffner, the regimental commander, asked if there were any questions. Lt. Col. Russell Harris, the **2nd Battalion** Commander, stepped forward and said that he would refuse to attack. Everyone could hardly believe what he had heard. Col. Duffner asked Lt. Col. Harris to please repeat what he had said. When Lt. Col. Harris repeated his refusal to attack, the regimental commander dismissed all of the officers except for the three battalion commanders. All three battalions were in pretty bad shape and in no condition to continue to attack. That night **Anti-Tank Company** moved several miles to the east to **Basse-Bodeux** as the regiment went into division reserve. Whenever I think about it, I can still feel the bitter cold and see the snow covered roads in the thick pine forests that we drove through that night. This was the first relief for the **290th RCT** since entering combat on 23 December 1944. Nineteen days without any rest or relief. Shortly after we arrived at our destination the medics examined the men's feet and as a result, four men from the **2nd Platoon** were sent to the hospital for severe trench foot and never returned, among them was my original unidentifiable jeep driver. I also lost one man because he suffered from occasional attacks of blindness. That man was Pfc. Frank Ryan, a married man with two children, he pleaded with me not to send him to the hospital. I assumed that with his eye problem that he would be sent home. I didn't find out until Tom Grimm unexpectedly showed up at the reunion in Houston, Texas 10 September 1999, that Ryan was not sent home but was reassigned to a Quartermaster outfit. Tom had

received a letter from him telling him how miserable and unhappy he was in that outfit. The regiment received four hundred replacements during this three-day rest period. This still did not bring the regiment up to full-authorized strength.

12 January 1945, the **290th RCT** officially rejoined the **75th Infantry Division** when it was detached from the **VII Corps** and attached to the **XVIII Airborne Corps**. The division was to remain with this corps until the end of our stay in Belgium. The **1st Battalion** moved into **Vielsalm**. Later that morning, during a snowstorm, the **2nd Platoon** entered **Vielsalm** and I recall seeing **291st Regiment** troops bringing in several POWs as we drove down the street looking for a house to shelter us from the bitter cold. There was a huge stockpile of American artillery ammunition stacked along the street about five feet high and hundreds of yards long that had been left behind when the enemy captured the town. It looked as though the enemy hadn't disturbed it. The **2nd Battalion** must have been in reserve, because we stayed in the house that we had moved into for a few days, otherwise we would have been sleeping in foxholes somewhere in the woods. The **1st Platoon**, attached to the **1st Battalion** was involved in the attacks on the towns of **Burtonville, Ville-du-Bois** and **Petit Their**. The **1st Platoon** had one KIA in the attack on **Burtonville**.

14 January 1945, the **290th RCT** relieved the **289th RCT** near **Goronne, Belgium**. The regimental history mentions that **Anti-Tank** and **Cannon Companies** were brought up to strengthen the tactical situation because **K Company** was detached to the **289th Regiment**. I can't recall how or if our company was committed, unless it was as attachments to the battalions in the usual manner. Anytime the **2nd Battalion** was committed, the **2nd Platoon** went with them.

18 January 1945, the **3rd Battalion** finally succeeded in taking **Burtonville**, but sustained heavy casualties against strong enemy resistance. Rifle companies were down to platoon strength (about 50 men). Authorized rifle company strength was 197 officers and men. The **1st Battalion** was unable to advance beyond the **Poteau** crossroads. They went into a defensive mode in order to enable them to hang onto this strategic crossroad. The **2nd Battalion** came out of regimental reserve to assist the **1st Battalion** to advance, but it also ran into stiff enemy resistance.

19 January 1945, the **2nd Battalion** attack continued to face strong resistance even with the aid of a flanking attack by **K Company**, from the **3rd Battalion**.

20 January 1945, the enemy forces were finally eliminated by midmorning. The enemy continued to fight desperately to stem the regiment's advance. Seesaw battles went on all day. We gained and lost some ground, but for the most part more ground was gained than lost.

22 January 1945, fighting went on all day with little or no advance until after a successful night attack, when the enemy no longer had sufficient strength to hold onto his positions. They still very grudgingly gave ground.

26 January 1945, the **289th Regiment** relieved the **290th Regiment**. The **290th Infantry Regiment** had fought its last battle in the **Belgian Ardennes**. We were within sight of **St. Vith** when we moved out of the front line. As the regiment was moving from the front we were heavily strafed by what looked like a full squadron of British Spitfires, and as a result, suffered a number of casualties. Friendly fire?

26 January 1945, the entire **75th Infantry Division** ended its participation in the "**Battle of the Bulge**" and headed for a well-deserved rest. Before we were able to settle down, I was awakened about 0300 hours and told to wake up my jeep driver, Pfc. Owen Sellars, and to join an advance party that was leaving for **Alsace, France**, before dawn. The **75th Division** was ordered to proceed to the **Colmar Area** to drive the enemy out of another bulge east of the **Vosges Mountains**, close to the Swiss border. The assembled advance party convoy consisted of about a dozen or more jeeps led by the Regimental Motor Officer. We started out just before dawn at a very high rate of speed. It was bitter cold and the roads were covered with snow and ice. We hadn't traveled very far when one of the jeeps skidded off the road and turned over. Everyone stopped and helped to set the jeep right side up and back onto the road. I'll never understand why no one was hurt. As soon as everything was set straight, the convoy took off again at a very high rate of speed. When I questioned the Motor Officer about why we were traveling so fast, he said it was because the rest of the regiment would be on the road only a few hours behind us and we needed all the time we could gain in order to have billets ready for them before they arrived at our destination. We ate K rations for breakfast and lunch. We arrived at the **Seventh US Army Headquarters**, in **Luneville, France** after dark. We were able to get a hot meal at the transient mess. Officers had to pay for their meals. One of the oddities of the Army was charging officers for meals, even when living in a foxhole on the front line. At least we had a warm dry place to sleep that night, thanks to the **Seventh US Army Headquarters**. We were up before dawn, had a hot breakfast and were soon on the road again traveling at top speed. The jeep speedometers only went up to 65 mph. and almost all the time the speedometer needles were pegged at the top speed of 65 mph. We had to pass over the **Vosges Mountains**. The road through the **Vosges Mountains** ran and passed over close to the top of the mountains. There really wasn't any low level pass in the vicinity where we went over those mountains. As we started down the east side of the mountains it started to snow. There were times when the right side of the rather narrow road ran along the edge of steep cliffs. The Free French Army included some French Foreign Legion Units. The Legionnaires drove like madmen and made me wonder if any of them had forced other vehicles over the edges of the cliff or driven themselves off of the road. We reached the vicinity of **Ste. Marie-aux-Mines** and arranged for billets with the local authorities. **Anti-Tank Company** was assigned to a small local school building that was nice and warm. Shortly after settling into our billets our company received about a dozen or so replacements. My jeep driver and I had barely enough food for the two of us. Everyone in the advance party suddenly had replacements on his hands and no food for them. Somehow, the Regimental Motor Officer, who was in charge, managed to scrounge up a few cases of K rations. We settled down in our nice clean and warm quarters for a full night's sleep. The next morning everyone in the town was talking about a **28th Infantry**

Division soldier who was executed by a firing squad. The only soldier executed for desertion since the Civil War. It wasn't until after the war that I read Pvt. Eddie Slovak's story and of his execution. Everywhere you went, all that you heard were soldiers talking about this tragic incident.

Sometime in the late afternoon **Anti-Tank Company** arrived. Before we turned in for the night, Sgt. Pack, the mess sergeant, was able to feed the company a hot meal. I believe that it was the first hot food that the recent arrivals had since leaving Belgium. At least the advance party ate two hot meals at the **Seventh US Army Headquarters**.

1 February 1945, the **290th RCT** was in division reserve near **Holtzwhir, France**. The **75th Division** was assigned to the **US XXI Corps** that was attached to the **French First Army**, commanded by General de Lattre de Tassigny for tactical operations and attached to the **Seventh US Army**, commanded by Lt. Gen. Alexander M. Patch, Jr. for administration. Lt. Gen. Patch was the commander of **Task Force 6814** and the **Americal Infantry Division** that my old outfit was a part of when we sailed out to the **South Pacific**. The **2nd Battalion** moved from the assembly area in **Holtzwhir** to **Bischwhir** closer to the front. The **3rd Battalion** was positioned on the division right flank, while the **1st Battalion** moved to a wooded area north of **Appenwhir** to relieve elements of the **291st Infantry Regiment**.

3 February 1945, the heaviest barrage that the regiment had ever faced hit the **3rd Battalion** but the attack was resumed after dark and they successfully took their objective.

4 February 1945, the **290th RCT** attacked to aid the **289th RCT** take **Appenwhir**, and captured the **Bois-de-Weckolsheim**, where I had a grandstand seat when the **1st Battalion** moved against **Wolfgantzen** in a night attack.

6 February 1945, the **2nd Platoon** was dug in on the edge of the **Bois-de-Weckolsheim** when the **2nd Battalion** rode on tanks in the attack against **Weckolsheim**. Lt. Col. Harris was riding on the lead tank when one of his men was shot and fell off of the tank less than fifty feet in front of our position. In less than one minute stretcher-bearers came up to us looking for the wounded man, who we were able to point out to them. The man was out in an open field that made it hazardous for us to go to the man's aid, but usually the Germans didn't shoot at the medics. As we expected the medics were not fired upon when they picked him up and had him on his way to an aid station in less than five minutes.

7 February 1945, the **290th RCT** made a dawn attack across the **Rhine-Rhone Canal** and reached the **Rhine River**. Occasional enemy fire was received from the east side of the river.

8 February 1945, the **290th Infantry Regiment** was relieved by the **109th Infantry Regiment**, **28th Infantry Division** and went into division reserve. The **440th Anti-Aircraft Battalion (AW)** was attached to the **75th Infantry Division** when it became the first anti-

aircraft unit to shoot down a jet fighter plane during an air attack.

12 February 1945, the **290th Infantry** moved to an assembly area near **Baccarat, France** when the mission to eliminate the **Colmar Pocket** was completed. The last Germans were driven from French soil. The **City of Colmar** was General Charles de Gaulle's hometown. The members of the **75th Infantry Division** were awarded the right to wear the Coat of Arms of the **City of Colmar** by the French Government, but the US Army makes no provision for wearing it on our uniform. We rested for a few days near **Luneville, France**.

15 February 1945, the **290th RCT** received orders to proceed by train and motor convoy to an assembly area near **Pannengen, Holland**. The weather was beginning to feel like spring. It looked like living and fighting in the cold and snow was over. The division actually assembled in the vicinity of **Helden, Holland**. The division finally joined the **US XVI Corps**, of the **Ninth US Army** that was the original division assignment before it was diverted to the **First US Army** for the "**Battle of the Bulge**". The **Ninth US Army** was attached to the **Second British Army**, and would remain with them until the end of the war. The **75th Infantry Division** relieved the British **6th Airborne Division** along the **Maas River**. This was a strictly defensive mission. The British told us that this was a very quiet front and if you didn't fire at Jerry he wouldn't fire back at you. It was so ridiculous that the enemy used to line up for chow right out in the open on the front line. The regimental commander gave orders to call down artillery fire on the chow line. If the enemy fired back we had orders to count the incoming fire and reply with three for every round fired at us. The enemy soon caught on and never fired or returned our fire on them. Meanwhile, our seriously depleted division units were restored to authorized strength with the arrival of a large number of replacements. The principal job was the training of the new replacements. Some of the training (you could call it on the job training) involved patrols across the **Maas River** that would have been done even if there were no recruits to train. There were occasional exchanges of artillery fire. There was supposed to be a shortage of artillery ammunition, but I believe that artillery ammunition was being hoarded for the Rhineland Campaign and the Rhine River crossing.

2 March 1945, soon after the **290th Regiment** moved to a new assembly area in the towns of **Buchten, Born** and **Holtum, Holland**, orders were received to move again.

3 March 1945, the **75th Infantry Division** moved to an area near **Venlo, Holland**, the **290th Regiment** moved into an assembly area in the vicinity **Westerbrock, Germany**, for the division's first entry into Germany. The division I&R Platoon (Intelligence & Reconnaissance) made contact with the Canadian First Army, on our left flank.

6 March 1945, the **290th Regiment** was ordered to assemble south of **Kaldenkirchen**.

7 March 1945, the move was completed early in the day. The regimental CP and the **Regimental Battalion** were billeted in **Leutherheide**, the **1st Battalion** in

Heidhausen, the **2nd Battalion** in **Bruch** and the **3rd Battalion** in **Hulst, Germany**.

8 March 1945, the **290th Regiment** cleared the **Venlo-Roermond-Kaldenkirchen Area** of isolated enemy units bypassed by the units that made the breakthrough to the Rhine River. **Anti-Tank Company** never ran into any bypassed enemy units.

11 March 1945, the cleanup operation was completed.

12 March 1945, the **290th RCT** moved to an assembly area near **Linfort**, to relieve elements of the **35th Infantry Division** and took over their positions along the **Rhine River** in the vicinity of **Rheinberg** and **Buderich**.

13 March 1945, the relief of all of the **35th Infantry Division** units was completed.

16 March 1945, patrols crossing the **Rhine River** had some failures, but many successes. One successful **2nd Battalion** patrol crossed and was able to penetrate for a considerable distance beyond the river.

17 March 1945, **Anti-Tank Company** moved to positions south of **Wallach** for direct fire against observation points and buildings on the east side of the **Rhine River**. The **2nd Platoon** fired from positions in **G Company's** area. The river was more than 500 yards wide at that point. This was a fine way to celebrate St. Patrick's Day.

18 March 1945, another successful patrol by the **2nd Battalion** found that the enemy positions were lightly held and was able to make a detailed study of the road nets behind the enemy front line positions.

21 March 1945, a five man enemy patrol was stopped by **G Company** and four enemy soldiers were killed and an officer was captured.

24 March 1945, one of the heaviest artillery barrages, which lasted for four hours, preceded the attack across the Rhine River by the **117th** and **119th Infantry Regiments** of the **30th Infantry Division** through the **290th Infantry Regiment's** positions. The Engineers followed close behind the assault units and started construction of two pontoon bridges.

25 March 1945, the **2nd Platoon, Anti-Tank Company** crossed the **Rhine** on one of the two pontoon bridges. It was my twenty fifth birthday. Once across, the platoon moved about a mile east of the river and set up a roadblock at a road junction next to a small stream. There were no other units in the vicinity that we were aware of. The enemy had constructed the position that we occupied. We didn't have to dig any foxholes. When a couple of the men thought that they had seen some activity on the other side of the stream we fired several rounds of HE after we received no reply to our challenge. I don't believe, that there was anybody there. Firing our guns eased the tension of the men.

26 March 1945, the **290th RCT** was attached to the **30th Infantry Division** and was assigned to a front line position between the **Lippe River** and the **Lippe Canal**.

28 March 1945, the situation was changing real fast when the **290th RCT** was attached to the **8th Armored Division**.

29 March 1945, the **290th RCT** was credited with the capture of **Dorsten** so that the **8th Armored Division** could advance.

31 March 1945, the **290th RCT** was relieved from attachment to the **8th Armored Division**.

1 April 1945, the **290th RCT** attacked through the **8th Armored Division** and two division objectives were captured against light resistance. **C Company** reached the **Rhine-Herne Canal** riding the tanks of the **701st Tank Battalion**.

3 April 1945, the **290th RCT** attacked through the **134th Infantry Regiment**, **35th Infantry Division** and reached the bank of the **Zweig Canal**.

6 April 1945, the **290th Infantry Regiment's 1st and 3rd Battalions** in a dawn attack cleared the town of **Ostuck**, and the **3rd Battalion** continued the attack through the **289th Infantry** against **Dingen** and **Bodelschwing**.

7 April 1945, the **1st Battalion** called for air support, near enemy occupied **Kirchlinde**. The front line troops were told to stand fast as P-47 fighters strafed, bombed and fired rockets at enemy troops assembling to attack. Everybody rose out of his foxholes to watch the show. The P-47s stopped the attack dead in its tracks without the Infantry or Artillery firing a shot. The **2nd Platoon** had a front row seat to observe the P-47 attack.

All the roads and enemy communications from the west to **Dortmund** were cut off. It was one day about this time, when we were pushing the enemy, night and day without let up that **Anti-Tank Company** was told to find our attacking battalions. It seems that regiment had lost all contact with the regiment's three battalions. I set out to find the **2nd Battalion**. My jeep driver, Pfc. Owen Sellars, and I were literally stumbling around in the dark, when I was challenged by an invisible sentry, I answered with the password, **Tin**, and the sentry replied, "That's not it". He then said that he knew me and that I could advance toward him. The person who had given me the password led me to believe that the sign and countersign was "**Tin Can**". The sentry told me that it was "**Thin Man**." This made more sense since the Germans had difficulty pronouncing the English "th" sound. Such was the logic used when making up the signs and countersigns. When I asked the sentry if he knew where the **2nd Battalion CP** was. His reply was that I had found it. Right behind the large bush that hid the sentry was the **2nd Battalion CP**. When I told Lt. Col. Harris about my mission, his reply was that as far as regiment was concerned I did not find him. He told me that he and the other battalion commanders had decided not

to contact regiment, because the troops had been pushing constantly for several days and nights and were in need of rest. The three battalion commanders had decided that none of them would report to regiment until the following morning. This was typical of Lt. Col. Harris; he was always looking out for his troops. It's my guess that he talked the other battalion commanders into following his example and doing the same thing. He then told me that if I thought that I had found him I would have to remain with him until the following morning. I told him that I would spend the next few hours with his battalion until near dawn and then report back to my company and admit that my all night search had been a failure. Let's face it; stumbling around in the dark on a fluid front line could be kind of hazardous.

Later that same day the **2nd** and **3rd** **Battalions** pushed into **Kirchlinde** and **Marten**, and cut thr rail line into **Dortmund**. The **2nd** **Platoon** moved to an extreme right flank position to reinforce a rifle platoon, a tank and a tank destroyer holding a road junction on the edge of a large mining town along the railroad line. It is only now, (5 May 2002) 57 years after the event that I am able to identify the town as **Gelsenkirchen**. I studied a nylon map provided by the Air Corps to bomber crews in the event that they might be shot down and would have some information to aid them in avoiding capture. After greatly enlarging the part of the map, on my computer, of the area involved that it was possible to make a possible identification of the town. We spent two days out on a limb playing cat and mouse games against a beaten enemy. The road leading to our position was under enemy observation. The following morning I decided that we would eat C or K rations for breakfast, but my jeep driver, Pfc. Owen Sellars, volunteered to risk a trip to our company CP to bring us a hot meal. Another man volunteered to ride along with him. I took both men to the second floor of a building, where we had a view of the road that they had to travel over. I explained the strategy that they were to follow to protect themselves from the mortar fire that they were sure to draw. They were instructed to come to a complete stop alongside a building before driving through any street intersections or breaks between buildings and to wait for the inevitable mortar barrage before proceeding. The enemy had their mortars zeroed in on all the street intersections. Sgt. Rice was instructed to post a man in this building to watch for their return and to let me know when they were on their way back. I watched their progress over this road when they left. Pfc. Owen Sellars, the driver, followed my instructions to the letter. When I was alerted that they were in sight on the return run, I again followed their progress over that hazardous road. They waited out each mortar barrage as they raced along that road and arrived without a scratch, with our hot breakfast.

What followed was one of the strangest days that I ever experienced during the war. The German house that we occupied was a three-story brick building. Both sides of the street had similar buildings. The German family was still in the house while we were there. We used to lock them in the cellar each night just to get them out of the way. The street ran south toward and under a railroad trestle. The enemy was dug in on the opposite side of the tracks from us. The railroad embankment was the enemy's front line position. There was a large town bordering on the railroad occupied by the enemy. The railroad tracks were less than a hundred yards from the house that we occupied. While I was eating breakfast in the living room, looking out through a large picture window, I could see the tank that was with us out in the street facing the railroad trestle to the right. The tank

would race toward the trestle and fire its cannon at the enemy positions, and then it would race backwards past the window firing its forward machine gun. The enemy fired his machine guns at the tank, with no effect at all upon the tank, and then I would see tracer bullets flying in both directions past my window. The tankers kept this up for more than half an hour. It was like watching a crazy movie. While this was going on there were German civilians, with their elbows resting on pillars in the windows, on the upper floors of the houses across the street watching the exchange of fire between the tank and the German machine gunners. They turned their heads left then right then back again, following the actions below them, like people watching a tennis match. The 2nd Platoon had an unauthorized 60-mm. mortar that Sgt. Rice was having a grand time with, firing at the enemy behind the railroad tracks. We soon learned that if someone fired a rifle all the German soldiers would stick their heads up to see who was shooting and at what. This started a new game. One man would fire a rifle while the others would watch to see where the heads came up. After a minute or so a man would again fire a weapon and the others would take aim at a spot where a head had previously popped up. It must have resulted in a lot of enemy casualties, because after an hour or more of this two enemy soldiers jumped up and fired a machine gun toward us while lying between the track rails. This looked to me as though the enemy troops facing us had very little combat experience. It was also quite apparent that they didn't know exactly where we were firing from, because when they returned fire it wasn't even close to our location. One of the riflemen, from the rifle platoon, had crawled a good distance toward the enemy positions and hid behind a small bush and fired at any enemy who showed himself. This went on all day. He must have moved forward before sunrise and couldn't return until dark or he would risk becoming a casualty.

At the opposite end of the street, behind our position, there was a factory and we soon became aware that there must have been a sniper somewhere in that building. Fortunately, he had not hit anyone. The rifle platoon sergeant sent a few men into the factory to eliminate him. When the riflemen searched and failed to find him, there seemed to be only one place where he might have been. The tank destroyer moved into a position where he had a clear shot at the rooftop water tank. One round of HE (high explosive) and the water tank disappeared. There was no more sniper fire from the rear.

When the rifle platoon sergeant asked Sgt. Rice if he could borrow a couple of men to fill in for some of his men, while they cleared an area on his platoon's flank, Sgt. Rice assigned some of our men to help him. Among the men assigned to help the rifle platoon sergeant, was T/5 Charles Meyers, a truck driver, in the third squad. Meyers went to get his weapon, an M-1 rifle equipped with a grenade launcher, from the holster on his truck. Meyers then took off to follow the rifle platoon sergeant, who was no longer in sight. Meyers took a wrong turn; he went down the street and under the railroad trestle. Meyers was unaware that he was alone behind the enemy front-line positions. There was a disabled street car, just beyond the trestle, Meyers saw three or four Germans duck behind the street car so he fired a rifle grenade at them and they raced for a nearby bunker. Meyers ran after them and fired another grenade into the bunker. Meyers suddenly realized that he was alone. He raced back to our position, sat down and shook like a leaf. Sgt. Rice tried to calm him down. It took a while before he was even able to talk. Meyers was a very likable kid, from Hoboken, New Jersey, who was always asking me where the

enemy was, how far away and in what direction from our position.

9 April 1945, a German sergeant deserted and voluntarily surrendered to the rifle platoon. This man was a prewar soldier, with seven years service in the German Army, who realized that it was time to quit. Later that night I received orders to bring the **2nd Platoon** back to the company CP. We picked up the German sergeant and quietly drove out under the cover of darkness with the German POW riding on the hood of my jeep. The other troops who remained behind had no problem, because the **289th Infantry** attacked early that morning to secure the open right flank of our **2nd Battalion**. The attack by the **289th Infantry** not only secured the right flank, but they advanced over and beyond the railroad track.

10 April 1945, the **2nd Battalion** captured **Ospel** and **Dorney** against light opposition. I left the **2nd Platoon** in one of these towns, while I went ahead with the attacking rifle company to find out where we would next set up our guns. As I was returning to pick up the platoon, there were individual enemy soldiers running across the fields from the town, where the **2nd Platoon** was waiting for me to return. I fired at them to discourage them from coming in behind the rifle company that I had just left. Close to the location that I was shooting from there was a badly wounded German soldier in a foxhole covered with blood and pleading for help. I was unable to do anything for the poor guy; I had a responsibility for the men of my platoon. While I was doing this, I saw an artillery round hit the building where the **2nd Platoon** had taken shelter. My first thought was that I no longer had a platoon. The platoon was in a second or third floor apartment that had an open balcony facing the battlefield. An enemy tank crew must have seen some of the men on that balcony and fired at them. The jeep driver and I sped back to the town expecting the worst. When we arrived, Sgt. Rice had the platoon lined up in the street and was counting heads. Everybody was covered with white plaster dust. Most of the men were sitting around a dining room table eating K rations, when the artillery round went through one wall and out the other, without hurting anyone. The round was most likely an armor-piercing projectile from an enemy tank, which accounts for the fact that there was no explosion. Just as we were leaving to move up to join the rifle company that we were to support, 1st Lt. Fisher, then commanding **Anti-Tank Company**, came along and traveled with us to the forward position that we would occupy. As we drove forward, we met a rifleman who was marching a column of German POWs to the rear. I stopped our column and directed the rifleman to let a couple of the prisoners pick up the badly wounded German in the foxhole. I felt better now that I knew that he would be taken care of when the prisoners reached the prisoner of war stockade. Whenever I found wounded enemy soldiers I always tried to get help for them if it didn't interfere with my mission. I never kept track of how many men that I helped, but I know that it must have been at least ten enemy wounded men that I notified the medics about when I came across them while patrolling in our regimental area. One time, I found about eight of them in a cellar.

This reminds me of a story about Capt. Claggett from our regiment that happened during the Christmas Day battle. He had been wounded and captured by the enemy. When our regiment counterattacked and the enemy was moving out, the German medical officer asked if he wanted to be evacuated to a German hospital or to stay in the

dugout where he was, and risk being killed by friendly troops. Captain Claggett chose to stay. He was found by our men and ended up in a US Army Hospital. He was very lucky in more ways than one. GIs usually threw a grenade into any enclosed place before they dared to enter. As I type this it brings to mind many stories that I know should be recorded in other parts of this history. The longer that I sit here typing, the more wartime experiences come to mind. I have no idea when I might go over this material and weave these stories into this document into the places where they should have been entered.

Later that day, when the sergeants and I were planning our defenses for the night we were suddenly aware that some one was nearby and when we looked around, we saw four German soldiers standing with their hands on their heads. They must have been hiding in the cellar of the building that we were standing near. These soldiers couldn't have been more than sixteen years old. They were wearing paratrooper uniforms. When we questioned them, they told us that they were in the army only about a month and spent almost the entire time moving from camp to camp as the German Army retreated before our advance. This was the first day that they had been assigned to a front line unit. I have a hunch that the veterans in that unit might have advised them to surrender at the first chance they got or else the first day on the front line scared the hell out of them. The average German soldier knew that the war was lost.

That night, the rifle company that we were supporting fought a vicious battle on their right flank, but they drove the enemy off without sustaining any losses. At the time the **2nd Platoon** was on the far left flank and didn't get involved. That same day the **3rd Battalion** captured **Duren** and **Stockum**.

11, 12, 13 April 1945, the enemy was putting up stiff resistance against the **290th Regiment's** attacks. The **1st Battalion** advanced in a house-to-house battle through **Witten** to the **Ruhr River**. The **2nd Battalion** reached **Annen** by dark, and occupied it the next day. As it was starting to get dark, a soldier who was leading a column of at least two hundred German POWs came up to me. He stopped the column to ask me how to get to the town where the POW stockade was. I told him that the stockade had been moved to another town, but that I didn't know how to get there. The town must not have been on my map. He was the only guard that I was able to see in the darkening late afternoon light. When I asked him if he was alone, he replied that there was another guard at the rear of the column that we could not see because of the darkness. During our conversation, a short enemy prisoner spoke up and told us that he knew how to get there. The soldier thanked me and marched off leading the column of prisoners with that little German POW guiding them. The truth is sometimes stranger than fiction. The entire regiment was advancing and reached the **Ruhr River**. There were about three hundre fifty thousand Germans encircled in the **Ruhr Pocket** and they were close to surrendering. All of the surrounding American Artillery units were able to fire into the enemy pocket, from all sides. The **75th Infantry Division** was on the northwest side of the encircled enemy pocket and as the units on the southside advanced we were no longer allowed to fire into the pocket. We just stood by, on our side of the river, to prevent any enemy attempt to breakout toward the north.

14 April 1945, the 313th and 314th Infantry Regiments from the 79th Infantry

Division relieved the 290th RCT. The **Ruhr Pocket** was the last battle action for the 75th **Infantry Division**. The 290th **Infantry Regiment** assembled near **Waltrop** for rest and rehabilitation.

21 April 1945, **Anti-Tank Company** rejoined the 75th **Infantry Division** in **Iserlohn, Germany**.

23 April 1945, the 290th **Infantry Regiment** relieved elements of the 5th **Infantry Division** and assumed occupation duties in the area surrounding **Iserlohn**. **Anti-Tank Company** occupied and policed the town of **Hohenlimburg**, in **Westphalia, Germany**. **Anti-Tank Company** set up their CP in the Bentheimer Hof Hotel beside the **Lenne River**. This was only the third time that the entire company was all together since we first arrived in Belgium, back in December 1945. It was an ideal building for a company headquarters. We had a bar, a huge dining room, a kitchen and plenty of room for the company headquarters personnel. We sent a truck to the local brewery and brought back a few kegs of beer that we charged to the town burgomeister. We always had a keg of beer on tap in the bar. The four platoons were billeted in a nearby building large enough to house all four platoons. Whatever unit first occupied the town, they found and recognized that the records stored in one of the buildings were extremely important, so they sealed the room, guarded it and notified SHAEF of their find. These records concerned the effects of the Allied Air raids on industrial production and restoration. We had guests from SHAEF and Washington that stayed with the company while they studied the documents. They told us that these records indicated that when the bombed industries were restored the production was always greater than before the bombing.

We also had a German military hospital in the town. We had to put a sentry there to keep the civilians out and not to keep the military personnel in. The German medical officer was very reluctant to say when any patient was ready to be released because we would send him to a POW stockade. An American medical officer along with a sergeant was assigned to the hospital to determine when a man was fit to be released to a POW stockade. One day our regimental commander, Col. Duffner, came to our CP and asked for someone to take him up to the hospital. I was assigned to be his guide for the visit to the hospital and for him to meet the German Officer in charge. The hospital was in a large school building that had probably been a high school. I was quite familiar with the building, so I was able to take him directly to the administrator's office where the, German, commanding officer, would be. Col. Duffer was German born. Col. Duffner's mother was German and still lived in Germany. Col. Duffner had been a sergeant in the US Army in World War I and went to West Point after the war. Naturally he was very fluent in German. I led the colonel to the hospital office and shouted attention as I threw open the door. All of the Germans, both civilian and military, jumped to attention as the colonel walked into the room without saying a word. Col. Duffner stood near the door and took everything in still without saying a word. The German commander was saying something to his assistant, all the while Col. Duffner just stood quietly listening and waited for the German commander to finish whatever he was saying. Then the colonel started speaking in German, very loudly, apparently giving them a good tongue-lashing. The German Officers looked like they wished that they could crawl into the woodwork. Col. Duffner lashed into

them for almost ten minutes, then turned to me and said "Let's go." When I asked the colonel what they said to make him lash out at them so angrily he refused to talk about it. I must say at this point, that I had my own problems with the colonel and that he had little regard for me.

Shortly after we occupied the town, a Dutch Army Captain surfaced and identified himself as a Dutch intelligence officer. He had been living with a middle aged German couple and operating in **Hohenlimburg**, from the very early days of the war, and had never been suspected of being a foreign agent. The couple's son had been a priest who had died in the Dachau concentration camp. He used to come to our company CP and occasionally ate with us. He let us know which Germans we could trust and kept us informed about what the local people were saying about the occupation. One day when he and I were standing outside our company CP, Col. Duffner got out of his car to visit our company commander, 1st Lt. Woodrow Fisher. This Dutch agent watched him then turned to me and said, "There goes an American Nazi." It amazed me how fast he had correctly sized him up. Maybe he had first met the colonel when he visited our regimental CP to inform the US Army of his presence and his mission or to contact his government. It was Lt. Fisher who told us who he was.

A German civilian surprised me, one day, when she walked up to me and offered her condolences for President Roosevelt's death. Maybe there were many more Germans who were sympathetic to the Allied Cause than we realized.

8 May 1945, at last the war was finally over. Since we were already on occupation duty it was kind of anticlimactic, as far as we were concerned. We knew and the Germans also knew that they were defeated, long before they finally surrendered. SHAEF ordered a liquor ration would be issued for every man who was at least ten miles east of the **Rhine River**. We, in **Anti-Tank Company**, ate our Victory Dinner in the hotel dining room. Throughout the division all of the units celebrated with liquor served to all ranks at the Victory Dinners. We had music at our dinner provided by an Italian POW orchestra. Later, the regimental executive officer visited our company and announced that ours was the best party in the regiment. One of our noncoms, Sgt. Russell Hedberg, was a professional piano teacher who was practically handcuffed to the piano by the XO. He spent most of the evening playing requests by the XO. At the end of the night we had to practically pour the XO into his car after he passed out, for his return to regimental headquarters. I have to admit that I enjoyed Sgt. Hedberg's piano concert, because that's what it amounted to.

When we were offered leaves to the French Riviera, I was given the first crack to go among the company officers. Lt. Fisher thought that I should go first because I was on my second tour of overseas service.

June 1945, (unsure of the exact date) **Anti-Tank Company** was relieved from occupation duty by a British Army Scottish Unit, that was wearing kilts. The **75th Infantry Division** moved to **Mourmelon le Grand, France** near **Rheims** to operate the camps of the **Assembly Area Command**. These camps were established to handle the redeployment of those units moving directly to the Pacific Theater of Operations or by way of the United States. Troops who had sufficient points to be discharged were

reassigned to units headed home for redeployment to the Pacific or to units that were to be disbanded. Those men who had low service scores were used to replace the high score men in units headed for the Pacific. **Anti-Tank Company** was in charge of **Camp St. Louis**. The city named camps were located in a French Army Base in and around Mourmelon le Grand. There were other camps named after cigarettes. Those camps were located closer to the embarkation ports. I was assigned as a supply officer for the regimental headquarters companies (Anti-Tank, Cannon and Service Companies, etc.). I was replaced by a nasty major from the Quartermaster Corps, who removed me from the job on the first day when he took over the supply operation, because I didn't do things his way. I believe that he disliked Infantry officers, or for that matter, any combat unit officers. I think that we were a bit too unruly for the likes of him.

My next job was prison officer for the regimental stockade. There were about six men from the 5th Infantry Division who were being held on charges for misbehavior before the enemy, a very serious military crime. They were being held long after they should have been tried. They begged me to assign them to work details, but when I tried to get a company to put them to work, all the company commanders refused to use GI prisoners. They said that they had plenty of German POWs to do the work. It was strictly forbidden, but I let them play cards to pass the time. Every morning I would remind the regimental adjutant that these men were long overdue for trial, because it was my duty to remind the adjutant when men were not tried within a certain number of days after they were charged. Each morning when I brought this to the adjutant's attention he kept telling me to forget it. I later found out these delays were due to Army politics. One day I was told that all of the charges were dropped and to release the men to the adjutant. The reason: I was told that there were no witnesses against them who were still in the ETO. These men would not be tried. Initially, an entire company was accused of misbehavior before the enemy, and from the top down through all the ranks, each level was cleared until it came down to these six privates, who were blamed for the whole affair. Now that there were no witnesses to testify against them they were set free.

6 September 1945, SO 213 Headquarters **75th Infantry Division** relieved me from assignment to **Anti-Tank Company 290th Infantry Regiment** and transferred me, attached unassigned, to the **14th Reinforcement Depot**, the first step on my way home.

10 September 1945, I reported to the **14th Reinforcement Depot**, (called Repple Depples by GIs) for shipment home to the good old USA. The first thing that everyone was required to do was turn in any cash that was to be exchanged for dollars. This left everyone without any pocket money for more than two weeks, while we waited for a ship.

30 September 1945, the casual group that I was traveling with moved to **Marseilles, France** to board the **USAT Marine Panther** for the trip HOME. This ship was a dead ringer for the **USS Gen. Squiers**, that I returned home aboard from the Pacific. Both ships were of a design that was built in the Kaiser-Frasier shipyards. The only real difference was that a civilian crew manned this ship. These ships had a profile much like an oil tanker, except that they had a low deckhouse instead of a number of pipes on the main deck with the bridge just aft of the forecastle. The single smokestack was on

top of a deckhouse close to the stern similar to oil tankers. The bridge and the deckhouses were very much lower than on passenger liners, like the **SS Brazil**. There were a number of Air Corps flyers already on board and they let us know that we weren't very welcome. They told us that there was a group of Army nurses aboard who were removed from the ship to allow us to board. It seems that we, as combat troops, had a higher priority than the nurses. The captain even agreed to take on more troops than he had quarters for and because so many men would have to sleep on deck, he would sail on a longer southern course. Naturally, no one complained so long as it got him home, sooner than waiting for another ship. The ship set sail as soon as we were all on board. No sooner than the ship set sail, the crew carried cartons of brand new gold seal bills to the mess hall and everyone received his back pay and the exchange money owed to him.

10 October 1945, everyone was on deck at dawn on the lookout for the first sight of our homeland. A rousing cheer went up from all on deck when land was sighted. We docked in Boston about 0900. There were three girls on the roof of the pier that the ship was tied up to and everyone was yelling and waving at them. Everyone was on the side of the ship alongside the pier causing the ship to list quite bit towards the pier. The girls were very entertaining, pretending to do a strip tease. Needless to say, this increased the yelling and whistling from the soldiers. The ship was listing so much that it was uncomfortable walking through the passageways inside of the ship. We left the ship before noon and boarded trains for a short trip to **Fort Myles Standish**. When we entered the mess hall we were given a steak dinner with all the food and milk that we wanted, followed by ice cream for desert. It was a great welcome home meal, appreciated by everyone. While we were at **Fort Myles Standish** we were ordered to fill out customs declarations. The lieutenant colonel in charge of our casual group gathered all of the officers who would execute the baggage inspections and instructed them on how it was to be done. He told all of the soldiers to keep everything in their duffel bags. He took the first soldier's duffel bag, patted it all over and told the soldier that he didn't see any of the items listed on his declaration. The soldier insisted that the items were there. After the colonel kept repeating that he didn't see any of the items on the declaration, the soldier caught on and he changed the declaration to read nothing to declare. The lieutenant colonel turned to the officers and asked if they had any questions. So, inspecting the soldiers' baggage and customs declarations was my first official duty back in the good old USA. By the way, that lieutenant colonel was an Infantry officer.

11 October 1945, I boarded a troop train for the trip to the Separation Center at **Fort Monmouth, N.J.** Shortly after the train started out we passed a locomotive terminal. It looked as though all the men climbed into the locomotive cabs to set the whistles blowing on every locomotive in the terminal to welcome us home. Upon our arrival at **Fort Monmouth**, I was given a thirty day leave and told to report back for separation processing at the end of the leave. The train crew wanted to swap their paper money for the gold seal bills that we received when we sailed. During the war these bills were only legal tender in areas that might have been captured by an enemy country so that they could be declared null and void and useless to the enemy.

12 November 1945, on my fourth anniversary on active duty I returned to **Fort Monmouth** for separation processing. I spent a week bringing my service records up to date and signing up for the Officers Reserve Corps. There were a number of errors and omissions in my service records that I failed to notice, even after I received my Certificate of Service. This document is the equivalent to an enlisted man's Honorable Discharge. We attended conferences explaining our benefits and rights to the jobs that we left when we entered the Army. A chaplain reminded everyone not to add adjectives to requests for someone to pass the butter at the dinner table after he returned home.

20 November 1945, I was relieved from active service after four years and eight days and just a few days short of three years of foreign service. Home for good at last. During my four years on active duty I was only at home twenty-two (22) days as near as I can figure. I was only in the USA for a total of twelve (12) months and this was on two different occasions. I still had another thirty days leave owed to me, so I didn't go back to work on the railroad until after Christmas. I had to wear my uniform for most of December because my brother wore out what clothes I had when I left home for the Army. Even if he hadn't worn them out my old clothes probably would not have fitted me. Most of the men who served through most of the war had most likely outgrown their civilian wardrobes. It took me quite a few weeks to find and buy a civilian wardrobe. Everything was in short supply because of all the discharged servicemen trying to purchase a new wardrobe. One day while shopping for clothes in New York City, a major still in uniform, told me where I could find certain articles of clothing. Everywhere that I went, I met former servicemen swapping information about where they had found certain clothing items were available.

AWARDS AND CAMPAIGN MEDALS

COMBAT INFANTRY BADGE

BRONZE STAR MEDAL

GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL

AMERICAN DEFENSE MEDAL

ASIATIC-PACIFIC THEATER CAMPAIGN MEDAL-1 Battle Star & 1 Arrow Head
(The Arrow Head represents the beachhead landings in New Georgia.)

AMERICAN THEATER CAMPAIGN MEDAL

EUROPEAN-AFRICAN THEATER CAMPAIGN MEDAL-3 Battle Stars

VICTORY MEDAL

ARMY OF OCCUPATION MEDAL with Germany clasp

CITY OF COLMAR-COAT OF ARMS

*Note: So-called battle stars really represent a campaign that may include many battles. We were never given any information on how or where to wear the Colmar Award on the uniform.

EPILOGUE

When Technical Sergeant Don Rice, Platoon Sergeant, 2nd Platoon, and I bid each other farewell, he awarded me the greatest honor that an officer could receive from an

enlisted man. He told me that he was glad that I was his platoon leader. I don't remember if I had the presence of mind to tell him what a loyal, dependable and reliable platoon sergeant that he was. He made my job so much easier under the battle conditions that we had to put up with each day.

Sergeant Rice startled me when he asked me what I thought about S/Sgt. Lindenmuth. It was then that I learned that all of the sergeants in the platoon had lost all confidence in him and they were unaware that I didn't feel too happy with his performance. When I told Sgt. Rice this, he said that they thought he was putting something over on me.

31 March 1947, I quit my job with the railroad and went to work for the Western Electric Company as a central office equipment installer. The company promised that they had enough work, installing new telephone central offices for a minimum of five years. The work only lasted for a year and a half.

22 November 1947, Thomasina Lia and I exchanged wedding vows at our parish church, St. Gregory the Great, in our hometown. We raised four boys, who were good students and provided us with four wonderful daughters-in-law and eleven beautiful grandchildren. We have so much to be thankful for.

August 1948, Western Electric laid me off, but this turned out to be a lucky break for me. The New York Telephone Company was expanding its work force in order to satisfy the heavy post war demands for telephone service. I went to work for them and had steady work for over thirty-five very enjoyable years, ultimately ending up as a transmission engineer. Since both companies were owned, at that time, by the A.T.&T. Company my seniority was carried over to the telephone company.

My thoughts often go back to those years (1941 through 1945) and I think about all those who served with me and who never had a chance to enjoy all of those blessings it has been my good fortune to experience. It is my hope that our fellow countrymen keep in mind the great sacrifice made by those who gave their full measure of devotion to the cause that we all served.

August 1989, the first enlisted member of the **2nd Platoon**, Ira Files and his wife, Flossie showed up at the **75th Division** reunion held in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. His buddies called him "Arky", since he came from Arkansas. After the war he joined the Arkansas State Police and rose to a high rank with them. Flossie has a very bad back, which makes it difficult for them to travel to the reunions. I was elated to see him again. Thomasina and I were invited to their 50th wedding anniversary party, but it wasn't convenient for us to go at the time.

10 September 1999, a second member of the **2nd Platoon** showed up at the **75th Infantry Division** reunion in Houston, Texas. Clayford T. "Tom" Grimm and I met fifty-four years after we last saw one another at **Camp St. Louis in Mourmelon-le-Grand, France**. He had only recently found out about the existence of the **75th Infantry Division Veterans Association**. We had a real good time going over our wartime experiences

together. His lovely wife, Lucy, pretty daughter, Rosemarie and son-in-law, Joe, accompanied him.

Since I put this story on paper I find that it is much easier to talk about my wartime experiences. Even when I used to talk about my experiences with my former combat buddies it used to make my stomach tighten up into knots. Out of a clear blue sky while involved in ordinary everyday tasks my thoughts often return to the various scenes of long ago battles. In talking to other combat veterans, I discovered that many of us almost feel guilty for having survived the war without receiving any injuries. We ask ourselves if we really did all that we could have done to assist in the survival of those men who gave their all. It causes one to ask, "Why was I the one to survive?" I believe that we are all truly thankful that we were fortunate enough to have returned home in good health and to have found happiness and peace at the end of our military service. I do not believe that the government owes veterans anything more than what the GI Bill provided, except for those who still suffer from combat injuries. I do feel that we shouldn't forget what we endured during those years. I firmly believe that it is every veteran's responsibility to remind our fellow countrymen what a monstrous crime war really is.

TAPS

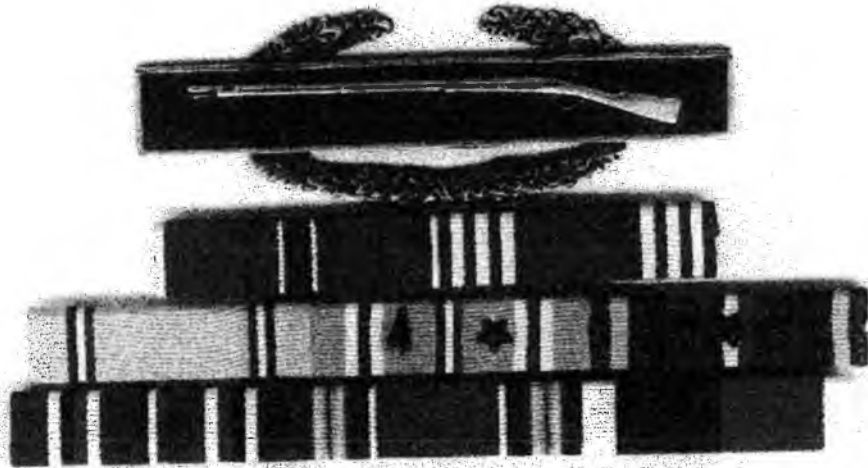
Day is done, gone the sun,
From the lakes, from the hills,
From the sky, all is well,
Safely rest, God is nigh.

Fading light dims the sight
And a star gems the sky,
Gleaming bright, from afar,
Drawing nigh, falls the night.

Thanks and praise, for our days,
'Neath the sun, 'neath the stars,
'Neath the sky, as we go,
This we know, God is nigh.

Author Unknown

MILITARY AWARDS



**COMBAT INFANTRY BADGE
BRONZE STAR MEDAL-GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL
AREA CAMPAIGN MEDALS
AMERICAN DEFENSE+ASIATIC-PACIFIC+EUROPEAN
AMERICAN+VICTORY+GERMAN OCCUPATION**

MILITARY AWARDS



COLMAR AWARD

**COAT OF ARMS
CITY OF COLMAR**

THE BRIDGE at FORGE a la PIEZ, BELGIUM

4 January 1945, Capt. Gillen told me that regiment needed to know if the bridge at Forge a la Piez was capable of supporting tanks and that I was to go and check the bridge. This bridge was southeast of Amonines on the regiment's left flank. The bridge spanned the Aisne River at a point where the river turned to the northwest from its westerly course. Most Americans would call it a creek rather than a river, but then all rivers start out small. At the time it never occurred to me that the 1st Battalion's front must have been very near to the river. I recall seeing maps indicating that Company B was somewhere in the vicinity of Amonines, not too far from the bridge and it must have been within sight of their outposts.

After consulting my map I decided that the road through Amonines was the way to go. All officers were under orders to have one man with him at all times to act as a casualty reporter to immediately report to his unit if the officer became a battle casualty. The man was instructed that his job wasn't to attempt to rescue the officer. I took S/Sgt. Paul Graves along to act as my casualty reporter. I also had my initial jeep driver and radioman, Pvt. Clayford T. Grim. The four of us headed for Forge a la Piez via Amonines.

There was 4 to 6 inches of snow covering the fields and roads. We drove through Amonines without seeing anyone or any signs of the 1st Battalion. There weren't even visible signs of people's footprints on the surface of the snow. We followed the road towards the river for some distance watching for some indication of the front-line units that were supposed to be somewhere in the area. It was a heavily overcast day and we were well into the forest and I began to get bad vibes, because the snow-covered road indicated that nothing had passed this way since the last snowfall. When we came across abandoned enemy personal equipment I told the driver to stop. I instructed him to slowly backup and keep the jeep in its original tire tracks until I told him to turn around. We backed up for almost 200 yards before I felt it was safe to turn the jeep around. There might have been mines buried along the side of the road. When I first told the driver to stop the others all exhaled and said that they thought that I was never going to stop. Each man said that he was beginning to feel very uneasy. We were the only ones who had disturbed the surface of the snow on that road.

When we reached Amonines I took a look at my map to see if we could approach the bridge by another route. It became apparent that the only other route was through the area held by the 289th Infantry Regiment on our left flank, but it would be about a 6-mile ride to reach that regiment's right flank to approach the bridge from the opposite side of the river. We traveled to Grandmenil and went south to la Fosse and turned west at the road junction that led to the bridge at Forge a la Piez. At the next junction we took a right turn and about a hundred yards further I told the driver to stop. Not far from where we stopped we had passed two rifle companies well dug in. In this area the snow on the road surface was well packed down and had all the appearance of many vehicles having passed over the road. I told the driver to pull to the left side of the road and park.

Sgt. Graves and I dismounted from the jeep and proceeded along the road in the direction of the bridge. The road curved to the left as we advanced. There was a ditch on left side of the road and a 3-foot embankment to our right. There were low thick bushes in the left ditch for a considerable distance. We had a good view over the fields on both sides of the road. We could see several black spots in the snow in the field to our left made by exploding artillery shells.

Suddenly out of the left corner of my eye I detected a movement in the ditch among the bushes. When I turned my head I was looking down the barrel of a rifle not more than 15 feet from me. As I shouted a warning to Sgt. Graves, it seemed like I was enveloped in the flame from the rifle when the enemy fired at me. Sgt. Graves immediately came forward from his position, maybe about 10 feet to my rear. I dropped to the road and pointed to where the enemy was in his foxhole. I raised my head in order to get a better look at him and he fired at me again. I called to Sgt. Graves to toss a hand grenade into the ditch, but for some reason neither of us was carrying any

grenades, which was very unusual. The German rose up with what we called a potato masher grenade, ready to toss it at us, when Sgt. Graves fired his M-1 rifle and cut the handle off the grenade. The grenade fell onto the road about 10 feet from us, so we just hunkered down until it exploded. Fortunately neither of us was hurt.

It was time for us to get the heck out of there. The sergeant asked for orders, so I told him to back down the road about 20 yards while I fired at the enemy to make him stay down. The sergeant was then to fire while I backed out of there. We followed this routine until we felt that we were far enough away for it to be safe to rise to our feet and get back to the jeep.

The poor driver and the radioman didn't know whether to leave or come to our aid. They were quite flustered and relieved to see us. Now I realized that there was no way that we would be able to get to that bridge. The sergeant and I were explaining to the driver and radioman what happened when a lieutenant colonel came over to us and asked what had happened. I explained what we ran into and why we were there. The colonel asked if I had been told that his battalion was going to attack across that road the following day. As the colonel and I were talking together the jeep driver let out a yell. From where we were and due to the curve in the road we were able to see to the rear of the German's position. The driver saw an enemy soldier crawling out of the brush alongside of the road in the rear of his position. The sergeant and I immediately reacted and fired at the enemy. The sergeant's first round hit and bounced off of the enemy soldier. Infantry squad leaders were supposed to load one tracer round in each clip so he could direct his squad where to shoot. You could always rely on Sgt. Graves to do the right thing. I was armed with an M-1 carbine, which held 15 rounds in a clip while the sergeant's M-1 rifle used 8 round clips. We were both firing round after round and when the sergeant was reloading I was still firing. The enemy was yelling his head off; I guess we were hitting him. He was trying to get to his feet when I fired and he went down. We were getting into the jeep when the driver called out again. When we looked, another German jumped out of the bushes and quickly pulled his companion out of sight. We figured that there was at least a squad of enemy soldiers dug in along that road. We must have run into their right flank.

As we drove away we began to realize how lucky we were to get out of there alive. The date is unforgettable to me because it was my brother's birthday 4 January 1945. I was extremely annoyed because our regiment apparently had a poor grasp of what the real situation was. When I reported to the regimental CP, I was furious and sounded off about their failure to know what the front line situation really was. Unknown to me, the colonel was standing right behind me while I was spouting off about their lack of ability to run a regiment properly. He didn't say anything but I soon learned which list he put me on.

THE BATTLE FOR SADZOT, BELGIUM

28 December 1945, the enemy, probing for a way through the lines of the 289th Infantry Regiment in order to renew his drive to the Meuse River and on toward Antwerp, launched an attack against the little village of Sadzot. (called Sad Sack by GIs probably because of the way that the local residents pronounced it.) This attack didn't involve the Anti-Tank Company's 2nd Platoon, but did have an impact upon the men of the platoon. The 2nd Platoon was in position near the left flank of the 2nd Battalion, 290th Infantry Regiment. The right flank rifle company of the 289th Regiment was unable to locate the left flank of A Company of the 290th Infantry Regiment's 1st Battalion. The right flank of the 1st Battalion 290th Infantry Regiment should have been somewhere off to our left, but I was never able to find any sign of the 1st Battalion being there. They might have been further forward (south) than I assumed, at the time. There was no entry on my map of the 1st Battalion's position.

Sadzot was about 1000 yards behind the front lines in the gap between the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 289th Infantry Regiment. A Chemical Mortar Company and a Tank Destroyer Platoon occupied the few buildings in the little hamlet that was called Sadzot. Twice during the night wire men from the 289th Infantry Regiment's Cannon Company drove through the village without seeing anyone or being challenged. It was a bitter cold moonlit night and the troops in the village were most likely staying inside the few farmhouses in the area trying their very best to keep warm.

Some time after midnight, the 2nd Platoon hearing German burp guns firing and no answering fire from friendly forces made it sound very alarming to us. The sounds from the enemy weapons seemed to be steadily advancing towards our position without meeting any resistance from friendly units. Every one was expecting to see enemy troops appearing at any moment coming towards us from somewhere on our left flank. It seemed that the enemy couldn't be more than a half-mile away and moving rapidly in our direction. What made us nervous was the seeming lack of any friendly answering fire. The extreme cold and clear weather made the sounds seem very loud and close by. Unknown to us, the 2nd and 12th SS Panzer Divisions were attacking the 289th Infantry Regiment at what they perceived to be a weak point between its 1st and 2nd Battalions towards Sadzot. What we didn't know or hear was the return fire from these two battalions and their supporting 897th Field Artillery Battalion. The terrain, in spite of the clear cold weather, apparently blocked the sounds of the 289th RCT's defensive fire.

Everybody in the 2nd Platoon became very nervous and any attempt I made to find out what was happening was fruitless. The only thing that we could do was to be as alert as possible for the sight of approaching enemy forces. I was extremely annoyed by one of my squad leaders who was pleading with me to pull out of our positions. I told him that until we were driven from our positions or received orders to pull out we were going to stay where we were. The enemy would also be a threat to our own 2nd Battalion, which was only about a hundred yards or so to our front, and we could expect a response from them if the enemy came anywhere near our position. There was no visible sign of any enemy activity to our front or to the left flank. In retrospect, what I should have told him that as soldiers it was our duty to resist the enemy advance and not run away without offering any resistance to his attack, especially since we couldn't see any sign of the enemy. None of the other three sergeants were asking or suggesting that we should pull out and I'm sure that they were just as nervous as this squad leader.

It wasn't until fifty-four years later at our reunion at Kansas City that I found out what really happened that night. The enemy found a gap in the line between the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 289th Infantry Regiment and the enemy was passing through Sadzot and had reached the village of Briscole on the road between Grandmenil and Soy. C Company in the 1st Battalion of the 289th Infantry Regiment lost all six of their officers on the line. The company commander and the executive officer abandoned the company and were relieved from command. A new company commander and executive officer assigned to the company were soon killed in the furious battle that followed. The NCOs and privates carried on without any officers to lead them. The defense line was very thin,

and had the enemy been able to break through there were no troops behind the line to offer any resistance to their advance. The enemy would have been in the rear of the 3rd Armored Division, 84th Infantry Division and the 290th Infantry Regiment and on their way to a crossing of the Meuse River. The 897th Field Artillery Battalion's twelve guns fired about 4700 rounds in support of the 289th Infantry Regiment's battle to stop the enemy's advance. In spite of the extremely cold weather the 897th Field Artillery Battalion had to stop firing every once in a while to pour water over their very overheated guns to cool them off during the battle that lasted a little more than four hours. Just before dawn we no longer heard any gunfire to our left. A captured German artillery officer was so amazed at the rapid rate of artillery fire, that he asked if he could see the automatic artillery guns. The enemy must have concluded that because of the fight put up by the 289th Infantry they would be unable to break through their positions.

It wasn't until after the German surrender and we were at Mourmelon le Grande, France that T/Sgt. Don Rice told me that he and the other sergeants were as concerned about the unreliability of the one squad leader as I was. All three sergeants thought that I was unaware of this sergeant's unreliability. I would have had a hard time convincing our executive officer that he deserved to have his sergeant's stripes taken away. He was highly regarded by the executive officer because he considered the sergeant to be a great instructor. I also felt that maybe with more front-line experience he might prove to be more reliable. This was our first time on the front-line and we had only six days combat experience. I thought that it was only right that he deserved a chance to prove himself. It was possible that his action was due to his lack of combat experience. Without being directly involved in the battle for Sadzot it did have a very serious impact upon the men of the 2nd Platoon.

There were several reasons why a breakthrough by the enemy failed, but it was mostly due to the leadership of one particular officer who directed his battalion's defense against this all out attack who caused the attack to fail. Major Fluck always led his battalion from the front line sharing the life of his front line troops in a foxhole. His staff manned the battalion CP well behind the main line of resistance (MLR) while he maintained communications with them by phone and radio. This major went from company to company and sized up the situation by being right on the spot where the action was. He enlisted in the Army in 1938 and rose through the enlisted ranks to first sergeant before the war. He must have displayed great leadership ability because he was granted a commission soon after the United States entered the war. He continued to advance in rank, and fortunately for the men of the 289th Infantry ultimately became the commander of the 2nd Battalion. He stayed in the Army after the war and retired with the rank of lieutenant general. Of the many field grade officers, that I knew, he was one of two who shared the front line life of the men that he led.

THE BELGIAN FARMER

In the second position occupied by the 2nd Platoon during the first ten days in action during the "Battle of the Bulge", the first squad was dug in on the east side of the road that ran between Soy and Wy. Their gun position was within 25 yards of a farmhouse that was on top of the highest treeless hill in the area. Most all the hills around us were covered with thick pine forests. The Belgian family made the men of the second platoon feel welcome when they entered their home a few at a time to warm up from the bitter cold weather. There were always some men in the farmer's home. The farmer and his wife had three daughters, whose ages ranged from about eight to sixteen years.

The farmhouse was heated by a wood burning stove that also served to do all the cooking and baking for the family. Almost every Belgian farmhouse had a similar stove for heating and cooking. It always amazed me how well these stoves heated the houses. Just outside of the house the farmer had stored a large quantity of wood for cooking and heating the house. It looked like the wood must have taken a lot of work and was probably meant to last the entire winter. Unknown to me, S/Sgt. Paul Graves became very ill from living and sleeping outdoors in the extremely cold weather. The sergeant didn't want me to know how sick he was in fear that I would have ordered him to a hospital. The men were reluctant to go to a hospital for fear that they would be sent to another outfit when they were returned to duty. The men were unaware that SHAEF required that the hospitals send all men back to their original unit unless they requested a change. Pfc. Franklin Emberry, our medic, nursed him back to health in that farmhouse. Because they tried to keep the house warm during the sergeant's illness they burned up a large part of the wood that the farmer had put aside for the winter.

One day the farmer left to cut more wood. T/Sgt. Don Rice saw him go off with his wood cutting tools and followed him. This farmer was a veteran of World War I, so he might have been forty or fifty years old, but due to the hard work on his farm he looked much older. At our young age, anyone over thirty-five appeared to be old, just as today people under thirty-five appear to be too young to be parents. Sgt. Rice came and asked me if it would be all right to take one of our trucks and a couple of men to help the farmer replenish his wood pile. That was when I first heard that Sgt. Graves had been ill. I readily granted Sgt. Rice's reasonable request. The platoon was equipped with axes, two man saws and other tools for building or clearing road blocks.

When the sergeant and the others arrived at the farmers wood lot they immediately went to work and in less than an hour they had cut more wood than the old man was able to cut in a week. When the farmer saw them pitch in and cut all this wood and load it on the truck he sat down and cried. The men didn't know what to think. They wanted to know if they had done something wrong. The farmer told them that they didn't have to do what they did, but that he didn't know how to thank them. It was then, he told them that he knew how hard a soldier's life was, because he had been forced, against his will, to serve in the German Army in World War I.

The next evening the entire family prepared a dinner and invited all the men to eat with the family. They had a dining room table large enough to seat the whole platoon, but we had to eat in shifts in order to keep some men manning our positions. Our hot meal arrived in time to share our food with the family. There was plenty of food on their table for everyone to eat.

The second platoon was always a lucky group. A few days later a large enemy artillery projectile made a direct hit on the first squad's position right alongside the 57 mm. gun and failed to explode. It just plowed a groove in the dirt and bounced away.

Shortly after the war ended a group of us from the regiment returned to the Ardennes and visited those families that we knew in the area around Soy. This farmer and his family gave us a hearty welcome. They remembered many of the men and asked about them by name.

Note: This not the same farmer and family that I mentioned on page 23 in my Military Service story. In this story the farmer and his family were living only about 200 yards behind the front line fox holes of the 2nd Battalion.

OCCUPATION DUTIES IN HOHENLIMBURG

Anti-Tank Company 290th Infantry Regiment was stationed in Hohenlimburg on the Lenne River in Westphalia, Germany shortly after the end of hostilities. The 75th Infantry Division was part of the US XVI Corps, US Ninth Army attached to the British 21st Army Group. We were to occupy this pleasant little village until the British, under Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery, was able to move in some of their units to relieve all the American Forces in what was to be the British occupation zone.

At this time, Anti-Tank Company was commanded by 1st Lt. Woodrow Fisher. The company command post (CP) was set up in the Bentheimer Hof Hotel alongside the Lenne River. The hotel was big enough to house all the men of the company headquarters group. The building was equipped with a large kitchen and a dining room with sufficient capacity so that the entire company was able to eat together. The last time we all ate together was when we were in Porthcawl, Wales. The four platoons were housed in comfortable quarters in a nearby apartment house just a few doors from the company headquarters.

The platoon leaders were given various administrative assignments involved in the occupation of this village. I was appointed to be the Town Major. This grandiose title had nothing to do with the rank of major; the ranking occupation commander was still 1st Lt. Fisher. My name appeared below this title with my true rank beneath my name. All the Allied regulations concerning the local population were issued by the Town Major over my signature, Robert F. McElroy, 2nd LT., Infantry. I can no longer recall any other duties involved in this assignment.

2nd Lt. Dalton D. Raze was assigned to screen the local population for high-ranking members of the NAZI Party and members of military units. His assignment was a very interesting one and he told me of some of the unusual cases that came his way. Since he is no longer with us, I will attempt to recall one of the more interesting events that he passed on to me. His most interesting task came about because of this assignment.

I personally became involved in a very minor way. One morning Lt. Fisher told me to take over Lt. Raze's duties screening the local population and when I asked what happened to Raze he mentioned that he was on a special assignment. Naturally this aroused my curiosity, but Fisher refused to elaborate or answer any questions that I asked. He would only say that Raze would be away for a while. I went to the town hall where Raze carried out his duties. Lt. Raze was assisted by a few enlisted men, Cpl. Robert M. Smith, Pfc. Rogers and an interpreter (Paul Guhl ?) or two, whose names I cannot recall. It was Cpl. Smith's job to maintain a record of the proceedings. I know that we had a few men, in the company who spoke German and were involved with the questioning of the local population. It was an easy assignment for me since the enlisted men were well versed in what had to be done. My only reason for being present was to have an officer present, mostly to impress the local population. The burgomeister, Herr Orshel, who was appointed by us from an approved Allied list, was told to notify the people in each section of the village, in its turn, to report to the town hall for interrogation by the Occupying Forces.

That morning and the following days when I reported to the town hall, the waiting room was crowded with people. The NAZIs had the entire population catalogued in such detail that it was very difficult for the people to hide any of their wartime activities from us. Everyone was issued some kind of document with detailed information about him or her. Most women had what was called a Kentekarte. Workmen were issued an Arbeitsbuch, or a Todtbuch if they were employed by the Todt Organization, (a government organization that did construction work for the military). The German people were constantly asked by the authorities to show their papers on demand and they expected the same thing from us. Every time their papers were inspected the inspecting authority stamped it and an entry was made as to when and where the documents were examined. They were very unhappy when we didn't stamp their papers after we checked them. It was easy for the authorities to keep track of a person's activities and trips to and from their hometown. It was easy to tell if anyone tried to make false entries because all the dates

had to be in chronological order.

Members of the military all carried Soldbüchs that gave an almost complete record of their military service: such as their units, promotions, awards, wounds and any other information about their duties and service. Because of these various documents we were able to arrest those with close ties to the NAZI Party and if they held important positions in the government. The people had no idea of how knowledgeable we were in our ability to read and decipher the information in these papers. It was easy to identify the most fanatical followers of the NAZI Party. The entry for religion stated that the person was a believer, instead of listing a religious denomination. One of the odd things about some of the NAZI officials was that they thought themselves to be far more important than we thought them to be. I believe that it was the former burgomeister of Hohenlimburg or a nearby village who killed himself and his entire family because he expected that the Allies would arrest them and send them off to a concentration camp. According to Raze he was not on the list of officials that were to be arrested. He did not rank as high as he thought in the ranks of the NAZI Party to be considered a risk to a peaceful end to the war.

Some of the people would give us an argument when caught in a lie, unable to believe that we were so well informed in how to interpret these documents. We had orders to send any servicemen to a prison of war (POW) camp if his date of discharge was on or after 6 June 1944 (D-Day). We had a lot of arguments with soldiers who insisted that they were no longer members of the armed forces. Some of the discharges were hand written documents signed by commanders of both large and small army units and officers of various ranks. Of course we always won these arguments. The other thing that helped us to find any former members of the German Armed Forces was an Allied edict that we would burn down the houses on each side of a house sheltering a former German Soldier, when we found him, if the neighbors failed to turn him in to us.

When a former member of the military was identified we immediately locked him in the town jail until the end of the day when we shipped him off to a POW camp. One day this resulted in a rather odd incident when a soldier with his wife and baby showed up at the company CP to surrender. When I checked to see if the POWs collected during the day had been sent from the town jail to the POW camp, I was told that they had already been taken away. I told the German soldier to go home and report back first thing in the morning. He and his family were back at the CP in less than a half hour. Their neighbors wouldn't let them back in their house lest we would come and burn down the houses on each side of their home. I had to go back with them and tell the neighbors that it was all right for them to return home for the night. The people must have wondered what kind of people we were to treat them in the way we did. Early the next morning the soldier and his family were waiting for me outside the company headquarters to be sent off to a POW camp.

It seemed that the German enlisted men felt that they could always put one over on us by denying that they were members of the Wehrmacht or any other military organization. On the other hand the German officers would show up wearing their uniforms or carrying them in a suitcase. They would show us their Soldbüchs and readily admit who and what they were and we would tell them to put on their uniforms. It may have been that they wanted to be treated as officer POWs. We even had one old man (over 75 years old and barely able to walk with a cane) who served in World War I and who insisted that we send him off to a POW camp. Most of the former soldiers were puzzled because some were sent to a POW camp while others were sent home. They never knew about the connection between the D-Day date and their discharge date. These were some of the things that we encountered during the population screening.

Lt. Raze suddenly showed up one morning about a week later and little by little I learned from him what he had been up to. While questioning a German officer he was told by the officer that he could lead him to Martin Bormann, a high level official in the NAZI Party close to Adolf Hitler. Among his many jobs Bormann was also the NAZI party secretary. Raze probably told me but I don't remember the details of who and how the arrangements were made, but he and the German officer were given the mission to track down and attempt to

capture Martin Bormann. Lt. Raze and the German donned civilian clothes and with Pfc. Rogers set out to track down Martin Bormann, who by the way, was also the executor of Hitler's Last Will and Testament. Bormann was with Hitler in the bunker in Berlin and helped to carry his body out to be cremated. It was also Bormann's duty to notify Admiral Doenitz that he was to take over as leader of the German Government as stated in Hitler's will. How Martin Bormann managed to escape from Berlin and where he went is still a mystery. Every once in a while stories show up in the press about his death or being sighted somewhere. He is spotted more often than Elvis Presley.

Raze said it seemed that they were close on Bormann's trail, seldom more than a week or so behind him. He told stories about being stopped at roadblocks. He said that the British were harder to convince that he was on a legitimate mission than Americans. Raze was armed with a 45 automatic that he carried in a shoulder holster out of sight. Unless it was very necessary he didn't let on that he spoke English. He and his companions were stopped by an American unit at a roadblock and taken to their CP to be questioned where the non-com told his commanding officer how he picked up these jokers. Upon hearing the non-com refer to them as jokers; Raze in his inimitable way stepped forward to state that he didn't like being referred to as a joker. He then reached inside his clothing to reveal that he was carrying a .45 caliber pistol and demonstrated that the men at the roadblock failed to check them for weapons. I don't recall if Raze ever told me just how far he traveled on the trail of Martin Bormann. I am sure that if Raze was still with us he could add much more about this most unusual and interesting assignment. The moral to this story is that many survivors of the war must have many stories that are very unusual and interesting. The more I hear some of these stories I become aware that there must be thousands of stories that need to be and should be told.

EPILOGUE

Both Ray C. Smith and Robert M. Smith recently sent me some historical information that brings closure to this very strange story that involved our former brother-in-arms, 2nd Lt. Dalton D. Raze. Ray sent me a transcript of concluding statements from a History Channel program that was aired 12 August 1999 and Robert sent me a story from the Internet that was dated 1 October 1999 about the last days in the life of Martin Bormann. It almost seems that the Internet story may have been derived from the History Channel broadcasts. Ray's transcript statements could be placed in the appropriate paragraphs without any rewording of Robert's Internet article. What makes this very interesting is that the Internet article is copyrighted.

According to both stories and the evidence given, it turns out that Martin Bormann was already dead before Raze even started out with his German POW informer. Martin Bormann's body was found within Berlin in December 1972, along with the body of another member of the group, Ludwig Stumpfegger, (Hitler's surgeon) at a construction site near the Weidendammer Bridge. This is where Artur Axmann (head of the Hitler Youth) left them to follow a different escape route, only to run into a Russian patrol. He returned to find the bodies of Bormann and Stumpfegger lying where he had last seen them alive. Axmann managed to escape to the Bavarian Alps where he was finally captured after hiding out for six months. Because the only word of Bormann's death was from Artur Axmann no credence was given to his testimony.

Bormann's diary was found at the site shortly after the war but everyone assumed that he managed to escape to some South American country. That the body was that of Bormann, there is reliable forensic evidence of the true identity of the body. Prof. Hugo Blaschke, Bormann's dentist, produced dental records that were accepted by the West German authorities and it was reviewed and validated by Dr. Reidar F. Sognaes, a celebrated U.S. expert in such matters. Alas Raze's attempt to capture Martin Bormann was in vain.

SEA VOYAGES & THE SHIPS THAT I KNEW DURING WW IITASK FORCE 6814
USAT John Ericsson

This ship was the former Swedish Liner Kungsholm. It was in New York when the war started and was immediately confiscated by the United States under International Law. This allows a warring nation to confiscate any ships within its territory if the nation feels that it needs the vessel. The Swedes were compensated for the ship. The Gripsholm was its sister ship and remained under Swedish ownership and was used to repatriate diplomats to their homelands from enemy countries. The ship was still being changed to a troopship by installing bunks in the holds and guns on the upper decks. **E Battery** was the first unit to board even as the work was underway. The convoy was designated **Task Force 6814**.

SS Santa Rosa
SS Santa Helena
SS Brazil
USS Honolulu CL-48
USS Salt Lake City CA-25

These three ships were also part of the convoy of five troopships and one freighter that made up **Task Force 6814** that set sail for Panama 23 January 1942. I have never been able to identify the fourth troopship. The convoy was escorted by six destroyers and a cruiser down the east coast. These ships were a part of the Atlantic Fleet that I was never able to identify. The two listed cruisers were not a part of the convoy during the trip to Panama. They joined the convoy with seven new destroyers when the convoy entered the Pacific Ocean 1 February 1942 on the way to Australia. These escort ships were a part of the Pacific Fleet. The convoy arrived in **Melbourne**, Australia 27 February 1942. These ships were reloaded and set sail for **Noumea, New Caledonia** 6 March 1942. The Task Force arrived and debarked in Noumea 12 March 1942.

USS President John Adams APA-19
USS President Andrew Jackson APA-18
USS President James Monroe APA-17
USS Crescent City APA-21

E Battery loaded and boarded the ship 26 May 1943 and practiced boarding landing craft and assault landings on nearby beaches until the convoy sailed for Guadalcanal 12 June 1943. **E Battery** manned the **USS President John Adams'** 50 cal. machine guns. This is the convoy that was attacked by Japanese on the trip to **Guadalcanal** the night before we arrived off of **Koli Point**.

LST ?

E Battery loaded its equipment aboard a Navy **LST** 15 June 1943 for the trip to the **Russell Islands**. All of the battery's new 40-mm. guns were set up on the top deck of the ship ready for action. The ship sailed 16 June 1943 just as the Japs arrived on an air raid against the airfields and ships on and around Guadalcanal.

LCTs- ? (6)
Mine Sweepers ?

E Battery loaded battery equipment aboard two of the LCTs. **B Battery** loaded their equipment aboard two other LCTs and two reinforced rifle companies from the 103rd Infantry Regiment boarded the last two LCTs. Two small wooden mine sweepers that resembled fishing trawlers was our armed escort. **E Battery** was equipped with bigger weapons and had five times greater fire power than both of these two ships had together. This attack force sailed before dawn during a heavy rainstorm on 28 June 1943 to invade the **New Georgia Islands** in "**Operation Toenails**"; the first objective was **Wickham's Anchorage, Vanguna Island**. One half of **E Battery** was put ashore there while the

rest of the **E Battery** and an infantry company sailed on to its objective at **Viru Harbor** the following morning. (2 LCTs and the 2 Mine Sweepers.)

- LCT-? 20 August 1943 E Battery left Viru Harbor and rejoined the rest of the battery and B Battery at Wickhams Anchorage, Vanguna Island.
- LCT-? **E Battery** left Wickham's Anchorage 5 October 1943 for a group of LCT-? small islands south of the captured Japanese Munda Airfield. The battery was attached to the 14th Marine Defense Battalion that was responsible for the overall air defense of the area.
- USS Pinckney APA-? Sailed from Guadalcanal for Noumea, New Caledonia on the first leg of my trip home to attend OCS at Camp Davis, North Carolina on 5 November 1943. Arrived in New Caledonia 19 November 1943.
- USS Gen. Geo. Squiers APA-? Boarded the ship 19 November 1943 on the last seagoing leg on my way back to the U. S. A.
- SS Brazil We sailed 20 October 1944 for the trip to the **ETO**. This is the same ship that that was part of Task Force 6814 In January and February 1942. We sailed 2 October 1944 and arrived in **Swansea, Wales** 3 November 1944.
- USCG LST-? 10 December 1944 we boarded the ship at **Southampton, England** for France. On 12 December 1944 we landed in **Rouen, France**.
- USAT Marine Panther I boarded the ship in **Marseilles, France** on 30 September 1945 for the trip home and the U.S.A. On 10 November 1945 I arrived in **Boston, Massachusetts** almost exactly a year since I sailed from New York on my way to the ETO.

SHIPS THAT WE SAW ALMOST DAILY BETWEEN NAVAL BATTLES

- USS North Carolina BB-? These ships were based in Noumea, New Caledonia when the **70th Coast Artillery (AA) Regiment** was responsible for the anti-aircraft defense of this important South Pacific Naval Base.
- USS Saratoga CV-3
- USS Massachusetts BB-59
- USS Helena CA-59
- USS San Juan CA-54
- USS Washington BB-47
- USS Columbia CL-74 I boarded this ship to visit Reggie Crotty in Noumea, New Caledonia.
- USS Flusser DD-368 I boarded this ship to visit Eugene Eisemann in Noumea.

RANDOM WARTIME THOUGHTS

Sometime before the Naval Battle of the Coral Sea, while E battery 70th Coast Artillery (AA) Regiment was stationed at Plaines de Gaiac, New Caledonia, I recall standing on one of the partially completed runways, and asking myself how long is this war going to last. We were only overseas a few months and it already seemed like it was an eternity. This was a remote outpost guarded by E Battery, a reinforced infantry rifle company and a single battery of field artillery, while a company of army engineers was building a bomber base here in this remote part of the world. A further thought crossed my mind about how could a loving God permit human beings to engage in such an evil activity. I'll have more to say about this later on. It all seemed so wasteful and wrong that the nations of the world could get involved in such a monstrous act of inhumanity towards one another.

It wasn't that I felt that the Allied cause wasn't right; after all, the Japanese attacked the United States and England without warning. Their only reason for attacking the Dutch was to take over the oil fields in the Dutch East Indies. It was the idea that Tojo and Hitler could plunge the entire world into what amounted to mass murder of so many innocent people because of their religious beliefs or because of the desire to dominate the weaker countries in their so called "spheres of influence".

At the time it seemed that the Japanese were unstoppable. The British were unable to hold onto their base in Singapore and prevent the enemy from pushing them back towards India. The U.S. Army was losing ground in the Philippines with little likelihood that there was any chance of holding out there until help could arrive. The combined fleet of the Allied Navies (Dutch, English and American) lost every naval engagement with the Japanese Imperial Navy whenever they tried to stop the enemy's further advance towards Australia and the Dutch East Indies.

The morale of the troops in the South and Southwest Pacific Areas appeared to be very good, but the remoteness of New Caledonia and especially this airfield, made one feel like we were very far from any strong friendly forces if we were to be attacked by what seemed to be an unstoppable enemy. It took us almost twelve hours to cover a little more than one hundred miles from the main base at Noumea at the southern end of the island to reach Plaines de Gaiac. It took this long to make the trip without having to fight against an opposing force to reach this remote outpost. Everyday the news from other fronts was bad. The Japanese were advancing closer and closer as they took over the Dutch East Indies.

The field artillery unit with us was equipped with British 25-pounder howitzers, a weapon that was not quite equal to our own 105-mm. howitzers. E Battery was equipped with the latest model 50 cal. water cooled machine gun which were in good condition, but the main anti-aircraft weapon we were equipped with was the 37-mm. (approximately 1½ inches) automatic anti-aircraft gun which was already obsolete, even though it was capable of firing 120 explosive rounds per minute. The infantry brought a few of their unusable 50 cal. MGs to us to see if we could help repair them. These weapons were totally inoperable when we checked them out. The infantry had no spare parts and the receivers were almost falling apart. We pounded the receiver rivets and managed to tighten them up. The tee slots in the bolts were pounded almost closed due to too many dry runs with the headspace adjusted too tightly. Fortunately we had a number of spare bolts and were able to restore their weapons to working order. It was almost a year later before we had our World War I helmets replaced and we first saw the M-1 carbine.

When we sailed from the U.S.A. we were known as Task Force 6814. This organization later became the Americal Infantry Division. It was one of two divisions in the World War II United States Army that was not assigned a number; the other was the Philippine Division. The Americal Infantry Division was assembled by using the fourth infantry regiments from the old National Guard square divisions when the new triangular formations became the standard. The infantry regiments were once parts of National Guard Divisions from the Middle West

and New England.

The 70th Coast Artillery (AA) Regiment was a Regular Army Unit and as a result all of the noncoms were regular army. Many of these men had more than ten or fifteen years service behind them. A few of the corporals had only six years of service. The long-term sergeants seemed to be unnecessarily mean in their treatment of their subordinates. Those regulars who weren't noncoms were all privates first class whether they deserved it or not. The Army Table of Organization (TO&E) placed limits on the number of privates, privates first class, corporals and the many sergeant ratings in the various types of military formations. This was also true in the case of commissioned officers, though a Regular Army unit all of the officers were reservists. Most of the Regular Army officers were promoted to major or higher ranks when the Army started to expand with the draft. Because men of the Regular Army filled all the enlisted ranks above private, it was impossible for a draftee private to advance to a higher grade until there was a vacancy due to a transfer or casualty among the Regular Army men.

Throughout the Army organizational changes were constantly being made, because of studies to find the most efficient way to use the vast numbers of men that were needed for the Army to carry out its mission to win the war. The change that was to effect the 70th Coast Artillery (AA) Regiment was the new Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E) that eliminated the Coast Artillery (AA) Regimental organizations and formed Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalions (AW) or (Gun). As a result shortly after I left to go to OCS the 70th Coast Artillery (AA) Regiment was split into two separate battalions; 70th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion (Gun) and 925th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion (AW). E Battery became A Battery in the 925th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion (AW). This was months after these changes were made for units stationed in the United States. Usually automatic anti-aircraft weapons battalions were attached to infantry and armored divisions while the gun battalions were attached to army corps groups.

These and other changes were taking place throughout the Army. The Tank Destroyer (TD) units were formed. Some were made part of the armored divisions and other units were assigned as attachments to infantry divisions and to corps groups when the tactical situation made it necessary. Another change was the addition of an anti-tank company to the infantry regiment and an anti-tank platoon was added to the battalion headquarters companies. Almost all formations were organized on a triangular basis, from squads to divisions. This was true of the arms (armor, artillery, cavalry, infantry, and the air corps). The other formations in the army were called services. The Corps of Engineers served in both categories depending upon the tactical situation. All formations, except for the Medical Corps, were armed, just in case.

One thing about being in combat as an infantryman was the question of whether or not there was a loving and just God. There was any number of instances when one experienced close calls that could have resulted in a fatality or serious wound. I seldom attended church services or prayed for a Deity's protection from harm. There were so many instances when I was aware that I experienced narrow escapes and close calls that it made me wonder how many times was I unaware of a near thing that could have resulted in death or a crippling wound. It may appear to be a contradiction, but I did go one time to a nearby church to offer a prayer of thanks when I experienced a close call that could have resulted in death or serious injury. I finally came to the conclusion that Someone was watching over me. My belief in God was strengthened, as it seemed to be impossible that the number of close calls where I escaped death or serious wounds were mere coincidences. In spite of these thoughts I did not pray for God's protection. Contrary to popular belief I know that agnostics and maybe atheists also dwelt in foxholes. Not everybody was sure of God's existence or prayed for God's protection. I guess the possibility of being killed in combat was not in the forefront of everyone's thoughts, at least that was my own personal experience. I'm not implying that it never crossed my mind. It would have been impossible to remain sane and continue to carry out the missions assigned to my unit and to protect the men for whom I was responsible if my personal safety was always in the forefront of my thoughts. You needed to keep your mind clear of personal hang-ups so you could make the best use of your training and experience. One of the benefits of command responsibility was always being

so busy that you had little time to dwell upon your personal thoughts. It is my firm belief that this was also true of the corporals and sergeants. They did their utmost to look out for the welfare of their men and I found the NCOs in my platoon for the most part to be loyal to me. One of the things that crossed my mind was the possibility of becoming cruel and losing a sense of caring what you did in your treatment of the enemy when he became a prisoner of war or was found on the battlefield badly wounded and helpless. To become cruel and uncaring made you as bad or worse than the enemy you were trying to defeat because of what his country stood for.

In late April 1945 the 75th was in corps or army reserve and orders came for all the vehicles in the division to assemble to move the 289th Infantry forward to the Elbe River. The days of combat were drawing to an end. I was assigned to lead the Anti-Tank company vehicles with Lt. Sweigert from Cannon Company and their vehicles. We picked up men from the 289th Infantry Regiment and started for the front. We had only gone about 50 or 60 miles when orders caught up with us canceling the move and to drop off the 289th men at the point where we picked them up. About this time the trucks were running low on gasoline and it seemed that what remained would barely take us back to the 290th. The 289th claimed that they didn't have any gas to spare for us. We parked the trucks along the road so that we could conserve what fuel we had while Lt. Sweigert and I drove around in my Jeep to hunt for a fuel depot. We searched over a wide area in an attempt to find a source of gasoline without finding any outfit willing to fulfill our needs. The only thing left was to carefully study our maps for the shortest route back to our outfit. The greatest problem in this strategy was the many destroyed bridges, which forced us to backtrack over and over again. We decided to park the trucks and use the jeep to find an available bridge that was to get closer to our destination. Fortunately we had an ample supply of gas for the jeep. When we crossed one bridge we again followed the same procedure to search out the next available bridge. We finally arrived back at our company practically driving on the fumes in our gas tanks.

The company was waiting for us. They had orders to move to the vicinity of Iserlon, Germany for an occupation duty assignment. The 75th Infantry Division was officially informed that our combat days were over. While everyone was glad to hear the good news the smiling men accepted the news in a very quiet and rather subdued manner. When I see newsreels of the victory celebrations in the cities at home and in England I always recall how quietly the combat troops received this most longed for return to peace. I think every man was thankful that he had survived the war and was thinking of returning home and the end of his separation from family and friends. It was some days later before the entire army celebrated the victory with parties in each unit. General Eisenhower ordered that a liquor ration be supplied for every man in those units 10 or more miles east of the Rhine River. Anti-Tank Company was served a great meal eaten at tables covered with tablecloths and utensils from the hotel that we had requisitioned for our company headquarters. The company cooks did a great job. We had an orchestra of Italian POWs provide music during the meal and for dancing with women from the displaced persons camp. These displaced people were French, Belgians, Hollanders and other nationalities that were used by the Germans and forced to work in their factories. Everyone had a good time.

Eventually we were relieved of our occupational duties by British troops, since we were in what was to be the British Zone of Occupation.

5 February 2003, at our VBOB meeting a guest speaker, an author of books on World War II, revealed an interesting and startling fact about the casualty rates during the war. During the first three years of the war the United States Military and Naval forces suffered over 100,000 KIAs, but during the last year of the conflict our armed forces suffered more than 300,000 KIAs. This is an indication of the increased size of our forces engaged in battle against the Germans and the Japanese. These statistics really surprised me. I was aware that campaigns were initiated at a greater pace than in the early years of the war. I received one bronze campaign star during the first 22 months in the South Pacific and received three bronze campaign stars in less than three months in the ETO.

survived more than a brief span of the fighting found themselves propelled through changes overthrowing, one after another, propositions that they regarded as both fundamental and assured."

As paratrooper commander Laurence Critchell remarked: "Combat is foreign to all other experience; nothing in ordinary life reminds one of it."

When experienced combat, many of their high ideals were dashed. "Consideration of principles and larger aims diminished drastically as soldiers realized that they had no bearing in battle," concluded Linderman.

After comrades were wounded and killed, soldiers and Marines began to question their own mortality and wondered when "their numbers would be up." "The soldier's God," professed famed author and Guadalcanal vet, James Jones, "was a 'Great Roulette Wheel.' "

FEELING ALONE

Men on the ground had mixed emotions about their backup. Cartoonist and 45th Infantry Division vet, Bill Mauldin, probably captured the infantryman's dislike of tanks best when he said: "Foot soldiers stayed in battle tankers departed." (This is a bit of an exaggeration.)

Former Marine and writer, William Manchester, who served with the 29th Marines on Okinawa, noted this about artillery: "There (is) something grotesque and outrageous about a man safely behind fortifications, miles away, pulling a lanyard and killing other men who cannot see him, let alone reach him."

While certainly artillery support was appreciated, Linderman says in "The World Within War": "Infantrymen did not truly wish that the artillery receive less recognition or suffer higher casualties or kill the enemy in some more equitable fashion; they were simply deploring once again what they believed was the war's mal distribution of sacrifice; with their own lives the forfeit."

The American public idolized airmen. Highly decorated pilots became icons overnight. Air crewmen received 14 times as many medals as infantrymen. And while 52,000 Army Air Forces personnel were killed, veterans readily recognized the differences in their daily existences.

U.S. infantry units were kept on the line. On the average, British outfits were rotated after 12 days in combat; compare that to the U.S. Army's 60 days.

"There must be a hell hereafter for men who willfully make such hells here for us," wrote infantryman, Orval Faubus, in a letter home to his family.

An infantryman could withstand 200 to 240 days in combat, at least *according to those in the rear echelon.* (Italics mine R.F.M.)

In reality, ex-Marine Eugene Sledge wrote in his book, "With The Old Breed on Peleliu and Okinawa;" "The stare [two thousand yard stare] appeared on fighters' faces after 15 days."

Harold Leinbaugh, a vet of the 84th Division, concluded that "the soldiers...were able to endure 17 to 21 days without breaking."

Mental breakdowns under these conditions were all too common. On Okinawa alone in 1945, over 26,000 psychiatric cases were recorded. In WWII as a whole, 25% of all casualties were caused by "combat fatigue."

POWER OF PRAYER

The old adage that there are "no atheists in a foxhole" has some merit. Often infantrymen under heavy fire would utter: "God, if I ever get out of this, I promise that I will..." Some 83% of combat veterans in four different divisions fighting in Italy said praying "helped a lot."

On Peleliu, Marine George Hunt had a near-death experience when a tree toppled and almost crushed him to death. "Someone must be doing a lot of prayin' for you Skipper," remarked a Marine who witnessed the event." Hunt agreed: "Yes...there are several prayin' for me (and) I'm beginning to think it must do some good."

In a survey conducted near the end of the war, an astounding 79% of combat veterans thought that their experience had heightened their spiritual beliefs.

Self-discipline and respect played a part, too. "It's a citizen's army," said Mauldin "and it has in its enlisted ranks many men who in civil life were not accustomed to being directed to the back door and the servant's quarters. To taking orders, yes; but to taking indignities, no."

The following article copied from the November 1998 VFW magazine was added to this history because the author explains the risks faced by riflemen in the infantry better than I ever could. It was my good fortune to be assigned to Anti-Tank Company, probably because of my previous overseas tour of duty as an anti-aircraft artilleryman. The risks were somewhat less than that of a rifleman because our mission was mainly defensive. Occasionally Anti-Tank Company men were used as riflemen when casualties were exceptionally high in the rifle companies. Anti-Tank Company had six or seven men KIAs and several more WIAs, for about a 12.1% casualty rate. In the 290th Infantry Regiment, the rifle companies suffered a casualty rate greater than 40%. Our company usually followed closely behind attacking rifle companies. We never had to lead an attack.

COPING WITH COMBAT

By Al Hemingway

It is the infantryman who bears the brunt of combat in any war. How he copes with the trauma and goes on to lead a productive life is an age-old phenomenon.

"On the wall of the office of the Army General Staff was a poster of a World War II infantryman with fixed bayonet advancing against the enemy," wrote military historian Harry Summers, Jr. "Underneath was the caption, 'At the end of the most grandiose plans and strategies is a soldier walking point.' "

In WWII, Army infantrymen made up only 14% of that service, but sustained fully 70% of the casualties. The story was similar with riflemen in the Marine Corps. They were the tips of the spear.

Gerald Linderman's book, "The World Within War": America's Combat Experience in World War II (N.Y.: Free Press, 1997) explores in depth, what motivated and sustained this select group of veterans. The widely acclaimed film, Saving Private Ryan, brings the same theme to the big screen.

Tom Hanks' (the movies' star) character, Capt. John Miller, is ordered to go on a mission behind enemy lines to rescue Private Ryan. Ryan had lost three brothers so, a Ranger unit was sent to bring him to safety so that he could be sent home.

At one point, when the squad is arguing whether or not to continue because of the risk of the job, Miller utters a very telling line. He says: "I don't know this Ryan, I don't care about him, but if bringing him back means my getting home to my wife and family sooner, then I'll do it."

A JOB TO DO

That one line epitomized the attitude of many combat veterans toward WWII. Raised during the Depression, they were brought up with a strong work ethic. That is simply: If you have a job, do it quickly and thoroughly.

But few imagined that work in the factory or on the farm could have ever prepared them for what lay ahead. As Marine Grady Gallant put it bluntly: "War is killing. Seeking out the enemy and killing. Killing without mercy. Killing for God and country."

Audie Murphy recalled later about killing; "I remember the experience as I do a night-mare. A demon seems to have entered my body."

Surviving required a hardening process. Recalled vet Paul Boesch: "Looking at him [a German] and knowing that it was I who had done this thing to him, I realized I should have felt some kind of compassion, yet I had none. It was as if I were a carpenter and had driven home a nail which secured one beam to another, the job I was assigned to do."

Yet very few were tasked with killing. "For so indispensable a role in the American accomplishment," Linderman writes, "their [actual fighting men] numbers were small. From a population of 132 million the military drew into service 16.3 million persons: fewer than 1 million, probably no more than 800,000, took any part in extended combat. In numerous theaters, fighting men comprised 10%, or less, of the military complement. Infantrymen, constituting 14% of American troops overseas, suffered 70% of the casualties."

How this select group coped is the core of his book. Linderman describes it this way: "World War II, like war before and after it, confounded the expectations of those who entered upon its battles. Few other human activities are as certain as combat to alter substantially those who participate, and the American soldiers who

To maintain discipline, there had to be separation of officers and enlisted men, which, according to James Jones, "[caused] a lot more bitterness in World War II than historians allow."

Adds Linderman: "The worth of discipline in and of itself: obedience as the indispensable standard, trust in one's superiors, and high confidence that their commands wielded intelligence, courage, and true concern for the lives of the soldiers...these were not the values that infused American society. In World War II, its young men resisted a system of military discipline that had been designed as if they were."

BROTHERHOOD

One of the main reasons that infantrymen survive the terrible ordeal of combat is comradeship.

Lewis Mumford, whose son was a combat soldier in WWII, determined that men who fought together "knew comradeship and experienced love, sometimes to a degree far beyond their civilian experienced love...War, which plainly brutalized men, also raised some of them to a saintly level."

Carl Meinelt, a squad leader in the 5th Marines, watched as his best friend Ed Peterson was shot in the stomach on the beach on Peleliu. Over 40 years later, the two were reunited when he saw his friend's name in the 1st Marine Division Association directory. It was an emotional reunion when they saw each other at Meinelt's home in Waterbury, Conn. "He was alive. He had survived," Meinelt said. "It was so good to see him again."

Not even the passage of some four decades had erased the bond that was formed between the two Marines.

"Men... do not fight for flag or country, for the Marine Corps or glory or any other abstraction," wrote William Manchester in his book "Goodby Darkness", "but for one another."

This theme is repeated regularly.

Marine Eugene Sledge: "What was worse than death was the indignation of your buddies. You couldn't let 'em down. It was stronger than flag and country."

J. Glenn Gray, author, of "The Warriors" (1959), wrote, "The fighter is often sustained solely by the determination not to let down his comrades."

Keith Winston summed it up best: "There's a genuine bond...you might call it survival...that brings every type man together."

CHANGED FOREVER

Most WWII combat veterans buried their fears and anxieties when they came home. They put their experiences behind them and proceeded to live their lives.

Years later, spurred on by the PTSD that occurred in some Vietnam veterans they began speaking out.

Sy Kahn, a veteran of the Pacific fighting, fought with his demons: "I was changed by the war, haunted in dreams and memory, rendered restless and sometimes alienated, sometimes more at home than abroad, sometimes a stranger everywhere, and in mysterious ways beyond my knowing, perhaps a casualty."

Many civilians looked upon returning veterans as different. And they were. Those who experience the rigors of combat undergo a metamorphosis.

Orval Faubus: "No one could ever fully grasp the horror and awfulness without being on the ground, not only to see, but feel the presence...and the to smell the sickening stench of the dead. Only those who have lived in this world [of war] can ever know what it is like."

Often by the public that had cheered them on to victory, some veterans withdrew into themselves, preferring the company of the few who understood what they had been through.

"The public," Marine sergeant Gilbert Bailey said, "Makes little...distinction between a man who faces death every day and another who is simply overseas. They all wear the same ribbons and tell the same stories."

Infantry vet Grady Arrington put everything in perspective when he said: "Only those men who have faced similar circumstance are capable of judging the rightness of our actions."

Linderman came to the same conclusion: "The loss of mental focus on all save the rudiments of survival; the petrification of the emotional reaction to events in and beyond battle; the reiteration of the combat moment into an apparently endless war whose sole movement was the approach of one's death, now resisted less by the will than by habit and reflex...here was the play of forces that immured combat veterans within the world of war."

THE REPLACEMENT'S STORY

Having read stories and seen TV documentaries about how replacements were treated by the Army, when they were on their way to a combat unit in the ETO, I was interested in talking to someone who went through the experience. At a division reunion I spoke to George Sosebee, from Canton, Georgia, who became a member of B Company 291st Infantry in February 1945. He became a member of the 75th Infantry Division after we were sent to Holland following our second battle where we took part in the liberation of the French City of Colmar in Alsace.

George joined us when the division was in a defensive position on the west bank of the Maas River and Canal after we relieved the British 6th Airborne Division in the vicinity of Pannengen, Holland. It was a relatively quiet front, so the division was able to lick its wounds and receive the many men returning from the hospitals after recovering from their wounds. The division infantry regiments also received replacements for those who would never return. His story gives one some idea of how desperate was the need for infantry replacements after the heavy losses suffered by all the divisions that fought in the "Battle of the Bulge". When George graduated from high school he was immediately drafted into the Army and was sent to an infantry basic training center. Basic training lasted for thirteen weeks. After that the soldier was usually assigned to an army unit for further training as a member of a squad, platoon and company unit. In George's case he and his group were shipped overseas without receiving any unit training. He landed somewhere in Scotland where he and his comrades were immediately put on a train that dropped them off in the south of England. There, they boarded ships to cross the English Channel for France. George said that everybody got seasick during their channel crossing and they all were very happy to get their feet back on dry land.

They were sent to a Reinforcement Center (called "Repple Depples" by combat veterans) to await assignment to a battle weary line outfit somewhere on the continent. These "Repple Depples" had a bad reputation among battle veterans. Recovered wounded men waiting for transportation back to their units after hospitalization would go AWOL in order to get away from these hated centers in order to return as rapidly as possible to their outfit, even if their unit was engaged in combat. Their outfit was home and family while they were overseas. These centers were first named Replacement Depots and the Army thought that they could eliminate their bad reputation by renaming them Reinforcement Centers. Of course, this didn't change the GI's opinion of them one iota and neither did the GIs stop calling them anything but, "Repple Depples". The thing that veterans of the combat arms resented the most, was the petty rules, put in place and enforced by rear area non-combat commanding officers. My own personal experience in rear areas was that veteran infantry combat officers tried their best, whenever possible, to allow the men to enjoy any free time whenever they were away from the front lines. The petty rules so annoyed combat infantrymen that they chose to go AWOL to escape from these chicken rules and return to their units even if it meant facing the dangers and discomfort of front line foxholes.

George and his fellow recruits waited a week or more at the Reinforcement Center before their names were finally called out to proceed to their new assignment in a line outfit. One day they were loaded onto trucks, sometime after dark. As the trucks traveled toward the front they became aware that they were hearing the distant sounds of artillery getting closer and closer. Sunset was rather early due to Europe's latitude. They arrived somewhere unknown to them, when the column of trucks finally came to a halt and an officer, most likely from division headquarters, welcomed them to the division with a speech about the proud unit that they were joining. These poor guys still had no idea where they were. They were told to stay in the trucks until they received further orders.

While they nervously waited in the trucks, there was suddenly a tremendous amount of artillery fire not too far away that seemed to be coming closer and closer to their location. The artillery fire was from enemy anti-aircraft batteries firing at Allied bombers returning from a raid over Germany. The enemy anti-aircraft guns along the bombers' route opened fire when the planes came within range of their gun batteries. This led them to believe

that the firing was coming closer and closer to their location. George said that no one showed up to tell them what to do. When this kind of thing occurred the veterans knowing what it was usually ignored it, but this was the first time these green recruits were anywhere in the vicinity of enemy fire and they had no idea what was really happening or what they were expected to do. There was nobody in sight to give them any guidance. They were strictly on their own. It wasn't until later that they were told what all the shooting was about.

It was still dark, when a sergeant showed up who was to take them to their newly assigned unit. They got off of the trucks when ordered to, and were marched along a road until they finally were introduced to their new company commander who welcomed them and told the 1st Sergeant to assign them to platoons and squads. It must have been close to dawn because George remembers seeing some GIs and being told by the sergeant that they were now a member of what was their assigned unit. They had been assigned to B Company 291st Infantry Regiment. Of course, these newcomers were curious about what the future held for them. The veterans had very little to say to these new guys and when they were asked what combat was like the only answer was "You'll find out." Other than that the veterans had very little to say. I asked George what he thought when he was told that there were only about forty or so men in the company that had an authorized strength of one hundred ninety-seven men. His reply was that he had no idea how many men were in a full strength company. As a result, George was totally ignorant of how high the casualties had been or might be in the future. George said it was more than a week before he knew the name of his squad leader. He never got to know the names of most of the new men who arrived with him, because they didn't last long enough for him to get to know them. George also had no way of knowing that this was a very quiet front. He had no reference to enable him to size up the situation. His story of his first patrol will give the reader some idea as to how unprepared he was for combat.

One night, he and several of the new men were assigned to a patrol led by one of the veterans. They were to cross the Maas Canal, the front line boundary between their unit and the enemy, to gather intelligence about the enemy's positions and activities. They were instructed to watch the patrol leader and to do what ever he did and to follow his orders. Shortly after they were across the canal all hell broke loose. There was a lot of shooting and as George describes it the rookies all froze in their tracks and had forgotten what they had been told at the start of the patrol. Suddenly, George remembered to watch what the patrol leader did. The patrol leader had hit the ground and George quickly did the same. It's times like these that a guy learns real fast. This could be called on the job training. Fortunately, the entire patrol returned safely to the company area.

When I asked George how he greeted new replacements after he became a veteran, he admitted that he now understood why the veterans that he first met acted in the way that they did. When he was asked the question about what combat was like he gave the new recruits the same answer that he received when he was a green recruit. He now knew that it was beyond words to describe what combat was like to some one who had not experienced it.

Today George is a highly successful funeral director in his hometown of Canton, Georgia. He is an extremely generous man who gives a lot to the 75th Division Veterans Association and takes no credit for his generous gifts. He always says that the gifts are from all the members of B Company 291st Infantry. It's a pleasure to be in George's company. He has a great sense of humor and his jokes and stories are very funny. They are all the more enjoyable because he makes it a rule not to belittle any person or ethnic group.

75th INFANTRY DIVISION
 290th INFANTRY DIVISION
ANTI-TANK COMPANY

HEADQUARTERS PLATOON

Position	Rank	Name	Casualty	Deceased
CO	Capt.	Gillen,	Lawrence W.	12/22/00
CO	1 st Lt.	Fisher	Woodrow	12/??/60
XO	1 st Lt.	"	"	
XO	1 st Lt.	Nichols	William C.	
Recon. O	2 nd Lt.	Grose	Charles	1980
Recon. O	2 nd Lt.	Daniels	Rubie	
Recon. O	2 nd Lt.	Smith	Carrol C.	1960
1 st Sgt.	M/Sgt.	Parsons	Orland H.	10/12/97
Co. Clk.	Sgt.	Heiterer	John	7/12/94
Recon. Sgt.	Sgt.	Hedberg	Russell	WIA 12/??/44
Recon. Sgt.	Sgt./2 nd Lt.	Webster	John P.	1970
Jp. Drvr.	T/5	Premazzi	Lee A.	1/6/97
Jp. Drvr.	Pfc.	Baggs	???	
Medic	Pfc.	Kniesley	John	
Mail Clk.	T/5	Bell	Lennie D.	??/??

COMMUNICATIONS

Chief	Sgt.	Stewart	Edward S.	1991
1 st Rad. Oper.	T/4	Compton	Milton	
2 nd Rad. Oper.	T/5	Allen	William	
Wire./Oper.	Pfc.	Smith	Raymond C.	
Trk. Drvr.	Pfc.	Saylor	???	

KITCHEN

Mess Sgt.	S/Sgt.	Pack	Norman
1 st Cook	T/4	Karos	Gus
2 nd Cook	T/5	Ragar	???
3 rd Cook	T/5	Chartier	???
Trk. Drvr.	Pfc.	Hamilton	???
Trk. Drvr.	Pfc.	Gail (Gall?)	???

SUPPLY

Supply Sgt.	S/Sgt.	Groves	William F.
Asst.	Sgt.	Goodman	William
Arm./Art.	T/4	Stuart	Robert
Asst.	Cpl.	Olive	Max
Trk. Drvr.	Pfc.	Terry	???

MOTOR POOL

Chief Mech.	Sgt.	DeNegre	John
Asst. Mech.	T/4	Preston	???
Mech.	Pfc.	DiMaria	Jack

FIRST PLATOON (GUN)
PLATOON HEADQUARTERS

<u>Posit</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Casualty</u>	<u>Deceased.</u>
Ldr.	2 nd Lt.	Raze	Dalton D.	12/28/96
Plt. Sgt.	T/Sgt.	Isaacs	Wilbur A.	KIA Korea
Arm./Art.	T/4	Transauskas	???	
Jp. Drvr.	Pfc.	Rogers	William J. "Billy Joe"	6/3/99
Medic	Pfc.	Greco	George	

FIRST SQUAD

Squad Ldr.	S/Sgt.	Moir	Alexander	WIA	10/1/84
#1 Gunr.	Cpl.	Garrett	???		
Trk. Drvr.	T/5	Wallace	Lovell "Sess"		
Gunner	Pfc.	Collins	???		
Gunner	Pfc.	Gase, Jr	Viril C.		
Gunner	Pfc.	Johns	George Randall		
Gunner	Pfc.	Malinak	Michael		
Gunner	Pfc.	Ruebsaman	Gilbert		
Gunner	Pfc.	Sheridan	William J.		
Gunner	Pfc.	Sieg	Carl	KIA	12/25/45
#1 Gunner	Cpl.	Cooper	???		
Gunner	Pfc.	Lovell	Robert G.		
Gunner	Pfc.	Marsh	Fred	WIA	12/??/67
Gunner	Pfc.	Fary	Raymond E.		

SECOND SQUAD

Squad Ldr.	S/Sgt.	Rivetti	John R.		
#1 Gunner	Cpl.	Smith	Robert M.		
Trk. Drvr.	T/5	McClain	???		
Gunner	Pfc.	Bondaruk	George		
Gunner	Pfc.	Dickens	???		
Gunner	Pfc.	Gilbert	???		
Gunner	Pvt.	Huskey	???		
Gunner	Pfc.	Mybro	???		
Gunner	Pfc. ?	Claypool	Edward L.		

THIRD SQUAD

Squad Ldr.	S/Sgt.	Groover	Lawrence H.	10/??/84
#1 Gunner	Cpl.	Norfleet	Edward K.	8/13/89
Trk. Drvr.	T/5	Purcell	George	
Gunner	Pfc.	Guhl	Paul J.	
Gunner	Pfc.	Hull	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	Morris	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	Parker	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	Post	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	Sickler	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	Anderson	Leroy V.	

Note: Garrett took over when T/Sgt. Was wounded. Lt. Raze retired as a full colonel and is buried in Arlington Cemetery. Pfc. Carl Sieg was KIA on Christmas Day 1944 when friendly P-38s mistakenly attacked near Soy, Belgium. Cpl. Uremovich was seriously in the same attack. We have no information as to when or where Pfc. Marsh was wounded. Dalton D. Raze stayed in the Army and retired as a full colonel.

SECOND PLATOON (GUN)
PLATOON HEADQUARTERS

<u>Posit.</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Casualty</u>	<u>Deceased</u>
Plt. Ldr.	2 nd Lt.	McElroy	Robert F.	
Plt. Sgt.	T/Sgt.	Rice	Don	
Arm./Art.	T/4	Czenski	Frank	
Jp. Drvr.		Pfc. Sellars	Owen	
Rad./Oper.	Pfc.	Grimm	Clayford T. "Tom"	
Medic	Pfc.	Emberry	Franklin	

FIRST SQUAD

Squad Ldr.	S/Sgt.	Graves	Paul	
#1 Gunner	Cpl.	Dole	Robert	WIA
#1 Gunner	Cpl.	Gardenar	Kenneth	
Trk. Drvr.	T/5	Temple	John	
Gunner	Pfc.	Charlton	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	Gerdis	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	Kern	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	McManus	James	
Gunner	Pfc.	Okon	Theodore	
Gunner	Pfc.	Staunton	Robert	
Gunner	Pvt.	Hill	James?	
Gunner	Pvt.	Dunne	???	

SECOND SQUAD

Squad Ldr.	S/Sgt.	Lindenmuth	Ray	
#1 Gunner	Cpl.	Clark	Robert	
Trk. Drvr.	T/5	Richardson	Sylvis	
Gunner	Pfc.	Files	Ira "Arky"	
Gunner	Pfc.	Gawrulyk	George	
Gunner	Pfc.	Geller	Carl	
Gunner	Pfc.	Schuenke	Howard	
Gunner	Pfc.	Swank	Robert	
Gunner	Pfc.	Ryan	Frank	Temp Blindness

THIRD SQUAD

Squad Ldr.	S/Sgt.	Eaton	Claude	
#1 Gunner	Cpl.	Golic	Joseph	
Trk. Drvr.	T/5	Meyers	Charles	
Gunner	Pfc.	Jacobson	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	Leherer	Howard	
Gunner	Pfc.	Rodriguez	Jesus	
Gunner	Pfc.	Sittig	Predose	
Gunner	Pfc.	Smith	J. B.	
Gunner	Pfc.	Tobias	"Toby"	
Gunner	Pfc.	Vera	Guillemera "Pancho"	
Gunner	??	Silvnani	Lino	KIA / 9 th I.D.

Note: The original jeep driver lost due to suffering severe trench foot.

Pfc. Frank Ryan lost to intermittent blindness.

Several were lost because of trench foot.

Robert Dole left prior to my assignment to Anti-Tank Company. WIA serving with 10th Mtn. Div.

In Italy. Lino Silvani KIA serving with M Co. 39th Inf. August 1944 near St. Lo, France.

THIRD PLATOON (GUN)
PLATOON HEADQUARTERS

<u>Posit.</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Casualty</u>	<u>Deceased</u>
Plt. Ldr.	2 nd Lt.	Nichols	William C.	
Plt. Ldr.	2 nd Lt.	Blake	Charles	12/?/95
Plt. Sgt.	T/Sgt.	Bucchioni	Julian	
Arm./Art.	T/4	Yursek	Joseph	
Jp. Drvr.	Pfc.	Horton	Justice	12/?/95
Medic	??	???	???	

FIRST SQUAD

Squad Ldr.	S/Sgt.	Rezach	Howard	
#1 Gunner	Cpl.	Brown	George A.	
Trk.Drvr.	T/5	Polluck	Manuel	
Gunner	Pfc.	Alvarado	Jesus T.	
Gunner	Pfc.	Dionne	Norman R.	
Gunner	Pfc.	Hopkins	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	Lockner	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	Petak	Andrew	
Gunner	Pfc.	Weeks	???	

SECOND SQUAD

Squad Ldr.	S/Sgt.	Wright	???	
#1 Gunner	Cpl.	Wilcox	???	
Trk. Drvr.	???	???	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	Coldwell	Robert C.	12/?/86
Gunner	Pfc.	Collings	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	Cooney	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	Earp	Malcom	
Gunner	Pfc.	Elam	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	Richardson	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	Sweigart	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	Hulsey	William P.	KIA 12/?/44
Gunner	Pfc.	Anderson	Leroy V.	

THIRD SQUAD

Squad Ldr.	S/Sgt.	McColgan	???	
#1 Gunner	Cpl.	Oberg	David	
Trk.Drvr.	T/5	Harned	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	Beckwith	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	Erickson	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	Janes	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	Johnson	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	Krahwinkel	???	
Gunner	Pfc.	Lauland	John	

Note: Pfc. William Hulsey was KIA near Soy, Belgium a few days after Christmas Day 1945 when a stack of German mines that had been removed from the road suddenly exploded. 2nd Lt. Bill Nichols was promoted to 1st lieutenant and became the company executive officer when Capt. Gillen left the company near the end of hostilities and 1st Lt. Fisher took command, and 2nd Lt. then took over the 3rd Platoon..

FOURTH PLATOON (MINE)
PLATOON HEADQUARTERS

<u>Posit.</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Casualty</u>	<u>Deceased</u>
Plt. Ldr.	2 nd Lt.	Vosters	James B.	2/3/97
Plt. Sgt.	T/Sgt.	Daniels	Rubbie	
Plt. Sgt.	T/5	Benfield	John	
Mapper	T/4	Fratalone	Phillip	
Trk. Drvr.	T/5	Adams	???	
Trk. Drvr.	T/5	Higgenson	???	
Trk. Drvr.	T/5	Taylor	John	
Jeep Drvr.	Pfc.	Boyle	William B.	

FIRST SQUAD

Squad Ldr.	S/Sgt.	Sutton	Robert L.	
Asst. Ldr.	Cpl.	Howell	???	
Mine Engr.	Pfc.	Allen	R. C.	
Mine Engr.	Pfc.	Fields	Charles	
Mine Engr.	Pfc.	Metz	???	
Mine Engr.	Pfc.	Premo	Ben G.	12/??/??
Mine Engr.	Pfc.	Sites	Leroy	
Mine Engr.	Pfc.	Wagner	John	
Mine Engr.	??	White	Bob	
Mine Engr.	??	Parker	Clyde	

SECOND SQUAD

Squad Ldr.	S/Sgt.	Black	Billy B.	6/18/98
Mine Engr.	Pfc.	Berry	Gordon L.	
Mine Engr.	Pfc.	Ingles	Ernest	
Mine Engr.	Pfc.	Kolarczyk	Frank M.	
Mine Engr.	Pfc.	Pildner	John A.	
Mine Engr.	Pfc.	Strawn	Willard S.	??/??/88
Mine Engr.	Pfc.	Daehler	Ralph H.	
Mine Engr.	Pfc.	Yack	Donald M.	WIA 2/??/45
Mine Engr.	Pfc.	DeVault	Francis T.	KIA 1/??/45

THIRD SQUAD

Squad Ldr.	S/Sgt.	Kysar	Francis T.	??/??/92
Mine Engr.	Pfc.	Cornett	William H.	
Mine Engr.	Pfc.	Gean	G. R.	
Mine Engr.	Pfc.	Hunter	J. I.	
Mine Engr.	Pfc.	Jarrel	Melvin "Bill"	
Mine Engr.	Pfc.	Peel	Robert	
Mine Engr.	Pfc.	McCain	Henry M.	
Mine Engr.	Pfc.	Rich	Harley E.	
Mine Engr.	??	Albert	Paul	
Mine Engr.	??	Gall	Albert	

Note: T/Sgt. Rubbie Daniels (Regular Army) received a commission near the end of the war and became the company recon. Officer. Pfc. Donald Yack was seriously wounded in combat in the Colmar Area. Pfc. Francis DeVault was KIA near Burtonville, Belgium.

PHOTO TAKEN AT CAMP BRECKINRIDGE

Some members of Anti-Tank Company .

2nd Platoon Members that I am able to identify (not all men are from the 2nd Platoon).

Front row: 5th from left; 1st Lt. Woodrow Fisher, Company Executive Officer
6th from left, Capt. Lawrence "Rudy" Gillen, Company Commander
Second row; 1st man on left Tech. Sgt. Don Rice, Platoon sergeant 2nd Platoon
Third row; 4th man from left; S/Sgt. Ray Lindenmuth, 2nd Squad Lead 2nd Platoon
Man on extreme right, S/Sgt. Paul Graves, 1st Squad Leader, 2nd Platoon

PHOTO OF A-T Co. on ROAD in the VICINITY of DORTMUND, GERMANY

April 1945

The Jeep appears to belong to the 3rd Platoon and that might be Lt. Bill Nichols standing beside it. His was the only jeep that I can recall that had a bracket added to it. This has always been one of my favorite pictures in spite of it's poor definition and excessive contrast. It was a very rainy day and a stop was made to take time out so the men could eat. Some of the details were enhanced on my computer, but there was not really much else that I was able to do to bring out any of the details.

PHOTO OF COMPANY FORMATION IN WALTROP, GERMANY

April 1945

Platoons from left to right: 2nd, 3rd and 4th (Mine), Squad Leaders 2nd Plt. S/Sgts. Claude Eaton, Ray Lindenmuth and Paul Graves. Platoon sergeant T/Sgt. Don Rice, 3rd and 4th Plt. Sergeants not visible in photo. Acting in place of 1st Sergeant Orland Parsons, in front of formation, 1st Platoon T/Sgt. Wilbur A. Isaaks

SOME INDIVIDUAL PHOTOS in WALTROP, GERMANY

16 April 1945

This photo of me was taken before we were told that we had spent our last day in combat. I was able to eliminate the shadow on the right side of my face. Obviously this picture of Pfc. Owen Sellers was taken on the same day as mine. In this case I was unable to remove the shadow from his face.

PHOTO of ANTI-TANK COMPANY'S VICTORY DINNER

May 1945

This picture was taken in the dining room of the Bentheimer-Hof Hotel in Hohenlimburg, Germany that served as the company Command Post (CP). It's too bad that this photo was torn and in very bad condition, but no amount of trying to bring out any details could improve the clarity and sharpness.

NOTES

World War II military unit strength, acronyms and official names are explained below.

Infantry Division = 1 Military Police Company, 1 Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, 1 Ordnance Company, 1 Quartermaster Company, 1 Signal Company, 3 Infantry Regiments, 4 Field Artillery Battalions (e/w 36 105-mm. & 12 155-mm. Howitzers), 1 Combat Engineer Battalion, 1 Medical Corps Battalion, attached medical personnel, chaplains and a band. Authorized strength, 14,281 EM and 747 Officers.

Regimental Combat Team, RCT = an infantry regiment and its supporting field artillery battalion: e.g. 290th Infantry Regiment and the 898th Field Artillery Battalion.

Infantry Regiment = 3,259 enlisted men and officers, consisted of 3 battalions plus 4 companies (headquarters, anti-tank, cannon and service companies.) sometimes unofficially referred to as a regimental battalion. The three battalions each have a headquarters company, three rifle companies and a heavy weapons company.

Infantry Battalion = 871 EM & 35 Officers 1st Bn. = Hdqrs., A, B, & C rifle companies + D hvy weapons company, 2nd Bn. = Hdqrs., E, F & G rifle companies + H hvy weapons company and 3rd Bn. = Hdqrs., I, K & L rifle companies + M hvy. weapons company.

Infantry Company (rifle) = 193 EM and 6 Officers in five platoons: headquarters (35 EM & 2 Os), three rifle platoons (41 EM & 1 O each) and a weapons platoon (35 EM & 1 O) e/w 3 60-mm. Mortars & 3 light 30 cal. machine guns.

Infantry Company (heavy weapons) = 166 EM & 8 Officers, four platoons; headquarters (35 EM & 2 Os), 3 weapons platoons: 2 (36 EM & 1 O each e/w 4 30 cal. heavy machine gun platoons) and one mortar platoon (60 EM & 4 Os e/w 6 81-mm. mortars.) Each battalion one heavy weapons company designated D, H & M companies.

Command Post = CP = field operational headquarters for all units from SHAEF down to platoons.

<u>Infantry Regiment</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Enlisted Men</u>	<u>Officers</u>
	Regt. Hdqrs.	8	* These companies some- times referred to as a regimental battalion.
	Hq. Co.	100	
	Svc. Co.*	111	
	Cannon Co.*	118	
	A-T Co.*	165	
	1 st Bn.	871	
	2 nd Bn.	871	
	3 rd Bn.	<u>871</u>	
		3119	
<u>Infantry Battalion</u>	Bn. Hdqrs.	4	Each battalion has a Hq. and 4 letter companies, 1 st Bn. A,B,C & D 2 nd Bn. E,F,G & H 3 rd Bn. I,K,L & M
	Hq. Co.	122	
	A Co. Rifle	193	
	B Co. Rifle	193	
	C Co. Rifle	193	
	D Co. Hvy. Wpns.	<u>166</u>	
		871	
			35
<u>A, B, C, E, F, G, I, L & K Companies</u>	Co. Hq.	35	
	1 st Plt. Rifle	41	1

	2 nd Plt. Rifle	41	1
	3 rd Plt. Rifle	41	1
	4 th Plt. Hq.	6	1
	“ “ Mortars	17	0
	“ “ MGs	<u>12</u>	<u>0</u>
		193	6
<u>D, H, & M Companies</u>			
	Co. Hq.	34	2
	1 st MG Plt.	36	1
	2 nd MG Plt	36	1
	Mortar Plt.	<u>60</u>	<u>4</u>
		166	8
<u>Anti-Yank Company</u>			
	Co. Hq.	24	3
	1 st Plt. Hq.	4	1
	Squads 1,2 & 3	30	0
	2 nd Plt. Hq.	4	1
	Squads 1,2 & 3	30	0
	3 rd Plt. Hq.	4	1
	Squads 1,2 & 3	30	0
	4 th Plt. Hq.	6	1
	Squads 1,2 & 3	<u>21</u>	<u>0</u>
		165	7

SOUTH PACIFIC AREA NOTES

AIF = Australian Imperial Forces; an all-volunteer regular army force that could be sent overseas. The entire army consisted of four divisions, the 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th. The 8th was captured when Singapore fell to the Japanese.

Australian Territorials, = Similar to our National Guard, but was an all draftee force that could not be legally sent out of the country until the law was changed after 7 December 1941. These units later received combat-experienced officers from the AIF.

Reinforced Rifle Company = Units from the infantry regiment that are temporarily attached to and served under the command of the rifle company commander. Usually a MG squad or a mortars squad from the heavy weapons company, but could be a tank or tank destroyer company from a unit attached to the regiment.

CBs or Sea Bees = Naval construction Battalion. Equivalent to Army Engineers, usually manned with former civilian skilled construction workers. These men were usually older than the average serviceman (generally in their thirties and older) who entered the services during the war.

MILITARY UNIT FORMATIONS AND TERMS

SQUAD = The smallest and lowest (identified by Arabic numeral) unit in the chain of command in tactical and service units. In the infantry it consists of 12 men led by a staff-sergeant.

PLATOON = In the Infantry, a rifle unit (identified by an Arabic numeral) normally 41 men led by a 1st or 2nd lieutenant with a technical sergeant as second in command.

COMPANY = Identified by a letter; in the infantry rifle company, normally consists of 193 EM and 6 Officers. Usually commanded by a captain or a 1st lieutenant.

BATTERY = Artillery equivalent to a company in the other arms or services.

TROOP = Cavalry unit equivalent to a company.

BATTALION = (identified by an Arabic numeral) consists of a headquarters unit and three or more tactical or service units. Sometimes it may be a part of a regiment. It can be and is often a complete command especially in the artillery. Usually commanded by a lieutenant colonel.

SQUADRON = A cavalry unit equivalent to a battalion. Most people think that it originated in the air force.. Identified by an Arabic numeral.

REGIMENT = Usually consists of two or more battalions. Normally commanded by a colonel. Identified by an Arabic numeral.

BRIGADE = Identified by an Arabic numeral. A flexible unit without a standard TO&E and may consist of regiments, battalions and troops or squadrons from various arms. May be commanded by a brigadier general.

COMBAT COMMAND = Used in the United States armored divisions and is identified as CCA, CCB or CCR. It has a standard TO&E and is roughly equivalent to a brigade. CCA & CCB normally commanded by a brigadier general, CCR commanded by a colonel. CCR is not as large a unit as the other two combat commands.

INFANTRY DIVISION = Normally identified by an Arabic numeral (American Infantry Division was not assigned a number until after WW II, when it became the Regular Army 23rd Infantry Division). Infantry divisions were organized around three infantry regimental combat teams (RCTs). RCTs consists of an infantry regiment and an artillery battalion that serve in combat as a unit. The RCT is under the command of the infantry regimental commander. A major general (2 stars) commands an infantry division.

ARMORED DIVISION = Identified by an Arabic numeral. The major combat units are the three combat commands and is commanded by a major general (2 stars).

ARMY CORPS = Identified by Roman numerals and consists of two or more divisions and smaller combat units (engineer regiments, battalions or groups and artillery battalions or groups and armored battalions) and is usually commanded by a major general (2 stars). In the Pacific the commander could have been a lieutenant general (3 stars).

ARMY GROUP = Army groups numbers were spelled out: e.g. NINTH US ARMY. The commander held the rank of general (4 stars) and consisted of two or more army corps.

THEATER OF OPERATIONS = The popular practice was to use an acronym to identify the operational area: ETO, SWPA, POA and SPA. Initially commanded by an admiral or general (4 stars) until a new rank of general of the army or fleet admiral was established later in the war.

TO & E = Table of Organization & Equipment = a listing of manpower assignments and equipment for a particular type of unit: e.g. infantry, artillery, armor or engineer organization so that the unit is able to carry out its assigned missions.

TO & E for ANTI-TANK COMPANY

EM	Officers	Rifles	45 Ps	50 Mgs	Baz	57 Guns	Veh
165	7	120	45	3	9	9	22

TO & E for Anti-Tank Platoon

34 1 29 6 1 3 3 4

Sometimes the actual TO & E would vary. A unit was allowed 10% additional manpower, but in actual practice this was rare after the initial entry into combat. Units almost always entered a battle with less than authorized manpower due to battle losses that could take a week or more before a unit received replacements and even then the new men might be less than the losses sustained. At no time did I ever see 100% of combat losses replaced. This may have been because there just weren't enough men available in the Replacement Depots to supply all the units in combat that needed replacements at the same time. When it came to equipment losses most units, including my platoon, had more of the smaller weapons and vehicles than we were authorized, because we salvaged weapons on the battlefield from lost equipment of other units. This in spite of the fact that the army always seemed to be readily able to replace any lost equipment in less than a day. My platoon had picked up a 60-mm. mortar and two extra 50 cal. machine guns that we were able to put to good use.

LST = Landing Ship Tank. This is a true oceangoing ship with an enclosed lower deck with troop quarters on each side and an open upper deck that could carry more vehicles and tanks. A single LST could carry all of Anti-Tank Company's trucks and guns. In WW II identified by a number.

LCT = Landing Craft Tank. This is a large flat bottomed landing craft capable of carrying several vehicles, tanks or artillery pieces. It has only about 20% of the capacity of an LST and has no sheltered quarters for troops.. It is not a seagoing vessel. They were transported overseas attached to the open top deck of an LST. In WW II identified by number.

USAT = United States Army Transport. The Army operated these ships with civilian crews.

USS = United States Ship. All US Navy vessels.

USCG = United States Coast Guard. All United States Coast Guard vessels and personnel operated as a part of the US Navy from 11 November 1941 until the end of the war.

75th Division in 20 Day Push From Rhine through Ruhr

Evansville Soldiers, Others Known Here, Mentioned in Dispatches

It took 20 days for the 75th Division to drive from the Rhine river through the Ruhr industrial pocket.

And in the historic drive was a goodly portion of Evansville men and others who became known here while the division was in training at Camp Breckinridge, Ky.

The combat teams of the 289th, 290th and 291st infantry regiments swept through Datteln, Ickern, Dorsten, Erschenschwick, Marl, Witten, Kol Brassert and Herdecke.

And all along the lines, men of the 75th freed slave labor. It was a campaign of contrasts...and men of this division have many tales to tell.

There's Sergt. Louis Vingis of Bicknell. He's an artilleryman.

An excited Russian boy, a slave laborer, ran up to Sergt. Vingis and began to jabber excitedly in Russian.

Vingis took him to an interpreter and learned that the boy knew the whereabouts of a former Gestapo man who had punished him for refusing to dig fox-holes for the Nazi soldiers.

The boy showed the stump of a finger which, had been amputated by the Gestapo while they were beating him with an iron rod. Other Russians corroborated the story.

Vingis and another soldier picked up the Gestapo suspect and took him to the American military government, where he will be held until his trial as a war criminal.

Some of the towns in the trail of the division were gutted from end to end as a result of the fanatical resistance and others show hardly a trace of the

struggle; they show only surrender.

"Took Ickern, Too"

There was a severe battle for the town of Ickern by the 289th regiment, but the town was taken on schedule.

And on a wall in that town is a huge sign painted by Pvt. Bill Seay, husband of Lois Seay, Outer Riverside drive.

It reads; Roses are red, violets are blue, the 289th took Ickern too! There's another sign, "Live in Ickern, Every house is a knockout. Courtesy 289th Chamber of Commerce."

Another member of the 289th is Oscar D. Leventhal, technician third class. He belongs to a medical battalion.

And medical were needed as the regiment rescued some 220 Russian prisoners at Ickern. The PW camp had held 3,450 Russians, but the Germans moved the prisoners in advance of their columns when the Yanks were closing in.

The Nazis left those Russians too sick to "navigate under their own powers."

It was men of the 289th who learned that the Russians had labored 10 to 14 hours a day, seven days a week for the Germans.

Leventhal has been awarded the unit meritorious service award for action this spring. His wife, Rosebud, lives at 840 East sycamore street.

Members of the MP units have come in for their praise as a result of their work during the initial crossings of the Rhine.

Others in Platoon

Included in this platoon are

Staff Sergt. Luther Deshazo, rural route 2, Chandler; Pfc. John F. McQuay, 1309 North Elliot street, Evansville, and Pfc. Charles Cavanah, rural route 1, Providence, Ky.

There other men in the unit, mentioned recently in dispatches from Germany.

William W. Hadley, husband of Mrs. Mildred Hadley, 425 Dreier boulevard, has been promoted from corporal to sergeant. He is a construction foreman.

Pfc. Kenneth C. Hon, whose wife, Aletha, resides at 2151 East Eichel avenue, and Pvt. Chester K. Cassidy, whose wife, Mary, lives at 2510 Adams avenue, are members of company D of the 291st infantry regiment.

Both were recently awarded Combat Infantry badges, for participation in the battle of Germany. Pvt. Cassidy is a rifleman and Pfc. Is an ammunition handler.

John Tremont has been promoted from the rank of private first class to technician fifth grade. He is a toolroom keeper with the 75th division. His wife Helen, lives at 1417 East Indiana street.

Then there's the story of Technician fifth grade Irv Lichenstein, well known at the USO.

His theatrical background came in handy recently. On the last reel of the "Thin Man," the power went low and though the film showed on the screen there was no amplification of the sound track. Meeting the crisis. "Litch" gave a running narration of the story.

Best of Nazi Fighting Men Beaten by 75th Division

Ninth Army Headquarters Releases Reviews Record Of Breckinridge Unit

Know what's happened to the 75th Infantry division which left Camp Breckinridge, Ky., last October?

Since its departure, the division has earned its battle spurs by defeating some of the best units which Germany has been able to assemble on the western front. An account of its exploits comes from Ninth army headquarters in Europe.

Arriving in France shortly before Christmas, 1944, the 75th was rushed onto Marshal Von Runstedt's flank at the time of his deepest penetration into Belgium. The division's performance during that one month which saw the bulge reduced to a mere bump earned the praise of Britain's General Montgomery.

Praised by General

Again when the nazis threatened in Alsace-Lorraine, the 75th was rushed to the very breach where it launched a series of counterattacks with the French troops which saw the enemy driven back across its own Rhine borders. This campaign evoked the following commendation from General Devers of the Sixth army group.

"On Jan. 31, the 75th division entered the line with the ultimate objective of assisting in the liquidation of the Colmar pocket. Despite bad weather and difficult terrain, the division maintained an aggressive and determined fight. Your troops cleared Andolsheim and the Colmar forest, continued forward to capture Wolgantzzen and Appenwhir, reached the Rhine river on Feb. 7.

Met Superior Numbers

"The performance of the 75th division in this important engagement

to eliminate the Colmar pocket reflects the highest credit on you and the officers and men of your division. Although you entered the line, greatly under strength, you did not let this handicap to deter you from pressing vigorously and courageously forward. You can be justly proud of the part played by the 75th division in this notable victory, and I wish to extend to you, and the officers and men, my pride and wholehearted congratulations."

The division embarked on its second campaign, which was the Colmar pocket, on Jan. 29, after having moved 250 miles from their success in the battle of the bulge.

The men pushed down roads, through woods, past minefields---sometimes Knee deep in water and mud before by-passing Colmar and sweeping on to the Rhine.

Note: All spelling and grammatical errors copied from the original newspaper clippings.

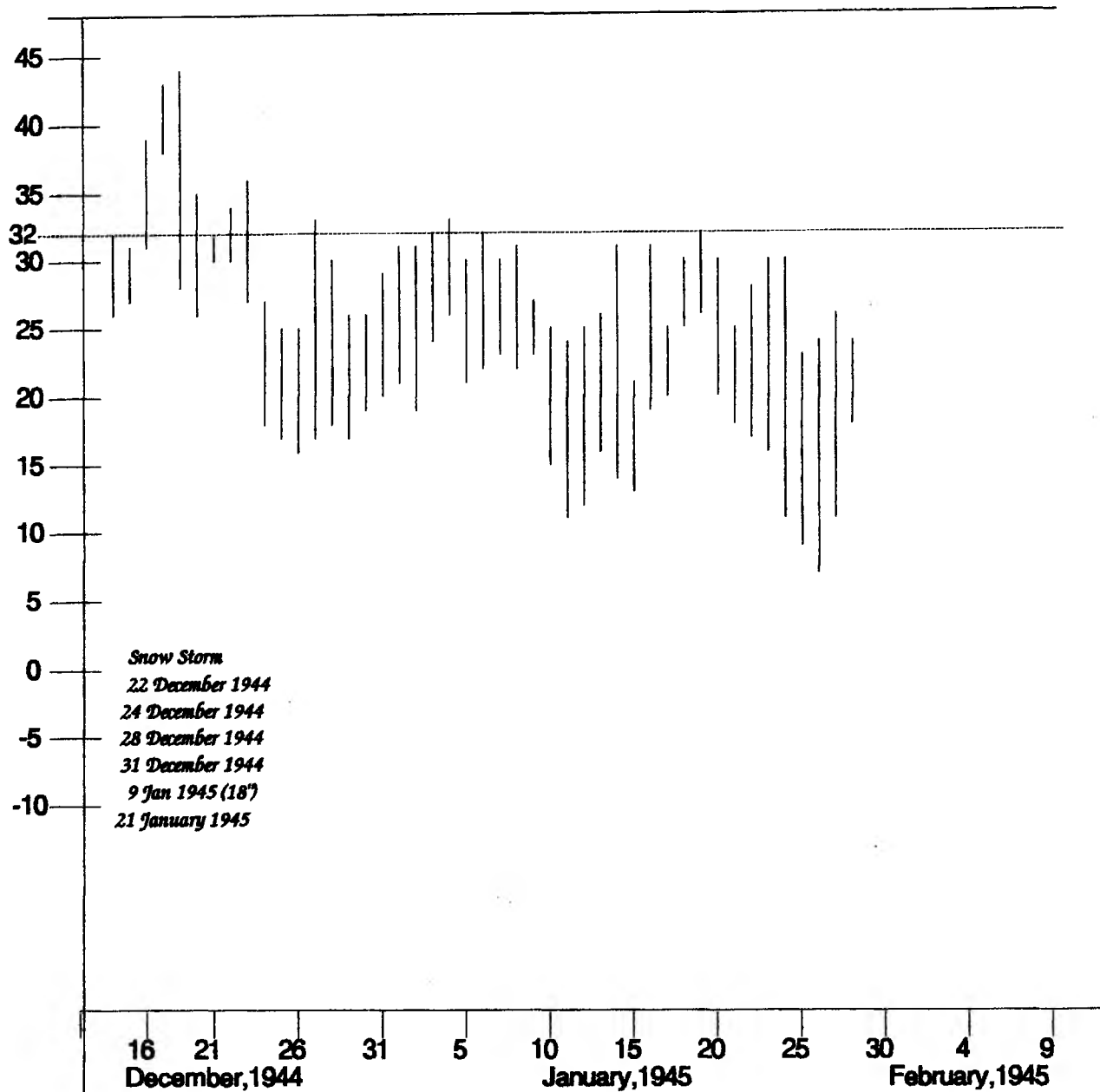
This is a newspaper story that was first published by an unknown newspaper in the USA. The chances are that this clipping came from one of the local newspapers in the vicinity of Evansville or Camp Breckinridge, Kentucky. Evansville, Indiana was the town most visited by the men of the division when on pass. A number of the men dated and married some of the local girls. As a result the local newspapers made their business to keep the local people informed of the division's activities after they went overseas.

75th Division Named Redeployment Cadre

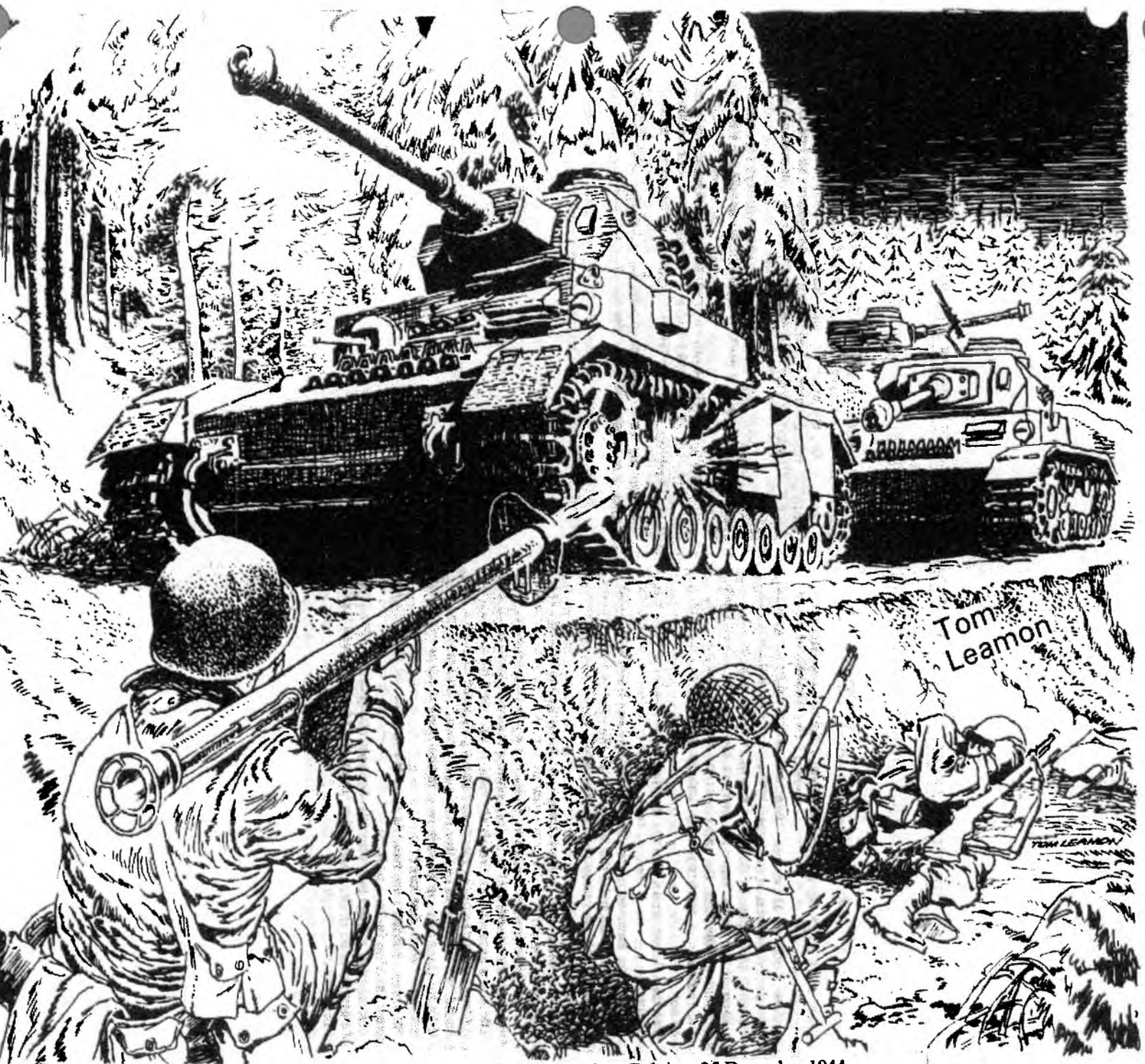
ASSEMBLY AREA COMMAND,
Rheims, June 13--The 75th Inf.
Div., which fought in four European
countries and saw action with five
Allied armies, today was named cadre
for the 17 redeployment camps of the
Assembly Area Command.

The combat hardened 75th once
was known as the "Diaper Division."
The nickname was handed to the
division after army nurses at Ft.
Leonard Wood where the outfit was
activated found out that the average
age of enlisted personnel was under
21. But that was several years and
several bloody campaigns ago.

DAILY TEMPERATURE DURING ARDENNES CAMPAIGN



I've heard many people claim that the temperatures were even lower than indicated on this graph. There may be some truth to that since no particular town was identified as to where these temperatures were recorded.



Cpl. Richard Weigand K Co. 289th Inf. stops enemy attack near Manhay, Belgium 25 December 1944

THE STORY ABOUT THE DRAWING ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THIS PAGE.

THE NAMING OF A HERO

Time: 0300, 25 December, 1944. **Place:** Belgium, the Ardennes, the woods southwest of the strategic towns of Grandmenil/Mesmy. **Situation:** A column of German "Panther" tanks, led by a captured "Sherman", rumbles down the road toward the west and Liège. The "Panthers" have split the defensive line of foxholes held by the 3rd Battalion of the 289th Regiment and are blasting the infantrymen on both sides of the road. The tanks have crushed an American "Jeep" and the soldiers, under fire for the first time, crouch in their holes, confused.

One man, however, a Corporal, shoulders and loads his bazooka, and with one shot halts the lead tank. In the next instant a German shell blows the man away—but the German column is stopped. Trapped on a road behind a dead tank, a high cliff and a deep ravine, the German column retreats—and this thrust of the German drive west is ended.

Forty-six years later, in Sacramento, Al Roxburgh (Canon-289), was reading the official Army account of that Ardennes encounter. The noted historian, Dr. Hugh M. Cole, in his 700-page volume, *The Ardennes: The Battle of the Bulge*, wrote a dramatic account of the battle, but was unable to identify the soldier who gave his life halting the Christmas drive of the Panthers. Roxburgh's sense of justice was irritated. "With survivors of that battle still about," Roxburgh reasoned, "why shouldn't we be able to give that man a name—and the credit and honor due him?"

Roxburgh started inquiries. At the 44th Reunion of the 75th Infantry Division in St. Louis, July 1990, Roxburgh talked with K-Company 289th Regiment veterans. Someone produced a 1945 copy of a history of King Company, with names and photos of each soldier in that unit.

Roxburgh found particular help from Dave Fennessey of Quincy, Massachusetts. Dave himself had been part of the Christmas Eve action, and recalled the event in vivid detail—including the name of the nameless bazookaman whose death made history: he was Cpl. Richard F. Wiegand. To date, no record of Wiegand's place of origin is known.

Having successfully identified Wiegand, Al Roxburgh forwarded the results of his research to the U.S. Army Center of Military History in Washington. While Wiegand will remain "nameless" in Cole's history of the battle, the identity of Cpl. Richard Wiegand has been placed in the file of the 289th Infantry Regiment, in our nation's National Archives, where it will be available to future historians.

Written by Tom Lennon (A-289) from material provided by Alfred S. Roxburgh and Dave Fennessey: June 1991.

GELSENKIRCHEN

5 May 2002, ever since I started to write the story of my military service I've searched far and wide to try to identify the German town where the 2nd Platoon was ordered to reinforce an under strength rifle platoon, that was led by a platoon sergeant, and reinforced by a Sherman tank and an M-10 mobile TD. We weren't sent there because more anti-tank weapons were needed, but because more manpower was required to hold the position against any possible enemy attack. We were able to reach the town over the only road available, but it was under enemy observation and fire from infantry mortars. For some reason this town is not mentioned in the post war histories prepared for the troops of the various units of the division.

The only map that I have of Germany is a map, printed on nylon, issued by the Air Corps to fliers and crews who flew missions over enemy occupied areas with the hope that if they were shot down that with the help of these maps they might be able to elude capture and find their way to advancing allied forces or a friendly or neutral country. The map was given to me by a member of our family, Major Chuck Fry, (ret. USAF) who flew 65 missions in the ETO as a B-26 bomber pilot. My problem with the map was that the scale was too small to identify the details surrounding the area that I was interested in. Even today I can recall the layout of the town and the red brick two and three story houses. In November 2001 I purchased a computer. At the time, I had no idea that this computer would provide the means to identify this town, that we were to find out a few days later was to be our last battle. My oldest son gave me a scanner for Christmas and this gave me the means to enlarge the map and help me in my search. I kept enlarging the area of interest until I was able to identify what I thought was the town by its location along the railroad that led into Dortmund from the west This is one of the few towns that gets little mention in the unit histories distributed to the men of the division.

7 April 1945, late in the day the 2nd Platoon was assigned the mission to reinforce the small group that consisted of an under strength rifle platoon, led by a platoon sergeant, reinforced by a Sherman tank and an M-10 mobile TD (tank destroyer). What was really needed was more infantrymen and we were chosen. I was to be the only officer present, but nobody told me that. The rifle platoon sergeant received orders from his company commander, who was a captain and outranked me. The entire force, including us, had maybe 50 infantrymen and was not too strong if the enemy launched an attack of greater than company strength. Fortunately for us, the enemy had all that they could handle trying to stop any further allied advances into the Ruhr Pocket. As mentioned in my military service history it was a strange situation. We were playing cat and mouse games against a beaten enemy that persisted in continuing to fight for a lost cause.

As we approached the town we came under fire from enemy mortars atop high heaps slag or mine waste that paralleled both the road and blocked our view of the nearby railroad track. Our only protection and cover were a line of two and three story brick houses along the left side of the road. We quickly learned that the enemy had the breaks between buildings zeroed in with their mortars. The opposite side of the road was open rolling farmland. Our column of a jeep and three trucks towing 57-mm. anti-tank guns raised a lot of dust as we moved toward the edge of the town that we were headed for. The enemy followed the dust column and fired when they expected us to pass an open spot between buildings. Their timing was off at the first open gap and alerted us to their strategy. From that point on I stopped the column just before we passed any open gap between buildings, and sure enough several mortar rounds pounded the road ahead of us. As soon as the last round exploded we took off before they were able to reload their weapons. We continued in this manner until we reached the part of the town that was held by our own people.

We set up our position among the buildings on the southwest edge of the town on the western side of the railroad. This was the beginning of two days of an almost unbelievable sequence of events. At the eastern end of the street there was a railroad trestle over the road. It was obvious to us that the enemy was dug in along the northeast side of the railroad embankment.

As we pulled onto this street and quickly pulled in behind the houses, a German officer and some enemy soldiers could be seen on the opposite side of the railroad embankment. I fired a quick shot at the officer and I was able to see my shot hit the wall alongside the officer's head. This officer was the only enemy soldier not wearing a steel helmet. There were many instances that led us to believe that these men

were not too battle wise.

Later the rifle platoon sergeant asked Sgt. Rice if he could borrow a few men while his men were involved in some maneuver that I never heard about. Sgt. Rice sent some men to report to the rifle platoon sergeant. One of the men was Pfc. Charles Meyers, the 3rd Squad truck driver. Meyers went to his truck to get his rifle from the scabbard that held the truck drivers' weapons when they were driving. The truck drivers were armed with M-1 rifles equipped with a grenade launchers. Meyers didn't see where the others went so he went down the street and under the railroad trestle. The railroad trestle was about a hundred yards to the east down the street from our position. He was on the enemy's side of the railroad tracks and didn't realize it. Here is a guy who was constantly asking me the direction to where enemy was and how far away. The first thing that he saw was the feet of what might have been three enemy soldiers behind a knocked out street car and he fired a rifle grenade at them. The enemy took off and ran into an air raid shelter. Meyers chased after them and fired another rifle grenade into the shelter. He suddenly became aware that he was all-alone. He took off quick as a bunny back to our position. When I saw him later he was sitting against the wall of the house that we occupied and was unable to speak. Sgt. Rice told me that when he first retuned his speech was unintelligible and he was shaking like a leaf. That was episode number one.

There was a rifleman about fifty yards ahead of our position hidden from the enemy's view by a large bush who was sniping at enemy soldiers who poked their heads above the railroad embankment. The sniper must have moved to his position before dawn because it was quite apparent to us that they didn't know his location. Watching him we noticed that when he fired his rifle a row heads rose up from the enemy side of the railroad. We devised a strategy to inflict as many casualties as possible on the enemy. We would alert our men that we were going to fire a rifle towards the enemy position and they were to watch where the heads came up and prepare to fire at that spot when we fired again, a few minutes later. Every few minutes one of us would fire his weapon and sure enough heads would reappear all along the embankment. Each of the men fired at the spot that he had picked out after the first shot. It seemed that the enemy didn't catch on to what we were doing. We kept this up for at least an hour. We had no idea if we were inflicting any casualties on them. The answer suddenly came when two enemy soldiers equipped with a machine dropped between the rails on top of the embankment and fired in our general direction. They were not shooting anywhere close to our positions. It was quite obvious that they had no idea from where we were shooting at them. We decided that our strategy was causing casualties among them. That was episode number two.

8 April 1945, I didn't expect that our company headquarters would try to run the gauntlet of enemy mortars to bring us a hot breakfast, so I told the men that they would have to eat C or K rations. Pfc. Owen Sellers, my jeep driver, said that he was willing to make the trip to the company CP and bring us a hot breakfast. Another man volunteered to go along with him. I told the two of them to cross the street with men to a building where we were able to see the route that they had to travel over. I went over the strategy that we used to get into the town the previous day and gave them a chance to forget the whole idea. Sellers was sure that they would be able to get to our company CP and return without too much trouble. Off they went with Sgt. Rice and I watching their progress. Sellers was an intelligent driver, he followed my instructions to the letter. I told Sgt. Rice to post a man in the building to alert me when they came in site on their return trip. It wasn't too long before I received word that they spotted on the return run. They again followed my instructions and arrived with a hot breakfast of coffee, pancakes and bacon for the platoon. The enemy didn't seem to be learning anything about our strategy when we drove over that road. That was episode number three.

While I was eating my breakfast in the living room of the house that we occupied, the Sherman tank crew was playing games with the enemy. The room that I was in had a large picture window with a view to the north with the street running more or less east to west. The tank would run down the street to my right firing its 30 cal. machine guns and at the enemy's end of the street they fired their cannon. I have no idea what they fired their cannon at since the railroad trestle was at that end of the street. They would then run backwards past my window and I would see tracer bullets going both ways past the window. They must have amused themselves (that's what it looked like to me) this way for at least a half hour. I don't think any of us were used to hanging onto a defensive position like this and they became bored. Put my situation in a movie (watching tracer bullets passing in both directions past the window

while eating my breakfast) and it would probably be laughed off the screen. The thing that made it even more ridiculous was the German civilians in the second and third floor windows of the houses on the opposite side of the street watching this activity with their heads turning left and right with the action, like an audience watching a game of tennis. This was episode number four.

Sometime during the day we became aware that there was an enemy sniper somewhere in our rear. There was a factory building just to the rear of our holding position. The rifle platoon sergeant sent a few men to search the factory to try to eliminate the sniper. It seemed to be the only place where he could be. The search failed to find him and we were still receiving fire from the rear. He never did succeed in hitting anyone. Could he possibly have been one of the civilians that we tended to ignore? We decided that he might have been hiding in and sniping from a wooden water tank on the roof of the building. Too bad for him, the TD fired an HE round at the water tank. No more water tank. No more getting fired upon from the rear. That was episode number five.

During the afternoon Sgt, Rice, a regular army man, was firing a 60-mm. mortar that we weren't supposed to have according to our unit TO&E. I have no idea how we had acquired this piece of equipment, but Rice was an excellent mortar gunner. He also seemed to be having a real good time.

We were way out on a limb on the extreme right flank of the 2nd Battalion and the only way reinforcements and supplies could reach us was over that road covered by enemy mortars. The 289th Infantry was supposed to be next to us on our right, but they were nowhere in site. I don't think that there were many experienced enemy infantrymen in the force opposing us. They responded to everything that we did as if they were very inexperienced and not like any of the enemy infantry that we had encountered when we first entered combat in December 1944.

9 April 1945, late in the day I received orders to return to the company CP after 10 PM that night. I guess that they realized that it was too dangerous to make the trip in daylight or maybe it was to keep the enemy from seeing any reduction in the defending force left in the town. Meantime a German sergeant had deserted and surrendered to the rifle platoon just after dark. This guy had almost seven years service and knew the score. I was told to bring him back with the 2nd Platoon. When we set out I reminded everyone to be as quiet as possible. The sergeant POW rode, sitting on the hood of my jeep. He even guided us around the many shell holes in the road. We finally got safely back to our company CP without drawing any enemy fire after we dropped the POW at the IPW Team's location. As far as I was able to find out no casualties were suffered by our force in Gelsenkirchen. The following day the 289th Infantry attacked and occupied Gelsenkirchen and the open area along our right flank.