

On December 7, 1940 (which was Sunday) I was sitting home reading the Sunday paper when it was announced over the radio that Pearl Harbor was bombed by the Japanese. At that time I was working in the General Electric Co. at Schenectady, NY in the searchlight and ordinance Division on a Fellows Gear Cutting Machine.

My number in the draft was one of the first ones but I was deferred because of the importance of the job I was on. After 3 years and one month the foreman told all of his men that the company couldn't defer us any longer. So on February 24, 1944 I was drafted into the Army. I preferred the Army as I had previous experience in the National Guard for 3 years. Only 3 men from Fulton County were inducted on that day and we went to Ft. Dix, NJ for a period of 10 days for orientation and shots.

I was 25 1/2 years old and married with one 7 month old daughter. I hated to leave my wife and daughter, but was drafted and it was necessary to go and fight for my country. I had one other daughter the year after I was discharged from the service.

My parents accepted the fact I was drafted into service. My father said he regretted not going into service in the first World War, instead he worked as a layout designer in the shipyard at Newport News, VA.

I was sent to Camp Walters Texas near Ft. Worth and Houston, Texas on March 5, 1944 for the basic training, this lasted for 17 weeks. During that time I was made acting Corporal because I had previous experience in the National Guard. It was at this camp I met Matt Oskawski from Utica, NY. I was the oldest man in our Company. Most of the fellows were 18 or 19 years old. Our routine was the same every day. Training was hard we started out with short marches with full pace and rifle. Many of the young men would fall by the way side but the Sergeant in charge of our training was tough, his age was 72 years old, he was brought out of retirement to whip the men into shape. This is what he did best. Most of us were over weight and soft. When he finished with all of us we were a well trained group of men. I just wished we could of all gone over sea together.

One of the boys in my squad got home sick and went AWOL back to his home in Tenn. His father, a captain in the Army in the First World War, brought him back. The Army punished him by making him dig a 6x6x6 deep hole with a table spoon. He did this in his spare time. As the weeks went by the marches became longer until we were doing 20 miles with full gear twice a week. At the end of the 17th week we were given a weekend pass, this is the first time the boys could get out of camp. The next week we received a 2 week furlough to go home and see our family.

On July 21, 1944 I had to report to Fort Meade camp, a Deportation camp for the European theater of operation. While in Camp Walters I applied for a Ranger training but was turned down because I was married and had one child.

On July 29, 1944 we boarded a ship at Hampton Roads, VA. We started North that night and joined a convoy going across the Atlantic Ocean, landing in Glasgow Scotland. We then boarded a train going to unidentified camp south of London, England. We stayed there about a week, than boarded an English Ship to cross the channel to the Omaha Beach August 13th. On the trip across the channel all the fellows got sick, probably Roast Pork we ate the night before for supper.

We landed in France and walked up the steep hill and the first thing we saw was a huge cemetery with thousands of white crosses. What a sight, quite impressive. After we

walked a few miles we boarded a truck and went inland 50 to 100 miles to a replacement Depot and waited for orders to join different divisions.

As we waited to be sent to the front we played cards (poker), football, baseball, we had a couple of hours of close order drill everyday. We also had to clean our rifle everyday. The men were all getting restless waiting to go to the Front. The fellows I trained with in Basic Training camp went in different ways after the 2 week furlough, only one (Matt Oskowski from Utica) stayed with me to the replacement camp. He went to the 80th Division and I went to the 35th Division after about 2 weeks. On August 30, 1944 we departed company and was assigned to those divisions.

One thing I didn't like was going into a unit not knowing a single man in the company. I didn't know my Sergeant, who was returning to the line after being wounded the month before. My Company was CO. F 134 Inf, 35 Division attached to Pattons 3rd Army. I joined the Company right after St. Lo (a town west of Nancy, France). The Battle of St. Lo was a hard fought one. The Airforce bombed the town flat and also killed many of the 3rd army soldiers. Our Division Liberated Nancy, France, very little gunfire or destruction of buildings.

As we were going thru the town we saw several women with their heads shaved and hanging from the street lights. Later we found out these women fraternized with the German soldiers. We went on thru Nancy to about one mile outside and was pin down by enemy fire. for about 12 hours, that night we had to dig our first slit trench as they shelled us all night. The next morning we moved up into the German trenches. The Sergeant said he didn't like the idea of being into their trenches.

We captured 3 Germans in the trenches and sent them back with the free French, who were fighting with us. They didn't take the prisoner back too far. We heard these short burst of gunfire several times and within 15 minutes they were back on the line with us.

Since the Germans started to pick us off one at a time the Sergeant raised his head and ordered all men to keep their heads down, just then he was shot in the head. Now we had no leader, didn't know where the rest of the Company was and we were all scared. We were all replacements in the outfit and didn't know what to do. Some of the Germans were in the trench with us. We found out after we decided to surrender to the Germans because of being in their trenches and they were picking us off one at a time. At this time I was wounded in the arm and leg we were taken prisoners on September 22, 1944.

The Germans took us (6 men) up to a Command post and interrogated us one at a time. We all said the same thing, name, rank and serial numbers. They knew more about us then we did. After several hours they took us to the rear by truck. That was my first experience of riding in a truck powered by wood chips. I guess gasoline was scarce in Germany.

About 20 miles back of the German lines we came across some of Pattons tanks disabled and the personnel burned to a crisp. We ended up in an old school house along with 18 other G.I.'s The guards fed us a bowl of soup. All nightlong the U.S. artillery bombarded us but thank heaven we came thru the night safely. The next day we got on the truck 24 G.I.'s and 2 guards. We must of driven about 100 miles still seeing Pattons tanks disabled along the side of the road also along side the road full size trees with explosives

They must of figured they were going to retreat soon. We ended up in a prisoner of war camp near Frankfort, Germany. I think it was Camp 12A. There we were interrogated and given dog tags I still have mine. We stayed there about a week an then was sent by train to a camp near Berlin, that camp was filled to capacity so we were sent to a camp 7A in Mooseburg. 10 Kilometers north of Munich, we stayed at this camp for 7 months.

We went into Munich every day and worked filling in holes or laying railroad track. During the month of November I went on a detail of 30 men and two guards to work and stay in Munich. I worked for a lady, we sold produce to small stores in Munich. Each day I would be dropped of at a railroad siding and meet up with 2 French slave labor. We would shovel potatoes in 100# sacks and delivery them by horse and wagon to the stores. We found out about 90% of the population was slave labor or prisoners of war. During the 30 days stay in Munich we became well acquainted with our guards and talked to them one on one. One day the guard in charge had to go home to where his mother and father lived. His home was bombed out and his parents home was completely destroyed but no one was injured in the bombing. He returned to our school house home and he was telling me all about the bombing. I asked him how he felt about the Americans for doing this to his village. He answered me by saying this is war. On Thanksgiving day, he asked me if the boys wanted some beer. I said yes. As none of us had tasted beer since August in England. We had to raise 10 marks to pay for the keg of beer. That night after work 2 of us and the sergeant took a wagon and went down a back alley and knocked on a door. A German woman opened it. The sergeant introduced us to her and told her what we wanted. She was glad to give us a keg of beer. We took it back to the school house and had a ball. We were sent back to camp on December 1st and another 30 men took our place. We went back to going into town every day and doing various jobs each day. Food in camp was bad. No breakfast and a bowl of cabbage soup for supper with a slice of saw dust bread. Yes bread made from saw dust and flour the bread was dated on the bottom some dated as far back as 1933.

During our work parties in Munich the American airforce would bomb the city trying to knock out the bridges that cross the railroad track. Munich is like St. Louis, the railroad came into town and went out the same way it came in. So there were several bridges over the tracks.

These bombings occurred everyday at noon and lasted till 1 PM or 1:30 PM that meant we went without Lunch, sometimes the prisoners were so hungry they would go thru garbage cans at nearby restaurants and stores.

One thing about going out to work is you could acquire food or clothing which we needed desperately. One day the Lord was with our work party the air raid sounded and the guard rushed us to a shelter nearest us, but it was full so he took us down the street 2 blocks and got in that shelter, after, the all clear was sounded we went past the air raid shelter we couldn't get into it and it took a direct hit and killed all persons in there. These air raids went on everyday. Starting in January 1945 we looked forward every week to getting a Red Cross package to be divided amount 7 men. The package was designed to feed 1 person for a week. What I remember of the contents of the package was Liver Paste, Spam, white crackers, Cigarettes, toilet paper, soap and other canned foods which I can't remember.

We were able to write home once a month and also received 1 letter a month. We were allowed packages from home, but only a few got thru to the prisoners because the guards would confiscate all packages with cigarettes in them. Cigarettes were just like money they could buy you anything even a way out of the country if you had enough of them. I remember one day coming back to camp after working in Munich the guard had 3 knapsacks full of white bread which they tried to sell to us for 20 cigarettes a loaf. The guards couldn't speak English but we could understand German. Some fellows carried more cigarettes than others because they didn't smoke. When the guard asked for 20 cigarettes for the bread I spoke up and said to all the men in the Box car not to pay the asking price, as they had to get rid of the bread before they got to camp. So the bidding started we offered 2 cigarettes, the guard dropped to 15 cigarettes, This went on for about an hour, then suddenly we were getting nearer to camp and the guard dropped to 10 cigarettes and one of the prisoners offered 6 cigarettes and they grabbed the bid. They sold all but 4 loaves which they said at 4 cigarettes per loaf I got 1 of those loaves of bread..

On Thanksgiving day we heard thru the underground, the Germans were launching an offensive against the Americans. Suddenly new prisoners were brought to our camp. We started to get over crowded. The food we were getting had to be divided among the new fellows. The new prisoners were hungry as their stomachs had not shrunk like ours had. It takes about 3 months for your stomach to shrink. It is a good thing we could get into town and work. One day we had to work at a prison, holding political prisoners, putting the walls back after it was bombed. The prisoners we saw there were very thin and poorly fed and clothed. We would give them cigarettes, which they enjoyed very much. As the winter went by we got colder, but life went on as usual, more prisoners were brought in finally they took in total about 50,000 prisoners of war in our camp 7A (Mooseburg). They had to move us older prisoners to another camp near St. Johanne (Mark Pongo) in Austria. We marched , it seemed forever probably was only 20 or 30 miles. Then got on a train in Box Cars and proceeded to our new camp. We were strafed by our planes several times. Nobody was hurt. Thanks to the engineer he would stop the train and the guards would let us out of the box cars and get into the gullies along side the railroad tracks. P38's would fly down so low you could see the Pilot in8 the plane.

We finally reached our camp, East of Strasbourg, Austria. This camp wasn't any better than the lat camp. We still went out to work on the tracks that were bombed out by our planes. These tracks ran thru the mountain in the valley.

During one work party we had an air raid the guard said there was no air raid shelter in the town and we had to go upon the side hill and sprad out. Get away from the dam and power plant. The bombers came thru the mountains pass at eye level. We could see the pilot in the cockpit. Those fly boys were good, a Red Cross train was in the station which was alongside the power plant and it wasn't hit, only the powerplant and dam.

It was getting near the end of the war around the 1st of May, Hitler ordered all prisoners of war to be shot. Our camp cammandant was from the old German school and he wouldn't obey the order thank goodness. We woke up a couple of days later and the camp was empty of all guards. The whole German army were retreating to the mountains.

to hide out. Most of the prisoners left camp and went on a rampage in town. We entered an army garrison, broke into a supply room filled with sugar, the fellows went crazy, they took their shoes and sock off, (what was left of them) and cut the 100lb bags open and walked thru the sugar. None of us had any sugar in the last 9 months. We filled our pockets full of sugar. We put some of the 100lb bags in the truck we stole along with a 50 caliber machine gun and a motorcycle and went back to camp. Everything was in chaos at the camp as no one was in charge.

The next day the 101st Airborne liberated us. They established some control in camp. We were soon returned to the American lines by truck and put into hospital tents. I happened to have pneumonia at that time. They fed us our first good meal, not too much, the medics said we would get sick. I weighed in at 140 lb. I lost 45 lbs. in 8 1/2 months I was a prisoner. We were trucked to Paris and was put up in a big department store there. We spent 3 days in Paris seeing the sights. The city was never bombed by our planes or artillery. The paymaster gave us some of our back pay so we could enjoy ourselves. From Paris we flew on a C47 to LeHavre a seaport on the English Channel and waited about 7 days to be shipped home. We landed in Newport News, Virginia and took a train to Fort Dix, New Jersey. We were integrated again by army intelligence officers and given a physical and a choice to go to Atlantic City or Lake Placid for 2 weeks with our wives. So I chose Lake Placid that included a 72 day furlough at home. I had a hard time adjusting to civilian life. I would have nightmares and one time my wife rubbed her foot against the wall and I thought it was the enemy. I almost choked her to death. That is when we bought twin beds. I started to drink too much but stopped the over drinking when I saw I was breaking up our marriage.

We went to Lake Placid by train and I was with all ex Prisoners of War and their wives. We had a wonderful vacation. and were rehabilitated. We had classes in the morning and were free to do things with our wives in the afternoon. The good times had to come to an end. We went home and I went on to Camp Shanks on the Hudson River about 40 miles north of New York City.

I spend the next 2 1/2 months receiving oversea soldiers that arrived by boat in New York City and taking them by train to Camp Shanks. Making sure they had a bunk to sleep and clothing as needed toilet articles and their first good steak dinner.

They were then reassigned to a different camp or Fort or Discharged thru Fort Dix. I was sent to Fort Dix about December 1, 1945 as I had 105 points and was discharged on December 7, 1945. I would have stayed into the service if I was a staff sergeant or higher but I was only a PFC and you couldn't support a family on a PFC salary. I returned home to my family, and under the GI Bill I studied the plumbing trade. I worked at the plumbing trade 34 years and then retired in September 1980. I was awarded the following medals. Good Conduct, European Theater of Operation, Purple Heart Prisoner of War, Expert Rifleman. This is my experience during the World War II era.

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When I as in High school I did not quite appreciate the full meaning of Veterans day. However, in 1943, at age 18, a country boy, from the small farming town of Hartford. I was ordered to report to Glens Falls for my physical and since the body was warm I was told to report to Albany on December 9, 1943 for induction into the Army. I was ordered to report back on December 30th. and after about a week at camp Upton we were shipped to Camp Blanding Florida for basic. After 13 weeks of learning how to say "YES SIR" and 3 additional weeks of clean up duty I was given a 10 day home leave. Little did I know that my life was about to endure a big change.

After my home leave I had reported back to Fort Meade Maryland and then shipped to Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia for overseas assignment. On July 1, 1944 we boarded the troop ship "CRYSTALBALL" and 15 days later, after many alerts, arrived in Naples, Italy. As a new recruit, I was assigned to guard an ammo dump, but with no live ammo for my gun. I guess they did not trust the new green recruits with live ammo.

However, in early August of 1944 OPERATION ANVIL was put together for the invasion of SOUTHERN FRANCE and while I had not yet been assigned to a regular unit, we were part of that operation. After 3 days at sea in some of the worst weather possible, on August 15, 1944 the action began with the 3rd infantry and several other divisions landing on the beaches of southern France. The trip from Naples was on LC.I.s' with the landing ramps down each side. I went ashore at night and I don't mind telling you that stepping off that gangplank into black water with a 40 pound pack, rifle and ammo was more scary than the sound of the battle from the beach.

Shortly after landing I was assigned to Company I, 30th. Regiment, 3rd. Division. Looking back I feel lucky to have had my Squad

leader and his brother as platoon Sergeant as they had served in all the action from the African thru the Italy campaigns and led us thru many difficult spots.

From the shore of Southern France to the Colmar pocket was a period when days, nights, and weeks all ran together. I remember that the food was mostly C rations in a can about the size of today's cat food cans. We were treated to a hot meal at Thanksgiving and Christmas at great risk to the mess crews bringing the meals to the front lines. In late December my company was relieved from front line duty for 3 days to bath and get new winter clothing. Up until then our helmets served as wash basins, etc. as depicted in Bill Mauldin's G I Joe cartoons. But after 3 days we were shipped back to the front lines.

How we managed to rest, eat, etc. during the continuing push thru France I do not know.

The Colmar region was where the Germans put up one of the most hard fought resistances of the war. In particular, Hill 616 where we would drive them off only to be driven off ourselves. This happened 3 times before we could hold the hill which overlooked their main escape route and our route to advance. I have no idea how many German and American soldiers died on that hill but I do know that frozen bodies were stacked up and used as shields because the ground was frozen and there was not time to prepare fox holes.

After securing hill 616 our unit moved forward and soon reached a small river on January 24, 1945 where a temporary bridge was built to allow us and support tanks to cross. My platoon led the way and got across but the tanks did not.

This was the day that I and 5 others from my platoon found ourselves out of ammo and decided to hide hoping that our support

would come thru. I and one other crawled into a haymow but were found and were taken prisoners. I can only speculate as to what happened to the others.

We were taken across the Rhine river as P.O.W.s and to Stammlager 5A. Here food was a ration of about 1/3 a loaf of bread (3 inches of 4x4 inch loaf) We learned that the bread had been made many years before and contained saw dust as filler. Some days we also received a cup of watery soup as a reward for working to repair roads which had been bombed.

On or about April 1st. we were packed into box cars and moved as our troops were advancing. During those 3 days we could hear our aircraft going over and prayed that they did not drop bombs on the train. After 3 days we were taken out and marched for long hours on the same short rations. Some days you carried some who could not walk and at other times you were helped. We knew what would happen to any who could not make it. During these marches we were given ten minute breaks and were ordered to sit in the ditches along the road. At times we found dandelions and even snails which we put into our pockets and ate later when they put us into barns or other building for the night.

On April 27th. 1945 at 7AM American Tanks opened fire on the village where we were with bullets ripping thru the barn we were in. Needless to say our guards took off and we came out waving anything we could. The next few minutes were a blur but within an hour we were being given food and drink. Two days later we were flown out in C47 hospital planes to Rheims France where we were treated and fed. Mostly liquid diets for about a month. I weighed in at 90 pounds when I arrived back in France.

On June 10, we were put on board the "Marine Robin" troop ship for the U.S. and arrived in New York on the 18th, after a day of processing, passes were issued for a 3 month medical leave and we

were on our way home. My folks had no idea that I was even in the states since they had no phone and the last word that they had was a letter I had written in march from the prison camp.

Communication then were not like today. After I left New York I traveled by train to Albany and Bus to Hudson Falls arriving there about midnight. I still had 15 miles to go, so I tried to hitch a ride. The first car that came by stopped but when 4 men jumped out and came toward me I was shook. However, they were four men from Hartford attending a meeting in Glens Falls and they took me home. Needless to say no one got much sleep that night.

After my 90 day Medical leave the Army sent me on a Holiday to California where I served out the rest of my time at Fort Ord.

After service I used the 20 – 40 club to learn a little about accounting and then spent the next 39 years at GE retiring 18 years ago.

In 1993 when the 50 anniversary of D day was being talked about I realized that my memory of the details of WWII was fading and when my wife asked what I would like for my birthday I said a History book on the Third Infantry would be nice.

And now for the rest of the story as Paul Harvey would say:

In reading the Day to day accounts of the 3rd, I found that the reason the tanks and our support did not get across that bridge was that the very first tank had sunk in the middle and stopped all the others. There is even a picture showing that bridge and tank.

I also found that I was listed among the missing in action in the official record book. This peaked my curiosity and as I continued to read I found a list of names of those who had been awarded the Bronze Star and there was my name. The next list was of the Silver Star recipients and once again my name was listed.

Upon learning about these some 50 years after the fact I contacted Congressman Solomon and with his help I now have not only the metals but also the official documentation for these awards.

And now you know the rest of the story.

Now after 60 years out of High school I have learned to appreciate Veterans Day. Thank you.