REMEMBRANCES

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CHRISTMAS 1999

Dan

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At Fay's suggestion, and for whatever other reasons there may be, I am going to write some of what I can remember of World War II, and my little part in it. It has been fifty plus years since I was in the army. I'm not sure much of this will be of interest to anyone, but it is for the kids to decide, as this is for them.

In December of 1941, I was a freshman at the University of Colorado, living in Baker Hall on the campus in Boulder, Colorado. On Sunday morning, December 6th. I had just returned to my room from taking a shower when it was announced on the radio that the Japanese were bombing Pearl Harbor. I was planning on getting ready to study for final examinations that were coming up in a few days, but that all changed. The door to my room was open and before long the room was full of other guys listening to the reports. Later, we all went over to Old Main where they had set up speakers outside, and we listened to the reports and to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's address to the nation and the declaration of war against the Japanese.

Over the next few days and weeks many of my friends and others that I knew enlisted in the Army and other branches of the service. I gave it a lot of thought, but I held off because I was going home at Christmas and I wanted to talk it over with Dad before deciding what to do.

Dad was principal of the Hopi Indian Boarding School at Keams Canyon, Arizona at that time, and he was also on the draft board for Navajo County, Arizona, as a representative of the northern part of the County, which was all the Indian country north of highway 66 in Navajo County.

When I got home for Christmas, Dad suggested that I not enlist, but stay in school as long as I could. I was studying premed, and he told me that if I wanted I could apply for a deferment for that reason. I tried to assure him I would not do that, that when my number came up I would go. Dad, however, insisted, that when my number started to come up, he would resign from the draft board so I could do what ever I wanted about the deferment without any problem about him being on the board.

I went back to school and stayed in school the rest of the school year. The summer of 1942 I worked for the Park Service on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon as a fire lookout, and that fall I went back to Boulder to school. About Thanksgiving time Dad wrote to me and told me he had resigned from the draft board and that if I was going to apply for a deferment I should do it right away, otherwise, I should plan to return home at Christmas time, because my draft number would come up early in January, 1943. I did not apply for a deferment. I went home with all my stuff when school was out for Christmas.

When I got home I found that Slim Halderman, the Indian Trader at Keams Canyon needed a truck driver and helper, so I went to work for him until I went into the service. While working for Slim I spent most of my time hauling flour and hay from the rail head in Holbrook, Arizona, to the trading post at Keams Canyon and the trading post at Indian Wells, which Slim also owned. It was fun and is a story of its own, but has nothing to do with my military experience.

I got my first notice from the Draft Board to appear for physical examination and testing at Phoenix on approximately January 15th, 1943. I passed all of that and was classified 1-A in the draft, and I was ordered to return to Phoenix to be sworn into the Army on January 25, 1943. After being sworn into the Army on January 25th, I was sent home to await my Orders to report to the Induction station. Early in February I received my Orders to report, at Army expense, by railroad, to Fort MacArthur, at San Pedro, California, for induction into the Army, leaving Holbrook, Arizona, on March 19, 1943.

Dad took me to Holbrook on March 19, 1943, and there was a group of 40 or so men waiting to go from all over that part of Northern Arizona. Why, I never knew, but I was picked to carry all the orders, transportation authority and meal requests for the entire group. It didn't take but a few minutes to figure out it was not going to be an easy job. Most of us in the group were very quiet, particularly the Indian boys, but there were six or eight railroad men, the first railroaders to be drafted from the Santa Fe Railroad, and they were drunk and they were mad. According to them, railroaders were supposed to be deferred.

When the train arrived the M.P.'s got off and met us and went over the Orders and took roll call. The train was a long one, many cars full of military personnel and many more cars full of civilian and other passengers. Someone had goofed and failed to notify the railroad dispatcher about our group.Since the train was full, they chased everybody out of the lounge car, locked up the booze and everything else, and put us in that car for the trip to California. Needless to say, the M.P's were there constantly and they had a Hell of a time with the railroaders. I stayed out of their way. We got to L.A. and on to San Pedro the next day, and I was relieved of my duties of being in charge of the group. I did have to file damage reports about the damage the railroaders did to the lounge car we traveled in, but that was all I had to do with that. Later, some of those railroad guys did, however, take me with them on a pass to L.A., because my report did not name them, or anyone, so they had not gotten into trouble because of the damage.

For the next week I was processed, given a haircut, issued uniforms and filled with shots, and my civilian clothes were mailed home. Because I had been a premed student, I applied to be sent to the Medical corps. I also put on my papers that I could type, and this came back to haunt me much later. After the processing, and before the assignments were made, we were given a forty eight hour pass to L.A., and as I mentioned above, the railroaders took me with them, and I got to see some of

L.A. When the assignments were made, I was sent to the Combat Engineers and assigned to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, for basic training. When I left San Pedro, there was an entire troop train of us going to Fort Leonard Wood.

Fort Leonard Wood was an old Fort, but it was growing by leaps and bounds, so when we arrived new barracks were being erected, and most of them were barely ready to be occupied, and the drill fields were graded off, but not ready for use. The first week we picked up rocks off of the new drill fields. Most of the group that arrived when I did, and most of all the other groups coming in about that time from all over the U.S. were largely made up of college students from colleges all over the U.S. For the next six weeks they tried to make soldiers and engineers out of us. I was never so tired, wet and muddy as I was during that period of time.

Just before the end of our basic training the Army started a new program, called Army Specialized Training Program,(A.S.T.P.). The plan was to send a person to college to study in fields that the Army needed, a few of which were Medicine, all areas, Languages, Engineering and several others. For those that qualified, and if they went all through the program, at the end that person would receive a commission in the Army. The tests to qualify were made available to every one to take if they wanted to. I, of course, applied, and I was allowed to take the first test, it was a general test, and if I passed it I would be sent to a testing center for further tests in the field selected or open for students at that time.

A couple of weeks after taking the first test, we were all out in the field training on various projects and building roads, bridges, buildings, storage areas,etc.It was raining like mad, and had been for a week or more, when they came out and assembled all of us, and informed us that if our name was called out we were to get our gear and head back into camp on the double. My name was called and I got my stuff and headed for camp. When we got back to camp we had to check our tools in, and then we were informed that those of us who were called out were the ones that had passed the first test, and we were heading for a testing center for further tests, and if we passed there,we would be shipped off to college. If we didn't pass, we would return to Ft. Leonard Wood to finish our basic training and go on from there. We were then told to get all our clothes and uniforms clean and packed, we were shipping out at 6 p.m. that day. By the time I found all this out, it was 2 p.m., and I had one dry class "A" uniform that was clean, and that was what I was going to wear, and everything else I had was mud soaked and dirty. I washed all my clothes in the shower room, squeezed what water I could out of them, and packed them wet in my duffel bag.

We were assembled at the railroad spur that evening about 6 p.m. and there were hundreds of us assembled there, and we were given a paper sack with a couple of sandwiches and an apple for our dinner. (As I recall, the sandwiches were jam

sandwiches, two pieces of bread jammed together.) We were then called out,one at a time and put on various railroad cars. Sometime in the middle of the night the various cars were split off and attached to troop trains, going we knew not where.

There were two cars of us on the train I was hooked to, and sometime the next night we were cut loose and left sitting on a siding. About daylight we were ordered off the train and loaded on buses and trucks and taken to the Field House at the University of Wyoming in Laramie, Wyoming. As was to happen to me on several occasions in the Army, we arrived at the University of Wyoming before they were ready for us, so that day and night we sat around, and slept, on the floor of the Field House, but we were able to spread our stuff out and let it dry, which was nice, and badly needed, and we were also fed a nice hot meal.

For the next two weeks those of us in that first group worked and helped set up the bunks and prepare the drill fields, and build an obstacle course and other things that were needed for the bulk of the testees when they arrived.

About a week after that, when the place was jammed full of guys to be tested, they started giving us our tests in the various fields we had chosen. The rules were, as I have already stated, if you passed your test, you would be shipped to a college to begin your course of study at whatever level you had tested out to, provided that field was set up and ready to receive students. If you failed your test, you went back to where you came from. If you passed, and your field wasn't open yet, you could test for another field, or go back to your old camp if you wanted to.

After I took my tests, I sat around and waited for a week before my name was called out, along with a big group of other fellows, and were handed out test results and directed to wait. I had passed the premed test and qualified for the 3rd year of premed, and I was happy about that.

When everybody had their test results and the ones that had not passed were sent to get ready to return where they came from, they told the rest of us that the premed and med school, in fact all the medical related, programs were not ready to go, and it would be several months before they were ready, so, we could go back to our old camps, or try for some other field. I decided to try engineering. I figured it was the only chance I had, because I didn't want to go back to Ft. Leonard Wood, if I could prevent it.

I took the engineering test, and in due course I was called out and given my slip with the results. I passed, qualified as a first quarter freshman. After that, along with about fifty other guys, I loaded on a rail car, we were hooked on the back of a troop train, and we were shipped to Washington and Jefferson College, at Washington, Pennsylvania, which is about thirty miles south of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The troop train we were hooked to was a train of W.A.C. recruits heading for basic training, so we had M.P.'s in our two cars constantly to keep us from getting into the W.A.C. cars. We were fed on the train, and all we could do the rest of the time was watch out the windows and

sleep.

When we arrived at Pittsburgh, about noon on the third day out of Wyoming, the train M.P.'s reported our presence to the M.P.'s in the railroad station while our cars were disconnected from the train and we were shoved onto a siding. Sometime after that a couple of M.P.'s showed up and wanted to know what we were doing there. A fellow by the name of Horn was our leader and I had been appointed his assistant, so the two of us were taken to the railroad station while they sorted the deal out, another army goof up, no one knew we were coming. They were going to make us stay on that rail car until somebody showed up that knew something about the deal, but Horn finally got one of the officers to listen to him and get the message, we had not eaten since morning, the restrooms on the rail car were locked because we were in the railroad yards, and besides, the guys had not been off the train for three days. The M.P.'s then let all of us off the rail car and allowed us to come into the station and use the restrooms and walk around one end of the station. The M.P. in charge of the detail then called some where and a Major showed up in about an hour.

At first the Major seemed mad at us, but finally, with Horn and I sitting in the M.P. office with him, he made contact with somebody that must have had something to do with the situation, because he said, over the phone, "what do you mean you can't do anything until tomorrow? These men have not eaten, they've been on a train for three days without rest or able to clean up, they have no blankets, and they can't spend the night in this railroad station! You had better get them some food damn quick and a place for them to stay or you and your whole outfit is going on report!"

It wasn't too long after that that the Red Cross showed up with coffee and doughnuts, and then a First Lieutenant in a jeep arrived. He was at a loss to know what to do, but he was apparently the person the Major had been talking to, because after a conference with the Major and the M.P.'s, the Lt. left to find someplace for us to stay, and we were sent to get our stuff off the railroad cars we had come in on.

By late afternoon the Lt. was back, he had found a hotel we could stay in, and we marched about ten blocks, carrying our duffel bag and other gear, to the hotel, escorted by the M.P.'s so we couldn't escape. The hotel wasn't all that great, but we did get showers and we were allowed to go downstairs to the dining room where we were fed, and then back to our rooms. There were M.P.'s on the floors and in the lobby to keep us in the hotel.

About noon the next day trucks arrived and hauled us all down to Washington, Pa. and to the college of Washington and Jefferson, where we were unloaded in the middle of the football field.

Washington and Jefferson College was a small, all male college, and they had very few, if any students at that point. They did have about one hundred Army Administration students training there but that was about all. The Army was supposed

to take the school over, but had not done so yet, so there was another problem. According to everybody there, the Army wasn't due to be there for another thirty days, so a big scramble started to see what they were going to do with us. The Lt. that had us under his control marched us about four blocks to the George Washington Hotel, a very nice place, and we were fed an early dinner meal, which was very welcome. After dinner we marched back to the college football field. A truck had arrived loaded with pup tents and sleeping bags, which were issued to us on the spot and we proceeded to set up the tents and get ready to spend the night camped in the middle of the field.

While we were eating a couple of other Lieutenants and a couple of Sergeants had arrived, and they were put in charge of us to get things going. Also, a bunch of people from the town showed up and brought us cookies, coffee and pop, which was very welcome`

Starting the next day, we spent the next thirty days drilling, helping move furniture out of fraternity and boarding houses the army took over, and setting up bunks and moving army furniture and supplies in. There was going to be eight hundred A.S.T.P. students there at the end of the thirty days. Although we had to be there most of the time, we also had free time in the evenings, unless we were on duty as a charge of quarters or what ever, and when we had free time we could go around the town since the City Limits was also our post limits, so we were not entirely like prisoners any more.

The A.S.T.P. program was set up to get a student through college with a bachelor's degree in eighteen months, at which time a limited number would go on for advanced degrees, and the rest would receive a commission and be assigned to other units in the Army, a great plan, if it worked. If you didn't make the grade you were shipped out where ever the army decided to send you.

By September 1st all the students were present and we started school. We marched in formation to and from class and to and from the campus to the George Washington Hotel where we ate. We had a couple of hours to ourselves after school and after supper, then we had required study hall in our quarters or in the library every night until 9:30 p.m. Lights out and bed check was at 10 p.m. We had weekends off, except the times they decided we needed to do some drilling, or some other training. Everybody had to take his turn as charge of quarters, at night and on weekends, but that wasn't too bad, because there were so many of us it didn't happen that often. We also got a seven day leave between quarters. I went home between one quarter and went to Oklahoma to visit Bing once and to Providence, Rhode Island, to visit Burt and Jean once.(Burt was in the Sea Bees and stationed in Providence at that time).

I was at Washington and Jefferson College nine months, and had finished my sophomore year, when the Army abolished the entire A.S.T.P. program and we were all shipped to various outfits across the country. About half of us from Washington and Jefferson were sent to the 84th Infantry Division at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, which was a few miles South of Alexandra, Louisiana.

The 84th Division had been trained at Camp Howze, Texas, along with the 83rd Division, and both outfits were ready to go overseas, however, because of the heavy losses being sustained in North Africa and Italy and in the South Pacific, both outfits had been used as replacement reserves and depleted to just about bare bone, and were being brought back up to strength to start training all over again.The 84th had been sent to Camp Claiborne and the 83rd to a camp on the other side of Alexandra for that purpose and that is when we were assigned to the 84th.

Camp Claiborne was divided in two parts. The North end was the home of a colored Army supply division, and the South end had been a German Prisoner of War Camp. The South end, the P.O.W. camp, was mostly tar paper shacks, and had been condemned as a P.O.W. compound and camp by the Red Cross, so a new P.O.W. compound and camp was built, (a nice brick one as a matter of fact), and we got the tar paper shacks as our barracks.

I was assigned to the Second Squad, Second Platoon, Company 'G' 335th Infantry Regiment, 84th Infantry Division. The Division was originally known as the Lincoln Division, and also was known as the Rail Splitter Division.

The next several months were tough, long days and nights of training, and most of it was jungle type training, done in the swamps of Louisiana, so we were sure we were going to the South Pacific when we got done but, thank heavens , we were wrong.

Finally, I had enough time in to get a furlough, and like a fool, I didn't go home, but went instead to Salt Lake City, Utah, to visit people I had gone to high school with. Later I wished I had gone to Arizona to spend the time with Dad.

At the end of my furlough, when I got back on the train in Salt Lake City, heading back to Camp Claiborne, going through Denver, I was nailed by the M.P.'s, and although I still had two days left on my furlough,(which I planned on spending in Fort Worth, Texas, with an old aunt, my mother's sister, who lived there), the M.P.'s told me I was to go straight back to Camp Claiborne, the 84th Division had been alerted for shipment and all furloughs and leaves were canceled. I had to change trains in Denver, but I was not allowed to leave the station. Because of train delays, the train to Texas was late leaving Denver, so when I got to Ft. Worth, where I had to change trains again, the train to Louisiana had already left, and there was no other train for eight hours going the direction I had to go. The M.P.'s let me contact my Aunt, and she came to the station, and the M.P.'s allowed me to go to her home for a couple hours while I was waiting for the train.

It was just about noon when I left Ft. Worth, the train was full and I had to stand between the cars all of the way to Alexandria. I got to Alexandria at mid-night, and by the time I got to Claiborne it was about 3 a.m. I was ready to drop when I walked into the Company area and into the first Sergeant's office. I knew there would be

somebody in the office, but I didn't expect to see the first Sergeant. Our first Sergeant was old army, and his name was Brown, a tough old man, but he was good and he was fair. Sgt. Brown took one look at me and said,"Meyers, you look like you are about to drop, so let me make a suggestion to you, but first let me tell you something you need to know. We are leaving at 10 this morning for ten days' training in the swamps under battle conditions. The men will be eating rations and not from the field kitchens, however, the kitchens have to go to the field too, and I need a couple of guys on K.P. while we are in the field, so I suggest you volunteer for K.P., then go to your bunk, go get a shower, put your gear away and get your field gear ready to go to the field. After we get out there, and the kitchens are set up, you can sleep for the next ten days if you want too."

I took his word for it and volunteered for K.P., and I went to get ready. It worked just as Brown said it would. The Company marched out, as if going to battle, and I helped get the kitchen trucks loaded and ready, and then I got to ride to the bivouac area. I helped set up the field kitchens and the cooks prepared the meal for the cook staff and other support people, the First Sgt., Officer of the Day and a couple of other people and I'm not sure who else. We had "T" bone steaks and all the trimmings and it was great. I had to help clean up, but that was easy, and I loafed the rest of the day. We ate like kings, eggs, ham, steaks and whatever we wanted. There was a good supply of beer available at night. I did have to take my turn at guard duty, but that was usual.

I found out that what was going on was that we were in a waiting period so they could bring railroad cars and freight trains into Camp Claiborne so we could start loading everything for going overseas. It was done this way to try and fool the spies as to what was happening.

The second day out I developed a bad toothache right in the center of my lower jaw. Sarge put me on sick call and I went back to camp on the jeep. The dentist messed around and couldn't find anything wrong, and sent me back with a couple of pills. When I got back out to our camp I told Sarge about it and told him the pain was driving me nuts, so he sent me in again the next morning, hoping I'd get a different dentist, but no such luck, I got the same one. That time he, the dentist, wasted very little time on me and told me I was "gold bricking" and if I came in again he'd have me thrown in the guard house. When I got back out to the field, I reported to Sarge and he immediately put me on sick call for the next day. I told Sarge I did not want to be thrown in the guard house, and he said, "you won't be, I'm going in with you". The next morning Sarge did go in with me, and when I was called, I had the same dentist, who by the way was a captain. The minute he saw me he started yelling for an M.P., and Sarge walked in. Sarge and the captain had a few words and then Sarge said, "this man is not a gold brick, and if he says he has a toothache, he has a toothache, and you had better damn sure find it, or I'll get you out of this Division and out carrying a shovel instead of playing with a drill". Sarge stayed in the room while they X-rayed my teeth, and they found I had an impacted wisdom tooth, it was growing sideways in my jaw, causing pressure on my front teeth. The dentist apologized to me and to Sarge and

took the tooth out. I was laid up for another day, but the toothache was gone.

When the time was up, we went back into Camp Claiborne. They started in with shots, all kinds of shots, then all our new uniforms and equipment were issued to us and everything had to be marked, new patches had to be sewed on our uniforms and our names put on all our stuff. It was daylight to dark work. Our new weapons came packed in grease and we had to get them cleaned and then fired, and that took some time.During all this time we were restricted to our company area, except after chow at night we could go to the P.X., which was just across the street from our company area.Our mail was also censored during this period. We couldn't write and tell anyone what was going on or that we were about to ship out.

We were also doing a lot of close order drilling and in Company formations, practicing for the big full Division parade and review, which was to take place the following week, before a review panel of high ranking generals from Corps and Army Headquarters. One of the Generals was General Westmoreland, who was out of Washington at that time. General Westmoreland showed up a couple or three days early to inspect the entire Camp, so during the day they marched us out to the swamps to play games and to get us out of the inspection teams' way, and we would come back into camp about dark. The Officers and the top Non-commissioned Officers had to remain in camp to be available to escort the inspection team through the Company area when they arrived. However, one afternoon, just before dark, when they thought General Westmoreland was done for the day, the Captain, the Executive officer, the First Sergeant, and the Supply Sergeant, were relaxing in the Company office, Sgt. Brown was at his desk with a beer and the others were just standing around, so we were told, when General Westmoreland walked in, and no one saw him until he was already in the office, and no one was at "attention". That proved to be a disaster and a big mistake, and our Company was assigned to permanent K.P. for the entire trip on whatever ship we went overseas on.

The big review was had, fifteen thousand of us in the hot Louisiana sun. The next day we were supposed to start loading all our gear onto freight trains and then ourselves on troop trains to go every which way and finally end up at the P.O.E. for overseas shipment. I guess some of the outfit did get started loading before we received a stop order a couple of days later, but our Company had not started yet. We were ordered to stand by for another Division parade and delay, but no one knew why. Everybody that had loaded out were brought back and a couple of days later we had another Division parade and review before our own General, General Bolling, and his staff. At that time they read us two telegrams. The first one was from General MacArthur, and it stated that he would not take any more troops trained in southern Texas or in Louisiana, because they were already worn out from the heat. The second telegram was from General Eisenhower and stated that all troops coming to Europe were to be trained for glider flight.

We were put back to turning in all our clothes and uniforms and getting new ones

issued. This time they were mostly wool uniforms, overcoats, field jackets, heavier sleeping bags and blankets, all of which had to be marked, new patches put on and all of the rest of that stuff. After all that we went back out in the swamps for two weeks of war games, and when we came back into camp, they had turned Claiborne into a big air strip, with mock-up gliders all around the field and they started teaching us to load everything on a glider, tie it down and still have room for us to ride. For the next couple of weeks the training was around the clock, non-stop except for brief periods of sleep and for meals. By the time we finished the glider training we were worn out. A selected few from each company actually had to load a glider and go for a glider ride, I was lucky, I missed that part of it!

Finally we were ready again, and began the loading process, inspections, another round of shots, and taking the shoulder patches off all our uniforms, and getting paid for the last time before leaving the U.S. and finally the actual boarding of the troop trains.

During all of this we were confined to Camp Claiborne and all our mail, in coming and out going was censored. I might add, also, that back when the outfit was first alerted, we were assigned an A.P.O. number, and that was our address.

The train I was on pulled out and I have no idea where all we went. I do know we saw most of the South and as far west as Nebraska, It took eight days for us to get to the Port of Embarkation (P.O.E.) at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, from Louisiana.

After arriving at Camp Kilmer and after unloading and being assigned barracks, the first order of business was to clean our weapons, sew shoulder patches on our uniforms and have an inspection. The next three or four days were full of overseas orientations, more shots, physical examinations, drilling, and, not the least of it, being fed good, hot food, the likes of which we hadn't seen for the entire period of getting ready to leave Camp Claiborne.

There were a few days left after we were done with our orientations and all the required stuff before we were to ship out, and we were allowed a pass to go to New York City or to Philadelphia, both an hour by train from Camp Kilmer. I went to New York and just looked around, afraid I would get lost, so I didn't get too far from the railroad station. The next day after my pass to New York City we got slammed with, and by, a hurricane. What a spooky deal that was, water about two feet deep and the barracks shaking like mad, and I had never seen rain fall that hard in my life. By the time the hurricane was over, we were alerted again and restricted to Camp. We had to remove all our patches and pack our gear to load on a ship for overseas, which we were ready to do.

We loaded on a train and were taken to Pier 57 in New York, and spent the next twenty four hours getting loaded on a ship. Five thousand of us were loaded on the Sterling Castle, a very old passenger ship. It was a British ship with a Dutch Crew.

We were packed into that boat like a bunch of rats, barely room to walk between the bunks, and as soon as we were on board our Company began our K.P. duties. The troops were fed twice a day, and it took a lot of work to feed five thousand men, get cleaned up and do it again twice a day.

When they pulled us away from the pier, I was on deck and got to watch it happen, and we started down the river to join a convoy, past the Statute of Liberty, which I had never seen before, and I was impressed, then the fog moved in and you couldn't see a thing. Several hours later there was a large thud and a bump and all the alarms went off and the ship came to a halt. It was reported that we had rammed a tanker ship and would have to be towed back to our pier for repairs or to load on another ship. We were towed back to pier 57 by tug boats, and we unloaded for transport back to Camp Kilmer. Since Co. G was the K.P. company, we had to clean the ship before we could unload, so we were the last troops off.

Since we were all cleared for overseas shipment, when we got back to Kilmer all we had to do was resew our patches on all our uniforms, and then we could get a two day pass, either to New York City or to Philadelphia. The only problem was that most of us were about broke. There was a guy in our Company who had been a professional gambler before he joined the army, so he got a bunch of us together and made a deal, if we would chip in and get a pot together, he would take it and go to another outfit where new troops had just come in and who had been paid before they arrived and try to get us enough money to go on pass. I had five dollars that I chipped in and the others put in various amounts, and he took off. We didn't see him for two days, but when he came back he was worn out, he hadn't slept for two days, but he had money in every pocket of his uniform. He pulled the money out and piled it on his bunk, told us to divide it up, giving him one share, and he went in, took a shower and came back and crawled into his bunk and went to sleep. I ended up with enough money to go on a pass and have some money left.

One of my buddies, named John Lambert ,was from North Philadelphia, and his girl friend, who was Polish, had a sister who was getting married. John invited me and another buddy, named Dick Siessenup, to go home with him, and take in part of the wedding celebration, which lasted seven days and nights. Siessenup and I went with Lambert to his home, we arrived in the late afternoon. The celebration had been going on a couple of days then, and Lambert led us off to join in. We went from house to house in the entire neighborhood, there was music, food and drinks at every house, and there was a little band that went with the bridal party from place to place. How they could do it for seven days and nights I don't know, but I do know I had a great time for two days before going back to Kilmer, and all it cost me was a train ticket to Philadelphia and back to Kilmer.

We were at Kilmer two weeks and then we shipped out again, right back to pier 57 and the Sterling Castle, which had been repaired, and we loaded again. When the time came we were towed out and started down the river. This time, however, the weather

was clear, and we got to watch it all, and we joined a very large convoy of ships, troop ships and freighters, and, we were under way. It took us twenty one days to cross, but since my company was on K.P. we spent most of our day below decks. We were, however, able to be above decks for a couple or three hours a day, so we got to see some of what went on. The convoy was spread out as far as you could see in every direction, and patrol ships were every place. During the crossing the convoy was attacked at least twice by German U-boats, one of which the patrol boats got with a depth charge, and one freighter in the convoy was sunk.

Because of the salt water, we had to clean our weapons every day to keep the rust out. I was second gunner on our B.A.R. (Browning Automatic Rifle) team, so I had my M-1 rifle and also had to help with the B.A.R.. The B.A.R. had a bi-pod on the end of the barrel that was kept in place by a flash hider, and the bi-pod rotated freely. When you ran with the B.A.R. the bi-pod would go around and around, and if you weren't careful it would catch on a weed or a branch or the ground and that could send you flying through the air. The first gunner of my team was named Howard Armstrong, and he and I decided that the bi-pod would be better off in the bottom of the ocean, so one evening as we were cleaning the gun, and the sea was running quite heavy with big waves and the ship was rolling from side to side, the bi-pod slid across the deck and over the side. We, of course, tried to catch it, since there was an officer on deck, but we just couldn't get to it in time and we lost it overboard.

The crew of the Sterling Castle was mostly Dutch, but the cook was English, and the baker was Dutch. The food was not very good for the most part, mostly boiled meat and stews. At the morning meal, however, we always had hard boiled eggs and some kind of meat and bread. They brought the eggs up by the case from the hold every day. How long they had been boiled I have no idea, but at least you could eat them. The coffee was terrible, it was half tea and half coffee. The bread was different, it was baked daily in big loaves, and they were good, they also had jam in gallon cans. Since we were on K.P. we would stash several loaves of bread, a can of jam and a bunch of us would eat that after we finished cleaning up at the end of a meal, in fact that is about all I lived on going overseas on that ship.

We docked at Liverpool, England twenty one days after we left New York and began the unloading process. We marched from the docks to the railroad depot and boarded trains and went across England, mostly at night, to some place south of London, and from there by army trucks to a large apple orchard about two miles from a village named Stockbridge. There were canvas covered buildings in the apple orchard and those were our barracks. We were issued a mattress ticking and taken to a large stack of corn stalks, which we shoved into the ticking and that was our mattress for our bunks.

We spent two weeks in that apple orchard before we shipped out again. We got paid in English money, which we didn't know a thing about, so we had a lot of poker games not knowing what we bet. I was lucky and ended up with a big stack of pound notes

which I found out later were worth four dollars each.

After a few days they began giving 48 hour passes to go to London. Lambert, Siessenop and I got a pass, so we went to London together to see what we could see.Most of what I remember about London were the bombed out buildings and the sand bag tunnels leading from the streets into the pubs. The night we arrived in London we ate a meal at the restaurant near the Red Cross shelter where we were staying, and we had boiled beef and vegetables. It was very plain and tasteless as far as we were concerned. Later we went to a pub.Because of all the troops in London from all over the free world, the pubs had large tables with benches along each side, crowded in just as tight as they could get them in. We got our beer and found a bench we could get on across from some soldiers who were wearing a hat like an American cowboy hat;with one side of the brim turned up. We didn't know where they were from, but they talked English, with a British ascent. After we sat down one of them asked us how long we had been in England, and we told them we had just arrived, so they wanted to know how we liked it so far. Siessenop replied that we hadn't seen much of it so we really didn't know how we liked it, then he said,"one thing we've found out is that you Limeys are lousy cooks", Well this guy across from us with the funny hat stood up, and he was huge, and he reached across the table and grabbed Siessenop by the front of his shirt and stood him up, and said,"I'm an Aussie, and don't call me a Limey", and with that he pushed Siessenop back and turned loose. Siessenop went back against the table behind us with such force that the table tipped over, scattering soldiers and beer every place. Whistles and bells began to blow and a big fight started, so Lambert and I grabbed Siessenop and pulled him out of it, and we crawled under everybody to the door and up the tunnel and to the street, just as the M.P.'s and cops began to pour down the tunnel. When we got to the street we took off at a dead run and got out of there before they could stop us, but we learned to keep our mouths shut. We spent the rest of that night going from pub to pub, and finally we went back to the Red Cross shelter and to bed.

The next day we spent most of the time sight seeing and riding the London subways, which they called the "tubes". The subway platforms were on different levels, depending on where you wanted to go, and the platforms were also used as bomb shelters when there were air raids and bombing going on. We went to Picaddilly Circus, a large section of London, and the area where at night all the G.I.'s went to pick up women, but we were there during the day, and we saw a lot of bomb damage, whole blocks bombed out. We also went to Westminster Abbey and we got to see the changing of the guard and all the pomp and ceremony that went with that. Again that night we went pub hopping, and we also went to a party at the U.S.O. Club. We had a great time but it was time to go back to camp, so that ended our visit to London.

When we shipped overseas we were one of the first outfits to be issued the army's new combat boots instead of leggings. The combat boots were somewhat like the paratroopers boots, worn by the Paratroopers, except instead of lacing all the way up, the combat boots had a leather wrap around that was buckled by two straps. We found

out that there was a shortage of paratroopers boots, and the Paratroopers were not happy that we had the combat boots. Not far from where we were camped, a couple of miles as I remember, was a small air field, and there were a bunch of Paratroopers stationed there, and we ran into some of them in the village of Stockbridge one night, and they warned us that if they caught us in town again they were going to take our boots. I didn't think anything of the threat, but a couple of the guys reported it to the First Sergeant, and an order came down the next day to the effect that if anything happened where any of us lost our boots, we were to report it so the matter could be taken care of. Well, sure enough, a couple of days later some of the guys were in Stockbridge and got jumped by some Paratroopers and in the end they got beat up and they lost their boots at the same time, and had to walk the two miles back to camp barefooted.We were told that the matter was taken up through the chain of command, and the paratroopers thought it was a big joke, and were not going to do anything about it. I'm not sure who planned the next little operation, but rumor had it that it was our Captain, but any way, a couple of nights later a couple of trucks came into our camp, right down to our company area, and we were all urged to get on the trucks for a little trip to Stockbridge. The trucks were packed full when they left camp. When we got to Stockbridge, the officer in charge told us that the plan was we would move through town going into every bar and pub, and if we found any paratroopers we were to yell and everybody would get in on the act and take their boots away from them. Well, the town was only two streets wide and four or five blocks long, but there were plenty of pubs. By the time we got to the other side of town, we had collected eight or ten pair of boots. The trucks were waiting for us when we got on the other side of town, so we loaded on the trucks and we went back to camp. There was quite a stink about that deal, and I was told that the Captain was reprimanded because of it, but in any event, we had no more trouble with the Paratroopers. The rest of the time we spent there, and before that also, we had all kinds of lectures and training on how to conduct ourselves in battle, around any civilians we might have contact with and about what to do if we got captured, giving only our name, rank and serial number, and nothing more. We also got to write letters, but of course we couldn't tell anything that would give a clue of where we were. Finally, the orders came down to get ready to move out, and we got all packed up and we were trucked to the railroad loading area and loaded on trains and were taken to Southampton, England. We had to carry a full field pack, containing a change of clothes, our shelter half, mess kit and personal items, with our sleeping bag and extra blanket. The rest of our gear and clothes were packed in our duffel bags, which were taken to the train on a truck, but when we got to the train we had to find our duffel bag and carry it with our pack onto the train, so it was mighty crowded. When we got to Southampton we had to carry our duffel bag and pack to the docks, which was a distance of a mile or so, and it was a heck of a chore. We, of course, also had our weapons, gas masks, trenching tools, and ammunition belts to carry, so we were well loaded.

After we got to the dock we had to sit and stand around for a long time-as I remember, several hours-before we started loading onto a troop transport ship, which was a converted passenger ship of some kind. We carried our duffel bags and packs on

board, dropped our duffel bags on the top deck and proceeded to what had been a large dining room, now fitted with rope hammocks for bunks and that is where we were to sleep. It was the end of October or the the first part of November, and it was getting very cold outside. After we were loaded, the ship left the dock, but after a short time we stopped, and we stayed stopped well into the night, but along about daylight we started again, and joined a convoy to cross the English channel.Going across all we could see were ships of all kinds with troops and supplies, but later we were able to see the coast of France. Our ship went into a harbor formed and lined by sunken ships of all kinds, and we dropped anchor, and waited for the landing crafts to come along side to take us on in. We waited several hours before the landing craft, a L.C.T.(Landing Craft, Troops) came along side. It was a flat bottomed craft with a square front end, which dropped open when it was time to get off.They put a large net over the side, and we had to go down that, like a ladder, carrying our duffel bags, packs, weapons and all, what a job, but we finally made it., When the L.C.T. hit the beach, the front opened and we waded ashore, onto Omaha beach. Once on the beach we dropped our duffel bags, where they were loaded onto a truck to be taken to our bivouac area. The beach was still covered with bombed out tanks, trucks, guns and all kinds of equipment, even though it had been five months since the invasion of France. Once on the beach our company was formed up and we started the hike to our bivouac area. We hiked along the beach for a ways then up a steep road to the top of the cliffs above the beach, the cliffs were about five hundred feet above the beach. On both sides of the road it was posted that the fields were still covered with land mines, and to stay on the roads. After we got to the top of the cliffs, we hiked past a huge cemetery, where most of the dead from the invasion were buried. It was raining, the road was wet and muddy, we were soaked, but that was war, as they said. We stopped at least once for a break, and to eat some of our rations, and then we moved on. Our bivouac area was ten miles from the beach, and by the time we got there we were packed with mud, soaking wet, cold and not in very good spirits. Our bivouac area was a farmer's field, surrounded by hedge rows, which they told us were still mined and to stay out of them, which I did. We got our pup tents pitched and then went to find our duffel bags, to get our over coats and some dry clothes. Our kitchen truck had been in an accident we were told, and it did not arrive that night so we had to eat what rations we had with us, which we ate cold. The next day one of the lieutenants went back some place and got us more rations, which we lived on until the kitchen truck arrived, which I believe was later that second day. As I recall we spent a couple of days in that field. The rain let up for a while, so we were able to dry out some of our gear a bit. We also had a few hot meals, which helped us all, but I had decided that I had seen all of Europe that I wanted to see, but there was no way to get away so I had to stick it out.

We still had the usual duties to do, that is guard duty at night around our company area, and some K.P., but I only had that once while we were there.

A day or so later the order came down to start packing and get ready to go, so we repacked our duffel bags and our packs and got ready to move on. It began to rain

again and we took our duffel bags to a loading area, and they were loaded on our trucks. Before daylight the next morning we got ready, had breakfast, and began loading on the trucks. Our duffel bags were piled in the middle of the trucks, and we had to sit on the seats around the sides and several men had to ride on top of the duffel bags. The rain was coming down in sheets by this time and it was very cold. We all wore as much as we could get on, including field jackets, overcoats, rain coats and of course our helmets, and we had our packs on our backs. We were packed on those trucks tight and we couldn't even move our feet. The trucks had no tops on them so we had no protection from the rain or the wind, and we darn near froze to death. The convoy of trucks, the Red Ball Express, was so long you couldn't see either end of it. We passed through a lot of wrecked towns and villages and past a lot of ruined equipment of all kinds. That first day we passed through the ruins of St.Lo, which was one of the major battles of the war. That night we spent in another field and it was very cold and wet. The next day was another very wet, cold day. That day we went through Versailles, and then through Paris, at about fifty miles an hour, but we did get to see, at some distance, the Eiffel Tower, and some of the shops along the way, and then we went past a very large airport. That evening, when we stopped for the night, it was raining hard and the area where we were to camp was nothing but a sea of mud about a foot deep. Trying to pitch our tents was not easy, and when we did we ate cold rations, took off our boots and tried to dry our feet, and got into our sleeping bags to get warm and get what sleep we could.

As I recall, we didn't move on the next day, and it stopped raining and the sun came out, so we were able to get somewhat dried out. The kitchen truck arrived and set up, and we had three hot meals and they were good.

A couple of days later we moved up again. It was very cold that morning and we went through some more of France and some of Germany. Late in the afternoon it began to snow and was bitterly cold. It was late that night when we arrived at our area in a driving cold rain. Our area was in some woods and there was a battery of field artillery right beside us, About the time we started to try and put up our shelters a terrific artillery barrage went out from the battery near us and it scared us all half to death. Another problem was that we had to get our duffel bag off the truck and carry it (or drag it) through the mud to our area, and the mud was over the tops of our boots. We stayed there several days and during that time we had a talk by the commanding general of the 30th Infantry Division about what we could expect. We found out we would be in support of the 30th Division for a time before going out on our own.

When we left there, we hiked, carrying full field packs and our weapons, but not our duffel bag. After hiking several miles we arrived at a small town or village. That night we slept in houses and had fires in the stoves in the houses and stayed warm. The next day we took over the 30th Division's positions and we also took a couple of prisoners. We found out that the farm houses in this little village had a lot of chickens and rabbits, so we killed some of them, cooked them and had a feast that night. The next day we marched several very hard miles in a light rain to another little town or

village and again stayed in buildings. We found a lot of canned fruits and jams in the cellars and potatoes, cabbage, and onions in the cellars and attics of these farm houses and we enjoyed all of it.

The next night we had to dig in along a railroad embankment to guard all of the battalion's mortars and our own light machine guns, which were all there firing in support of the 30th Division who were attacking the next town down the line. A couple of days later, in another little town, we got our first attack by the German 88's, and we also had a couple of bombs dropped on us and believe me, I was scared to death. I think this was the place where we found some little pigs running around, so we caught one and butchered him. I got the job of trying to get the hide off of him. I didn't know a thing about what to do so I proceeded to try to skin him, which didn't work. I spent all night cutting the hide off that little devil, in little pieces, but I got the job done about day light, and then the order came down to get ready to move out. I wasn't about to go off and leave all that little pig for someone else, so I cut off a hind leg and took it with me, and it was a couple of days before I got to cook and eat it, but it was good when I did.

It was getting along towards Thanksgiving by then, and we were moving up to relieve elements of the 102nd Division, which had taken a heck of a beating. We were moving on trucks, and before we got to the town we were heading for the Germans opened fire with a terrific barrage on us. It was raining like mad again, but we got off those trucks and into a field and began to dig in, but it was so muddy it was almost a losing battle. There was part of an Armored Division there at the same time, and they said it was the worst and heaviest barrage they had ever experienced. We spent the rest of the day and that night in that field under that barrage. A Hopi Indian boy by the name of Clarence Beason and I were together, and we had moved into a German communication trench that ran through that muddy field. The trench was about shoulder width, and chest deep and it had about four inches of water from the rain in the bottom of it. Clarence and I had been taking turns standing guard, one hour on guard and then one hour off. It was a little after dark and still raining hard when Beason and I changed guard duty and I laid down in the bottom of that trench in the water to get some sleep and rest. I had my blanket under me and around my legs and I had Beason's blanket over the top of me and over my head and under my helmet. I hadn't laid there very long, but I had gone to sleep, when a German shell, a dud, hit about eighteen inches from the trench, and just about opposite my waist and the entire trench along there caved in and buried me under all that mud. I had my arms folded across my chest under the blanket, which was held up off my face by my helmet and my folded arms. I, of course, was scared and I began to yell, but it wasn't long before I was aware that the guys were trying to find me and dig me out, so I stopped yelling and tried to conserve what air I had and it wasn't too long until they had moved enough mud to get down to me. One of the guys feet came through the mud right into my face, which was the happiest day of my life. They pulled the blanket back from over my face so I could breathe and since I was not otherwise hurt, I couldn't move at all because of the mud, they took cover until the shelling let up, which was quite a time later and then they came back and finished digging me out. When I got out of that

mess, I tried to find my weapon, pack and gear, but never found any part of it. I went to the company command post, a little house not to far from there, and I spent the rest of the night in the command post, drying out and getting over my close call of being buried alive.Later that next day we moved on into town and relieved the elements of the 102nd Division that were there and we took up positions on the edge of town. We dug fox holes, in the rain and mud and tried to settle down to holding the position. I was with Beason and he told me that the night before, when that shell came in, he wasn't sure whether he heard it coming or saw it coming or what, but just before it hit, he ducked down and ran around a bend in the trench, and that was what saved him, or we would have both still been there. I found out a little later that it was Thanksgiving day, and that we were to have a hot dinner of turkey and all the trimmings, which we did, and it was great, even though we ate it in our wet, cold, muddy fox holes. That same day our company Jeep was hit and the Jeep driver, a fellow named Earl Seals, nicknamed "Bird Turd" for radio communication purposes, was killed. I believe he was the first man in our outfit that was killed.

A couple of days later we left that position, after dark, and hiked to Prummern. That was one of the toughest marches I ever made. We marched across a field where the war's greatest tank battle had taken place. The whole field was covered with the wreckage of German and American tanks and armored vehicles, and the bodies of dead German solders were still there, but the Americans had won the battle. That field was also a sugar beet field and the beets were past the time they should have been harvested. The beets were big and they stuck out of the ground. As we hiked across them we would step on one and the mud on our boots would slide off and most of the time we would end up on the ground, in the mud. As I recall it only took us a couple of hours to make that hike, but it seemed a lot longer. When we got to Prummern we were assigned to sleep in the barns behind the farm houses, which was fine with us, at least they were dry and we could stay warm. We also got a change of clothes, the first since we left England, and got washed up, using our helmets for tubs, and we shaved. We were ordered to shave, by the way. We also had a chance to write letters, and I wrote to Dad and I believe Bing at that time.

The next day we were briefed for our first attack on our own, we were to take some high ground and an anti-tank ditch and a railroad embankment near or in a small town on up the road a short distance. It was to be an easy operation with no real problems, according to the big shots. They forgot to tell us that part of the 102nd Division had taken the same area ahead of us, and had been driven back with great losses, and they also forgot to tell us about several pill boxes which we would have to take. We were informed at that time that it was part of the Siegfried Line.

It was long before daylight when we moved out of Prummern across roads, gullies and fields and a couple of ditches full of water from all the rain. It was raining lightly and very muddy and very cloudy. When daylight came the skies cleared and it stopped raining, which helped a lot. Also some P-47 fighters showed up and worked over the towns of Wurm and Beeck, both along our route, and also the pill boxes in front of us,

which helped, and gave us a little boost, which we needed, because we were all scared to death. Just after dawn, as the lead scouts started down a hill and across a ditch, and started up a steep slope, the Germans opened up with their machine guns and after a couple of minutes of that we all began to dig in, which was lucky, because just after that we got hit with a barrage of German mortar fire. We also drew a lot of machine gun fire and we were pinned down for a time. Our mortar section began to fire and they knocked out one machine gun nest, but we also found out that there was a concealed pill box at the top of the hill. Late that afternoon some P-47s came to our aid and we were able to move forward a short distance. Our platoon got up the hill as far as a communication trench that ran through there, but we were well short of the anti-tank trench, however part of one of the other platoons did make it to the trench. That hill side was also an apple orchard, and since we were being shelled all the time, a bunch of us would watch the apple trees, and when one of the trees would get hit, we would jump out of the trench and gather up all the apples we could, and get back in the trench and pass them out to all the guys to eat. Another problem was that the field behind us had a bunch of German snipers in fox holes and in the communication trench that went across the field, and those snipers kept shooting at us every time we poked our heads out of the trench. The next morning the German artillery let up for some reason, and our Lt.,Lt. McCaskey, lead a patrol consisting of Siessenop, Tilles and myself back down to the field behind us sniper hunting. I shot one German sniper, the only person I really know I killed in the war, and I took two German prisoners. I didn't intend to take them prisoner, but as I jumped across the communication trench at a bend in the trench, I looked down and there they were, one on each side of the trench, dug into the bank of the trench, and I fired my rifle into the trench between them, since I couldn't hit either of them at that angle. I had forgotten to count the shots I had fired, and when I fired the clip in my rifle flew out, just as those two Jerries jumped up. They both had their rifles in their hands, so I was afraid to try and get a new clip out to put in my rifle, so I motioned for them to get out of the trench and finally got them to kneel down on their knees, and drop their rifles, which I then kicked away Then, standing behind them, I got a clip out and reloaded my rifle. Since I had those two prisoners, I was not able to continue with the hunt for more snipers, but Tilles also took a prisoner, so I added him to the two I had and guarded all three of them until the others finished clearing out all the snipers. We went back to our platoon and turned the prisoners over to the detail that was in charge of that phase of the operation.

That night the Germans tried to set up a machine gun nest on the ridge to our left, but our mortars started to fire and after a direct hit on their position they withdrew. Also that night a German tank came from the right flank and got behind us in the field and several soldiers got out and yelled for us to surrender. No one answered them so they got back in their tank and began to fire tracers over our positions, then they left.

The next morning our platoon and one of the other platoons moved up to the anti-tank ditch. While doing so, we drew all kinds of fire from the Germans, rifle fire, machine gun fire and the worst was the 88's.We didn't get any further that day and that night was mostly quiet.

The next morning part of the 334th moved through us and went on a little ways and got pinned down. We pulled back a ways and then moved to the left, around that hill and up a draw and into the town of Beeck, which we took in short order, but just as we got through the town artillery shells began to tear the place apart, but our platoon got through it without anybody being wounded or killed and we moved on to the top of the hill in front of a pill box. Lt. McCaskey and a couple of other guys went out and scouted the pill box and determined it was not occupied. They came back and we were preparing to go over the top of the ridge and go out and secure the area when Lt. McCaskey, looking over the edge of the draw, was hit in the head by a sniper and was killed. I felt a very personal loss at his death, in fact all of us did, and we postponed the jump off to secure the pill box until later. Just before dark a detail of us ran over the top and to the pill box. Just as we got there a machine gun began ripping the ground all around us to pieces and we jumped into a communication trench and worked our way around the pill box. We discovered the machine gun was further out, towards some railroad tracks, but it was too late to try to get him with mortar fire. More men were brought out and we dug in and secured the area for the night. In the pill box we found a lot of German bread, some bacon and other food, so we had something to eat besides our rations that night. We spent the next day trying to move, but we couldn't, we were pinned down by a lot of artillery fire and everything else. A couple of tanks were making a lot of noise in or about Beeck and drawing fire and shells right down on us.

Late that night we were relieved to go back for a rest, which we needed. We walked, carrying all our equipment, back through Beeck and on to Prummern, where we spent part of the next day, then we hiked down another muddy road to another town, where we loaded on trucks and were taken to a little town near the border of the Netherlands.We got there early in the morning, it was just after the first of December, it was raining, and the little town was almost entirely destroyed, but we all located shelter of sorts, cleared it out some and got ready to get some sleep. The next day we got a chance to get cleaned up and clean our weapons. We didn't have clean or dry uniforms, just the ones we were wearing, but we got some of the mud off and dried them off somewhat. We also got a couple of hot meals while we were there, which were very welcome.

We were in that little town for a couple of days, then late one day we loaded on the trucks and went back close to Beeck, from which point we hiked on past Linddern,quite a distance, through a lot of sugar beet fields, to a sort of a long flat plain from which we were to make an attack on the Ruhr River, which we thought we could barely see off in the distance. In front of, and between us and the river, were sixty or seventy pill boxes, which we were going to have to take. Off on our left was a railroad embankment with telegraph poles along the railroad. Another item was that when we were put into our positions, all of the fox holes were empty, except for one. We found out a little later that while we were moving up to relieve that part of the 334th, a German patrol came in behind the position and took the men prisoners, except for two men they missed.

There were still some bodies lying around, and a lot of equipment, indicating that there had been quite a battle. That same night, after we were in position, a German sneaked up and threw a grenade in one of the fox holes and then he began to fire into the hole, yelling, "hands up". One of the BAR men began to shoot and then some rifles started to shoot and they killed that German. Another soldier from the 334th was out in a fox hole between us and the railroad embankment, in front of the platoon, but we didn't know about him for several days. It turned out he thought we were German soldiers and he didn't want to surrender, but he finally got so hungry that he came out with arms up to surrender. He was a very happy man when he found we were G.I.'s, and was glad to get something to eat.

We were in that position for a week or more, holding our ground and waiting for support to help take the pill boxes. We were constantly under fire by mortars, machine guns and being attacked by German patrols. Finally we were pulled out of that position and loaded on trucks and rode, then marched, to Lindren, which was three or more miles from where we got off the trucks and then on for a couple of miles from town. Our platoon was in the middle, with a platoon on each side of us, and the railroad was to our right with those telegraph poles. At night, when you are scared, and you think you are about to be attacked, those telegraph poles seemed to move around all over the place.

Early the next morning, a couple of hours before daylight, a large group of German soldiers, more than a company of them, approached our position for an attack. They must not have known where we were for sure, because they approached across an open field in a column of twos, rifles over their shoulders and covers over the muzzles of their rifles and machine pistols. The lead group was very near our positions when they were spotted, and our machine guns, both heavy and light, then the B.A.R.'s and rifles let loose. The Germans began to run back, then the mortars dropped shells to the rear and cut them off, so they scattered to the right and left. When they went right and left they got into their own mine field, which we didn't know was there. They were cut off and pinned down, and we kept them that way until daylight, when those that could got up and came forward and surrendered and the wounded were taken back for treatment or treated by our medics and taken prisoner. As far as I know we didn't suffer any injuries in this attack.

When we went into this particular area our Captain told us that after the attack we were to make on the Ruhr River, he thought we would be relieved for Christmas. The attack was held up because of a lot of reasons I guess, and the next night we were relieved. We thought it was for Christmas, so we didn't mind the marching most of the night through the mud and through those beet fields on our way back to a cross road where we boarded trucks, and before daylight we were on our way. It was on that hike that night through the beet fields, that I fell when I stepped on the top of one of the beets, and went rolling through the mud, that I lost my wrist watch, a gold Hamilton watch that dad gave me for graduation from high school.We found out the next morning, during a break in our truck ride, about the German break through in the

Ardennes, and that we were being pulled out of the Siegfried line in Germany to go to Belgium to help stop the German advance there. We were pulled out of the Siegfried line on December 22, 1944.

We rode those trucks all day and until about midnight, when we de-trucked. We were tired, wet, cold, hungry and miserable. We were ordered to get our weapons cleaned, clean ourselves up some, including getting shaved, and we had a lecture on what we were to expect, including the fact that the Germans were all dressed in American uniforms, spoke perfect English, were wearing beards, and carrying G.I. weapons and driving G.I. trucks and Jeeps. By that time it was almost daylight and we were ordered back on the trucks and started on a long, round about trip to Belgium, the route was to confuse the Germans and also to avoid, if possible, any German patrols or advances, if any. The weather was cloudy and there was a light rain and we were packed on those open trucks as tight as they could get us. Late that afternoon we arrived on the edge of Marche, Belgium, and de-trucked. Most of us started digging foxholes to spend the night, but we were then ordered to move through Marche and on to a small village about five miles away. That was one of the toughest marches I had ever made in my life, we were beat before we started, but we had to do it anyway.

We arrived at the small village of Waha very late that night, and most of the outfit went into cold barns for the night, but guards had to be posted, and Siessenop and I were posted on the edge of the village on a road leading towards the German lines. We were told the Germans were only two miles away, but we found out later that the Germans were closer than that. Siessenop and I were along the walls of the last two houses in the village. The houses were built right on the edge of the road, or street. It was very cold, rainy and dark, and Siessenop and I would walk to the middle of the road every little bit and whisper to each other, then we would get back to our wall where we couldn't be seen. There was a window and a door from each of the houses right where we were standing. Just about daylight the window on each house opened and a man poked his head out of each one, they scared you know what out of us, but when they saw our helmets and knew we were Americans, they both came outside. They spoke French, but no English, so we were out of luck understanding them, but we figured out they wanted us to come inside to get warm, which we would have liked to do, but didn't dare, so they bought out a little glass of something for each of us. We didn't know what it was, but I smelled it and then I threw my head back and tossed it all down in one gulp, then Siessenop did the same thing. Those men looked amazed at what we had done, but they took the glasses from us and got us each another glass full. That time they indicated and gestured that we were supposed to sip it, not gulp it! We followed their directions, and they nodded that we were doing it right. They also brought us out a couple of apples apiece and some black bread for us to eat, which we enjoyed. About that time we head a motor in the sky, the two Belgium men got very excited and wanted us to get inside, but we wouldn't budge, we didn't know what it was, but about that time the motor stopped and those two men ran inside the houses. In less than a minute there was a terrific explosion, then we knew what it was, it was a buzz bomb. We had heard of them, but that was the first time we had been around

them. It wasn't too much longer after that that Lt. Jenkins (he had been our Platoon Sgt. but made Lt. when McCluskey got killed) came with a couple of other men to relieve us. We told Jenkins about our Belgium friends, and they came out then and shook hands all around. Jenkins figured out then that we had had something to drink, but we still didn't know what it was, and Jenkins was unhappy that we hadn't saved some for him. Later Jenkins and the Captain went back with one of our guys who could speak French and got a lot of information about the Germans, those men were farmers and their farms were up the road behind the German lines, and they gave us a lot of information that our own intelligence didn't have, and it was all accurate. Jenkins also found out that what they had given Siessenop and me to drink was some very good cognac, and he was mad then that we had not shared it with him.

When we got relieved we thought we would get to sleep awhile, but no such luck. We got a hot breakfast and got ready to go out of town a few hundred yards and get dug in on our defensive line since it appeared the Germans would be attacking at any minute. Our first set of foxholes we hacked and dug out of mostly rock at the top of a ridge over looking a long valley, across which, at the other end, was Bastogne where parts of several outfits were surrounded and appeared to have no hope of getting out. From that position we could see the German tanks massing and getting ready, so we knew we were in for a merry fight.

When things got quiet, which they did once in a while, we could hear the shelling and bombing that was going on at Bastogne, which was across the valley from where we were at that time.

There was one road coming up out of that valley, and it came up right on the edge of our platoon position. We dug machine gun and BAR positions on both side of that road. After we got those positions dug into those rocks, forward observers from the various artillery outfits joined us and called for artillery on the various targets they could see. The artillery hit a couple of the forward tanks and also a whole group of attached foot soldiers.

That set of foxholes was on the exposed side of the hill, just over the ridge, and we found out in a hurry that we were exposed to the German 88's and artillery and also to some snipers in the German lines, so after getting them dug we fell back a bit, over the ridge of the hill, and hacked out another set of foxholes that we could fall back to and where we could have protection from the 88's and from the artillery. The rest of the time we were in that area,we spent most of the daylight hours in the forward positions, but at night, when the shelling got bad, except for a couple of positions for guard stations, we would go back over the ridge to the other positions. From the rear positions we could still see most of the valley, but it took a little more effort. Off to our left front there was a long sloping hill from the ridge where we were to the floor of the valley. This entire area was covered with pine trees, big pine trees, and the Germans were dug in all through that forest and area. Every time one of us showed ourselves, the German snipers would bear down on us. It kept us on our toes and was a scary

situation.

On Christmas eve it began to snow, which added to our discomfort. Christmas day was cold, the ground was covered with snow, it was still snowing, and it was miserable. Starting along about the middle of the day we did get relieved a few at a time to go back to the village of Waha, to the company command post for mail call and for a Christmas dinner. The dinner was good, even though it was cold, there was no way they could keep it hot for all of us, out like that. I received a couple of letters and a box from Dad, with some cookies, socks and a pair of wool gloves, all of it was very welcome, I might add.

The next day, the 26th Howard Armstrong, B A R man and I, were in our forward foxhole near the road when, fairly early in the day, a formation of Patton's tanks arrived from Austria, and they, along with some half track troop carriers went through our position and down the road toward the valley below where the German tanks were. The artillery began to shell the area and the tanks began to fire and it was some show. A couple of the G.I. tanks got hit, but several of the German tanks got knocked out and the others began to withdraw. Patton's tanks kept going, they were on their way to relieve the Bastards of Bastogne and break through the German positions surrounding Bastogne.

After the tanks were out of sight, we settled down to our usual duties of being on the lookout for any enemy soldiers, patrols or other possible signs of danger. I had been on guard duty for a couple of hours, so Howard and I switched, he took over guarding and I got in the bottom of the foxhole to rest for awhile. I had just gotten settled down, but I was still on my hands and knees, with my back to Howard, getting a blanket ready to lay down, when I heard the zing of a bullet and I said, "That was close wasn't it?". Armstrong didn't answer so I looked around and he was slumped down in the end of our foxhole. A sniper got him just below the bottom of his helmet right in front. It lifted the top of his head right off. I checked real quick and found that the back of my overcoat was covered with his brains and blood- I got sick, then I grabbed my rifle and took off for the company C.P.,which was on the edge of Waha. Later, I went back with the medics, who took Howard's body and his personal things back to the rear, and I took over the BAR as Ist gunner at that time.

The sniper that had shot Howard was some place along the edge of the woods in front and to the left of my foxhole, so I was watching real close to try and spot him so I could get a shot at him. Since we had so much trouble with snipers from those woods, the Captain called for the artillery to blast that entire area of trees, which they did, and when they finished the Captain sent a patrol, made up of several men from each platoon, down through what was left of the woods to flush out any German soldiers they could find. I wasn't on that patrol, but one of the fellows from our platoon told me that there were dead German soldiers all over the place, but a lot of those not killed retreated and got away, but they also captured over a dozen Germans at that time.

Things were quiet that night and the next day, and we sort of relaxed a little, which turned out to be a mistake, because that night the Germans tried to get through our lines, and we only had a few men on the line. I was back in one of the houses in Waha, trying to get warm and get a little sleep, when we heard the firing and then we got the word, so we grabbed our weapons and gear and took off, in the snow and dark, for our foxholes. By the time I got back to my hole there was a lot of shooting going on and flares were going off and the mortars were shooting and shelling right out in front of us. The Germans were in our forward positions, so we had a touchy situation going, but the machine gun crew got to their hole, and began spraying the whole area with machine gun fire and the mortars were doing their job, and after a while we moved forward and found that the Germans had retreated.

At this point I want to add a little about the weather. It was snowing off and on all the time, the temperature was way below freezing. We were all wet, spending most of the time in our foxholes, which were open, and where the snow had melted in the bottom of the holes it was frozen mud, and we could not get our feet, hands or bodies warm. I have never been so cold and miserable in my life as I was at that time.

Along about this time, and I'm not sure which day it was, Lt Jenkins, Jones the medic, and another soldier were in my hole, and we were talking and looking, when we spotted a German soldier hiking up the road, about a half a mile from us down in the valley. The other GI raised his rifle and took a shot at the German but he just kept hiking along, so another shot was sent that way and the German didn't even look up. Jenkins took the rifle and fired a couple of shots and the German didn't show any sign that the bullets were even close, so I took the rifle and I fired a couple of times, with the same results. Jones the medic, took off his helmet, borrowed mine, since his had a red cross painted on it, took off his arm band, took the rifle, and took a shot. That German jumped and landed in the ditch. After a couple of minutes he got up and began to run up the road, so Jones took another shot, The German ducked a little and kept running, so Jones shot again and the German kept running, then ran into some trees along the road. We decided that we were all a bunch of lousy shots, but we knew there was at least one German soldier in that patch of woods down in front of us.

After dark on the 29th our company was relieved by one of the other companies and we marched three or four miles, I think more or less north, to a village named Hollogne, I think. When we got there, we went into a large warehouse, it was cold, but it was dry, and we were told we were going to spend the night there. We found a hayloft, and raided that for hay and straw to make ourselves beds on the cold floor and it wasn't too bad. I had just laid down to get some sleep, when they came in and told us to move. We were moved down the street and put in private homes, some of which had civilians living in them, but it was a lot warmer and more comfortable. The next day, the 30th, we moved out of Hollogne and dug in on a very cold, snow covered hill. When we tried to dig in on that hill, we found that it was pure rock, and it was a mighty tough deal to get a foxhole dug. Another tough part of that position was that we were overlooking the Germans on the next hill, so we knew we were apt to have action at

any time. My platoon had to maintain a walking patrol between Hollogne and Marche that day and night, in order to pick up stragglers and also look for stray Germans. I only went on one of the patrols while we were there because I was the BAR man, and with the Germans so close the automatic fire power was needed there. That day and night and all day on the 31st we were on guard constantly, and patrols were going and coming all the time.

At midnight on the 3lst, New Years Eve, we put up a terrific artillery and mortar barrage, however, the Germans dropped an even heavier barrage on us, and the shelling behind our lines, back towards the battalion headquarters, was especially heavy.

On New Years day we were fed a very good turkey dinner with all the trimmings. We had to go back into Hollogne, to the warehouse building where we almost spent the first night in Hollogne, to get our dinner, and while we were there they paid us, this time in Belgian money. The dinner was hot for a change, and it was real good.

That afternoon we received a lot of replacements, which we needed badly. The ones we got in our platoon and squad had been trained for the field artillery, and they didn't know a thing about the M-1 rifle which they had been issued, they had never shot one, and didn't know how to load them even, so we were trying to teach them how to load their weapons, and what to do if it failed to fire semi-automatically. Just about that time we got relieved by a British outfit. We were trained to be as quiet as possible, not to use lights, or even have an uncovered cigarette lit at night, or have any open fires, or do anything that would give our position away, and bring the enemy fire in on us. The British, however, were different. They used flashlights all the time, lit fires to heat water and cook their meals, and stay warm, and they didn't seem to care whether the Germans shelled them or not.

When we first arrived in Belgium, we had been told we were to hold at all costs, and to prevent the Germans from retaking Marche. We had held, and now we were being relieved in order to move to a new area, and we were to start driving the Germans back to where they had started.

After dark on January 1, having already been relieved by the British, we were loaded on trucks and moved to the rear, through Marche. We were told that we were to get a night's rest before going back on the line, but it took a long time to get to the woods where we were to spend the night. When we got off the trucks the snow was about two feet deep. We dug away some of the snow, then we carried straw from a haystack we had spotted, and put that on the ground. Most of us went back and got a bunch more of the hay to put over the top of our sleeping bags to help keep us warm. It helped some but it was still mighty cold. Most of us took off our boots and tucked them up close to our bodies in our sleeping bags to try and get them warm, but they stayed cold and got very stiff.

Early the next morning we were up and after getting our very cold feet into our stiff and cold boots, we were fed a hot meal, which we needed badly. We then loaded on the trucks again and moved ten or fifteen more miles to another village which was already crowded with troops from other outfits, but we were able to find a few barns that we could live in, since we were going to be there all that day and night.

The next day we moved on to another village a couple of miles away, and more in the mountains than we had been, where we spent the rest of that day. The move was on foot and it was a tough one, the weather was terrible, the roads were very icy and snow covered and about a foot deep. We spent the rest of that day in some very poor houses and barns, and we darn near froze to death.

Early the next day we walked to another village, which I later found was named Amonines, from which we were to start our attack. That night the kitchens were able to get a hot meal to us, which we enjoyed.

The next morning, the 5th of January, we started out in a snow storm, following a valley between the snow covered mountains, then we left what road there was and took off through the trees and the side of a mountain, then along a more or less flat area covered with about two feet of snow. At that point we were in contact with the Germans, but the German soldiers were falling back. As we got to the top of the ridge, and started down into the draw, or valley, the Germans counter attacked, and we retreated back over the ridge and across most of the flat area. We reorganized, and took off again, and the Germans began falling back. We got most of the way across the flat area again when the Germans began to drop mortar fire and artillery fire in on us, as well as machine gun fire, and we were stopped in our tracks. We dropped down into the snow and tried to get what protection and cover we could, which wasn't much. It was getting very late in the afternoon by then, and it was snowing like mad. I was flat on the ground, under a very large pine tree, and there were two other GI's to my right under the same tree. The first man on my right was named Earl Watts and the man on the other side of him was named Ervin Tieken, who I think was one of our sergeants by then. About that time a mortar shell hit the top of the tree, and when it burst, the shrapnel came straight down. I was hit, I didn't know where at that time, and the other guys under that tree were hit also. I called out for my second gunner to come and get the BAR, and the GI on my far right, Tieken, called for a medic. Jones, our company Medic got there about that time, and after I could not tell him where I was hit, he began to look me over, and he spotted blood coming through my clothes around my right knee. He cut my pants leg open, and all my underwear, and found the hole in my leg, which he treated the best he could. He asked me if I could walk, or would I rather wait for the litter bearers to get there, after telling me that they were way back up on the flat picking up guys. He also told me that there was a half track ambulance down a little draw, on the road, about a quarter of a mile away. Jones checked the other two guy then, Watts was dead and Tieken was wounded. Jones treated Tieken and told him to stay where he was, and Jones came back to me. I told Jones I was sure I could walk if he would help hold me up. He helped me get to my feet and he held me up and I

hobbled to that half track ambulance. There was a captain, a doctor, there and he looked at my leg, and said,"you are not hit that bad, we'll have you back in a couple of weeks". At that time I could have shot him, if I had had a weapon, because the last thing I wanted to do was to be back in a couple of weeks. I said goodbye to Jones, he left, and they put me in the ambulance. Since I was the fourth man it was full and they took off down that narrow, slick road, heading for the field hospital.

After what seemed like an awful long time, and a very rough ride on a rough road, we arrived at a field hospital, which I found later was at Marche. It was very dark and it was snowing, when they took me out of the ambulance. I was on a litter and they placed me on the ground next to other guys on litters. Someone came by and put another blanket on me, which was welcome, because I was still cold. After a time I was moved into the tent part and put on an operating table and they got my uniform off my leg and cleaned it up some. By that time I was getting warm and my leg was beginning to hurt. I looked around and I could see a row of operating tables down the line, with doctors and nurses around each one. There was a nurse on each side of me, and they were checking my vital signs and talking to me. I was talking to the one on my right side, when the nurse on the other side said,"now look at me". I turned to see her, and I don't remember ever seeing her.

When I awoke it was daylight. I was in a bed in a large room with beds all around the place with GIs in them and I tried to turn over and sit up, but I couldn't do more than sit up on my elbow. I looked around and down at my leg, which I couldn't move, and I discovered I was in a cast from my middle, down the right leg to my foot, and down my left leg to my knee. The cast wasn't dry yet so it was cold, but it did have a picture of my wound drawn on it. It showed I had lost part of my femur, just above the knee, and that there was a crack across part of the rest of the femur, but the inside part was all intact. It wasn't long before a corps man came by with a tray of food for me. I was ready to eat, I was warm, and except for the wet cast, I was dry and clean. A little later a doctor came by to check me. From him I found out that my cast was called a "spiked" cast, intended to keep me from moving, and in my case from cracking the rest of the femur all the way across. I also found out that I would be moved, probably that day, to a general field hospital, and from there I would either go to a hospital in France, England or back to the U.S. I also found out from him that I would be out of action for three or four months at least, which was sweet music to my ears.

After I had eaten, and been checked by the doctor, I just laid there and stayed warm for awhile. Later someone from the Red Cross brought me a pen and some paper and envelopes so I could write letters, which I did. I wrote Dad, and tried to tell him I wasn't hurt that bad. I couldn't write anyone else then because I didn't have my stuff so I didn't have anybody's address. It was snowing outside, I could see out a window across the room, and it looked bad, but I was warm at least. Later that day, in fact after lunch, they came and got me and loaded me on a litter and hauled me out to an ambulance, which was loaded with four of us, and they took off. It was cold, the wind was blowing and it was snowing like mad, and you could feel the ambulance slide and slip on the

road, and hear the mud hitting up under the fenders as we went along. Some time after dark, it seemed like hours later, we arrived at another hospital, and we were all put in a big tent covered room, the sides were either made of lumber or metal, I could not tell which, with the tent over the top. Shortly after that a doctor, a nurse, a chaplain, and an orderly came by checking each of us. I found out from them that it was a field general hospital, and it was in Liege, Belgium. I also found out that I was in the receiving area, and those that needed immediate attention would be first to be treated, and the rest would be treated as they got to us. I didn't need immediate attention, and since we had not had dinner, we were to be fed, which happened shortly thereafter. They kept moving guys in and out of there all night, and sometime the next morning I was moved to the treatment area, where they removed my cast, redressed my wound and checked me, and put a new cast on me and I was put in another big tent like building or ward. The way the big tent was flapping you could tell the storm was getting worse and it was very cold I found out every time I put my arm out from under the blankets. There were a couple of big pot bellied stoves burning like mad to try and keep the place warm, but it was a lost cause.

From the orderly I found out that they were moving out the wounded GIs as fast as they could because so many were coming in, but they were afraid that the weather was going to get so bad that they could not get the planes off the ground that day.

Later that afternoon the Germans began shelling the entire area and all the tents shook from that, then they began to bomb the place. The explosions were so loud they almost deafened you and even through the tents you could see the flashes of the explosions as the bombs hit. At that point, I wished I could get out of bed and under something, but no such luck. After the bombing stopped, they fed us supper, which was a very welcome change.

The next day, the storm kept getting worse, but they kept moving guys out. I found out about the middle of the morning that I would have an early lunch and then some time in the afternoon I was to be flown to a General Hospital in England. After I had my lunch, a chaplain came by and talked to me for a few minutes, and then I just laid there and waited. Late in the afternoon I was wrapped in blankets, strapped on a litter, loaded in an ambulance, taken to an airfield, and loaded on a plane. The sides of the plane were fixed up to put the handles of the litters through loops and held in place by a support bar to the side. I laid there a heck of a long time while they got that plane loaded, then the nurse and the orderly came by and told us that the weather was so bad they weren't sure we would get to take off that night, but that we would be held ready for at least an hour before they would unload us,if we couldn't take off that night. It was close to an hour later that they told us they were going to try to get off the ground, and that we would be the last flight that night. I'll admit I was scared, but there was nothing I could do. We took off and it was a rough flight all the way, but some time later we landed and the orderly began to get us unstrapped. He told me we were in Bath, England. When they unloaded us it was dark, the wind was blowing and it was cold, but I do not remember that it was snowing. We were again loaded in

ambulances, four to a vehicle, and taken for a ride, which was only about thirty or forty minutes long, and we were unloaded in a large receiving room at an Army General Hospital. It was a large building with tiled floor and real hospital beds. After they got us all moved in and collected our records, which were put in our litters with us, they came around with trays of food and fed us dinner, which I was ready for by that time.

The next day I was wheeled into the operating room again, and they took the cast off, and put me to sleep. When I woke up I was in a regular hospital bed, in traction, with no cast on.

I stayed at that hospital in Bath,England, for about three weeks. I was kept in traction, but my wound was checked every day, the food was good, meals were served at regular times, and we had a lot fun yelling across the ward at other guy and talking to other wounded GIs that could walk that came by all the time to visit. While I was there, some mail caught up with me, which was nice, and I also was presented with my Purple Heart.

After about three weeks, a doctor and nurse team came by my bed, and checked my wound, and leg, and then told me that the hospitals were so crowded that all cases that would take more than six weeks to heal were being sent back to the states and I would be shipped out in a few days. Needless to say, I was very happy about that.

A couple of days later I was told that I would be put in a "spiked cast" again, because I was to be flown back to the U.S., and they had to be sure that my leg didn't get moved or bumped. Later that same day they took me back to a big room and put me in a cast. Then I was taken to another big ward to await my orders to be shipped out and also to let my cast dry. It was the next day, I believe, that I was told that I would be on my way the following day, which was fine with me.

That evening, after I had dinner, a Chaplain came by, and after talking for a little bit he asked me if I had any real preference on how I traveled, as long as I got back to the States? He told me then that there was a G.I. in the next ward that had been blinded. He was scheduled to be shipped back to the U.S. by boat within a week or so, but they had just received word that his parents had been killed in an accident and they were trying to get him home as soon as possible. Because of that, the Chaplain asked me if I would give up my place on the plane the next day so the poor guy could go home. I told the Chaplain that I would be glad to change, it didn't make any difference to me how I went home, as long as I got to go. Later that night the Chaplain and a G.I. with his head all in bandages came by my bed. The G.I. thanked me for letting him have my place on the plane the next day. The day after I was to have shipped out by plane, the Chaplain came back to see me again, and told me that the other G.I. had in fact gotten on the plane, that the plane had taken off from the Bath Airfield, and headed for Scotland, where it landed to refuel before heading for New York. He told me that the plane had in fact taken off from Scotland and made radio contact with the ground after it was in the air. That was the last they ever heard from that plane and they did not

know what had happened to it, or the people on it, but it was presumed that it crashed into the ocean. At that point I was a little shaken, because if I hadn't given up my space to the poor blind G.I. I would have been on that plane.

The following day they took me in and took off the spiked cast and put me in a long leg cast. Then they had me start using crutches. I got around on those crutches as much as I could, it was the first time I had been out of bed on my own for over a month then. I was able to go up and down the ward, visit with guys in other beds, and I enjoyed doing it.

It was at that time that part of my personal gear from my duffel bag caught up with me, so I had a few of my own things for a change, including my address book, and I also got some more mail, which was always welcome.

About a week after that I received word that I would be shipped out within a few days, so I stayed close so I wouldn't miss out on that. When the time came, I was taken to a train and placed on board that and when the train pulled out it was full of G.I's going to the same place. We were taken to Liverpool, where we were transferred to a ship. It was the "New Amsterdam",which at that time was the third largest passenger ship afloat. I was in a cabin with about ten other G.I's, all of whom could get around. The only problem was that there was a limited number of pairs of crutches on board, so I was stranded in bed. The other guys did, however, get out and around and hunted up some crutches for me, which I was able to use a few days, then had to share them with others on the same deck. Because of the speed of the ship, it traveled back and forth to the U.S. without escort, and the trip to New York only took seven days.

When we arrived in New York I was taken to the military hospital at Camp Shanks, New York, to await shipment to a hospital for recovery. The Red Cross gave us pens and paper and other goodies and we were able to write letters to our families and tell them where we were for the first time. I wanted to call Dad, but couldn't get to a phone. I was at Camp Shanks several days and then I was told that I was going to be shipped to Fitzsimons Hospital in Denver. When we first got to Camp Shanks they had asked us where we would like to go if we had a choice and Denver had been my first pick, so I was happy about that. It wasn't too long after that that I was taken out and loaded on a hospital train. It was a big one and I was on my way. When we arrived in Denver they rounded up all the military ambulances from all sources and put them in use getting all of us to Fitzsimons.

When we arrived at the hospital they were trying to get beds ready for us, they had not been forewarned that we were arriving, so they were not prepared.

That first night was a mess, but they got the job done, and then they began to check each of us to see where we were to go. At that time Fitzsimons was a chest, lung and stomach hospital, and they had no orthopedic doctors on their staff. When they got us sorted out they had a big ward full of leg cases. The nurses and ward boys were great

and got whatever we wanted, including dinner, which was good and we had ice cream and more than one if we wanted it. It was the first ice cream I had had since I had left the U.S. when we went overseas.

The next morning the army doctors, with the nurses, came around and talked to each of us and checked us a little. Since I was in a cast, they couldn't see my wound, but it was beginning to smell a little, and besides, my leg had shrunk so much I could put my hand down inside the cast almost to my knee. The doctor decided that my cast should be removed, my wound checked and redressed, and x-rays taken of my leg, before it was put back in a cast, but I was warned that I would have to stay in bed for a couple of days until they could get that all done, which was no problem for me. Later that day they took me out, cut the cast off, put a new dressing on the wound, and rubbed all the loose skin they could off my leg, which was a big relief, and after x-rays I was taken back to my ward. A little later a nurse came by with some lotion and rubbed it on my very dry and scaly leg, and it helped a lot.The next morning, the doctor told me that the following day a civilian doctor, an orthopedic surgeon, would be in to check me, and that my x-rays would be ready for him to see, and at that time they would know what to do for me until the army sent a team of orthopedic surgeons in to be stationed at the hospital.

The next day I was checked by a very nice older doctor, along with the army doctors, and he ordered that I be put in another long leg cast (what I had had on), and that I was to be allowed to be up and start walking with crutches as much as possible. Later that day I was taken to the casting room and I was put in a new cast and told that when it got dry, probably the next day, I was to start getting some walking in, but to take it easy at first because my leg would swell up for the first few days.

I had written to Dad as soon as I got to Denver and told him where I was and gave him my address. When I got up on crutches, I got to a phone and called Jeannie, who was living in Denver with her mother and Terry, who was a baby. Burt was on Guam at that time. Jean and her mother came to see me the next day and brought me cookies, candy and other goodies, and it was a big day in my life. Jean came to see me every couple of days after that. I had also written to Mr. and Mrs. Henderson, (Mom and Pop Henderson, Bing's first father and mother in law), who lived in Boulder, and it was only a couple of days later that they came to see me. It was less than a week after that, out of a clear blue sky, Dad showed up to see me. That was quite an emotional meeting for both of us. I didn't realize it until then, but he had gotten the telegram from the War Department that I was wounded several days before he got my first letter, and the telegram said "seriously wounded". Dad had taken the news very hard, and even after he got my first letter I guess he was in sort of a daze. (I found out later, when I was on leave from the hospital, from some of the people at Keams Canyon, that he didn't eat, and walked around as if he in a trance for several days after he got that telegram.) Dad had gotten off the bus down at the depot and had taken a cab out to the hospital, so he still had his suitcase with him. I got a hold of the Red Cross lady, and found out that I could get him a room that night at the hospital and that he could have dinner with

me at my bed in the ward, since I couldn't leave the post yet. That was probably one of, if not the most, remembered days of my life. Dad stayed in Denver several days and spent most of his time with me while he was there. He seemed to enjoy it, and I know I did.

I made good progress and between the crutches and a wheelchair, which I had full use of, I managed to get around a lot, even to the P.X. when I needed to, or wanted to.

It was several weeks, maybe a month, after that, that they had me fitted for a long leg brace, which fitted into the heel of my shoe and fitted me so that the weight of my body went to the ground and none of it was on my leg. With the aid of a cane I could walk, but I couldn't bend my knee. When I was standing a lock slipped down over where the hinge was and kept it stiff. When I sat down I could pull the lock up and try to bend my leg, but that didn't work too well, it hurt like mad, for one thing, and the other thing was that my knee was very stiff from being in the cast and wouldn't bend. I began going to therapy every day, two hours in the mornings, and that started the recovery process for the rebuilding of the muscles in my leg and also the bending of my knee. I had to go to therapy every morning, except Saturday and Sunday, and the rest of the day was mine to do whatever I wanted to do. I was given a pass to leave the hospital grounds, actually, the pass was to get back on the hospital grounds, you didn't need a pass to get out, so I could leave as soon as my therapy session was over each day. I was told to do as much walking every day as I could in order to regain my strength as fast as possible. A bunch of us would catch a bus just outside the hospital main gate, ride the bus down to the turn around for the street car at the Denver city limits, called the "loop", and then take the street car down Colfax to downtown Denver. I would do this every couple of days, just to get out, but if I went into a bar about noon, somebody would always buy me a drink.

I was in the hospital in Denver on April 12th, 1945, the day President Roosevelt died. I had just returned to my bed from taking a shower when the news came over the radio. A bunch of us got ready and took off for downtown. We spent the afternoon going from bar to bar, getting as many free drinks as we could, and finally along about dinner time I went out and caught the street car back to the hospital. On May 7th, 1945, the day the war in Europe was over, we did the same thing, except I didn't get back to the hospital until after the bars closed that night.

Along about this time I wrote to one of my buddies in the 84th, Ed Reis, and in due time I got a letter back from him. He told me that although he couldn't tell me where they were, that had I been there, I would have recognized it, because we had been there once before prior to going to Belgium. Ed, by the way, went through it all and all the way to the Elbe River without getting wounded.

When I was at Washington and Jefferson college in Washington, PA, in A.S.T.P., my roommate in the house I lived in was from Denver. His name was Marvin Miller and he had been a freshman Engineering student at C.U. when he got drafted. We got to be

good friends while we were in school there. He was Jewish and was the first Jewish person I had ever been around and he was a swell person. He told me one day, when we were talking about various things, that there were Jews and there were Kikes, and he said,"and I am a JEW' When they closed the A.S.T.P. program down, Marvin went to the 334th Regiment of the 84th when I went to the 335th. While we were in Washington, PA his folks had come to visit him, and took the two of us out to dinner one night and they were great people. They owned a jewelry store on the fourth floor of the old University Building in downtown Denver. Later, when we were overseas, just outside Prummern, Germany, my company had to made a move towards Beeck and we crossed an area that the 334th had been fighting for the day before and had taken it with a big loss of man power. As I went along, I jumped over a ditch with water running down it, and just where I jumped over, I looked down, and there was a dead G.I. laying in the bottom of the ditch face up, and as I jumped over him I thought it was Marvin Miller.

One day, when I was in downtown Denver by myself, I found the University Building, went into the lobby and checked the list of tenants, and sure enough, the Miller jewelry store was listed on the fourth floor. I was going to go up to the store, but couldn't get my nerve up that day to do it. It was about a week later that I got up enough nerve to go up to the store and face the Millers, since I thought Marvin was dead. When I got off the elevator, I almost backed out again, but I went on in the store. What a surprise I got. There was Marvin standing behind the counter talking to his dad. They were as surprised to see me as I was to see Marvin. I found out that he had gotten home just a couple of days before and that he had been taken prisoner during that fight around Prummern and had been in a P.O.W. camp the rest of his time in Germany until he was released by the G.I.s. Mr. Miller suggested that I come to their home, in East Denver, the coming Friday, and that Marvin and I go out to dinner and then out on the town for the night. Since I didn't have to be in the hospital on weekends, it sounded like a great deal to both of us, and that is what we did. The deal was that we would take the Miller family car downtown and we would park it in the spot Mr. Miller had for his car and then later, if were not able to drive, we would take the street car back to Marvin's house and I would stay there that night. Friday night we went downtown to a restaurant Marvin knew about and had a few drinks and dinner, talking all the time. After our dinner, which was paid for by Mr. Miller by the way, we took off bar hopping and talking until the bars closed. I have no idea how many drinks we had had by then, but neither one of us was drunk, or could even feel all the drinks we had had, so we went back to the car and took it to Marvin's home and we went to bed. Marvin was on leave, so until he had to leave to go back to whereever he was stationed, we went out several times and later after we both returned to college we got together a couple of times.

As time went on and I continued to improve, I was granted a thirty day convalescent leave. I went home to Keams Canyon and spent it with Dad. We had a great time talking and we also went to Gallup a couple of times and visited the Constants, old time friends of the family, who owned the U.S. Auto Camp in Gallup.

When I got back to the hospital they began to let me go without my brace until I was able to manage without even a cane. By this time, it was the last of August, and I was ready to be discharged from the hospital, as well as from the Army. I was shipped out to Fort MacArthur, California, where I was processed for discharge from the army. After I arrived at Fort MacArthur and all my records were checked, it was discovered that I was entitled to a thirty day overseas leave, which I had not had. My orders were cut, and the army even paid my travel expense, and I was taken to Los Angeles and got on the Santa Fe Railroad "Chief" heading for Holbrook, Arizona. I didn't write and tell Dad about it, I figured since I had seen him just a short time before, that I would spend a couple of days in Holbroook before I went on out to Keams Canyon. Travel was so heavy that the Santa Fe "Chief" was two trains instead of one, and I was on the second section, or train. The second section was powered by two steam locomotives. The second section of the train left the station about ten minutes behind the first section. I was in the fifth car behind the second engine. The train began to gain speed and we were really flying along, when it all went to pieces, the cars were bouncing on the ties, and going from side to side, and then I saw one of the cars in front of mine go out at right angles from the tracks, and just hang there in the air, the car behind had jammed into the side of it and was holding it up in the air. The car I was in rammed into the car in front of mine, and people were screaming all over the place. When we all got stopped, the two engines were laying on their sides, on one side of the tracks. The lead engine had hit a large water tank and there was a flood of water going down the tracks on that side, the first baggage car was up on part of the second engine, and all of the cars in front of mine were jammed up. The tracks were up quite high at that point, so it was a long way down to the ground. Just across from the tracks was the highway at the entrance to the Santa Anita Race Track and the events of the day were just over and cars were leaving the race tracks. The doors at the end of the car I was on were all jammed shut with the car in front and the one behind, so with the help of another G.I. I got a window up and I went out the window and then I began to help others out the same window. People from the other cars to the rear were coming up then and then firemen, policemen and others began to arrive and they started to work to get the people that were trapped out. It took a long time, but they finally got everybody out and those that were injured were taken to hospitals. The rest of us were taken to the rear cars of the train that were not damaged. They got all our names, and possible injuries, and then we were pulled back to Los Angeles, put on another train and we took off again the following day. The surprise came for me when we got to Holbrook the next day and I got off the train. Dad was there waiting for me. I found out then that the pictures of the train wreck were on the front page of the Phoenix newspapers and the one picture was of me helping get a stretcher with a lady on it out the window of the train car. When Dad saw that he knew that I would be at least going through Holbrook if I wasn't coming home, so he came into Holbrook to wait for the train to arrive.

During the course of that month Dad and I went to Gallup a couple of times and spent the weekend, I went to Holbrook and spent a couple of days, and I worked for Slim

Halderman at the trading post at Keams for a few days when he needed me. New teachers were arriving also during that time, so dad got a deal worked up for me to go to Holbrook and meet the new teachers and bring them out to Keams. The new teacher deal was one where dad got the first pick of the teachers, but if he didn't want a particular one, then they were up for grabs by the principals of the schools at the various Mesa's. One case was rather amusing. Dad came down to the house one afternoon, just after lunch, and told me that a new teacher, coming from New York, was to arrive on the four thirty train that afternoon, but since he had all the teachers he needed, this one would be going on out on the reservation, so if I didn't want to go get her I didn't have to. I had nothing to do so I told him I would go. Dad pointed out to me that if the train was late, or for any other reason, we were late leaving Holbrook, to keep in mind, that I had to be back at Keams not later than six thirty if I wanted to eat dinner, since the employees' club, where we ate, closed at six thirty.

There was one other problem and that was that Dad did not have a spare tire for his car at that time. Tires were hard to get, and all of Dad's tires were getting badly worn and he had had a flat tire and the tire was ruined. Mr. Wilson, the superintendent, had a government car exactly like Dad's, so Dad said he would try to get Mr. Wilson's spare for me to take just in case I needed it. When Dad asked to borrow the spare tire Mr. Wilson said "no". Dad and Mr. Wilson were not getting along very well any way, so Dad told Mr. Wilson, "all right, you had better get somebody else to go to Holbrook to get the lady, Don will not go unless he has a spare tire." Dad came back to the house and told me to sit tight, he was sure Wilson would change his mind. It was just a few minutes when the phone in the house rang, and it was Mr. Wilson, and he told Dad to have me go up and get the spare tire and go on to Holbrook and get the lady.

I was in Holbrook and at the train depot long before four- thirty, but of course that day the train was late and it didn't come in until almost five. At the time the train came in there was a big crowd of Indians just standing around, why I have no idea, but when that train stopped and this young lady got off with her suit case, she looked scared to death when she saw that crowd and they were, of course, looking at her, since she was the only person who got off the train. I went to her immediately and identified myself and verified she was the person I had come for, picked up her suit case, and had her follow me to the car. While I unlocked the car, and she was getting in, she kept looking back at that crowd of Indians, with a scared look on her face. The Indians, of course, were paying her no attention whatsoever by that time. I tried to explain to her that she was in no danger, but she wasn't sure of that, and she didn't want to understand why I met her instead of dad or someone else. I explained to her that we were running so late that we probably would not be back to Keams in time for supper and that there was no place to eat after we left town, but all she wanted to do was get out of town, so we took off. When I turned off the paved road onto the dirt road to Keams, she really got scared, and she started talking a mile a minute. I tried to answer her questions, but she was as scared of me as she had been of the Indians, so that didn't help much. I wheeled into Keams and drove on around and up to the stairs leading into the employee club building just as Dad and some of the others were

coming out. Dad came over and met the lady and told me to take her in and get her some dinner. He told me which room she was to get for the night and he took off for home. I took the poor girl in and we both had some dinner, then I took her suitcase to her room, told her what time breakfast would be, and that someone would take her whereever she was to go the next day. When I got home, I explained the deal to Dad, and he laughed and laughed, and told me that my driving probably added to her being scared. (Dad figured the lady would not want to eat in Holbrook, and that I would miss dinner, so he had fixed me a sack lunch and taken it home from the club.) I found out later that she stayed on the reservation about a week then quit and went back to New York.

About the middle of the month I received new orders and travel vouchers from the army. My original orders were that I was to report to the separation center at Santa Barbara, California, at the end of my leave. My new orders informed me that the separation center at Santa Barbara had been closed, so I was to proceed to Fort Sam Houston, Texas for reassignment and / or discharge, as the case might be, reporting on October 1, 1945.

When it was time to leave Dad took me to Holbrook to catch the train. I thought I would be home to stay within a couple of weeks when I left, but that was to change too.I stayed on that train until I got to La Junta, Colorado, where I changed to the train for Texas. Some time later, we were going across a wide, deep canyon on this high trestle when part of the train jumped the tracks and began to rock and jolt back and forth. Thank God we weren't going very fast, because none of the cars tipped over. We were there and we couldn't get off the train and we spent the rest of that day and that night right there before they got us all back on the tracks and we proceeded on our way. When I got to San Antonio and got off the train, I found that the army met every train and bus, and had buses ready to take G.I.'s to the various forts, bases and camps in the area, so I had no problem getting to Fort Sam Houston .

Every morning we would fall out and they would call the names off that were to go to the separation center, or whereever, then the rest of us were free for the rest of the day. The entire City of San Antonio was the Camp limits, so we didn't have to worry about passes and on top of that the food was the best I had ever eaten. I was there two weeks before my name was called , along with a bunch of other guys that had been around there a while, so I thought I was finally going to get discharged, but no such luck. The group I was with were informed that "when you entered this Army, you told them you could type, now, you have a choice, you can stay here at Fort Sam and type, or you can go to Camp Shelby, Mississippi and type". I had been through Camp Shelby once, overnight only, but I didn't think I wanted to go there again, so I chose to stay at Fort Sam Houston. I was assigned to Headquarters Company, but I was sent to Service Company One as a typist. The office I was put in was the Morning report section in an officers area, for army officers coming back from overseas, and elsewhere, either to be reassigned or go for discharge, and they were coming and going all the time. The office consisted of one other G.I. and a civilian clerk. The other

G.I. was named Foster, he had been a lawyer before he got drafted, had his basic training in the field artillery, shipped overseas and put in the infantry. He was wounded his first day there, sent back to the states to recover, and was now at Fort Sam Houston waiting for discharge, and his home was in North Little Rock, Arkansas. The entire Service Company office was in what had been the kitchen and dining room and supply room of a former active company. The supply room was the offices, and our little office was a closet off of that. The dining room was the barracks for the runners and other enlisted personnel of the service company, and the old kitchen was the day room and lounge area. Foster and I had our bunks in a storeroom off the day room area and we had a door we could close, so we had our own private quarters. Foster was in charge of the morning report section. When we got the report ready everyday we would call for a jeep send our report to Headquarters, then we would take off for a few hours and then begin getting ready for the next day. A shuttle bus went by every few minutes, which we could take to most places we needed to go, so we rode the bus to the mess hall for all our meals, and to the P.X. Besides our meals, we could also get fruit to take back to our barracks at the mess hall. Sundays we got breakfast and dinner, then we would pick up sandwiches, fruit, milk, and what ever there was to take back with us for that nights' meal.

After I learned the procedure, Foster would go home to North Little Rock every weekend he could get a pass. His wife had cancer and was on her death bed, but because the army needed typists he couldn't get his discharge yet. I spent Thanksgiving and Christmas there at Fort Sam, but it was good duty and good food so I didn't mind. At Christmas Foster tried to get a furlough for a week, but he couldn't get it, but we worked out a deal with the officer that was in charge of us and he signed a pad of three day passes and gave them to me and every day I would fill in the blanks and mail one to Foster in North Little Rock. His wife was getting worse, so I just kept mailing those passes, but he would call me every few days to make sure everything was O.K. Foster came back after the first of the year for a day then they called him home again, so we went back to the pass route some more, until about the second week of January the orders came down that Foster and I would both be going to the discharge center on the 29th, so I got on the phone and called Foster that night and told him so he could get back in time.

At this time I need to point out that the army, a week before Christmas, froze everything like it was as far as we were concerned. What that meant was that everybody on leave had their leave extended until after the 1st of January and didn't have to report in until then. It also meant that everybody already there was stuck and would not be going on leave, or shipping out until after the 1st of January. It made a good deal for me, because after the orders were frozen I figured out the morning report and the civilian clerk made up the reports for every day from then until after the 1st of January, so all I had to do every day was call for a jeep and send that day's report to headquarters. It also meant that the clerk got to take the time off and stay home.

A couple of days before Christmas the Captain of Service Company called me into his

office and told me that he was having beer and booze delivered for all the enlisted men of the company, including myself. That the beer would be put in the walk-in cooler in our day room, which was still hooked up, and the booze was to be kept by me and put out as needed. That afternoon a jeep arrived loaded with enough beer for us to have two cases a day for the entire period and there was enough booze for at least one bottle a day during the same time. We made good use of it all.

On Christmas morning all the Officers of Service Co. and their wives, came over to the barracks and had eggnog, which they had made, with us before dinner. That Christmas dinner at the mess hall was the greatest feast I had ever seen. There was turkey, chicken, beef,(roast and steaks), pork, ham and all kinds of sea food, as well as cakes, pies, nuts, fruits, vegetables, salad and breads, and more.

On the 29th of January, 1946, I went to the discharge center at Fort Sam, and there was a fellow getting out at the same time who had a car, from Phoenix, and he wanted somebody to pay half the gas to go to Phoenix, so I rode with him that far, then I got a bus to Holbrook and called Dad and told him I was out of the Army and where I was, but since the weather was bad he couldn't come that day, which was fine with me, and he came in the next day and got me.

A few days after I got home, I got a short letter from Foster, informing me that his wife died the day after he got home from the army. I wrote to him immediately, but I never did hear from him again.

After I had been home a couple of weeks, I went to Gallup and went to work for the Constants, and also applied for a job at the Grand Canyon with the Park Service. I got the job with the Park Service, but it didn't start until June 1st, so I worked for Constants until then and went to the North Rim of the Grand Canyon as a fire look out. That job was over at the end of August, and I went back to Boulder to college under the G.I. Bill at that time.

JUST A SIMPLE SOLDIER

He was getting old and paunchy and his hair was falling fast.

And he sat around the legion telling stories of the past.

Of a war that he had fought in and the deeds that he had done.

In his exploits with his buddies they were heroes every one. And 'tho sometimes, to his neighbors, his tales became a joke, all his buddies listened for they knew whereof he spoke.

But we'll hear his tales no longer, for ol' Bob has passed away, and the world's a little poorer, for a soldier died today.

No, he won't be mourned by many, just his children and his wife.

For he lived an ordinary , very quiet sort of life. He held a job and raised a family, quietly going on his way; and the world won't note his passing; 'tho a soldier died today.

When the politicians leave this earth, their bodies lie in state, while thousands note their passing and proclaim that they were great.

Papers tell of their life stories, from the time that they were young, but the passing of a soldier, goes unnoticed and unsung.

Is the greatest contribution, tho the welfare of our land, some jerk who breaks his promise and cons his fellow man?

Or the ordinary fellow, who in times of war and strife, goes off to serve his country and offers up his life?

The politician's stipend and the style in which he lives, are sometimes disproportionate, to the service that he gives.

While the ordinary soldier who offered up his all, is paid off with a medal and perhaps a pension small.

It's so easy to forget them for it is so long ago, that our Bobs and Jims and Johnnys went to battle,but we know...

It was not the politicians, with their compromise and ploys, who won

for us the freedom, that our country now enjoys.

Should you find yourself in danger, with your enemies at hand, would you really want some cop-out, with his every waffling stand?

Or would you want a soldier, who has sworn to defend, his home, his kin, and country, and would fight until the end?

He was just a common soldier and his ranks are growing thin, but his presence should remind us, we may need his like again.

For when countries are in conflict, then we find the soldier's part, is to clean up all the troubles, that the politicians start.

If we cannot do him honor, while he's here to hear the praise, then at least let's give him homage, at the ending of his days. Perhaps a simple headline, in the papers that might say: OUR COUNTRY IS IN MOURNING,FOR A SOLDIER DIED TODAY.

- Author Unknown