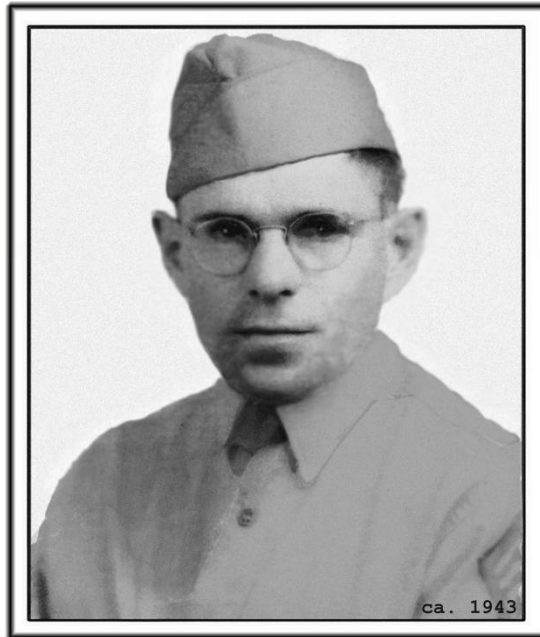


My Military Experiences



**Memories of My
MILITARY EXPERIENCES
1941-1945**

By John Edward Phelps

My Military Experiences

Memories of My
MILITARY EXPERIENCES
1941-1945

By John Edward Phelps

© 2000 John E. Phelps, Springfield, Massachusetts
Edited 2006 by George A. Phelps, Sparks, NV 89431
Second Printing: 2007

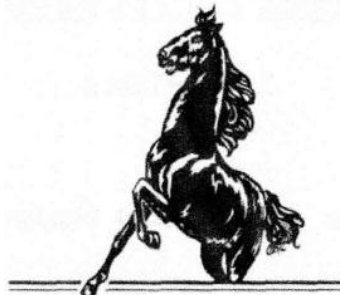
My Military Experiences

Text and photos copyright © 2002, 2008

All rights reserved. No portion of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, scanning, or by any other information storage or retrieval system without the prior permission of the Editor or Publisher.

Edited 2006 by George A. Phelps

Published by Mustang Bindery, LLC, 25 Michigan Street
Winchester, NH 03470-2424

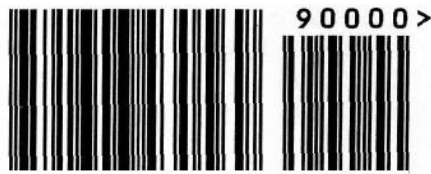


MUSTANG

B • I • N • D • E • R • Y

Printed and bound in the United States of America using acid-free materials for longevity.

ISBN 978-1-60643-056-9



9 781606 430569

ISBN: 978-1-60643-056-9

Library of Congress Control Number: 2008905919

Second Printing 2008

My Military Experiences

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	1
Introduction	3

PART ONE

EASTERN UNITED STATES

In The Army Now	5
Basic Training, Southern Maneuvers Camp Edwards	7
Second Southern Maneuvers Carolina Beach, Camp Blanding	9
New 328 th Regiment, Fort Jackson	10
Camp Gordon	15
Camp Shanks, New York	19

PART TWO

EUROPEAN THEATER of OPERATIONS

Normandy	21
Foret de Bride et de Koecking	29
Saar Region	33
Luxemburg, the Bulge	40
Saarlautern	41
On German Soil	45
Darmstadt	48
WW-II Winds Down	49
Appendix One	55

My Military Experiences

FORWORD

Unlike the modern world, wherein so many adults insist that anyone who's lived through a time of difficult circumstances automatically needs counseling, during and after WW-II just about everyone who had witnessed the horrors of war coped with the experience without any sort of so-called therapy. And the way they coped, I was to learn, was by going about their business of living and working and, usually, raising a family, thus shunting away wartime memories. They seldom if ever talked about their activities over there, especially the hard times, even if they'd earned a medal in the process.

It was probably forty years after the fact when my brother John opened his wooden box full of WW-II memorabilia to me, a box that included his Bronze Medal and Croix de Guerre.

But his lifetime project, that of delving into and carrying on the "Phelps" line of genealogy, with which he was charged as a young man by our grandfather, was his first priority. And at age 90, in 1997, he completed a 250-page book on the subject.

Only then did he begin to write down notes and names and related anecdotes from his 1940s tour in the U.S. Army, and by the year 2000 he had filled a binder with notes. He eventually typed a couple of stories from those notes, copies of which he sent to me. However, despite the fact that he wanted to continue, he had too little time to complete his objectives. Actually he had intimated that I should write his stories and publish them if he didn't get around to it.

Sometime after John passed away, when my wife Rita and I were visiting Gladys, his widow, she showed me some small binders containing his notes and asked if I would like them. I wondered whether I should accept, but she insisted and I was delighted to have them. The notes he'd made pertaining to his military service filled one of the binders, the others included stories and events from the early days of our family. And so I tackled the job of converting his notes into a manuscript for posterity.

A year or so later, Ed Phelps and June (Phelps) Houghton shared their copies of John's material. While the gist of his account was the same, in their copies, I was able to use some pieces and dates in my manuscript.

The task has been both interesting and challenging: It was interesting in that I got to research the military history of John's outfit throughout the war, and to learn about my brother's activities during that period. It was challenging because those notes were obviously intended for his own use, and were therefore very brief and often hard to interpret, particularly where he had gone back to pencil-edit previous pages.

My Military Experiences

Of course the business of survival in the war precluded John's use of paper, pencil and time to keep a journal. And the notes that he made, a half-century after the fact, were random rather than chronological in order. It was obvious that they were written whenever a particular thought or incident came to mind. Furthermore, even though his memos generally included the names of the men involved, quite often his position at the time of a certain event was a mystery. Thus a great deal of research was required to put things in a semblance of order.

I am truly thankful for the opportunity afforded me to undertake this project. And while I believe it is impossible for us civilians to comprehend what the battlefield is like, I trust that the reader will not only appreciate John's memorable account but also acquire a feeling for his personal thoughts during that 4½-year period in his life.

Having explained that, I now apologize for such errors as will inevitably crop up in his-story.

George A. Phelps,
Editor and Compiler

My Military Experiences

INTRODUCTION

I was drafted as a selective service man into the army on March 10, 1941. I had received my notification on the previous Monday, March 3rd, at Northfield, Mass. The following Wednesday evening I took my fiancée, Gladys M. True, and her aunt, Bertha Martindale, to see the movie "Gone with the Wind" at a Greenfield theater. It was a long show and we arrived at Miss Martindale's at midnight. She hurried into her home while we sat a few moments in the car before I told Gladys that I was to be inducted into the army on the following Monday.

We decided to get married, and, despite the short time interval, made arrangements and were wed in Bernardston, Massachusetts, on the 7th of March.

I reported for basic training at Camp Edwards, Mass. on March 10, 1941. While at Camp Edwards, Gladys came to visit as often as she could. Money was short and she found a job in Rhode Island.

In September, our outfit was sent on a three-day journey to South Carolina for maneuvers. Several weeks later, on December 6, 1941, we returned to Camp Edwards.

On Sunday, December 7, 1941, Gladys and I returned to Camp Edwards from Provincetown and learned that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. The U.S. was really in a war. The 26th Division, of which I was a member, was immediately put on Coast Patrol, which was in effect from Maine to the Florida Keys.

The 26th or "Yankee Division" had included the entire Massachusetts National Guard. In 1927 and again in 1936 it was involved in the Connecticut River floods in Springfield and other western Mass. areas.

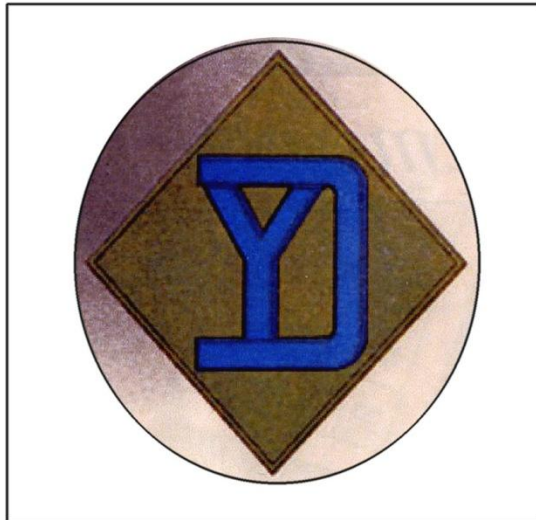
The 26th was made into an Armored Division. A third of the 104th Infantry, a third of the 101st and a third part of new men from the South and West, along with non-coms and men chosen from the old units, became the reactivated 328th Infantry Regiment, which had been Sgt. York's outfit in WW-I.

I became 1st Sgt. of Cannon Company, but would later go overseas with H Company, 81mm Mortars. The 26th Division fought in France at The Bulge, crossed the Rhine at Oppenheim, drove through Germany to Hof, went south to secure the Danube at Regensburg and southeast to Linz, Austria, where we met the Russians. From there I went on to Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, where for some of us World War-II ended on the 7th of May 1945.

From a Buck Private to a First Sergeant, ultimately to a Platoon Sergeant during combat; a Bronze Star and a Croix de Guerre, and the knowledge that we had done a good job was satisfaction enough for me. I was honorably discharged in mid-October 1945 and was glad to get home, without visible injuries, to Gladys and our two-year old son, Jason.

Believe me.

My Military Experiences



My Military Experiences

PART ONE

EASTERN UNITED STATES

IN THE ARMY NOW

March 10, 1941:

I boarded a bus at Turners Falls, Massachusetts, for Springfield. My new wife Gladys True, her sister Glennis and husband, Harold Doran, saw me off with the other selective service men from Turners Falls, Millers Falls, Northfield, Erving, Greenfield and Bernardston, all nearby towns in Massachusetts. Many of their folks were watching.

It was chilly, the sun not yet shining through the gloom. By the time we reached Springfield, tentative conversation had begun. But most of us were silent and wondering just what we were about to face.

We arrived at the Springfield Post Office on Dwight Street and a policeman guided us to the parking area at the rear. A man in army uniform formed us in a line of twos, and we entered the building through the back door and climbed a stairway to the second floor.

We stripped and went through our physicals in line, each taking a turn being injected with certain drug shots against disease. A fellow up ahead fainted when they stuck him with the needle. At last we dressed and took an eye and ear exam. I had worn glasses since I was twelve years old but was tested anyway.

I warned the doctor that I had no hearing in my left ear, and very shortly learned that you had better be careful about what you volunteer. He tested my right ear first, having stood me in a corner of the large room while I held a hand over my left ear, and he whispered. Okay, then the reverse. To my surprise I faintly heard his voice and repeated the word to him.

"I thought you said you could hear nothing in your left ear," he remarked caustically. "What are you, one of those cowards that doesn't want to fight for your country?"

"No sir, doctor," I replied. "I don't mind fighting for my country. My family has served in several of our wars since the time of King Phillip's war."

I did think he should know that.

He said no more, filled out a form and I was released. Physicals over, we all gathered in a hall and sat while a military officer spoke to us of the importance of our country's being prepared for war, especially since we did not know how the European War was going. Then we all stood and took the oath of allegiance to the United States as we saluted the flag.

That was it. We were in the army now. We were led downstairs and across the street to where the trucks were parked, for our lunch of baked beans and hot biscuits with plenty of butter, a piece of pie and some ice cream. Some guys had seconds.

Securing our gear, we marched across the street and up to the platform to wait for our train for Boston. It was the first of many

My Military Experiences

long waits while in the army. Finally a Lieutenant gave the word and we climbed the steps into the line of coaches that had "bucked" into the station. Another long wait and the first of GI bitching, engendered by nervousness. Guards made sure that none of us left the boardwalk.

A few among us had served in the State Guard at one time or another. Needless to say, a bevy of listeners gathered around them, since they seemed relatively self assured compared to us real greenhorns.

I was older than anyone else in this particular batch from the Turners Falls area, and I remembered when my father and I had come to Hampden Park the day he tried to enlist for WW-I.

I had taken the train to Boston many times, on the Boston & Maine, from the Greenfield station. But I don't recall doing so from Springfield on the Boston & Albany tracks. So I was interested in the view of the back yards and country vistas on this route. However, train rides have always invited sleep and this was no exception.

Eventually we arrived at the South Station area and were shunted to a dead end siding where we de-trained to a forlorn gravel space with no redeeming qualities other than a blank brick wall. Again a uniformed soldier guarded the only exit, over a rail yard to some distant buildings. Some guys tried to bribe the guard into allowing some one of us to get away to a place to buy sodas and snack food. But no go! We were learning what life was like in the army. You camp in out-of-the-way places and wait for orders. Some fellows just laid down to one side and snatched naps, or sat against the base of the brick wall in various sitting postures and learned to doze in such positions; something we were to do a lot of in the future, in full gear in rest periods on long road marches.

A fair sized, heavy wooden box was lying near the blank brick wall. A couple of fellows brought it over and turned it bottom up for a platform. A five-foot tall, dark haired fellow named D'Amico was a singer who had entertained at Springfield nightclubs. His companions had called for him to sing but he was so short nobody could see him for the crowd surrounding him.

"If I had a stage I'd tap dance too," he cried out, and that's when his buddies remembered seeing the big box and brought it over. He leaped onto it and began dancing as he sang popular songs. We all gathered around, glad to have something to break the tedium while waiting.

After what seemed like several hours, our lieutenant appeared with word that finally a train was supposed to back in and take us to Cape Cod. Even then we had to wait awhile. I'm sure the lieutenant was as happy as we were to have someone entertaining us, but presently D'Amico jumped off the box, perspiring profusely, and claimed a much-needed rest. Even the penny ante gamesters gave up and the bitching became more frequent. There was no doubt about it. "Hurry up and wait" had begun for us in earnest.

Finally, to the extreme relief of us neophytes as well as the lieutenant, a railroad man appeared and threw a switch. The tall end of a railway coach grew larger and larger to a stop just opposite the

My Military Experiences

lieutenant. The enlisted man ordered us into line and the lieutenant called off our names, I believe from a list he held, as we approached the first car. We scrambled aboard and sought our places two to a seat.

I sat next to a window so I could sleep leaning into the corner, a custom I had developed years before on train rides to Boston when I was at Art School.

I was awake though when the train crossed the bridge over the Cape Cod Canal, and it wasn't long thereafter that it backed slowly to a sudden stop on a spur track, boxed in by a very dark evening. The conductor had long since alerted us to the fact that we were approaching Camp Edwards.

Supervised by the GI who had accompanied us from Boston, we detrained and were ordered to fall in line and march a few feet to the waiting 1½-ton trucks, which were each fitted with long planks on each side of its flat bed to sit on. We threw our motley array of suitcases and cardboard boxes, containing our clothes, shaving kits, writing gear and so on, in the middle and climbed aboard. The clothes were superfluous, as we would soon discard them.

BASIC TRAINING, CAMP EDWARDS

SOUTHERN MANEUVERS

The following weeks were spent in and around Camp Edwards learning the basic regulations that every soldier had to know, from personal conduct to shooting a rifle, from drilling and marching to hand-to-hand fighting, but especially discipline; i.e., how to take orders and comply with them.

First Lieutenant Oudette was a "by the book" soldier, which was a boon for me. From him I was to learn and practice by the book myself when I became a sergeant. Sergeants Cowhey and Petraska took a liking to me because I wanted to be a soldier. By observing them I learned a lot about how to handle men, though many of the guys were just closing their years as kids.

Wittig was a large fellow, though not more than 5-feet 11-inches tall, with sort of flat features, heavy black brows and really dark eyes. As for close-order drill he was not the best with his feet, but when we began maneuvers between the Reds and Blues we discovered that we had a very superior forager bringing back eggs and other foods, which resulted in his becoming an acceptable field infantryman. I don't recall there being any serious complaints by the company officers, although he did become one of our occasional stockade visitors due to his nonchalant attention to the rules of the game. No matter what, he always seemed as happy as a kid despite reprimands about military protocol.

Sergeant Bistany was one of the "old" National Guard sergeants, and one who loved his mortars. He took a liking to me even though I was a machine gun sergeant. He wanted to instruct me in the fine points in the use of the 81mm mortar. I thanked him but said that I thought I might be discharged due to my age, as we'd been informed when we first

My Military Experiences

entered the service. He was quite disappointed but occasionally renewed his offer. He doubted that my discharge would happen and managed to refer to something about mortars occasionally, which I would well remember later when I decided not to leave the regiment after all, when offered the opportunity. Of course at that time I fully expected to remain in the 104th.

In the field we had our machine gun mounted on wire-spoked, two-wheeled carts, the ones used when the outfits were on parade. They certainly were cumbersome and hampered our use of the gun, so much so that one time at the Cape our section was overrun and captured by the "Reds".

There was a demonstration of a cigarette glow in the dark. Few if any of us had given much thought to how far that glow could be seen.

One time we had an overnight camp maneuver near the small town of Temple, New Hampshire, and paused for lunch the next day in a cemetery. Another maneuver, on Cape Cod, placed us in the "Mashpee" Indian Village, where not only were there cranberry bogs close by but also poison ivy vines in our late evening's choice for a campsite.

I well remember an incident at the close of one of our Red and Blue "Wars" at Cape Cod. Everybody was tired and we were resting in various attitudes from the prone to lying stretched on a road bank, snoring, when Gen. Logan, the new Division Commander, drove up in his command car and stopped where Capt. Hines and other officers stood rehashing old stories about the Regiment. They came to a salute and the General, acknowledging, spoke loud enough for all in range to hear: "Tell the boys I have a truck coming with a beer for every man and officer."

Silence, till it sunk in, then there came a roar of approval. The men were on their feet shouting, "Hey, General, thanks," as he drove off saluting. I believe he owned a brewing company. I think some of the older officers had served with General Logan in WW-I.

The trucks arrived and the men fell in line gladly enough, and a beer was handed to each soldier as he headed the line.

September to December 1941:

It was a three-day motor move to the South for maneuvers at Camden, South Carolina, Greensboro, Fort Bragg, and Raleigh, North Carolina, and Campbell, Kentucky.

While on the move to Campbell, where we began some real training under General Paul, I was tapped for First Sergeant of Capt. Caesar's 1st Cannon Company. It is interesting to note that at the time, Walter Winchell theorized that we'd never go to Europe.

Morale was high when we began the three-day motor trip back to Camp Edwards in December, where we arrived on the sixth. On Sunday, December 7, 1941, Gladys and I returned from Provincetown to Camp Edwards and learned that Pearl Harbor had been attacked and bombed. Camp Edwards immediately went on alert, as there was a Declaration of War against the Axis: Germany, Italy and Japan. A system was quickly instituted to signal the disposition of troops, using numbered blasts from the camp alert system.

My Military Experiences

The 26th Division Regiments had already updated their heavy weapons companies to what would be called an "armored division." The .50-caliber machine gun platoons had been taken from us, and the antitank platoon was now attached to Division's control.

Practice runs for machine gun crews were established, and then very quickly we found ourselves en-trucked and headed for Providence, where for quite a period D Company was established in the great hall of the Armory.

From there each morning Jeeps took relief crews to their machine gun positions, and 2½-ton trucks took riflemen to relieve buddies at strategic strong points.

The fear of possible sneak assault groups from German submarines was uppermost in everyone's mind along the Atlantic Coast, and this was the first stage of what would be called the "Coast Patrol." As Platoon Sergeant I was at Providence, making sure that our relief patrols went out on time, et cetera.

One Sunday, the Lieutenant asked me to go along on an inspection. We visited our machine gun sections as far as the Connecticut line, and found them established in summer cottages with piled-up sand bags, or dug in, or even in out-buildings with great fields of fire covering the water front.

When they were inside buildings, for the most part they were able to be quite comfortable despite the cold, which was extreme at times. I remember that our Jeep driver drove us along a hard damp beach where great sea-ice blocks formed ramparts in some places.

SECOND SOUTHERN MANEUVERS

Carolina Beach, Camp Blanding, Florida

Sometime in 1942:

From the Rhode Island Coast Patrol we took a train to North Carolina, then went in trucks to Camp Squad, Carolina Beach, a tent city for our 1st Battalion, 104th Division.

An interesting experience at Carolina Beach: It had been a long wait for the trucks and it was a cold day, as I recall. We slept in the open because the relieving unit had taken possession of our tents. But I was to learn something from that outfit. The brass shells in our M.G. [machine gun] belts, which we were leaving for them, had become green corroded and we'd spent quite a lot of time trying to clean them. A Sergeant from the new outfit told me not to worry, just give him the belts. I did. He tied a rope to them and dragged them round and round in the sand behind his Jeep. Cleaned them!

Captain Gladding was impressed and asked me how come I hadn't known about that trick.

I've often since wondered whether our Massachusetts Old Guard sergeants had known about that method. Seems simple enough, doesn't it?

January 1943:

My Military Experiences

We finally en-trucked from Carolina Beach toward Camp Blanding, Florida, wondering what we'd find when we got there. An older sergeant asked me to speak with 1st Sgt. Pederzani, to make sure that because of his age he would not be sent to an action theater. Then in his late forties, it seems that he'd lied to get into our outfit on coast patrol.

When we arrived at Camp Blanding we found ourselves in barracks once more. Pretty neat, we thought. Gladys and some of her friends found places to stay nearby.

As dawn approached one morning we woke up cold to discover, when we looked out the windows, maybe two inches of snow on the ground. We each had but one GI blanket, and a stove with insufficient fuel just wasn't enough. Not only that but the water pipes, which had been run along the outside of the buildings, had burst. No showers that day.

One day the soldier in charge of quarters told me to report to the Company CP [Command Post]. I reported there, to Capt. Gladding, who introduced me to a Colonel from Division who asked me about my art training and whether I would be able to paint murals in officers' recreation or dining rooms. I had never thought about that possibility but after all, if I could get back into art work in the army I thought I'd be better placed than as a first sergeant.

So I assured him that I could, described my background in art, and told him briefly about the murals Roger Wolcott and I had painted in Springfield, Mass. He directed me to report to him when we got to Ft. Jackson, and I was dismissed.

It seems that Captain Gladding intended this to be of service to me, as he wanted to put me in a cadre destined to be separated from the 104th Infantry. What actually occurred was that after the 181st left us for the Pacific we were to become possibilities for active duty. The 26th Div. would have its third Regiment.

NEW 328TH REGIMENT

Fort Jackson, South Carolina

February to April, 1943:

I soon found myself, along with other NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] of the 104th, trucking to another new destination. The conversation was mostly about probabilities. Several Old Guard technical sergeants from the 101st and 104th presumed that they might become First Sergeants. Among us was Donald Brown of Riverside, a village in the town of Gill, Mass. Another was Tech Sgt. Thomas Brooks. And I was surprised to see that our transportation sergeant, St. Louis, was among the speculators aboard our truck.

At Fort Jackson when the smoke cleared away, as it were, I discovered that I'd been assigned as platoon sergeant of the 81mm Mortars in First Sergeant Tom Brooks' D Company of the new 328th Infantry Regiment, which consisted mostly of men from the 101st from which Tom had come.

Tom Brooks was a middle height, sandy haired individual who, I'm sure unbeknownst to him, when talking to the men had a muscle lift at

My Military Experiences

the left corner of his mouth, suggestive of but not quite a sneer, which was very effective when combined with a cold blue stare from his eyes when talking to someone who had stepped out of line. He turned out to be a first rate first sergeant, and I learned a lot from him about handling men in a fair but firm manner.

We marched, exercised, and had one or two days of finding our way through lush trees and vegetation. Training exercises continued, with a difference that we were introduced to jungle-like swamps of mud and goo where supposedly we'd find ourselves exposed to poisonous snakes, the cottonmouth being a native to the South. Everybody got the word, "Watch out for cottonmouths, they're a poisonous snake." I guessed we were being prepared for duty in the Pacific Theater. However, I never saw a cottonmouth during the time we spent in the "jungle."

We had barely gotten to know one another and the new men when I was ordered to report to a Major Kilbourne, at Regiment, who was to be in command of training of the new men; draftees from the South, Midwest and West. I was to be Sergeant Major of the Training Battalion, organized by Major Kilbourne of Greenfield, Mass. I was to keep the records of progress of a battalion of the new draftees and, along with other sergeants, train them in close order drill and general orders. Among the other officers on the training schedule were Lieutenants Speck and Randazzize, and a rough talking captain whose name I don't recall but who was very good.

The training period was probably of the same length of time that we draftees had had in Massachusetts. Then, at the close of this period, I reverted to Sgt. Brooks' platoon in D Company, and was delighted to have Don Brown with me as he had been an 81mm mortar-man under Sgt. Bistany in the 104th.

In one field exercise where marching fire was used, we were using hand signals from me to the gunner. An officer would receive information about our progress by walkie-talkie or voice phone, which I would relay to Brownie, as I remember it. We would lift fire when the riflemen were to advance to the next target.

I received an order to lift the fire forward and hand signaled to Sgt. Brown. But his mortar man had just dropped a round, finishing the previous order. A tree burst resulted in a machine gunner, Shinnekonis, being wounded by flak through his helmet, skinning a section of bone from the top of his skull. I quickly relayed the order from the officer to cease-fire. I believe the finding after an investigation was that the infantry had advanced faster than expected. I would be happy in the future, when overseas, that our gun was equipped with a sound-powered phone.

Shortly after this I was ordered to report to Capt. Caesar at Regiment, where I learned that I was to be First Sergeant of the 328th Infantry's Cannon Company, newly instituted, with him as Commanding Officer.

We discovered that we had received good and bad soldiers from the new companies constituting the 328th Infantry Regiment. And I was told that I'd be getting one of the worst companies in the regiment to straighten out and to make something of. Well I did straighten it out, in a way. But at one point I was ordered to report to the Regimental

My Military Experiences

Commander, Col. Higgins, who asked me a question or two then ordered me to do better. And with that I was dismissed.

I requested a manual on the cannon, from a Lieutenant Colonel who questioned me one day and found me ignorant concerning some one part of the cannon. We never did get a manual, and I never learned as much about the cannon parts as I'd have liked.

As for its use, the cannon was good for 105mm fire, being more of a howitzer than otherwise, and we were told that it would be a good antitank weapon as well. Of course I had to fire the cannon and also be an observer; and its firing orders differed from the 81mm mortar.

At one point in time, all officers and sergeants gathered in a large room to meet and listen to our General, Willard Paul. He was brief and energetic, and intent on pushing the division into readiness for overseas. He told us quite directly that he wanted us to build a division of top quality, and that he had every expectation that we would help him do just that and be ready, when needed, for the firing line.

He then asked if there were any questions. There were a few, although I thought his talk was direct enough. But an older staff sergeant of artillery, I believe, arose. The General acknowledged him. The man wondered if the General would permit a man in town, on a pass, when meeting an officer be not obliged to salute.

The General was visibly surprised and spoke with some acidity. He asked the sergeant how long he had been in the service. I don't recall his reply but he'd been in service a lot longer than most of us ever hoped to be. Then the General said, in more or less the following words, "Sergeant, I am surprised by your question. With your length of service I would expect that you would consider the act of saluting a privilege, to acknowledge someone who has studied to be a leader and who has learned or acquired more intelligence about behavior under any circumstance than an enlisted man is ever expected to have to know.

There appeared to be a subdued murmur of agreement.

Although I never spoke with our General, I did have the pleasure of being addressed on two occasions by his executive officer, General Hartness.

With few exceptions our company became a good working unit. I rarely saw Capt. Caesar and we were all extremely surprised when we learned one Monday that he had committed suicide when at home that weekend.

First Lt. Carlton Fisher became our Company Commander, and though I rarely saw him either our Executive Officer, 1st Lt. Turner, was very effective. I believe he had been a school teacher in civilian life.

First Lt. Craig, from Georgia, was a good example of an officer and a gentleman. Lt. Grigsby was a southerner also, but I thought he was rather too quick tempered.

One of my platoon sergeants was an old guardsman from the 101st Infantry. And Sgt. Alfred Briggs, from near Boston, was another good man from the 101st.

There was a corporal who often returned from a weekend pass plastered, to use a vulgar expression. I had warned the men that I

My Military Experiences

didn't care if they got drunk on pass as long as they did not come back and disturb the men trying to sleep in the barracks.

One evening, close to midnight when I was still at work in the company office, the CO [company orderly] reported that the corporal was disturbing everyone in the barracks. "He's really drunk," he reported.

I asked him to tell the corporal to simmer down. He returned and told me that the man had used abusive language to him.

I ordered the CO to have the corporal report to me at the office. He came. I told him that I had had enough of his disturbing my men, and when he began using violent language I told him that I was taking his stripes. When Lt. Fisher appeared at reveille he carried the order through.

Another time, the CO came to report that some card players were talking so loud the men complained that they couldn't sleep. It was nearly midnight, so I ordered the CO to tell them that I wished they'd stop. A little later he returned and said they were still at it.

I walked over to the barracks, to the second floor. The lights were on and several non-coms and others were playing cards for money. A pile of it stood there on the floor. I walked over without saying a word and gently kicked the pile of money.

The men were astonished. One spoke up but I shushed him. "I don't care if you guys play cards but not up here keeping the other men awake."

"Where can we play, Sarge?"

"Anywhere you can find a place, but not here."

I turned and walked to my room at the bottom of the stairs, expecting to be attacked momentarily. But it didn't happen. I never had any more trouble that way, although I knew that a big sergeant wanted my job.

Late one evening I took our morning report to Regiment myself, as often I would talk with whoever was on duty. That evening Tech. Sgt. McDonald came along with me, and we leaned over the desk in a three-way conversation.

Presently McDonald drew a beautiful hunting knife from its sheath and played with it a moment, then drew it slowly across my left forearm, watching me closely. That was nothing new to me, as we used to play such games in an Indian club I belonged to in my early years. He watched carefully to see if I would flinch but I disappointed him. He drew a little blood but I just smiled and, discomfited, he put the knife back in its case.

Oddly enough he was made a first sergeant, and would take 1st Sgt. Ferk's place later on before Capt. Lendon became H Company's commander.

A Sgt. Avery and I hit it off pretty well, as did a tall, thin, dark haired sergeant whose name I have been unable to remember.

We first sergeants of Cannon Company were obliged to go to the practice rifle range. And as a first sergeant, I was normally armed with an M1-carbine so I had to borrow a rifle to shoot [most likely a .30-cal. Springfield] from the rack at the rifle range.

My Military Experiences

That was one of the finest rifles I'd ever used. It had been well taken care of. I got a lot of bulls-eyes at the first few targets and then we had a lunch break. After lunch I was kept in conversation with some officers and was late returning to the firing line, and there was only one rifle left on the rack. I used it, but the right rear sight, required for the 500-yard target, was broken. I was unable to guess a good setting without that rear sight and came away with only a "sharpshooter" rating.

One day I was an observer at an artillery/cannon range. A major, whose name I didn't know, was interested in my firing orders for the cannon. He asked me to give the same order to some 81mm mortar men. Why, I never did know, for the order is different for each kind of gun, you see.

Some time about then there was a demonstration of a tank rolling over a slit trench with a man in it. Volunteers were called for. Of course, in combat a tank might deliberately grind away with its tracks to crush someone. We never saw that officer again after that incident; he was replaced by an older officer.

I remember one weekend, after a week of war-games, when my Jeep driver and I were ordered to report to our CO. But he was not at the Command Post. We were told that he would be on a certain old road, which we then took confidently enough, but the farther we went the less well used and the more uphill the road became.

Besides that it began to rain. Finally, near the top of a ridge in a wooded area, we found that there were no longer any vehicle tracks at all on the road. I figured that we'd been set on a blind track. Then, when the driver was turning the Jeep around it slipped off the road and, to our disgust, began sliding backward on a moss-covered ledge. I hopped out to push.

When I saw that we were sliding toward a drop off I put my back to the Jeep, bracing my feet against a fair sized tree. The driver was lucky, as the Jeep was in low-low gear and the wheels took hold. I couldn't have held the thing any longer.

Much relieved we retraced our way and found that the kitchen, supply, and HQ vehicles were camped beside the road we had earlier taken. We had gotten there ahead of the Command Post so I'd missed the lieutenant altogether, which turned out to be of no consequence.

However, the next weekend when I was hiking on a lonely road because we had lost the company during a retrograde movement, a lieutenant hailed me as he came hiking out of the woods to my left rear. It was Lt. Swift, who, also through miscalculation somewhere, was in search of his company. Shortly thereafter we came upon some men who led us to our respective units.

This was a God-forsaken wilderness area, such as the one in the future where C Company would take a wrong road in Europe when in the Koecking Woods in France.

My Military Experiences

Camp Gordon, Georgia

Maneuvers in the Camp Gordon area in the winter snow and mud were almost worse than some of our experiences overseas would be. Except that there was no shelling here. The nice part was that we could expect our kitchens to show up at the weekend close of an exercise. Even so, the mud and snow and rain taxed the skill and patience of everyone.

Then one weekend at the close of an exercise we entered a lovely grassy field surrounded by woods. The drivers parked their prime movers, cannon and Jeeps in a military manner along the right edge against a row of trees. The Company CP tent and the kitchen were set up immediately to the left of the entrance, and pup tents were placed around the perimeter beyond the vehicles, leaving us a comfortably free area in the center.

Lt. Fisher left just as we entered. I went to the Company CP tent, after checking the layout, and found a Captain Canon there. Surprised, I saluted and was told that he was our new Commanding Officer.

Captain Canon seemed pleased with our camp and told me to give out passes to town, and that the next day, Sunday, would be a rest day. He then stated that he planned to spend the evening in town, and took leave of us in his Jeep. I didn't recall then, nor even to this late date, ever having received anything about those orders from Regiment Headquarters.

Next morning I was awakened at 5am, I think, with information that my new CO would appear and expect the men to fall out in formation at 7am.

Well, Capt. Canon was in his tent sleeping off a heavy "night before." I never again heard from Lt. Fisher, and I was about to report to a Capt. DeGeorge at the 7am formation. I ordered the CO to roust the men, who were in various states of slumber, some having barely returned from liberty and were slightly the worse for liquor.

The CO and I were still making sure that the men were up and ready to fall out when the captain appeared. I reported the Company and in a few words he told us who he was. He said he expected every man to do his best, dismissed the Company and went off to Regiment HQ in his Jeep. By the end of the time it took him to drive to HQ, I received a call from there. I was ordered to report with all of my gear to Capt Sullivan right away.

Taking a few minutes to try to let Sgt. Avery take charge, I was interrupted by the phone. The Regiment Adjutant coldly reminded me that this was his second call, and he ordered me to appear at Regiment P-D-Q. I did so with no illusions, expecting to be demoted right then and there.

Instead, I was ordered to accompany the regiment trucks carrying the men's barracks-bags to a safety location where a tent was supposed to be set up for the bags of all the soldiers in the regiment while they were off on another week's maneuvers.

A young second lieutenant was also sequestered there for the week. He had been a coach and had pulled a minor boner during the previous

My Military Experiences

week's maneuvers. Two sergeants were also left there with the Regiment HQ tents.

General Hartness and an aide appeared unexpectedly, looked over the tents, some of which were poorly set up, and ordered me to see them set right. He then departed.

The lieutenant and I straightened up one that was really in need of work, but the rest I worked on myself since the HQ men refused to help. Some rations had been left for us, so aside from boredom we were well provided for despite the rainy weather. We talked of home and a variety of subjects, the lieutenant being of a good education.

I have wondered ever since but at that time I understood that I was ordered (verbally) to stay until ordered otherwise. Anyhow, I stayed for a second week. But the tents were not pitched well that time and everything was covered with huge tarpaulins, and it rained again.

I chose to stay under H Company's tent, but there was no supply of water left. One young man had been stationed with the gear. In one day he drank all of his water, despite my advice that he should husband it. There seemed to be some rations there, if my memory is correct, and as it rained I gathered water. But the rain was followed by sunny weather.

The young man disappeared in search of water, and returned with word that he had stopped at a house on a nearby road but the woman would not let him in to fill his canteen; so he told her that his sergeant would come with him and she said yes, in that case. So we both went to her house. She filled our canteens inside but said, "No more. If my husband knew I'd given you water he'd beat me up." I thanked her and she shut the door and bolted it.

Naturally my young friend used all of his water right away. So we then went through the woods on a side hill, hoping to find one of those depressions where water sometimes collects if you dig a hole nearby for it to filter through the sandy earth, and you can drink it.

(Of course, when overseas we would have halizone tablets to put in the water we found. Even if it looked good we'd put halizone tablets in it just to be sure.)

While we were searching the young man suddenly said, "Sergeant, that Jeep just came out of our camp."

We yelled and waved our arms but the driver had his eyes on the road and he couldn't hear us over his motor sound. But yes it was my Jeep driver, sent to bring me back to Cannon Company.

The week was up and the trucks came for the barracks bags and I rode with my Jeep driver. About half way back we met Capt. Sullivan who was looking for me. He was not in a pleasant mood, and ordered the Jeep driver to take me to the Regiment CP where I was to report.

We complied, and my Jeep driver returned to Cannon Company. I was then ordered to take my gear, and an orderly would escort me to a tent. It was a pup tent in which I was to stay while waiting for Capt. Sullivan. I went to the chow line and had mess with the Regiment HQ people.

It was late Sunday afternoon when Capt. Sullivan appeared at my tent. I came to attention. With a razor blade he removed my 1st Sgt. stripes and told me that a Jeep driver would take me to H Company

My Military Experiences

Headquarters to report to Capt. Coddle. I did so. The clerk took some data from me and I was told to sew on some staff sergeant stripes. A soldier then took me to a group of non-coms gathered around a fire telling stories.

I introduced myself, and found them to be a really great bunch of fellows there that first night. Of course I was now a supernumerary, unattached to any unit.

After several days I became tired of this. But my relief was to be peculiar to say the least.

One Sunday afternoon I was wandering around the camp when I observed a soldier approach 1st Sgt. Ferk.

"Hi, Top Kick," he began, "How's about..."

At this point, beyond any volition on my part, I suddenly asked distinctively, "Soldier, is that the proper way to address your First Sergeant?"

Sgt. Ferk just looked at me, turned and walked away. And the soldier walked away. Everyone within range stopped in his tracks. I turned on my heel and went to my tent. I was disgusted with myself, for I had no idea why I had done that.

Early that evening the CO ordered me to report to the First Sergeant and I did so. Sgt. Ferk merely handed me a piece of paper and said, "Sergeant Phelps, here's a list of men for your squad. Find 'em and have 'em clean your mortar."

I looked them up and found them already at work cleaning the gun. A tall thin fellow introduced himself as Cpl. Huston, the gunner, and each man gave his name. The man who had spoken so to the first sergeant (above) was J.J. Allen. A tall dark fellow was named Vesh. The heavy set fellow was Rocco. There were two others whose names I don't recall. I realized right away that I had been handed the "gold brickers" of the Company.

Vesh spoke first, saying, "Sergeant, we'll take your orders on duty here but we want nothing to do with you in our free time."

"Okay men, that's all right with me. And remember this. I don't really care what you call your first sergeant or me. I was just getting tired of hanging around. You do your work and I'll do mine."

Privates Vesh and Rocco preferred to work in the mess hall, but they did all right until the first time we had to fire a mortar in a test with Infantry. I should of course have enquired of our platoon sergeant, Manwiller, whether they had qualified with the mortar.

Everything seemed to work out well. I had to go on the firing range to qualify with the gun instructor and Sgt. Ed Znudzien accompanied me, which began a new friendship. However, at an important regimental exercise I found that he didn't know his job, which made a poor mark for the captain and myself.

Not long after that I was sent on the range again and I qualified once more. This time Sgt. Francis Cremins was my coach, and again a friendship was born. It turned out that he lived in Dorchester, Mass., not far from where I had roomed with a Mrs. Spurr when I was in Art School. Of course he knew all about Franklin Park and the Arnold Arboretum.

My Military Experiences

The army was about to take on us draftees, many of us with college degrees. No rough stuff or senseless hazing, as I understood it, but they intended to push us to the limit.

Sergeants Cremins and Znudzien were both first class mortar men. I would lose Ed in France, but Francis would remain with H Company until the Division returned to the U.S. in late 1945.

Francis had a troublesome attribute at parties, though, as he would get drunk and want to fight everyone.

George Sheraw, who came from Poughkeepsie, N.Y., was more than a little Amerind [American-Indian].

As for J.J. Allen, he and I had a lot in common but often saw things differently. He told me once that his father was in WW-I. Through no fault of his, or of mine in a sense, I reported his dirty linen improperly to Sgt. Manwiller, which precipitated a run-in one evening when Allen was drunk.

He and I would be distracted by one another throughout our time in H Company. We got along like a couple of touchy brothers. He could be very funny when he chose to be, though, and I was sure he'd be okay when we got into combat, if we ever did. I miss him to this day.

"It's gonna be a helluva job whipping this new army into shape without a whip," gloomily observed 1st Sgt. Pederzani of D Company, 104th Infantry.

"Yeah," laconically replied his transportation sergeant, St. Louis, an ex-marine.

That's the story a 104th Infantry friend told me several months later on a rainy Sunday in our pup tents during southern maneuvers in November.

Two Pennsylvania lads whom I thought a lot of were Bernhardt and Borneman. I think Borneman was the youngest man in the platoon. Both were German-American descendents of Palatinate [a region in Germany] immigrants when America was young.

Sgt. Liberty and I had an unspoken, friendly contact over the leadership of our men. He had a French flair for doing the right thing.

There was a Sgt. Faust, who was another Penn State man of Palatinate ancestry. A quiet one and a first class soldier was Sgt. Tom Kennedy. Cpl. Weber would usually be my Jeep driver overseas, but in the States I had not yet gotten to know him well.

A few days after I came to H Company, before I had a squad, our company was on a long hike that ended up in the woods during a heavy rainfall. On returning to camp we came to a small brook flowing across the road, the one that we'd taken in the morning.

Nobody made a move to go across so I said, "Come on, boys," and I plunged in, using an occasional large rock for a step stone, and everyone followed. As there were no officers at that point I figured it was my job to go first. The water was very cold.

When we were at Camp Gordon, Georgia, our "war" experiences had included the 1943 Cumberland River flood crossing. One company of the 104th Regiment lost over two-dozen men there. I was not exactly sure of what could happen here at Fort Jackson.

My Military Experiences

I think it was during this, our second stay at Fort Jackson sometime in early 1944, that we finally received the word to clean and cosmoline our mortars and weapons for overseas travel. We then boarded trains for the north once more. This time there was a tension in the air. It was a strange feeling, one of hoping we would prove to be real soldiers when the time came. "But could this finally be true?" We had all felt sure the war would be over before we got there, based on the news we received of General Patton's successes.

The evening was early as our train made slow progress past the West Point railway station at the foot of a tall dark hill in New York City, then came to a stop at the station for Camp Shanks. The closing of the gate behind the last man gave us the sense of being cut off from the life we had known. However, and to my surprise, passes were issued to those of us whose wives were waiting hopefully for a last brief visit in a hotel.

Gladys had checked in with her sister Alice, who would take care of Jason in her room on another floor while Gladys and I had a room together for the night.

Camp Shanks, New York

It was back to Camp Shanks in the morning. The place was deadly quiet, as it turned out that many of the men had the next day and evening off as well, for each outfit had its exact time for departure lest there be a bottleneck.

Our time came all right and we marched to our pier. Up the gangplank we went, just as General "Gangplank" Paul had promised. Our ship, a Liberty Ship I think, was the U.S.S. McAndrew.

I must say that the Navy did a superb job and everything went like clockwork, with each unit moving at command and quartered aboard ship in a well-marked area. Every unit had been set up for guard duty throughout the ship. My section and Sgt. Liberty's watch came due sometime mid-voyage, as I recall.

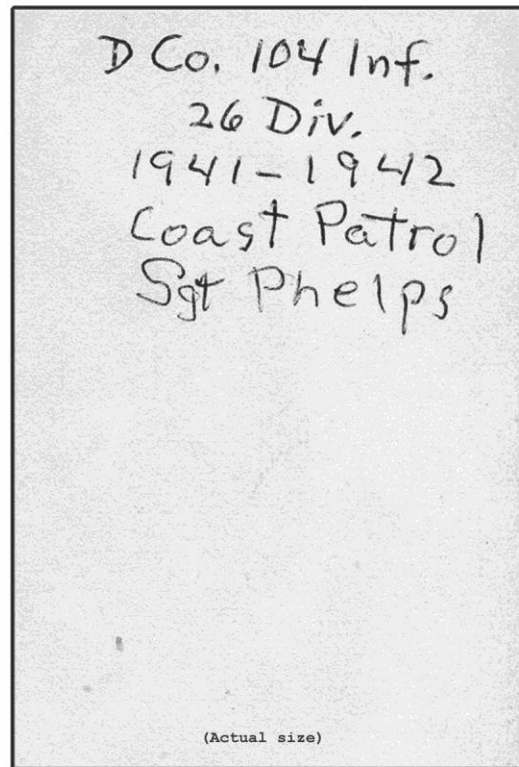
In the meantime we'd wander certain deck areas without interfering with the ship's personnel. Some of the company were seasick but only once did I feel likely. One morning in the galley while waiting in line a guy ahead of me got sick and up-chucked. I quietly left and returned to my quarters.

Since our good ship encountered no violent or unusual North Atlantic storms, I was not to succumb to the Mal de Mer.

By turn our units participated in a boat drill, and exercised in a large area that I don't really remember. There was only one time that I recall some excitement on deck, when our destroyer escort seemed a bit alarmed about a possible enemy submarine. Otherwise the voyage was uneventful as far as I was concerned.

And then we found ourselves approaching the English Channel.

My Military Experiences



Sketch by John when on Maneuvers in the South

My Military Experiences

PART TWO

EUROPEAN THEATER of OPERATIONS

NORMANDY, EASTERN FRANCE

September 7, 1944:

There was great interest when someone shouted, "Ireland." And soon the Chalk Cliffs of Dover came into view. But we didn't go to England, we hove off to the coast of France - one of the first troop carriers to do so - where we climbed down the cargo nets onto LCTs (Landing Craft Troops), and drove toward the shore at Utah Beach where several steel wharves ran out into the sea. When the LCT's steel ramps were dropped onto them we marched ashore; not at all like the storming of the beaches in June when men had struggled in the water to get ashore or died in the attempt. A myriad of rusting craft lay in the water from that valorous day, so obvious to us as we marched laden with barracks bags the length of the wharves.

As soon as we got ashore we formed up and marched, in our turn, up steep paths to a comparatively level plateau where pillboxes now were silent, and onward between thick hedgerows. After a while the companies formed up along the countrified road and turned in, on the left, to a great field where an easily visible sign marked our area. There, by companies and platoons, we erected our shelter halves in a military manner.

From there we made daily marches along country roads, many of them with apple trees alongside. Pretty tart were the apples, but they made very good cider. There was a small cheese manufactory close by and the place did a lively business, until they ran out of aged cheeses and sold us unripe cheeses that made us sick. But that didn't affect the cider and cognac trade.

We saw a man with a wheelbarrow load of stone across the way; stone he had just cut from a family quarry in a back yard using a saw that looked like those we used, back on the farm, to cut ice with on the winter pond. He and others were repairing shellfire damage. One house had a perfect hole under its gable, where an armor-piercing round had gone through the little building from end to end.

We rarely saw any young women, but some of the fellows at first had dates with the few that were about. To prevent the possibility of any unpleasant episodes turning the friendly attitude of our Norman neighbors against us, fraternizing or dating with the local girls was forbidden by the higher command.

The Normans seemed to be glad we were there, perhaps especially so because they felt that now the Germans were not about to come back.

I forgot to mention that when we came up from the beach we passed a cemetery beside the road, where a number of gravestones had shallow niches in them with photos of the deceased in special frames. I was to see more of them in other cemeteries in Europe.

General George S. Patton's Third Army was actually created in August of 1944. It now included General Eddy's XII Corps, General Willard Paul's 26th Division and our 328th Infantry Regiment.

My Military Experiences

Now, because Patton's tanks had moved ahead so fast they were way ahead of fuel and supplies, the "Red Ball Express" was formed. The 26th Division detached its trucks and, under Major Arnott of the 328th, the convoys went into action: 2½-ton trucks (some called them deuce-and-a-halves) in virtually around the clock operation getting the fuel, food, materiel and so on to the fronts to keep the pressure on the Germans. They did a great job. And they were often under enemy artillery fire before we were.

October 1944:

The 328th Infantry left St. Martin on October 4th and commenced through the wet and cold toward Fontainebleau, our Regiment Assembly Point. I remember seeing the war-torn Norman towns, the St. Lo devastation and others from which some of our ancestors had come. I remember especially the silhouetted gable-end of a Norman church on a hill, which I saw from the front seat of a 2½-ton truck as we snaked through bulldozed streets and alleys where artillery damaged ruins had clogged our way to Fontainebleu.

The truck was not one of ours, and a black man drove. At first we were silent. Finally I asked him whether he was a married man. He was and we had a good visit about our families back in the States. I've often wondered whether he got home after the war.

I remember the woods at Fontainebleu, and the stone mill and the pond with ducks swimming idly in the mill's reflection, and the laughing girls silhouetted in the windows waving to us, safely reflected in the water beyond our reach.

On our side of the pond the engineers had set up a much appreciated shower point. Five minutes was allowed each man under the hot shower, then off to a room where luxurious big towels were handed to us. When dry, an attendant did his best to provide clean underclothes, socks, a clean uniform and shoes of a proper size as we each progressed down the long aisle of dark canvas walls, emerging to dazzling sunlight on luscious green grass; whilst our lady killers did their best to converse in broken French with the damsels in the windows across the waters.

But all too soon we climbed aboard the trucks, the amenities of civilization soon to be forgotten as we approached a region we would long remember; a battle line defined by brush, trees, damaged buildings, and the intermittent sound of machine guns and mortars from both sides, even German heavy guns.

On October 5th and 6th we crossed the Moselle at Pont a Mousson, and proceeded to within 5-miles of the Attan lo woods where we bivouacked. From there we went on through Vic sur Seille, to Bezange la Petite, Moncourt Crossing, and made camp at Bezange le Grande, all in the region of Lorraine.

Though some elements had been attached to the 80th Division we had finally taken over; some sooner on the line than others as is the nature of Battalion use, companies rotating so that one is always in reserve. It was planned that a section of our mortars was to be in support of those on the line. The men were finally up forward in the

My Military Experiences

"fun" position they'd yearned for back in the states; a section of heavy machine guns and our 81mm mortars in support of an element of the 80th Division. Lt. Speck was forward as observer.

The rest of us were held within a lovely woodland, like a park. There was a mounded German bunker there, so well covered with grassy sod that from the air it was probably confused with the park-like grass around it. Platoon Sergeant Bruce Manwiller, and any of the men not on a gun, really enjoyed this bunker. The Germans had it fitted up with a kitchenette and all the conveniences of home, in a rough sense.

It was deemed safe to bring the kitchen field pots up under the big trees and we ate lunch picnic style. However, two men had to remain on the gun some hundred feet away to the left front in a small clear spot. While we were at lunch Lt. Speck, who was up on the line with the infantrymen, called for mortar fire. The range was such that Corporal Leffel had his loader lie on the tall brush ahead of his gun, to be sure of clear fire, and after setting the range he dropped or sort of threw the shells down the barrel of the gun and achieved the distance he wanted, which was further than could have been expected from the gun.

When the 328th riflemen were finally relieved they told tales that would later seem like trifles, but at the time they built up morale. They also told of stringing up empty ration cans so that nobody could sneak up on them in the night without warning. This was early in October 1944. I think we were on line about two weeks before parting from the 80th Division.

Then, in reserve for a brief spell, we dug our foxholes on a grassy slope. I remember it was a lovely day and I recall that Captain Andon's foxhole was near mine. His was well constructed, with a log roof and room for several of his headquarters men.

From where we were we had a panoramic view of the distant battle area. I think it may have been there that we observed a dogfight between some of our planes and the Germans. In fact, it may have been the day that we saw a flight of B17s returning from a daylight bombing mission. One seemed to be in trouble and as soon, evidently, as it crossed the front line parachutes blossomed and the men floated to earth on our side. The crewless plane continued on its way till out of sight in the west.

One morning, a Sunday, when Father Brausfield was holding a service using an altar set up in his Jeep, we heard airplanes coming in on a glide beyond a row of trees. I was at the barracks bag pile, searching for my bag, when I looked up and saw a P-47 trailing black smoke and being pursued by two German F-109s. The P-47 crashed on a burley hillside a half-mile to our left; the 109s, whose pilots we could plainly see, glided gracefully very low beyond Father Brausfield. No shots were fired while we watched and they took off toward the front. We heard anti-aircraft fire beyond but they kept on going. We later learned that both 109s were shot down before reaching the German lines.

Our forward Observation Post, although in a building, was different from some that we had used. To get to it we had to walk from our town building, where we were billeted, across a long wide meadow situated

My Military Experiences

between our buildings and those the Germans occupied on the further embankment.

It appeared that they had an OP as well and could see quite a lot of our traffic, mostly our runners, but enough that the Jerries were delivering timed-fire with their mortars.

A 2nd lieutenant, who had requested service with our H Company mortar section, accompanied me on a trip to our OP.

"Sergeant," Lt. McCarthy finally admitted, "I've never really been under fire. I'm scared."

"Sir," I replied, "Anybody who says he's not scared is a liar. Don't worry about it." (However, he would not be with us the next day.)

We were within a hundred yard of our objective, I'd guess, when several mortar shells exploded either in one of the many trees or on the path we would soon be on. One of my men had told me this would happen, but no shell up to that time had struck the road we were using. Even so I'd deliberately held back until the barrage came, and when it was over I asked the lieutenant to double-time with me to make sure we'd get to the building, where we expected to find Lt. Speck on observation duty.

We climbed three flights of stairs to a ladder into an attic, which bears description once I remark that the stairs went up to a square, exposed glass tower on the opposite corner of a fine apartment.

If my memory is correct, the building was made of brick. The attic was wooden-floored, though I recall some houses I'd been in had attic floors of concrete. Lt. Speck was there of course, and a Lt. Colonel of artillery. I believe I was about to introduce the lieutenant with me to Lt. Speck, who, however, had already met him and so he introduced him to the artillery officer.

The officers had some ingenious apertures in the wall for observation, made by pushing the bottom edge of one of those ubiquitous European red tiles a couple inches up and pushing a small wooden block or other object to hold it that way. We were able to observe a wide area with our field glasses, with apparently no detection by the Germans.

At this point I'd like to interject that, although we generally used the word "Krout" or other epithet, these many years after the fact it no longer seems appropriate.

Some of our sergeants, corporals and Jeep drivers were often more at risk than we were because, when needed, they would carry the wounded out of some very ticklish situations. Cpl. Weber, on one occasion at Moncourt Crossing, took me forward of the buildings at the crossroad itself to Sgt. Putterman's mortar section. The road forward was slightly downgrade for a few hundred yards, and then a narrow field opened off to the right. Both of us were a little surprised not to have received mortar fire from an alert enemy. We were not at all surprised when, almost as soon as we entered the field close to its lower edge near the small trees and brush, a mortar shell landed about 15 feet beyond us on the upper hillside. As we continued, about four more landed.

My Military Experiences

By the time we reached Putterman's site the shelling had ceased. However, the sergeant was so upset that neither he nor his crew would take a bite of the food we had brought, despite the fact that I sat down and ate a good meal out in the open. There was a good covered foxhole for most of the men and the mortar was set up behind a small, knocked-out German tank, if I remember correctly.

Weber was disgusted. After all, he had brought the hot food up despite his knowing that we'd likely be shelled. Nevertheless, we waited till twilight before we crept out of there, with nary a goodbye enemy shelling for good measure.

My next memory is of Sgt. Putterman's Section being with the reserve company when we took over some really first class log-, board- and sod-covered German foxholes. We were located a few yards in front of a battery of 105 howitzers. It was raining when we checked into our little inn. What else! During the night the battery began firing salvos just as a terrible thunder and lightning storm took place. The combination was hellish, the roar of guns, the crash of thunder, and the freight-car-sound of shells flying close over our heads!

Putterman was one of the few people I have known who was deathly afraid of thunder and lightning, and with this gunfire he became hysterical. He kept trying to burrow under me and the blankets for protection.

The storm let up but not the rain, and about 3 o'clock or so in the morning we were routed out, our mortars loaded into the trailers, the sergeants and gunners into their jeeps, and everyone else in 2½-ton trucks for an early morning rainy run to a new position. The rain ceased, followed by heavy fog. Men were off-loaded a little before the crest of a hill, while our gun-jeep and trailer crept onward a bit further before unloading us, our mortars and ammo in a ghostly foggy dawn on a shell-holed macadam road. Quiet was the word, as we walked a very short distance into a narrow, abandoned gravel pit. Sergeants Liberty and Faust set up their gun nearest the shell-pocked macadam road, and I set up Sergeant Putterman's gun at the far end. A brooklet divided the two sections. A swampy wood bounded our front and the far end was some five feet lower than a pasture that continued around behind us to the road, with a barbed wire fence defining it.

Sergeants Liberty and Faust then took off for an observation post in a brick building at the foot of the hill, on the same side of the road as we were. It stood beside a deep stream about fifteen feet across, at a guess.

I decided that two observers was enough and that one sergeant should stay with the guns. The next morning I took a walk there, to see what was there, and discovered an artillery sergeant observer also at the position. They were having a good time so I came back to the guns by way of a path through a small vineyard with grapes so delicious and overripe that many had split and leaked out their sweet juices. I had never eaten grapes so delicious.

I discovered a dead German soldier, actually a youth, on the vineyard path on the way back. Part of his nose and upper jaw had been blown away by a grenade or mortar shell fragment. A few papers and a

My Military Experiences

faded photo lay where someone had left them, on his chest, after going through his pockets.

One morning I observed an elderly Alsatian shuffling over to examine the vineyard. (A bit of description is in order here.) The road we came in on in the foggy dawn went straight to the bottom of the hill, and was known to be not only under observation in daylight but at odd hours received timed fire. Nobody was foolhardy enough to appear on it in daylight because that would be asking for the mortar fire to come. There were several supposedly abandoned houses on the far side of this macadam road, big willow trees along both banks of the stream at the observation post and below our gun position, and a variety of spindly young trees in a swamp.

We had a sound-powered phone line from the observation post to each of our mortars, in case of a call for a fire mission. One late, wet evening a call came up to Faust's sentry from the artillery sergeant. Rogue was on the gun and refused to fire a mission for someone he didn't know, so I took the call and had my gunner fire the mission. I always felt that Faust should have been at his gun anyway.

One day, at about 2 o'clock of a foggy morning, my sentry woke me and whispered, "Sarge, I think there's a German patrol out there coming toward us."

I listened intently. There was no doubt at all that footsteps were gradually approaching the gravel pit. My carbine at the ready, I finally saw shapes begin to form in the thick fog. **Cows!** Several of them became apparent but I kept watch for some time lest a real enemy patrol was mixed among the cattle for camouflage. The young soldier was embarrassed, but I praised him for his alertness. Better that than to let a real patrol come in among the cattle and wipe us out with hand grenades while we were asleep.

A macabre situation took place one sunny afternoon when some of Faust's men decided to search the little brook in the pasture above us, where the grass was very tall and luscious. They had only gone some twenty feet above our positions when they discovered a very dead German soldier lying in the brook. They were a little upset, because they had been filling their canteens from that brook where it flowed across our positions. I asked whether they had been putting the halizone tablets in their water as they were supposed to. They looked at me rather strangely but said nothing. Well, as a doctor once said, "You can't live peoples' lives for them."

The riflemen of our battalion, at other locations, did have lethal contact with German elements, and somewhere in this time frame a patrol was ambushed when they went in to scout a town. Very few of them managed to crawl away, many were killed and some were captured.

A place called Vic sur Seille was one of the towns involved in our introduction to real warfare, and I have a mental picture of our having bivouacked in this locality on a bluff. Next day, in the ubiquitous Alsatian rain, my mortar section followed the riflemen, sometimes on their arse, down a slick clay path to a spongy grass plain where there were German tanks scattered around because they had run out of gas, or so it appeared. Several dead cattle lay about and I

My Military Experiences

think it was there, whatever the location name, that Captain Andon paid a Frenchman for a young bull, a battle casualty with a broken leg, which he had one of our men butcher and we had fresh beef.

Several roads ran through the plain, and beside one was a small church that had been ruined by shell fire. I shall never forget the figure of Jesus on a large cross hanging at an angle by one cross arm over the doorway: The inside of the little church was a roofless burned ruin. Somebody can probably give this place its name from memory, I'm sorry to admit that I cannot do so.

My next picture is of de-trucking after a refreshing period of brief rest at the top of a slope, down and away from which a vast area could be seen right and left as though scooped out long ago by some giant. This formed a ridge on the left to woods where at night tracers from our machine guns flashed. And from that point trees ran to the bottom across a level area where the 2nd Battalion Command Post was located, with brushy stuff beyond.

Near the bottom of that slope, to the right center, was a shrine-like building that our Catholic boys said was dedicated to St. Joseph, if my memory serves. We went down past that onto an old road that ran past our riflemen dug in at the base of the left slope, then marched on past the left end of the Battalion C.P. where the woods began again. Presently, while following our 104th Infantry guide from whom we were taking over the mortar position, we came to a small clearing where an unattended German 88mm field piece was aimed down the road on which we had just approached. Our guide thought the piece was ready for action. We shivered but followed him diagonally across the left edge of a muddy ploughed field on our right, then up a slight grade to a ridge with an open space between some brush. It was there, as it turned out, that our own Lt. Moran already had a machine gun section in a prepared position.

Our guide wasted no time in leaving. We shortly became very battle wise. Having been accustomed to positions located behind something, we had not realized that this position was under active German observation. We had one large 6x6-foot gun trench with a makeshift roof of sheet metal and old boards on stakes at the four corners, for defense against rain only. We walked around boldly, then discovered that there was only one real slit trench for our use, and another only 12-inches deep at the most because the position was on a rocky eminence with only a thin sheet of soil.

But at least we were now at our designated gun position on the Battalion map.

I don't remember which rifle company was dug in out there in the trees and brush some yards beyond the sergeant's gun. But some days earlier Weber and I had brought hot food forward to its captain and Cpl. Bernhard's squad at Moncourt Crossing.

The road approach swings a bit to the right as you emerge from the woods, with deciduous trees on the left and a hedge in front of a dwelling house on the right. Perhaps a 100-yards ahead was our crossroad, but we were to go straight beyond to the second roofless structure, which was Captain Andon's Command Post.

My Military Experiences

We were right behind the hedge and dwelling house when the banshee nebelwerfers came flying into the treetops and all around us. Luckily, nary a one came too close.

We unloaded our shiny aluminum mess cans with the hot food as soon as Weber parked against the rear wall of the CP, then handed it off to the men inside and followed them down a set of stairs to a landing where we waited while the officers and men ate their lunch.

Occasionally, shells exploded against the outer walls and at various spots around the crossroads. They seemed to be at timed intervals, which was what Weber relied on when we left the place to feed one of my gun crews in a ruined inn. I judged it as an inn from its size along its north arm, and I think we came in from the west. Weber and I had brought food up to this section at least twice, so I guess our transportation sergeant alternated the drivers.

These men were billeted in, as I wrote, what may have been a small inn in peacetime. It was a long structure of a number of rooms without much of any second story as a result of shelling. But the men had made a first rate quarters of one room, having blanketed windows, plugged holes, and heaped all manner of furniture and lumber against the holed walls so that no light would show from their candles.

I was interested in a very dead German soldier that had been carefully laid out on a couch or something under a heavy dining table; part of the junk against the outer wall on the German side of the room.

There was a bayonet in the cadaver's abdomen, which appeared to have been detached from a rifle. Or had someone used it as a short sword? I think the men said the body was on the floor when they arrived.

A fire order came in on the sound-powered phone while we were there, and the gun crew hustled out to send their explosive greetings to the Jerries. Of course that crew had greeted our appearance - and our field kitchen cans full of hot food - with pleasurable grunts of satisfaction when Weber parked his Jeep along the street-side walls of their war-torn Inn. Somewhere, as usual, a GI had located a bottle of liquor that was poured around for a taste in every canteen cup.

On one of our luncheon visits, Weber and I came onto the crossing as the Jerries' shells plastered an empty field beyond the building, mentioned above, leaving great round black discs in the white snow.

And then, doggedly marching across that field, we spotted a lone GI rifleman. Tired and cold he did not hurry but plugged onward with his rifle slung from his shoulder, his helmet at a rakish angle, and with a be-damned-to-you expression on his face.

When the shelling ceased, the "Inn" mortar men ran out and got him inside. Whose mother's son was he? I think he told our lads when they questioned him that he had been freezing long enough and discovered that his buddies were dead or had moved forward somewhere without notifying him.

My Military Experiences

Foret de Bride et de Koecking

November 1944:

I am a bit confused as to the ending of 2nd Battalion's engagement in the Foret de Bride et de Koecking. I do remember that a great many of us had begun to have colds. The fact is that the old adage "a soldier's worst enemy is weather and disease" began to be evident. Rain and wetness were never far from us; our clothes and boots seemed always to be soaking wet. Not only that but after a while the snow complicated our movements.

As I understand it, Foret de Bride and de Koecking was a wooded ridge that was essential for us to clear of Germans lest they threaten our advances elsewhere. And our entry into this engagement seemed rather effective, as I look back on it from a GI's point of view.

I remember marching in a column along an old woods road, a rifle company ahead of us, when the shelling began. Everybody hit the prone. It was mostly tree bursts, I think.

In a big field on a slope to the right front Captain Andon yelled, "Get those guns up here!"

We picked ourselves up and our gun and hustled up the slope where the other sections, under Lt. Speck and Platoon Sgt. Manwiller, set up all of the mortars in a row several yards apart.

"Is this the way to fire mortars in battalion formation?" the captain enquired, or words to that effect.

"Yes sir," I replied. "All on the same target at once."

"Then set up your guns and everybody fire on my command," he ordered.

He was on the wire to the infantry up front, who fed him the azimuth that he relayed to us, and our gunners raised an arm when all was set. Each man stood with a mortar shell poised above his gun's muzzle, watching the captains raised arm. When it dropped, every gun coughed its deadly burden high into the air, and the shells were fed till the captain gave the order to "Cease fire." Although, through the dimness of time I feel that we may have lifted our fire once or twice before that order came through. (Perhaps he can set me straight on that some time.) I do not recall that particular gun formation ever being used again during our European service. I believe it was the way the mortar had been used in WW-I.

Nowadays the army has artillery for support. Our mortars were used as an extra backup for battalion support, as they were larger than the 60mm mortars carried by the rifle companies. They were especially effective when using a forward observer's actual sighting of men pinned down by enemy fire. On that day, I presume that our supporting artillery had not yet gotten into position, after entering the woods, and the infantry had run into the German positions.

After that, Lt. Speck's platoon was set up on the right flank of our neck of the woods, or at least the section I was in, and Putterman was our section sergeant at the time.

Our position was above a draw that was the defining edge of the ridge at that point, or so it appeared to me. The day hadn't been too bad but as darkness fell a light rain began to fall. In a

My Military Experiences

small cleared space among the trees stood a two-wheeled trailer shed, painted red and with its door padlocked.

Lt. Speck ordered, "No tampering," as it had likely been booby-trapped by the Germans when they pulled out.

An old woods road led off along the edge of this draw, and Sgt. Putterman ordered me to take a look-see ahead. I found it to be lined with well-dug foxholes and slit trenches along both sides, nicely camouflaged with the brush that grew beside this old road.

I went for some distance, but it had been vacated with nary a scrap of anything whatever in the holes. I returned and reported that all seemed devoid of any thing, living or dead, although I'd heard in the distance a sound which was a sort of wailing call for help. And it was heard throughout the night. Was it the eerie sound of some wounded man beseeching aid? Or, as everyone wondered, was it a trick the German's were using in hopes that some naive soldier would follow it to a sudden volley of fiery death or capture. I believe that incident was mentioned in some official reports of this particular sector.

We ate our cold rations in the excellent slit trenches we found waiting for us; two men to a trench, a raincoat under us and one over our blankets with a shelter-half stretched over some boards over the hole. One man was to be awake at all times during the night, using the buddy system.

I don't recall who my buddy was that night, one of the new men I expect. Along about 2am he woke me, by squeezing my arm as I had instructed. It was foggy, and even the trees a few yards distant were faint bits of dark upright blobs, their upper branches invisible.

"There's something moving out there," my buddy whispered. I listened, and sure enough among all of the soft night sounds, yes, I could hear something moving toward us. It would stop for a time then move forward again.

That someone must have been very good, as I could not distinguish any large mass other than tree trunks in the foggy night. Finally, some fifteen feet away, a form separated from the grayness on the wet fallen leaves. A bunny rabbit!

It was laughable. Here we were, rifles at the ready, to suddenly be faced with one of the most harmless creatures on the face of the earth. We chuckled in silent relief then, our taut muscles relaxing after having visualized a German patrol at the worst.

When dawn arrived we gathered with the rest of our section around Lt. Speck, where we learned that the rifle fire in the night had indeed been a probing attempt at our forward lines. Our Machine-gun Sgt. Grondin had been killed, and several were wounded in the brief, vicious encounter. But our men had held and given the Germans a good account of themselves, and our battalion had now been relieved.

It was Sgt. Grondin's first fight. He had just rejoined us, having been left in the states when we embarked for Europe because he was in the hospital, if memory serves me correctly.

Because we had been relieved but not yet en-trucked, I took a look-see at where the action had taken place during the night, when the German patrol had probed our positions and been driven off after the fire fight that killed Sgt. Grondin. I found where one of our

My Military Experiences

riflemen had been killed, I believe, because an M1-rifle was leaning against the base of a blood spattered tree trunk. I took it, the rifle, and carried it with me or in our Jeep throughout the rest of our 2nd Battalion's war, all the way to VE Day in Czechoslovakia.

My regular arm as a sergeant was an M1-carbine, which I found adequate for any shooting I was required to do. But the only claim to any German deaths I caused was among the unknown number my section may have killed or wounded with our 81mm mortar fire. I don't mean that I was never under machine gun or artillery fire, because I was. And I've seen German tanks in action. But, for instance, I never had to stick a man in the belly with a bayonet.

It is one of the terrible facts of modern war, that from the time of the invention of cannon fire that could bring down hitherto impregnable stone walls from a distance, the gunner never sees the death he has caused at the moment of impact. Artillery fire and air bombing is a cold, mathematical accomplishment.

Our progress through the Foret de Bride et de Koecking was like that. Advance, flush the enemy, hold while another battalion or regiment passed through our lines to continue the pressure, and vice-versa until the forest ridge was won. It was mid November.

As the war progressed and the weather worsened the men no longer griped about being in the war, but no words were spared in cursing the perpetual rain and snow. And the resultant trench foot caused more than enough bitching to last a lifetime.

In late November the 328th Infantry was committed to attack at Dieuze. We were then trucked back to reinforce the 101st. The streams were in flood and we were wet all the time. A foxhole would fill up with water from the rain before morning. Even a roofless, beat-up old stone house somehow made us feel better, just because it had once been a comfortable place to be, I suppose.

It was a funny thing, but our raincoats were so airtight that condensation formed on the insides, and we often wondered why we wore them. Of course it was caused by the steam from the wet clothes that the heat of the body was giving off.

They issued us overshoes, and after we got them full of water a few times our feet were worse off than with just our combat boots on. So we threw the overshoes away beside the trail. The government had spent good money for them, but we felt warmer in our wet leather combat boots. The generals were to learn a lot about the need for improved winter clothing, especially in the boot department.

The ubiquitous "C Ration" came in for curses enough as well, although the food was wholesome. It was the packaging. No one who has never had to open a tin can with a bayonet, with fingers so cold they wanted to stay in a half-curl, can know why soldiers so often threw their cans away unopened. They'll never know the contempt those cans of nourishing frozen food engendered. They'd have to spend time in a cold foxhole trying to open a can themselves to understand. Of course, after the GIs smartened up they kept the rations to trade to the natives for eggs when we got off the line.

Yet, despite all of that, our food was a Godsend compared to the rations of a German Wehrmacht or a Russian foot soldier.

My Military Experiences

Finally, when the Foret push had been accomplished, the 104th Regiment or the 101st went through ours in pursuit of a retiring Wehrmacht German Army. Captain Andon took our H Company to a place with quite a stand of fir trees alongside an old woods road. Our Jeeps were supplied with regular axes, and we set to work cutting some felled trees into lengths to cover the well-dug foxholes abandoned, I presume, by the Germans.

I suddenly became acutely ill with pains in my stomach. And I was not alone. The men paired off and Pvt. Ahrens and I took to a foxhole. I began to use an axe while he scrounged for bark and small stuff with which to cover the log roof we planned, but I discovered myself so ill that I could not even dent a log with the axe!

Ahrens was a big man. He took over the axe and in no time finished the job of roofing our foxhole, which we then made as waterproof as possible with the bark, small brush and one of our shelter halves against possible snow in the night. Placing one of our shelter halves and a raincoat on the "floor", a blanket under and over us topped with the other raincoat, we had ourselves as comfortable quarters as a GI could have for an overnight hotel.

I believe our mess was brought up in the customary big field pots, but although it was excellent and hot I couldn't think of food.

"Doc" Kessler, our Medic, ordered me to report for sick call in the morning. But I was to spend a miserable night, upchucking into my steel helmet several times. I'm sure that Ahrens hardly slept, what with our regular two-hour watch swap as was our custom, and my illness.

At daylight the word went around for men who were in need to report for sick call. A warm fire had been built under the fir trees at Capt. Andon's CP. A great many reported in with trench foot, to my surprise, as well as stomach problems such as mine. Among them was Sgt. Faust, of Sgt. Hector Liberty's mortar section.

Many of the men, despite our instructions, wore too many socks and the foot was so tight in the boot the toes couldn't wiggle. We had stressed that a field soldier should change his socks daily, and when he put the second pair on he should turn them inside out from what they had been; all of this over and over until clean socks were once more available.

I refused to go on sick call after all, as I was feeling considerably better. I rested all day and along toward nightfall reported as ordered to the captain, who enquired after my health. I assured him that I felt much improved and he then ordered me to report to Sgt. Slattery, to stand guard with him on his .30-caliber machine gun. The sergeant had been left short of men because so many had reported either with trench foot or severe stomach cramps at sick call that morning.

I was glad to be relieved of boredom with something to do. We would man his machine gun in a pit on perimeter guard duty that night, so as not to be taken by surprise by a German combat patrol.

I found the sergeant already set up with a fine foxhole for two, albeit one of us would stay on the gun. Each would stand a two-hour guard, the duty alternating throughout the night.

My Military Experiences

In the early evening we visited at the gun pit, swapping stories about our respective families. I believe his family was in Washington, D.C. Of course, as an old machine gun sergeant when I was in the 104th Infantry back in the states, the gun was familiar to me. Still the sergeant briefly went over the proper use and checkout procedure, in case of a stoppage of some sort.

The position had a wide field of fire for swiveling the gun at need. For some fifty-feet everything was quite clear, other than for a few tall, gaunt, leafless trees. Beyond those, some brush oaks in their brown winter garb stood out over the snowy terrain among a number of smaller trees, such as those close by. With few exceptions none of them was greater than eight- to twelve-inches in diameter at the butt, and would furnish practically no safety for a man behind them. And the ground had very few mounds or gullies of much value for a prone figure, except for a small snow capped rock here and there.

After the war, I read somewhere that one of our gunners had used his .30-caliber machine gun to cut a 12-inch tree off at the butt in his attempt to get a pestiferous German gunner who kept firing at our boys.

No untoward sounds came from the wastelands. Just those we had become accustomed to, including the occasional sound of distant artillery fire.

I believe we were en-trucked some time on the following day for replacement troops, a brief rest, showers and fresh clothes, and we were then ready for our next assignment.

SAAR REGION

and

Woelfling, Lorraine

December, 1944:

I had gone about 35-feet beyond Sgt. Liberty's mortar position when sure enough, the sniper he had warned me about took a shot at me, so close to my head that I knew it was he! There is no mistaking the "zip" of a bullet.

I knew I couldn't run across all that debris, so I just kept on walking and made it safely to the first marked street corner. From there on I wasted no time. I followed markers to a street lined with houses that had holes for windows on both sides, as sinister and sad a sight as a bad dream. My senses were alert to any untoward sound, though, any one of which would have sent me diving into a ditch or, with rifle ready, dashing into a cavernous doorway.

The smell of such streets is the smell of hovering death itself; cordite, burnt wood, the subtle odor of unwashed bodies, dried blood and wounded trees, while the silent curses in many languages hang heavy in the damp atmosphere; as it has in that war-torn part of Europe since dukes and kings fought over the important riverine locations.

When Capt. Andon had his Aerie in Saarbrucken, Lt. Speck and I with my mortar crew were stationed on an island between two bridges in a

My Military Experiences

brick schoolhouse with, needless to say, no glazed windows. The further bridge received timed-fire every now and then, from one of the guns in the cliff gallery eastward.

Cpl. Weber and I were to carry some ammunition and supplies to Sgt. Liberty, located in a beat up house at his mortar position across the bridge a ways. As we left the schoolyard a couple of shells landed, one in the river and the other a bit on the far side of the bridge we were about to go over. Figuring on the usual, methodical German fire pattern for the bridge, Weber drove across as fast as the state of the road allowed and proceeded to the right along the once-fair street parallel to the riverfront, dodging shell holes all the way. We heard a couple of shells in the air that struck in about the same pattern as those we had seen at the bridge.

Shortly, as I remember it, we found a marked street and took a left turn past mangled tree-stumps toward a building that seemed conspicuously extraordinary, since it had not been nearly obliterated. The thing that really struck me was that this street was full of debris, including artillery shell casings and shells that Weber told me were duds. The corporal just slowed down a bit and kept on driving over them. I felt some trepidation but on my objection he blithely said, "We've been driving over 'em for the last two days."

So I figured, "Okay, couldn't be a better man to go with if it comes to that."

We pulled off to the side and came to rest in the lee of the building, opposite from where, I supposed, the Germans were lodged in the damaged row or tenement buildings beyond a field; which appeared to have been a park of some sort a block or more long and devoid of anything but debris and shell casings in a line to the buildings.

Liberty received us cordially, inviting us to wait, as I recall, and soon poured something into our GI cups; the kind of cup that fits snugly in its canvas carrier under the omnipresent water bottle in which some guys carried spirituous refreshment rather than H₂O. Not Liberty's, though, his spirits came from a bottle he averred miraculously appeared amid the house-cellar ruins.

Having delivered the ammunition and supplies, we were shown the layout. Among other things was a .50-caliber machine gun with plenty of ammo, which I suspect Capt. Andon had blessed some outfit to provide as it was not part of our GI According-to-Hoyle arms.

Sgt. Liberty gloated over that gun every time he fired it, "in short bursts for the hell of it if he saw any movement among the distant apartment buildings," he said.

These buildings had been hotly contested before our arrival on the scene, and they still were. The Germans had made the art of fighting a classic and nasty example of attrition, which our men had had to learn.

I'm not sure why it was that I wanted to go on to what I've always fancifully thought of as Capt. Andon's Aerie, located in a building in Saarbrucken itself. It was close enough to German occupied buildings that my mortar had been called upon once or twice to break up a Krout

My Military Experiences

attempt to attack; I suppose it was with the idea of re-occupying his former section of buildings.

First off I asked Weber to drive me there, knowing that vehicles did so, but only after dark he averred. Even Liberty thought I was nuts to consider going up by myself, but he gave me excellent directions when I persisted.

Nighttime was always a street fighter's ally, when shapes appear where no solidarity seems and a burst from a machine gun, pistol, or grenade flies out from a crack in a wall or a barricaded window. Yet I remember well that the nights were illuminated, from our searchlights reflected off the night fogs and mists that hung over the area.

At last a small roofed porch jutted out onto the sidewalk. A .30-caliber machine gun, on its swivel, was sighted in to sweep the area if an attack erupted from buildings down the street, which was held in a stalemate by GI riflemen. A voice, which I was very glad to hear, challenged. I had arrived at my destination, Captain Andon's Aerie as I had dubbed it.

Tensions eased as I was escorted down a set of stairs and through a door hung with a GI blanket to exclude light. We proceeded to the Captain's forward command post, where I delivered a message from Lt. Speck and was greeted by the guys, who naturally wanted to know how I got there.

Since it was lunchtime, someone advised me to go through the back yard, I think, and thence to Forward Headquarters because word had it that a kitchen crew had come up with the field pots, and guys could filter through from their positions in relays for a hot lunch.

Somebody loaned me a mess kit and I went through the line for a dollop from each pot and coffee in my canteen cup, the one I carried snapped to the bottom of my water canteen. I should mention here that a canteen was as essential to the soldier in combat as a bandolier of ammunition, or of blood itself.

Men with rifles slung over their shoulders, squatting in small groups outside, fed their faces then lit cigarettes and conversed in guarded tones that gradually grew louder as GI banter was exchanged. I never cared for cigarettes, but in the combat zone our rations in the foxholes contained three packages of them in each meal container, plus matches. So what's for entertainment in a slit trench? Smoking. I guess we all did. So the first time I got to where I could do so, I bought a short-stemmed French Sergeant's brier pipe that I thoroughly enjoyed, even for a while, maybe two years, after I returned to the U.S.A.

Suddenly, an officer erupted from the back door of the headquarters and sharply chided the men for their loud talk. He ordered quiet. About that time he recognized me, both of us having served in D Company, 104th Infantry, back in the States.

He then began sharply, "Sergeant, I'm surprised. Now break up these groups and spread the men around. We aren't far from the Germans, you know."

"Yes Sir," I replied.

He turned and reentered the building while I circled among the GIs as ordered. Silently they complied, with a few acid remarks from guys

My Military Experiences

who I'm sure felt that this was safe enough compared to the posts they had come in from, in basements right across from the Germans, perhaps. Of course, as a mortar man I knew well enough what a German 80mm mortar shell could do. I would have prayed for a Czech dud. On the other hand, who ordered the field mess up there anyway?

Soon a sergeant looked at his watch, stood up, hand signaled, and several men filed out to soon be replaced by fresh riflemen with taut faces.

I used to be confused by the different "Saar" subsections. I suppose, as I look at a map today, they were all one big city.

I presume it was a busy city even in the so-called prehistoric times, for its location did indeed offer a chance to easily penetrate the countryside and return before an effective force, even a small but efficient one, could be brought to bear.

Even so it must have been terribly costly to keep army patrols on duty day and night, year round, to guard against intruders. Of course such an attacking group would have only struck places known from experience to be fat with stores of grain, or churches full of gold and jeweled memorials from wealthy patrons. Actually, the neighbors had probably felt blessed when everyone in the area was in agreement so that their work and trade could be accomplished in peace.

One village stood atop a steep open-sided hill. The 104th had taken that area. In fact, I lost an old friend, Sgt. Schule, of the 104th Machine Gun at that village.

One day some guys were trying to shoot a rooster who, oddly, seemed to be defying them. They were obviously trying to shoot him in the head or neck, but he managed to stay about fifteen feet distant. I watched, but soon noted that the villagers were observing anxiously so I advised them to stop. Most of them didn't know much about fowl, anyway, and it was not a very good exhibition of marksmanship.

Later on the guys asked me to shoot a hen in an orchard at the same distance. I shot it in the neck with my carbine and we had chicken for lunch. Afterward we left a stack of "C" Rations there as payment, some that the fellows had accumulated because they didn't like the cold stew or a pork ration.

In the near future, at The Bulge, they'd not be as squeamish even though the rations were all frozen in the cans.

We approached very close to the German lines from Alsace-Lorraine. The houses here were, as usual, mostly made of stone with red tile roofs. The windows were casement, as I recall, and with two sets, which reminded me of our old New England houses of the Indian Wars era, the outer set being made of solid boards.

One or two men from our battalion actually crossed the German border a few feet that particular day. And the outfit that my mortars were supposed to support was pinned down in a ditch beside the road that they'd been marching on, and the fire was coming from a machine gun in a Tiger tank inside the wreck of an old stone building beyond an open field probably two hundred yards across. The men weren't going to be able to do anything.

My Military Experiences

Well, it so happened that my lieutenant was observing all of this from the basement of a stone building ahead of me when I had been sent out to patch up the telephone wire again - that always seemed to be my job - and I had a young soldier with me. All of a sudden some Germans with a machine gun opened fire in my general direction. I'm sure they didn't see me and were aiming to get somebody else. But they fired an 88mm shell that went right through that stone building from end to end. Went right over my head. Showered me with rocks and pebbles and stuff.

It seems they were shooting at a tank destroyer, which is a kind of lightly-armed tank that we Americans had, one that was equipped with a 90-millimeter gun at that time (not so equipped originally) which actually could punch a hole in a Tiger tank if it got a chance to do so. Well, the driver of that tank destroyer was inside the building. He came rushing out and jumped from the ground right up to the turret and into that tank destroyer faster than I've ever seen anything done before, and he put that thing in reverse and got out of there so fast there was nothing but dust rising all around us. The Germans fired another round, and of course it went off into the town.

Well I, of course, was in the ditch and the mud too. I picked myself up but I couldn't find my house. I spent twenty minutes trying to find it as the Germans opened up with a quick burst of machine gun fire every now and then. Finally I found a ringside seat. It was just as if I was in a theater.

When you got into trouble of that kind your outfit was supposed to call back to the P-47 fighter squadron, and they'd come up to support you. Soon two P-47s came roaring over where the CP had been, swooped low over the building and machine-gunned the spot where the Tiger tank was, to establish more or less, their target. They pulled up in the air and circled around. The first one then dropped two big bombs, that landed right on the wreck of the building where the Tiger tank was. The second one come swooping around and dived toward that same place and dropped five bombs. The infantry was now free. No more problems with Tiger tanks.

I went forward to see my lieutenant and we decided to buy a rabbit from a man who had a rabbit hutch in the cellar of the building. We took the rabbit back to our outfit and had roast rabbit for supper, eaten in a building back to the rear.

The next day we moved up further where a Tiger tank had knocked out one of our tank destroyers and set it on fire. Three or four of our men were in the ditch near the burning tank destroyer. The driver of the tank tried to get out of his tank but he was all afire, and a couple of our men had been volunteered by the captain to be medic aides; that is, to be stretcher bearers. These men were not trained in medicine or anything, they were our own men. Some guys hollered to one of the volunteers, "Hey, get up there and get him out of there." And the guy couldn't do it. He just couldn't do it. Of course the German never would have been able to be saved anyway. But that night the guys were really complaining to me about this coward, and I asked, "Did any of you volunteer to get up there and get him?"

"Oh, no," they said. "It was his job."

My Military Experiences

"No, it was anybody's job that was able to do it." I said, "But I don't want to hear any more about it."

Well, the next day our outfit was supposed to retire and another outfit take over the position, and we couldn't seem to locate one of our machine gun nests. So the lieutenant says, "Take one of the men and see if you can locate Sergeant O'Neill's machine gun and tell the boys to come back. We're leaving. Somebody else is going to take over."

Well, there was a quarter of a mile long plowed field so we skulked way around the edges of it. All of a sudden, a Tiger tank that was located on high ground just at the other end of the field opened up with his machine guns. Bullets were zipping all around us.

I said, "I really don't think our machine gun is over there. Not with those guys around. Let's retire."

"But," I added, "I don't think we'd better turn our backs. They may be sending out some infantrymen, you know, to get us. We'd better crawl backwards and keep our eyes peeled and our M-1s ready."

So we did, until we got back to the end of the field and it was almost dark then so we got up and rushed back to our lieutenant and told him of our experience.

"Okay. That's okay," he said. "Somebody found them and they're all back in and we're retiring." And then, "Sergeant, it's a good thing you got back. There's a heavy fog setting in. Would you mind guiding this new outfit in to our position?"

"Nothing to it, Lieutenant," I answered.

"Okay. Go up to the road, take some of the men with you, continue on and guide this squad in to this building. It's only about an eighth of a mile but the fog is so thick you could cut it with a knife." He said, "Are you sure you can find your way back?"

"Oh yes, lieutenant. I'll find my way back."

I got my guys together and got the new outfit up there. The lieutenant and one man who were up there couldn't leave, of course, until the new lieutenant arrived.

"Sarge, can you lead us back?"

"Sure, Lieutenant," and the three of us we started off.

"How do you know how to find your way in this fog?" asked the lieutenant.

"By the feel of the slope of the land on the way in and the way it feels going out."

From that time on, whenever someone wanted to know how to get somewhere he'd ask me to find the way.

There was more bad weather when we went off the line for Christmas at Metz; that is, three days of it before plunging north in the cold and snow to meet the Germans at the Bulge, where some of our infantrymen would leave strips of hide on their steel rifles while in the cold, snowy slit trenches. That was before their rifles got hot from repulsing the German tank infantry.

Life may be hell a lot of the time anywhere, but certainly the hell men create for themselves in war, to prove something or other, is best summed up by the row after row of white crosses that add luster to all wars, the remains of those who have died in the hope that finally the

My Military Experiences

heads of nations, the usual instigators of wars, might stop short of declaring war when no longer they can they be sure that they will survive.

I was very fortunate, as I was not wounded in the sense of blood and guts. But the following did happen to me in Alsace-Lorraine. As a platoon sergeant, I was sent to the rear with a jeep and a trailer to pick up more ammunition. My driver backed the trailer into a barn. We got out and swung shut the great barn doors. The men were loading the trailer with mortar ammunition when a German shell, from who knows how far away as we were in the rear echelon unit now, landed in the street outside the barn doors. The blast blew the door inward. I was about ten feet inside the door. It blew right straight in and smashed me against the radiator of our jeep. If I hadn't had a helmet on, my head would have been crushed. As it was I had a few lacerations on my head. But the force snapped the cartilage in my rib cage and I had assorted black and blue bruises all over me. And I was a little dazed. A couple of guys shook me and said, "Hey, Sarge, you all right?"

"Yeah. Okay, boys, let's go."

We took off with the ammunition. When we got back to the outfit, a medic wanted to look me over right away and he says, "Sarge, I think you ought to go to the rear, maybe. Be looked over."

I said to him, "Nah. I'm OK."

"Let's go see the captain anyway." So we went to see him.

"Sergeant," The captain said, "I don't think you've got any hurts at all. . . Do you really hurt?"

A little miffed, I answered, "Sir, I don't have a pain in my body." And with that I went back to my unit.

Before the bulge, before Christmas, we were down to two rounds per mortar. We couldn't have fired more than two rounds. And my company commander says, "Sergeant, you gotta get hold of some ammunition." So I went back to supply. I couldn't get any ammunition there and nobody seemed to have had any.

So I told my boys, "Company Commander's going to break me if I can't find ammunition for you guys, and I can't find any anywhere."

I went back to the captain and reported, "I haven't been able to find any ammunition yet."

"Well, you better keep looking."

I went back to my guys. "By golly, I guess you'll be seeing me as one of you tomorrow, a private, if we can't find any ammunition somewhere."

"Hey, Sarge, we got a surprise for you!"

"Oh? What have you got, roast duck for dinner?"

"Nope. Come on out." They beckoned to me to come to the foyer, and there was a tarpaulin covering something big. I drew the tarp off and there was a stack of 81-millimeter mortar shells.

"Where did you get them?"

"We-e-ell, Sarge, we ain't saying. But aren't you happy?"

I said, "Yes, sirs, I sure am, and thanks."

My Military Experiences

Well, we had several missions that night and we had plenty of ammunition so I didn't go back to see the captain. The next day, though, he sent a letter to me that I should appear before him promptly. Which I did, and I could see that something was not quite nice. He looked at me and asked, "Sergeant, did you steal the ammunition from the outfit headquartered in the church where they had us packing ammunition to the churchyard?"

I answered, truthfully, "Sir, I don't know anything about that ammunition."

"Are you sure your men didn't steal that ammunition?"

"Sir, my men wouldn't steal anything from anybody."

He looked straight at me a long time, then, "Okay, Sergeant, I'll tell them we really don't know anything about it. And that was it. Those were the kinds of things that happened."

LUXEMBOURG Battle of the Bulge, Ardennes Eschdorf and Wiltz

December 25, 1944:

From Metz, where we were supposed to be having Christmas vacation, we went right up to the line and attacked the Bulge at Eschdorf on Christmas Day; a day on which we lost many, many, men. Some of our men were holed up in the cellars of buildings. The Germans stuck their tank guns into the cellar windows and just let off a round. Everybody in it would be killed. One of our lieutenants just managed to get out of a place in time, ran in back of a wall and off into the woods with a couple of men. Almost all of the men with that machine gun detachment were lost. And that was the story all over the area. That was Eschdorf.

The incident about the P-47's occurred when we were probably ten miles from Wiltz, which was one of the important cities where the war for the Bulge was really fought by Patton's army. We gained a lot of ground there, which enabled him to get closer and pinch off the Germans at Bastogne.

It was icy and slippery and we were holding in this village, waiting to be put forward, and we had our mortars set up and there was an anti-aircraft truck outside of the barn my men were in. Our mortars were set up outside as well. If we got a fire order over the phone, of course we would fire on the targets they proposed for us.

We were lurching soldiers' style, on rations that we carried with us, when all of a sudden a fighter plane came zooming down at us and opened up with his guns. Bullets were coming through the roof of the barn. I lay as close as possible against a cement wall and the other guys were doing the same. But not a single one of us was hit. I don't know how it happened because the roof was full of holes when he left. He circled around, came back and dropped a bomb trying to knock out the anti-aircraft guns. He missed, fortunately, and took off. We could see then that it was a P-47 and we were madder than hornets because they were supposed to be on our side.

My Military Experiences

Well, it turned out that it was a German pilot that was flying it. In fact, during the Battle of the Bulge German soldiers used our tanks, our jeeps and our uniforms to infiltrate our lines. But that was a really close one.

I had a lot of other close calls, but....

During the last few days of January 1945, H Company, 2nd Battalion of the 328th Infantry could say that it had survived the Bulge, and with a full-drawn breath of relief we were glad it was over.

We were allowed a couple days to get hot showers, clean clothes and sleep before we climbed aboard our trucks and Jeeps to reassemble at the Saar towns, from which we had so recently driven north to put a crimp in the last of the Germans punch at the Western Front.

Saarlautern

February-March, 1945:

Most of our previous battles in France had been in the forest and cold countryside. This time our riflemen found themselves in house-to-house fighting, a savage business with no glory where you could occupy a house while the enemy occupied the one across the street, or even just beyond a wall.

The smell of death and cordite was persistent. What had been five-story apartments were now cut off at the waist, so to speak, or left in total rubble. A cellar became a living quarters and the wreck of a first-floor wall a fragile shield of sorts, with blank windows stuffed with junk, and with holes for portholes from which to fire at targets. A brief exposure of an arm or a pistol was enough to invite gunfire. Modern day Daniel Boones.

Some men on night patrols even pulled off gun dueling stunts, actions that no civilian would believe. Some men died or were captured when German artillery shells sent walls crashing into the cellars, or when a tank fired a round through a cellar window or waltzed through a wall sparing nothing or no one under its bulk.

One problem was that a range of hills full of pillboxes spewing hot lead made life not just purgatory, but hell itself in parts of the once fair suburbs of orderly apartments and fine living of the city of Saarlautern.

The heavy and light mortars came into their own there, because we could drop shells into the next street or wherever the case demanded. We could even stop a counterattack on a house where our riflemen were posted, if need be.

Artillery fire often had to be called upon, indeed, but mortar fire could quickly be laid on a new target as directed by an observer or a rifleman armed with a sound-powered phone.

I remember an instance when my own section effectively used German shells and mortars, some that our captain had discovered in a cache. We were in a schoolyard, and because the ring of pill-boxed hills couldn't see us - intervening terrain and buildings hid us in the yard - we didn't have to dig-in to set up our mortars.

My Military Experiences

An amusing incident then occurred when a number of these German shells refused to fire. There is a proper procedure for handling such a situation; which is, the gun tube is removed from its base-plate and the breech end slowly lifted higher and higher till a man at the muzzle catches the shell as it slides from the barrel. Although my gun crew knew this technique, because these were German shells they were hesitant to carry it out.

I was in the building when the gunner called out, "Sarge, do you think it's safe to catch these like we do our own?"

"Sure," I hollered back.

"How about you giving a demonstrating," the gunner yelled back, grinning.

I chuckled and walked over to the gun. The gunner obliged. I caught the shell, walked over and dropped it into the Saar River.

I stuck around for the whole mission and caught six of those miss-fires. We had been told that a lot of shells were made in Czechoslovakia by slave labor, and every once in a while a brave soul outfitted a dud. You thank God if you're the target of one of those.

However, one is not always so lucky in war. The next afternoon one of our replacements was wounded due to thoughtlessness. Lt. Speck and I, together with a couple of artillery observers, had climbed a ladder to an attic and found an opening through which we could see an area of enemy territory without being noticeable to them.

All of a sudden, enemy artillery shells began to penetrate our building and we all ran for the ladder, wasting no time in leaving the attic. Later, on investigating, we discovered that a shell had come through the outer back wall, showering the space with brick fragments, continued across the room and out the other wall. Nobody was hurt on that floor.

As we ran down to the next floor we heard someone holler, "Medic," and on the ground floor I discovered that one of our replacements, whose name at this late date escapes me, had been mortally wounded. Medic Kessler was already there and we brought the wounded man in behind the stove, where Kessler looked him over and did what he could for him. I think the lieutenant telephoned a rear field hospital unit, and as we waited the shelling ceased.

Remembering that Cpl. Weber was due to arrive with hot chow from our rear kitchen, I ran to the entrance of the cellar corridor and past a row of smashed windows to stop him. He soon arrived, and many hands whisked the mess gear out the other side of the Jeep. Weber turned the Jeep around, and Kessler and some soldiers tenderly loaded our lad on an improvised stretcher aboard. Weber sped off for the hospital, with Kessler riding and watching over the wounded man.

Before the lieutenant and I had gone up to the attic, we had left word for someone to watch for the corporal with the chow. This young man, really a boy, had volunteered to watch for him. But he stood just outside a door at the foot of the main staircase facing the hills. When the first shells struck the building he dodged inside against the door. A shell exploded against the opposite stanchion of the doorway, and a piece of shrapnel flew inside and struck him. And there we found the young soldier, crumpled at the base of the doorway nearly

My Military Experiences

unconscious. By that time the medic had arrived and the shelling ceased.

A squad from another company was holed up in a big room beyond this doorway. Outside, some heavy planks were leaning against the building over a window and a door under a roofed entrance. I don't recall who the men were, I'm sorry to say, but a shell exploded against a large plank over a window, a tiny steel scale [sliver] flew at an angle through the outer doorway, across the corner of an entryway, through another doorway into a roomful of standing men, through a third doorway to a den, and caught a young soldier in the forehead just as he sat up and was about to slide off an upper bunk!

It was a small steel scale nowhere near the size of the stone that David slung, striking the giant Goliath in the forehead and killing him dead.

At a reunion, long after the war, I was reminded of an incident involving Ed Znudzien and a couple of German prisoners. It was the last time I saw Staff Sergeant Znudzien, when I left him with his gun-crew while I escorted two Germans to Battalion Headquarters.

"Phillips," Ed always miscalled my name, "I will be killed today!"

And he was. Not by the enemy but by American rifle fire. It must have happened when we were not far away on the road with the prisoners, and could have been simultaneous with a nebelwerfer barrage.

It seems as though I would have recognized rifle fire in that quarter, it being a different weight of sound, but in view of the fact that a nebelwerfer barrage always distracted me maybe it was so at that.

Anyway, the prisoners did okay sitting on the front edge of the Jeep, their feet pressed against the bumper as we drove down the cobbly hill to headquarters where a number of prisoners were being guarded by some riflemen. I handed over our two to an officer, then the Jeep driver and I took off to a building nearby to pick up supplies. But the supply sergeant, Malcolm Harkins, said he had no shells for me, I'd have to go to regiment.

I decided to hike back to my section, and had gone about fifty-yards when I was met by a man sent by an officer to order me back to Battalion. I hung around there awhile, saw Father Brausfield, and finally returned to the building where I'd left Harkins and the drivers. Still not receiving any communication, I remained there until morning. Meanwhile, my driver returned to Lt. Speck and my section, and learned that Ed had been killed, shot in the forehead.

I received an order to report to Capt. Andon at the CP. My driver took me over and the captain questioned me. Did I know who shot the Sergeant? It was said that the shot had come from an M-1 rifle. Did Ed have anyone in his squad who might have done it? I didn't think so.

After more questioning and my assertion that it could not have been someone from our section, he asked why I had not been there. I explained that I was supposed to have gone to supply for more ammo, but that I was ordered to first take two prisoners to Battalion. Which I did. I then went over to supply and learned that there was no

My Military Experiences

ammunition supply truck there. That surprised me, but not having received any other communication I remained there till morning before returning to my section.

And that was the end of the grilling.

As far as I know, just who killed Sgt. Znudzian was never determined.

We had but a few days of "rest, refitting and replacements" after our campaign at Saarbrucken before we en-trucked again. Lt. Speck and I found ourselves reconnoitering a position in an area where the Saar makes a real loop under the forbidding, nearly perpendicular face of rocky Hocker Hill, a hill that might have been a goat-romping ground.

Yet, when I looked it up in the 2nd Battalion booklet, I found that the 94th Division had taken it from the Germans. They must have been the most aggressive troops in the world, was my admiring assessment when I learned about them.

The result was that our side had a foothold at the top of Hocker Hill before we got there, a foothold that included some concrete pillboxes.

When we finally trudged up a road that nearly did me in, I was told that the men from S-and-P had carried supplies up on their backs. I was truly impressed. I realized then, if not before, that I really was the old man that my mortar lads sometimes called "Pop." It was a name used in a friendly way, I'm pleased to say, when they didn't know I was within hearing distance.

I think we were expected to locate our 81mm mortars up there on Hocker Hill. However, instead we set up a section in a village or hamlet below, well within the expected range of the coming assault that E and G Companies' riflemen were soon to push through.

I don't know how we happened to examine the few houses on the alluvial plain below that steep hill, but it was very evident that our artillery men, who had dug in there, had suffered plenty of casualties. Pools of blood were still in evidence everywhere.

As we learned later, the Germans had met them in a fierce assault of their own, so it turned out to be a tough one. The Germans finally threw in a heavy and substantial artillery barrage. I think it was then that Major Burk was killed, and our own Capt. Andon was so severely wounded that we never saw him again. Lt. Yarborough became our Company Commander.

The following day our mortar outfit climbed the hill that had nearly done me in. When we arrived at the top, the battlefield was self evidently a bad one because of small brush and trees with brown leaves from the winter before that prevented our men from forward vision.

We hurried along, then it was discovered that the Germans had left the area so fast our front lines had not yet caught up with them. So we sat down with our guns and gear till the trucks could be brought forward to enable us to speed after them. We sat on a cut bank topped with great trees, tired, as I'd say, from our exertions. Actually, I was pooped. We never did catch up with the Germans.

My Military Experiences

Lt. Speck received an order to report to the company CP, so he jumped into his Jeep with Jack Cole, a real cowboy Jeep driver, who zipped up the bank where we were reclining, yelling, "Get outta the way." And we did, for he meant business.

The lieutenant was late getting to the CP and the road was congested with all kinds of trucks and gear parked every which way.

"Damned Cowboy!" the guys yelled at him. But he was a great Jeep driver for front line driving.

Not too long after that, further along in our chase, Cole and Sgt. Liberty were speeding along the road after dark with only their tiny lights on when a big, 2½ ton 8x8 backed out of a dark alley in front of them. They had no time to take evasive action, and were banged up enough that we saw neither of them again until much later; that is, after the division reached the States and when Liberty and I attended the same reunion.

But where we had waited and he left with the lieutenant was beside a German hunting lodge, a place replete with stag horns, furs and steins. We wished we could have hung around and quaffed some good German beer, but by now the "snafu" had been straightened out, everybody was en-trucked and we put many miles behind us over the next few days.

ON GERMAN SOIL

The Rhein Crossing

After crossing the Saar River, we continued on to the northeast through the German Saarland until we came to the Rhein River. It had been decided by the higher-ups to let the 5th Division cross the Rhein ahead of us, so we marched a short distance to a suburb of Mainz, on the west bank of the big river, across from where the Main [pronounced "mine"] River enters it from the east. We bivouacked there that night in some of the buildings.

It was quite a large town, it seemed, and we were detached at its southern end. It was one of the few times I remember its happening, but we were apparently left to our own devices.

As we marched nonchalantly along a sidewalk I noticed a lot of riflemen gathered in front of a building. First thing I knew one of my lads appeared with a wine bottle in each hand.

"Hey, Sarge, try one of these." And he handed me one of the bottles. It was really first class Rhenish wine.

"Where'd you get this?" I asked.

He pointed up the street where there were infantrymen from several companies swarming like bees out of a store cellar. They came with bottles in each hand and field jacket pockets bulging.

It was like a fiesta. Germans looked out of their windows smiling broadly. Here and there even a small American Flag was waving. I returned to our side of the street and a GI hailed me from the steps of a corner store doorway.

"Hey, Sergeant Phelps." It was one of some of the men I recognized from another company.

My Military Experiences

I walked over to them, and just inside the door an officer turned to face me. It was Captain Sullivan, the Regimental Adjutant who had had the task of cutting off my stripes the day I was reduced in rank from First Sergeant to Staff Sergeant of Cannon Company, and was then sent to H Company.

"Sergeant," he said, "I'm sorry I had to do what I did back there," or words to that effect.

"Captain," I said with a smile, "It's okay. You did what you had to do and I've never been happier than I've been in H Company."

We shook hands and visited briefly, and then I went on up the street with my men.

I never saw Capt. Sullivan again. But now that the war was beginning to wind down I could truthfully say that I didn't hold a grudge against him or anyone else, since I was the one who had pulled the boner at the time.

My platoon and I kept walking and we came to some tall apartment buildings just as darkness fell. I had lost contact with all but the Jeep drivers, so I stopped at a shed where they had parked the vehicles. Sure enough, our runner found me and took me back to where a section of the 3rd Platoon was looking for a place for the night.

All of the apartments had tall locked gates, so I asked Putterman, who spoke fluent German, to try and get us a place.

I'm not sure what he said but the German men on several upper floors laughed sardonically. As luck would have it, a lady on a third floor behind us told Putterman, in German, that her maid would let us into her compound, and we were soon within a large yard.

Lt. Speck appeared about then, as luck would have it, and in perfectly good English the lady invited the lieutenant and me indoors. We quickly agreed that we would occupy the first floor. She then invited the lieutenant and me to use a bedroom on the second floor, but Speck felt that since the men were to sleep in their bedrolls on the first floor we should sleep at the foot of the stairs, to make sure that no one passed up or down during the night. However, we all slept so well that night that in the morning both of us wondered about that.

The lady was up early and the other women of the house had eggs and toast for all, and coffee that we had furnished since she had none. We were all properly humble in this homelike atmosphere, after having lived in trenches and shell-torn buildings for so long. We felt like asking, "Is this really happening?"

Breakfast over, the lieutenant and I made sure that everyone had vacated the house, then we all stood or napped against the wall in the compound.

I don't recall whether it was still morning or afternoon when we received an order that came down from General Patton, that all bicycles and motorbikes of any sort were to be incapacitated. Our "landlady," whom I believe may have been Jewish and who spoke good English, had a small motorbike about the size of a good bicycle.

We immediately set about to carry out the orders, which I explained to the lady. Since we had no tools the men would have to jump on the bike to disable it. The lieutenant and I both felt badly as she

My Military Experiences

watched from her back door. Lt. Speck motioned me over to him. "Tell your men to just remove a small part and pocket it." Which was done. We then put the bike back in its shed. It appeared to have suffered nothing from our abuse.

Shortly after this episode Sgt. Putterman, whose section men had found another place to stay for the night (no doubt by the good offices of our lady) came running into our compound with blood streaming from his nose.

"He's trying to kill me," he screamed.

Just as suddenly J.J. Allen, our tough street guy from the Boston suburb, was there, having chased him from wherever they had spent the night. He started for Putterman and was about to attack him, but Sgt. Cremins came to assist as I wrapped my arms around Allen and said, "Hold it, J.J., don't get in any further."

"But he drew his gun on me," he asserted loudly.

Lt. Speck then came out of the building. "What's going on, Sergeant," he demanded.

We released Pvt. Allen and I told the lieutenant what each had said. He put the Sergeant under "house arrest" for the moment while he himself got the story and then, after making sure that Putterman had no weapon, accompanied him to Company Headquarters. We never saw Putterman again, so I expect that he was transferred.

Allen's story, when we got things sorted out, was that the sergeant had been drinking and pulled a gun on him because he'd refused to give him more wine, or some such thing.

In combat there are accepted times and reasons for an officer or NCO to shoot one of his men. I don't think it had been done very often, if ever, in the Yankee Division. Of course I have no statistics on that, nor of a courts martial either, although I believe that in the regular army some cases must have arisen.

In a National Guard outfit we were citizens willing to fight for our country without feeling that we had lost our rights to object at times to certain conditions. Perhaps this point of view would be debatable. But an officer's behavior depends on his quick estimate of need related to the safety or lives of the rest of his command.

We non-coms were upset over what had transpired that day, but there was no time to think about it because we'd soon get the word to march and assemble for the crossing of the Rhein.

The following morning we marched to the south as a company toward a pontoon bridge the engineers had built over the Rhein at Oppenheim. The Fifth Army had already crossed, but I'm sure we all still expected to be strafed by German planes, or at least fired upon, when we came to make our crossing. I think the last strafing of our particular outfits occurred there.

When we were midway across the pontoon bridge, a lone German plane flew over as if reconnoitering. We could plainly see the pilot he was so low. He swooped down, continued on, made a big loop around and came back down over us again. We figured this time surely he would strafe us. But not a shot was fired. He swooped low and then climbed out and disappeared into the sky toward Berlin! And that's the last German plane we ever saw.

My Military Experiences

We wasted no time completing our crossing, and were greatly relieved when we stepped foot on German soil and moved quickly beyond to a gathering place where trucks would pick us up. We would now ride because the armored units had moved so far ahead that we needed to catch up.

March 1945:

[Stephen Ambrose, in his "Citizen Soldiers, a biography of the Army in the ETO," quotes a Third Army report as follows: "Without benefit of aerial bombing, ground smoke, artillery preparation, and airborne assistance, the Third Army at 1300 hours, March 22, crossed the Rhein River."]

Darmstadt

We were in a special combat team convoy. A mobile self-contained unit traveling in two-and-a-half ton trucks with tanks, tank destroyers and supply trucks.

Fortunately, the Allied drive eastward across Germany was not opposed as strenuously as we had a right to expect. The fighting was sporadic and short-lived, though vigorous at times, but not bad compared to Bradley and Montgomery's campaigns.

Those events were well documented by war historians. Small unusual happenings are mostly my interest, such as the following event when we approached a bridge at Mainz on the River Main. At the time, as I understood it, we were heading for Berlin.

The trucks stopped. "What's wrong?" I asked a soldier on foot who had stepped out of a truck up ahead.

"There's a GI in the upper iron work of the bridge over the Main River. He's shooting at vehicles that want to cross, even ours! They're trying to talk him down."

It was Pvt. Johnson, one of our Jeep drivers. In the light of certain past incidents I was surprised, in a way, that he was not in a rifle company.

I remembered an episode that Sunday morning at Darmstadt, when several of us were warming our hands over the fire and having coffee. All of a sudden Johnson, a big man, and his corporal, a small man, had a disagreement. Johnson suddenly took a swipe at the corporal who dodged and backed away past me. The German people had been watching us as we joked around the fire, and I thought we should not be seen fighting one another.

But before I could stop it, Johnson bulled his way through the men and accidentally stepped on my foot. Realizing that his intent was to beat up the corporal I gave the corporal time to leave by saying, "Hey now, Johnson, what do you mean by bumping a sergeant as you just did?"

He turned around and glowered at me. I quietly stepped aside and said, "Y'know, you drivers have done a great job but I guess you're pretty tired of all this hard driving. Why don't you get back to your Jeep and take a nap. You really deserve it, you know."

My Military Experiences

To my surprise and pleasure he stopped, stood still for a moment, then walked back to his Jeep. I checked a while later and found him sprawled on the hood of his Jeep, sound asleep.

But right after he'd left the fire I looked up Lt. Speck, in case something came of it, and found him sitting on the curb of a cobbled street in front of the town pump with one of our lads standing nearby. The lieutenant looked really pooped, worn out. I think he may have been ill.

I was hoping to get him to find a place to take a nap when along came a Jeep. I've always thought that its driver deliberately splashed through a puddle there, not realizing the seated man was an officer. Anyway, Speck jumped angrily to his feet just as I recognized the officer in the Jeep. It was Lt. Grigsby from my old Cannon Company.

"Hello! Lieutenant Grigsby," I greeted.

The two officers recognized each other. Grigsby leaped to the cobbles and they fell into each other's arms. Two Virginians, they were, far away from home.

They took off together and probably had a good drink and a confab about Virginia and life back home at a beer joint. Just the tonic my lieutenant needed.

It was then that I went to talk with Cpl. Weber, my Jeep driver, and that's when I found Johnson sound asleep on his Jeep's hood.

Whenever Johnson had had a few drinks I knew he'd remember me. And sure enough, a couple of days after the war ended in the ETO, a private came and told me that Johnson was drunk. He'd taken a bottle with him to a tree-covered knoll a few hundred yards from the buildings we were using. "He has his rifle with him and he wants you to 'come and get him'." I thought that sounded kind of foolish so I let it ride. Actually, he probably slept the afternoon away.

While waiting for the transports on a Sunday in the small town of Darmstadt, it may have been Easter, I was able to attend service in an old church with faded and dirty murals on its walls. Being an artist, I remembered that Holbein had painted a church mural there before he went to England to paint for Henry VIII and the English nobles.

Afterward, I returned to my platoon HQ where I found that a few men had built a fire in the street using some paper and the wax boxes that our rations came in, for it was a really chilly morning. I joined them as a number of German kids and mothers looked out from a window. The fire felt good.

WW-II WINDS DOWN

We continued on through a number of important German towns but I have trouble remembering all their names. We finally came to Hof, which is close to the northwest corner of [then] Czechoslovakia. We were held up there for pretty near a month. I'm sure that Patton was madder than a hornet. And we were too, because Patton had told us that we were on our way to Berlin and we wanted to go there. We chafed and fumed but it didn't do any good; Patton received orders to go straight down through Bavaria into Austria to Regensburg, then swing along the Danube River to Linz.

My Military Experiences

April 22, 1945:

The Third Army headed southward for Regensburg. Our unit left the Hof Region of Germany, zipping smoothly along in luxury on the autobahn, past Bayreuth to some place beyond and a town nearby for the night (according to notes I have from one of our reunions).

We mopped up a few Germans, Nazi resisters, and picked up a few prisoners. Sergeant Parz and I, and a couple of other men, heard that a couple of Germans were in a house the night before and that they took off in the night toward the Danube. So we took off in that direction on our own. We did capture a German ex-airman who, I think, was very happy to surrender to us. Anyway, we brought him back and handed him over. The rest of our outfit had moved on so we went with our two trucks, and the officer in charge, after them. If we hadn't been with them I'm afraid we'd have been in trouble, because we had acted without orders.

But then, it was nearing the end of the war and our soldiers, officers and sergeants alike did a lot of things like that because we knew we could get away with it.

Anyway, when we got to Regensburg we swung eastward along the Danube to Linz; a lovely town. And of course Linz is where Hitler had hidden a lot of art work that he'd stolen from the French and other people. We were bivouacked in this park and one of my soldiers came to me one morning, and he said, "Sarge, this is a convent. See where this wall is that we have our mess oven set up against? And further along," he pointed, "there's a little door that goes through the wall. A couple of us were up there this morning, and the door was open so we went in. And there was a nun inside, but she kind of walked away from us. That place is chuck full of fine old paintings and all kinds of art things. You want to see it?"

"Not on your life." I answered. "We're not supposed to have anything to do with things like that. But we'll go and tell the officers about it."

And so we did. After the war, back in this country, there was an exhibition in - Smith College, I think - of looted paintings from the Dutch Government. They had loaned it to the United States for the exhibition. There was a Dutchman in charge of it, a man who had actually been with the United States Army, and he had been at Linz. His prime job, when he was over there, was to try to save those objects and they saved a lot of them.

It was also at Linz that we met some of the Russians on a bridge. Our men started across and the Russians started across from the other end and met us. Everybody was armed with wine bottles and it was a real gala affair, right there on the middle of the bridge. But then, a little later in the evening, a few fist fights broke out over who had what bottle and so forth, so our outfit withdrew northward.

We went north into the Sudetenland, part of Czechoslovakia. Earlier we had commandeered a German Ford truck, which had carried us most of the way through Germany. We were now ordered to park them in a compound under the guard of the Czechoslovakian Army. It was loot from

My Military Experiences

the German Army and thus had to be turned over to them. We were really upset, and so were lots of other soldiers who had liberated trucks and all kinds of things.

For three or four days our men were out there, where the Germans were fleeing the Russian Army and pouring into our lines. There were wagons drawn by a horse and a cow in many cases, sometimes just a cow. Sometimes the wagons were even drawn by people. They were loaded with household gear and maybe a little tent, and the wife and children of a German soldier. None of the women intended to stay anywhere near the Russians.

They came in and gladly surrendered their pistols by the bushel, by throwing them into a bin at the edge of the road. One of my men, who had been detailed to be on that line, brought me a German Luger and a Walther P-38. Of course, the German officers were supposed to hand over their Lugers to us but the people also got rid of all kinds of guns, rifles, machine guns, anti-aircraft guns and artillery. They didn't want the Russians to have them. Anyway, that was a happy incident.

I was there about a month or so, and I did get so I could speak a few Czech words. You learn how to ask for food, for bread and eggs and so forth. Soldiers are quick to learn to do that.

Another picture comes to my mind, of a railway yard where some of our riflemen had captured a lot of Germans. But in particular was a giant railroad gun that had been wrecked. I thought it had been done by our bombers until, back in the States, I read that the Germans blew it up themselves before they surrendered.

When I saw that big gun, mounted on two flatcars, I remembered hearing about "Big Bertha," a Railroad Gun that had sent a few shells into Paris from a very long distance away during WW-I.

I also saw quite a number of railway coaches there, in various positions and conditions as well, and a big locomotive practically standing on end among the trashed equipment. I remember the yard as being surrounded by a wooded area. Oh, for a camera, for pictures to show civilians what the war was like.

The following day, the company officer told me that the captain wished to see me, so I reported to the Command Post. He had a regimental order for me to report to Captain Shipman for detached duty. A Jeep was waiting outside.

I got my belongings and was whisked away to the Czech town of Vlachovo Brezi, where I learned that I was to be one of several enlisted men who would work with Captain Shipman and others on plans for a school for enlisted men. That is, once we were a part of the occupational forces after peace terms were hammered out.

Anyway, what the Army wanted to do, after all the surrendering was over, was to establish schools and educate soldiers in different branches on whatever they had missed. A lot of these boys had come right out of the hills of Virginia and didn't have any education.

Lieutenant Turner, from the cannon company, was in charge of us sergeants and over him was Major Chipman, who actually had been a school superintendent in Indiana, I think, before the war. There were

My Military Experiences

three of us sergeants; one from the armored division, another who was to draw up a plan for mathematics and all that kind of stuff. And I expected to teach the art classes.

I did have a chance to do a number of water colors while in Czechoslovakia. And an underground Czech soldier, an artist, took a liking to me. He took me everywhere and introduced me to several Czech people. He could speak English quite well and tried to teach me his language. With his help I got a chance to visit a small museum, where I saw pastel portraits done in the style of Eastern Europe.

He introduced me to a man who had been in the Czech government, the underground government, and who was to be in the new government then being formed. His daughter, a lovely young blonde lady, said that she would like to have me do her portrait. All that I had to work with were some German watercolors and no watercolor brushes. I don't remember what I used. I may have taken wooden matches and chewed the ends to fine fibers.

Anyway, I did a very small watercolor of her in her authentic Czechoslovakian costume. Whenever she had to leave, she left the costume with my young Czech friend so that I could do the embroidery and everything with authenticity. She was very pleased with the painting. I have a photograph of it, one that her friend made for me.

Later on, when we were lined up in formation for the last words and so on from our commanders, my young Czech friend came to where I was standing in the back of the line and quietly said, "Sergeant, I want you to have this." And he pinned a Czech decoration of some kind onto my uniform. It was my misfortune to have it stolen the very next day while I was traveling.

I must say that the Czech people were good to me, and I enjoyed and profited by my stay in their country.

However, after several months of drawing up numerous plans nothing came of it; at least not for some of us older men. Those of us who had either the number of service points required to be discharged, or were over a certain age, as I was, being almost 37 years old, were being peeled out of the division.

I said goodbye to my lads of the 3rd Platoon, H Company, 328th Infantry. The officers then invited me to attend a farewell dinner at the Officers' Mess. Afterward, after handshakes and parting words, Lt. Speck and I embraced each other and that was it.

All of us who were to leave the division were trucked to Pilsen Airfield, where General Patton gave us a farewell talk and inspected our ranks. He paraded through the first two ranks consisting of tall men, but not the third rank of "shorties" like me. It was a nice touch, I thought on reflection, as he would have seemed to be looking down on us had he walked close by.

I have always thought that Patton himself may have inspired his famous nickname of "Blood and Guts," which was used by the media as a promotional phrase back when he was shaping the form and wartime use of tanks like cavalry; a textbook the Germans put into practice in WW-II.

My Military Experiences

After another brief but heartfelt speech, the brilliant but controversial General George S. Patton praised us all and wished us:
"God Speed"

For us, WW-II effectively ended on May 7, 1945. Now we were being sent back to England. But I would not be discharged until mid-October.

All my life I'd been hearing, from old soldiers from World War-I, about "Forty-and-Eights" and cooties and all that stuff. Well, after spending a couple of weeks in Germany with a tank outfit, that we were headed across France in, what else? Forty-and-Eight boxcars.

Well, as I understood it, the 40/8 boxcar was so designated as it would hold either forty men or eight horses. And they were way high off the ground. Some time before, in Rheims, I'd bought a short, German sergeant's pipe; a lovely, hard, hand-carved briar pipe. And I'd used that pipe a lot because when you're in a foxhole there isn't much to do. That was about the only pastime I had.

Now, as I was getting off of that Forty-and-Eight, and it was about eight feet from the floor to the ground, or it seemed to me because of the railroad banks, I sat on the edge of the boxcar and leapt off and broke the stem right off of my pipe. That ended my smoking in the army.

We traveled all the way back to the Fontainebleu forest that way. And from there we went on to the coast and across the channel to England. What to do? Why, to go home!

Oh, yes. But first they put us to work cleaning up the airfield, the mess left after the airmen and aviators were sent to the Pacific. There were trucks and all kinds of gear spread over the camp, so we went to work putting jeeps, half-ton and two-and-a-half-ton trucks in orderly lines.

One morning the lieutenant said to me, "Sergeant, you see this ten-ton truck here? Get in and take it over there and park it in that lot."

I said, "Sir, I've never driven anything bigger than a two-and-a-half ton truck at the most."

"Get in there." He said, "You won't have any trouble. They're easy to drive."

"Have you driven one, sir?" I asked.

"No, I haven't, but you can."

So I climbed in, tried all the gear positions until I got the right one, and drove it over and parked it.

When I got out I went to the lieutenant and asked, "Lieutenant, can I drive this around for a while? That's the most comfortable ride I've had in all my time in Europe."

Not long after that we boarded a troop transport and I came home. Gladys had found an apartment in Greenfield, on Conway Street. But I was at loose ends. I thought about the many friends I'd lost in that war. I thought about those who, like me, had survived.

You couldn't think right. You weren't a soldier any more, you were an "ex-soldier." You couldn't be a civilian because you were different. I guess every soldier who ever returned from a war felt

My Military Experiences

that way. And unless you had connections nobody would hire you. Fortunately, the state gave us a bonus and that helped tide us over for a period of time.


















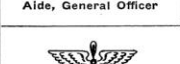




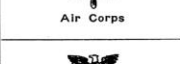





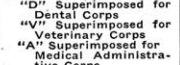




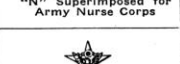



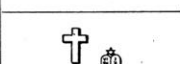



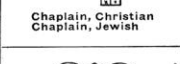


At last an old friend of mine, Owen Ferguson, one of the really great sign painters of those times, helped me find a job. At last I was on my way into a new, productive era in my life.

My Military Experiences

APPENDIX ONE ARMY UNITS

UNIT	OFFICER IN CHARGE	SUBORDINATE UNITS
Field Army	General	Headquarters & 2 or more corps
Corps:	Lt. General	Two or more divisions
Division:	Major General	Headquarters & 3 or more regiments
Regiment: battalions	Colonel	Headquarters & 3 or more
Battalion:	Lt. Colonel	Headquarters & 4 or more companies
Company:	Captain	Headquarters & 3 or more platoons
Platoon:	Lieutenant	Four squads
Squad:	Sergeant	Ten enlisted men

INSIGNIA OF THE U. S. ARMY

THE INSIGNIA OF ARMS AND SERVICES OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY			RANK INSIGNIA OF COMMISSIONED AND NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS		
 U.S. Army of the United States	 Coast Artillery Corps	 Judge Advocate General's Dept.	 4 Silver Stars, General 3 Silver Stars, Lieut. Gen. 2 Silver Stars, Major Gen. 1 Silver Star, Brig. Gen.	 HAT CORDS Regimental Insignia Worn on Campaign Hat and on Coat Lapels	 Master Sergeant
 Adjutant General's Dept.	 Corps of Engineers	 Military Police	 Colonel (Silver)		 Technical Sergeant
 Aide, General Officer	 Field Artillery	 Ordnance Dept.	 Lieut. Colonel (Silver Leaf) Major (Gold Leaf)		 First Sergeant
 Air Corps	 Finance Dept.	 Specialist (No Branch)	 Captain (2 Silver Bars)	 Staff Sergeant	
 Medical Corps "D" Superimposed for Dental Corps "V" Superimposed for Veterinary Corps "A" Superimposed for Medical Administrative Corps "N" Superimposed for Army Nurse Corps	 Quartermaster Corps	 Bureau of Insular Affairs	 1st Lieutenant (Silver Bar)	 Sergeant	
 Professors and Asso. Profs. U. S. Military Academy	 Signal Corps	 War Dept. General Staff (Worn on Right Side of Coat)	 2d Lieutenant (Gold Bar)	 Corporal	
 Cavalry	 General Staff Corps	 National Guard Bureau	 Warrant Officer (Gold)	 Private, First Class	
 Chaplain, Christian Chaplain, Jewish	 Infantry		 Left Arm Service Chevrons	 FOURRAGERE—Both an organizational and indi- vidual decoration. Most frequently seen as a di- visional decoration. Right to wear fourragere ceases when member- ship in organization ter- minates, unless individ- ual is entitled to wear it in his own right.	
 Chemical Warfare Service	 Inspector General's Dept.		 Right Arm Gold Wound Chevrons Left Arm Gold Overseas Chevrons (One for Each 6 Months)		

PREPARED BY U. S. ARMY INFORMATION SERVICE

PREPARED BY U. S. ARMY INFORMATION SERVICE

My Military Experiences

INDEX

104th, 3, 8, 9, 10, 11, 18, 32, 33, 35, 36
104th Infantry, 3, 10, 18, 33, 35
1941, 3, 5, 8
1943, 10, 18
1944, 19, 21, 22, 23, 29, 33, 40
1945, 3, 18, 41, 48, 50, 53
1st Battalion, 9
2nd Battalion, 27, 29, 31, 41, 44
328th, 3, 10, 11, 22, 31, 41, 52
328th Cannon Company, 11
328th Infantry Regiment, 3, 10, 11, 22
81-millimeter mortar, 39
81mm mortar, 8, 11, 12, 14, 31
81mm mortars, 23, 44
94th Division, 44
Ahrens, 32
Allen, 17, 18, 47
Alsace-Lorraine, 36, 39
Amerind, 18
Andon, 23, 27, 29, 32, 33, 34, 35, 43, 44
APPENDIX ONE, 55
Avery, 13, 15
Bayreuth, 50
Berlin, 47, 48, 49
Bernardston, 3, 5
Bernhardt, 18
Bezange le Grande, 22
Bistany, 7, 11
Blanding, 9, 10
Borneman, 18
Boxcars, 53
Brausfield, 23, 43
Briggs, 12
Brooks, 10, 11
Brown, 10, 11
Bulge, 3, 36, 38, 40, 41
Burk, 44
C Company, 14
Caesar, 8, 11, 12
Camden, 8
Camp Edwards, 3, 7, 8
Camp Gordon, 15, 18
Campbell, 8
Canon, 15
Cape Cod Canal, 7
Carolina Beach, 9, 10
Coast Patrol, 3, 9
Coddle, 17
Cowhey, 7
Craig, 12
Cremmins, 17, 18
Cumberland River flood, 18
Czechoslovakia, 31, 42, 49, 50, 52
D Company, 9, 10, 11, 18, 35
D'Amico, 6
Darmstadt, 48, 49
DeGeorge, 15
Dieuze, 31
Doran, 5
England, 21, 36, 49, 53
Erving, 5
Eschdorf, 40
Faust, 18, 32
Ferk, 13, 17
Fisher, 12, 13, 15
Fontainbleu, 22, 53
Foret de Bride, 29, 31
Fort Bragg, 8
Fort Jackson, 10, 18, 19
Gill, Mass, 10
Gladding, 9, 10
Gladys, 3, 5, 8, 10, 19
Glennis, 5
Greenfield, 3, 5, 6, 11, 53
Greensboro, 8
Grigsby, 12, 49
Grondin, 30
H Company, 3, 13, 16, 18, 24, 32, 41, 46, 52
Hampden Park, 6
Harkins, 43
Harold, 5
Hartness, 12, 16
Higgins, 12
Hines, 8
Hocker Hill, 44
Hof, 3, 49, 50
Huston, 17
Jack Cole, 45
Johnson, 48, 49
Kennedy, 18
Kessler, 32, 42
Kilbourne, 11

My Military Experiences

King Phillip's war, 5
Koecking, 14, 29, 31
London, 13
Liberty, 18, 19, 25, 32, 33, 34,
35, 45
Lieutenant Turner, 51
Logan, 8
Lorraine, 22, 33
Main, 45, 48
Mainz, 45, 48
Major Arnott, 22
Major Chipman, 51
Manwiller, 17, 18, 23, 29
Martindale, 3
McCarthy, 24
McDonald, 13
Millers Falls, 5
Moncourt, 24, 27
Moselle, 22
nebelwerfer, 28, 43
Northfield, 3, 5
O'Neill, 38
Oppenheim, 3, 47
Oudette, 7
Owen Ferguson, 54
P-47, 23, 37, 40
Palatinate, 18
Patton, 19, 22, 40, 46, 49, 52,
53
Paul, 8, 12, 19, 22
Pederzani, 10, 18
Petraska, 7
Phelps, 45
Pilsen, 3, 52
Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, 3
Pont a Mousson, 22
Poughkeepsie, 18
Providence, 9
Provincetown, 3, 8
Putterman, 24, 25, 29, 30, 46,
47
Raleigh, 8
Randazzize, 11
Regensberg, 50
Regensburg, 3, 50
Rhein, 45, 47
Rhein River., 48
River Main, 48
Riverside, 10
Rocco, 17
Saar, 36, 41, 42, 44
Saarbrucken, 33, 34, 44
Saarland, 45
Saarlautern, 41
Schule,, 36
Sergeant Parz, 50
Sgt. Cremins, 47
Sheraw, 18
Shinnekonis, 11
Shipman, 51
Slattery, 32
Speck, 11, 24, 29, 30, 33, 35,
42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 52
Springfield, 3, 5, 6, 10
Spurr, 17
St. Louis, 10, 18
St. Martin, 22
Sullivan, 15, 16, 46
Swift, 14
Temple, 8
True, 3, 5
Turner, 12
Turners Falls, 5, 6
Turners Falls,, 5
U.S.S. McAndrew, 19
U.S.S. McAndrew., 19
Utah Beach, 21
Vesh, 17
Vic sur Seille, 22,26
Vic-sur-Seille
Vlachovo Brezi, 51
Weber, 18, 24, 25, 27, 28, 34,
35, 42, 49
Wiltz, 40
Winchell, 8
Wittig, 7
Woelfling, 33
Wolcott, 10
Yarborough, 44
Znudzien, 17, 18, 43

My Military Experiences