

STORIES I HAVE TOLD

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to my beloved wife of 53 years, Betty Lee Thompson Gregory, who listened to my stories for all those years and urged me to write a book to record all the stories that I could recall. I regret that she is no longer with us to see that her wishes have been fulfilled. I also thank all my grand children who have spent hours listening to my recollections of my past. They have all inspired me to finish putting the stories I remember into a book. Also, I thank our five great children for their urging and help on this project.

Note:

The contents of this book have been recorded as part of our family history and are the sole property of the author. None of the contents of this book may be used in any way without the written consent of the author.

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PART I.

MY CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

“BILL”

I was born, CHARLES WILBUR GREGORY, on the morning of October 14, 1921, in Mooresville, North Carolina. I frankly do not recall much about my entry into this world as I am sure that mother was busy and I was upset about leaving my shelter to enter the world. Do not have any recollection of getting acquainted with my parents or brother, John, Jr. My mom was concerned that kids would call me "Wilbur or Willie" so early on they nicknamed me "Bill" and that is what I was called until I finished college and entered the U.S. Army. When I was about a year old, my mother entered me in a baby contest and I won first prize which I was told was five dollars, a tidy sum in those days. I have a news paper article that appeared in the local paper on the contest that is in my scrapbook.

My best recollections of my childhood begin when we lived in Statesville, N.C. I have some memories of the first house we lived in there. I think I would have been four or five years old then. I recall it was a big house with a big curving porch on it. We had a big bull dog named "Bell" and he followed us around all the time, protected us and we dearly loved him. If I knew what happened to Bell, I do not now recall. One day we were suppose to go somewhere and the lady who was our housekeeper dressed us all (myself and brothers John and Clinton 'nicked named C.B.') in white shirts and short pants. Mom had gone somewhere and was to come back and get us. We went across the street from the house and played in a large open dirt ditch that mom had told us not to get into. Of course we got awfully dirty and had to change clothes and I recall the spanking we got for disobedience. I have memories of our housekeeper who was a nice lady and we all liked her. She did correct us and make us mind. I have a vague memory of one time when great grandmother Amacker was visiting us. We did not mind her and when mom came home we all got a real hurtful spanking and then we had to go in one by one and apologize to great grand mother for being bad.

I recall that during this time frame our family Doctor was a Dr. Tatum. In those days the doctors make house calls and we saw him more at our home than in an office. I can recall him coming to our house many times but can only recall one time that we went to his office. He came to our house to examine us kids, give us vaccinations and shots and to treat us for illnesses. The

three of us boys use to run from him and hide. One of our spots was under the front porch. I truly recall the doctor crawling under the porch and pulling us out to give us shots. I especially recall one time he crawled under the porch and pulled C.B. out as he was in a hurry and was a bit angry at him. Of course all three of us yelled at the top of our lungs as he gave us vaccination shots. Dr. Tatum was a, for real doctor, as I also recall him outrunning us and chasing us down and making sure that each of us boys got all our shots. I think that Dr Tatum knew the hiding places of all the kids in town.

Dad was an insurance agent for a major company and had an office downtown. I recall one Saturday that he took the three of us with him to his office as he had some work to do. Not to our credit I remember running around the office and getting into things. We behaved quite badly and dad was upset with us and did not take us to his office again, that I can recall.

How well I remember that first day of school. Mom got me dressed up and was telling me that she would have to leave me so I could get acquainted with all the kids. I remember holding her hand and I was panic stricken. I will never forget going up the walk toward that large building holding tightly to moms hand. That front door looked like it was made for giants and all those strange people standing around. It was panic time as I knew that mom was going to leave me and I was scared and I mean, I remember that I was scared. Through the eyes of a six year old I remember seeing those kids and their moms or dads disappearing through those giant doors and I did not know what was on the other side. I know I tried to pull away and run but mom held my hand assuring me that I would like school and the kids. WRONG. I do not remember much about going into the class room and meeting the teacher. But mom leaving was imprinted on my mind and being scared to death I guess I retreated into a shell. I do not remember much about the class-room and the teacher as I wanted nothing to do with school. I am told that I refused to talk to anyone, refused to answer any questions and would not cooperate with anyone but kept strictly to myself. I guess that I was one really unhappy trooper and did not get over it.

One thing that has always stayed with me and I recall with no pleasure was the recess periods in the first and second grades,

at which times we went outside for recreation and I kept to myself (at least that is what I have been told) and did not engage in play activities. I vividly recall the lunch periods, at which time we were lined up in two lines one for boys and one for girls. We were marched down to the basement and into the huge rest rooms. A male warden watched us to make sure we relieved ourselves of liquid, of no further value, and then we went out into a hall way where we were lined up in two lines by women teachers who doubled as wardens. We were then marched to the sinks where the senior warden told us to stick out our hands at which time she pushed on a plunger and liquid soap spurted onto our hands. The senior warden watched carefully as we lathered and washed and rinsed our hands. Then we were marched into a room and allowed to eat our sack lunches we had brought from home, all done under the careful and watching eyes of several wardens. I don't recall much of the classes but was told that I hated school and totally disliked the teacher.

I vaguely remember the day that mom told me that I had failed the first grade and would have to attend summer school. Here I was, a wee chap, hating school and looking forward to a summer away and am told I have to attend school during the summer. Do not really recall much about going to the summer school. Guess I disliked it so much my mind just blanked it out. The one draw back to summer school was that the teacher for that session was my first grade teacher. Not surprisingly, I guess, I also failed summer school and had to repeat the first grade the next year. Mom was upset to say the least, She told me that she began to investigate the circumstances and talk to a lot of people and found out that after she left me at the school alone, I had to all intents and purposes, with drawn from the human race. I would never speak to the first grade teacher or answer her at all. I had remained totally silent for the entire school year and had very little to do with the rest of my classmates. The same situation existed at summer school. Mom said that I had become a little more cooperative by then but the teacher failed me just the same. I do recall clearly one morning during the winter that when I got up the ground was covered with snow that was very deep and I recall dad carrying me out to the car to go to school.

Somehow, I became aware that dad and mom were going to

move from the big old house that was our home and also we were going to lose our housekeeper. I remember all us boys were unhappy over that. I dimly recall mom telling me that they were moving the next day and after school I should not come home to the old house but go to the new house as the old one would be empty. She put me in the car and drove the route from the old house to the new one and from school to the new house. She reminded me again the next morning to come home to the new house but being a small tad in the first grade I suppose I promptly forgot what she said. When school was out I walked home and found the house empty and no one about. I became extremely frightened as I stood in front of the house and tried to remember what I had been told. My mind was a complete blank and I began to panic as I did not know what to do. I remember walking about the neighborhood and down to the end of the block and then back to the school trying to remember where I was suppose to go. As I walked back toward the old house, suddenly mom drove up. She was very upset when I did not get home on time and figured that I might have gone back to the old house. I was one happy camper to climb into that car with mom.

We did not live in that house very long but I have a lot of memories of the time there. I recall empty fields (probably just lots but seemed big to me) on both sides of the house and across the street. There were lots of places to play but the lots had weeds and dad was afraid there might be snakes in them. I do recall dad killing a lot of snakes. I recall times when Dr Tatum chased us down and pulled us from under the porch to give us shots. I recall one time when mom was having a birthday party for dad and told us to hang outside as she had a lot of work to do getting ready for the party. We ended up at a small carnival in the town and kept riding on the merry-go-round as we found tickets on the ground that people threw away. We got home very late and mom was beside herself. We got a spanking and had to stay in our rooms the whole evening while the party was in progress. One day mom had to go somewhere and told us to stay home and not get into trouble. They were building a house across the street so we went over there and started messing around. I was walking on the rafters which were just framing at the time with John and suddenly I fell. I don't remember much after that as I landed on my shoulder and head and knocked

myself out. I dimly recall some men taking me home and mom came and was angry and upset. I recall being in a hospital and being frightened when they put me in a machine to xray the shoulder. Mom stayed where I could see her the whole time as I was really scared and half out of it. They put a cast on my shoulder and I remember having to do nothing and be careful. I remember the trip to the hospital and taking more xrays and the decision to take off the cast. I was really happy when we got in the car to go home and the cast was gone. I recall one Sunday when a friend of dads came by. He had a big twelve cylinder convertible that was huge. He brought a couple bottles of beer which he and dad drank as they talked in the living room then he took us for a spin in his convertible on the back roads, which were dirt at the time. One time mom and us kids had gone some where and were headed home after dark on those dirt roads with ruts in them. It had been raining and we were near town when we had a flat tire. I recall how worried mom was but some men came by and changed the tire and we went on home. In those days there was no such thing as a spare tire. Every car had a repair kit. If you had a flat you had to jack up the car, take off the wheel, take the tire off the rim and locate and patch the puncture in the inner tube, then remount the tube in the tire on the rim and pump up the tire with the pump in the car and remount the tire on the wheel and let the jack down. It was a dirty job that took skill and strength and most women were not up to that job. The help from those men to do a dirty job was really appreciated.

Do not recall if I was still in the first or in the second grade when we moved again to a one story frame house that was located about one mile from my school. I recall this house clearly as it sat on a street corner or on an alley corner. Do not clearly recall which it was except there was a street on the left side as you faced the house which had a big porch and a big tree in the left side of the yard. On the right side facing the house was a large lot with vines and trees. There was a barn on the left side at the back of the lot facing the street or alley. There was a large back porch that may have curved around a little and steps leading up to the porch as the house sat up off the ground. I recall many adventures we had while living there as John, myself and C.B. could be an unruly and unpredictable bunch.

I had to walk to school and it seemed to me like a very long

way and I recall being apprehensive of some of the people I met along the way. One day in the fall, I was walking home and I ran into two boys who were much bigger than me. Both the boys were wearing badges with pictures on them. They stopped me and started talking about something and then demanded to know who I was going to vote for. I had absolutely no idea what they were taking about but they became very aggressive and threatening so I took off and ran home as fast as I could. I told my mom about it and she said they were electing a president.

One thing I have never forgotten was learning to read. How vividly I recall night after night sitting beside my mom in that rocking chair in front of the fire place and trying to read from my book. I made many mistakes and mom would become so frustrated and lose her patience and I would become confused and cry but it must have worked in the end. I just know how I hated those times as they seemed an eternity to a small boy.

Dad smoked Lucky Strikes back then. They came in many type packages and one was a tin box that contained 50 cigarettes. All three of us guys became interested in smoking so one day we took some cigarettes from his tin box and went out by the back porch and tried smoking them. Of course, we all got sick but that did not fool mom. We got a stern lecture and a spanking when dad got home.

One warm sunny afternoon John, Jr, C.B. and myself were playing in the back yard when John called us over by some bushes next to a fence. He wanted to burn something for what reason I cannot recall. C.B. and I objected as we had been warned many times to leave the matches alone and we were afraid the grass might catch on fire and told John so. John went and got a bucket of water and said if anything caught on fire he would put it out. John set fire to what ever it was that he wanted to burn and C.B. and I watched. Soon the fire got bigger and bigger and we tried to put it out but it just spread and got bigger. I heard someone yell they had called the fire department and we all ran for the house. Suddenly there were fire trucks arriving with sirens going and lights flashing and many spectators lined the side walk watching as firemen put out the fire. Mom came home about then and do I have to mention how upset and angry she was. We all had to answer questions of several big angry men as to what we were doing and why. We

were told we could have burned down several blocks and that we might have to go to jail for what we did. Of course, when dad got home we all got a good spanking and we spent the entire night worrying about what was going to happen to us. The next day we got a stern lecture from the fire Captain and his threats of dire punishment made an impression on us that lasted. No more matches or fires for us.

The three of us often went downtown and messed around. One day we were walking around downtown and wandered through the ten cent stores. As we were going home John showed us a couple toys that he had lifted in one of the stores. Do not recall what they were now, but when we got home we knew we could not explain having the toys so John hid them in the tree in the front yard. The next Sunday a friend of dad's visited with his small daughter and as he was leaving, he spotted the toys in the tree. He climbed up and retrieved them. Since we boys had no idea how they got there, mom suggested that he give them to his daughter which he gladly did. We never did like that man or his daughter after that.

I recall one day we were playing in the front yard when a man came driving up in a black two seat convertible Dodge roadster. He told us that he was the salesman and was delivering the car which was a present to mom from dad. Mom told the salesman to take the car back as she did not want it but we all begged her to keep it so she agreed to try it out for a day and we were all happy anticipating a ride in the convertible. We were all unhappy when the salesman came back the next day and left with the car. Mom later told us that she did not think that they could afford the car.

I had made some friends at school and with the kids in the neighborhood. One day CB and I were playing in the front yard when a friend of mine joined us. While we were playing my friend showed us several rings he had in his pocket. Later he offered me one of the rings that was real nice so I took it as he had several. Later that evening I showed the ring to mom and she immediately became very upset and questioned me in great detail as to how I got the ring and where it had come from. Mom told me that the ring was actually a very expensive diamond ring and was concerned where the boy had gotten several of them. Some time later a couple of big stern looking men came to the

house and questioned me and CB about how I got the ring and about the boy who had them. They were Postal Inspectors and later told us that the boy had been stealing packages from mail boxes and had taken a box of very expensive rings from a mail box. They thanked us for being the ones to give them the information to solve the thefts. Actually mom had called someone about the rings. If I knew, I do not recall what happened to the boy who was seven years old, my age.

How we boys looked forward to spring when we could discard the longjohns and just wear overalls and go bare footed. I recall one day especially when we wanted to go somewhere and mom told us to stay home as she would be coming back from the store with clothes. Yes, it was longjohn time again and mom came home with new longjohn underwear for us and we knew we had to wear them until spring when she would let us out of them. They were one piece with a slit in front and a panel in back held by two buttons. You had to unbutton and drop the flap to go to the toilet. How inconvenient and uncomfortable. So we all looked forward to the day we could get out of them and go barefooted.

I can recall a few times that dad and mom loaded all us kids in the car and drove to Uncle Dick and Aunt Pallies farm near Belmont, North Carolina to spend the day but do not recall ever staying the night. We had many cousins to play with on the farm. As summer approached, mom and dad talked about leaving us boys on the farm with them for a couple weeks while they went somewhere. Do not recall exactly where they intended to go. I have a recollection of that day when we all got into the car for the trip to the farm that CB and I were upset at the thought of mom and dad leaving us as they had never left us anywhere and gone off. We were scared as we did not know if they would ever come back and our very young minds were active thinking of all the bad possibilities. When we got to the farm every one was so happy to see us and took us to see some new animals. When we came back to the farm house from the barn, mom and dad were driving away. We ran after them crying but to no avail as they just drove off. Aunt Pallie threatened to use a hickory switch on us if we did not stop and she was an expert with the hickory switch. That big lady wore out a lot of hickory switches on us and her boys over the next few years. I really do not remember too

much of what we did on the farm that summer but we were really glad one day when we saw dad and mom driving up the lane to the house.

One night when dad took us all out to a Veterans encampment. I recall there were lots of people there with bands, bonfire and fireworks. I was sitting in the touring car with mom and the other kids when dad came running up to the car and said that he had lost his wallet with all his money. We all got out of the car and started looking. I found dad's wallet on the ground near the car and dad gave me a big hug and kiss as I was the hero of the day.

For some reason I do not recall much about our move from Statesville to Roanoke, Virginia. I seem to recall riding through the mountains in the family touring car, but dad often took us for a drive in the mountains on a Sunday afternoon. Some times we would take a picnic lunch and stay in the mountains all day. My next real recollection was living in a one story house with a basement on Huntington Court in Roanoke. The house was on a cul de sac and was at the very center of the curve at the end of the street. I recall a bread truck that came through the area every other day and would park in front of our house. When the driver opened the door of the truck the most heavenly smell came out and all us kids gathered around the smell. He had great big trays of huge iced cinnamon rolls that sold for 5 cents each and they were big. Some times mom would buy one for each of us. I have liked those rolls ever since. I had to walk down to the main road and then walk a long way along the main road to my school which was a brick building on the right side of the road. I do not recall much about it except being in a room with a lot of kids and I liked the teacher and got along fine with everyone.

There was a store several blocks down on the main street and mom would often send one or more of us to the store to pick up some last minute items she needed for a meal. I remember once she sent me down at dusk and I recall being frightened walking along and imagining all sorts of dire things. When I got home, mom asked me for the change and was really upset when I had no change as I had been given none by the clerk. By mistake she had given me a \$2 gold coin that felt like a dime. Dad went down to the store and at first the clerk denied that I had

given him a gold coin. When dad threatened to call the police, the man suddenly found the gold piece among the coins in his cash register and dad redeemed our gold coin. I recall there were a lot of kids to play with living near us. I recall one little girl who lived next door and took a liking to me so we played together a lot. Possibly we did not live in that house for a long time as I have no other outstanding memories of the place.

I recall we moved to another house not too far away and I still went to the same school. This was a two story house and I do not recall too much about it so maybe we did not live there for a long time. The walk to school was not as far as before and I recall walking home for lunch every day. I remember on cold days mom would fix rice and cheese and I dearly loved that hot dish. I recall the school and now I was studying and working hard. My hardest learning experience in that grade was the multiplication tables and arithmetic but I mastered them all and recall how proud I was when my grades were so high that I did not have to take the final tests for the grade and was promoted with honors. I think this was second grade but not sure.

I think that it was just a few months later when school was out that we moved again. I don't recall much about the move except mom told us that we were moving. This house was a huge two story house with big rooms and a big front porch and a good sized front yard. I think it was a corner house and was located a few blocks from downtown Roanoke. My bedroom was on the second floor in the front corner of the house with a view of the big buildings downtown. There was one tall building with a large antenna on it with lots of lights on it some that rotated. I use to have a lot of bad dreams and when I would wake up and see the lights on the building I felt reassured and could go back to sleep. This was the first time that I had ever had nightmares and they persisted for sometime. Do not know what caused them but they must have quit at some time. If I attended school while we lived there I cannot recall anything about it. I do recall that when walking in some direction I had to pass an ice plant. The plant had large pools of dark water in a large building that I could see through large open doors. It was a scary place to me and I hated to have to pass it if I could go another way.

I recall while living here that mom was a district distributor for the Saturday Evening Post and worked several days a week. I

remember that on days the magazine came out she had to distribute the bundles to salespeople and I remember well her zooming about town with my little brother Finley in the back seat. I would have been eight or nine at the time. I clearly remember one night in particular. It was a strange eerie occurrence that left me with bad dreams. It was dark and we were all in the great big living room and I was reading. Suddenly there was a very loud knocking at the front door. Mom went to the front door, stepped outside and on returning she said there was no one at the door or in sight. Some time later there was another loud knocking at the front door. Johnny and I went to the door but no one was outside the door. A short time later there was another loud knocking at the door and this time dad went to check on it. He said there was no one outside and we all discussed what possibly could be the cause of the knocking. Early the next morning mother got a telegram that informed us that her dad, Grandpa Smith had passed away the previous evening, and I remember her weeping and dad and mother discussing her going to La for the wake and funeral. I cannot recall if she was able to go. It was strange that the knocking happened about the same time Grandpa passed away and we were not sure if he was trying to tell us bad news was on the way.

I do not recall much about Grandpa Smith when I was very small although I think we visited him a couple of times. I have a vision of walking up to some steps to a house and an old stern looking man with beard and mustache looking down at me. I really do not recall much else about him. I was told that he was a small slim man. I do vaguely recall once going to De Quincy to visit grandpa. Mom and dad had been talking about the storms and flooding and whether we could get there. I remember looking out the train window and seeing nothing but trees and water as far as I could see. I cannot recall any more about the trip or being at Grandpas.

From about this time until we moved to W.Va. We three boys all sold magazines. Johnny always sold the Saturday Evening post on the streets and going door to door. I did the same selling Colliers magazine and CB did the same selling the Liberty magazine. We ran around the town and suburbs and knew our way about town very well. One thing we really liked to do in the summer was ride the street cars. We could for one fare go to the

end of the streetcar line and back at origin get a transfer and get on another car and repeat the process until we had ridden all the cars to the end of the line and back. This could take hours and we enjoyed riding the street cars and selling our magazines.

I do not recall how long we lived in this house but I liked the house and was not happy when for some reason unknown to me we moved to Salem, Virginia. We lived in a house that was located, it seems to me, on the side of a hill with a big yard in front. Strangely, I just do not recall much about that house or how long we were there. There were lots of open fields around us and I recall going out early many mornings and picking blue berries, black berries and raspberries. There were so many berry bushes on the slopes and in the fields that I filled many a gallon pail with them and took them home. Mom made pies, canned some of them, made jellies and jam with some of them and we sold the rest. Just as we sold our magazines door to door, we sold the berries the same way. I remember we went to the more affluent neighborhoods in town to sell our wares.

For some reason, my mind is a blank on my schooling in Salem. I am sure that I went to school and might have been in the fourth grade but am not sure of that. I cannot recall where the school was or even going to school but am sure that I did. I know that we ran around the town, rode the street cars and knew the neighborhoods well. I recall one evening about dusk we went to a movie. We were standing in line when a group of boys came up and started arguing with us and started trying to fight with us. Since we were out numbered we took off on the run with the kids chasing us. We knew the area better than them so we lost them. We got back together and decided to go back to the theatre. Do not know if they left but we did not see them in the show. I remember one afternoon mom gave us the money to go to the theatre where Tom Sawyer was playing but instead we misbehaved and went to see the movie Virginia City, which mom did not want us to see. When we got home she asked us a lot of questions and it did not take her long, despite our lies and denials, to figure out that we had not gone to that movie. Of course, we got a licking and were grounded.

We always seemed to have a big garden and raised many things. We had to do the work in the garden. I remember the big watermelons we grew there which were sweet and delicious.

Some Sunday afternoons we also made ice cream and ate it and cold watermelon in the yard. Now those were great days and times. We also peddled some of our vegetables and melons in the more affluent neighborhoods and recalled that we sold a lot.

For some reason up to this time I do not recall anything about going to church or Sunday school but I am sure that mom saw to it that we went some. In Salem I recall Johnny, CB and myself going to Sunday school and church and vaguely remember the big church we went to. It sticks in my mind on Sunday the three of us were in church and they passed out bread on trays and little glasses of juice. Johnny told us we could not take the glasses but had to put them in the holders on back of the pews. I liked Sunday because when we got home from church, I always read the comic section and followed the adventures of Little Orphan Anne, Jiggs, Popeye, and many other favorites.

I think we lived in Salem about a year and when school was out things turned bleak at our household. I remember hearing dad and mom discussing how bad things had gotten and the country was in trouble with banks failing. Dad had lost his job and money was tight everywhere. There were no jobs available in that area and they felt that we had to move. I recall that they talked about moving to DeQuincy, Louisiana, where Grandpa had property and his house in town was vacant and we could live in the house for free. At some point they made the decision to move to La. I do not recall what happened to the furniture and personal belongings. Maybe they shipped some of it by rail ahead, I just don't recall. It was decided that mom would take the train to Louisiana with Rosamond and Finley. Dad would load his two seat Dodge touring sedan and take Johnny, myself and CB and Catherine. The day we set out, the car was loaded so there was not much room to move about and I was real sad, to the point of tears, to be leaving. The big old car did not have windows but was open with only a roof over us. We had side panels to button on the sides to secure the car if the weather got bad which it did many times on the trip and we would have to stop and put the sides on to protect us. We drove at nights a lot and it got quite cold. My recollections of the trip are vague just long days in the car and bumpy roads and numerous rest stops for us kids. In those days there were no roadmaps available as there are today and very few paved roads. Most roads from

town to town were gravel or just plain hard packed dirt. You had to ask for directions as to how to get from one town to the next. I recall dad stopping often to ask filling stations and farmers how to get to the next town. I can remember dad driving long after dark and waking up when he stopped for gas or to ask some one for directions. We slept curled up in the car a lot. I remember one day he said he was going to try to get a motel cabin for the night so we could have a bath, change clothes and get a good nights sleep. We did stop at a cabin that night and I remember the next morning we were very hungry and dad told us to stay in the cabin and he left. We were very worried but he came back later and had cereal and milk so we had some breakfast and got back on the road. I cannot remember how long it took us to drive to DeQuincy but it seemed like forever. I am sure it took a week at least. I remember how glad we were to see mom and the other kids again. I forgot to mention how many flat tires we had to stop and repair. We all pitched in and helped and I did most of the pumping of the tire when it was patched up. Dad also tried to get bread and sandwich makings to carry in the car for us and I now realize that he did not have much money as he had to save for gas and repairs. I remember being a little frightened one night when it was dark and raining hard and we were on a dirt road between towns. We had put the sides up but it was cold in the car. There were no heaters in cars in those days, just blankets to cover you as best you could. I remember that dad pulled over and stopped the car as he could not see very well and did not want to get out in the mud and rain, also, he was not sure exactly where he was, so we slept in the car until morning. There were no motels in those days, just tourist courts and they were few and far between. There were very few road sign and bill boards. One had to ask for directions for every thing.

Don't remember arriving in DeQuincy but recall we were living in Grandpa's old house on Coffee Street. (Sister Catherine told me she was in Dequincy a few years ago and tried to locate the house, but all the old frame houses in the old neighborhood were gone and the entire area had changed.) The house was a frame house on concrete supports and sat up off the ground a couple feet and had a big front porch. My favorite place to read books was sitting in a corner of the porch. The house sat on a large lot with a big garden in back and a small barn at the back

of the lot. On the right side of the house on an adjoining lot was a small frame house that some of the family had lived in but was vacant then. It was long and narrow and had the rooms one behind the other. For some reason I can vaguely remember being in that house when I was smaller and remember the cluttered back yard that seemed so big and scared me then. Our house had four bedrooms (I think the old living room had been converted to a bedroom) a parlor with a big pot bellied cast iron stove in a sandbox on one side, a kitchen with a wood stove, and a bathroom with sink and tub that had been added at a later date and was off the back porch. You had to go out the back door on the back porch to get to the bathroom. There was no entry to the bathroom from the house proper. The back porch extended across the rest of the back of the house. There were big old persimmon trees in the side and front yard. We did have running water and electricity in the house but there was no heat in the bedrooms only in the parlor and kitchen. We had loads of pine logs delivered and it was our job to chop the logs into stove size and keep the fireboxes filled at all times. I can clearly recall many times when we would forget to do our job, mom would wake us up before dawn and we would have to go out in the breaking dawn to chop wood for the stoves. Chopping up those pine logs and knots was a hard job but we learned how to use an axe safely and no one ever got hurt.

DeQuincy was near Lake Charles and was primarily a railroad town. There were three major railroads that formed a triangle around the town and train traffic was steady and constant on all of them. There were two major train stations in the town and one was just a few blocks from our home. Each of the railroads had major railroad shops for servicing and repairing train cars and there were two huge round tables in the town for the big steam engines where they were serviced, repaired and turned around.

I know that we moved south because of the depression which did not mean much to me at the time as I was not old enough. The depression became much more real to me and made much more of an impact on me as time passed. We were in DeQuincy from about June 1931 to June 1936 when we moved to W.Va. Dad did not have a job and employment was almost impossible to find and it seemed that most of the men in town were

unemployed. I remember talking with a foreman in one of the railroad shops who told me that there was not even one job of any kind open in the area and that well over half of the men in the area were without jobs. At that time there was no stigma attached to being unemployed. I recall there was a big alley off the main street downtown, behind the stores, where many of the towns men met to play checkers and dominos and discuss the job situation and were available if anyone wanted someone to work for an hour or a day. A lot of us kids hung out there at times also. At the height of the depression it seemed that there was no money to be had. Men took any odd job they could get thus it was impossible for any of us kids go get odd jobs. Johnny, CB and myself continued to sell our magazines once a week and Johnny delivered telegrams for the telegraph office at one of the train stations for years. A nickel tip was a lot of money in those days. We gave all our earnings to mom to help out with the family.

There was a neighborhood grocery store about halfway between our house and the train station. We used to go to the store to buy things mom needed and I recall that bacon was 7 cents a pound, eggs 6 cents a dozen, bread 5 cents a loaf, bananas 5 cents a pound and down at the local Coney island restaurant one could get two hot dogs for 5 cents with all the trimmings. Many times when mom did not feel like cooking and we had money, she would send us down to get hot chili dogs for all the family.

As I look back down the dimming corridor of past years I clearly see at times that the experiences and hardships encountered during our four years in DeQuincy had a profound influence on my life and decision making as I got older. I realize that there was a feeling of insecurity that haunted me for years and years. I guess my most lasting impression as a small lad was being so awfully hungry so many times and for so long. It seems to me there were periods when we had food and some when we did not. I can recall being hungry for so long it felt like my backbone was coming through my stomach. I recall many times when the food was so scarce that we sent the smaller kids out to different relatives who could feed one or two and the rest of us ate very little or did without. I remember many times sitting at the table in the kitchen and mom fixed a mixture of flour and

water which she fried in lard as that was all we had in the house to eat.

Fortunate for us the government gave out surplus food. I recall many times going with my brothers, dad and our wagon to a building where they gave us sacks of flour, beans, rice, and other items and when we got home mom would fix up a meal that was to me a feast. I recall one day when the three of us had been out to Grandpas old farm in the country and were walking along the railroad tracks back into town. We were really hungry so as we passed a field of watermelons, we found a stray which we took and John broke open on the tracks. As we ate the melon sitting on the tracks, we all discussed being hungry and broke and how not to be in those straits. We decided that if education was the key to having money then we would get as much education as possible. Sometimes when we were really hungry we would go down to the railroad tracks and jump a freight train carrying sugar cane. We would throw off a bundle and then jump off the train. We would chew the pulp of the cane and the sweetness would help with the hunger. The trains had to slow down going through town and we had learned the schedule of all the trains and knew when, where and how fast they would be going so we could jump a freight most any time of the day. I remember many days when we would jump a freight train to our favorite swimming hole and back. One day scared up plenty. We tried to jump a freight that was going too fast. John was hanging on the ladder when CB jumped and missed the ladder. He would have gone under the wheels for sure if John had not grabbed his arm and held on while he got hold of the ladder. After that we made sure we could get on safely and took no chances. Sometimes when we needed ice we would get into the refrigeration cars and take out and throw off large chunks of ice which we took home to use or carry around in our wagon and sell it for pennies.

We had a big garden out back every year and we had to help cultivate it. I remember we had vegetables in the summer which mom fixed up to eat and sometimes if we had an abundance we put some in our wagon and peddled it door to door. Since we had a small barn on the lot we always kept a cow and had milk. I can remember working that plunger on that churn to make butter and how good that fresh buttermilk tasted. I still like it

today. Of course, we did not have the cow all the time. I can remember taking that white oleo and mixing the color to get it to have the same color as butter.

In those days nearly every freight train that went through the town was loaded with "hobos". These were men who were 'down on their luck' and some were traveling to new towns to look for jobs, some were traveling to visit family and some for many other reasons. Not too far from our house was a huge "hobo jungle" which was a place these men spent the nights and sometimes days while waiting to move on. We boys used to go to the jungle quite often to talk with the hobos and if they were eating they would offer us some of their food which we gladly ate. We had nothing to fear in the jungle as all the men there were decent men and it was interesting talking with them as they had many stories to keep us interested. Hobos frequently stopped by the house and offered to work for a meal. If we had any extra food on hand or a big pot of beans on the stove, that we usually had there, mom would offer them something to eat. I later learned that if you fed them they would mark your house in a code known only to them so all would know of your kindness so others might stop by to ask for a 'handout'. There was one very elderly black man who use to come to our house and stay for days at a time. He slept in the barn and mom fed and took care of him and he did minor chores about the place. Mom knew him very well and his association with the family went back almost generations. He was a real gentleman with lots of stories. We all were glad to see him come as we really liked him and always hated to see him go but he said he had to move on.

There was a man who lived behind us who had a lot of hunting dogs. They bayed all the time and were really noisy. He had several English walnut trees in his yard. We used to sneak over at night and load all our pockets with the walnuts. He was not a friendly man as I recall and would chase us off if he could to keep us from his walnuts. That did not deter us as those were good walnuts.

The school we attended in DeQuincy was located across town from our house so we had to walk almost through downtown to get to the school which I am sure was a mile or more from home. There were three two story brick buildings in a line with the grade school on the left, middle school and high school on the right.

Each building had a metal chute at each end like a big covered slide that came from second floor to ground so kids could slide down it to get out in case of fire. The basket ball court was a concrete slab with baskets at each end as there was no gyms then and the games were played out doors. I recall a lot about going to school there and the kids I knew and played with. I remember each class had its own library of books for that class and I prided myself on trying to read all of them during the year. I well remember one teacher, Mrs. Jones, who insisted on complete discipline in the class. She use to grab us by a hunk of hair on our head and give it a yank to get our attention. After she did that a couple times to me I had mom give me a butch cut and put grease on my hair. The next time she grabbed my hair she got a handful of grease and no hair. She was angry and rapped my knuckles with a ruler she always carried. I recall liking school very much and my class mates. In those days every boy in school carried a large switchblade knife which we used for many things and used it to play mubble-peg on the school ground every day. (Today you would get jail time for having a knife like that). My class was always on second floor and when they had a fire drill we had to line up and one by one jump on the slide to the ground where two teachers stood to catch us and help us away from the slide. A bunch of us guys would find out when they were going to have a fire drill and the evening before after dark we would all come with wax paper and climb up the inside bare footed and slide down on the wax paper. After a few trips we would have that thing slick and fast. When the kids came down during the fire drill they came so fast the teachers could not catch them and they landed on their posterior on the ground. After a few time of this happening, they figured out what we were doing and put something on the chute in the morning to slow it down.

Because so many families in Louisiana could not afford lunches, the Governor Huey P. Long created a state program to provide lunches in the schools for the needy and hungry kids, of which I was definitely one. I can recall in detail how desperately hungry I used to be when lunch time came. They gave us huge bowls of beans and ham with great big slabs of buttered bread and it was so good and filling. Every day it was a big bowl of something different and bread. Nothing fancy just

plain good food. I was very grateful for that food as some nights we did not have much at home.

I recall we used to carry our lunch and cannot recall if this was before the free lunches or if they had quit serving them. The father of one of my very close friends in 6th grade owned a butcher shop and he brought sandwiches with bologna and ham and the like. We could not afford meat for five kids for lunch so mom scrambled eggs and made egg sandwiches for us and fried up a lot of home fried potatoes and gave us a lot of them in our lunch also. My friend kept telling me how much he liked eggs and potatoes and asked me to switch lunches with him. After he asked several times and I realized he meant it, I would switch lunches with him and we were both happy and satisfied. We also carried a lot of peanut butter sandwiches but the peanut butter in those days was not mixed up so it came with the oil on top and we had to work to mix the oil and peanut butter so it would spread. I recall one instance where mom had to be hospitalized in Lake Charles for several weeks but it seemed like months to me. Dad had gotten a job working for a band instrument company and was on the road so Johnny became head of the household and we all pitched in to keep the house going. My great aunt Eulla would go to the store with us once a week and guide us in buying food for the week and for lunches. John and I did most of the cooking and made the sandwiches for lunches. I guess we were successful as we were all there in good shape when mom came home. I recall the year that Rosamond was in the first grade. She did not like school at all and ran away at least once every day. The principle would call us boys and we would go out searching for her about that end of the town. We found her hiding in barns, we pulled her out of outhouses, from under houses, culverts and places I am sure I have forgotten. We would take her crying and fighting back to school and they would watch her for the rest of the day. I don't now recall how mom got her to stay in school. I recall that when mom was in the hospital that Aunt Eula gave us \$5.00 to buy the groceries for a week and we make it on that amount. We did not have wax paper so we wrapped our egg sandwiches and fried potatoes in old newspapers we collected and carried our lunch that way. If the newsprint rubbed off it did not make us sick or anything.

I well remember those long walks to school in the morning. We kids usually all walked to school together. There were not as many cars around in those days and traffic was not a real problem. I can remember running home a lot of the time and jumping fences. Recall a couple of times I caught my right shin on the board of a fence and skinned it up right good not to mention the spills I took. The weather could get right cold in the winter months as mom made us wear shoes. It was a real treat to get home hungry and step into the kitchen as the smells were heavenly. As I recall mom baked bread at least two mornings a week and when we got home we could have hot fresh bread with butter on it. Some days when it was cold she would have an oven full of roasting peanuts and I would go out to play with my pockets full of hot roasted peanuts. Sometimes she would have baked yams in the oven and with butter in them they were a very filling snack.

I think that I was in the sixth grade when one day I became really sick. I had awful pains in my right side so mom and dad drove me to a hospital in Lake Charles. I well remember lying on the back seat of that car in pain with mom consoling me while dad went into the hospital. He came back with some men with white coats. They took me into the hospital to a room and examined my side and did blood tests and told me that I would have to have an operation as my appendix was bad and might rupture. I recall how frightened I was as mom said I would have to stay in the hospital for a few days as they had to go home but I would be taken care of by the Catholic sisters. I was scared when they wheeled me into the operating room even with all the consoling by every one. They put a mask on my face and told me to breathe deep and count to ten. I hated the smell of that ether then and now. I remember waking up really sick and throwing up constantly. All in all that was a bad day. I was in the hospital for a week or more and mom and dad came to visit me once and then to take me home. I know what with the kids and dad trying to make a living for us, it was a real hardship on them to come to the hospital. I recall the sisters were great to me and came in the room often to cheer me up and thought I was real smart as I learned all the prayers they taught me while I was there. In those days operations like that required major incisions and mine must have been six to eight inches. I know that when

I got home I was afraid it might break open so I was very careful in everything I did for a few weeks.

One Saturday dad had a meeting in Lake Charles. He had a job selling band instruments and setting up bands in schools. He had to work long hours and be on the road for the entire week to make a living for the family. There was a Boy Scout encampment in the city that day so dad took us over be part of it. There was a carnival in town that we could go to in the evening and dad gave us specific instructions on how to get to the house where he would be. He gave each of us five cents so we would have a little money. We went to the carnival and wandered about seeing the sights. John started playing a machine that had claws and was suppose to pick up prizes. It cost a penny to play it. John conned up into wasting our money on the machine when we told him we did not wish to mess with it. He took our money and wasted it all on the machine and got nothing in return. We left to go to the house where dad was but soon realized that we were lost. John who we depended on could not remember the address let alone the street dad was on. I could not recall it either. Fortunately we ended up in the right area of the town. I was starting to get worried as it was getting to be a real dark night. We were greatly relieved when dad came driving by so we all jumped in the car and drove home to DeQuincy.

Of course, in school, even in the sixth grade there were cliques among the kids and we were envious, of course, as many of us were not included in the cliques. We thought some of the girls were very pretty and wished that we could 'travel in their circles' but some of them thought they were better than others because their parents had jobs or were professional people. I know that I had discussed this with mom many times concerning the kids that were involved in the cliques. There lived a girl named, Betsy, across and up the street from us whose dad had a very good job and she was a member of an elite clique. Betsy was having a party one Saturday night and since one of the boys in the clique was sick and could not make the party, she invited me to take his place. Of course, feeling a little pumped up by the invitation, I accepted and went to the party where I was paired off with a very pretty girl that I secretly admired. What happened as the evening progressed com-

pletely shattered my regard for the kids in that clique. Once they were all paired off and began to get bored they gathered in groups to talk using dirty four letter words and the foulest of language, all of which was totally unnecessary in my opinion. The boys and girls began kissing each other and fondling each others bodies. My date for the evening began insisting that we do the same thing. I was extremely uncomfortable with the situation I was in knowing that the conduct of those kids was immoral and wrong. Later in the evening a group including me and my girl went out behind Betsy's house and sat around in the alley. Some of the boys and girls started smoking and messing with each others bodies and began telling the dirtiest jokes I had ever heard and then some. My girl wanted me to join in and tried to put my hand between her legs. I was really shocked with the things the kids were doing in plain sight of each other and wanted no part of that bunch. I was now totally out of place and uncomfortable so I excused myself to go to the rest room and immediately left the party and ran home. I told mom all about the party and what the kids were doing and she was glad I had left them. Betsy was very upset with me for leaving the party so I told her that it was the wrong group for me as I did not approve of the things they did. After that I was not longer envious of those kids or their cliques.

I really remember the 1st Baptist church we attended. It was located not far from our house on a corner and was a white frame church with a big tree in the front yard. We all attended the church regularly and Sunday school also. We were members of the youth group and attended regularly. I once won a bible for the best attendance in my class. Between Sunday school and church most of the men went out under the shade of the tree to talk and smoke a cigarette. The deacons sat on the front pew and uttered very loud Amens when the pastor made a point. You did not call a deacon Mister, but addressed him as Deacon wherever you met him. I was baptized in that church and on that day I was dressed in white trousers and white shirt and white socks. I also had to carry a white handkerchief for the pastor to hold over my nose as he immersed me in the baptismal water. I was worried the pastor might drop me but he told me to stay rigid and it went just fine. We had a youth group that met once a week at the church and after the meeting we would play

a game called 'capture the flag'. We split into two groups and divided the town in two halves and roamed the entire area. The game would last for hours.

I will never forget one night when two of my friends and I were downtown in the Coney Island Restaurant playing a noisy pinball machine by the front window. We noticed that there was a lot of activity out in the street and then a wagon with hay bales was pulled up in front of the restaurant and a man got on the wagon and was making a speech. We all recognized him because he was Huey P. Long but we were not interested in his speech and continued playing the machine. Suddenly two men came into the restaurant and came up to us at the machine. They were hard grim looking men in suits and hats. They ask us to quit playing the machine as it was noisy but we declined telling them that our pennies were in the machine. They did not get angry but were pleasant and offered each of us 25 cents if we would quit and go outside near the wagon and clap and whistle every time Mr Long paused. Twenty five cents was a lot of money and you bet we readily agreed, took the money and went outside and clapped and whistled as they asked us to do. I saw Huey P. Long many times after that.

One of the big events in De Quincy was the day when the new model cars were put on display. The dealers would have grand showing days for the cars and most every one in town visited the dealers to see the changes made in the new models. In those days all the cars were shipped by rail in locked box cars. Us guys would go down to the rail yards and watch them unload the cars so we saw them several days before the showings.

I remember a grocery store on a corner downtown that we passed on the way to school and was one of the largest in town. The store has a weekly flyer distributed to the houses in town listing products and prices for the week. Mom got us boys the job of distributing the flyers door to door and we delivered the flyers to all the residences in the area assigned to us. I know that the owner checked on us and was very pleased that we actually delivered all the flyers to houses.

When I was a kid fireworks were available in all the stores and on all special days like July 4th through out the year we shot off fireworks in the neighborhoods and all the people did

likewise. It was a fun time. We could get all size of firecrackers and I guess we must have been careful as there were no major injuries. We planted firecrackers under cans and blew them up into the air. We had sparklers, roman candles and many other fireworks. We did suffer some burned and split fingers but no major injuries.

I recall our many Christmas'. We did not have much and I know that mom and dad gave us as much as they could afford. We always got a stocking full of fruit and candy and really enjoyed that. We did not have bicycles and very few of our friends had one. We did have roller skates and skated most of the places we went. We skated on the paved roads about town and even for a ways out of town. We skated so much that we wore out our skate wheels and had to replace them many times. We had to keep them oiled to roll smoothly and not rust. We did not have many toys so had to create our own. We got metal hoops and to guide them when we ran with them we got wood sticks and built a T which we used to push and guide the hoop as we ran with them. We also got old tires and pushed them as we ran and figured many things to make the hoops and tires do. With all the running I guess we stayed in good shape.

Grandpa had a farm a few miles outside of town. It had a house on it that I can remember visiting as a kid that he lived in part of the time and a small shack on the grounds with a barn and some other small outhouses. When we got to DeQuincy there was no one on the farm but a tenant farmer and his small family. All grandpas property was tied up in an estate problem and ultimately, what with the depression, the state finally took it all for taxes. We used to go out to the farm regularly and the farmer would give us some of the vegetables and melons to take home. We often went through the house as it was vacant and empty of furniture. In the attic were lots of old letters. Wish we could have saved some of them. The well on the farm finally became bad so the tenant farmer moved and we did not go out as often. To go to the farm we had to walk through the black section of town. We would talk to the kids as we went through and played with them some but did not spend a lot of time in that section of town.

I remember great aunt Eula very well. Mom used to go over to her house which was close to the railroad tracks near town. I

would sit in the parlor while they talked and had coffee or go outside and play. A few times I cut the grass for her and she gave some money for doing it. At one time she kept railroad men as boarders as they would stay overnight at the end of their run. The women in the neighborhood were regular in their morning and afternoon coffee times. They would gather at different houses to have coffee and chat.

THE WORST DAY OF MY LIFE WAS THE DAY DAD LEFT AND WE WATCHED HIM WALKING AWAY DOWN THE RAILROAD TRACKS. It seemed that things got even worse and employment was non-existent. Dad had lost his job and his car and things were very tight at home as there was no money coming in. We boys took advantage of every opportunity to earn a penny or nickel and any money we made or found we turned over to mom. We overheard mom and dad discussing an offer from Mr. Hubble for dad to come and work with him. I can recall as a small boy several times we got dressed on Sunday and took a drive and visited with Mr. Hubble, as he and dad were the best of friends. Mr. Hubble told dad that if he would come to West Virginia, he would get him a job as a cookware salesman with the company he was with and would help him get a car so he could work and get a house for us to come to West Virginia when dad got established in his job. Of course, dad would have to go to W.Va. without us and I could see how worried mom was. It is hard to describe my feelings when I realized that a final decision had been made and that dad would be leaving us and that we had absolutely no idea as to when we would be seeing him again. Mom and dad estimated that it could be up to a year. We kids were all heartbroken and crying because we thought we might never see our dad again as now we knew for sure he was leaving for W.Va. It was a bad time to go through.

I will never forget the day dad left us to go to W.Va. We were all sad and very unhappy and there were lots of tears and dad tried his best to cheer us up. He would not take the little money we had for train fare and decided that to save the money for us he was going to hop a freight train and ride the rails until he got to W.Va. Dad had a packed suitcase and a large pack to carry on his back with belongings and food and water to last him for several days on the trip. In order to catch the right freight train going East we had to walk several miles out of town to a rail

junction of several rail lines. Rail traffic was very heavy in those days with trains going past at least every 15 minutes or so. We three boys walked with dad to the rail junction and waited until the train he wanted came along. We all ran along side of the freight car and helped dad get his things in the car then he hopped up and in it and we ran along side the car waving good bye as it rolled on down the tracks. All three of us stood there crying and waving until the train was out of sight. Our dad was leaving and we did not know when we would ever see him again. We did know if we saw him again it would be a long time and in truth, it was a long time, over one year we were without him.

I do not recall how long it took dad to make the trip, but one day we got a telegram that he was safely in W. Va. He was starting his job with the company with Mr. Hubble's help. Conditions at home were very hard and difficult after dad left and food was in very short supply. I can recall many mornings when mom searched the kitchen for something to fix for us to eat. Occasionally mom would get a letter from dad containing a five or ten dollar bill. How happy mom was as it meant a trip to the grocery store and food to eat. Sometimes if there was a little extra money, mom would treat us and send us to the Coney Island for two hotdogs for everyone with all the trimmings. I liked to read and amassed quite a collection of books, most given to me. I liked to sit on the front porch in the afternoon and read.

Some time after we moved to DeQuincy we could no longer afford electricity so the company shut it off. For at least two years all our light was supplied by kerosene lamps. In the evenings we would have to fill the lamps and trim down the wicks for better and more efficient burning. The number of lamps we had lit at any given time depended on how much kerosene we could afford to buy. This could be inconvenient at times especially going to the bath room at night. I recall many nights doing my homework or reading by the light of the kerosene lamps. Of course, at Christmas we could not have any lights on the tree or outside without electricity. At least we did manage to have running water for the house and did not have to have an outhouse as many people in the town had. We could have water in the kitchen and in the bathroom so did not have to activate the old well.

During the summer, mom did not want six kids and friends tramping into the house for a drink as it let in a lot of insects. We had a three gallon insulated crock with a spigot that sat on the porch. Every day we could afford it a five pound block of ice was put in the crock by the delivery man who sold the ice door to door and the crock was filled with water. The dipper hung on a post so there was cold water to drink and we all used the same dipper. Of course, we did not have an electric refrigerator but we had the old ice box and when we could afford it the delivery man put a big cake of ice into the ice compartment of the ice box. Since we had no electricity we did not have a radio. Radio was a relative new thing in those days and radios were expensive and very few people had them. Also, we did not have a telephone after we lost our electricity which we did not have again until we got to W. Va.

Late one afternoon after dad left a bad storm came up and the sky got very dark. The wind kept blowing harder and stronger. In those days there was no such thing as weather forecasts and we had no way of knowing if a storm or hurricane was coming until it hit us. The wind was blowing so hard the house was shaking in its supports and the rain was coming down in torrents. Suddenly a large limb broke off the persimmon tree in the side yard and fell on the roof. Mom got us all into one room and I clearly recall her on her knees praying for all of us. I later realized how frightened she was for all of us as when she was a young girl she was in the same house in a hurricane when the house was actually blown off the concrete supports. Fortunately, the storm did no major damage to the house and I recall that we boys had a real job chopping on the big limb to get it off the roof. About three blocks from our house the storm tore the roof off a big ware house and deposited it on the railroad tracks several hundred feet away. There was other major storm damage in the town.

As I mentioned, there were few radios, but if you could afford one you could buy a kit and construct a crystal set that could pick up a few stations broadcasting. In those days one did not hear music like you can today. There were not jukeboxes around in most places as there are today. Some people could afford a Victrola which one wound up and it would play a record or cylinder. The sound was terrible as compared to today. Some

people could afford player pianos. You placed a roll in the piano and worked the pedals and the piano played a song. It was very good music in those days.

When I was a kid getting a new pair of shoes was something that did not happen. We wore the shoes until they were worn out then we went down to the ten cent store and bought a repair kit with a heel and sole and glue and nails and re heeled and re soled our own shoes and kept on wearing them. When we grew out of them we passed them on down and got one from the bigger kids. Clothes were worn until worn out and then mom darned or sewed on patches. She made clothes for the girls and younger kids.

With dad gone the situation seemed to become much worse and I felt sorry for mom cause she seemed to work all the time. She was always sewing making clothes for the kids or sewing to make money, knitting or crocheting. She crocheted afagans which she sold or raffled off. John spent all his spare time delivering telegrams. He did not get paid for delivering them and just worked for the tips he got when he delivered them. We all pitched in as best we could and gave mom any money we acquired. I can recall many times that the money John made delivering telegrams was the difference between going hungry and having something to eat. We ate a lot of rice, beans, vegetables, corn bread and so forth. I remember that potbellied stove in the sandbox in the parlor. It was our only source of heat in the house besides the kitchen and when it was cold everyone sat in the parlor around the stove. We would stoke that thing and get it red hot to heat the house as much as possible. I remember one night Rosamond tripped and fell against the stove and got a bad burn. Like so many people, as we walked along the tracks we would pick up and chunks of coal from the engines and bring it home to burn.

Being sick then was not what it is today. We did not run to the doctor with every illness but treated it with home remedies. I remember going barefooted we would cut a foot or step on a nail and then have to soak the foot in turpentine until it puckered. I can still practically smell that Vicks vapor rub they put on us for colds and stuffy heads and the mustard polices and the castor oil we had to drink down. I remember I went through a year of so of having real bad boils on my back. They got big and really

hurt. Mom would put polices on them, soak them with Epson salts and then she would open them and get the core out. How that hurt and I was glad when I no longer had them I still have many scars on my back from the boils.

The spring of 1935 came and I was I was finishing up the 7th grade. There were only ten grades in the school system so I was actually finishing middle school. I do not recall much about the school year now. I know that I was happy in school, liked to read all the time, and had lots of friends. I recall there was lots of letters between dad and mom and the anticipation was growing that soon we would be with dad again. Money was in very short supply and mom and dad decided that when we could get the money, John, CB and myself would take a train to Belmont, North Carolina, and spend the summer with Uncle Dick and Aunt Pallie and Mom with Catherine, Rosamond and Finley would take a train to W.Va. when they got the money and then they would come for us in N.C. when the summer was over and time to start school in the fall. Dad had gotten a house in Salem, W.Va., and why he settled there I do not recall now as Mr. Hubble lived in Ohio. Now the problem of money to make the trip became the number one concern. Us boys did every thing we could to make money, selling things and odd jobs, John at Western Union and mom constantly crocheting. The store for which we delivered weekly fliers helped mom out by putting some of her crocheted afgans in their store window and raffling them off. I remember the anticipation as we began packing as it appeared we would have the money to go. I recall packing my books in two boxes with mixed feelings as they were my only possessions. I do not recall what happened to them. I thought they were to be shipped on the train with us but do not know for sure and I know I never saw my books again. There was happiness at the thought of seeing dad again but a real dread and apprehension at the thought of being separated from mom and the other kids. Also, the idea of traveling alone on a train from Louisiana to N. C. alone with my brothers was a scary thought for an inexperienced kid. Mom said she would have enough money for us to leave when school was out. That day came soon enough and I recall how worried I was and John was concerned as he was responsible for me and CB.

Soon school was out for the year and it was time for us to

leave. Remember we packed our bags and check them through on the train so we would not have to try to carry them and change trains in New Orleans. We carried small packages with water and lunches with enough food hopefully to last us for two days. I was worried about us getting separated or lost but my great uncle Charles who lived in Lake Charles was the conductor on the train and looked after us and showed John exactly how to change trains in New Orleans. We had to change train stations and he told John the exact route to take and the train to get on to go to Belmont. We would not have to change trains again as they put you into cars going to specific places on train routes and then switched the cars from one train to another one going the right way. I remember arriving in New Orleans and getting all our belongings and was worried about being lost. Guess John was up to the challenge cause we made it. It was a long way between stations and we had to walk carrying our stuff. I remember how excited John was when we got to Canal Street and was walking down it and he was telling us some of the history of the street. I recall standing on a corner and John wanted to look around but we insisted on going on to the station. To me, the city seemed so big and so busy with people rushing about. We made it and got on the right train. I don't recall much about the train trip but it was long and hot. I remember that a day or so later we were told the next station was Belmont and to get our stuff to get off. How relieved I was to see Uncle Dick and cousin Price waiting for us at the station and how happy we were to get to the farm and see Aunt Pallie and our other cousins. Price was the same age as CB.

We had visited the farm many times in the past and had stayed there weeks at a time so I knew the farm, I liked it and was happy there. The main house had about five bedrooms some on the second floor and to get to the big dining room, big pantry and kitchen we had to go out on the big back porch which ran along two sides of the house. Immediately behind the house was the spring house and off to the side was the outhouse that was the only toilet facilities as there was no indoor plumbing. It was a scary walk at night for a kid or when the weather was bad. On back behind was a potato house and some other buildings. A dirt road ran off to the right to the barn where all the animals were kept. At the top of the road on the right was a big tool shed

where Uncle Dick kept an old 12 cylinder Romer touring car. He said some day he would get it running again but he never did to my knowledge. In front of that was a huge tree and under it was an old Essex sedan that was broken down and just sat there and it was heavily invested with fleas. By the potato house was an old broken down Ford truck that just sat there. I can remember the barn as some years before we went to Louisiana we were at the farm and down at the barn when a bull broke loose and chased us up to the main house. I remember running to the house and up those broad steps to the back porch and safety. Behind the barn was the fenced in pasture through which a small stream ran among the trees. We used to spend a lot of time in the pasture wading in the creek and sitting in the shade of the many trees. Off to the left of the back of the house was a large orchard with many grape vines of the sweetest blue concord grapes, apple trees, peach and pear trees. I recall many pleasant times eating the fruit from that orchard. Off to the right at the front of the house was a huge garden that was Aunt Pallies pride and joy. Our cousins on the farm were in order of age: Clara who had two sons, Earl and Shorty who were about our ages, Louise, twins Lloyd and Boyd, Blanche, Mildred, Faye and Price. Uncle Dick had at one time operated a furniture refinishing and upholstery business in Belmont. I was told that he was one of the very best in that business and Earl and Shorty learned the business from him and set up a business in California after the war. I was told that Uncle Dick tired of the business and one day just closed his shop and walked away and would not reopen despite pleas from friends and customers. He also sold popcorn, candy, ice cream, hot dogs and other food from a truck with sides that opened out. That truck sat deserted near the old Essex as long as I could remember. As far as I could see about the only thing Uncle Dick did was to sit on the front porch dipping snuff and do a little plowing and farming. Most of the girls who lived at home had jobs working in local textile mills and gave money to Aunt Pallie to help out. As I recall, they only had one car between all of them most of the time. I remember that every time we went to the farm all the girls would come out and sing 'Let me call you sweetheart' and being a boy it made us uncomfortable for girls to be doing that. They always did the same thing when we left.

As I mentioned the outhouse or privy was a couple hundred feet behind the house and was inconvenient to get to in the middle of the night, although I went out there many times at night and in inclement weather. In the privy were lots of catalogues from Sears, J.C. Penny, Montgomery Ward and other businesses. It made for reading material and for toilet paper. Each room was equipped with a chamber pot for use in bad weather or other reasons for not going to the privy. We slept on the second floor in the front of the house so at night we could just lift up the screen and relieve ourselves on the front porch roof. I know aunt Pallie and the girls objected to this practice because of the smell but the rain washed it off. We had to empty the chamber pots and rinse them every day. That was a chore we did not like.

Monday was always a busy work day because it was wash day on the farm. We had to get up early and draw the water from the well for the wash. There was a large open space between the house and the lane to the barn and just to the side of the tool shed. In that area sat three huge black iron kettles. Our job early in the morning was to draw the water for the three kettles and then light a fire under each of them and keep the fire going until the wash was done. It took a lot of buckets of water to fill those pots I can assure you. The well was located at one end of the back porch. It was a closed well with two big cylinders at each end of the line on which they hung. One turned a crank and one cylinder went down into the water in the well and the other came up and stopped in the well housing. You then stepped on a lever which opened the bottom of the cylinder and the water ran out and filled a bucket. You then repeated the process and I remember how tired we got of cranking and filling buckets and carrying them out to pour into the kettles until finally we got each one full. Beside the kettles was a big old wringer with two big rollers of rubber with a hand crank to turn them. The clothes were boiled in hot soapy water, then we had to turn the crank as the clothes were put through the wringer. The clothes went into a boiling rinse and were put through the wringer and into the last rinse and through the wringer and then they had to be hung up on a clothesline. I forget how many loads they would do in the wash pot before we had to change the water and start over. The chore took up most of Monday. There were

other daily chores like taking care of the mules and cows, milking the cows, slopping the hogs, feeding the chickens, cutting grass, hoeing weeds, and so on. In front of the barn to the side was a huge water trough that water ran into constantly from a spring. We watered the animals at the trough when we had them out and drank from the watering pipe ourselves. Most of the farm equipment was stored under a large over hang at the front of the barn and most of the time there were two mules, Kate and Dianne and three cows. We tended to them and after milking the cows were put into the pasture. In the evening they returned to the barn themselves and were milked and fed hay and grain. If the mules were not worked that day they were pastured and fed. Dianne was the bigger of the mules and had a good disposition. Kate was smaller and could be mean at times. When working together we had to watch Kate close as she would try to slack off and let Dianne pull the load. To work those mules we had to be in control of them all the time.

I guess it was about this time that I realized that Uncle Dick did not own the farm but was a tenant farmer and gave part of his crop to the owner who lived up a road toward town in a big white house. He farmed several large fields located in different areas. We would hitch up the mules to the wagon and ride to the fields. In one he planted sorghum and required only planting and some cultivation. In one he planted sweet potatoes that required cultivation, plowing and hoeing. In another on the banks of the Cataba river he planted peanuts called goobers which required a lot of hoeing and cultivation. We also plowed fields and planted corn, wheat, watermelons and cantaloupes. He had one large field in which he planted only tomatoes. I can vividly recall when I was smaller working with my cousins to set out hundreds of tomato plants in the field and then carrying water to water them down after planting. Next to the tomato field toward the house was aunt Pallies garden which uncle Dick plowed and planted and we kids kept it weeded and hoed to loosen the soil. There was a lot of that work to be done in the hot sun in the summer. Uncle Dick would lie in the shade of a tree and throw clods of dirt at us to keep us working. Aunt Pallie scolded him for that.

Uncle Dick had a hired hand for many years who was a real good worker. He had his quarters in a large room at the end of

the potato house. We liked him and got along fine with him. We often got his goat by the tricks we played on him. One afternoon we were messing around and saw him lying on his bed. He was afraid of cats and we saw a small one. Not being able to resist the temptation we got the small cat, crept into his quarters and threw it so it landed on his chest. Well, he exploded off the bed screaming and we took off running and good thing we did because he was running after us and he was one angry guy. We got away and hid until he got over his mad and he had a good laugh as we promised not to do anything like that again and to stay out of his quarters.

One day Aunt Pallie packed lunches for us as we were to work in the field of goobers on the Cataba river. We hitched the mules to the wagon and rode to the field. As usual it was the hired man, John. Price, CB and myself, as we worked as a team. It was a very hot summer day and after working hard and steady for several hours, we took off our clothes and went skinny dipping in the river, something we did many many times. There was no one about in that desolate area. Later Uncle Dick came by and said that we were not getting enough work done and accused us of going swimming. Of course, we denied the allegation wet hair and all. On another day when we were working the same field a man came by and gave the hired hand a jug of homemade elderberry wine. During the rest of that hot afternoon he sipped on that jug of wine and John drank some also. The rest of us would have none of it. As the afternoon passed we could see that he was getting loaded and John was showing the effects. We decided that they had drank enough of the wine as they were acting silly, so we quit work, hitched the team to the wagon, threw the jug into the river, got them into the wagon and headed home. Price drove the mules while we tried to control our loaded duo fearing that they might fall off and get run over by that heavy wagon with steel rimmed wheels. When we got to the barn we pulled the wagon into the barn and the hired hand grabbed a rafter as we went in and there he was dangling high in the air. We had to back the wagon up to rescue him and get him down. Uncle Dick was upset and mad at us and John had a bad headache.

When all the chores were done on Saturday morning, it was time to get ready to go to town. The big wooden bath tub was

carried into the kitchen and sat near the stove, which was a wood burning stove, and over a small round hole in the floor. The plug was removed from this hole and by removing the plug from the bottom of the tub it would drain down under the house and into the ground. We had to draw the water and get several pots heating on the stove and then draw the water for the tub. After three of us took a bath, we drained the tub and replaced the water for the next three and so on. We took turns as to who got in first. Uncle Dick shaved with a straight razor as we bathed. When we got down town he dropped us at a movie house and gave us each a nickel to get in. We watched the cartoons, serials and movie until we had to met him. Sometimes we were able to sit through it twice or more.

I loved going into the dining room and smelling the odor of the good food, and of course, it seemed that I was always very hungry. The dining room was very large with a long table with chairs that could seat 30 people and on Sunday it seemed that the table was always full as many relative would drop by. The kitchen was at the end of the dining room and we kids had to keep a big wood box by the stove full firewood at all times. The girls helped Aunt Pallie with all the cooking. By the door going into the kitchen was a large side board and I remember that it was always loaded with fresh baked pies and cakes, especially for Sunday dinner. Off the dining room was the large pantry. That summer we saw a large gunny sack full of goobers so when we went out to play, we loaded our pockets with peanuts. One day Uncle Dick came yelling at us that some one had eaten up half his seed peanuts. Guess he should have told us that they were for planting and not for eating.

I vividly recall one incident at the farm when I was about seven years of age. We had just gotten to the farm and I was all dressed up. I was fascinated with the barn and the animals. Uncle Dick and several men were doing something in front of the barn as I walked toward them. Suddenly I heard some of the men yelling and I saw a huge bull running toward me. I did not hesitate, but turned and ran for the house as fast as I could. Aunt Pallie and mom were on the porch yelling for me to run faster. I got to the porch and ran up those wide steps to the porch just as the bull got there. All the men came running after the bull and as I watched, panting and scare to death, they put a

collar on the bull and led it away. It was a couple days before they could get me to go down to the barn again.

At night in the summer after supper and the chores were done everyone would go out front. Aunt Pallie, Clara and others would dip snuff and Uncle Dick and others would chew their Red Mule chewing tobacco. Lloyd, Boyd and others would get out their guitars, banjos, violins and other instruments and play and sing for a long time. We enjoyed it. Also they had a radio and it was turned to the Grand Ole Opry. We loved lying in the front yard talking and listening to the radio. We liked looking at the stars and speculating on the universe and the sky. With no lights on the stars and moon seemed so big and close one could touch them. In the country there were no street lights or other lights about. The only light came from the moon and stars. On Saturday night we would stay out very late.

On a hot summer Sunday after lunch was finished we guys would go down into the pasture. It was cool as the many trees provided lots of shade and the creek flowing through the pasture was cool and had some deeper pools of clear water. We would take off our clothes and go skinny dipping in the pools. Soon the girls found out what we were doing and came down and spied on us and teased us so we stopped.

I recall the late summer when the threshing machine arrived and pulled up to the barn. The grain had been cut and bundled and left in the field so we had to load it on to the wagon and haul it to the threshing machine and load it into the hopper. It was a dirty hot job with all the chaff whirling about. I recall those long afternoons going into the corn field and shucking the leaves off the plants and tying them into bundles to go into the barn for silage. That was nasty work as you could easily get bad cuts on those dry corn leaves.

In those days the state and counties used prisoners on chain gangs to work on the roads. Most ever summer they work on the roads near the farm and this summer they worked on the road in front of the farm. On hot days, and I mean so hot we could not step on the asphalt roads barefooted as the soft tar would burn the feet, we would get buckets of cool water from the well and take out for the prisoners to drink. We did this several times a day. The guards and prisoners really enjoyed the cool water and we were free to move among them and talk with them as we

wished. The guards did not bother us or stop us. When there was fruit in the orchard we took baskets of grapes, apples, pears and peaches to the guards and prisoners. The men were really sincere in their thanks to us and if we had an old tooth brush the prisoners would make us a ring out of the handle. Since we went barefooted all the time in the summer we had to wash our feet good before going to bed. Aunt Pallie was death on that as dirty feet would ruin the bed sheets.

Uncle Dick chewed Red Mule chewing tobacco. He kept several plugs of the tobacco sitting on top of the dresser in his bed room. One day we decided to experiment with chewing it so we copped a plug and went down to the barn where we all took a bite and started chewing. Of course, we all got a bit ill and spit it out. We hid the rest of the plug in the planter at the barn. Later some one told Aunt Pallie and she retrieved the partial plug which she showed to us before she got her famous hickory switch and gave us a good licking. She was a big woman and could really swing that hickory switch on the legs.

We used to load the wagon with watermelons and cantaloupes and haul them into town to sell at a corner and also house to house. We sold a lot but one day the hired man got into a fight over some gal he met and got beat up. Uncle Dick was afraid we might have been hurt so would not let us do it anymore. I heard years later that the hired man got into a fight in a bar and killed a man and was sent to prison.

Mom was really good at writing us letters so we knew what was going on with her and dad. She finally got enough money to get train tickets for them to go to W.Va. We knew that we would be living in Salem. I do not know what happened to the personal property in our house in DeQuincy and if I did know I have forgotten. We did not have all that much anyhow and it was all old and used. I never will forget the day we were standing on the back porch and suddenly dad, mom and the kids came driving up the lane into the back yard. We were overjoyed as we had not seen dad in over a year and the rest for the entire summer. In a way we hated to leave the farm and our family there but we had to get home to start over in a new town and school.

As I said, dad had rented a house on the side of a hill in Salem, W. Va. I seem to recall that he picked Salem for a

residence as he worked with someone who lived nearby and recommended Salem to him. Salem was a small community of several thousand people with one main street of shops about three to four blocks long. Salem college was located in the town and it was a school originally started by the Seven Day Adventist denomination but now was what we called a 'teachers college' geared to primarily AB degrees. Many of the shops in town were closed on Saturday because of religious beliefs.

Dad was a salesman for Cookware Associates, Bucyrus, Ohio, and would have dinners in peoples homes with guests they invited. He would cook a meal for them and explain all about the ware and how it worked and then would call on those interested and sell cookware to them. The more he sold the larger the prize for the host so they were encouraged to invite interested folks. He had a black man who assisted him and drove for him. Since there were no black people living in Salem then, he had to get accommodations in Clarksburg, about 12 mile to the east and dad would pick him up or let him take the car. I recall him that first year working with dad and coming to our house on Sundays and he often took us for long drives through the hills in Oct and Nov 1936 when the leaves were changing color. We enjoyed the drives but after about a year he had to leave to return to his home area.

We got to W.Va. in time to start the school year. I remember the principal that year a Mr. Tesche as he wanted to put me into the eighth grade. He finally put me in the ninth grade when he realized that in the south I would have been in the first year of high school and I had to be in that grade to keep on track for graduation in 1939. My home room teacher all four years was a Mrs. Gladys Helmick and we had 44 kids in the class all the time with 22 girls and 22 boys. Nothing specific about my first school year there really stands out. I recall that we had to walk to school and took a back route to avoid downtown as the main highway ran through the middle of town. We lived about a mile or so from school and, also, had to walk home for lunch and back to school. There were no meals served in schools in those days and we either went home or carried a lunch if necessary. I do recall how cold it was that first winter as we were not used to that cold and had to obtain heavy clothing. There was a long hill near our house and we used to spend hours riding sleighs down that

hill. It seemed that once the snow came down it stayed on the ground full time for months. I recall how happy I was when it all melted off and spring came. One thing that does stand out is that after we moved to W. Va. I do not recall ever being hungry again or worrying about the threat of it as in La. Shortly after we moved into this house we got our first radio. It was a small table top model but we could get lots of stations on it. On Sunday evenings we use to make sandwiches and all gathered in the parlor to listen to the radio for several hours. I recall there was a large pantry off the back porch and dad use to hang cured W.Va. hams out there that we ate from all year long.

The second school year in Salem we moved several blocks away to a large brick two story house that was located on the main street near Salem college. We still had to walk about the same distance to and from school and now we walked along the main road through town to school. As always, we had to walk home for lunch or carry a sack lunch. I know that I would carry a lunch if I did not want to come home or had something to do at lunch time. The college gym was located within our block so on the nights they had basketball games a lot of us kids would volunteer to sell pop to people in the bleachers for 5 cents a bottle. We did not get paid for it but got in free and we liked helping out. Cuts caused by those bottle caps could be very painful. Salem was located in a valley surrounded by quite steep hills. We enjoyed walking about the hills in the fall and spring and spent a lot of time on the weekends just walking miles and mile through the hills. Again, nothing specifically stands out that happened during this year. I did get a bicycle during this year and a friend Frank Muldoon and I rode our bikes on the road out front. Was not as much car traffic as most people only had one car if they could afford that. We had found a good swimming hole a couple miles out of town and would ride our bikes out to it but on the way back we had to push them up Salem hill as that was one steep hill. I liked the school and all my teachers. I had made many friends in school and was becoming involved in school activities and plays. I like acting in those plays and remember the hours I spent memorizing parts in plays.

In the spring of 1937 I went out for the football team and found it much more difficult that I had anticipated but I would not quit. The physical part was tough and I had muscles aching that I did

not know I had. During this year the father of one of my closest friends was shot and killed while deer hunting by a hunter who saw the bushes move and shot without seeing what was there. I went to the wake and funeral and it was a sad heart rending time that left a lasting impression on me. I have never had any desire to go deer hunting.

During the summer the family moved again to the opposite side of town about 4 blocks from the school and just across the railroad tracks from the main street. My next door neighbor, Howard Pepper was a senior and played on the football team. Mom said we used to come home smelling like iodine. I believe that the reason we moved was that Salem college wanted to buy the house to use for expansion. We had a big garden in the back of this house and I can recall selling some of the sweet corn to make money. We sold all we could grow and peddle. During the summer we took what ever jobs we could to earn money. Many days in the summer we worked on local farms pitching hay. We would have to pitch the hay from where it was raked onto a wagon and then pitch it from the wagon to a hay stack if one was being built or into the loft of the barn to have it handy for feed. Most of the time you were taking that pitchfork and pitching large batches of hay up and over your head and all the dust in town seemed to come down on your face and down your neck. On a hot day this was very uncomfortable and dirty work but we did it.

From spring to late fall we caddied every year at the local golf course every day that we could get there. We usually earned money every day caddying at least 18 holes or double that. It gave us spending money. There was just a little shack for an office and an outdoor pop machine. The greens were all sand not grass and the course was only nine holes. The man we caddied for would usually buy us a bottle of pop at the end of nine holes and sometimes when we finished. Dad played when he could and I usually caddied for him. Many times dads good friend, Julian Grubb, who worked with him would come along when he was in town. I remember on Sunday morning when we were on the fifth hole and we had gone ahead down the fairway to watch the ball when they teed off. Julian was standing under a tree some yards ahead of me watching dad tee off. Suddenly a golf ball came out of nowhere and I saw it hit Julian on the left side of the head and he crumpled to the ground unconscious. I

remember the thud when the ball hit but fortunately he was wearing one of those flat brimmed straw hats and the ball hit right on the bow of the hat band helping to soften some of the impact. Some idiot had hit a brassie shot from nearby on an adjoining fairway and did not bother to yell 'fore' when he saw where the ball was headed. Needless to say Julian had a headache for several days.

Also, to make money, my last two years in school, several of us would go down to the local A and P grocery store on main street on Friday evenings to weigh and bag up bulk items for the busy Saturday shopping day. In those days items such as sugar, rice, beans, flour, dried fruits and vegetables, pastas, and many other items were shipped in large barrels or 100 lb sacks. We would weigh and sack the items in brown bags in one, two, and five pounds depending on the item and stack them on the shelves after labeling each as to what it was and the weight of it. On Sat. morning early we would go to the alley behind the store where they had two big barrels of water boiling over a fire. A truck loaded with crates of chickens would soon arrive and back up to the store and we went to work as fast as we could. We would each grab a chicken from a crate, chop its head off on a block, thrust it in to the hot water for several minutes and then pluck it completely clean. When we finished a chicken we took them inside and put them into a large box behind the display counter in the meat section. I remember we plucked a lot of chickens because they sold a lot of fresh chickens. I don't recall what we made per chicken but it was money and we did it for a couple of years. One must remember that in 1937 there was no such thing as a frozen food as there is today. Many of the stores still had coolers cooled by ice and a refrigeration unit was a very expensive. All foods were sold either dried, canned or fresh.

Working around the A and P I learned a lot and learned to watch and pay attention to items when shopping and when checking out. Sat. was a very busy day there and they had about four check out counters. In the morning a new broom was placed in the out going lane next to each cash register. As each customer checked out with a large enough order the broom was automatically added to the purchase. Most people did not even notice they had purchased a broom and the register in those days did not print out a tape just a total on the machine. If they

noticed it and objected it was taken off and apologies were in order. At the end of the day a prize was given to the cashier who sold the broom the most times. Meanwhile back at the meat counter, they picked out five of the best looking, plumpest and best shaped chickens and put them on ice in the display case. A customer would come in and select one of the chickens which was taken out of the case and thrown into the box with the chickens we were bringing in after cleaning. An assistant would then reach into the box and grab any other chicken and wrap it in white paper they used. After the customer left the original chicken was replaced in the case.

As I mentioned I went out for football my second year. Salem was not a very large school with probably about 300 students. We were not a big team with our heaviest lineman weighing 165 lbs. Over half of the guys in my class were on the football team. I was fortunate and got a lot of playing time my last two years being on the first team most of the time. Football practice I will never forget. We started practice in August and on that dirt field in the heat we bruised each other and made all our muscles ache as we tried to get into good condition. Of course, I was a 'holy terror' on the football field, my 5' 10" and 135 lbs striking fear into my opponents as I was playing right tackle. Later I was moved to right end. I recall in one game at Dodridge the coach told me I would have to hit hard and fast on my blocking assignments. When that guy lined up across from me he looked like a house and at 295 lbs he probably was. Blocking him out was impossible so I had to devise ways to shunt him off to a side or just delay him until the play developed without holding him. When that game ended I was wiped out. In one game in Clarksburg I was on the end of a sweep in my direction and I took on two great big blockers and was so groggy coach took me out. Later a half back was hurt so coach told me to go in an play his position. I lasted a few plays and got knocked groggy again taking on those big guys. We played seven games a year and we lost our first 13 and got a 13-13 tie my last game. When Nov. came it was really unpleasant playing in the rain and in the cold in those wool jerseys and especially when some one stepped on your hand or leg with those cleats. We played some night games but I did not like the night ones. When we graduated the team was depleted and the next year very few turned out to play

so the school dropped football as a sport.

I recall that in my junior and senior year many of the girls in school were very unhappy that most of the guys in both classes could not dance as they wanted to have a Junior-Senior prom and most of the guys could care less. There was a malt shop downtown that had a dance floor with a juke box in back. The girls offered to put the money in the juke box and teach us to dance if we would come down on certain nights each week. A bunch of us guys went to the malt shop several times and got dancing lessons and practice but most of the guys were just not interested in having a prom so we did not have one. Most of the guys in my class and the class behind and ahead of us were not interested in girls or dating. Just to the left of the steps leading up the hill to the school was the First Baptist Church. On Friday and Saturday evenings we often gathered in a group on the steps and talked. The youth minister from the church would come out and join us and we used to have some lively discussions.

I remember on Halloween night a bunch of us were looking for some mischief to get into. We were walking on the west side of town when we saw a big wagon sitting in a vacant lot. Someone suggested we take the wagon apart and take it some where. Nearby was a dark house with a big porch roof. Undaunted we all pitched in and took that wagon apart and assembled it on the roof of that porch without causing any noise. What an accomplishment and would those folks be surprised. The next day or so we went by and found the elderly owner trying to figure out how to get it down. Not to worry. Feeling badly, we volunteered to get it down for him which we all did in very short order. He offered us money but we refused accepting only his thanks for helping him out of a bad situation. We felt better about it.

The past year brother John had been attending Milligan College in Tenn. Do not recall why he went there but the next year they sent him to W.Va. University. My senior year mom and dad decided to move to Morgantown, W. Va. The university was located there so all of us would have a better opportunity of going to it. John was in his second year there and I would be starting the next year.

During my senior year, high school football players were

invited to be guests of the University at one of their games for free. I decided to hitch hike to Morgantown to visit John and see the University and the game. I got a ride with no problem to Clarksburg and hitched a ride heading to Morgantown. It did not take me long to realize how poorly the man was driving and after twenty or so miles of speeding and bad driving, I realized the guy was drunk so I insisted he stop at which time I jumped out and let him go on. I got another ride on to Morgantown but that guy though sober was not a much better driver. I went to the football game and after seeing the size of those players I knew college football was not for me. I thought the university was huge compared to Salem College and it was a long walk to Johns room in Westover as we had to walk over the bridge and up a hill to his rooming house. I hitchhiked home and with the intoxicated drivers on the road, I felt lucky to get home in one piece and I have never hitchhiked anywhere again.

During one winter a school friend invited me to spend the night at his house on their farm. I went out and had a good time. The next morning it was cold and I recall how wonderful that coffee smelled. At breakfast we had cereal and they put milk on it. I took one bite and almost choked. They used buttermilk on their cereal so I had to eat it as best I could. Did not get any of that good smelling coffee as they were against young kids drinking coffee. Later we went out on a hill and my friend started trying to ski on two barrel staves. He wanted me to try it but I declined. I was afraid of breaking something on that rough hill on those staves.

During my high school time I was interested in acting so I tried out for all the plays and was given good parts in all of them. I was in every Shakespeare play our class gave and in most all other school plays. I also tried out for community plays and was in a couple of them. Some of my teachers thought I would have an acting career. During my Junior year I was chosen to give the class address at the banquet and also sing in the quartet that entertained. I was really very nervous preparing for it but my teacher and friends all said I did a good job of it. During my junior year one of the smartest and most attractive girls in our class got polio and was paralyzed and could not attend school. They hooked up a two way phone system with her room and all the class rooms so she could hear everything and was

practically in classes. We could all hear her and speak with her and she could answer and ask questions as if in the class. We all thought that was a marvel for the time and she was able to graduate with our class. As I said the snow stayed on the ground for so long and so deep during the winter in those days that we could schedule sleigh riding parties weeks in advance. My class had several. We went out to Salem Hill and built big camp fires at the bottom of the hill and at the top which we kept going all evening and we had lots of hot coco to last. It was about a mile from top to bottom of the hill and took about 20 minutes to climb it and 5 or less to ride down, so trips were spread out with lots of socializing by the fires. Of course we never took the ride down without one of the girls riding on our back. It was cold and wet but a lot of fun.

My last two years I took typing and was on the typing team. We actually held meets and went to other schools. I could only type about 65 words per minute and some of the girls could type over 100. I was the only boy in the class at that time as typing was girls stuff, but I wanted to be able to type for college. The reason I was on the team was because I seldom made an error and my accuracy helped pull the other scores up. The typing teacher was also the assistant football coach and gave me a hard time now and then.

PICTURES FROM THE PAST



Charles Wilbur Gregory
age 11½ months
Taken just after winning
the baby contest. Same clothes
as worn to the contest.



...fair will have a most stimulating effect. The fair is a success and should be kept going.

One of the most interesting features of the fair was the best baby contest, which took place Friday afternoon. There were 36 babies entered for this contest. Drs. G. W. Taylor, S. A. Rhyne, A. E. Bell made the tests. The first prize was won by Wilbur Gregory, 11 1-2 months old son of Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Gregory. The child was 100 per cent normal, weighing 20 1-2 pounds. \$5.00.



Bill Gregory Mooresville, N.C. 1922?



Bill Gregory & his Dad
Bill & John Gregory 1922



Bill 1922 Mooresville, N.C.



John & Bill
1923



Bill
1923



John & Bill
1924/1925



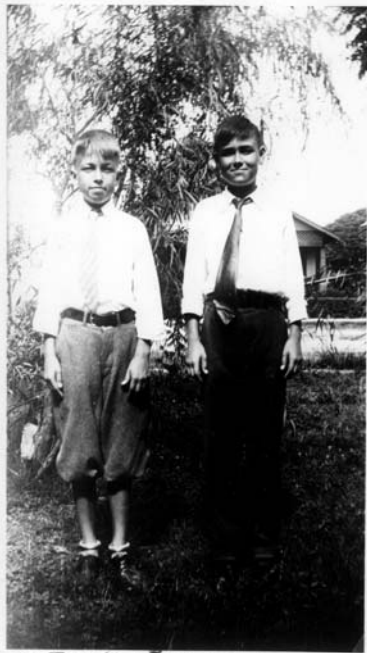
C.B., John, Bill
1927



Bill
1933



Bill DeQuincy 1935



C.B. & Bill - 1935
DeQuincy, LA



Bill, May 1939, Salem, W.V.

PART II.

THE STORIES
I HAVE TOLD
ABOUT A WAR
CALLED WW II

AND A FEW STORIES
I HAVE NEVER TOLD

Prologue

At long last, after much urging, I have forced myself to take the time to record many of the stories that I have told in the past mostly to my children and grand children. I tried to do this about twenty years ago and managed to hand write many pages but my mind just did not want to become involved in the entire scope of the war. It has been no less easy this time but I have tried to stick to my purpose. As I try to revisit the past I find it very difficult because in dealing with my time in the Army, I recall much of the time and experiences as being more unpleasant than they were pleasant.

Of all the Army experiences, Combat is the worst experience of all. Soldiers train constantly to learn the techniques of combat to be successful in a fight with the enemy that means killing and destroying to accomplish a mission. A soldier once committed quickly learns that many other factors will determine his destiny. Sometimes it appeared that fate was the determining factor despite caution and training.

I am amazed at times of my inability to recall the events of days and even weeks. Those time periods are a total blank in my mind. I recall there were many events that I wanted to write down at the time, but did not do so as I thought that I would never forget the incident or happening. Perhaps that is the minds way of insuring that we cannot talk about some of the more unpleasant events.

I believe it has happened to lots of soldiers who do not talk about the past. I mentioned a young man who contacted me to learn about the experiences of his father-in-law who was in my platoon. He said that he would not talk about his time in the army and if any of the family tried to ask questions, his father-in-law would just get up and leave the room. His family was interested in knowing just what he had endured in combat. I spent two afternoons talking with the young man and mentioned several good books to give him an idea of the horrors of real combat. He later thanked me and said they all had a new respect of what he had endured and the reasons why he did not

want to revisit past times. The young man who installed my cable told me that neither he nor his father knew any thing about his grandfather's war time activities other than that he had been in the Army. He said that after his grandfather passed away, they found his decorations, including the Silver Star, Purple Heart and many other decorations. He said that he and his father regretted that they had never been able to get him to talk about his combat experiences. I receive a 100th Division Newsletter about every three months. In each issue there are ten or more requests, from children of former soldiers, trying to contact former associates of their fathers to learn about their Army experiences as their fathers would not talk about that time in their life. It appears that most soldiers just decided to forget it or time erased the memory.

I have tried to relate many incidents as best I could recall them. What I have related actually happened and my only regret, is that I cannot recall many of the other incidents that I thought I would never forget.

THE MILITARY SERVICE
OF CHARLES W. GREGORY
ENLISTED SN 15316102
OFFICERS SN 0539305

- ENLISTED IN THE ENLISTED RESERVE CORPS (ERC):
30 JULY 1942
- ORDERED TO ACTIVE DUTY (AD): 19 March 1943
- PROMOTED TO CORPORAL: 1 AUG. 1943
- DISCHARGED AT FT. BENNING, GA.: 5 DEC. 1943
- COMMISSIONED AS 2nd LT. UNITED STATES ARMY
RESERVE (USAR): 6 DEC. 1943 AT FT. BENNING, GA.
- PROMOTED TO 1st LT.: 16 DEC 1944
- PROMOTED TO CAPTAIN: 24 JUNE 1946
- SEPERATED FROM MILITARY SERVICE AT CAMP
KILMER, N.J.: 31 AUG. 1946
- PROMOTED TO MAJOR USAR: 6 DEC 1955
- RETIRED: TRANSFERRED TO RETIRED RESERVES: 20
DEC. 1962

CHRONOLOGICAL RECORD OF MILITARY SERVICE OF CHARLES W. GREGORY

- * 19 Mar. '43 called to Active Duty and assigned to 1546th Service Unit (SU) at W. Va. University, Morgantown, W. Va.
- * 31 May '43 transferred (tsfrd) to 1524th SU, Fort Hayes, Ohio. as atch unasgd
- * June '43 (latter part) tsfrd to . 3558th SU at Camp Perry, Ohio.
- * 3 Aug. '43, promoted to Corporal and tsfrd to Fort Benning, Ga. Permanent station to attend Officer Candidate School. On arrival asgd to the 2nd company, 3rd Student Training Regiment (STR)
- * 20 Nov. '43 given 10 day furlough to home as father had a serious heart attack.
- * 6 Dec. '43 graduated from OCS and commissioned 2nd Lt. ORC (Officers Reserve Corp)
- * 6 Dec. '43 tsfrd to Infantry Replacement Training Center (RTC) Camp Blanding, Florida with a 10 day delay enroute
- * 16 Dec '43 asgd to Hq. IRTC, Camp Blanding, to attend one month refresher school.
- * 12 Jan '44 tsfrd to company C-222-68th ITR (AT), Camp Blanding.
- * 21 Jan. '44 tsfrd to Co. F-223rd Infantry Training Regiment (ITR)
- * 17 Mar. '44 tsfrd to Co. A-197th-61st ITR

- * 1 May '44 tsfrd from IRTC, Camp Blanding, Fla., to 100th Division, Fort Bragg, N.C., and granted 10 days leave enroute.
- * 11 May '44. Met on arrival with Maj. Gen. Withers Burress and was asgd to Anti-Tank (AT) company, 399th Inf.
- * 29-30 Sept. '44 depart Ft. Bragg and arrive at staging area at Ft. Kilmer, N.J.
- * 5 Oct. '44 Took train to Jersey City, N.J., then Ferry to Manhattan, New York where we boarded ship enroute Europe. I was aboard the transport McAndrews
- * 20 Oct. '44 Arrive at Marseilles, France, and debark, walking on planks over submerged ships to shore and then hiked 12 miles to a staging area.
- * 29 Oct. '44 Left staging area near Marseilles in convoy enroute 7th Army area.
- * 31 Oct. '44 Arrive vicinity of Fremifontaine, France.
- * 3 Nov. '44 entered combat in the Vosges Mountains Campaign relieving units of 45th Div.
- * 16 Dec. '44 Promoted to 1st Lt.
- * 31 Dec. '44 just prior to midnight the German attack known as NORDWIND began.
- * Early in '45 was taken off lines and trucked to Paris for 3 days leave.
- * 6 May '45 WAR IS OVER
- * 21 Nov. '45 Tsfrd to 3rd Div. Assigned to 15th Inf. Reported and assigned as Ex. Of. Co. F
- * Asgd as CO of Co. F about one week later.

- * 31 May '46 relieved of command of Co. F, 15th Inf, 3rd Division
- * Transferred to Camp Lucky Strike in France and boarded boat for home.
- * 24 June '46 promoted to Captain
- * 23 June '46 issued orders for separation from service effective 31 Aug '46.
- * 24 June '46 Sworn into the United States Army Reserves as Captain.
- * 13 July '48 asgd to 398th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 100th Div (Reserve)
- * 5-18 July '48 Summer Training at Ft. Bragg, N.C. with 82nd AB Div.
- * 20 Sept '48 asgd as Company commander of Co. F, 398th Parachute Infantry Reg. Reserves
- * 1 June '49 to 29 Aug '49 called to Active Duty (AD) and served as assistant instructor for Reserve units in Northern W.Va.
- * 20 Aug. to 4 Sept '49 summer training with 100th Div Reserves at Ft. Campbell, Ky.
- * 15 June to 30 July '50 called to AD as asst. instructor in Reserves.
- * 6-20 Aug. '50 Summer training with 100th Div. Res. At Ft. Campbell and in charge of all recruit training for Division

SERVICE PICTURES





B. 11 1940



Charles 1943
Private US Army



B. 11 1942



Fort Bragg 1944



B. 11 1944
St Augustine, FL



Charles & Mom 1944



*C. B. & Bill
France 1945*



1945 France



Germany 1945



*C.O. H Co 15th Inf.
Germany 1946*



*My Last Mount
Hemmelburg Ger 1946*



Germany 1946



Germany 1946



*Germany 1946
Mie & Co. 1st Sgt.*



1946 Waiting for boat home France



On the boat Homeward bound



Home at last



COLLEGE DAYS AT WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY

I suppose the best place to begin the narrative of my military service and “war stories” is to begin as I graduated from high school in Salem, W. Va.

My first experience with the army was when we graduated from high school in May 1939. Jimmy Jenkins, our quarterback on the football team, decided not to go to college, but rather to join the army. He asked several of us seniors to join the Army with him so we all went as a group to talk to the recruiter. I do not now recall what was said but since I planned to attend college, I did not join with him and neither did any of the other guys. Jimmy did join the army and was stationed at Hickam Field in Hawaii when the Japanese attack the fleet there.

Mom and Dad moved the family to Morgantown, W.Va. in June 1939 to a rented house on South Grand Avenue so we kids could attend W.Va. Univ. I started studies at the University. in Sept. 1939, in the School of Forestry. As W.Va. was a land grant college, all male students were required to take two years of training in the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC), unless excused. We were issued Olive Green woolen uniforms (including wool shirt) which we had to wear all day on the three days of the week when we had ROTC classes. During the fall and spring months the 3 classes a week consisted of one hour of close order drill and in the winter months it was class room study. I can almost feel to this day how uncomfortable those woolen uniforms were in the sun, heat and dust. It seemed that every time there was an excuse for a parade down High street in Morgantown, the Corps was lined up, shouldered rifles, and marched the length of High Street in the parade. About once a month the entire corps was on parade. I recall standing for what seemed like eternity in the heat on that dusty parade field at attention with men passing out and falling in the ranks, to be attended to by medics who were present. We sure hated those hot woolen uniforms except in the wintertime when we were in class.

During the summer of 1940 I signed up for Civilian Pilot Training (CPT). The flight training was to be given at the airport and the class was limited to 35 students. I was accepted. I well remember my first flight with my instructor, Lou Musgraves. He preached caution and no risk taking with the planes. While we were aloft the first time Lou did stalls and power turns that turned my stomach inside out. Somehow I got through the first 1/2 hour of familiarization. The first few hours were difficult as each new maneuver took some adjustment and it seemed that I would never settle down and enjoy flying. Lou liked to fly very early in the morning, as did I, so I had my lessons beginning at 6:00 am. I loved the quiet and beauty of the clouds, sun and sky in the early morning light. I usually could get a ride to the airport, about 3 miles from town, but had to walk back home most mornings. I had night flight classes at the University and at the same time had a part time job as usher at the local Warner Brothers Theater.

All students had to "solo" (fly alone) after a certain number of hours of dual instruction or be washed out of the program. Of course, we all worried about when we would have to solo and pulled for each other to get it done. We had to complete 40 hours of dual and solo flying time to take the private pilots examination which was a written test and flying test conducted by the Federal Aviation Agency (FAA). Dual instruction continued after solo for several hours with dual flight checks on maneuvers after that time. I flew in a single engine Taylor Craft plane with side by side seat while others flew in a Cub single engine plane with seats located front and rear. One morning we were practicing taking off and landing. I had just landed and I was turning into the wind to take off. I had my hand on the throttle and was about to hit full throttle for the take off when Lou said "Just a minute, Bill". I watched in amazement as he opened his door and got out of the plane. All Lou said was, "Take it up right now and repeat." I really thought I was going to panic on the spot, but I did not have time as he was waving me to take off. I hit the throttle and watched the runway rush by as the plane gathered speed and lifted off the runway with me alone for the first time. What a feeling! It was impossible to describe the feeling of flying alone for the first time. Driving a car alone for the first time was one thing, but flying alone at age 18 was

something else. I flew the plane out and did some turns and stalls and then landed but Lou waved me around again so I continued the practice until he waved me in. We did not have radios in planes in those days. All we had was an altimeter, RPM indicator, and compass. The gas gage was a float on a wing or the hood. After I dismounted Lou took me over to the small airport café and bought us coffee. I told him that I had been worried about soloing but that his method had worked. He just laughed and said that I would do all right. That morning as I walked home from the airport, I was walking on air, so to speak.

One morning some days later, after flying, I went to get a cup of coffee at the airport café that was located in a wooden building near a hanger. As I entered the café I saw that the kitchen was in flames and the cook and waitress were screaming for help. I grabbed a large fire extinguisher from off the wall and sprayed the fire with it. It was a grease fire from a pan on the stove and was spreading fast. Being there at just the right time, I was able to bring the fire under control with a minimum of damage to the kitchen. I was 'dubbed' a real hero by the gals working there and after that all the coffee was on the house.

Every student had to take a solo 'cross country'- flight. Each member of our class had to fly solo to a town in PA about 80 miles distance, check in and fly back to Morgantown. Naturally we were concerned about our ability to do that and we had to learn the landmarks and use them as we flew to and from our destination. When a student made the trip, the instructor called the airport to alert them of our flight and when we checked in at the airport, they would call the instructor to tell him that we had arrived and left. When my turn came, I took off at 6:00 a.m. and although I was not nervous about the flying, I was apprehensive about the possibility of getting lost. I knew that I could always land the plane in a small field as a last resort, so that comforting thought allowed me to settle in and enjoy the flight. I did notice that during the flight I had to increase my corrections for wind drift. I landed at the airport, checked in and started taxing out for take off when the wind suddenly increased to the point that my plane kept turning into the wind. Two airport employees had to lie on each wing to give me enough weight to allow me to taxi out and as they got off I hit the throttle and took off. When I hit the

end of the runway I was at 500 feet and climbing fast. I battled the wind all the way back and what a beautiful sight when the airport came into view in the distance. As I neared the airport I could see Lou on the runway frantically waving toward the windsock and toward a runway he obviously wanted me to use for landing. I realized from seeing the windsock that the wind was very strong and there would be down drafts off the end of the runway, therefore, I would have to fly the plane onto the runway under power instead of stalling it in as usual. I had to almost do power turns to get lined up and I had a good landing at almost cruising RPM. As I slowed down, Lou and others rushed out and steadied the plane to taxi it to the hanger. Lou said he was worried as in the high wind any mistake would be "crash time" but he knew that I was cautious enough to "feel the landing out". One morning we were sitting at the end of the runway waiting to take off when we delayed to allow another student and instructor flying a Piper Cub to land in front of us. The runways at this airport are carved out of the top of a big hill and have drops of 100 feet or more at ends of runways. This causes severe up and down drafts, especially on hot summer days, and makes for very bumpy flying. As we watched the plane approach for the landing from our right side, I noticed that the plane was actually below the runway as it came in to land. I remarked to Lou that he was too low to get in but Lou replied that the instructor would pull the plane up. The plane was so close we could see the expressions on both men's faces and they both appeared surprised. Suddenly I could see the instructor take control of the plane and hit full throttle as he pulled back on the controls. When the plane shot up the landing gear hit the dirt at the end of the runway, tearing away with the plane sliding down the runway. Fortunately it did not flip or nose into the ground. The nose of the plane hit the runway just in front of our plane at which time the propeller splintered, the nose and a wing dug into the runway and the plane spun around and skidded to a stop. The men climbed out of the plane with blood running from their faces. Lou looked at me and yelled, "taxi around them and take off". I did as he instructed and I realized later it was the best course of to follow as I became too busy to dwell on the accident. We went aloft and did Figure 8s a maneuver which I thoroughly detested. The men in the accident were banged up but they

were not injured seriously, however the plane was wrecked. Flying in and near Morgantown airport, pilots became cautious about the wind effects on the small planes and the power of the up and down drafts. Several fatal accidents at the airport were caused by these factors.

I took my FAA inspectors examination in the fall on a beautiful day and passed it. My flight Log Book noted that I was a certified private pilot at age 18. Mom would never go up with me though I took all the rest of the family up for 1/2 hour flights. I flew with brother Clinton several times. One bright sunny Sunday morning, Dad decided he wanted to go up so we rented the plane for 1/2 hour. We were flying around when I asked Dad if he wanted to see the Country club. He said yes so I pushed the nose of the plane down as the club was directly below us. The plane went into a deep dive and Dad let out a yell while he held onto the struts for dear life. I reverted to conservative flying for fear that Dad was going to jump out.

As I neared the end of my second year at the University., we were told we had to apply for Advanced ROTC if we wanted to be considered for that training. That was in 1941 and the draft was in effect at that time. We were told to enlist in the Enlisted Reserve Corps (ERC) and that the ROTC would advise our draft boards of our status. We did as requested and were properly sworn into the ERC. I was accepted for the Advanced ROTC course of 2 years. In order to take advanced ROTC each student had to sign a contract with the War Department agreeing to complete the full two years and to complete the summer training camp of 6 weeks provided by the army during the last summer of school. On completion of this training the students were to be commissioned as 2nd Lieutenants in the Officers Reserve Corps (ORC). I signed the contract before the school year ended.

I had been informed that the CPT would offer a secondary training course with 15 students to the class and we would be flying larger planes than we had flown for primary training. There was to be only two flights in training consisting of a total of 30 students. I applied for the training course and was delighted when told that I had been accepted and also when I passed the physical examination. The training was to be in a WACO 220 horsepower, two wing open cockpit plane with two seats front

and back.

I was working part-time as an usher at the local Warner Bros. Theatre but to pay the cost of the training of \$15 to \$25 I needed a summer job. I was scheduled to fly at 6:00 a.m. my favorite time. I finally got a summer job at the local McCroy Ten Cent Store as a stock boy making 20 cents per hour. I was very fortunate to get the job, as work, especially summer jobs, were very scarce in Morgantown in the summer of 1941.

The day came to start secondary flight training and I had my 6:00 to 7:00 am start time. I met my instructor Bob, last name forgotten, at which time he showed me the plane and explained the plane and the differences between flying it and a smaller plane. It was an open cockpit plane with seats front and rear and the seat of the plane was actually the parachute. The pilot sat in the seat, buckled on the harness of the parachute and then buckled up his seat belt. Bob as I found out was a real jokester and not as conservative a flyer as was Lou. Bob was much younger than Lou and shortly afterward he became a pilot for the Allegheny Air Lines. I have sometimes wondered if those parachutes would actually opened and work as I never saw one checked or taken out of the plane where they served as cushions.

After checking out the plane thoroughly, Bob and I got into the plane with me in the front seat (where I always flew) and Bob in the rear seat. We taxied out to the runway and took off. We just flew around the airport (there was not much plane traffic in those days) for about 15 minutes getting the feel of the plane when suddenly Bob threw the plane into a snap roll. After the plane rolled over Bob tapped me on the shoulder and laughed as he asked me if I had fastened my seat belt. I responded to him saying, "If I had not, your question would not even be necessary" As we flew for the hour, Bob did some landings and takeoffs, power turns, power stalls, snap rolls, slow rolls, and other maneuvers. Again, I had to solo the plane after 5 hours of dual time, which was easy for me and no worries this time, and take an FAA flight and written test after 40 hours of flight time.. I loved the flying but the school every night was a bore. I really disliked doing the power turns called the Precision 8's. One day Bob kept pulling the throttle back shutting off the power informing me the engine was dead and I had to land the plane. I had to

immediately pick out a landing spot somewhere and glide the plane into it and I could not pull up until Bob opened the throttle that he usually did at about 100 feet forcing me to come very close to the ground. One day he kept practicing the maneuver where the only good landing spot was a field in which a farmer was pitching hay onto a wagon pulled by a horse. As a result, I in effect had to buzz the farmer and his horse four or five times at very low altitude as I made the dead stick approach. Each time the farmer waved his pitchfork at us in anger. I enjoyed flying an hour each morning at 6:00 am as I could fly through, around and over the beautiful cumulus clouds on the sunny bright blue cool early mornings. Piloting the Waco was merely a matter of adjustment.

When it came time to take my FAA test it was a completely overcast day. The inspector had me fly up over top of the clouds and instructed me to perform specific maneuvers. After I spun the plane out on each attempt he had me land the plane. Looking down at the cloud cover I had no points of reference to do any precision flying. I was really worried until he said that we would try it again the next day which we did and I passed the flight test with a real good hour of flying. I recall that there was a big party at the Morgantown Country Club for all those connected with the flight training some time later. I do not recall that I ever took any of the family up in the Waco as for some reason not recalled, they would not rent the plane out.

As a matter of interest, there were 14 men and one woman in my flight and all passed the course. Of that group I was the only one who did not continue flying and I ended up in the Army as being only 19 at the time my mother would not sign for me to go into any pilot training. The rest of the flight became flyers in one of the services as we became involved in WW II. As best as I could determine, only myself and one other student in the flight survived the war. He was flying off a carrier in the Pacific and was either shot down or forced down in the ocean three times. Our woman pilot crashed while ferrying bombers to England, two were killed in crashes while giving flying instruction and the rest were killed in combat situations except one who was a friend of mine. His father had passed away and he was flying home in a two engine light bomber for the funeral. As he was landing he was caught in a sudden down draft and according to observers

the plane dropped suddenly and crashed into the end of the runway. My friend and his entire crew perished. As with the previous summer, I had to walk back to town most mornings after my flight time, but I still continued to get free coffee at the airport café.

My job at the five and dime store was dull and boring. I worked eight hours each day and I helped unload trucks, store stock, take orders for stock, fill the orders putting the merchandise in containers and then taking the containers to the floor for stocking of the individual counters in the store. As I recall there was a crew of four of us working in the stockroom including the head stockman. I was being paid 20 cents per hour, a fair wage at the time. After I had been working at the store for about a month the head stockman became ill and was hospitalized for an indefinite time. The store manager prevailed on me to take the job. My job included checking all merchandise into the store and marking each individual item with a code for the cost price and the sale price. Every last item in the store for sale had to be so marked and it was very time consuming. The manager was constantly harping at me to do more even though I was trying to learn on the job and we were now down to just two stockmen. (One of the stockmen I got to know very well, I ran into in a train station in Germany by accident at which time we brought each other up to date on people we knew from home). Having a lot of unwanted pressure, from everyone who wanted it done now, I had seriously contemplated quitting the job, even though I really needed it. My time was limited as I was flying, had night classes and was still working at the theater.

One very hot summer afternoon I was in the basement of the store marking a gross (144 count) of 10 cent items for the counter. (There was no air conditioning then and no fans in our work areas) There had been a lot of mistakes by counter clerks and stockmen that day and my patience was about gone as I knelt marking the gross. Suddenly the manager was standing over me "chewing me out" over the way I was marking the items and how long it was taking me to do it. I instantly made my decision as I stood up, handed him the marking pen and said only, "That's it. I quit. You mark it. I will pick up my check on Friday. Thanks and goodbye" Having said that, I punched out on the time clock and started out the basement door. He ran over

and stopped me and said, "What am I going to do. I do not have any other employees with the intelligence to mark the merchandise." I replied that he should hire someone who could do it. He then asked, "Would you stay if I raised your pay to 25 cents an hour". Of course that was a 20% raise and jobs were hard to come by so I relented. The offer of the pay raise improved my job attitude and my feelings toward him. I agreed to stay on the job if he agreed to offer only suggestions to help me on the job and leave me alone to do my work, which he really did after that time. My pay raise was effective that morning and all the employees were very considerate of me after that episode.

There was a lunch counter at the rear of every Dime store. The cook at this one knew that I liked the hot rolls they had for lunch every day so, every day she saw to it that I got two hot rolls with butter when the rolls came out of the oven. One day I came to the counter and observed her drop a pan of rolls on the floor as she tried to put the pan into the oven. The pan turned upside down on the dirty floor and I watched in amazement as she righted the pan and put the rolls back in the pan and then into the oven. Needless to say I lost my desire for rolls and stayed away from the lunch counter.

One day the manager told me that the assistant manager had been transferred to another store and he would like for me to take his job at a salary of \$25 per week. It was a tempting offer but I declined as I wanted to finish college. He approached me several times encouraging me to take the job as we could work well together and he felt that I had an excellent chance of getting my own store at a young age. I tried to explain that I had a contract for ROTC that I had to honor and that required me to attend college.

During the summer of 1941 the draft began to increase quotas. I recall that fall we used to sit on a stone bench at the end of the chemistry building and discuss the situation. It was obvious to all of us that a war was coming and it was only a matter of time until we would all be in the military service. I could see the attitudes of my class mates change drastically as we all faced the inevitable.

My best friend was John Adams a fellow student in the forestry school. John spent a lot of time at my house studying

with me. Many nights he did not go back to the dorm but slept in my room and ate with the family. Another very good friend in forestry school was John Katchur who lived with his widowed mother in Morgantown and was a halfback on the University football team. He was All State in high school. Another good friend was Robert Brock. I recall one Sat. I went to Bob's home as we were going somewhere that morning. While I waited on Bob in the living room his sister and father came into the room and we talked about a dance she was going to that night. She left and his dad and I talked for awhile. When he left the room he turned and said to me, "Bill, I am really glad that you and Bob are such good friends". I was pleased with the compliment. John Adams was from near Sutton, WV and was raised on a farm. He was about 6 feet, 180 pounds and strong as an ox. John Adams, Bob Brock and myself were all in advanced ROTC and were on the rifle team. We all spent a lot of time together. During my senior year we went on a bus to Annapolis, MD for a dual meet against the U. S. Naval Academy. We spent the night in the barracks with the cadets and ate all meals with them. I was impressed with the academy and the cadets.

December 7, 1941, was a day that President Roosevelt said would live in infamy. For me Sunday December 7, was a day for working to earn extra money for school. Little did I know as I arose early that morning, before the day was over so too would end many dreams. The events of the day caused most everyone to sense a great loss that was to come and I am sure we felt a dread of the future. About 7:00 a.m. that day, John Adams, me and two class mates went out to the W. Va. University Agriculture Farm. We had contracted to saw down trees marked for cutting in the forested area and to cut them into firewood. We were paid, I think, \$2.50 for a short cord and \$3.50 for a long cord. If we worked steady we could cut two to three cords a day. The day was cloudy and cold with two or three feet of snow on the ground. We sharpened our double bit axes and two man cross-buck saws and went to work. We built a big fire and worked so hard that by noon we had stripped to the waist. As it became dark early, we quit work about 4:00 p.m. and returned home. When I walked through the door and saw mom crying, I knew something was terribly wrong. She told me at once that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. The entire

family spent the next several hours gathered around the radio in the parlor listening to the latest reports and speculating on the future. We all realized that soon we would be in an all out war against Japan and Germany that would change our lives forever. We discussed the impact on our plans for the future and the possibility that we dreaded most of all, the breakup and separation of our family. Mom, of course, was frightened over the prospect that some of us could be killed in the war. Clinton and I knew that our immediate future was in the military and any other plans would have to wait for the outcome.

No more practicing with wooden guns (the army had taken all our Springfield rifles during the past year) as it would be the real thing soon. We were all subdued for awhile, as the war effort began for real once war was declared and rationing became a way of life for all of us. Shortly after the war began, I received letters from the Army, Navy and Marine Air Corps (all separate units then) urging me to join their branch of the service. I was informed that I would be given a plane for 5 hours of solo flying and then I would be given a flight test. If I passed the course I would be put into a class that had completed at least 50% of the required course to be commissioned a 2nd Lt.. Since I was not 21 I would have to have the signed permission of my parents. They declined to sign saying that I should go ahead and complete college and ROTC before I went into the service. During the summer of 1942 I went to Forestry camp in southern WVA as ROTC summer camp had been canceled due to the war. The camp was near the hotel at Greenbrier and we could see the Japanese interred there. After the camp we toured logging and other forestry related operations in the southern states. One man was in charge of the funds and paid all our expenses. One very hot day we stopped for lunch in a small town in South Carolina. When our man paid for the lunch for all of us with a \$50 dollar bill the owner called the police and the cops came and arrested us. Seems they thought we were bank robbers as none of the people had ever seen a fifty dollar bill in their life. They let us go when we convinced them that we were really students on a tour.

Colonel "Willie" Orton was the Professor of Military Science and Tactics and he commanded the ROTC unit at the University. He was an experienced soldier and had his own ideas for getting

us ready for future military service. During the latter part of our junior year and our senior year he devised tactical problems with his staff and the places to conduct the exercises. Numerous weekends we had to go out into the field overnight to conduct the exercises and he set up a one week problem in the field just before we started the senior year. One thing I recall was getting up one morning and watching Colonel Orton come out of his tent stripped to the waist, break the ice on the bucket of water by his tent and take a sponge bath. On that cold morning that is the example he would set for us. I remember on one night problem Shorty Hicks reported that he was trying a rebuttal on the opposing force when he was hit in the head with a rifle butt. I remember one night I was alone on a compass course problem he had devised to test our ability to follow compass directions. The moon was so bright I could easily read my directions for the course and the compass readings with out any additional light. The moon cast such large shadows I almost felt that I was in an unreal world. Prior to the start of the last year, Colonel Orton caused to be built on the parade ground an obstacle course (a real tough one) and a bayonet course. During the entire last year he demanded that every morning before school we run the cross country course of several miles he laid out for us. It was up and down hill and was very demanding. I got use to it in time. He also demanded that we run the obstacle course and the bayonet course once each day. In addition, we had to go to the armory at least once each day and dry fire our weapons at targets set up there. We had to dry fire for at least 10 minutes each day and sign a roster that we had done so. There were no more parades as class work and field work took on a very serious purpose. We did still have close order drill and some formation marching. The ROTC activities, school and studying and part time jobs kept me extremely busy. All the members of the advanced ROTC were in the ERC. We kept hearing rumors that last year that the ERC would be called to active duty but when we asked the staff we were told that would not happen as we had a contract with the War Dept. to finish the course. About Feb. 1943 Col. Orton was transferred to Ft. Benning, Georgia, as Director of Training for Officers Candidate School (OCS). As such he was also head of the OCS appeals board. Colonel Orton personally decorated me with the Rowan Rifles

award as an out standing 3rd year ROTC student. My close friend, John Adams, and some other close friends in ROTC were nominated for and inducted into the Scabbard and Blade Society, however myself and many other students in ROTC were not inducted. I really did not concern myself about not making S&B as it added nothing to my activities. Long after the war was over and we were having a conversation about our college life somehow the subject of S&B came up. John told me that I had been nominated for S&B and the reason I had never been inducted was because I was black balled. John said, "Bill, you were black balled by a person you considered to be one of your closest friends and I believe he did it because of jealousy." John never would tell me the identity of the friend as he said it had no bearing on anything now, he thought the person regretted what he had done and it could ruin a very good friendship. I never asked him again as I agreed that should remain in the past.

MY ROUTE TO A COMMISSION

The rumors we had heard all along proved to be true. The ERC through out the country was called up to active duty. We were told that many calls had been made to the War Dept. to no avail and that all ERC had been activated which included all our advanced ROTC units.

On the morning of March 19, 1943, we were ordered to be on the parade ground in the morning with our luggage. We were right in the middle of the last semester of our senior year at the Univ. and I was carrying 23 semester hours in order to graduate on schedule. We all expressed concern at being yanked out of college at this stage. I believe that due to the war, if a student was called to service and had completed a certain number of weeks of attendance then they were given credit for the semester of study. The draft and voluntary enlistment were reducing the ranks of the male students at the University and in time we had lost over 75% of my class in the Forestry school. I recall in one class, we started the last semester with about 14 students and there were five left in the class when we were called to active duty. In one class, I was only student left at the middle of the semester.

Once we were all assembled on the parade ground, we were loaded on buses and driven to Grafton, WV, where we were taken to a recruiting station for the purpose being sworn into the United States Army. It was necessary that we go there to be sworn into the military service by the regular army Sgt. assigned to the office. Our complement of students was about 70 and we were in many different frames of mind at the time because of what was happening to us. The Sgt. began vocally giving us a hard time about what he would do to us once we were sworn into the army. Of course, he got the usual gestures, cat calls and raspberries. That really set him off verbally in colorful language. Later we all raised our right hands, took the oath swearing to defend the constitution and our country and as we lowered our hands we were officially Privates in the Army of the United

States! The exchanges between the Sgt. and our group really escalated into a full scale shouting match with him shouting threats at us of harsh action to come. We were accompanied by all of our commissioned army officers assigned to the ROTC including the Major who was the acting commander of the ROTC unit so we felt insulated from the threats of the Sgt.. Later we were taken to the train station and boarded a west bound C&O train, destination unknown to us, with the Sgt. still screaming threats at us. I guess with all the officers we had with us there was little else he could do. Very late in the evening of that same day, we arrived at Ft. Hayes, Ohio, which is in Columbus, Ohio. We were fed a meal and assigned to bunks in a typical barracks. They were usually white, two story wood frame buildings with one large room on each floor and rows of cots on each side of the room. The toilets and showers were in open rooms on the first floor. The officers with us were billeted elsewhere.

The following day was truly an experience for all of us. We were marched to a building where, as we went through in a line, we shouted out our sizes and promptly had dumped into our arms hats, caps, trousers, shirts, undershirts, shorts, jackets, coats, fatigue sets, socks, boots, until we could carry no more. They said we got the sizes we asked for but a lot of trading of clothing went on later. Finally, they gave us a duffel bag to dump the stuff into. They did actually measure us for the boots and gave us at least two of every thing and extra underwear and socks. The duffel bags were full and difficult to carry to our quarters. We were instructed to change into Olive Drab (OD) wool dress uniforms and then take all our civilian clothes to a certain building. The clothes were boxed by some workers and mailed to our address of record. Mom said she and all the family were really shocked when that box arrived with all my clothes and no explanation.

The next two days were spent taking a physical examination and taking written and intelligence tests of various types. This of course included a visit with the doctor who asked hard questions such as: do you hate your mother and do you dream about girls. We were hit in both arms with all the required shots and vaccinations again. I recall we were in line and were all kidding about the shot we were going to get in that line. When it came his turn John Adams turned white and passed out on the floor. I

was surprised that several other men passed out also. Of course, big John Adams took a lot of kidding from the guys. They all knew John to be a big strong guy who could break the grip machines they had in some stores.

The next few days we messed around in the mornings and went into Columbus in the afternoons, returning in time for supper. One day some of our men were assigned to mow the parade ground at Ft. Hayes. We went into town returning at 1530 hours and observed all the mowers lined up at the edge of the field and all the men in the Post Exchange (PX) drinking beer. The "Brass" got upset over that but with our officers to protect us they could only complain. After about a week our officers told us that the reason we were given no assignments after the mowing incident was because the Commanding Officer at Ft. Hayes was concerned about the contract each student had with the War Dept. and he felt therefore, that he was not authorized to assign us any duties or make any transfers. After another day or so we were informed that the Army had made a mistake in calling us to AD so we would be sent back to college as privates in the army. We were then put on buses and driven back to Morgantown. My family was really surprised when I walked in the door a private in the army.

As we were now in the army, we had to be present for formation on the parade ground every morning at 7:00 am and for retreat at 5:00 p.m.. We had to eat all our meals in the dining room at one of the women's dorms but we were allowed to live where we had lived prior to induction. For me that meant living at home and eating at the dorm. We returned to classes as if nothing had happened and as if we had not missed a day.

I well recall one morning when we were standing in formation on the parade ground, I looked at my friend, John Adams. John was very pale and he had that appearance of being ill. When I questioned him after formation was over, he admitted that he felt sick so I insisted that I take him on sick call to the infirmary. I then informed the duty officer that I was taking John and would accompany him. We waited in the infirmary for the doctor. John had a temperature of 103 degrees when the doctor examined him. The doctor told John that he was not going anywhere and in fact, was going to be hospitalized. The second floor of the infirmary had been converted into a small hospital ward with

single and double rooms. The doctor immediately looked at me and said, you look sick also. I protested that I felt fine, however, my temperature was taken and it was 103 degrees. John and I were taken upstairs and put to bed in a double room. We were immediately given medication and we had a nurse assigned to us day and night. We had a very difficult time getting calls made to advise every one of our whereabouts. Finally the nurse made the calls for us. One day when we were given our medicine I watched John take his pills. I became suspicious of the way he held the pills in his fist and was convinced he was not taking them. Sure enough, I looked in the drawer of the stand by his bed and saw all the pills he had put there. He admitted that he had not taken any pills for several days as he felt fine and did not need them. One night John admitted to me that he had gotten dressed and had a date with a nurse while we were hospitalized. As his best friend, even I had trouble reasoning with John at times. We were hospitalized for a week before we were allowed to leave and go back to our usual activities. I might add at this time that as privates in the army we were being paid \$50 per month minus deductions and we all felt like millionaires. We had received pay as advanced ROTC students but I think that only came to about \$15, or less, every three months.

One very hot spring afternoon John insisted that I go with him to the football stadium as they were having an inter-fraternity track meet and he was going to run the 1 mile event for the Sigma Nu fraternity of which we were both brothers. He talked me into running the mile event as I had tried out for that distance on the track team (though I had never even placed). It was hot and before the race John bought us both an R.C cola which we drank. I did run the mile and finished it but the cola caught up with me on the last lap and my legs felt like rubber. I was really sick to my stomach so I went up into the stadium and laid myself on the bleachers. John ran his race and then stayed with me until I was able to force myself to walk to the parade ground just as the formation for retreat was lining up. I have never been able to tolerate soda pop and should have known better than to drink it even if it tasted good on a hot day. During this time, we still went to classes, studied ran the cross country course, the obstacle course, the bayonet course and dry fired in the armory every day.

Money was hard to come by when I was in college. Tuition was \$37.50 per semester. I constantly looked for part time jobs. I worked at the Warner Bros. Theater for a couple of years as usher on week ends until I was called in and lost that job over a disagreement with the assistant manager during my junior year. At the beginning of my 2nd year I got a job on a government program (I do not now recall the name) which was much sought after. One of the Professors helped me get into the program. I earned 20 cents an hour working part time and I was assigned to work in the University library. I worked there until we were called to active duty then I had to quit the job. I really enjoyed the job. I worked on the reference side of the library for 2 years and learned a lot about how the library was set up, divisions of operation, how to use the library, numbering systems, indexes and so forth. It was a real experience and brought me into contact with most of the students on the campus. The last year I was asked to take over the film section of the library with an increase to 25 cents per hour. I took the job that included cleaning measuring and repairing film and also mailing it out and receiving it back. Many people would donate their private libraries to the University or just their accumulation of books or documents. As part of my job I had to catalogue all incoming shipments of used documents and books and make recommendations as to whether they should be retained, discarded or given to schools and whether they should be repaired, rebound or left as they were. The job was very interesting and took much time as I had to read a lot and many of the documents and books were very old. I recall one old English magazine (similar to National Geographic) had a fly leaf of beautiful paper and print announcing the marriage of Martha Curtis and George Washington. Every time I ran into the manager of the McCroys store he tried to talk me into the assistant managers job at the store. I also worked part time stoking furnaces at fraternity and sorority houses in the winter and I cut cordwood on the forestry wood lot and any other odd job I could get.

Graduation day approached and one day the Dean called me into his office and said there was a problem with my graduating as I had only attended 7 weeks of a 3 hour class and had not attended a class with Dr. Erickson since. I agreed that was true but since I was the only student left in the class, we had covered

two text books completely, and Dr. Erickson had given me a 3 1/2 hour oral exam on each text book, I felt I had finished the course. I told him that he could give me a grade and let me graduate as there would only be three left in the class or if necessary, I would retake the class after the war was over. The Dean gave me a "C" in the course and I graduated. Of course, we had final exams in the rest of my courses and once they were finished we relaxed and got ready for commencement exercises.

We were instructed to have our duffel bags packed and on the parade ground by 0800 hours on commencement day and to be present on the parade ground by noon that day to load on the buses. After commencement was over John and I had just enough time to run over to my home for a quick sandwich and drink and then run to the parade ground where the Greyhound buses awaited. Quickly we were rushed on the buses and driven to guess where, of course, Ft Hayes. I left feeling really "down" as did John because Mom and my two sisters were crying when we drove off and we all thought this was a final goodbye.

We arrived at Ft. Hayes late and again we were fed and given quarters. Our officers from ROTC were still traveling with us, having no other assignments. Initially at Ft. Hayes we were given no assignments and were just left alone. As I recall we just had to fall out for our formation every morning and then were on our own. To pass the time we went to movies, went to town, played cards, read, wrote letters, hung out at the PX and so forth. After about a week, we were informed by our officers that our situation had not been resolved because of the contracts that we had all signed with the War Dept. Therefore, we would be given 30 days of leave with travel time and we could each take off as soon as we received our travel papers. We were told to report back to Ft. Hayes after the 30 days. The next afternoon a group of us caught the train for W. Va. and some of us got off at Grafton. Dad met us as I had called the family that I was being sent home for a month. Due to the war, we were not allowed to wear civilian clothing and had to wear our uniforms all the time. Fortunately while at Ft. Hayes, they had issued us several sets of "suntans" the summer uniform consisting of shirts, trousers, ties and caps

That turned out to be the start of a great summer. I had

money as I was paid every month, time to do what I wanted to do, and a lot of friends to do it with. We went swimming many afternoons in Cheat Lake, played lots of tennis, hung out downtown, and spent time with friends and family. As the end of my leave neared I got a telegram extending it for 15 days. Several in my ROTC unit were from Morgantown so we frequently got together and discussed our situation and hung out together as we had not been able to obtain any information as to our future in the army and where we might end up. About one week later I received a telegram to report to Ft. Hayes (my home away from home) at the termination of the leave granted.

As we had done before a group of us from Morgantown and the area caught a train at Grafton and reported for duty at Ft. Hayes. After about another boring week of just hanging out (some of the guys were so bored they actually volunteered for KP and other jobs) we were instructed to pack our duffel bags as we were being transferred to Camp Perry, Ohio. Camp Perry was an old National Guard camp in Ohio. It had lots of buildings, barracks and other facilities because national rifle meets and other activities were held there. They had excellent facilities and excellent ranges for rifles and pistols. We boarded a train for Camp Perry accompanied by some of our officers, the rest having been transferred elsewhere. On arrival in the camp we were informed that we had been sent there to go through a six weeks pre Officers Training School. We were billeted in the usual type barracks and had to pull KP and guard duty (actually Fire Patrol). Even to me this was a most unusual situation. I was assigned to a platoon consisting of 30 men in ten men squads. Our platoon leader was a Lt. Col from an ROTC assignment assisted by a Major. Each squad was commanded by a Captain who had a 2nd Lt. as his assistant squad leader. These officers were regular army officers assigned to us. We had classes every morning which were really just a rehash of what we had covered in four years of ROTC and every afternoon we were formed up and marched to Lake Erie where we had to swim for three hours. Talk about boring (later I realized I should have it so good). We spent a lot of time on the rifle range shooting and I enjoyed that activity as the ranges were the best I had ever seen. What with the National Rifle Meets being held there every year, the range was the most modern and up to date

there was.

Our weekends were free and since there was nothing to do on the base, not even a movie theater, most weekends we went into Toledo, Ohio, by bus. They had a very large well staffed USO in Toledo where one could relax, read, write letters and very often get free bus tickets to and from camp. I do not recall what John Adams did on weekends but I do not recall going into Toledo with him. He had started running with a different bunch of the guys as he was in a different platoon and usually in another building. Once in Toledo I went to a theater to hear Ozzie Nelson and his band that featured as vocalist, Harriet Hilliard. Camp Perry was a nice clean camp but was not operated full time, only had a small complement stationed there and as a result only had a very small PX that was not too well stocked. We really had it made there but could not appreciate that fact as being young all of us were bored.

After we had been there for a few weeks we were told that we would be sent to Ft. Benning, Georgia, to attend OCS. They explained that the reason we had not received commissions when we finished ROTC was because we had never attended the six week training camp as required in the contract, therefore, they were sending us to OCS to qualify for commissions in the army. In a way, the War Dept. really shafted us on this one. Instead of getting a commission after taking ROTC for four years, we were headed for a ninety day OCS school to become ninety day wonders. As OCS students we were subjected to the same rules that washed out so many good men – the infamous buddy sheet system in which each soldier in a platoon of, as I recall in OCS, forty men had to rate every other man in the platoon. Obviously this is actually the old curve method and of course, the men who were rated the lowest on most of the buddy sheets were reviewed by a board and those who did not pass were kicked out of OCS. We started out with a class of over 200 men in the OCS class and graduated less than 100. Over 50% kicked out and all ROTC graduates. That was a squandering of potential officer material. I was lucky, I guess, as I managed average or better on all buddy sheets. I know that some of the men kicked out got direct commissions or battlefield commissions.

Having completed the Pre OCS course we all packed up for

the trip to Ft. Benning, Ga. The trip had been planned out and we were going to go on a troop train all the way. Two specially equipped cars at the front of the train served as the kitchens where our food was prepared. Some of the men were assigned to KP duty and some to serving the meals. Our train cars were the old style day coaches with the straight back seats and we were assigned specific seats in a coach with two men to each seat. There was absolutely no room anywhere on that train for one to lie down. We were confined to our seats for all meals that were served to us from cans carried by the men assigned to serve the meals. After eating we filed by squads to the front of the train to wash out our mess gear in three cans of hot wash and rinse water. This trip was in the latter part of August, 1943, in extremely hot and humid weather, and we were all absolutely miserable during the entire trip that took three full days and nights to complete. I believe we spent twice as much time sitting on the tracks waiting for other trains to pass than we did traveling on the rails. We could not get cold drinks, there was no ice in the water containers and the water we had to drink was almost hot. Our train was pulled by old coal burning steam engines. We had no AC at that time so all the windows in the coaches were kept open all the time allowing the smoke from the engine to come into coaches. The smoke was really thick and it was hard to breath when we went through tunnels or large towns. We did not really sleep, bathe or change cloths for over three days. We put on clean suntans to start out and when our train was finally shunted to a siding at Ft. Benning, our suntans looked as if we had just come off a shift in a coal mine. We were a dirty lot and must have been a sight to behold.

We disembarked the trains and formed up in platoons and then we observed the crowning irony. Standing in front of our platoon was 2nd Lt. Cecil B. Highland, Jr., who was ahead of us in ROTC. We thought we had seen the last of him when he graduated the year ahead of us. Bad luck continued to follow us. We, who had completed four years of ROTC and a six week pre OCS course, were now informed that the Army had decided to test a 16 week OCS course instead of the usual 12 week course and we were the second class to take the 16 week course. (Shortly thereafter they reverted to the twelve week course). It should not have taken a genius to realize that we would not be

a good test for comparison of the courses as we were all college graduates, had completed 4 years of ROTC and a pre OCS course and could not, therefore, be considered average OCS candidates. We were informed that we had been promoted to corporal when assigned to OCS and would be making \$55.00 per month.

We were divided into companies before we arrived at Benning and once in formation there, my complement was assigned to a company in the old 3rd Student Training Regiment (STR) in the Harmony Church area. I was assigned to the 2nd platoon of our training company. We were housed in the typical white two story barracks with the toilets and showers at one end of the first floor. The second floor was all one big room with the entire platoon of 30 or more men sleeping in old army cots in rows along the walls with our foot- lockers at the foot of the cots. 2nd Lt William Peterson was the officer assigned to our platoon and we found him to be a good officer who tried to be as helpful as possible. He checked on us constantly to see how we were doing and whether we had any problems he could solve.

I will never forget the first night we spent in the new barracks. We were all very tired after our trip and somewhat apprehensive not knowing what tomorrow would bring. I recall lying on my cot just after lights out reviewing everything in my mind. The class in the barracks next to us was graduating the next day so I am sure they were very relaxed. They sang many old songs over and over and it seemed that they sang for hours. One song they kept singing over and over was "My Wild Irish Rose" They kept us awake for hours with their singing and to this day that one song evokes memories of that night. I know that as we lay there, all of us felt a letdown after our travels.

In many ways for me personally OCS was not a pleasant experience. One of the worst aspects of OCS for me was the buddy rating sheets that we had to fill out every month for a total of three as I recall. This system required that each candidate rate every man in his platoon from 1 to 35 and then give a write up on each man to justify the number assigned. The men appearing at the bottom of most lists, usually 5 to 7 in number, had to appear before a board of officers that decided if they were officer material. Most of the men who went before the board were kicked out of OCS. Those men could appeal their

status to an appeals board headed by Col. Willie Orton, my old PMST at W. Va. Univ. A few did and were reinstated in the training. In all it was a vicious system that cost the Army many trained men who would had been good officers.

John Adams and I had been together since our induction but now he was in the 1st Platoon of the same company in a different building. We were so busy the first month that we had little time to socialize. I learned that John and other students were going to town in the evenings with a student who had a car and some of the officers were concerned that their activities reflected a poor attitude and lack of serious commitment to OCS. I realized that if what I was hearing was true, John was in serious danger of getting kicked out. One evening I went over to John's barracks, sat on the bunk next to him and talked to him for over an hour. I told him of all my concerns, of what I had heard in the company and the impression his activities gave to the officers in charge and to the other men. I practically begged him to quit going into town and do some studying at night to give the impression that he had the right attitude and was serious about getting his commission. I pointed out to John that he was very well liked by all the men but if they got the impression that the officers were down on him then they would rate John down on the buddy sheets and he would have to go before the board. He laughed about it but agreed he would try harder for my sake. It was too late as John was called before the board and was given the boot. I went over to his barracks when he got back and spent hours talking to him. I tried in vain to get him to appeal the boards decision but he said he would not do so. The day he left the company was a heart breaking day for me and reinforced my negative assessment of OCS. John was a smart bright man and would have made an excellent officer. The selection process of the OCS was a backward step. Some time later John wrote a long letter to my Mom explaining why he had not made it through OCS and told them he felt that he owed them an explanation.

Johns letter to mom and dad:

October 1943

Dear Mr and Mrs Gregory,

"I am a very poor hand at writing letters, but I feel that this is one, that warrants an attempt. Last September the eighteenth marked the temporary parting of two very close friends. Bill after learning that I was dismissed from O. C. S. came to me, and said, something that impressed me very much. Bill being fully aware of the circumstances himself said, 'how can I tell dad and mother, they have always thought so much of you, and there is no reason why they should not continue to do so, but I am afraid, that they will not understand, therefore, I will not tell them'. I feel that Bill has overlooked the fact that you being older and more experienced know better the uncertainties of human events than we. It is for the above reasons that I pen this difficult letter. My experience at Fort Benning was a peculiar one. I was making good grades and was getting along fine until a whirlwind struck my company that swept one third of us off our feet. There is a board meeting on the seventh, twelfth and fifteenth weeks to which the platoon leaders or rather the tactical officers send the boys in their platoons who are not doing well. The week before the board was to meet my tactical officer called me in and told me that I was going before the board. I immediately began to recall the past and I could think of no reasons that would warrant such drastic actions. Many candidates sent themselves before the board by failing tests or by getting a poor rating on the buddy sheet by their buddies. Such was not my case.

Sixty eight men in my company went before the board and sixth were shown the gate. The ones that stayed had made low grades on their tests or were rated low by their buddies, but were backed by their tactical officers. I knew that I would have to stand alone for if my tactical officer had been backing me I would have never seen the board. Colonel Orton who I had studied under for three and one-half years at the W.V.U was the chairman of the board. In order to hold his honor Colonel Orton had to give me the same deal that he gave other boys that faced him without the backing of their tactical officer. I left my company and was sent over to the casual company to await shipment to Camp Wheeler. While I was in the casual company I was visited by a Colonel who said that he wished to know why I was dismissed from O.C.S.; this Colonel carried all my Fort Benning records in his hand including my platoon leaders

comments. I learned later when I was visited by Colonel Orton that he was checking on my tactical officer and that it would have no effect on me unless signs of unfairness could be found and proven. The things that my tactical officer said about me could not be combated. For example, he said that I failed to repeat my company commanders commands. I did once when the company was double timing up a road, I nor any member of my platoon could hear the command 'quick time-march'. My platoon was number one in a column and the company commander was in the rear. Yet when I faced the board my tactical officer had written down in black and white that I failed to repeat the company commanders commands when I was platoon leader, leaving the circumstances under which this act was committed completely out.

The governments need for officers is cyclic. There are times when they will graduate anything that they have to graduate and there are times when it is difficult for all. Not difficult because they require too much physically or mentally but because they are determined to reduce their number and their means of reduction is not always evident. We were told that we were there because of a government contract (ROTC) not because the government was in need of officers. However, once you have gained admission to the school they cannot dismiss you without reason.

I am now convinced that out of bad comes a certain amount of good. I never before realized that I had so many friends, nor that their interest in me was of such magnitude until this happened. One boy Edgar Seigerist a graduate law student came to me and said, 'John, if I was to follow any of our W. Va boys in combat I would follow you as soon as any I have known'. When I was packing my equipment to leave my college pals gathered around me to say, so long, and as they spoke I could sense an unsteadiness in their voices; It is needless to say that Bill was one of these boys. One boy even mentioned that they were taking it harder than I was. Sometimes, I think maybe he was right. I have no explaining to do here,

In my opinion it is a disgrace to fall without first trying to stand. However, I say to my friends who are not already acquainted with the circumstances that I leave this school with the same rank and the same pride with which I came. In my heart I feel

that I am a victim of circumstances and that I have not failed. The only thing that hurts is the fact that I started out after something and I came back empty handed. I still am a firm believer in the proverb that there is always room for a good man. So I will go back to the ranks as a corporal and start over. I feel that I can work my way back here and get my commission if I do not get in an outfit that is going overseas. I will gladly take another crack at OCS should the opportunity be mine. I have no sour grapes as far as the school is concerned, because no method of weeding is without flaw. I am a person who is by nature prone to look not upon the past, but the future, and as far as I am concerned this matter is forgotten. I just thought that you would want to know.

I will be here in Wheeler for possibly two weeks after which time I will be sent to some division. I intend to make application for the mountain troops.

Please do not become alarmed about Bill's standing because I sincerely believe that he is firmly seated. Incidents like the one I have related to you may weaken Bill's morale and make him feel less sure of himself, but I feel certain that he will be presented two beautiful and well earned gold bars on December the fourth."

A friend

John

John was transferred to an Infantry Division (I forgot the Div. Number now) and was made a Sgt. and was shipped overseas after we went into combat. His regiment was the first Regiment chewed up by the Germans the night the offensive began which was the Battle of the Bulge. He was captured that night in Dec. 1944 and was a POW for the rest of the war. Later he told me of that night! They had just moved into combat and were untested troops. They had barely taken up their positions in the snow and cold when it seemed the world had come to an end as the thousands of shells exploded all around them with the noise, concussion and bright flashes of light. Suddenly there were German soldiers firing at their position and tiger tanks firing point blank at them with 88s. He said some of his men were

wounded and some dead. He looked around and many of the 18 year old soldiers were weeping in fear, frustration and despair. He related that a tank rumbled up to the hill, pointed an 88 at them and the officer in the tank demanded they surrender or die. John said he looked around at the men and knew they would all die so with a heavy heart he surrendered to the officer. John and I had corresponded regularly after he left OCS. I wrote him often and he responded as often. It was another "gut wrenching" day for me the day some of the letters I had written him came back to me stamped "Missing in Action". I do not now recall how I found out that John was a POW but did learn of his status very shortly thereafter.

I learned later that as soon as he was back in the states and given a furlough, John went to visit Mom and Dad. Mom wrote me saying that when she looked out the window and saw John coming up the walk she started crying because he had lost so much weight and he looked so poorly. She said he no longer walked or carried himself like the John she had known.

Sometime after the war was over John and I got together at which time I asked him about his time as a POW. John did not go into great detail as I recall, relating that they all suffered from the weather, lack of clothing, food, drink and medical supplies and the apprehension of not knowing what the Germans would do next. He said that toward the end of the war, the Germans marched them constantly every day to avoid the advancing armies. At night they were confined in barns, sheds or what ever was available. They suffered from exhaustion, thirst and hunger. He almost cried as he related how the will to survive practically turned the men into animals and they would fight over rotten potatoes they found under the floors of some of the barns, that he had himself engaged in that conduct and was filled with remorse even now. He said they all had lost so much weight, he from about 180 pounds to 103 when liberated, that they were taken to a hospital unit where they were forced to eat 6 meals a day. As a result of their ordeal most of them had incurred damage to their livers, kidneys, intestines and other organs. He said they were served six meals a day until they were furloughed in the states.

Recalling OCS is to remember close order drill in the mornings and afternoons, the hot days and nights with no fans,

the sand always gritty, the hot sun, crowding onto the benches in the trucks and large trailers used to transport us every day, sitting on the hard bleachers in the open with no protection from wind, rain or sun, day after day and week after week, the lukewarm liquid served with meals each day as there was no ice, returning to the barracks from the field and drinking the warm water from the fountains as there was no ice available, doing the pushups and chinning exercises every time we showered, and the constant watching of us by the tactical officers. By this time I knew most of the class work by heart and had read most of the manuals several times. One evening I was sitting on my bunk reading newspapers I had gotten from home that day. Lt. Peterson came on the floor and spoke with several men. When he came to me he said, "Are you so confident that you do not have to study for the test tomorrow". I explained to him that I was just taking a break for the moment so I stowed the papers and started studying my manuals. I fully realized that creating the wrong impression with the tactical officer could result in dismissal, so after that, anytime an officer, especially Lt. Peterson, came into the barracks, I had my notebook, clipboard and manuals out and was diligently working away. Lt Peterson would come in and see me, smile and make some conversational comment and leave. Of course, I had my newspapers and magazines under the covers. Reminds me of the advice in the story – always look busy. Carry a clipboard every where you go, make notes on it, and above all, act like you know where you are going and what you are doing. I knew that I must always give the impression of a good attitude and serious desire to survive OCS.

I was getting really desperate for a good cold drink that was not available in the company area or at the PX. There were only lukewarm drinks in the mess hall and from the fountains located in each barracks and the PX drinks were never cold.

When we learned that we were being sent to Fort Benning, a good friend and classmate insisted on giving me the name of his sister's best friend who resided in Columbus, Ga. They were classmates at an exclusive Eastern all girl college. He told me he would have his sister write to her friend to tell her who I was, that I would be attending OCS and that I might call her. After a few weeks, we were settled into the routine in OCS. We were

told that we could go into town (Columbus) but if we were ever caught in an off limits place we would be dismissed from OCS at once. We were given a list of off limit places that included the entire city across the river from Columbus, which was the infamous town called Phenix City, Alabama.

After a few weeks I called her and got a date for Saturday night. As I recall, I told Lt. Peterson all about it and he agreed it was all right to go to town. I had to catch a bus to Columbus and then take a city bus to her parent's home. I lucked out as she was a very nice girl and her family was friendly and caring. I cannot now recall their names. The cold ice tea and ice water, of which there was plenty, was heavenly. I was invited out every Sunday for dinner that was real southern fare and consisted of fried chicken, gravy, greens, potatoes or rice, hot biscuits, pie and ice tea. She had a small brother and sister, so each time I went to see her I took a bag of candy for them and they loved for me to come calling. I recall one Sat. night we went to a friend's house to a party and they played a lot of ping pong. She beat me every game we played. I enjoyed the company, food, cold drinks and was completely accepted by the family, as if I was a member of the family. I did not like catching the last city bus to downtown Columbus to catch a bus out to the Harmony Church area because several times I just made it in time. Also, I was concerned that the men in my platoon might think I was playing around and not serious about OCS and rate me down on the buddy sheet. (Knowing what was going on at buddy sheet time, this was a real concern). The situation became difficult to resolve as I did not want to hurt her feelings.

We had to wear an OCS patch on our shirts and jackets to identify our assignments. Any trouble with the MP's or anyone else for that matter was an automatic dismissal and you could kiss that commission goodbye. We were told to stay out of Phenix City, Ala. (It was the original sin city that was cleaned up by the National Guard after the war when the state attorney general was killed while visiting the city). The MP's were kept busy there with the soldiers from the Airborne Units and the Armored Units trying to show that each was better and meaner than the other. They had some real fights and knock down brawls over there. My date insisted one Sat. night that we go to Phenix City to get a drink. We took a bus over and went into

several clubs and had drinks and danced. I was worried about the MP's so I took off my OCS patch. We were left alone and no fights broke out so we took the bus back to Columbus without any problems. I did not want to go there again as it was not worth the risks involved. As I recall, the relationship was starting to get quite serious, so I decided to stay in camp on weekends and devote my time to getting through OCS. I called her the next week and gave some overnight exercise excuse. About a month later she called me at camp. I took some ribbing from the guys about her. I saw her once or twice before I left Benning but concentrated on the hectic last month of OCS.

About the 15th week I was called down to the company headquarters. I was told by 1st Sgt William Myrick that the Red Cross had called stating that my Dad had suffered a heart attack, was hospitalized and might not live for any length of time. They had been authorized to give me a ten day furlough to go home, however, the 1st Sgt explained that if I took the leave and was gone for over 2 1/2 days total time I would be out of OCS. I made a fast decision and told Sgt Myrick that if after 4 years of ROTC, 6 weeks of pre OCS and 15 weeks of OCS, it came down to a choice of my Dad or a commission, then my Dad came first and I wanted the furlough. I was given leave papers and returned to the barracks to pack. Emotionally I was very upset, but I called home first and was told that Dad was in the hospital and still unconscious, so then I decided definitely to leave, even if it cost me my commission in the army. I had not even given a thought to how I was going to get home as I did not have a lot of money. By this time most of my fellow OCS students in the Platoon had heard about Dad. I was standing by my bunk, as I recall, when a large group of them gathered around me with encouraging comments and offers of help. I recall Roger (Shorty) Hicks, Charles (Bud) Lawall (his dad was President of West.Virginia.University), Leland Hancock, Gard Huff, and many other guys, some who were not that close to me, and they all started reaching into their pockets and throwing bills and change on my bunk. They insisted that I take the money and fly home so I could get there as fast as possible. I almost wept as I was really touched by the real and sincere concern each of them had for me. Actually, I needed that money they contributed to enable me to fly home or it might have taken me days to do so. I called

and found out that I could get a plane out of Columbus that evening to Atlanta, and out of Atlanta for home the next morning early. Lt Peterson came in to talk with me and we had a very long private talk. He said he could not disagree with my decision and told me that he considered me to be one of his best students. He promised that if I missed over 3 days he would personally see that I was put into a class that had completed over 12 weeks so that I would graduate without losing too much time. He said that they (the officers) could arrange that for me, so go to see my Dad and not worry about OCS. I really appreciated the talk with him and his concern for dad and myself. I finally ended up catching a bus to Atlanta, checked into a hotel but had to share a room with three men I did not know. It was policy in those days to assign all space in hotels, even double beds. I caught a plane out of Atlanta early the next morning and arrived safely at home in the early afternoon. Dad was conscious and his condition was improving. He had severe damage to over 50% of his heart muscle. Since Dad was better and improving, after 4-5 days, he and the rest of the family insisted that I take the car and drive back to camp as they could do without the car. Since I was supposed to graduate in about 3 weeks and would get ten days leave before reporting to my new assignment, I could drive home and bring some of the guys from the area with me. I left on a Saturday afternoon, driving overnight and arrived in camp late Sunday afternoon. One incident on the way down happened late at night in Gastonia S.C. I made a wrong turn and ended up in a warehouse district and suddenly found myself surrounded by police cars. They demanded to know why I was in the area. Those guys were not too friendly and after what seemed like an eternity they showed me the route to take to get out of town. On my return to OCS I went back to my usual routine and continued with my training with the company as if nothing had happened. I reported in to the 1st Sgt on my return and neither he nor any of the officers said anything to indicate that my status had changed. Every one seemed happy over my return and I thanked them all again, on behalf of me and my family for their concerns and help.

Before I left home I went across the street and had a long talk with Mrs. Ridgeway who had lived there for many years. Often when I was in college, I would stop and have lengthy chats with

her when she was sitting on the front porch. She had worked with the Red Cross since WW I and was really dedicated to her service. She had left town to work many floods and other disasters in the past and she related many stories of her work. I was told that when Dad was unconscious, she called Col. Orton, her old friend, and after explaining the circumstances, she said to him, "Willie, you put Bill on a plane and send him home". That is obviously why I was immediately given a furlough.

Back in the company I continued training and no one made any comments about the time I had lost. Everything was just as it was before I took the leave home. About the middle of the 17th week 1st Sgt Myrick stopped me in the platoon area and said I had a problem. He said that he had just received the graduation list and my name was not on the list so he had checked on the order for new officer's uniforms and discovered that my uniform order had been canceled. I immediately sought out Lt Peterson and informed him of what the 1st Sgt had found out. Lt. Peterson was caught by complete surprise as he was not aware of any of this and I found myself starting to get real upset. He said he would talk to our commanding officer Capt. William Smith. I discussed the situation with some of my fellow candidates who were equally as surprised and many of them suggested that I place a call to Col Orton, which I planned to do if necessary. A while later Lt. Peterson told me that the Capt., who was not aware of this fact either, had checked at once and discovered that I had been dropped from the company rolls but could find no other actions taken on my status. I suggested to him that he recommend that Capt Smith call Col Orton for help in resolving the matter. A few hours later I was standing in the platoon area when I observed an OD staff car drive up and park in front of the company headquarters. Col Orton jumped out of the car and hurried into the headquarters almost at double time. About ten minutes later he hurried out the door, jumped into his waiting car and sped off so fast I did not get a chance to speak to him but could only wave to him. Shortly afterwards, Lt Peterson came to me in the barracks and informed me with a great big smile that I would graduate as scheduled and that a rush order had been placed to have my uniforms ready on time. He was very happy and pleased with the out come. He related that Col Orton had called a meeting of all the officers in the

company. When he arrived and the officers were all present, he requested that Capt Smith and Lt Peterson give him their opinions of Bill Gregory which he said were spoken as very favorable with recommendations for reinstatement in OCS. Col Orton then asked all the officers: "Does anyone here have any objections to Bill graduating with his class?" There were no objections, therefore, the Colonel ordered that I be reinstated at once with a rush order on my uniforms so I would have them for graduation. Of course, the official graduation list had to be reprinted to include my name. My fellow students had all expressed concern, so when they heard the news, they all came to congratulate me. Again, I felt great pride in them and how very fortunate I was to have such great comrades. Many of them had heard of Col Orton's help in my reinstatement. Unfortunately I never had a chance see him to thank him for his assistance. Yes, all that extra duty in advanced ROTC willingly performed had paid off, We Were Willie's boys from W. Va. Univ.

(An aside) Years later when John and I got together and were again discussing past events, we talked about our experiences and how distressed I was when he left OCS as I felt as though I had failed him in some way. He said he should have listened to the boys from W. Virginia University. . He told me that when he left the company Colonel Orton looked him up and had a long discussion with him. He said that the Colonel offered to get him into a program that would get him a commission, but he let "old pride and ego" get in the way because he had thanked him for his offer stating that he had 'made his bed and he would lie in it'. John said that many times after that he felt like kicking himself for refusing the Colonel's offer as he really wanted a commission and had invested a lot of past time into training for one. I agreed that he would have made a splendid officer.

Graduation morning came and I recall how happy we were in our uniforms waiting in formation to march to the ceremony for speeches and pinning on of our gold bars. It had taken years for us, but we had finally made it. The night before we were all relaxed and packing so we could leave camp as soon as the graduation was over. Oh, yes, we all remembered and sang 'My Wild Irish Rose' over and over. I forget who pinned on my bars. I was driving home as I had Dad's car and agreed to take five of the guys with me so we had loaded all our gear in the car early

in the morning. After the ceremony we took turns congratulating each other pinning on the gold bars, then we were served drinks and food, after which we all piled into the car and we were on our way home for ten days of leave. I do not now recall every one who made the trip home with me. Again, I drove overnight with help from the guys and arrived in Morgantown the next afternoon late. I recall one young man with us that I knew only from OCS. He had finished Greenbriar Military Academy and was a friend of one of the guys with us. We dropped him off at his home in southern W.Va very early in the morning at which time we met his widowed mother who thanked us for driving him home. Later, when I was in combat, I received information that he had been killed in action (KIA). It ruined my day (typical of most days were) as my heart went out to his mother who would soon be dealing with the pain of her loss, her only child. Others making the trip as I recall were Shorty Hicks, Bud Lawall, Leland Hancock, Fred White and possibly Jordon Papas.

As we traveled home we hit a RR track in Spartanburg, S.C., requiring us to completely unload the trunk to put on the spare and get the tire repaired. We just put it back in on top of everything. Also, I told them of my Uncle Dick and Aunt Pallie in Belmont, N.C. where I had spent the summers as a kid. Since it was only ten miles out of the way they insisted that I stop by and show them my new uniform. They were in bed and stayed there as we visited for about an hour. They were alone on the farm now as all the kids were gone and were very happy to see me, even for so short a visit.

My orders had been received at graduation transferring me from Ft. Benning to Camp Blanding, Florida, to report after ten days leave. On arriving home I found Dad was out of the hospital and recovering, however it was a year before he was able to work again. The people who owned the IGA grocery store a couple blocks from our home had a son stationed at Cp. Blanding and they had bought him a used Packard auto so he could get around at camp. They asked me if I would drive the car down for them accompanied by his mother and a friend and they would foot all the expenses of the trip. I was hesitant to do it but mom talked me into helping them by driving the car for them as it would also be convenient for me. My leave passed almost too fast as I hung out and visited with family and friends.

With leave over, we loaded up and set out for Florida with me driving the two ladies. We got into Charlotte, N.C. late and as they were tired, we spent the night in a hotel and continued on the next morning after breakfast. Traveling through Georgia, I was driving quite fast and was stopped by a Ga. State trooper. I convinced him that I was late reporting for duty and could be considered AWOL. He gave us a warning and let us continue on our way. After arriving at camp late in the afternoon, we picked up her son and they dropped me off at the incoming officers' section.

TRAINING SOLDIERS FOR COMBAT DUTY

A large number of our class had been assigned to Camp Blanding so I knew most of the officers that reported in with me. I was apprehensive as being an officer was a new experience and I knew I had to be tested. Camp Blanding was an old National Guard Camp with few permanent buildings which had been activated as an Infantry Replacement Training Center (IRTC) where the new incoming men were trained as infantry replacements for rifle, light and heavy weapons and Anti-Tank units. The training consisted of a 13 week course. The army had constructed buildings covered with tar paper, usually one building for ten men with two potbellied stoves in sand boxes and for officers the same only smaller housing 4 officers with a stove in the center. The boards in the units were not flush so the wind whistled through.

We were all assigned to a barracks on arrival and told that Gen. Fales, the C.O., had decided to institute a four weeks IRTC training course for officers. We all looked at each other in disbelief and there was, of course, a lot of griping. We were tired of schooling and wanted to get in the field. Another training course we did not need but since it was one week to Christmas we did not object too much. The weather was getting cold in Northern Florida, and it appeared we were stuck there over Christmas and New Years Day. We did get to go to Jacksonville a few times and stayed in a nice hotel frequented by infantry officers and men. The course we spent a month in was of all things: close order drill every morning for 30 minutes, physical training., classes and fieldwork. It was a complete rehash of all we had covered and posed no challenge for any of us. It did give us a chance to get acquainted with the training cycles, the camp and its activities, and the surrounding area. There were about 75,000 men stationed at Blanding and with the navy and air force there was probably in the neighborhood of 200,000 or more troops stationed in the area.

One quick story to demonstrate how naïve I was. Fred White

and I made arrangements to meet in Jacksonville as we were in different units and usually took different buses into town. The first one there got the hotel room and the second arrival got a bottle of spirits. The manager liked us and always had a room for us. One week we were together when we checked into the hotel. I noticed an attractive young lady watching us intently and called Fred's attention to her. Shortly afterwards, Fred was taking a shower and I was pouring us drinks when there was a knock on the door. I opened the door and there stood the young lady I had observed in the lobby. "How would you like to have a party" she asked me with a big smile. As I stood frozen in place trying to understand the situation she repeated the question. I still had not responded to her when Fred yelled from the shower, "For Pete's sake, ask her how much". So, I said "How much?" to which she replied, "One Hundred Dollars". I was stunned. That was a lot of money as I only made \$150 per month as a 2nd Lt with an added \$21.00 for rations. Fred let out a yell, "one hundred dollars?" to which she replied, that is only \$50 each and you can party as often as you like". Needless to say, it did not take us long before we sent her on her way looking for someone to pay that much for a one night party. As I thought about it, I felt a little foolish.

I ran around with my friend, Bob Brock, whenever we could get off at the same time, until he was transferred to the Panama Canal Zone, where he spent the rest of the war. Bob did not like to go into bars but preferred to hang out at the soda fountains in drug stores. I recall one night when we met two attractive young ladies at a soda place and had dates for the evening with them. As we walked around town, my date kept looking into store windows and telling me, "I would like to have that". I recall she made the request for candy, ear rings and a stuffed animal. Later when I took her home she gave me her telephone number and suggested I call her. I did call her later but she said she would not date me if I did not buy her the things she wanted as all the pilot Officers she dated bought her things and kept her happy. I told her that I did not earn the money they were paid and if my dating her depended on buying her presents, then, she could just forget that I called. That phone number was erased from my book in a hurry.

Since cold, damp and rainy weather had set in for that area

in Dec. we felt we were just as well off in the classroom even if we were bored to death. The food was not bad and the holidays were nearing. One weekend, Leland Hancock asked three of us to accompany him to St. Petersburg to visit his widowed mother who lived there. Since we were bored to death in camp, we decided to go with him and caught a train. In those days trains were crowded. This one was so full we had to stand in the vestibule of the rail car, all the way, going and returning and it took all night to make the trip. In those days the town was just a small place and we could walk to the outskirts of town carrying our bags. His mother had no room so we walked out of town to a motel where we spent the night sleeping on cots in the basement at no charge. The owner even provided showers. It was an interesting trip as I had never been to Florida before.

During this training we were not allowed to wear fatigues and had to wear our OD woolen shirts, trousers, ties and jackets. We were told that the officers could not wear fatigues at any time, not even in the field. Starting in the Spring, we wore cotton suntans and we had to have sufficient sets of suntans to last 15 days as it took 8 days for 7 sets to be laundered at the post laundry. I bought 16 sets of suntans and needed every set of them as we got very dirty in one day's time. In addition I went completely through two pairs of G.I shoes which I broke in by standing in the shower with them on and walking around in the water for periods of time.

The month training course was completed and I was assigned to an AT replacement battalion and to a company in the battalion. As I was driven to my assignment I felt a little lost, very much alone and nervous over adjustments that would have to be made. After all, our group of men was finally completely split up. I had been together with this fine group of men through four years of college and ROTC, pre OCS, OCS and post OCS and now I was totally alone and on my own. At that point, it was a scary thought. Only two of my friends were assigned to the same battalion, however, we rarely saw each other as we were very busy. Sometimes we could get off on weekends to go to Jacksonville on the bus. I often went into town with either Robert Brock or Fred White.

I was one of three of our group assigned to Anti-Tank training as all the rest went to rifle and weapons training units. I knew

nothing about AT guns except a little of the concept of tactical use. I had no manual on the guns or how to use them. It is difficult to describe my feelings as I reported to the Captain in that almost bare tar paper covered building on that cold dreary rainy day. Apprehensive I guess. The Captain was a pleasant but cool and distant man. He assigned me to a platoon but was of no help otherwise. I got a little help from the Executive Officer (EX O) and the other 2nd Lt.. The Sgts in the company were the most help as they gave me advice and made helpful suggestions. I obtained manuals on the 57 mm AT guns and studied them thoroughly. Working with the Non-commissioned officers I learned to take the gun apart, clean it, repair it and put it back together. The time I spent doing all this was not without reward as it became useful later.

I had difficulty becoming comfortable working with the Captain. For instance, the first day we had field training after I joined the company, we ate lunch in the field. The kitchen crew showed up and set out in a line the containers that kept the food warm. The men lined up with their mess gear and I started to get mine out when the Captain called me over to where he was standing. I was startled to see the kitchen crew setting up a table with white tablecloth, china, silverware and chairs. The Captain told me to sit at the table and eat my lunch as that was the way he dined in the field. He indicated that he was entitled to special privilege as the Captain. I was extremely uncomfortable eating before the entire company in this manner while they ate sitting on the ground. It reminded me of the caste system practiced in foreign armies in the past. At least once a week we went to the field and I had to eat with him. I never got use to it and I never enjoyed eating lunch with him. He ran his company himself, handled all the training himself, was a very unapproachable C.O. and indulged himself in the company as he wished. The whole AT Battalion was badly understaffed and I could not find anyone to buddy with. After several weeks we went on a 15 mile forced march over blacktop roads. A few days later my groin swelled so much that I went on sick call and when the doctor examined me, he put me into the base hospital. Tests revealed nothing so the medics decided that since I had received a bad blow to the groin during training, the bruise from the blow had been aggravated by the hard march causing the swelling. I

was in the hospital about five days during which time the Captain came to see me and asked me a series of questions that gave me the impression that he thought that I was goldbricking. I told him if he had any questions to talk to the doctors and check the records. At any rate a few days later I was transferred to an infantry Battalion training new men as replacements for rifle companies and training on light machine guns and mortars. I reported to the company and for the first time at Camp Blanding, I felt at ease and more at home in the army.

I immediately became totally involved in the day to day training of the men and at the same time became more confident in my own ability. I had been on several forced marches with the men and I knew first hand how many of them had foot problems due to poor fitting boots and I had brought it to the Captains attention with my recommendations. He advised me 'not to rock the boat' and to 'let it go'. Shortly afterwards, the company was on the rifle range and I was in charge of a section of the range (I was giving rear area instruction to men not involved on the range). Without warning Gen. Fales, the base C.O. approached our area and I reported to the general as we were instructed to do. He walked around the range asking me questions that I answered. As he was leaving, the General turned and asked me if there were any problems he should know about. I immediately told him of the problem with many of the men in the company who had been issued boots that did not fit, causing severe foot problems that affected their ability to soldier and that many would end up in the hospital. The Generals aide was taking notes furiously. The General walked around asking men questions about their feet, how well their boots fit, and circumstances of when and where and how their boots were issued. He then told me not to worry as the men would be taken care of and he turned and issued instructions to his aide that I could not hear. That afternoon two large trucks completely filled with the high top GI shoes arrived on the range. Any soldier on the range that desired was accurately measured for shoes and had the shoes fitted on them by experienced men. Most of the men were measured and obtained new shoes and express openly to me how much they appreciated my sticking my neck out for them. Of course, I caught 'Hell' from the Captain that evening but even that was muted as the General had ordered

the shoes for the men.

One day I was working on the firing line when a Sgt told me that a soldier was having trouble firing the rifle. I spoke with the soldier and lay down beside him getting forward to a position where I could see his eyes, as he fired the rifle, to observe if he was flinching.. I soon realized that he was afraid of the rifle but I continued to try to talk him through firing it. When he fired the M1 he closed his eyes and yanked the trigger thereby depressing the muzzle of the gun and when it fired the bullet hit in the dirt about a foot or so in front of me. I was really shook up from the noise, concussion and dirt thrown up by the shot. I had the soldier removed from the line for safety reasons and referred him for investigation. I was told that he later received a Section 8 discharge as unfit for mental reasons. I had one soldier in my platoon with an IQ of 50 and they put pressure on me to Section 8 him out of the service but he was very likable and was really trying hard to acclimate and learn so I refused and he finished the course.

I got along well enough with this Captain as I handled a lot of the training of the men by myself. Since Dad was not able to work, they decided to drive to Florida for a visit. I got them a room at the base guest house and got them settled in their room when they arrived. On Friday morning they drove over to where I was conducting PT for the company and I introduced them to the Captain. He insisted that I take off at once and take Mom and Dad to St. Augustine for the weekend. He was very considerate of Mom and Dad, so I changed clothes and we took off. We had a very relaxing weekend seeing the old city, the old forts and taking pictures. One night as we were driving on a two lane road a speeding car sideswiped us and took off. I chased the car but could not catch it. The car was damaged but fortunately we were not hurt. I arranged for them to eat in the Regimental mess with me for many meals while they were visiting. Mom finally agreed with me that pork three times a day was a little suspicious what with all the wild porkers running in the woods.

Since I was getting along very well with the Captain and my work had been acceptable, I was completely surprised when I received orders transferring me to a company that trained men as replacements for light and heavy weapons companies. We

trained on light and heavy 30 cal. Machine guns and on 60 and 81 mm mortars.

One thing that happened in this company illustrated the perils of a young single Officer. Four officers were in the company, including myself, and the rule was that each officer had to take his turn at weekend duty officer that would result in each Officer pulling duty officer about once a month. The DO had to check the company area, be present in the company area or in quarters the entire weekend, eat all meals in the company mess and handle any incoming calls or problems. The other three officers were married and had their wives off post. Each weekend I was posted as the duty officer and soon four weeks had passed. When the Captain posted the duty roster for the fifth week, I was listed as DO. I took the list to him and explained politely that I had been the DO for four straight weekends and I needed time off. He replied that they were married and I was single and surely since I had no place to go I should let them be with their wives. I responded that if I was duty officer this weekend he could reach me at the Hotel Seminole in Jacksonville. I guess he thought I was kidding but promptly at noon on Sat. I caught the bus for town. I was at a Supper club on Sunday night and I missed the last bus back to camp so I had to stay overnight and take the 5am bus back. I forgot the company was moving out early and while walking down the black top I passed the company, led by the Captain, marching in the rain that was pouring down. I was soaking wet, with a hang-over, so I went to my quarters to dry off. The ExO came in and suggested that I join the company as soon as possible to help the Captain with the training as he, the Captain, was willing to forget the entire matter. I dressed and went to the training area in a jeep the ExO sent for me. I spent a miserable day in the wet woods training the men all day in the rain with no hot coffee and only C rations to eat. I am sure the men were just as miserable as I was and, Oh yes, the Captain never mentioned my leaving camp or getting back late. After that I only took OD for someone else if they asked and I wanted to do so.

One weekend when I was DO I left my quarters and walked into the company area where I observed two of the men fighting while a large group of the men surrounded them. I moved in to break up the fight (big mistake) ordering them to cease fighting

as I tried to move between them. They both turned on me and I realized they were both very drunk. One became belligerent and began arguing with me. I realized at that point that I was fast being put in the position of having to court martial two or more men. Realizing the predicament I faced, a smart Sgt stepped forward and ask, "Would the Lt leave the company area for awhile and not make a report on this incident if we (the NCOs) handle this matter to the satisfaction of the Lt.?" Given the opportunity to save face and avoid a court martial I quickly replied, "Thank you Sgt. Take over" and I left the company area and returned to my quarters. I understand that those guys got knocked around some but there were no more fights in the company. Being DO was a miserable job because added to all the problems of the company and the men was all the phone calls I had to take from parents of the soldiers. I tried to answer their requests (some impossible) and act as a father confessor and mediator. I recall one day we were in the field and one soldier asked if he could speak to me alone. I could see that he was troubled so I talked with him. He related that he had his wife visiting for two weeks. He got permission to leave camp the night before and found his wife in bed with a sailor. He had two children and he asked me if he should divorce his wife. By now, with troubles of hundreds of new men in camp, I felt like I was a chaplain as men constantly ask me for advice or to solve problems for them. I could see this man was miserable and unhappy. We had a very long talk and he agreed with me that his wife was the only one who could raise the children while he was away in the army. I suggested and he agreed that he should send her home that evening and wait until after the war to assess him feelings and whether he could continue the marriage. He seemed relieved with our determination.

On certain days at Camp Blanding every unit had to go on C rations for the entire day whether they were in camp or in the field and we could not build fires or use stoves to heat the rations. One day my company was out in the field and as usual it was a cold rainy day. I was sent back into camp for some supplies and while waiting for them I decided to slip into the Regimental Mess and partake of a couple cups of coffee from their every ready pot. As I started in the door I ran smack dab into the Regimental Commander. He looked at me and said,

"You are suppose to be on Cs today". I replied that I just wanted a warm cup of coffee, and anyhow, I had been raised during the depression and I could assure him that I did not have to practice to learn how to do without. He got a laugh out of that but would not relent so I returned to the field and the rain without any coffee.

In the new company area we lived in the four man shacks covered with tarpaper across the road from the company buildings. The pot bellied stove sat in the middle in a sandbox with the pipe through the roof. There was just enough room to sit on the cot so when the cold wind blew, the knees roasted and the back froze. An orderly kept the stove supplied with fuel. The showers and toilets were in a building at the end of the row so it was a cold hike when they were used. The men lived across the road in larger shacks with the same set up. The company buildings with mess hall were in front of the living area.

The last company I was in was the most interesting because now I could see the whole operation of the training cycle. I reported between classes and helped clean up and get the company area ready for the next class of the 300 men per company. The men arrived on troop trains directly from the induction centers just a few days after the men were inducted. Once they got off the train they were lined up in formations and ordered to count off into groups of 50. Each Lt then took charge of a group of 50 men and marched them to the company area where with the help of the platoon Sgt the men were briefed on schedules to be followed and what training they would be getting and when. There were 300 new men in six platoons of 50 men each. We were short on officers so I was the only training officer in this company. The same situation existed in the company across the street from us, so the Lt. in charge of training and I struck a deal since we had the same training schedule. We combined the men into a class of 600 men and he instructed for half the training while I studied and prepared to give the other half of the training. We could also have time to insure that all NCOs' were used to the fullest extent. I felt close to this group as I was with them from the start of their training.

I really felt sorry for them at times. For instance, we would come in about eleven p.m. after a full day of training in the rain and mud, firing machine gun exercises. We always marched in

and formed up for last minute instructions. The Captain would come out, give instructions and often told the men to fall out in clean fatigue uniforms in the morning. I had extra clean sets of clothes but the men did not, so late at night they took showers in their uniforms to get them clean and tried to get them dry overnight. This type order was not unusual. Most of the men in my company came from Tenn. KY or W.Virginia and they were an independent group of souls. Just getting them indoctrinated into the army discipline required constant supervision. One day we were on the rifle range and as usual I was giving the required rear area instruction to the men not involved in firing at the time. After about an hour of instruction I asked one of the men, from KY, a question as he was not paying attention and his mind seemed elsewhere. The soldier responded, "The Lt is young and handsome and must have a lot of girls in town. Can the Lt tell me where I can get a girl in town on Saturday?" All the men laughed and looked at me to see how I would respond. I had learned by this time to always think out a situation and never 'fire back a response' to any soldier as the situation could escalate. Looking at the class, I informed him that my list of girls was strictly confidential and he would to operate on his own without my help and if he did not pay attention, I might scrub his weekend and he would not have to worry about it. He laughed at my response as did the entire class and with everyone at ease the class continued.

Another day we were on the firing range and after the day was finished we marched back to the company. Before we left the range all rifles were cleared by me personally by having all the men open the bolts and after I ran a cleaning rod through the rifle the bolt was closed and the rifle secured. I then knew that all the rifles were empty. I marched the men into the company area and when they were formed up I turned the formation over to the field Sgt to give them instructions before he dismissed them, then I went into the mess hall for a cup of coffee. I was looking out the mess hall window down the first row of the formation when the Sgt gave the instruction 'inspection arms' and all the rifles came up to port arms and the bolts were opened. Then he gave the command 'Order Arms' and horrified I saw a puff of smoke and fire issue from a file in the ranks followed by the bang of a rifle discharging. I then saw a man in the ranks crumple and fall to

the ground. Fearing the worst the other Lt, who was having coffee with me, actually ran right through the screen door of the mess hall as we ran out to aid the man. At the same time, the Captain and Ex O came running and yelling from the orderly room having observed the incident. I could see big trouble ahead for me if a soldier was shot. NCOs came running from every side. I fully expected to find a dead soldier on the ground, shot in ranks. The training Sgt got there first, seized the rifle that fired and was administering to the man down. The men in the company were gathering around and the situation was becoming scary and tense. Our man turned out to be very much alive 'Glory Be' amid audible sighs of relief. He had merely blacked out from the muzzle blast and appeared to be all right. An immediate meeting was held in the CO's office and all officers and NCOs involved concurred that I had definitely cleared every rifle before we left the range. We could only conclude that one of the men, as a lark, had kept a bullet and slipped it into that soldier's rifle during the march home. We always marched with the bolts open as added precaution. If this was a lark, it was one with potentially deadly consequences and it really shook up the men in the company and was a good safety lesson for them. Of course, no one would admit to doing the deed or having seen any one do it.

We trained mainly on light 60 mm mortars learning every thing about them. One day after class work was finished we put the company into the bleachers for a firing demonstration to illustrate what they had learned. A mortar was set up back of the bleachers and was being aimed and fired by experienced NCOs. The demo proceeded showing methods of combat firing namely: ladder bracket , over and under, area search, point firing, and also, due to the range of the firing they could hear the rounds and watch the explosions when they hit the ground. As a Sgt was firing a fixed search of 6 rounds, the Sgt observing the fire screamed, "short round" at which time the men scrambled to get out of the bleachers and hit the ground. The Sgt's cry meant the round had come out of the barrel tumbling and could land anywhere, even on top of us. The sound the round makes is unmistakable once you have heard it. And worse, we had two short rounds out of six fired in the air at one time. Fortunately both rounds landed over 100 yards downrange. The company

was shook up but learned that not every round fired goes as planned.

Some of the problems with training in Florida in 1943 were the swamps, pine trees and wild pigs. The wild pigs were every where in the woods and they were "mean as sin" but they were great for mortar practice for the men. Our ranges were just open lanes cut in the pine forests giving a field of fire of several hundred yards. The trainees in gun crews trained on the ranges and became highly competitive. On the mortar range they set up their guns and waited for a wild pig to come onto the range. Then they had to determine the range, decide how to fire and fire the rounds to try and hit the pig. They never had long to wait for a target to appear, and even with several crews firing they did not get many pigs. It was good training and experience for them. (Today there probably would be demonstrators on the range to stop the firing and protect the wild pigs).

During our training we had to learn how to use explosives and practice using live explosives. We used blocks of material that contained TNT (we did not have plastic explosives in those days). The blocks of TNT came in different sizes and had a hole in the center where one had to insert the detonator. To prepare the detonator one had to secure the fuse for the time he wanted to set for detonation, then he had to crimp that fuse into the detonator after which he inserted the detonator into the block of TNT and taped it securely. After that one could light the fuse and it would detonate depending on the timing of the fuse, say, five seconds, ten seconds or longer as desired. We would follow this procedure as we practiced and part of the time we used a five second fuse on a quarter pound block and threw it as if it was a rock or grenade. This was extremely dangerous especially in dealing with the detonator and the TNT, both being somewhat unstable. The detonator was sensitive to heat and jarring so one had to be careful in handling it. The detonator was a pencil size copper like tube about one inch long and we had several men have crippling injuries to their hands when the detonators exploded in their hands. Also, one friend of mine from college had the quarter pound explosive go off in his hand causing him to lose his arm and some vision. I was extremely anxious to complete that training and move on to something else.

Toward the end of the training cycle, I was assigned by

Battalion to operate the live hand grenade range for a week where the men practiced throwing the live grenades at targets. Before we went on the range, I personally gave them intense instruction on how to handle live grenades. I emphasized that when you pulled the pin to throw a grenade you put the ring holding the pin on the ring finger and kept it available to deactivate the grenade if necessary and I repeated over and over what action to take if a live grenade landed near them. I lectured and gave demonstrations to explain and prove that in an emergency they could throw a grenade further in five seconds (time it takes to explode) than they could run in that time. To emphasize my point I devised a demonstration. I had a slit trench dug in the rear area which I said was dug to show them how to throw a grenade from a trench. I was assisted by a Sgt who was present with me at all times. Live grenades came in a round cardboard container sealed with yellow tape. I took one, and in the presence of two Sgts I opened it and then unscrewed the top of the grenade, pouring out all the powder but leaving the fuse intact. I then screwed the top back on the grenade, replaced it in its container and resealed it with the yellow tape. I then stuck it in my shirt in the Sgts presence. This was so both could observe me at all time and make sure the grenade was never switched. (I realized this was a dangerous way to make a lasting point but felt it might save lives in war) As I finished preparing the men to go on the live range, I stood in front of them to show them a live grenade, at which time I took the live grenade from my shirt explaining how the container looked, color of it and the yellow tape sealing it. I then removed the tape and took out the grenade showing it to them and its color and construction. I then removed the pin explaining again that you could not out run a grenade but could throw it quicker, then on the pretext of inserting the pin to deactivate the grenade I purposely dropped the grenade. Immediately the Sgts and I jumped into the slit trench to all appearances leaving a live grenade rolling among the class. Bedlam ensued as the men screamed, yelled and scrambled for cover, some barely moving before the primer exploded with a loud bang. Net result, three men injured and a group of really scared soldiers who had a point driven home with a bang. My points were well made, but after a few days word circulated and the demo was not the

surprise the first one had been.

The grenade range had six pits in a line from which to throw grenades at targets on the open ground to the front. I had a station above ground behind stacks of sandbags and just in front of the pits so I could see down into them with three pits on each side. A Sgt was in each pit and went over the procedure with each soldier again before they threw the grenades. As the men in the pits threw their live grenades, on command, I had to quickly observe where each landed and if any grenade did not explode I had to plot it on a chart in front of me. The soldiers were constantly instructed if they dropped a grenade to pick it up and throw it. Amazing to me, several soldiers did get excited and drop the live grenades, with pin removed, as they tried to throw it. In every case, either the man or the Sgt. grabbed it and tossed it out of the pit. One day a soldier in throwing his grenade somehow hit the lip of the pit and the grenade fell back into the pit. I was watching this soldier in particular for some reason and could not believe what I saw next. The Sgt dived for the loose grenade and the excited soldier fell on it. During the next five seconds my mind envisioned many things all unpleasant as I screamed at the Sgt to get it. The Sgt bodily tossed the man aside and flipped grenade, which landed on the forward edge of the pit and exploded. I was busy hitting the dirt when it exploded. Fortunately, no one was hurt, however I earned my pay that day as did a very shaken Sgt. While the men were marching back to camp I had to take my chart of all unexploded grenades, locate each one, pick it up and jam the striker, unscrew the top and pour out the powder, replace the top, rearm the striker and throw it out and let the primer explode thereby rendering the grenade harmless. Any grenade I approached could have exploded at any time, but if the powder train ignited as I picked it up, I still had five seconds to throw it and hit the ground. Some guys did have grenades activate when disturbed. It was highly dangerous work and to say I was very tense and nervous doing it would be an understatement. A sigh of relief was audible from those left behind to clean the range when the "all clear" signal was given and the red flag was hauled down and we all rode a truck back to camp. On the last day I was in charge of the grenade range, when I arrived in the company area, I was accosted by a very mad Company Commander. In

a very loud voice in front of the men the Captain demanded to know where I had been. I explained I had been assigned to the grenade range by the Battalion and the Ex O knew of that fact. He would not listen and proceeded to chew me out in front of the entire company for several minutes in a loud and profane voice. I made no comments but let him finish and left to finish my work. That completely changed my feelings and relationship with the Captain for the remainder of my time in the company. He later called me to his office and tried to apologize but as I told him, he had embarrassed me in front of an entire company. I was the only training officer for the entire company. The CO and the Ex O seldom came out when we were in the field training or on exercises leaving me to handle it with the NCOs. Shortly afterward we had a new 2nd Lt assigned and I was really happy as he was a fine officer. He was a great big guy and the men had no trouble saying 'Yes Sir' to him.

As part of our training we had one or two forced marches each week starting with three miles the first week and ending with twenty-five miles the last week. We had one soldier who fell out of ranks on every march, stating that his feet hurt and he wanted a ride to camp. Being concerned for the man, I had personally taken him to the hospital twice for examinations with X-rays but nothing could be found wrong. I even had his feet measured for shoes to make sure he had the right size and had his shoes checked out by experts to make sure they had no defects. No problems or faults could be found, yet he continued to complain and drop out of marches. Our new Lt ask me to let him take the company on the next march and I was glad to oblige as I had lots of work. Later I was told the soldier had fallen out of the march as usual and a Sgt took the company as the Lt stayed with the man. It was stated that he fell over an embankment and injured himself requiring first aid. The soldier went to the Chaplain and the Post Inspector but got nowhere. The Chaplain did come over to the company and talk to me about it. He was told it was just an accident. At any rate, the soldier never fell out of ranks during any march after that time.

As we neared the end of the course we were required to go into the field for several days at which time we had some class work, numerous field tactical problems and ended it all with an assault exercise using live ammunition. The first day in the field

we set up in platoon areas, the kitchen was set up in a separate area, as was the supply unit. The afternoon was devoted to hours of class instruction and discussion, then time out for supper followed by a night tactical exercise. I was the only officer with the company as the other Lt had been delayed somewhere. I was giving instruction on field hygiene, field sanitation and related subjects. The Captain and Ex O had no intention of staying in the field and came out for about 15 minutes each day. My best field Sgt came to me, just before we started class, and asked that I allow him and three other NCOs to go into town for a few hours. They were not needed for the class work, and they promised to be back in the area in time for the night exercise. I told him that they could go if they agreed to stay out of trouble and get back by the agreed time. (How totally dumb I was).

Due to the number of wild pigs in the woods, we had to leave one guard in each platoon area to prevent the pigs from destroying the tents, bedrolls and everything else in sight. Even with one guard per platoon they were kept busy chasing off the wild pigs and occasionally there was a nasty confrontation with a determined pig, especially a wild boar. That evening as the men marched back into the company area we observed the guards busy chasing pigs. One soldier was chasing a pig and suddenly he pulled his bayonet from the scabbard and threw it at the pig. It was a tremendous throw and it stuck into the pigs side. All the men began hollering at the guard to get his bayonet back or he would have to pay for it. It was good for a relaxing laugh to see that pig disappearing in the distance with the guard yelling and chasing after it. Another company later retrieved his bayonet from the pig.

While the troops were relaxing after supper I located a good area in which to operate and wrote a night problem to fit the terrain. I returned to the company and briefed the NCOs on the night exercise. I was uneasy because the four had not returned from town and I was short handed however we successfully ran the problem without them. Very late that night the other 2nd Lt arrived with my four missing NCOs in tow. The story related was, they went into town and started drinking beer and whiskey. Late in the afternoon they got into an argument with a group of civilians and my top Sgt hit a man in the face with his steel

helmet knocking him out. They were picked up by the MPs and returned to camp where the Lt got them released. I had a few unkind words for those contrite NCOs and some restrictions with some nasty extra duty.

The Captain showed up the next day and asked me, "What the hell is going on out here". I told him that I had made a mistake and trusted the wrong men and would not make the same mistake again. He did not pursue the matter and informed me that the Inspector General's men from the Fifth Corps would be in the field all afternoon during the tactical problem to grade the company. I told him that I had been the only officer with the company for a day and had been too busy to locate an area and write a problem. He got upset but cooled down and ask me to go write a problem. I was really getting peeved at the lack of help, but I located a good area and wrote up a tactical defense problem to fit the terrain. Later the men took their positions and set up their weapons. During the conduct of the tactical problem, I observed the IG's men running around with their pens and clipboards. From my own observations I could see that the men had set up some of the machine guns in positions where they would have fired into banks if used and some of the mortars had been set up under trees and would not have been safe to fire. I just left all the positions as they were set up. That night the Captain showed up in his jeep with his bedroll obviously to spend the night in the field with us. After supper he took me aside and confided that the company had failed the IG inspection badly and he could be transferred because of it. He said he had talked with the IG's men and they were willing to give us another chance and he wanted to know if I could write an exercise on short notice that would get us a passing grade. I told him I was very tired and it would take all the remaining daylight to try to do it. He was very pleasant and told me that he knew that I wanted to be transferred out of IRTC to a Division and if we passed the problem he would personally see that I got a routine transfer out of Camp Blanding to a Division. We shook hands and I wrote an exercise that the company passed with an excellent grade because this time I had the total cooperation of all the NCOs. The next morning the Captain was vocal in the praise he heaped on all of us.

The final problem involved the company attacking up a hill

through smoke and simulated shell bursts in which the company used live ammo to fire at targets ahead. Like a greenhorn I got out in front of the company about 25 feet leading the assault on the hill. We would charge a short distance then hit the ground and fire and repeat the assault. About halfway up the hill we charged and then I hit the dirt and as I did I heard a rifle fire and a bullet hit about three feet to the left of my left hand. I spun around pointing my carbine in the direction of the men behind me. Several men yell that it was an accidental shot but I waved them on past me up the hill and followed them up. After all, I had been pushing them hard for three months, but having no reason not to believe the men who said it was an accidental shot, I did not pursue the matter.

One night while on bivouac I was lying in my pup tent after dark (in the woods) writing a letter home using my flashlight. My tent was next to the platoon area where the men had their tents positioned. As I wrote there arose a loud piercing blood curdling scream from the dark tent area. It really was the type scream that caused the heart to beat faster and sends chills running up and down the spine. I immediately crawled out of the pup tent just in time to see, by the moonlight, a nearby pup tent go straight up into the air accompanied by more blood curdling screams. Some of the men rushed to the site as the tent collapsed and pulled the two men out. The story as told by one of the men kept the company laughing for days. It seems that one of the two men had gotten a package from home that day that contained many things including candles and a large box of salted peanuts. When they retired, the two tent mates set the box of peanuts on the ground at their heads as they lay down in the tent to read by candle light. They would reach back over their heads and get a handful of peanuts to eat as they lay there reading. Unknown to the two men a wild boar had stuck his head in from the top end of the tent and was eating peanuts from the other end of the box. About this time our recipient of the goodies reached over his head to get peanuts and instead he grasped the tusk of a very big and startled wild boar. The frightened boar immediately exploded into action leaping high into the air taking the soldier and tent with him. The man, frightened out of his wits, started screaming and was joined by his tent mate as they tried to get out of the uprooted tent. The

boar, his meal interrupted, took off knocking down several other tents as he made his frantic retreat.

THE CENTURY DIVISION

Three days after returning from the field I met with the Captain who was all smiles as he handed me a transfer to the 100th Division at Fort Bragg, N. C., which included a 10 day leave in route to Bragg. He thanked me again for my work in the company and I thanked him for pushing the transfer through for me.

Being on transfer I would not be able to finish the cycle with the men but continued my duties as I performed the check offs necessary to clear the post. One day as I was teaching a map reading course, one of the best soldiers in the company engaged me in conversation. He said that he lived in Raleigh, N.C and he was the county engineer there. He knew of my transfer and insisted that I call his family in Raleigh and go to visit them for a weekend. He gave me his address and his phone number there and said he would call his wife and alert her to invite me for the weekend when I called.

The day arrived when I had cleared all administrative checks and was able to leave. I packed my footlocker and took it to the train station where I shipped it to Bragg. That evening I caught a bus to Jacksonville to catch the evening train to Washington, D.C. I knew that the train would be very crowded, possibly with standing room only. It was suggested that I tip the porter \$5 when I inquired about a seat. I did exactly that and the porter directed me to a reserved arm chair type seat in the club car which I had all the way to Washington.

Once in Washington since I had to wait for the train to W VA I decided to take a walk around the Union Station area. I had not walked two blocks when I came upon two women having a real knock down brawl in the street. I watched for awhile but as the crowd grew larger and unruly I decided to get out of there and did so. Later as I walked around I met a very well dressed man. We engaged in conversation for awhile during which time he invited me to a party, however I had to decline his invitation since I had to catch the train for home. He gave me his card, he was a Congressman, and suggested that I call him any time he might be of assistance to me.

I noticed a couple of WACs in the club car during the trip to Washington. Some of the soldiers on the train plied them with drinks and I could see that they were getting quite drunk. When we arrived in Washington the MPs had to escort them off the train. I felt sorry for them as I am sure the MPs made a report on them. MPs rode all the trains during war time and they would be all over you if only one button was unbuttoned.

I had a very good vacation at home for 10 days. Mom and Dad were managing an Inn in Arthurdale during this time and I stayed in the Inn with them and Dad took me down to tour the plant that made gliders in Arthurdale. We went into Morgantown often as they still had their house there at 310 Second St. Once my leave was over, Dad drove me to Grafton where I caught a train for Ft. Bragg.

When I reported in at the 100th Div headquarters at Fort Bragg, N.C. I was ushered in to the office of Major General Withers A. Burrese the Commanding Officer. After interviewing me about my schooling and experience, he pointed to a large organizational chart on the wall and stated that there were lots of assignments available in the division and that I could have my pick. He suggested that I consider the Anti-tank platoon in the division headquarters company. Obviously, from the standpoint of contacts and advancement I should have taken his suggestion. Instead, I declined and said that I would prefer to be assigned to a unit of the line. He was very understanding and said, "I will assign you to my very best unit and best commander. Report to Colonel Andrew C. Tychsen. You will be serving with a fine C.O". I reported to 399th Infantry Regiment headquarters and met with Col. Tychsen, the regimental commander. He also showed me an organizational chart on the wall that had over half the assignments shown as blank. He told me to take my choice of rifle company, heavy weapons company, service, cannon or AT company. I picked the Regimental AT Company. I cannot recall now why I picked that unit unless I was beginning to get a little wiser as it turned out to be an excellent choice. When I reported in at the company headquarters building, the first officer I met was Lt. Franklin K. Pierce who was about my age and he just reported in the day before me. My assignment to the company left one officer vacancy. I met later with Captain Edgar Fenstermacher the CO

and Lt. George Blair the ExO. The Captain assigned me as Platoon leader of the Second Platoon. Lt. Pierce commanded the 1st Plat., me the second, 3rd was filled later, and Lt. Curtis commanded the mine platoon. He was much older than the rest of us and we officers who worked with him called him Pop. 1st Lt. Donald Gilbert was our senior field officer. I liked and respected all these officers and got along very well with them. We all were with the company from that time until the end of the war in Europe.

The Division had just been stripped of over 50% of its complement of officers and men who were sent overseas to combat as replacements and myself and others were transferred in to replace them. I was one of the early replacements. The company was just nearing full strength and every one was familiarizing themselves with the equipment, weapon, PX, Regimental Area and the Post prior to beginning a training course. Frank Pierce and I were by far the youngest officers in age and rank in the company. We were assigned the job of giving all instruction and training to the men. None of the other Lts, NCOs or men in the company knew anything about AT guns. None of them knew how to take one apart and put it back together, so I knew that we had a major job ahead of us which had to be accomplished in a short period of time. Frank and I discussed the situation and reached an agreement: I would teach all the tactical operation, actual firing of the gun, care and cleaning, repair, and so forth, and he would teach all other subjects of which there were plenty. The NCOs and men were very surprised at my knowledge of the gun, especially the first time I took one completely apart and put it back together, however I taught them and they learned, including Frank.

The layout of the Regimental area was as follows: a paved road ran through the area., fronting the road in a row was the Colonel's bungalow, the Officers quarters and the Regimental Mess. Behind was a large open parade ground and on the other side the Regimental Units were lined up. I lived in the Officers quarters which was the typical two story white frame bldg with furnace at one end and the toilets and showers at the other end on the first floor. The building did have a large room on the first floor that served as a recreation and visitors room. The building was divided into separate rooms for two and I occupied one

room by myself for a long time and then a 2nd Lt was assigned to the Company and to my room. The room had a cot on each side with foot locker at the foot of the bed and a place to hang clothes. There was also a small desk and chair in the room.

The Lt. was a nice guy but he was extremely sloppy. He was married and had his wife with him in Fayetteville so he left for town every night and for any weekend that he could get away. When we came in from work he would remove his clothes, shower, dress and leave the post. He left his clothes lying on the floor where he threw them and they would stay scattered all over the floor until I picked them up or he sent them to be laundered. I tried to explain to him that I lived in the room all the time and would appreciate his cooperation in keeping the room orderly but he continued to throw his dirty clothes every where about the room. Captain Fenstermacher thought I was overstating the problem but after inspecting the room at my request, he ordered the Lt. to keep his clothes picked up and to keep the room clean. We got along better after that episode. The Lt.'s wife was a real nice individual but she was quite large and very heavy. The ladies of the officers in the regiment had their own social affairs and there was an occasional dance. Some of the officers contrived to inform the Lt. that his wife was not welcome at the ladies affairs or the dances for reasons I did not know or do not recall. The Lt. was really upset and my heart went out to him, however the officers and ladies made fun of her whenever she was around and it was quite embarrassing for me as I had to work with him.

Fort Bragg being a permanent army post was like heaven compared to Camp Blanding. The small area PXs' were brighter, cleaner and much nicer to frequent. There were places to go on the post, a lake nearby and numerous movie theaters including one in our area. Fayetteville was near by with many nice restaurants but some of them refused service to soldiers. Most of the time I was at Bragg, it was hot and dusty and cold drinks were still hard to obtain. Shortly after I got there I learned that my cousin Earl Belt, Aunt Pallie's grandson, was assigned to the artillery school at Bragg. I went over to the school, as soon as I could get away, to visit him as I had not seen him for several years. We visited several times but he was finishing the school and was soon transferred out.

There was also a difference in belonging. At Blanding everything was transient. The officers were temporary and the men were transferred mostly as replacements in combat as soon as they finished the training course, therefore, there were few friendships formed. In the division we were training for combat, a very serious future for all of us. Friendships and relationships were much more caring, permanent, and fulfilling. There was a purpose and identity and everyone worked together toward a common goal. Little things meant a lot to us. I recall the meals in the regimental mess hall as very satisfying especially on Sunday nights. Desert was always a large ripe very sweet cantaloupe filled to overflowing with ice cream. There was an area theater nearby and Frank and I went to movies there quite often. Not your average movie theater, mind you, as the seats were wooden benches with no backs located in a one story frame building with very few fans to move the air. The movie cost 5 cents and the popcorn cost 10 cents so Frank and I used to flip a coin to decide who paid for what. Oh – such excitement on an army post on a hot summer evening.

I actually spent a lot of weekends away from camp when I could get off. I was fortunate to have many relatives in N.C that I could visit. I wrote a letter to the wife of the soldier from Blanding who wanted me to visit his family. She wrote back inviting me to visit for a weekend, so I went to Raleigh and took a cab out to their home. As the cab got to the outskirts of the town, I realized that we were entering a very exclusive residential area. And soon we pulled up in front of the typical two story white southern ante-bellum home. There was a large swimming pool, tennis courts and tended gardens. The family was very friendly and went to great lengths to make my visit an enjoyable one. His daughter, about 20 years of age, invited in many of her friends on Saturday night for a party to introduce me around. Also, the meals they served were excellent. I have to admit that I was very uncomfortable with all the attention and the luxury to which they were accustomed and at ease with it. I tried to mingle with the guests at the party but most of them were real Snobs, however a few really attempted to be friendly. They were out of my class, however, and I did not want to get involved with all of them, so I found many reasons to decline other invitations offered. She even called me at camp once to invite me for the

weekend, but I declined her offer as I had to go to the field on exercises.

Several times Frank and I went to Raleigh for the weekend and we usually ate breakfast in our hotel coffee shop. One morning we ordered breakfast and the waitress served us a small bowl of grits. I guess I had a disapproving look on my face because the manager hurried over to us to inquire if anything was wrong. "Are you rationing the grits?" I inquired. He seemed to visibly brighten up and asked, "Do you like grits?" I told him that I did at which time he took the small bowl away and returned with a very large bowl of grits. I ate all of them and after that our meals in the coffee shop were always served king style including the grits.

After a couple of weekends I was able to take a bus to Belmont to visit my Uncle Dick and Aunt Pallie on the farm, in Belmont, N.C., and, of course, I had some fine home cooked meals and I saw many of my cousins again. Aunt Pallie was Dad's mothers sister, who raised him, after his mother died when he was about 10 years old, and Dad was very fond of her. In the past I had spent several summers on the farm, therefore the visits were a special treat for me. Transportation to and from was very poor and time consuming.

One weekend I went to visit my Grandfather Gregory who lived with a cousin about 150 miles distant. For reasons that I cannot now recall the visit was not at all pleasant. I did not like the cousin with whom he lived so I never went back again and never saw Grandpa again. He passed away several years after I got out of the army. As I recall, I had only seen Grandpa Gregory twice, in the past, when he came to visit us. My Dad never talked about Grandpa and never went to visit him. As far as I know he never corresponded with him or called him.

Most of the time I visited with my mothers younger sister, my Aunt Eula and Uncle Chesley, in Greensboro because they were closer to my age and we had much more in common. There was one draw back in that both of them were deaf and could not speak much. They had a daughter, Patsy who was about 3, and she could speak using her hands to sign, so she could, even at that age, actually convey my conversation in sign language to them. She was always glad to see me come to visit as it gave her someone to talk with. She spent a lot of time talking with me

and I later realized how important my visits were to her. One weekend while visiting, Patsy got upset when we went out to bowl and dance on a Saturday night and left her with a baby sitter. Sunday morning when I went to shave half of my razor was missing. We searched for it with no luck so I went out and bought a new razor. Many years later when I visited them in Washington, DC, Eula told me she had recently found the missing half of the razor in some of Patsy's keepsakes.

One weekend while visiting them, we all went out to supper on Sunday evening and I missed the bus back to Ft. Bragg. Chesley had friends who got me a ride back to camp in the back of a milk truck and that was some ride even in the summer time. About 21/2 hours in the back of a truck filled with cans of milk, sitting on a can surrounded by cakes of ice is an experience. I had on a summer uniform and nearly froze on that ride but they got me back to camp by 6:00 am tired and with no sleep. One Thursday night the entire regiment took a 25 mile hike in 8 hours led by the Colonel himself. When we finished, I showered, dressed and caught a bus to town. At a restaurant in Fayetteville I remember I ate two bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwiches at 10 cents each and then caught the bus to Greensboro. That night we went bowling all evening and on Sunday morning I was so stiff I had trouble even moving.

Several weekends I traveled to High Point, N.C and visited with my Aunt Myrtis (one of mom's younger sisters) and Uncle Louie. My three cousins, Betty, Mildred and Rosemary were still at home. Uncle Louie was still the projectionist at the old Rialto theater downtown. When I was younger and we used to spend part of the summers with them and we spent a great part of our time at the Rialto seeing the movies for free. I remember I saw one movie at least 10 times. I enjoyed my visits with my cousins but I held my visits to a minimum as Aunt Myrtis with her attitude and tongue could make me very uncomfortable.

By a strange coincidence I met a girl who was a distant cousin on my Grandpa's side of the family who lived and worked in Fayetteville. I do not recall how I met this cousin as I knew nothing of the relatives on Grandpa Gregory's side. I think possibly Grandpa gave me her name and address when I visited with him. She was indeed my cousin and her husband was in the service. She invited me to her apartment several

times for apple pie, ice cream and coffee that I really enjoyed as I did my visits with her. We talked on the phone often but I did not see that much of her as I did not know that side of the family at all and also I was quite busy during the week at camp.

I would guess that about three fourths of the men assigned to the division came from New York City and it environs, from New Jersey and other New England states. I was amazed to learn that one of the men in my platoon who was born and raised in NYC could not read or write. The platoon Sgt. wrote his letters, read his mail for him and looked out after him. He tried real hard and was a very good soldier all through the war.

All the officers and men were really kept busy for the 5 or 6 months we were there as we were training seriously knowing that with all certainty we were headed for combat soon and we were preparing for that mission. Since we had a full complement of officers who handled their end of the work, life was much easier than at Camp Blanding. One weekend I drew Regimental Officer of the Day and as such I had to be available for the entire weekend in the orderly room or in my quarters and also I had to run several checks on the posted guards. I had heard stories of dog packs running loose on military reservations attacking soldiers but had not seen stray dogs on the post. In order to check the guard I had to arise at 2:00 am, dress and walk to the guard posts. I started out from my quarters walking, passed the Colonel's quarters and was about half way across the parade ground when suddenly my "blood ran cold" as I observed a pack of 15 to 20 dogs running toward me at full speed. I did not have time to retreat or find cover and there was no one else around at that early hour. I carried a 45 calibre automatic, with no ammo of course, so I pulled it out as the only weapon available. As they neared me the lead dog and several others sprang up at me and I hit the lead dog in the head with the 45 knocking it aside. Then I swung wildly with the gun and my feet knocking the others that jumped to the side. That maneuver split the pack of dogs and they passed on both sides still running at full speed. I wheeled around to defend myself but very fortunately for me the dogs kept running and did not slow down. I was really shook up but I continued with my walk of the posts, advising all guards to be alert for the dogs and take precautions.

Monday morning when I reported to Col Tychsen on the

events of the weekend, I related to him the events of that night. Immediately that day and for the following week the MP's went around the post shooting every stray dog they could locate. I heard of no more dog packs during my stay there.

While at Fort Bragg, the Army instituted the Expert Infantry Badge (EIB) which was awarded to men and officers who could pass a very grueling three day and night test. The test included physical endurance, use of all weapons, map reading, military tactics crawling through a mine field with machine guns firing live rounds about 2 feet over the head, night compass problems and other problems. It was extremely hard and difficult as I found out. The award was primarily for the soldiers as those who earned the badge received a bonus pay of \$5.00 per month but the officers who passed it received nothing except the badge. The captain decided that the officers were as good as the men so he assigned me to the second group to take the test. I understood when I finished the three days why every one slept for about 24 hours when it was over. We were kept on the go for three days and nights with all sorts of problems. The physical part was difficult and exhausting in the hot sun of Bragg and of course, the ever present sand of which I ate my share. There were the field firing problems, and also, the ever present NCOs who would boot one in the rear to hurry them along regardless of their rank. The last night was a compass problem where we were broken into small groups, trucked to a location, given numerous compass bearings and distances and told that we had to come out on the target point within 100 yards or we would fail the test. We finished the course well within the required yards, however during the problem I was leading the group in the dark of the night in the woods (no lights were allowed. Compass face was luminous) when I took a step and horrified I realized that I had stepped into empty space. Fortunately about five feet below there was a large pond. The men fished me out and we skirted to pond to resume our bearing. The Thursday, July 20, 1944, issue of "The Powder Horn", the 399th Infantry newspaper, under the heading, " Anti-Tank Co." contained in part the following: "Hats off to Captain Edgar R. Fenstemacher and Lt. Gregory for being the first officers in our company to take and pass the expert infantryman badge test. Lt. Gregory can now call himself a deep-water Baptist as he received an over-all

ducking during his night compass course". It was an excellent test of a soldier's ability and I am glad that both Frank and I passed it and received our Expert Infantry Badge

There was one man who was around our regiment all the time who did a lot of talking. He was a representative of the American Red Cross assigned to the unit. Frank and I did not like him at all. All he ever bragged about was "skinny dipping" in the lake with a Red Cross girl, after every one left the lake. We debated going down there to see if he was lying but decided that losing sleep over it was not worth the effort. Once we were over seas he disappeared and we rarely ever saw him.

I think that it was about September when I was ordered to attend a meeting at Division Headquarters. I discovered there, that I had to attend a couple days of classes on umpiring and then the various units in the Division would be given combat tactical problems to be performed as an exercise by the designated unit. I was to be one of the umpires on the tactical problems for every AT unit in the division. During this time I got to be much better acquainted with my jeep driver Charlie Amberger as we spent a lot of time driving around and waiting in the jeep for the units to run their problem. I would take the Officers forward and with maps give them the overall problem. They had to bring their NCOs forward and brief them and make a decision on the attack plan for their unit. They then brought their units and guns forward and executed the problem according to their plan during which time I observed and graded them on their performance. When they were finished we met and critiqued the performance with participation by members of the unit. The exercise for my platoon was handled by my platoon Sgt. and he did an excellent job. The entire umpiring job took about two weeks.

One day I was called in by the Captain and told to attend a meeting at Division Hq as I would be responsible for supplying the unit with equipment necessary for our over seas movement. I was to take along assigned NCOs who would be responsible to insure that all equipment was packed for shipment or readied for shipment per instructions. For the next three weeks I was very busy requisitioning needed supplies and insuring that we got the supplies, issuing combat gear to the company personnel and overseeing the packing of materials for advance shipment

overseas. I did not get to spend much time in the company or with my platoon leaving that to the Sgt. as I spent a lot of time in my jeep running between the company, Division Hq, various supply units and the railroad. Obviously the time had come and this was the real thing. The men had been issued combat clothing, we had loaded our guns, vehicles and other supplies on railroad cars for advanced shipment to the ETO so it was only a matter of time until we would receive our "marching orders" that would take us into combat. The men started scrambling for leave but only emergency leave was being granted.

Of interest was something that happened in July 1944. A combined Regiment of the 100th Division was detailed to go to NYC to march in a parade. The men who went had a great time and were royally treated by the local citizens. Many of the guys reported that in bars and restaurants waitresses and bartenders would infer that the unit would be overseas in three months. Did they know something we did not?

We were officially told that we would be moving out shortly for overseas and that we were in a state of quarantine and could not leave the post nor could we tell anyone of our status. The next day I received a telegram from home that my brother John, Jr. was getting married and would visit me at Ft Bragg on his honeymoon. I got permission to call home to stop John from coming to Bragg, supposedly without saying that we were leaving. The folks knew before the end of the call that it was bad news. We were told to pack the belongings we wanted to take with us on the ship and to pack the other stuff in duffle bags or footlockers, stencil it for identification and take it to a collection point to be shipped separately. On Sept. 29, 1944, we were formed up and marched to waiting trains, struggling with the weight of our duffle bags, packs and weapons as we boarded the trains. We were being given the royal treatment now as we had assigned seats and sleeping bunks (I had an upper). At least this train ride was going to outdo all the rest I had traveled on as the seats were comfortable and we had a place to lie down and sleep during the night. No sitting on sidings waiting for other trains to pass as before, instead, we rolled right through arriving at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, the next day to be processed for shipment to Europe. (I learned that we had been scheduled to land in England but that had been changed to Marseilles,

France)

Our days spent at Camp Kilmer were busy ones as we checked our clothing, attended lectures, practiced abandoning ship on mock ups by going over the side on cargo nets and handled administrative details. Of course, we were given all the shots and vaccinations again regardless of our shot records. Then company by company we were marched to take a final physical exam. The exam was in a long building and starting at one end there were ten lines manned by doctors sitting at tables.. We had to strip naked and then move along in the line to be examined by doctor after doctor as we went from one station to another. The entire exam lasted about an hour and all agreed it was a complete farce. If you were breathing at the time you passed. (It was rumored that several chimps were sent through the line and all passed). We were issued gas masks, two extra blankets, body bags, ski socks and shoe pacs for the men. On Oct. 3 we were given a 12 hour pass to NYC but in the short time we had there, we could only do a little sight seeing and hit a few clubs. Seems like we may have taken off one other night for a short visit to the city.

That last day we had in NYC was an adventure. Five or six of us went in together and as we walked around we decided to get our haircut before we shipped out. We were use to paying 20 cents for a haircut but in NYC they ran 50 to 75 cents and the barbers were hard sell people. They tried to convince us that being in the army and the field we needed special shampoos, special facials, finger nail care and so forth for a package price of \$7.00 per man. I stayed with the hair cut even though the barber tried to make me uncomfortable so I would change my mind. Of course, we went to Radio Center, The Plaza, Times Square and "rubber necked" the sights. We got into a cab about 8:00pm and asked the driver to take us to a certain place in Greenwich Village. He asked us if we had been in that area before and then suggested that we just view the area from the cab and leave. We insisted on getting out at which time (which was unusual for a cabbie) he told us about the area, the people there and how act in some of the clubs to avoid trouble. We went into several bars and it was an eye opening experience for us. The clubs were specialized for in some women dressed as men escorted women, in some men dressed as men escorted

men dressed as women and in some they were all dressed normally with men dating men and women dating women. All in all NYC was an experience for all of us

On October 4, 1944, we were formed up and marched off by companies as we began our adventure of embarkation for the ETO and combat. We were everyone carrying a heavy full field pack, our weapons and a full duffle bag that weighed at least 100 pounds. We all staggered under our loads from the trains that had moved us from Camp Kilmer to the rail terminal to catch a ferry. It seemed that we walked for hours and for miles to catch that ferry, but I am sure it just seemed that way. After a nice ferry trip across the water, we struggled with our loads down a dock that seemed to stretch into infinity and then up a ramp into an enormous building where at last we could see a transport ship. At last exhausted to a man and feeling as though we could carry our loads no further, we were lined up to board the ship according to numbers chalked on our steel helmets. This was the first time that I recall wearing those steel helmets and it felt like someone sitting on my head. Of course, there were the Red Cross ladies, trim in their uniforms, handing out coffee and doughnuts that were very welcomed.

CROSSING THE ATLANTIC OCEAN

At last, after what seemed eternity, we boarded the ship and struggled down the narrow steel stairways and narrow steel corridors with our bulky heavy loads to a cabin that had been assigned to us as we were checked on at the gangplank. The cabin that originally had been for one person, now had four rows of steel bunks three high to a row for 12 officers in the small cabin. I was assigned to one of the top bunks and had to sleep with the steel ceiling only ten inches from my face. It is a good thing I was not claustrophobic or I would have not slept much. We had our own bath room and shower adjoining. Obviously, we had to take turns as there was not room for many at one time.

Walking down into the bowels of a ship was a new experience for me. The smell that hit me instantly was one of people, food and the oily smell of operating machinery. To this day I can hardly stand to go into the hold of a ship that smells like that. We were crossing the Atlantic Ocean in a Liberty transport ship named, McAndrew, and it was strictly a “subcompact” when compared to our main convoy ship the George Washington (formerly the USS America). I went down into the holds where the men were billeted. They were in huge holds with rows and rows of bunks reaching to the ceiling. It very crowded with barely enough room to move around. Our ship was carrying Col. Tyschen and all regimental headquarters units and possible one battalion. Most of the Division was on the GW. There were many ships in our convoy carrying other combat units and we had many navy ships guarding the convoy.

We were ordered to stay below decks as the ship loaded and departed. I recall vividly the feeling as suddenly the engines started to rev up and the screw began turning causing the ship to vibrate through every steel plate. We could feel the ship as it was backed away from the dock, turned and begin to gain speed. Our stomachs did flip flops as we were on our way to an uncertain future. Our convoy consisted of 11 ships escorted by a destroyer and four destroyer escorts.

On board every one was assigned to eat in shifts twice a day and if you did not eat when your shift was scheduled, you did not

eat. Frank and I were called in by Col Tyschen who stated that we were to be the mess officers for our shift. We had nothing to do with the food preparation. Our job was to observe and monitor the men from the time they lined to eat until they had finished and washed up their gear and to maintain order. To eat the men lined up with their mess gear, went through the food line, then with their food and drink descended a nearly vertical steel stairway to a room where they ate standing at counters. They then moved up another set of stairs to a room where there were trash cans to empty the mess gear and the usual three containers of boiling water to wash and rinse the mess gear. We left the pier in the late afternoon and by the next day we were at sea heading into the North Atlantic. My stomach had already started feeling nervous and shaky from the smells, vibrations and constant motion of the ship. I was doing OK until that next day when we were in the ocean swells. Frank took the front end and I stood by the washing operation to make sure all gear was washed and observe how much food was thrown away so I could report on that fact. After several men came up the stairs, threw up into their mess gear and dumped it into the trash can in front of me, I felt the need for fresh air. I immediately went on deck and soon I was leaning over the rail with the other seasick soldiers. That was the beginning of my seasickness that lasted most of the trip. For a day or so I had Frank bring me some crackers from the mess and they seemed to help settle me down. I was lying on my bunk when Colonel Tychsen came in and ask me if I was policing the mess. I told him I was temporarily sick from the motion. He laughed and said, "Gregory, it is all in your mind." My question to him was if it is in my mind, why am I so sick. He laughed again and told me to go on deck and engage in the exercise programs and that would help get my mind off it. I did as he said but I can state that it is not in the mind.

There were lots of incidents and events that happened on the boat not all that I can remember but there was one in particular. During the trip I wrote a lot of letters. I kept the fountain pen I had been given while in college in the box with the writing paper on my bunk. One day when I went to write a letter home my pen was gone so I had to borrow a pencil from some one to write the letter. Several days later I happen to observe a Lt. writing with a

pen and I knew instinctively that it was my pen. My fountain pen had once been touched by a cigarette that had caused a very small burned area near the end of the pen. When I saw that I knew he had taken my pen from the box on the bunk. I went to Colonel Tyschen and told what had happened and even thought it was a small matter, I did not think an officer should take other peoples property. He called the Lt. into his cabin and asked to see the pen. When questioned the Lt. said that the pen was his, it was given to him and he had had it for a long time. I told the Colonel about the burn at the bottom that was on the pen but the Lt. claimed that was not sufficient identification that it was mine. I then told the Colonel that my name had been stamped on the pen in gold letters and if he would hold the pen just right in the light he would see a faint impression of my name on the barrel of the pen. Colonel Tyhsen rotated the pen in the light and, suddenly he actually turned livid with anger. He had seen my name. He castigated the Lt. in front of me, threatened him with dire consequences and then dismissed him. Returning my pen he told me that if I wished he would court martial the Lt., however in his opinion the man was a very poor officer and he thought he was trying to get a transfer or court martial so he could get out of going into combat. I agreed that nothing could or would be accomplished by a court martial and I was agreeable to dropping the matter as I had my pen back (I still have the pen). The Colonel was pleased with my decision and said that he would take care of the officer in his own way. Neither myself or any of my friends had anything to do with him after that time.

For a few days out of harbor we could at least get on deck for some fresh air. When we sail from NYC that Oct day it was a pleasant sunny day. About six days out of New York, we ran into a terrible hurricane reported by some of the crew to be the worst they had seen in 17 years. For two days the entire ship was buttoned up with doors, port holes and hatches sealed against the storm and water. That little vessel reminded me of some of the times I stalled the planes I flew and they dropped like a roller coaster. That boat did the same thing. The front seem to rise up straight into the air and then it would shudder as the propeller came partially out of the water and then as it shook and vibrated it would plunge, it seemed, straight down into the water where it slammed into the water with terrific force and the propeller

entered the water again. Then the nose started up in the air again and the process was repeated. (The division history states that the McAndrew came within five degrees of capsizing in the storm and just after that narrowly missed colliding with the GW) The storm raged unabated for 48 hours and before it was all over practically every one was seasick. The smells in the ship were foul and the air was very stale, so I just got sicker. What a relief to be allowed back on the deck after two days below decks and to be able to feel the cold air on our faces again. Since we crossed the North Atlantic route, the ocean was rough the entire trip across.

At Kilmer we had lectures on censorship and censoring mail because once we left the US on the boat we would each have to censor the mail of every soldier in our unit. Once that was done, we had to inscribe our signature on the envelope under the return address. I had to do that job for my platoon from the time the boat left the shore until the war was over. I hated the job because it took up a lot of my time and because I was privy to some of the most personal thoughts and feelings of the men. When I read their letters, I felt like I was intruding in their private lives. If a letter contained something that had to be censored and deleted then it had to be cutout as it could not just be lined out. This was time consuming and even though it delayed a letter, I gave them back with specific instructions on what to omit as I hated to cut up a personal letter .

As we continued on our trip our days were busy with physical training twice daily, gas mask drills daily, inspections daily and the quota of daily lectures on deck. On the twelfth day out of port suddenly we heard the word passed "Land Ho" and we could see the coast of Africa slowly coming into sight. Our convoy hugged the coast of Africa and as we sailed on we could make out the city of Tangiers and then we were entering the Strait of Gibraltar and later we could see the rock of Gibraltar. Some of the men in their letters noted that the trip was fine and they had seen sights that reminded them of the picture on their insurance policy. Devious it was but all the letters were censored. The ships hugged the coast of Africa for some time and then turned north into the Mediterranean Sea toward France. Very shortly the sea became rough as a storm rolled in and we were seasick all over again. Finally on the morning of October 20, 1944, the day

dawned bright and clear as we entered the harbor at Marseilles, France. Our ocean voyage ended at last after 15 days at sea.

It was late morning as I recall and we were ordered to pack our combat packs and put every thing else in our duffle bags and put them on deck to be shipped to a holding point. We were told to put on our long johns and woolen shirts, pants, jackets and boots. We had our last meal on the ship and in late afternoon we began leaving the ship for shore by walking on planks from sunken ship to sunken ship and crossing some above water. We finally reached the shore with our full field packs weighing us down and began the movement from the pier area. It was now beginning to get dark. Every man had been issued a flashlight as we left the ship that most men hung on their pack by the clip on the flashlight. We marched uphill from the docks which were extremely busy through the narrow streets accompanied by hordes of children begging for cigarettes, candy and gum, also people hung out of the windows so close we could have touched them as we passed. Our legs begin to feel leaden as we marched mile after mile up that steep ascent and out of Marseille. In all we marched twelve miles to a staging area near Septemes where we left the road and into a huge plowed field. It was very late and we were so exhausted that when the order to fall out came, we just lay on the ground on our shelter halves with a blanket over us and went to sleep. It was cold and damp but we were too tired to erect a tent. Also, over half of the men lost their flashlights, stolen by people reaching out the windows as we went by. It began to rain hard during the night but we just put the shelter halves under us on top of us and slept on.

We were at the staging area for eight days during which time we received our equipment which had been shipped, our jeeps, trucks, guns, ammunition, and other items, which we had to thoroughly check, test and repair. I can say, that with all we had to do, we were extremely busy. Out kitchens were set up under tents and we ate our meals in the open. By this time we had pitched our pup tents and that was what one could see for miles. There were no toilets and no showers. For toilet facilities they had constructed rows of outhouse type facilities. These were long wooden stool facilities with about twelve holes front and rear, back to back. They were all lined up along the main road and they were not covered in any manner. If you used the toilet

you were in the open and as people went past walking, on bicycles, cars and buses they waved and spoke. We were not conditioned to this type arrangement so most of the men waited until dark to use the toilets and then there were long lines at each unit of stools. I recall one morning several men, who could wait no longer, were sitting on the toilet facilities. I was standing nearby trying to convince myself to use the toilet when a bus full of people stopped in front of the toilets. Immediately all the men, women and children left the bus and ran to the toilets and began using them. I could see the look on the faces of the men as they pulled up their trousers and hurried left the toilets. About 10 am one morning I had to use the toilet and was sitting all alone on a row of stools facing the road when a young lady riding a bicycle approached on the road. She stopped, laid her cycle down and then pulled up her dress, sat on the hole next to me and started a conversation in French. I looked around and saw many men grinning and laughing at my apparent discomfort and since my concentration was now gone I pulled up my trousers and beat a hasty retreat. After that I joined the long lines of men lined up to use the latrine after dark. Our men were not comfortable with the French customs having been raised to use the toilet in private.

After a few days, during a briefing, we were advised that we were moving out the next day to relieve the 45th Division in combat. We were told that we could take the afternoon and evening off to go into Marseilles but we had to avoid places posted "Off Limits".

About dusk Frank, another Officer and myself decided to go into the city and were walking along the road toward Marseilles. As we walked I told them about my French teacher in high school at Salem, W.Va., Mr. Stone who had served in France in the first world war and had married a French lady. Mr. Stone told us guys in the class many times that if we ever got to Marseilles we must go and see a show put on in a "house". As we walked along we met one of my corporals returning to the area. We asked him about the places he had been and I mentioned to him what Mr. Stone had told us in high school.. My corporal grinned and said, "Follow me, I know where there is the best show in town with drinks and the cost is very reasonable". (I should have known better). We followed the corporal and

came to a nice neighborhood of stone and brick town houses three stories high. As he started in the door of one of the houses, on the right side of the door was a big sign on which was printed, "OFF LIMITS". I told the corporal that we could not go in there but he said we would go in and check. We talked to the "Madam" who consulted a little book and told us that the MPs had been in to check the place about an hour before and were not due back for two hours. She said that we had plenty of time for drinks, a show and any other pleasures. We got drinks and went into a pleasant room with easy chairs and a stage on one side. The show started and what a show it was. I questioned whether we were mature and experienced enough for such things. A short time later the MPs returned, having doubled back, and a lady took us behind the stage to hide from them but an MP Sgt. discovered us there. He was totally surprised and called his Lt. who advised us that he would have to arrest us for being there. We ran a bluff on him, telling him that it was OK to arrest us as that would keep us from having to leave with the unit the next morning to go into combat. As he stood there contemplating the situation, we got the impression that he knew our unit was moving out, because he said instead of arresting us he would take our names and units, which he did, and make a report to our commanding officer. As he started to leave we asked him if we had to go. He grinned at us and said, "You paid for the drinks and the show but get out of here before we come back". We got new drinks and saw the entire show over again, and I agree with Mr. Stone, you have to see one. Some time later the Colonel kidded us about the citations he had received and assured us that he had burned them.

Early on the morning of November 1, 1944, we ate breakfast and while the kitchen squad packed up, we loaded our gear on our vehicles. Then in Platoon order we all, as a company, took our position by the road waiting for the command to join in the order of march. Finally we moved onto the road and became part of a huge convoy moving to the front lines and to combat. Our route followed the old invasion path up the valley of the Rhone River with overnight stops in Valence and Dijon. As we traveled up the road, we marveled at the men who had proceeded us for we saw many guns, vehicles and tanks along the road and in the fields that were destroyed or burned out. I

recall one night we stopped in a large park overnight, ate C rations for supper and slept on the ground by our vehicles for that night. As we moved on that last day we all realized that the time was near that we had trained so hard for. After three days the regiment reached the vicinity of the village of Fremifontaine where we dismounted and moved into some woods. It was quite dark and now we could hear the boom of the big guns and the whine of the shells as they flew over head toward the German positions not too far forward. All night we could see the flashes in the distance as the guns fired and we could hear intermittent machine gun fire and especially the German MGs as they fired at twice the rate of ours with a very distinct sound. I am sure that we were all very nervous knowing that we were in a close rear area position and not knowing what tomorrow would bring, Being exhausted we posted guards and wrapping ourselves in our blankets, we lay down on the cold ground to get some sleep. Truly, the sounds of battle that later became a part of our night interrupted our sleep that night.

On the afternoon of November 1, 1944, there was a change of orders and the 399th Regiment was instructed to move up immediately into the front lines and relieve elements of the 45th Div. There were hurried meetings held at all levels and late that afternoon we mounted our vehicles and the regiment headed east to face the Germany army in the beginnings of the Vosges Mountain Campaign.

COMBAT AT LAST

Many have asked, what is war really like? The answer is indescribable! For war is composed of a series of battles or engagements in which each side tries to overcome or destroy the opponent, sometimes in battles that can last for days, even weeks and months. A battle is unique in its sounds that no fireworks can begin to portray. A battle is made up of ones own feeling's, activities of men and equipment, movements of men and vehicles, and sounds, especially sounds. How does one describe the sound of a large shell exploding fifty yards away, a sound that never seems to go away. For what seems like an eternity, there is the whine of shells overhead and the steady noise from the fire of our MGs and the burp burp of the German MGs. There is the steady sound of rifle fire, the tremendous concussion and noise as shells explode, the rattling sound of tanks moving and the roar of their big engines as they rev up, the sounds of vehicles moving and lastly the sounds made by the men. Sights like sounds are indescribable. A soldier sees his comrades hit by rifle and machine gun bullets fall down, sees the blood and their wounds, the cries of "Medic" by the wounded and also the many bodies of dead GI's in grotesque positions. He sees shells explode among the men tossing mangled and broken bodies about and he sees the flatten bodies of soldiers run over by tanks. He sees men in shock minus arms and legs from the effects of land mines and anti-personnel mines. To describe every detail of what one sees and hears becomes impossible and is something few soldiers ever want to remember or discuss in any detail.

A few years ago, I was contacted by Pat Bennett who was the son-in-law of Ed Selin, who had been a truck driver in my platoon during all our time in combat and afterwards. Pat had written a lot of letters and found out that I was Ed's platoon leader in combat. He told me that he was trying to write up something about Ed's army career for the grand children, but every time he tried to talk to Ed about his combat, Ed just got up and left the room. He told me that Ed would never discuss or talk about any thing regarding his time in the army. I met with Pat several times,

showed him pictures and maps, and tried to give him an overall picture of what we had done, where we had been and what we had endured through out it all. He wrote me later that he now had a better appreciation for what Ed had been through and why he was reluctant to talk about it. He also got letters from a few other men in the company and said that the one thing all mentioned most frequently was the rain, the mud , the loneliness and the bitter cold.

At the time, one feels and believes that not one moment of the time will ever be forgotten, but the mind evidently works differently and many of the bad memories slowly fade away. It is difficult to recall many events with clarity, when, where and how they happened and the sequence in which they happened. Other soldiers may have been impressed by different events or saw them from a different perspective. I can state from experience that in a combat situation the complete and total loneliness one feels is absolute. Your best friend can be three feet away but he might as well be on another planet. There are no fires, no talking, no cigarette smoking, only the sounds of intermittent firing and shell bursts with occasional glowing of light bursts in the distance.

One of the books I read, "The men from K Company" was a book that seemed to parallel many of my own experiences. Reading that book took me right back in to the past and I could almost see the snow and feel the cold. Ed's son in law read the book at my recommendation and wrote me that it gave him a better appreciation of what the men had endured and why they kept it to themselves.

Our company was composed of our Headquarters platoon (which included supply, kitchen unit, administrative unit, etc.), three platoons of Anti-Tank guns and a mine platoon. Each AT platoon was composed of a Lt., the commander, his driver, a medic, a platoon Sgt., and three squads of ten men each. Each squad was composed of a Sgt. squad leader, a Corporal gunner and eight men to help load and fire the gun and protect it while in action. They were armed with M1 rifles, carbines, one 50 cal. MG and bazookas. The primary mission of the AT units was to protect our assigned units from tanks, SP guns and other mobile vehicles. I had received a lot of training on MGs, mortars and AT guns and also, on the tactics involved in the use of all of them so

I felt confident in my ability to do my job. Once in combat, we were usually assigned to support an attacking force, usually one of the battalions or a company. This meant that we had to be in a position to cover all avenues of approach to our forces from the front and the flank. To accomplish this, many times we would have to set up our guns practically with the riflemen attacking and some times a short distance back of them in order to cover the flanks of the unit. Our mission was to defend against any attacks by mobile units or by enemy soldiers. This meant that I had to constantly keep abreast of the situation at all times in order to keep my units in the thick of the fight so we could support the attack. I had to keep my NCOs briefed constantly as they had the responsibility for the squads when I was not present and had to make decisions on their own. Of course, I had to constantly attend to the needs and problems of my men. It was necessary for me to keep close contact with my company commander and battalion staff to always have my squads where they would be most effective.

On the morning of November 2, 1944, we began relieving units of the 45th Div. Capt. Fenstermacher had set up his Command Post (CP) in a forward position and called a meeting of all officers. We were given maps and briefed on our mission and assignments. I recall going forward with my driver. Leaving him with the jeep I walked through the woods to an open field and stood there studying the terrain for places for my squads as shells passed overhead going out and coming in, and I wondered if any ever hit head on. Looking out over the field, I suddenly felt very much alone and not sure of my location. That feeling of total loneliness is one of the worst one can experience. I ran into a forward observer for a 4.2 mortar unit who gave me assurances as to my location and made me feel part of the human race again. I returned to the CP and was told that we had been switched to another location and would be getting new assignments that came very soon thereafter.

Again Amberger and I set out in the jeep to find the area of our planned attack to study the terrain for best locations of my squads. He drove and I studied the map and gave him directions. It became apparent from the terrain as we drove along, that things on the ground did not match the map. Roads shown on the map appeared to be trails, open areas were now

forested and landmarks did not match. Studying the map I found it was dated 1918 and since the map had been drawn during World War 1 very few of the map features were now accurate. It was very quiet in the woods and soon we were on a small dirt road, approaching a cleared area with a rather sharp curve to the right. As we pulled up at the edge of the woods and stopped, a GI with a rifle on his shoulder stepped out of a bunch of trees and ask where we were going. We explained our mission and he replied, "you can go on down that road if you want to but around that bend of the road is a German machine gun nest and infantry soldiers. There are no American soldiers in front of me". We backed up into the woods as the German MG opened up with its rapid fire. We studied the map with the soldier who was from the 397th Reg. And determined that due to relying on the old map we were way off our course. The soldier told us that one of the first casualties in their regiment had been the Colonel, their CO, who made the same mistake with the maps we had made and was killed when he ran into a German position. We thanked the soldier and retraced our steps using the map only as a guide and located our true position. We all told the Captain how unreliable the maps were and he told us later that it was a mistake and we would get new maps very soon, which we did.

As I recall, my company started into actual combat on November 5, 1944, in the foothills of the Vosges mountains that we would ultimately have to fight through to get to Germany. Fighting in the mountains was, of course, made more difficult by the forests, ravines, narrow dirt roads, and other natural obstacles. A quick summary of the overall weather sets the conditions in which we found ourselves fighting. Nov. 5, 1944 dawned bright, clear and cold but by late afternoon it began a light rain. What followed was an incessant rain that came down unrelenting for seven straight days. Over night the rain changed to snow which never left but was only made deeper by new snows. The depth of the snow was two to three feet generally and it covered the ground continuously until it melted in the spring. What with the weather as it was, the days were very cloudy with darken skies and in the cold wet woods that translated into some very depressing days. It was dark enough in the woods but things were made more difficult because it got very dark about 4:00 p.m. and daylight broke about 8:30 a.m.

and that, of course, made for extremely long nights. Once darkness set in a burning cigarette could be seen for long distances and would bring mortar fire or sniper fire, so to smoke at night one had to be in a closed vehicle or pull something over the head to conceal the cigarette.

Due to our fast moving combat situations, we could not put up pup tents, so at night, I would just lay my sleeping bag on the ground, climb in, and pull my shelter half over my face to protect from the rain. I usually took my boots off at night. One night after a day of fighting, Amberger and I found a fox hole in the woods, enlarged it and both of us climbed into it, since many shells came into the area all night long and we were concerned about tree bursts. Tree bursts are of great concern as the shell comes in, hits a tree and detonates in the air spraying shrapnel in all directions down on the men. We took off our boots that night and put them on the edge of the hole. When we awoke early the next morning, we were covered with about three inches of snow and our boots were full of snow and frozen. We had to empty the snow and put on the frozen boots, and, of course for the duration of the war unless in a dwelling in bed, we slept with out boots on. We always slept with all our clothes on as we might have to move or fight during the night.

The local inhabitants told us that the winter of 1944-45 was the worst they had seen in 30 years and I believe it. What with the rain and mud, followed by the snow and bitter cold and the fact that we were in the open constantly trying to sleep on the wet ground, our existence had become difficult to endure. I dressed in long johns, a woolen shirt and trousers, a woolen sweater, scarf and jacket yet I have never in my life been so cold for such a period of time. I use to sit with my right shoulder hunched up for so long that I developed a permanent ache that took ages to go away. I vividly recall one day sitting in my jeep on a hill shivering from the cold and thinking to myself that if I survived the war, I would never allow myself to be cold again. To combat the cold, many of our men cut their sleeping bags up the middle and sewed them up to make legs and cut slits so they could get their arms out to be free for action. Then, they wore the sleeping bags as an outer garment all day and night.

The steel helmet was a friend to many of us and served us well. We were ordered to wear it at all times but in combat

whose to enforce that. We wore a strong plastic type helmet liner and the steel helmet fit over the liner. The helmet was useful, especially in the woods, as it shed the rain, snow and ice that constantly dripped from the trees. It was used to heat water for bathing, shaving and heating canned rations and had many other uses including that of a vomit pan. I saw one soldier whose helmet had been hit in the right temple area by a sniper and the bullet traveled around his head between the helmet and the liner and exited at the left rear of his steel helmet leaving a big hole. He was one of the lucky ones. I saw many dead soldiers who were not so lucky.

And then there was that absolute loneliness a soldier feels even though he has comrades just a few feet away. I recall one night I was scouting for positions and was standing at the edge of a clearing in several feet of snow with a fairly bright moon shining and suddenly an eerie feeling came over me of being all alone in the universe. Was the feeling caused by a fear of death or injury, fear of the unknown, or just the personal discomfort suffered day after day? Akin to that terrible feeling of loneliness is the personal discomfort one must endure.

In combat our kitchen crew tried to bring up meals and coffee but most of the time that was impossible. It was practically suicide to build a fire day or night as it would immediately bring sniper fire and cannon or mortar shells on our position, therefore we could never heat water to shave, bathe or heat our canned rations. We were wet for weeks with no way to dry our clothes especially our socks. Most men changed socks every day and put the other pair between the body and shirt to try to dry them. Many soldiers were incapacitated by trench foot and frost bitten of the feet as they were not able to care for their feet.

Once committed to combat we would be called to Headquarters where the Captain would brief us on attack plans and give us our assignments. Usually each AT platoon was assigned in support of one of the battalions in the attack and could defend them against tank attack and provide some direct fire with the 57 mm AT guns. I would then report to the Lt. Colonel, the Battalion C.O, for briefing on their mission and what actions I could take to support the attack. I worked with all three battalions in the regiment at various times. Generally the C.O.s

respected our input on the tactical use of our weapons and men.

During one period of action I was assigned to work with the 1st Battalion commanded by Lt. Col. Elery Zehner. Even though we had only been in combat a short time Zehner had developed a reputation as a leader and fighter who liked to get on the front line and shoot at the enemy himself. Late one morning I stopped at the Battalion CP to talk with him. He was alone in the CP and later told me that he had to go check on some units and ask me to answer the phone while he was gone and take any needed action. I told him that I knew that one rifle company was pinned down and that if he went up there and got into the fight he would be pinned down and be of no use or help to his men who depended on him. He laughed and assured me that he would not get pinned down. I asked him, "What will I say if Colonel Tyschen calls and wants to talk to you". He again laughed and said I was to tell the Colonel that he had gone to the toilet. Col. Zehner left in his jeep and had not returned early in the afternoon nor had any of his staff. The phone rang and I answered. Col. Tyschen said, "Gregory why are you answering the phone?" I told him that Col. Zehner was using the rest room and I would have him call back. The Colonel responded, "Gregory, don't give me that baloney. Zehner went up to the front and got himself pinned down, didn't he?" I responded that as far as I knew he had gone to check on some of his units and I knew that one of his companies was still pinned down. The Colonel then told me to operate the CP until relieved and then to take command of my own unit. Late in the afternoon when he returned and I told him that the Colonel had called and was visibly upset. He shrugged and told me they had taken a bad beating but were moving forward again.

We were initially committed to action in the vicinity of St. Remy fighting toward and around Etival, Raon L'Etape, Rambervillers and Baccarat, France. This was one of the most difficult battles we experienced and lasted several weeks. We were fighting in the mountains against well entrenched and experienced German soldiers who had almost invisible lanes of fire cut out of the forests. They were well fortified with artillery, tanks, self propelled guns and had laid down many mine fields.

I recall that one night I was called to Reg. Hq for assignment for the battle to be fought the next morning. I knew from what I

had seen and learned that it would be a fight to dislodge the Germans. Our orders were to jump off at 0630 hours to support a unit to our right flank and it would hardly be daylight at that time. A barrage of artillery fire would be laid down for 30 minutes prior to the attack. That night as I lay in the open in my bedroll listening to the night sounds I relived in detail my short life over and over wondering if I could have done many things in the past differently. My stomach churned as I thought of the men and wondered how they were mentally preparing for tomorrow as I thought about the decisions I would have to make on the morrow. Some time towards morning I heard the big artillery pieces open up. Soon shells were screaming overhead and bursting in the near distance and I wondered how this was affecting the German soldiers trying to sleep over there. The firing intensified with literally hundreds of shells screaming overhead at one time and exploding to our front as they literally lit up the night sky with bursts of light. The noise level increased and with all the explosions the ground literally shook. In all over 25,000 shells were fired preparatory to our attack. Once engaged in a battle the specifics are now difficult to separate out from other engagements as to what I actually did on that day. I can assume it was like any other day with the tremendous noise level, lots of activity, keeping my squads busy and the sights of many dead or injured soldiers, both our men and the Germans.

I recall we were fighting to take one village and I was crouched by the side of the road to avoid snipers when I saw a dead German soldier lying by the side of the road ahead of me. Shortly thereafter one of our tanks passed rolling into the village and ran over the dead man. I also observed several of our trucks run over him, some I believe deliberately. Later, when I saw him again, his body was completely crushed flat and was unrecognizable. The thought struck me as to how impersonal war was regarding the values of humanity and how casual death was now accepted by the men. Men who now treated with indifference acts that would have horrified them before, or could it be that they feigned indifference as a defensive mechanism?

I remember that one afternoon we were attacking the Germans and the attack, which had been scheduled for early morning, had been delayed waiting for tanks to come up. At the briefing, the CO was worried that if we were held up for any

length of time, we might not be able to complete the mission before dark and might have to pull back inviting a counter attack. We finally jumped off and later we were attacking over a large clear area toward woods to our front. As the rifle troops started over the clearing they came under heavy rifle and MG fire effectively pinning them down. A squadron of 5 tanks rolled up and I talked with the officer in the lead tank about the situation. An officer from a rifle company, a tall, lean, handsome guy we all liked and whom we all called "Little Abner", came up and explained to the officer the mission and how they could help us. The tanks had pulled under some trees for protection to avoid direct shell hits and when they did that I told the guys that we could not depend on them as they were gun shy. Finally they agreed to attack and buttoning up they set out for the woods with Little Abner walking along at the rear of the tank talking to the commander on the phone located at the right rear of every tank. The outside man on the phone could assist the tank to avoid mines and spot targets. Suddenly shells started coming in and it was obvious that the tankers were scared as they stopped and started backing up. The lead tank spun around without warning knocking Little Abner down and running over him as it spun back. The tanks then took off and ran from the field of battle. I remember his body lying in that field but at that time we could not get to him because of the intensity of the enemy fire. The attack stalled and we had to back off to a defensive position for the night. The Colonel was incensed and wanted the tankers to be court martial. The tank commander agreed to send up five more tanks the next morning stating that the crews had not been in combat yet so they should be eager to prove their worth. For some reason we were late in the morning getting under way and again met stiff resistance. I recall the tank commander, a young officer, as he buttoned up his tank, said only mines could stop them and they roared across that field with MGs and cannons blazing. Before they made it two of the tanks were disabled by mines, which made them sitting ducks, but the other three made the woods and starting mopping up accompanied by all the rifle troops. I followed the tanks and cut off to the left at the woods and followed a ravine to its head where I climbed out at the forward edge of the woods. When I raised my head up to look around, I was looking directly into the four barrels of a 40mm self

propelled (SP) ack ack gun the Germans were using for direct fire. It was across a small road about 50 yards distant and it immediately opened up on me sending shells whistling by and exploding all around against the trees. Instinctively I threw myself backward and rolled down into the bottom of the ravine and when it appeared that no Germans were coming across the road, I left and returned to my platoon. I later learned that the lead tank had later knocked out the SP and became so enthused he ended up behind the lines and had to backup two miles to find room enough to turn around and return to our lines.

Anti-tank guns were actually big rifles in effect as they fired a rather flat trajectory with a high muzzle velocity. They were mounted on a frame with two wheels of rubber tires and were pulled along behind the truck. With the snow, the weather was now freezing so anytime the gun was put into an emplacement for action it had to be completely mobile. Fearing that the tires would freeze to the ground, Frank and I instructed our Sgts to insure that the guns were moved several times a day to prevent that happening. We checked the squads often to insure that they were moved. In another regiment it happened to a gun crew. That unit was attack by a Tiger tank that suddenly appeared and began shooting at the troops as it headed toward their rear area. The crew manned the gun and began tracking the tank until the gun hit its maximum turning arc. The men raised the trails and attempted to turn the gun, however, it was frozen solidly to the ground and was useless to them. They had to abandon the position until the tank was driven off. They learned a lesson that Frank and I had anticipated.

To follow some of the actions, it is necessary to understand what I did. I received battle plans and assignments from my Captain. If I was assigned to support a Battalion then I attended battle briefings at their CP and made plans agreeable to the Battalion CO on how I could best use my guns to back him up. I would then go out and reconnoiter the area to initially set up the gun positions. Some times this meant getting ahead of the troops to see the terrain and enemy positions. As the troops forged ahead then I had to constantly repeat the process and move my guns. The guns were never placed together or in the same close area to keep them from all being wiped out by one shell and as they could give more support when separated.

They were usually several hundred yards apart some time up to a mile or more. A lot of my time was spent moving about to various CPs to be kept completely up to date on the situation and battle plans, supplying my platoon, reconnoitering for positions, moving my squads and many other details. I tried to spend as much time with each squad as I could during the day and spend the nights with one of them. I depended on the Platoon Sgt. and each squad Sgt. to utilize his squad effectively in each combat situation and lead it at all times when I was away, generally, most of the time.

One afternoon when there was a lull in the fighting, Amberger drove me to the squad that the Platoon Sgt. was overseeing. I could see he was troubled and he told me a very sad thing had happened that would require my action. I had located the squad in a good position to protect the flank of the Battalion and very shortly they heard the engines of a tank rev up. Realizing that attack was imminent, the Sgt. had the squad man the gun while he acted as observer and called out firing instructions to the Corporal who was the gunner and assistant squad leader. As the tank came into sight the Sgt. ordered the gunner to aim and track. As the opportunity arose he ordered the gunner to fire but nothing happened. Three times he ordered the gunner to fire as the tank neared but the gun did not fire. Realizing suddenly that the gunner had 'frozen up' and the tank was nearing their concealed location the Sgt. ordered one of the men to take the gunners position. The man physically threw the Corporal from his position and began firing the gun at the tank that began to withdraw from the field. I realized the gravity of the situation. For the safety of all I could not have a gunner that froze up at the wrong moment, and removing him from the gunners position meant reducing him from Cpl. to Pvt. The Sgt. felt that I would not be able to reduce the soldier's rank as he was the one that had hit the home run in the last inning to win the post championship at Bragg and the Colonel liked him. When I got to the company CP and explain all to the CO he asked me if there was some way I could work with the Cpl. so he could fire the gun. I informed the CO that I could not jeopardize an entire unit of men and equipment as it could well happen again and he knew the possible consequences. I insisted and a new Cpl. gunner was named in the squad. I felt badly about what happened and

tried to explain it to the man himself, but he did not want to admit he froze up which made it all the more difficult. The matter was fully documented for Regiment and I heard nothing more on the matter.

One engagement that will stand out forever happened one morning as we were attacking up a hill in the woods with a reinforced Battalion. The German positions were well fortified and they had fields of fire cut in the woods that could not be seen until it was too late. Also, they had the area in front of them completely zeroed in on maps and could fire accurately with the first shot. With the combined artillery fire, rifle fire, MGs and tanks or SPs it was a bloody battle and we were suffering casualties in the 30 percent range. We were instructed to fall back awaiting a TOT (time on target barrage). A TOT is when every artillery piece and mortar in the area including the 240mm pieces of Corp are all fired in a sequence so that all shells hit the target and explode at the same time. Being near a TOT is a shattering experience for the concussion is felt for miles and the ground seems to roll and pitch. A second TOT was called for and it was equally as devastating as the first. Our troops then moved forward with little resistance to take the hill and capture the Germans most of whom were completely shell shocked. I saw many of the prisoners as they came off the hill and they were in a complete state of shock. I was called back to Bn. Hq for instructions and returned in my jeep with Amberger driving. We arrived at the base of the hill where the road split into two sets of ruts winding up either side of the hill. I observed two large trucks filled with the bodies of dead soldiers that were parked in the road, one up each fork. Two men in the back of each truck were tossing the bodies out on the ground and two men on the ground laid the bodies in a row side by side with a row of dead soldiers going up each side of the fork in the road. I looked at my driver whose face had turned white and told him to get us out of here right now. Watching the men handling the bodies left me with a depressive and sickening feeling. Again, it was the completely impersonal approach of the men to death that left us both with a terrified feeling that we were losing our humanity, that death rendered one as nothing of importance.

The Germans were one obstacle and the mud was another. After days of rain the dirt roads and trails in the forest and

surrounding areas became massive mud holes making movement difficult. Fortunately we had winches on the front of every vehicle. With its strong steel cable sometimes I could hook up to a tree and winch my jeep out myself. At least once I was stuck so bad that I had to use a truck with winch also to pull me out. The truck drivers swore that on many moves they had to winch themselves half way there.

Sometimes small things make big impacts. One day Amberger and myself were driving along a small dirt road and came upon a lone cow standing in a field lowing softly. Then we saw that the cow was bleeding from the neck and was slowly getting weaker as it dropped to its knees. It was surrounded in the field by dozens of dead animals. Just a few more helpless casualties of the war but it left both of us with a sickening and helpless feeling!

During this time we were fighting through the French mountains and through wooded areas with small farms and small villages. One small village we went through was in a valley with a fast stream running through the middle of the village. I had learned by now that in most villages in France there was one town toilet facility and one bath house. A home that had an outdoor toilet was rare and an indoor one was a real rarity, also none of the houses had bathing facilities. I found the town toilet in the middle of the village. It was a building that straddled the stream with a partition down the center over the stream. There were places curved out into the stream for the feet to be placed and then one leaned back against the partition to conduct business into the stream just below. The entire building was one large open room with no partitions anywhere. As I was conducting my business, a French woman came in and squatted down next to me. That ended my ability to concentrate so I went back to the war.

While fighting in the vicinity of Baccarat we fought our way into a very large factory.. I was tied up and when I finally caught up with some of my men and other soldiers they were in a large warehouse of a big glass factory. Like small boys they were enjoying breaking glass, throwing glasses and even boxes of glasses against the walls. I stopped them and I later learned the glass was very well known and desirable glass.

Thanksgiving 1944 was coming up and we had been told that

we would be pulled out of the lines in small groups for a classic hot turkey dinner with all the trimmings. For the past three weeks or more we had been living in the open in the woods and our diet consisted of C rations or the more condensed K rations. No hot coffee, milk, soft drink or anything else we were use to having. On Thanksgiving Day our company was pulled back for the big meal. The mess Sgt. was extremely proud of finding French ovens to cook the turkeys and of the meal he had prepared for us. It was pouring the rain down when we arrived to partake of the meal. The kitchen was set up in a small clearing in the woods and we went through the mess line to have our gear filled with the goodies and I might add the first cup of hot coffee in ages. It continued to rain so hard that by the time I had my gear filled with food the turkey was actually floating in the water. We sat down on the wet ground and leaned forward over our food to eat but it was useless. The water was so deep in the mess gear that the gravy washed off the food and the rolls were wet and soggy. After a few bites of the wet cold food, Frank and I looked at each other, nodded in agreement, got up and dumped out that disaster called Thanksgiving dinner and left. The only redeeming part of that day was our first mail call in several days and I got two packages from home.

We learned from experiences and Thanksgiving was one of them. We were in an area of buildings and I spent that night sleeping in my bag on the third floor of a stone building. About midnight I awoke with terrible pains in my lower stomach and knew I had little time. I rushed down the stairs and out of the building, all the time concerned that a sentry might shoot before I could identify myself. Thankfully I made it to the side of the building and took care of business. I spoke with the sentry who sensed my predicament then I retired to finish an uneasy sleep. The "runs" were called the "GIs" (Government Issued) and we quickly learned that when you had been on field rations for an extended time and ate garrison type rations then you would get the GIs bad. I have seen many men pass up a hot meal rather than suffer later and many times I did the same. One meal was not worth the misery. I recall later an incident when we were fighting in Germany when most of the men passed on the meal and the mess Sgt. wondered what to do with all the food. We all suggested that he give it to the hungry kids. He later said that

he had done as we suggested and had made some lasting friendships. Many of the cooks complained about the risks involved in taking a meal into the lines and having the men refuse to eat it.

On one occasion I was with one of my squads and about 4:00pm we stopped in some woods that were deep in snow. It was very cold and twilight was beginning in the woods. I was sitting in my jeep when I remembered my two unopened packages from home. One of the packages contained a lot of cookies and a pound package of coffee. The men were excited when they saw it and suggested that we make a fire and have some hot coffee to warm them up. I knew it was not a good idea but since I longed for the hot coffee, I decided to take the chance. We started a fire as one of the men got a large can from a truck and filled it with water to set on the fire. Against my better judgment I let them all gather around the fire as they were grateful for the warmth it gave off. The fire was going good and the water was bubbling in the can when the platoon Sgt. put almost half of the pound of coffee into the boiling water. The aroma was overpowering and we all moved closer to the fire to enjoy the smell as the coffee boiled. Almost as if ordained by fickle fate my worst fears were realized. Suddenly a shell exploded about one hundred yards to my left toward the German line and almost in the same instant one exploded about one hundred yards to my right. Instantly I screamed at the men to scatter and hit the dirt. I dashed about fifteen yards and hit the ground rolling away from the fire. I knew they were mortar rounds as we did not hear them come in and having taught mortars, I knew that we had taken an under and over and with a correction they would quickly fire 3 more rounds at us. My fears were realized when within a matter of seconds three rounds exploded in the vicinity of the fire and following that, utter silence prevailed in the woods in the cold and the dark. I discovered that one round had landed directly on the fire sending it and the coffee over the landscape. Fortunately our failure to stay dispersed was not costly as no one was hit, only the coffee. The aroma lingered in the night air and the Germans did not know how badly they affected our morale on that cold dark evening.

As we neared the end of the first week in Dec. 44, we had not

changed clothes or had a bath since we left the ship on 20 Oct. My layers of clothing had stayed intact during this time. When I got wet, I relied on my body heat to dry my clothes whenever I could get into my bed roll, as there was no heat, fires or very little sunshine. During all this time we had fought in the mountains with little shelter and it had rained or snowed most of the time. We became use to each other but I cringe to think how we smelled to others.

Some days later we were told that we would get to take showers and get new clothing and they would take us off the front lines a squad at a time. Our turn came and I went with one of my squads to the rear, a few miles, to a small village beside a small river. Our engineers had set up a series of showers in clusters with six shower heads on each standing pipe. They had put hoses into the river for water that was warmed in large heaters and then pumped to the showers. When we arrived we were told to strip naked and throw our old clothes into a truck. We were given a bag to put our personal items into to wear around our neck or leave on the ground as we showered. I wondered why so many of the local citizens were observing from a distance and it became apparent as we all walked naked to the showers that stood in the field with nothing to conceal us as we showered. We were limited to the number of minutes we could stay in the showers but at least we came out clean from head to foot. We then proceeded to a line of trucks where we gave our size and a soldier threw out the item, every thing clean, but not new, from shirt to boots. Giving our sizes was an exercise in futility as later, trading for correct sizes began in earnest. At least we all felt refreshed in our clean clothes even if they did not fit.

Some time later and for a reason that I do not recall, myself. Frank, our two platoon Sgts and our two drivers came to a French farm house very late one evening. It was the typical French farm with a stone house that had been there for hundreds of years. The basements had walls three to four feet thick and the walls of the house were about two feet thick. We decided to stay there and since it was the usual cold rainy day, we spent the evening in the kitchen where there was a warmth giving fire. The farmer and his wife had two daughters: one who was slim and attractive took a shine to Lt. Pierce and the other

who was the typical farm girl in that area, strong, stocky and rather plain in appearance took a shine to me and made sure everyone knew it. She kept coming into the kitchen with presents for me and I was really becoming embarrassed by her attention to me in front of every one. Shortly afterward when I was sitting on a table in the kitchen she came into the room, walked over to where I was sitting, picked me up and carried me out of the room amid the laughter of every one. For days after that I was ribbed by the guys over the incident. The next morning early the young lady was out in the wet pasture walking an extremely large and stocky Belgium draft horse. I called Frank and ask him to look at the shoulders on both. His observation was, "Which is the horse". She was one strong girl!

The farmers had a method of eating that I found scary. One farmer in particular lived in the old stone two-story farm house with the animals on the ground floor and family on the second floor. I was sitting in his kitchen while he ate. He would put a piece of bread, meat or cheese into his mouth and then with a deft swipe of a sharp knife he would cut it off and eat it. I kept waiting for him to make a mistake and cut off his nose but he was adept at that method of eating.

Some where along the way, before we got to Bitche, we came into the middle of a small village which had cobblestone walks and grassy areas in between. We observed several very excited soldiers gathered around a soldier lying on the ground with the lower part of one leg missing. Before any of us could shout a warning to the men, T/Sgt MacNevin ran toward the group. There was a loud explosion and MacNevin flipped into the air landing on the ground with a foot and part of a leg blown off. Frank and I and our Sgts screamed at every one to stay where they were and make no moves. We had to physically restrain several men from rushing to aid the wounded men as we knew that other mines were planted and the same thing would happen to them. We organized a line of soldiers to work slowly across all the areas using their bayonets to probe the ground to locate the mines and clear them before we began rescue efforts. Chills crawled up and down my spine as we extricated the wounded men and carefully marked of the areas we were unable to clear. The Germans had thoroughly mined the town with anti-personnel and land mines. In a separate incident, one Lt. in

the regiment went to the aid of a downed man and stepped on a shoe mine blowing off his foot and when he fell his arm landed on another shoe mine which blew off his arm. Terrible and lasting damage. The Lt., who was conscious, would not let his men attend to him until the area had been cleared. That took real courage.

The Germans planted many anti-personnel mines not to kill but to maim realizing that they were harmful to the morale of the troops and that it took three men out of action to handle every wounded man. The shoe mine was one of the most vicious as it tore off limbs. It was simple, 1/4th pound of TNT in a box with a pressure detonator. Step on it with a set weight and it exploded. Another device was a .30 caliber rifle bullet in a metal sleeve with a pin at the bottom that was buried up-right just below the surface of the ground. When stepped on the bullet was forced down onto the pin firing the bullet upward into the foot or leg of the person incapacitating him. Then there were the "Bouncing Bettys". They were explosives in a container surrounded by lead slugs in a larger container with an explosive to bounce it several feet into the air where it would explode sending slugs in all directions. It was usually operated by a trip wire that triggered the explosive to injure soldiers who were avoiding trails in the woods. All soldiers were cautioned against souvenir hunting as the Germans mined bodies, residences and stores. We never assumed that a place was not mined and avoided the places we thought were mined.

Land mines were placed in roads, fields and other areas to deny use of that area to all vehicles and tanks and to destroy or disable them. When a vehicle ran over a mine, the weight activated a detonator and the mine exploded. At times the Germans double decked them with one atop another. This was especially destructive to vehicles and men.

We were fighting through a wooded area and were hung up as I awaited a mine clearing crew to finish their work that would allow me to move my units forward. I was standing at the edge of a clearing watching the men work. I was impressed with their attitude and the way they worked, completely expressionless with no outward sign of apprehension. They worked clearing the narrow dirt road and the shoulders by sticking prods into the ground as they moved forward. A jeep with a Lt. Col. and his

driver came up the road and parked among the men on the edge of the road as the officer consulted a map. I observed a private in the crew stick his prod under the right front tire of the jeep and withdraw it. In a very calm voice and with out expression he turned to the driver and ask if he could back up about three feet which the driver did. The soldier knelt down and carefully swept away dirt where the wheel had been with the two in the jeep watching him intently. After working for several minutes the soldier pulled out of the ground a large round land mine which he immediately disarmed by screwing out the detonator and carried it to the side of the road in silence. The shocked look on the faces of both men was priceless though all the rest of the men paid no attention to it and continued to probe without expression. I was somewhat amused as I viewed the scene yet it could have been deadly to them, the private and other men and me as I was standing too close. Either the mine was defective or the jeep was not fully on top of it. Needless to say, the two men and their jeep left in a hurry.

One of the activities that worried and concerned me most was moving around at night in a combat situation whether it was right in the line of battle or in immediate forward rear areas. Sentries were posted by all units with a given password that was to be changed daily. Of course, you could never be sure that both had the same password and the very thought could send chills up and down the spine. Also, in the dark of night some sentries could become apprehensive and trigger happy.

Whenever possible I always stopped by Battalion Hqs as my last act of the night to assess the situation and learn of plans for the next day. I always told the duty officer where I would be bedding down for the night even if I was sleeping in a field. One night the unit I was working with fought into and secured a town. I bedded down for the night with my driver on the second floor of a building in the town. About 2 am I was awoken by someone shaking me. It was a messenger who advised me that I was to report at Bn. Hqs. at once. Since I could walk there, I told Amberger to get some sleep and I would be back when finished. I stepped out of the building to see the flashes of shell explosions in the distance and the noise of explosions and occasional MG and rifle fire. As I walked in the darkness lit only by the red glow of burning buildings my skin practically crawled

as I anticipated the challenge –Halt! Give the Password. It was an uncomfortable feeling until the challenge came which it did several times. At Bn Hqs the BN C.O. had an order for me for the next day that I considered not only suicidal but a tactical blunder as well. He refused to take any advice or listen to my objections so I called Captain. Fenstermacher and explained the situation to him. He told me to stand pat and he would call Colonel Tyschen, who then contacted the Battalion. C.O. and ordered him to consider my advice on the tactical support that I could really provide. After discussion with the C.O. on the tactics for the next day he agreed to a modified plan and I returned to my sleeping bag still concerned for my safety while walking in the dark in a combat area.

My brother Clinton wrote me about an incident that had him shaken and very upset. The incident also really upset my family in W.Va. Clinton was a Technician 5 assigned to a field hospital in France. He was a radiologist having taken his training at a hospital in Memphis, Tenn. He wrote to me that one day a Doctor at the field hospital came to him and told him that they had a dead officer, a Captain of Infantry, by the name of Gregory from W. Va. He suggested that Clinton might want to determine if the dead officer was in fact his brother who he knew to be in the Infantry in France. Clinton wrote to me, that with his heart in his throat, he went immediately to see the body and was very happy and relieved to see that it was not me on that slab. He said he did not know the officer and could not find out anything else about him. Meanwhile, at that time, the family in Morgantown began receiving strange phone calls from friends, acquaintances and neighbors. Mom said that she could not understand why so many people called every day to talk with her and offer to help in any way they could. Finally, Mrs Ridgeway, our neighbor who worked for the Red Cross, came over and told mom that it had been on the Radio several times that an officer named Charles Gregory from Morgantown had been killed in action in Europe and that she had heard the radio report herself. Mrs Ridgeway immediately began checking the report out her self and learned that there had been such a person killed in action by that name who came from a town near Morgantown. She had wanted to check the report thoroughly before she came over to talk with Mom. Of, course, mom was glad that she had

not heard it on the radio herself as initially she and the family would have been emotionally devastated until they could have found out the truth.

Sometime after we were in combat, Frank, who was Catholic, said he was going to Mass one Sunday morning and invited me to go with him. Since there were no other services that I knew about I decided to go with Frank. The Mass was being held in a small clearing in the woods near the front lines. A few chairs and benches had been procured from some where and logs were abundant. I was surprised at the large number of soldiers who came to the Mass. As the service proceeded I looked around at all the soldiers in their steel helmets who were cradling their M1 rifles between their knees listening intently as the service began. For some reason the whole thing struck me as being somewhat unreal, yet there we were. The service had been underway about ten minutes when we heard shells come whizzing in and exploding nearby. All the worshipers swiftly disappeared into the woods and the Mass was concluded. So ended my first Sunday Church service in France.

BATTLE FOR BITCHE

As we came to about the middle of Dec. 44 our existence had been one of continuous combat as we fought the enemy, the elements, discomfort, lack of food, sleep and other adverse elements. It was filled with long days of fighting and moving and doing it all over again, time after time, and the long nights of loneliness and boredom. It was a blur of small villages, mountains, forests, streams and farms in the countryside.

Rain was still falling on a dreary day on Dec.6, 1944 when the 399th Infantry Regiment received orders to push the attack in the vicinity of Wingen toward Lemberg. As we pressed the attack I was attached to one of the two attacking battalions and as we moved forward we ran into stiff resistance. We were in a continuous battle for three days and nights when on about Dec. 9th our units finally secured Lemberg after a day of fierce house to house fighting in which we fired directly into cellars with our guns and tanks. As we moved forward we came up against the Maginot Line which the Germans had converted to their use and was now a major obstacle in our path. While in School I had read all about the Maginot line the French constructed to deter the Germans but I was not prepared for what I first saw. It was enormous with huge fortifications and pillboxes.

On Dec. 15, 1944 Amberger and I made our way to a portion of the front line in our area of attack and leaving the jeep we walked forward as he wanted to see the famed Maginot Line. We came up to where we could see some of the fortifications and later we sat on the forward brow of a hill where we could observe the activity and still have some concealment. Our attention was concentrated on one large concrete pillbox that rose from the ground on top of a barren hill. We saw a large gun protruding from the round pillbox swing around and fire in our direction with the shell whizzing overhead as it sped toward its intended target. The pillbox then slowly dropped down into the ground and disappeared from sight. After a short interval the pillbox would again appear rising up to fire and repeat the process. Shortly thereafter I observed a big 240 mm cannon slowly come up the dirt road. The gun was in two parts on two

big trucks and the crew immediately started getting the cannon ready to fire. As they were working I walked over and talked with the Lt. in charge. He said that he had orders to knock out the gun turret of the pillbox and to accomplish that mission he had to knock the turret off its tracks so it could not move up or down. He told me that he had to knock out the turret with just a few rounds because as soon as he fired the first round he would draw artillery fire and from any enemy planes if they were around. Setting up his gun and readying it to fire was a slow process so I could see why he was so worried. The turret came up and fired at which time, as we all covered our ears, the 240 fired at the turret. There was a huge blast and flash of light and I saw the huge shell arch through the air hit the turret and bounce off. The cat and mouse game continued with the shells exploding and bouncing off the turret. The Lt. was getting very nervous and lowered his gun and after two more rounds one hit right at the base of the turret and jammed it so it could not move. He then put three more rounds into the turret and ordered his men to pack up to go home. The gun in the turret could still fire but could not move around. We left them packing up the big gun and returned to our war.

We had fought our way to within a few miles of Bitche and our regiment was nearing the time for our assault on the town and the fortifications surrounding the town. Bitch is a very old town that sat securely on a hilltop. One morning Lt. Pierce and I were summoned to Battalion Hq. The C.O. informed us that there was a Tiger tank on the forward outskirts of Bitche that hide behind some buildings in the town. The tank would appear and fire at us and then it would retreat behind the buildings making it impossible for our artillery or mortars to zero in on it. Since the regiment planned to use a hill, located about a mile or so to our front, as a jumping off place for our assault he ordered us to reconnoiter the hill for places to spread out our gun positions to support the initial phase of the attack. Most importantly he wanted us to move up at least one gun and knock out the tank when it came out to fire at us. The hill, which was to our front, was heavily forested and rose to an elevation of several hundred feet overlooking the city of Bitche. Frank and I drove to the base of the hill in his jeep and left it and his driver to await our return. We walked up the heavily wooded hill to the top commenting on

the terrain and how it could be used it for cover to launch the attack and looking for ways to bring our guns forward. It was cold and there was snow on the ground but as I recall the sun was shining. As we climbed the hill and walked around, we saw absolutely no one and we wondered aloud why we could not see any of our advance troops or patrols. As we talked, we had that sinking feeling that our troops had not been on the hill yet and we possibly were at least a mile ahead of our lead troops. We became more cautious but continued on our mission. Just over the brow of the hill facing Bitche the woods ended and it was clear land with clumps of trees and brush down the hill. Across a narrow valley the land rose again into the city of Bitche. We could not see the tank but we could locate its general position as the motor was running. We estimated that it was about 2,000 yards across the valley and at that distance having only the front of the tank as a target, we both believed that it would be almost impossible to damage the tank substantially, even if we hit it. At best with a lucky shot at that distance, we might knock off a tread that would result in the tank being immobilized, however the tank crew would be able return the fire. The 88 gun on the tank, being high explosive (HE) would probably get our gun and crew after we fired a couple rounds as it had a longer effective range. We could see a clump of trees about 50 yards down the hill and debated lowering a gun down there to provide cover for the gun and crew. We decided that was too risky as we would have to bring a truck forward of the woods and it would take time to winch the gun down making them a prime target for the tank as the noise and activity would not go unobserved. Having observed no one we continued to walk along in the edge of the woods for several hundred yards and then we walked about 10 yards to the front for a better view. As we stood looking about, Frank pointed to our right front and said, "Look Charlie, there are some of our men setting up a machine gun nest in that clump of bushes." We started walking toward the men and both of us stopped at the same moment sensing that something was wrong. There were five soldiers working with the MG and either they had not seen us or paid no attention to us. As we studied the soldiers I realized that their helmets were not shaped like ours and their overcoats were ankle length – GERMANS! We spun around and ran for the woods diving headlong into the

under brush. We crawled forward with cover to observe the Germans. They were occupied with their work and did not appear to have seen us. We discussed the situation as now we realized there could be other German soldiers in the woods and we could end up dead or POWs. We were fortunate the Germans had not spotted us and opened up on us with the MG, also, the question arose, would our troops have to fight into the woods to use them for cover for the assault. To say the least, we were both very nervous as we cautiously worked our way back to the rear of the woods and to our jeep. During this time we saw no one, no evidence of any activity and nothing to indicate anyone had been in the woods recently, i.e. no fresh broken branches, no fresh cut trees, no cigarette butts or paper.

Frank and I returned to Battalion. Hqs and reported our observations and findings to the Colonel and his staff in detail with our recommendations concerning the tank. They decided to try to hit the tank or pin it down with heavy artillery at the moment of the attack and to use the cover of the woods to launch the assault. We were ordered to move our units up to the woods to provide cover from a counter attack. We also learned that our troops had not occupied the hill at any time and we had been way to the front of them in no mans land. Frank and I recommended that they send patrols to reconnoiter the hill prior to moving the troops into the woods because of the MG nest we had seen. We do not think that was done as on the following morning when the troops started moving into the woods they came under heavy MG fire from hidden emplacements that the enemy had evidently set up during the night. What then followed was one long day of bitter fighting using all the resources we had before the enemy was dislodged and the hill taken. The Battalion had many killed and wounded taking that objective. We secured the hill that day but the attack on Bitche was delayed. Frank and I could only wonder if there had been some enemy on the hill that morning who for whatever reason allowed us to pass.

Sometime later we learned that another nearby AT unit had tried to winch a gun down a hill to an emplacement they had dug out. As they lowered the gun down the hill they left a round in the chamber with the breech open so they could fire in a hurry if a tank appeared. Two men were in front of the gun guiding it when it broke loose, hit the emplacement causing the breech to

snap shut and the gun fired. The men in front lost some hearing from the muzzle blast, the enemy opened fire on the activity wounding one man and it took the unit another day to recover the gun.

About Dec. 21, 1944, we were ordered to take up defensive positions. We had not yet attacked Bitche but the "Battle of the Bulge" was in progress and to stop the Germans all of our Corps artillery and many of our ground troops were transferred to that area. We were assigned our areas and working with a battalion I set up my squads in defensive positions on the flank of the regiment.

I recall for a short period of time Frank and I, our Platoon Sgt. and our drivers stayed in an old stone farm house that was deserted. Since the house was mostly empty of furniture we just threw our bedrolls on the floor. One room in the house had a wood burning stove so we had heat. There was an outhouse attached to the back of the house with most of the rood and side missing. We had to go out side to get to it and since it snowed several times, to use it we had to move the snow aside, therefore our trips were very brief. We attended meetings at Company headquarters and at Battalion headquarters and kept close contact with our squads. We spent most of the day with them seeing to their needs, checking guns to see if they were moved often and were kept operative in the cold and snow, and making any defensive changes necessary. Nights were boring times and I recall that I made a bracelet out of French one franc coins and shell casings to help pass the time.

We moved several times and I finally ended up with the 2nd Battalion on the extreme right flank of the regiment with the 106th Cavalry Group covering the area to our right. We were located several hundred yards behind what could be called the front with infantry troops in front of us. I had positioned my three AT guns and 50 caliber MGs to secure the area. One gun was placed down a hill about 150 yards from the top in a wooded area. The gun could cover the fork in the dirt road where one road lay in the direction of Camp de Bitche and other in the direction of Wingen and to save time we had stacked ammunition for the gun just to the rear of the gun. Just forward of this position was a small outpost manned by several riflemen and just to their front in the woods was the enemy. I placed the

second gun at the top of the draw from the other gun in a concealed location near a deserted wooden one story building. This gun could cover the first gun and its mission also and cover the secondary road that ran past from Lemberg to Bitche. The third gun I placed forward of the second gun in a concealed location where it could cover the second gun and the dirt road by it and also the secondary road. The crews of all three guns could rotate into the building for warmth. The machine gun was set up near the second gun to cover the draw and each squad had a bazooka plus rifles and I might add the building was unheated.

Christmas day of 1944 does not really stand out from any other day. It was a very cold clear day. Some of my men had decorated a small tree with paper, shells and what ever they could find and they were daily getting packages from home. I got a package and it had some fudge, cookies, gum and a wool OD sweater that I needed to layer against the cold. All the meals had to be brought forward from the company headquarters area and served to the men in their positions and I usually ate with one of the squads. The Christmas meal I do not recall as being anything outstanding but I do recall it was not the same menu as printed in the Stars and Stripes for the ETO.

We had reached a situation where we practically rubbed elbows with the Germans. Patrols went out daily and nightly by both sides but as the New Year neared the enemy patrols became more aggressive. We continued to receive information that the Germans were reinforcing, had become more active all along the line and that we could expect an attack at any time. The snow on the ground was now about two feet and it was very cold. The men were becoming apprehensive from all the rumors of an attack so to keep them busy we had to use our imagination. The guns could not be dug in as the ground was frozen and explosives were the only way to make a hole, so we constructed some barricades for the men. The checks on gun, ability to operate, and ammo were made many times a day as was the ability to swing it in a circle of 360 degrees. We had heard that if the Germans did attack, it would be after midnight, most likely early in the morning of Jan. 1, as reportedly Hitler thought all Americans, especially the soldiers, got drunk on New Years eve and would be in no condition to fight.

We were still sleeping in the old house where we had a field phone to Hqs. but we decided to move in with our squads to have direct command in case of an attack. We had small radios though they were not too reliable and we had messengers to communicate with Hqs. When I say small radios, I mean they were small for their time. Actually, they were about 4 times the size of a quart container and were very clumsy to carry and use. Most of the time they did not work due to interference. Early on New Years eve day we put our bedrolls and personal items into our jeeps and we all moved to our platoon areas. As I recall, Lt. Pierce and his platoon were just forward of my position and off to the left covering other avenues of approach.

December 31, 1944 dawned cloudy and cold. The snow began falling and continued all day laying down a very heavy snowfall that drifted deeply in some places especially in the woods. We had to be concerned with possible moves or with change in locations so the men had to work all day keeping open lanes for the movement of the trucks and especially the guns. The men tried to keep their spirits high offering the usual advice: don't take out any long term magazine subs, don't start reading any continued stories and don't begin reading a novel. As the day progressed everyone became tenser and the weather worse. We were given one hot meal that day as I recall and then were issued several days supply of K rations. I had moved in with my 2nd Squad next to the building on the hill top where I could see both my other squads. Oh yes, the dirt road that ran down by the first squad had been mined about half way down the hill. Late in the afternoon Frank and I walked forward to talk to some of the officers with the troops dug in on the front line. All fully expected the attack to come sometime soon. We knew some German troops had been issued the white covering their mountain troops used that covered the helmet and clothing. We discussed the difficulty that would pose as we looked over the front landscape and lamented the fact that we did not have the same equipment to make us harder to see in the snow. Later as dusk was setting in and the snow still falling, Frank and I stood at the edge of a field to look and listen intently one more time before joining our units and readying for the fight to come.

As dark fell I checked each squad one more time instructing that at least two men man the guns at all times, then I joined the

second squad. I went into the building and lay on the floor to get some rest. Everyone was trying to stay warm and some men read, some wrote letters, and others talked in muted voices. About 10:30 p.m. I went outside to look around when suddenly I saw flares in the distance to the front and heard bursts of small arms and MG fire. I could distinctly hear the burp of enemy MGs firing. Then shells started coming in to our area. I immediately ordered all men to their posts and cleared the building so one shell would not get them all. I could hear the firing intensifying and the artillery fire increasing, also flares going up all along the front. The noise of battle grew louder as I watched the flashes of light as shells exploded in the distance and nearby. At last, speculation was past, we were in the opening moments of the "Battle of the Little Bulge" or to the Germans code named "Nordwind".

I could now hear small arms and MG fire forward of my gun position down the draw so I moved forward to where I could see the gun and what was happening. I saw an injured man walking up the road toward the aid station and he advised me that the rifle outpost had come under direct enemy fire as had my gun position. I called to the Sgt. and we started running down the hill. About half way down we ran into a soldier who had been shot in the jaw and he tried to talk to us. Finally we understood that brave man was trying to warn us of the minefield in the road. He was in bad shape so I offered to get the jeep and drive him to the aid station but he insisted he could walk and he continued up the hill. Many times I have wondered what happened to that man as I am sure he must have been in shock. We got to the gun as bullets were zipping past and the men were waiting for instructions. One of the men from the outpost came up and told us that they had been ordered to fall back and there would be no one between our position and the enemy. I told my Sgt. to run up the hill and get the jeep while some the men got the gun ready to be towed. I sent the rest of the men to move the mines in the road and stay on the side to replace them when we got past with the gun. When the gun was ready to hook up I sent the rest of the men up the hill. The Sgt. arrived with the jeep and we hooked the gun to the jeep. I got into the jeep to drive and saw the Sgt. was going to try to load the ammunition. At the same time I saw the enemy emerging from the woods to our front. I

yelled at him to leave the ammo and dive into the jeep, which he did and we roared off just as the soldiers opened fire on us. Fortunately we got to the top of the hill, the mines were replaced and I held the gun in reserve behind the building. Mean while one of our weapons companies set up two MGs to our rear side so it fired down the draw and across our front holding the enemy at bay. I went into the building where some of the men were trying to get warmed as it was very cold and still snowing at times. Our platoon medic called, of course, Doc was lying in a corner in his sleeping bag. I said, "Doc, the Germans are coming up the hill". He replied, "Lt. wake me up when they come through the door". I think he really meant it.

It was now well after midnight and it was now a New Year, The night was alive with the sounds and sights of an all out battle. We strained our ears trying to pick up any sounds that would indicate the movement of tanks or SPs, but none were heard. About 3:30 a.m. a messenger told me to report to Battalion Hqs where all the officers were informed that our front had been hit by two German Divisions, that the attack spilled through on our right flank hitting the Recon Gp hard and driving them back and actually capturing a new unit to combat in the town of Wingen at our rear. Elements of the 36th Div. then recaptured Wingen taking the Germans prisoners and freeing our men. Units of that Div. were to take our positions and attack the Germans in the area patrolled by the Recon Gp. My position was to be taken over and at that time I was to move back to a designated place to receive new orders. After I returned to my platoon a messenger arrived and took me to a Lt. from a rifle company of the 36th Div. The Lt. and I with two of his men went forward to reconnoiter in the woods even though we knew the woods were full of Germans. He appeared totally unconcerned of any danger. I noticed he did not carry a pistol or carbine but carried only a fancy swagger stick in his hands. I asked him if he would not be better prepared if he were armed in case we should meet an enemy patrol. He curtly replied, "My job is to lead and make decisions, not to fight. If my men cannot protect me, we are finished anyhow". I was not used to that attitude as most officers I knew preferred to help decide their own fate.

I was early morning, still dark and very cold, and the deep snow made it difficult to move about. The Lt. said his men were

in place and we could move so I ordered the men to hook up the guns, load the ammo and them selves and stay at least 50 yards apart as we moved to a new location. We traveled to the area specified and came upon an old deserted tavern. Taking a big chance, I let the men go inside as we were chilled to the very bone, were hungry and had not been to bed that night. In side we found a Lt. and a platoon from a rifle company. Ever ingenious the men had built a fire on the floor in the middle of the room and were warming themselves. I spoke with the officer and was standing by the bar when my platoon Sgt. came over and said that I looked cold. "Would the Lt. like something to warm him up", he asked me. A bit wary, I told him I would if it would do the job. He pulled out a bottle with colorless liquid and poured about 2 ounces in a glass. Assuring me that it was safe and effective, he insisted that I drink it right down to get the best effect. Relying on the Sgt. I did as he suggested and drank it down. WRONG! I thought I was on fire and struggled to get my breath. "What is that stuff Sgt", I ask as my body flushed and warmed up. He merely poured some of it in a pool on the bar and lit it with a match. It burned with a beautiful flame. Pure alcohol one hundred and fifty proof he replied as he walked off. I was watching the men warming around the fire when suddenly the fire completely disappeared. The stunned look on the faces of the men was priceless as they contemplated the disappearance of the fire. No one even moved for a long time. The fire had burned through the floor and dropped to the ground below. No real loss for at that time we heard shells coming in and every one scattered outside for cover without a word being said.

I must confess that with the bitter cold, deep snow and cold wind, fighting the enemy seemed like a cruel joke to us as our survival had become a way of life. My clothing was really inadequate for the cold we experienced. I have never been so cold and hope never again to experience that as I developed a permanent ache in my right shoulder from hunching up in the wind. In this statement I am not alone as all my men agreed totally.

During the day and night of Jan. 1 and 2, we moved and repositioned ourselves several times as our unit moved with a Battalion that counter attack the enemy. The events of that short

period are now just a blur of unpleasant experiences that I cannot recall in any detail today. I do recall that with the constant moving and fighting we were tired, hungry and sleepy, having gone the better part of three days and nights without any. I recall spending a lot of time at Bn and Co Hqs, leading my squads on poor roads through wooded areas fighting the snow, setting up gun positions, shells bursting near by and on us and the cold, always the snow and the cold.

Finally after three days the German offensive was repulsed and our front lines had now become stable. We were ordered to go into defensive positions to await the outcome of the Battle of the Bulge and restoration of our artillery and troops. As I recall they did not anticipated that we would be attacking anytime soon and most likely not before the snow was gone and the ground firm again. We were given specific defensive assignments that we manned. I believe those positions were between the hill overlooking Bitche that Frank and I reconnoitered and the old farm house we had used. Since it was close to our guns we used the old house for sleeping quarters. The guns were dug in to protect them and the men dug or blasted out large holes in the ground they covered with timbers for protection and warmth. Life was not a gimme as there were snipers and the interdiction shelling day and night. At another unit near us they had the gun dug in and had a dugout constructed behind the gun. A shell came in and landed on the breech of the gun destroying it and killing one of the men in the dugout. One day some time late one of the men manning a gun in our third platoon strayed into the woods and was never seen again. They searched for him but could find no clues as to what happened to him. He just disappeared. I never found out if his fate was ultimately determined.

Early one morning Lt. Pierce and I were called to regimental Hqs to meet with the C.O. He told us that ultimately we would be attacking the Germans and he wanted more fire power on the front line during the initial assault. He informed us that he had secured a large quantity of British High Explosive (HE) shells and he had determined that the shell would fit the breech of our AT guns sufficiently to be fired out of the gun. Since the AT gun is a direct fire weapon he envisioned moving the guns right up among the rifle companies and firing directly at the Germans

with the HE.

The 57 mm Anti-Tank gun is actually a large rifle that fires directly at a target it can see and sight on and the shell travels in a flat trajectory directly to the target affected only by gravity. It is not fired in an arch. Also, the gun has a very high muzzle velocity when fired. Its mission is to destroy tanks, armored vehicles, SPs and other vehicles. It is more of a defensive weapon than an attack weapon. Originally it fired a "Ball" round which was a large steel bullet with a sharp nose and later Armor Piercing Contact (APC) which is the same bullet with an explosive charge on the end to weaken the armor before the steel slug hits.

Frank and I tried to reason with the Colonel. We point out that the AT guns were too cumbersome to use in that manner as once an attempt was made to place them in the lines we would draw heavy fire on our positions. Even if we were successful in getting the guns in place, once his troops moved forward we would have to quit firing as we could not fire over them. Also, the gun could not be moved by hand by its crew fast enough to keep up with the rifle companies. Most likely the gun would come under enemy fire after it opened up and it would be able to fire for a limited time before it would have to be moved. The Colonel was adamant and ordered us to move up with a designated unit the next morning and test the HE against some German positions.

Early the next morning we set out as ordered. Frank, me, his platoon Sgt, driver and one of his squads with truck, gun and Ball, APC and HE shells. The place the Colonel selected was a former Cavalry Post consisting of barns and buildings on a hilltop with excellent view of the area. There was an outpost consisting of artillery observers and a rifle unit posted on the hill. We talked with them to obtain all the information on the layout and the enemy positions. The hill overlooked a valley and a hill on the opposite side from us that the Germans occupied. Leaving the men, vehicles and gun, we worked our way into an old horse barn on the forward edge of the post. There was a large hole in the end of the barn and we could see the enemy emplacements on the hill opposite us. We could see fox holes on the forward slope of the hill and just behind were woods and we could make out two MG nests. There were several soldiers

walking around at the edge of the woods. Returning to our men, we brought the gun forward by hand to avoid detection and moved it into position at the end of the barn to fire through the hole. Using our maps we estimated the distance from the gun to the Germans at about 2,700 yards. Once the gun was readied for action, we moved outside the barn to observe and direct fire. We ordered the Sgt. to set the gun for that range and fire at one of the suspected MG nests with ball ammo and when they were zeroed in on the nest he should immediately switch and fire one round of the British HE. I should note that it was a gloomy gray overcast day with a slight mist in the air. The air had a heavy feel that we believed was crucial to what latter happened. When Frank and I inspected the HE rounds, being experienced in mortars, I pointed out to Frank that the rounds were not bore safe, were armed when placed in the chamber of the gun and could explode on contact with any thing. The gun crew performed well placing the first round fired within 25 yards of the target and they immediately follow with a round of HE at the target. We were watching intently and were startled when the round exploded about 100 yards short of the target. Supposing a variance in weight between the ball and HE we called to elevate 100 yards and fire another HE which was carried out quickly. This time we were astounded to see the round explode about 2200 yards from the gun.

For a little fun time we ask the Sgt. to switch to ball and try to put the round into one of the foxholes we could see and if successful to switch and fire one round of HE. The second round of ball they fired hit directly in the back of the foxhole and four surprised German soldiers popped up out of the hole and looked toward us. At that moment the crew fired a round of HE that exploded with a puff of black smoke and red fire about 1500 yards from us. Staring at this the four men, without boots or coats, turned and ran up the hill for the woods as if pursued by the Devil. Frank and I were becoming concerned and after discussing the possible reasons we decided to fire one more round of HE to test our theory. The round was fired and exploded with concussion and a loud boom about 700 yards from us. Since we had been firing for a considerable time we ordered the crew to take the gun and fall back as retaliatory fire would be coming in soon. Of course, the men manning the

outpost were not happy about the fire we brought down on the area. We reported to the Colonel that use of the HE could endanger the troops he wanted to help. It was our theory that the shells were being exploded by air pressure building on the contact point due to the high velocity at which it was traveling, therefore firing on a rainy day would render firing the ammo unsafe. We were concerned that under the right set of circumstances the shell could actually go off in the barrel of the gun or just as it left the barrel and encountered the muzzle blast. The shell was designed for a low velocity British shorter barrel gun. The Colonel realizing the danger dropped the idea and we were fortunate no one got injured with that experiment.

In the area that we occupied there were several old German cavalry outposts. I was told by one of our officers that some of the men had located a large barrel of mash that was fermenting and would be used to brew schnapps. A couple of the men had actually taken their canteen cups and drawn liquid off the fermenting mass and drank it. They became so drunk one Sgt. had to knock out one of the men to subdue him. One Sgt. took his submachine gun and riddled the bottom of the tank thus draining all the liquid out of the barrel. That ended that, they thought. The weather was cold and damp, so I should have been suspicious when my Sgt. was able to warm my spirits with an occasional drink of 150 proof. One day I was called to Battalion Headquarters and informally told by a staff officer that someone close to me was operating an illegal moonshine still. The officer said that the soldier was selling moonshine for 25 cents a canteen and had half the troops in the foxholes loaded and that I had better take some action before it became official.

At that time part of my men and Lt. Pierce's men were using an old time worn barn in a field by a dirt road as a base of operations. I discussed the matter with Frank and we drove to the barn to begin our search for the still. I had never been into the basement of the stone barn so we went down into it and to our surprise we found a still. We determined that our men had been making moonshine alcohol and selling it to the troops in the line for 25 cents per canteen. Frank and I were mortified that this had taken place practically under our feet and we did not know about it while others knew all about it. Rather than courts martial the Sgt. and others we let it go on their promise not to

engage in such conduct again and that the still would be destroyed immediately along with any remaining alcohol. We did learn that the Sgt. found out about the barrel of mash at the cavalry outpost and had taken several five gallon water cans to the post and filled them with the now dried mash. On return he added water to the cans and the additional fermentation was sufficient to allow him to actually distill it into a potent potato schnapps. In addition to the still the vats of mash at the post were now completely destroyed.

Even in a defensive line it is necessary to move locations at times for better fields of fire or many other reasons. Lt. Pierce had moved several times and we now had a squad from each platoon close to each other in a forward position. To reach our squads it was necessary to cross an open space to reach cover. There was an abandoned farm house to the right as we crossed the space about 800 yards distance which usually was occupied by the Germans during the day and by our troops at night. The Germans installed a MG nest in the house. Every day we would watch them and when ready we would dash across the open space as the MG crew opened up on us and tried to track us as we ran but we always out ran them. This was repeated at least twice a day for the several days we occupied the positions. We talked about it and wondered if the MG crew was seriously trying to hit us or just laughing thinking that they were scaring us into running faster. Who knows? They were probably just as bored as we were.

Occupying a defensive position is dull and boring and I had a hard time keeping the men focused. Because of the dangers from mines, snipers and enemy patrols, I ordered my men to stay with the gun and specifically, not to wander around. One nice sunny day a few of the men brought one of my men, Paul Mangold, to the aid station for treatment as he was bleeding from the mouth and nose. They were an apologetic group as they related that it being a nice day, for a change, they went sight seeing in their area and Paul had stepped on an anti-personnel mine. Fortunately for Paul the mine evidently had become wet from the rain and snow and could not explode with full power. Instead of blowing his leg off, it had just enough explosive power to blow his leg into the air causing his knee to strike him in the face with such force that he was knocked completely head over

heels. It did not appear that Paul had sustained serious damage and would be sore for a few days. The contrite men learned a good lesson and fortunately not the hardest way.

Many years later I spent time with Paul at reunions. He said that the incident had seriously damaged his leg and hip resulting in problems and pain for the rest of his life. The government had awarded him a partial disability because of the injury.

Time was passing as we neared the middle of March 1945 it became apparent we would go on the offense soon as new Divisions and Support units were beginning to move into our area. We were giving up some positions, moving to other positions, consolidating and bringing the unit up to combat status. Maps were one item that were in short supply, especially updated maps drawn to the proper scale. I was very fortunate to be able to secure maps on a timely basis as I depended on them completely when working with different battalions and moving between and with them.

One bright sunny day in early March, I was driving along in my jeep looking for a certain area. I was looking for a new position to relocate my Platoon as there were many new troops moving into our zone. I had stopped by the side of a dirt road to consult my map which I had spread out on the hood of the jeep, when I observed a full Colonel walking down the dirt road toward us. The Colonel asked if I knew where a certain unit's Command Post (CP) was located. I did not know specifically but I had seen the Unit signs along the way so I pointed out the general area to him. He then asked to see my map which I let him study and after doing so he ask me if he could have the map. I told him no way as it was essential to the work that I was doing. He said, "I guess there is no use to pull rank?" I assured him that under no circumstances would I part with the map and suggested that he go to his own unit supply office and get one for himself. He said that his unit could only get a limited number of the maps as they were new to combat. He then offered me money and whiskey for the map that I refused as I needed the map to accomplish my own mission. He refused my offer to drive him to find the unit CP and the last I saw he was walking down the dirt road. Guess What? I later learned that the Colonel was the Regimental C.O. and he was looking for his own CP.

Speaking of money and whiskey reminds me of an incident

that happened just before Christmas. We were called up to Company Headquarters for a conference and when it was finished and we were leaving we were given a bottle of Four Feathers whiskey. Captain explained that there was money left in the officer's fund when we left Fort Bragg so they just bought every officer a bottle of whiskey. As I recall, the road to the CP had not been cleared of mines so I had to leave my jeep and walk the last mile or so to it. I left after the conference and was walking down the side of the road in the cold and snow to my jeep. I was carrying the bottle of whiskey by the neck and as I walked along, I was stopped by a soldier. He inquired as to where I had gotten the bottle and whether he could get any. When I explained how I got it, he pulled out a twenty dollar bill and offered it to me for the whiskey. I refused and other soldiers joined the bidding and soon the price was up to fifty dollars. Fortunately, just then Charlie pulled up in the jeep so I jumped in and we took off. I was getting a little nervous as the bidding was getting out of hand. I passed the bottle around the squad I was staying with and it was emptied very quickly.

At last on March 15th the inactivity was over as we launched the attack with our mission being Bitche which we had securely in hand by March 17th and then the men made short work of the Siefried Line and we turned our sights toward Germany. The movement and fighting was swift and fast as we fought our way to the Rhine River. Some days the infantry units had to be trucked ahead as the situation moved swiftly.

One day while we were moving fast, we came to a small town where traffic was all backed up. I recall that we were sitting in our vehicles in a narrow street in the town. We did not like sitting in a line like that as it invited artillery fire. As we moved forward a short distance I could see French units coming from our right and roaring down the road ahead of us. The French Army was on our right and was to protect that side of us. They had fallen behind so they were moving through our Division to leapfrog and attack the Germans. We were told they had captured a vital city and had then partied for three days and having fallen well back of us they had to catch up. They brought a lot of fire on us from the movement of tanks and vehicles.

Some time after we captured Bitche and continued toward the Rhine, we had been fighting and moving day and nights with

very little sleep and food. Due to the fast changing situation and the movement of the troops I supported, I had to constantly be in the front lines to keep abreast of the situation, maintain constant contact with Battalion and Company Headquarters., reconnoiter for support positions and move my squads into selected positions. After three busy days my driver and I drove into a small town after it was dark, about 6:00 p.m. Our troops had been attacking the town since early afternoon and I could hear explosions and small arms fire but the town seemed secure. Some soldiers directed me to the Battalion CP where I talked with the Captain on duty. He assured me that our troops controlled most of the town and they would finish cleaning it out before they quit for the night. He could easily see that we were bone weary so he suggested that we find a nearby house and grab some sleep. Sounded like a good idea to me as sleep seemed to be one necessity that we could never put to use. We drove about one block and backed the jeep down a very narrow alley right beside a basement door. We went down into the basement, spread our sleeping bags on the stone floor and with the music of rifle and MG fire in our ears we both dropped off into a deep sleep. I awoken early before dawn and leaving Amberger sleeping I went down the alley to the main street with the intention of finding out if any hot coffee had been brought up for the troops. When I got to the street I looked to the left, the way we had come, and saw no one. Looking to my right I was stunned to see a squad of soldiers smoking and leaning against the buildings about a block away, and they had on those odd shaped helmets and long overcoats. GERMANS! I could also see many other soldiers moving about further up the street. My heart pumped fast as I assessed the situation realizing we were in a difficult position but fear was not one of my thoughts. I was concerned since I did not know whether the enemy controlled the entire town but had to assume that they did. I went back to the basement and explained the situation to Charlie. We threw our bedrolls into the jeep and got in ourselves. I explained to Charlie that we must assume the enemy had not had time to spot our jeep, but the moment the motor started they would be alerted to our presence. I told him we had to move fast so, the moment the motor kicked over he should drive to the street, turn left and head for the hill behind the town as our troops were last

known to be in that area. As we came roaring out of the alley and turned I looked at the soldiers down the street and the stunned expressions on their faces was laughable, except I knew the bullets would come flying in just a few seconds. As we roared down the street German soldiers coming out of houses just stared at us in utter amazement. It seemed to us like eternity, but it really happened so fast that no shots were fired. A few more blocks and we saw American soldiers who also looked at us in complete bewilderment. They directed us to the Battalion CP where I saw the same Captain. He gave us that cup of coffee I was looking for and in his cryptic way advised us that the Germans had retaken that part of the town. He said he had not forgotten that we were sleeping nearby but with the fighting going on they did not have time to look for us. He found our story amusing and had a good laugh at our expense.

On another extremely dark night (no head lights remember) Amberger and I were driving down a road, trying to find the regimental CP. We popped over the usual hill into the outskirts of a small town. It was eerie, seeing forms of men moving around, as it appeared that the whole town was ablaze. As we approached the fire we were suddenly surrounded by men in uniforms and they were not Americans. Without words from me, Amberger spun the jeep around and roared back over the hill. I looked back but every one seemed busy with the fires. The incident reminded Charlie and I that we were getting just a little lax.

I clearly recall an instance when I was passing through a very small village located between two wooded hills. Along side the road were the usual small stone houses and out buildings. As we were in the town, a barrage of shells started falling on the town. My driver, Platoon Sgt. and myself bailed out of the jeep and headed for one of the houses for cover. The people inside had locked the door and would not open it. Meanwhile, shells were exploding about us. The Sgt. wanted revenge on the people who would not let us in, but realizing that the shelling was interdiction fire on the road junctions I insisted we leave the area at once.

One night I was called to battalion CP for briefing on battle plans for the next day. The CP was in a tent in the woods. The tent had black out curtains that had to be passed through to get

into the tent without showing any light. Inside the small tent it was very smoky from cigarette and lamp smoke and some of the men had stepped back outside to await the arrival of the Battalion CO who was at Regiment. One 2nd Lt. I knew only through briefings came back into the tent and suddenly I saw him waving a 45 caliber automatic pistol over his head. I could see the safety was not on so I moved to the perimeter of the tent. I recall a Captain telling him to put the pistol away and hearing the Lt. say the gun was not loaded. Just at that moment the Colonel came into the tent and seeing the Lt. waving the gun, without saying a word the Colonel threw himself forward and tackled the Lt. The pistol discharged into the air and I like most of the officers there, vacated that tent in a hurry. Order was later restored and the briefing was held minus one 2nd Lt. I do not know what happened to him but heard he had a lot of problems, as if we all did not have enough problems.

I will always remember those trips to regimental, battalion and company CPs many of which were made in the dead of night with no light over wooded roads with the noise and flashes of shells around the area. At these meetings the situation was explained using maps, the objectives for the next day or the continuing objective, order of attack and what each unit was expected to do. This placed a heavy burden on the officers present and I could almost see the agony that decisions would bring upon them. I would return to my platoon and have a briefing with all my NCOs as to what our unit would be expected to do and when. Trying to sleep those nights was next to impossible as the projected events of the next day were gone over many times in my mind. Some times the tense and nervous state that night would give me the GIs at least once. I was always glad when those long nights were over even though I knew the day would be more unpleasant.

As we progressed toward the Rhine River we were occasionally rotating into reserve. Later one afternoon, after several hard and long days, we pulled into a fair sized town and I was really bushed and sleepy. We were still taking prisoners even though were in reserve where we would be one or two days. I got the men settled down and issued orders as to what we would be doing and what they had to accomplish the next day. I specifically instructed them not to wander off and not to

mess with the civilians. After we had eaten, it was dark and being very tired I went into a room in a house, climbed into my bedroll and went to sleep. I slept sound all night awaking for the first time at daybreak. I spent the next day working with the men to get our equipment in shape to move out quickly and in the afternoon an Officer came to me and said he was a Criminal Investigation Department (CID) investigator. He said that a civilian girl had accused one of my men of rape. This did not set well with me as I was short of temper at the time and with a war going on here he was accusing one of my men of rape. I really became incensed when he practically accused me of having knowledge of it since he alleged that it happened right outside of an open window in the room where I was sleeping. I assured that officer that I did not condone rape and would not have deliberately slept through one if I had known about it. Actually the act was alleged to have happened in a stable over twenty yards distance. Needless to say, that officer and I had a very sharp and loud exchange of words. Since we had to move on, a hearing was scheduled for the next morning that ended when a hearing officer merely stated that my man was released to duty. I asked the soldier why he was released from the allegation. He told me that the girl was testifying and it appeared to be going against him so he requested that the hearing officer allow him ask a question which was allowed. He said that he told the girl that he could not recall the incident so, how did it happen to which she replied that he was too drunk so she performed the act herself. He said that was the end of the allegation. Before we left I determined that the girl made the complaint because our unit captured her brother an SS officer after he changed into civilian clothes and tried to escape. We then arrested her and turned her over to the authorities for action and I again counseled my men to steer clear of civilians.

As we neared the Rhine River we were still fighting pockets of resistance and taking many prisoners, however most of the Germans had withdrawn back of the river. Since all the bridges over the river had been destroyed the engineers had a couple of pontoon bridges built over the Rhine and they were subjected to interdiction shelling. Since an entire division with supporting units had to cross the river at the same point one can envision the bottle neck and the traffic jam that was ensuing at the rivers

edge. All units were held back in designated areas on combat alert until the MPs on duty signaled a unit to move out. We were very apprehensive over the possibility of enemy shelling and enemy planes strafing and bombing us as we moved to the river since once in line there was little we could do but abandon our vehicles and seek limited shelter along the road. As we approached Ludwigshafen, Germany, where we were to cross I recall that we were stalled along a road in a residential area of large upscale stone and brick homes. Across the road a ways was a cemetery. Fortunately, just once, some large long range shells came in and we all hit the ditches for protection. A couple of the shells landed in the cemetery and excavated many coffins and bodies that we could see strewn about.

We moved slowly on and at last the pontoon bridge came into sight, and what a sight it was. It was located next to a bridge across the river that had been blown up and the middle section was lying in the river.. As I observed the pontoon bridge moving up and down and swaying as the vehicles moved onto it, I am sure that my stomach did a flip flop. We had now reached a crucial point for us in this war. One misstep and we would be in the water unable to get out of all the heavy gear or we could tie up part of an army from crossing. The lanes laid on the pontoons seemed awful narrow to me. As we approached the bridge every thing became more hectic as the MPs directing traffic were screaming, soldiers were yelling orders and vehicles were revving up their motors to get on the bridge. Finally, it was our turn. I signaled my trucks to close up and stay close until we crossed. At last we were on that moving and swaying bridge. I looked at my driver who was a little pale and so tense that he had a "death grip" on the steering wheel. I was worried that one shell or bomb could take out our entire platoon but after what seemed an eternity we drove onto dry land again and needed no urging from the MPs to speed full tilt away from that river. We were now in Mannheim, Germany.

As the combat units crossed and fanned out pushing the attack further into Germany we were following an armored division and attacking isolated pockets of bypassed enemy, knocking them out and taking prisoners. We liberated many "slave labor" camps. I really felt sorry for those folks as they were starved, miserable and in poor health. They wanted us to

give them weapons so they could kill all the Germans. We had to physically restrain them at times.

I recall that we were given specific instructions to bypass Heidleberg as we drove toward Heilbronn. The drive to that city took several days of intense fighting, but was only a harbinger of things to come. One of our worst battles with the Germans defending their homeland was just down the road. It was the Battle for Heilbronn.

FIGHT TO THE END

As we moved forward the French II Corps was responsible for defending our right flank, as they covered the area generally to Strasbourg. The French forces were lagging behind us, thus leaving an open area, exposing our flank to counter attacks by the enemy from the side and rear. To protect the Division flank, the 399th Regiment was assigned to guard against enemy attacks on the flank while the rest of the Division pushed ahead. In the area assigned to me, it was my job to occupy positions that would enable me to deny use of all passable roads to the enemy. Stuck out on the flank of the Division in this manner we had lots of contact with the French as they came into or moved through our area.

Amberger and I were sitting in the jeep by the side of a narrow dirt road one morning as I surveyed a very broad expanse of land to our right that could easily be traversed by tanks or other vehicles. A jeep came by with a French officer and three men and they were towing a 57 mm AT gun that looked new from appearances and the tires on it. As they passed us we heard a loud bang and the right rear tire on the jeep went flat. The men got out of the jeep and began loudly talking to each other while waving their arms wildly about. The decision made, the men took the wheels off the gun, put one wheel on the jeep to replace the flat, placed the other wheel in the jeep, pushed the gun into the ditch and drove off down the road. I told Amberger that we would be court-martialed for such an act, but they probably would just get a new gun from supply. I was unhappy with what I saw so I reported the incident to Capt. Fenstemacher, who sent a detail out to retrieve the gun.

Frank told me that one day he and his driver were in his jeep sitting near a road junction. He observed a convoy of tanks and trucks bearing French officers and men come by and stop where the road forked just to their front. Two French Captains got out of different vehicles and began arguing, waving their arms about, and pointing up the roads. Finally they spread a map on the hood of a truck and continued the discussion. Abruptly they ended the discussion, folded the map and returned to their

vehicles. Frank was completely amazed when the tanks took one fork and the trucks took the other as they sped off. What a way to fight a war!

Advancing on the flank we would pass through many small villages, some as small as ten to twenty houses and out buildings. As we occupied some for defensive purposes, we were alert to an attack by the enemy especially if the French army units on our right were slow in keeping pace with us. We had heard that the French units had a tendency to attack the small villages without any advance scouting of them to determine who occupied the village. Late one afternoon we were having a conference at our company CP when Lt. Rathiel, third platoon commander, came into the CP. Lt. Rathiel was formerly a top Sgt. in the company and had received a battlefield commission and was now an officer in the company. He told us all that he had his platoon set up in a defensive position in a small village when his guards called his attention to the presence of an unknown unit on the crest of a hill nearby. Rathiel believed that they were French as they talked to each wildly waving their arms about. They had vehicles with mounted MGs but no tanks that he could see. All at once the men jumped into their vehicles and all sped toward the village with everyone in the attacking force firing wildly as they approached. Rathiel had one man who spoke French fluently but he could not shout over the melee. To protect his platoon, Rathiel ordered his AT gun to fire near the vehicles and when that did not stop them he ordered his MG and rifles to open fire which then caused the attacking force to halt. His man was then able to communicate with the French and inform them that they had displayed white flags to no avail and that a force of Americans occupied the village. The French officer was upset that some of his soldiers had been injured and insisted that he be allowed to sack the village which liberty was refused to him so he took his men and left the area. The French soldiers really loved to loot the villages they occupied and strip them bare of even the bed mattresses. Many times I observed their vehicles on the road loaded with their loot, even cows and chickens.

One day in Germany I recall that my platoon and Lt. Pierce's platoon converged at an exclusive restaurant in an old chateau located on a hill with a magnificent view. We were awaiting

orders from Captain Fenstemacher and were there for several hours. The men were allow to roam about if they did not leave the area. Some time later some of the men came up from the basement carrying bottles of champagne that they started drinking. We did not stop them as it was late in the afternoon and no chance we would see action that evening, however we told the NCOs to monitor the men. Frank and I had a couple glasses of the champagne that was excellent but we were careful to limit what we drank. A man, possibly the manager, ran around protesting every time the men came up from the cellar with more bottles. We thought the men had drank enough and were getting set to stop them when the order came to move out. As we were getting the men into the trucks the manager came up to us and requested that we pay for the bottles of champagne taken. Frank and I almost cracked up as the episode seemed out of step with reality. We are fighting a war with the Germans and here is a German civilian wanting payment for the champagne and none of that worthless American money, he demanded payment in good old Deutschmarks. Too bad I had not taken the advice of that tank Lt, at the bank. When we laughed at the situation, the manager informed us that our men had drank his best champagne which then sold for \$50.00 per bottle in NY. As we drove off the German was still yelling after us.

I recall early one morning Lt. Pierce, myself, and our drivers were sitting on top of a high hill. We could see vapor trails of planes high in the blue sky. The day was cold but clear with few clouds high in the sky. As we looked behind us the sky slowly filled with planes and it appeared that it was a mass of planes that would never end. We knew that they were flying in a corridor protected by fighter planes and when they reached a certain point all the bombers would peel out of formation and head to their targets. It was a magnificent sight that gave us a sense of pride and well being. We discussed how we would hate to be on the receiving end of those bombers.

One day is pretty much the same as another except, as they say, the scenery changes. Finally we arrived in the vicinity of Bockingen on the Neckar River. Across the river lies Heilbronn which was heavily defended by the Germans. Behind Heilbronn lay a line of high hills and ridges and along the river were many

large manufacturing and power plants. Crossing the Neckar would be dangerous business as the Germans had excellent observation of our activities from tall buildings in the area and from observation posts in the hills behind the town and were throwing artillery and mortars shell at every thing that moved. All the bridges across the river were destroyed and all pontoon bridges that the engineers constructed across the river were promptly blown up by the German artillery. One of our battalions and some support troops got across the river in boats during the night and the 399th became involved in one of the worst sustained battles we fought in the war. The fighting was hand to hand and house to house as the enemy constantly counter attacked in force and contested every foot of real estate. To get our vehicles and big guns across the river, the engineers built small ferries by constructing rafts on pontoons powered by an outboard motor. The small ferries could only take one vehicle at a time and they ran continuously regardless of the artillery and mortar shells. Some of them were knocked out so a chemical smoke company was brought in to provide a continuous smoke screen over the river crossings.

We had been moving forward slowly by unit, keeping spread out to avoid the shells that fortunately were falling to our front. At last I was told to move to the river, cross it and find a place to set up in a designated area on the other side. As we approached the river's bank, what I saw there made me so apprehensive my stomach started churning. The river's bank was a busy place to say the least. German shells came in and exploded all around but they seemed to just be ignored by the men working on the bank and operating the ferries on the river. The area was covered with smoke that reduced visibility and then there were those small ferries on pontoons with outboard motors that looked like they could capsize at any moment. I was instructed to move forward onto a ferry. My three trucks and men would come over each on a separate ferry. I could see that Amberger was very apprehensive as we inched onto the ferry but he got us on it. The two soldiers manning the ferry seemed obvious to what was going on about them. The noise level was deafening and there was a constant bedlam of small arms and MG fire on the far bank and the constant explosion of shells. A shell landing in the river near could capsize us. In a high state of tenseness we

slowly inched across the river and finally drove onto the far bank. We needed no urging to clear the area and moved down river. I watched as my squads came across and had them occupy an area down the river while I went ahead to reconnoiter. A bunch of nervous men were starting to talk about the crossing and unwind. It is strange how the passing through a very dangerous and possibly tragic episode leaves one feeling almost safe and secure.

I had not been able to get a map of this area so I was operating on some directions I had been given. I knew where the Battalion was attacking and was trying to locate their right flank to set up and protect it. We drove down river and following the directions I had, we turned left and soon realized that we had poor directions or the scenery was changing as large buildings became a pile of rubble in seconds. As we tried to orient ourselves we continued to drive through the cluttered and torn up streets. After about three blocks we came into a square surrounded by multistoried buildings. I decided to drive around the square that was filled with rubble, burned out vehicles and many dead soldiers both American and German. Quickly the horrified realization hit me when I saw the bodies, that I was smack in the middle of the battle with the Germans on one side and our guys on the other side of that square. I looked at Amberger and said, "Charlie, I think we are in the wrong place, again, they are still fighting for this territory". There must have been a momentary lull in the fighting because about then the bullets started whizzing around and without any urging by me, Amberger accelerated that jeep off the square and back toward the river.

We turned in a southerly direction and passed many factories and plants and came upon a complex of buildings with a tower several stories tall. Intending to use the tower to familiarize myself with the area, we slowly climbed up the tower and discovered at the top two American soldiers using the tower as an observation post. I looked out from the tower to orient myself as to where I was and where I wanted to go. We frequently had to duck as the enemy would score a hit on the tower with what I thought to be 40 or 60 mm shells. We started to leave the OP when the men said, "Hey, if you want to see something amazing, stay a few minutes and watch!". We stayed and later observed

a huge gun on a railroad flat car slowly emerge from a tunnel in one of the large hills in the distance behind the town. The big gun fired and even though it was at a distance the black smoke and fire from the gun was spectacular. The gun fired with a low muzzle velocity so we were able to watch the shell leave the muzzle and travel through the air resembling a tank cylinder on a railroad car. We tracked it as it slowly rose up and descended, disappearing into a four or five story building which just seemed to suddenly disintegrate into a pile of rubble. We watched the gun fire three more rounds and left as MG fire rattled off the tower. I finally located my sector and got my men in position ready to fight.

One or two days of action followed in which there was little time for sleep and little food to eat following our river crossing. I recall we came to a point where the battalion swung to the left and attacked over open terrain, sparsely wooded areas and orchard type fields for several miles. Suddenly they stopped moving and I could hear an 88 firing. Leaving my platoon in a defensive position about a mile behind I drove a ways and then proceeded on foot to the rifle company that was pinned down by MG nests and two 88s firing, one from a tank and one from an SP. I joined up with the Company C.O., a Captain I had known since Bragg, and offered to bring up my platoon and guns and try to knock out the 88s. The Captain said he appreciated my offer of help but said that his men had been fighting for days with very little rest or sleep. He said he just wanted to knock it off for the day, try to get some hot food brought up for his men and then let them get as much sleep as possible when it got dark. It was a warm spring day with the sun shining and it was relatively dry. He looked at me intently as the consequences of my offer suddenly dawned on him and said, "If you come up here and go after those 88s, all hell is going to break loose and my men will play for it all night long." At that moment we could hear a high pitched screaming sound that grew louder and more intense as it came nearer. The Captain yelled for all to hit the dirt, but I did not need his warning as I was already frantically looking for a hole to get into. I saw a foxhole with a soldier down in it and running to it I dived in on top of him. At that moment the sound that had hit a screaming crescendo abruptly terminated as there were tremendous explosions all around and the concussion was

so bad it felt the ears were bursting. Huge amounts of dirt flew through the air to cover us and the ground seemed to actually rock from the deafening explosions. We were too busy trying to get deeper into the ground to worry about the shells but relief set in after what seemed like an eternity as it became deadly still! There were no noises of battle, just complete stillness and silence, and then the low mummer of voices. Fortunately, with all the shells that came in, no one was injured. The “screaming meenies” or Nebelwerfers did not have the fragmentation of regular shells but if they hit close they could do great damage. I realized that the Captain was serious when he asked me to stay away so I worked my way back to my jeep and returned to my platoon. I got all my men and guns set up in positions to cover the flank of the attacking force as they were through moving for the day.

I had spotted an old stone barn nearby that was now only a shell but had hay in it. After a supper of cold K rations I informed my squad leaders that my platoon Sgt , my driver and myself would be sleeping in the barn. We bedded down there at dark, about 8:00pm, and being dead tired as usual, I fell into a deep sleep. I awoke startled to find a soldier shaking me by the shoulder. “Are you Lt. Gregory”, he asked. I replied, Yes, and the soldier told me he was a messenger sent to tell me that I was ordered to report to Bn Hq as the CO wanted to see me. I asked him how he had found me there and he replied that it had not been easy. I was still very tired and sleepy as it was now only 11:30 p.m.. Charlie drove me to the Bn Hq where I found the Lt. Colonel holding a meeting with his staff. He informed me of the rifle company that was pinned down, at which time I informed him of my actions that afternoon and the Captains desire to feed his men and get them a night of rest. The Colonel, ignoring what I had said, ordered me to take my platoon forward and knock out the two 88s so that company could lead the rest of the Battalion in an attack at the next dawn. I tried to reason with the Colonel that moving a platoon of vehicles, guns and men into the company area would draw artillery and mortar fire as it is quiet at night and the sound of movement carries a long way. He was adamant and insisted that I carry out his orders at once.

Returning to my platoon I awoke them all and told them to be ready to move out when I returned and explained in detail to my

Sgts our assigned mission. I drove forward and proceeded on foot the last hundred yards or so. As it was very dark and I could not tell exactly where I was, I checked the occupants of each foxhole as I went along. A hand reached out of a foxhole and yanked me abruptly down to the ground – it was the Captain. He was furious and wanted to know why the hell I was waking his men when they had just gotten to sleep. I explained to him the CO's order to me, what I planned to do to comply with it, and asked if he had any suggestions. It was a clear night, quiet at the time and not too cool. The Captain still standing in his foxhole turned quickly and without raising his voice called "Radioman". As if by magic a soldier carrying a big field radio on his back appeared out of the dark by the Captain's side and handed him the telephone. The Captain contacted the Colonel on the radio and while I do not remember the exact conversation it ended up with the Captain not wanting me to go get the 88s and the Colonel insisting that I must do so. In total exasperation standing in that foxhole in the middle of a dark night the Captain raising his voice slightly said, "Colonel, you bastard, I told you that my men need sleep and rest and we can get the enemy tomorrow. If you insist on this, I am going to shoot Lt. Gregory and then I am going to come back there and shoot you". With that he handed the radio back to his man and looking at me he said, "I mean what I said!" I do not know how the Colonel felt about what was said and I did not go back to discuss it with him, but I knew the Captain and I knew that he meant exactly what he said. Returning to my platoon I told them to get some sleep and we would go after them in the morning and finally at 2:30am I lay down to sleep knowing that at 5:00 a.m. I would start this all over again. Before I fell asleep, I reviewed over and over in my mind the terrain and how I could use each squad to get the enemy guns and give my men as much cover and protection as possible. Due to the difficulty in moving the guns in close I decided to use them to distract the enemy and I would take three patrols through the woods armed with six bazookas and grenades to get them at close range.

Early the next morning on the usual empty stomach and no hot coffee, I headed up to the company for a consultation with the Captain before I started moving my platoon through or among his company. We decided to send out a patrol to check

on the enemy and his installations while his men feasted on cold K rations. The patrol later returned and reported that the enemy and the 88s had pulled back during the night, so shortly after dawn the Captain moved his company forward with me and my men following on his flank.

A couple of years later after I had gotten out of the Army I went with my dad on a business trip to Pennsylvania and New York. Enroute we decided to visit my brother in the Boston area. We were going through a small town in New York and decided to stop for some reason. We parked on the main street and started walking down the sidewalk. Suddenly a young man called, "Lt. Gregory." I did not recognize the man but walked toward him to talk with him. He could see that I was puzzled and said, "You probably do not remember me, but do you remember that night you came up to our company to get a Tiger tank and the Captain called Radioman. Well, I was that radioman." He said he realized that I was totally preoccupied with my discussion with the Captain and in the dark could not really see him. He said that he had seen me many times afterward and due to the tank incident he had not forgotten me. We had a nice long visit over a cup of coffee and my dad heard all about that night and a few other war stories he said stood his hair on end.

One afternoon all the officers were called to the company CP that was temporarily located in an old house. Lt. Blair, the EXO, said that Captain Fenstermacher was at Regiment getting orders and would want to talk to us when he returned. Also, he told us that he had just received the first whiskey ration for officers and ask us to pay for it. He then gave us a bottle of Champagne, Whiskey, Cognac, wine and a box of Trisket crackers. The next thing I knew we were all drinking champagne and eating crackers. One bottle lead to another so Frank and I decided to leave as we were beginning to feel the effects and did not want to appear before our men drunk. I recall that as we left one Lt. was standing on the hood of his jeep, holding on to the wire cutter and yelling "Charge". The incident seemed funny to us at the time, but we passed the Captain and I understand he was quite angry when he heard what had happened. The word was later passed about on what he learned at Regiment.

We fought on into a fair sized German town, it may have been Talheim, and as we fought into the town, I was following a pla-

toon size unit of soldiers who were firing at the enemy who was shooting at us. As we approached what appeared to be the main part of the town the soldiers were fighting house to house and the bullets were zipping by from every direction and some mortar shells were landing in the vicinity. My platoon Sgt. and I were standing in a recessed doorway when a Sherman tank pulled up and stopped right beside me. Out of the turret popped this Lt. I knew by name as we had fought together in several engagements.. "Where is the bank?" he asked me. I called him by name and said, "This is not time to be doing your banking when we are being shot at and shells are coming in. In case you have forgotten a battle is raging in this town and your services are badly needed about one hundred feet ahead." He gunned the motor and went ahead with us using him as a shield. Suddenly he stopped in front of a large stone building and we ducked as the turret swung around toward the building. Fortunately we were behind the tank because the Lt. fired a round into the door of the building not fifty feet away, demolishing the doorway. When we got to the door of the building, the Lt. and his tank crew were coming out carrying big bundles of German currency. The Lt. seeing me called, "It's a bank for sure. Hey, there is lots of money in there, better hurry in and get some yourself." I really thought that once we won the war the Germany money would not be worth the paper it was printed on. Anyhow, I did not have a tank to carry it in, so I told the Lt. I would pass and now, please, lets join the fight up the street. As we move on the next series of events take place over a time span of about a week.

A short time later, I was called to Battalion CP for a conference. We had just fought into a town of medium size that lay partly on a hill, down its sides and along the bottom. Since we were still covering the flank I moved my three squads to the top of the hill where I set up to cover all roads and the open ground of several miles to our right. To our front was open ground with rolling hills where the enemy was entrenched. The French II Corps was suppose to be on our right and, indeed, at times we could see groups of their colonial troops. Most of the time they infiltrated us trying to steal our rations, weapons, and anything not nailed down. We had to arrest some of them and turn them over to the French forces.

At the above conference I had a discussion with the Battalion CO regarding our defenses. After studying my three positions, the Colonel insisted that I move one of my guns to a position that put it on a road junction . At this point a main dirt road ran along our flank toward the enemy and a road from town came in from the left and came to a dead end on the dirt road. We were along the outskirts of the town and Lt. Pierce had his guns set up further along the road. The field of fire was excellent from the position the Colonel wanted me to occupy, but, as I pointed out to him, tactical considerations prohibited using a road junction as a defensive position. The enemy had all road junctions zeroed in for artillery and mortar fire and the moment fighting started the gun would come under intense fire and would be practically useless. I showed him that by sacrificing some of the field of fire we could perform the mission even with artillery fire on the junction. Also, Lt. Pierce was set up a few hundred yards away and could cover us. Under direct order from the Colonel, I had no choice but to position the gun on the road junction. At the road junction where the road from town intersected the road running along the outskirts of the town toward the town ahead of us there were several one story stone constructed houses. On the right was one house just off the intersection. It was a one story stone house with a garden on the side enclosed by a stone wall. The walls of the house were very thick and walls of the basement at least three feet thick. I decided to put the gun just in front of the house on the intersection so the crew could use the house for protection. Across the street were two small houses and up the main road on the right about fifty yards stood an old stone barn with a view of all the open space to the side and front. On up the road were a few scattered stone houses and Lt. Pierce's platoon. The house I selected sat back from the road and was enclosed in front with a small fence and a large tree in the yard. I positioned the gun to take advantage of concealment offered putting the gun and three men to operate it at the house. I put four men and a 50 caliber MG in the stone barn and 3 men with a bazooka, sub-machine guns and rifles in the house across the street. The Colonel was satisfied with the setup but I knew that once the fighting started the gun would be useless.

I decided that my driver, my platoon Sgt and myself would

stay with the men and the gun at the stone house about ten yards behind the gun position. The main dirt road was about fifteen feet wide and on the far side was a ditch with a bank about three feet high and behind that and to the front open area of three miles or more. Once the gun was positioned and dug in a little, Corporal Coplin, the gunner, and I were standing between the trails of the gun discussing the dangers of the position, the possibility of mortar fire and what route we could use to extricate the gun if it came under fire. Across the intersecting street about 25 feet from us was a Lt. I knew from a rifle company and four of his men and we were all facing the main dirt road and the open fields. Corporal Coplin and I were arguing about mortar rounds, with him insisting that we could hear incoming mortar rounds and I was telling him that we could not hear them. As if by magic, across the road on the bank, there appeared a round ball of the most beautiful black color surrounded by a circle of intensely beautiful deep red color. As if in slow motion I watched the ball get bigger and the red circle around it grew immensely. It was followed by a loud explosion and my mind finally told me that I was watching a mortar round explode about 25 feet away. As I wheeled to dash to the house I heard Cpl. Coplin yell, 'You win Lt.'. As we reached the door, Coplin in front of me dived head long into the house with me on his back as we slid down the hallway toward the basement where we dashed next. We both knew instinctively that the round that landed was not a chance round and there would be more. As we ran to the basement we could hear shells exploding and one scored a direct hit on our house. In the basement were my men and the owner and his wife. He assured us, as best we could understand his German, that we were safe as the walls were three feet thick. The shelling lasted about twenty minutes and we took 21 rounds. There were three direct hits on the house and as we came out of the basement we heard someone humming and discovered the driver for the squad standing in the kitchen before the window shaving and obviously intoxicated. The window overlooked the garden that took seven shells and we thought it a miracle that he was not hit. I was really mad and upset with the driver but did not have time for him just then. I later dealt with him harshly as he had been in no shape to help if we had needed him. I discovered that the original burst had killed the officer across the

street and two of his men while wounding the others. The gun had not suffered a direct hit nor had my jeep parked against the wall of the garden, however the tires on the jeep and gun were flattened. As I had predicted the gun in that location became useless. Cpl. Coplin and I concluded later that the shell we watched explode came from behind us and hit in the bank at an angle that spared us but the men across the road were not so lucky.

Fighting continued to be intense and the units were not advancing. We had been in place going on two days now and there had been no counterattacks in our area. We experienced daily shellings so regular we could almost predict the time. Lt. Pierce and his men were also hit several times and he lost his jeep for a time. Frank and I were called to regiment for a conference. We were told that the entire regiment was going to pulled out of the line starting that night through morning and would be shifted several miles to our left where the regiment would attack the enemy through our units there. Our company was assigned to cover the entire regimental front while the maneuver was completed. Frank moved his three squads to a location about a mile away leaving my Platoon unprotected by any other unit. I relocated two of my squads leaving the gun by the house with men in the barn and house across the road as before. When finished moving we had squads of ten men about five hundred yards apart responsible for guarding the former regimental front. We were told that a company of combat engineers would move in to support us while the regiment moved.

One of my squads was located about a mile from my location and they had sight of one of Lt. Pierce's squads that was several hundred yards away. We had told the men not to visit but to stay with their squad at all times. Later some of my men and some of his men were standing in a circle talking when a mortar round exploded right in the midst of them. Amazingly only one man was hit while the rest were just shook up from the concussion. Two men raced over in a truck and took him to the aid station. Later those two men took a ribbing when they were awarded Purple Hearts because they were entered in the records as being treated for wounds.. Needless to say a couple Sergeants were in hot water and after that the men were not

allowed to group up in such an inviting target. You would think that they could figure that out by themselves.

The move of the regiment went off as planned and eventually we felt very much alone out there on the flank with the enemy almost as close to us as our own men. Our instructions from the Colonel were that in the event of a counter attack we were to hold our ground at all costs and deliver an amount of fire so the Germans would think all units were on the line. When I told the men our mission they became very edgy and tense but I told them that we would perform our mission at all costs as we were not told we could retreat. As dusk was approaching that day, I drove back into town and down the hill looking for the combat engineers. I stumbled on their CP near the bottom of the hill that they had just moved into. The entire unit was gathered close around the CP which any officer should have known was a tactical mistake.

Entering the CP I observed a Major sitting on the floor looking somewhat lost. I immediately recognized him as a class mate at West Virginia University. I was in ROTC with him for two years and he graduated two years ahead of me. When I called him by name, he jumped up excitedly and grabbed my hand saying, "Bill Gregory, am I glad to see you," and then we spent a few minutes getting reacquainted with small talk. I learned from him that this was the first entry into a combat situation for his engineer unit. The Major said that he would rely on me and my experience to advise him. I suggested that his men were too close together in town and recommended that they move to the edge of town and set up there before dark. He told me that he would rely on me and my men as a First Line of Defense and he would hold his unit in reserve for support in case of an attack. I tried to impress on him that we would probably be over run too fast for that and my attempt to get him to change his mind and set up his men in a good defensive position met with no success. I knew for sure if we were attacked, with his set up, his unit would be over run with little resistance. I explained my situation to the Major in that I had myself, a Sgt, my driver and ten men to stay awake 24 hours a day and man three positions. The Major said he would have wire laid to my CP in the house by the gun and I could keep him advised of the situation at all times. Taking my leave of him I turned and said, "If you hear rifle and MG fire up

at the top of the hill, then you will know the situation.”

About 5:30 pm a line was laid into my CP and a phone was installed. From then on the Major called me at least every hour for an ‘update’ on the situation. The situation was nerve wracking enough without the constant annoyance he provided. About 2100 hours the Major called and ordered me to send out listening patrols to the front every hour to a distance of at least 1 mile. His order was unreasonable considering my manpower and my three positions being manned and I told him so quite to the point, but he persisted in his demand for listening patrols. I said OK, we will do what we can. The request was unreasonable as my few men would have met themselves coming and going. I did not get much rest that night as I was too busy answering the phone when he or one of his men called to check the situation and I reported that we neither saw nor heard anything out of the ordinary. That night my men were busy all night with a guard at each location out side where they could hear and observe any activity.

The next day was very busy reconnoitering, checking my squads, coordinating with Lt. Pierce, and the Major at his CP. That night was pretty much a repeat of the previous one except the men were more tense and nervous having heard the news that our regiment had attacked that day and had heavy casualties when they ran into heavy and determined resistance. About 0500 hours the next morning I tried to call the Major but the phone was dead. I jumped into my jeep and drove down to his CP only to find the place empty. Some soldiers I spoke with told me that his unit had pulled out very early. All that and not even a thank you or goodbye. We continued to maintain our positions until ordered to move. I recall that I ran into the Major sometime later and he told me that by the time he started to call me, his men had cut all their phone lines prior to moving out.

One day I was in my jeep and was moving with one of my squads in their truck when for some reason we stopped by a wooded area and all got out of the vehicles. I had noticed a plane in the area just before we stopped and as usual I was keeping a close eye on it. Continuing to watch the plane I saw that it had banked and was headed toward us and I knew instinctively that he was starting a run. I yelled at George, the truck driver, and Charlie, my driver, to get the vehicles into the

woods at once, which they did just as the plane leveled in for its run. Twice the plane strafed us before leaving but we were all intact. It was one of our planes flown by French pilots and as usual I was alert for their presence.

On one occasion on a very cloudy day I was leading my platoon marching down a dirt road in the foothills for a reason I cannot recall. I had the men spread out on both sides of the road in depth in battle formation. Suddenly the dirt started kicking up and I mentally estimated the distance between the spots as several feet. Turning to my platoon Sgt. who was across the road and behind me, I remarked that it must be starting to rain. Having observed what I had seen, he said, "Lt, those sure are strange rain drops. Look how far apart they are." Just at that moment we heard a loud sound like a whoosh. Looking back at the men I saw they were all looking up in the sky and some were pointing. I then saw a German plane in the distance making a turn to come back and we all stared at it because it had no propellers. Realizing that the plane was coming back extremely fast I yelled at the men to spread out more and hit the dirt and ditches which we all did at once. Again the dirt kicked up and looking up again we saw the strange looking plane going away extremely fast. It dawned on me then that we had been strafed by a jet plane. We had heard there were such planes and now we could vouch for that. Fortunately he did not return and no one was hit. It did cause a lot of concern because we realized that all the sound we heard was after the plane passed us and if we had been in our vehicles in convoy, the results might have been much different. Now we had to be more diligent in plane watching.

On one occasion we were in a small village near the German border. The men were out of their trucks awaiting instructions when we heard planes and saw two of our own planes in the distance. Experience had taught us to watch every plane in sight at all times regardless of identification and as I watched I realized the planes were angling for a strafing run. A gunner jumped on each truck to man the 50 caliber MG mounted on a ring mount on each truck and the men dispersed and took cover with their rifles ready to fire at the planes. As the planes came in on their strafing run every one opened fire at them as I stood and watched. We fired a lot of rounds and made a lot of noise

but the planes appeared unharmed as they banked for another run. Again, as the two fighters came in everyone fired at them but we could see no damage to the planes which left the area. We complained to our Hdqrs and were later told that they were Free French pilots in our planes and they had mistaken us for Germans. Well, what can you expect from the French. They built the Maginot Line!

On another occasion we were moving into an attack formation in the woods in the mountains when we heard planes nearby. We had learned to be wary of all planes until we could identify them and ascertain their intentions. We watched them carefully and in this instance they had American markings, still we saw that they were banking for a run at us. I recall that there were many men and vehicles in the woods at the time. I remember the first time the two planes came in strafing, we all hit the ground in about two feet of snow and used the trees as some protection. We stayed buried in the snow while the planes made three strafing runs on us. On the third pass they each dropped a 500 pound bomb. One bomb hit about 100 yards from me and the noise and concussion were tremendous as snow and dirt flew everywhere. The hole that bomb made, even though the ground was frozen, was large enough to drive a large truck into to hide it. We had dispersed well so none of my men were hit, but some must have been as we could hear the cries for medics. Again, we protested to Headquarters about being hit by our own planes and were later told it had been determined that the attack was by pilots of the Free French Army who were flying our planes and had lost their way. This left us with an uncomfortable feeling, knowing that we could be strafed by inexperienced French pilots again.

Another incident occurred one day as we were moving positions and were passing through a small village of typically old stone and brick houses when traffic became totally jammed up and we had to come to a complete stop. With no warning, 88 shells came whizzing in and landing all around. We all left the vehicles and sought what shelter we could up against the buildings. I had taken barrages like this in open areas and in the woods but being in the village was worse. When the shells exploded they threw pieces of stone, bricks, glass and other material about in the narrow streets that could kill and injure as

easily as bullets. The barrage lasted off and on for about two hours, but we could not move or better our position because the French Army was once again moving through our position and had the roads completely jammed ahead of us. It was several hours before they cleared our zone and we could move on again. Many units made complaints as they lost vehicles and men unnecessarily. Our commanders became adamant that the French attack forward and protect our flanks. I heard that Division had decided that the French could no longer use our zones without complete justification.

While at Fort Bragg, I became acquainted with a 2nd Lt. who flew L5 planes as a spotter for the Division artillery. We became friends and he was constantly urging me to apply for a transfer to fly with him as they needed a pilot and trying to get me to go up with him in his plane. I had heard from others that he flew with reckless abandon so I became cautious and that probably was why I never tried for the transfer. I ran into him several times during combat and he was always trying to get me to go up with him so he could show me the enemy lines first hand. I had also heard how he flew close enough to the enemy to be shot down by a rifle and he had been hit several times. I always declined as I had other assignments.

One cold clear morning several of us were sitting on a hilltop watching a German fighter plane try to shoot down an L5 spotter plane. The enemy plane would make a pass shooting at the spotter plane which would immediately go down among the hills and trees almost to the very ground and later it would peek up over a hill and the enemy plane would make another pass and shoot at it. This game was played for almost an hour and then the pilot either tired or was low on fuel as he flew off. We saw this game played several times and my friend was the quarry in some of them.

We were fighting in open country with hills and clumps of trees and wooded hilltops. Bypassed enemy were still in a lot of the wooded areas and we had to flush them out and some would surrender on their own. My platoon was spread out and I had joined one of my squads that had set up in a grove of trees. I always tried to rotate and spend my time with the squads when I did not have other assignments. As I joined this squad, they complained that they had come under fire but it did not appear

to be coming from the woods nearby. I moved to the edge of the grove and shortly afterward, as I was standing there looking around, bullets began whizzing around in the grove. I heard a plane and looked up to see if we were being strafed and saw instead my friend, the L5 pilot, at about 25 feet leaning half out of his plane firing a 45 automatic at a deer he was chasing. I ran out into the open to signal to him and to my surprise he landed his plane in a small field nearby and got out. After we exchanged greetings, I told him that the Germans were our main concern and I did not need him pinning my men down with gun fire so they could not do their job, also, it was just a matter of luck that no one had been hit. He just laughed it off and said that the men in his group had a yen for some deer so he was trying to shoot one. My Sgt. said if he would stop chasing deer and shooting at them our men would shoot him a deer and he could pick it up the next day. He was agreeable and tried to get me to go up with him so he could show me the where the action was, but knowing him, I declined. He took that L5 off the ground in that field with a very short run flying under some power lines and to our stunned amazement he did a loop around the wires that were not over thirty feet high, nearly crashing the plane as he was not at full throttle. He laughed as he waved at us and he was off into the later afternoon sun. He did return the next day in the afternoon and the men had a deer waiting for him that he loaded and took off, with no loops this time.

Later he told me a story of a time when he was the pilot for Colonel Malone, C.O. of the 30th Inf. Reg. That officer could be the subject of many stories I will not relate. He took command of our regiment, the 399th, after Colonel Tyschen was promoted to General and moved to Division. I recall one day when we were assaulting the enemy across a small river and as the assault troops moved out, there stood Malone taking down the name of every soldier whose field jacket was not buttoned so he could fine them \$25 for failing to obey his order. Later he received the Silver Star for leading the assault across the river, when in fact he did not go across that river until long after the troops crossed it and secured the other side. Should I mention that he was really disliked by the men. Back to the story, my friend told me that he flew Malone to inspect one of his units in a small town in a very rural area. Malone was in a hurry as he

was suppose to meet his daughter, a Red Cross worker, in Paris the next day. That night after drinking too much, my friend took a wrench to the motor of the plane, rendering it useless, and blamed it on German criminals. Malone was full of rage but had to cool his heels for almost a week until parts could be flown in to repair the plane and needless to say Malone did not make Paris.

I was moving through this mostly open terrain one afternoon early with a squad and their truck and my jeep when we came under heavy rifle fire from a wooded area on a small rise about 400 yards distant. We dismounted quickly and returned the fire and sent some of the men in pursuit but they returned empty handed. Since it was late in the afternoon, we stopped at an old stone farm house nearby. It appeared obvious that the residents had only recently fled to avoid the fighting. While they were checking the house and out buildings for mines or booby traps, the men found fresh eggs in a pail of water and fresh milk in a can in the spring house. This was something we had not seen since we landed in France. My enterprising Corporal found some potatoes in the pantry, so he started frying up eggs and home fries for the lot of us and what a feast we had that evening. It was nice being in the house out of the chill of the night air. We had a good fire going in the kitchen stove so we decided to make some cocoa using the rest of the milk and some of the Hershey chocolate bars issued to us. We put on a pan of milk and taking our knives we shaved several bars into the milk until it was covered. We stirred it up and let it come to a simmer and finally to a boil but the chocolate continued to float on top of the milk. We found out that the only way to melt that chocolate was to eat it.

The next afternoon we were near woods where enemy soldiers had been spotted. That evening I instructed the platoon Sgt. to place guards and specifically ordered that they be armed with M-1 rifles and not with the 45's and sub-machine guns I knew some of the men had procured. Later, about twilight, I heard a lot of gunfire and men yelling. Responding immediately to the source of the noise, I found the private on guard escorting two German soldiers back along a dirt road near the woods. Since the private was a long way from his guard post I questioned the Sgt. who was on the scene. It appeared that the Germans had

left the woods and approached the private apparently not knowing who he was. When the guard challenged them, they turned heel and frantically ran for the woods with the guard in pursuit. Contrary to my orders, he was armed only with a 45 automatic pistol that I learned he had never fired before. Unholstering his weapon as he ran after the Germans, he emptied his clip at them, reloaded on the run and emptied a second clip firing at them. As he reloaded another clip the Germans, by this time scared to death, surrendered to him. In all the guard had fired about 18 rounds at the men, some from close range, and scored no hits for which I was really thankful. There was absolutely no call for the guard to have opened fire on those Germans. Needless to say I was incensed over the incident, and thereafter all my men carried their assigned weapons they were trained to fire. I did not take away their unauthorized weapons as the men were contrite and realized how such incidents could adversely affect all the men in the unit.

As the war came to a close we were ordered to take a position in a small town near Pforzheim, Germany. I will never forget my first view of Pforzheim. I had seen massive destruction during my days in combat but nothing equaled the destruction in that town. It was almost totally demolished except on the outskirts. Our bulldozers had cleared one way traffic each way through the town. All other roads in the town were impassable due to the tons of debris lying about. At the corners of what wall was left of a building was written the names of the inhabitants believed to have been in them when they were bombed. A German doctor, who had lost a leg on the Eastern Front, later told me that the air raid on the city lasted about 15-20 minutes and approximately 30,000 inhabitants were killed. Also, since the population was much larger due to refugees and displaced persons living in the city it probably was a much larger count of dead. In the rubble we found a map of the town evidently used by one of the planes that bombed the city. The map had exactly three buildings circled in red, their target, and evidence of very accurate, pinpoint bombing, house by house using bombs with delayed fuses that dropped to the basement or close to it before exploding. Total devastation!

OCCUPATION PART ONE

Once the war was over we were informed that the soldiers who did not have enough points to go home would remain on occupation duty in Germany. We were moved to a succession of towns and finally my unit, AT Co. 399th Inf., was assigned to occupation duty in a small town near Pforzheim. Our headquarters was set up in a building on the main street, the men were billeted in an old school building nearby and we officers lived in a partly furnished house in a residential section a couple blocks away. Our duties consisted of guarding vital facilities and initially, just after the war was over, searching buildings, houses and cars for any type of weapon. In addition we maintained order until civil government could be re-established. Shortly after we moved here, Capt. Fenstemacher was transferred to regiment and we got a new Captain, whose name I cannot recall. All our other officers were still with the company.

One day the Captain called me in and explained that the Army wanted the men to have a break from their duties and to be able to see some of the sights in Germany. He said the Army had drawn up several tours of up to ten days that covered most of the interesting sights in southern Germany and each group could pick the tour they would like to take. I was told that Regiment had picked me to lead one of the tours. I would be assigned one jeep, three trucks and C rations for each person for ten days. The tour group was composed of one officer, one Sgt., one Medic, one mechanic, one jeep driver and thirty men (10 per truck). I did not want to take the tour and voiced my objections but the regimental C.O. ordered me to take the tour. I was given a printed tour listing our travel and sights day by day, and told we were to eat C rations and find our own accommodations or camp out. When I found out who had been assigned as my driver for the trip, you had better believe I could be heard yelling for blocks. I went straight away to the Captain and argued for the assignment of my own driver for the trip. I reminded the Captain that Soucy had almost killed Lt. Raithel when he lost control of the jeep and rolled it down the autobahn but he stated it was Soucy's turn to drive and he would instruct him to drive slowly

and safely. I told the Captain that I felt that Soucy would most likely kill me before the trip was over and he just laughed.

July 10, 1945, early in the morning we loaded the rations, men and their gear and set forth. It was a cloudy day and very cool as we turned east on the autobahn. As we drove along we passed a big bill board welcoming us into the 3rd Army area. The billboards stated assurances that per the orders of General George Patton the following listed fines would be levied for various violations including exceeding convoy speed, unkempt dress, unbuttoned coats, and so forth. As we rolled down the autobahn at convoy speed of 35 mph I specifically instructed Soucy not to exceed the speed and he assured me that he would not. It had become quite warm as the sun was shining and with the monotony of the drive I fell asleep. I was later jarred out of my sleep by the sound of sirens and as I struggled to awaken, my mind could not comprehend why I was hearing sirens in the deep woods along the autobahn. I sat up awake at last and looked over my shoulder and behold - two MPs on motorcycles with red lights and sirens on were overtaking us fast. Looking at the speedometer I saw that Soucy was going between 45 and 50 mph. We pulled over as instructed and I was informed by one MP that we were exceeding convoy speed and were in violation of 3rd Army speed limits. The MPs then ordered that we follow them to their headquarters so we followed them for about 20 minutes and suddenly there in the deep woods lining the autobahn appeared a small house and next to it a large fenced in area with two guards at the gate. We were ordered to drive into that area and park our vehicles. There were other vehicles in the enclosure and when I asked the MP what was going on, he replied that my vehicles had been impounded, that my men were free to go and I would have to accompany him to the house to fill out a report. The nearest town was many miles distant so as we left I instructed the Sgt to have the men remain together in the area. After the paper work was complete I asked the MP for my trucks so I could continue on my trip. He again informed me that my vehicles had been impounded but I and my men were free to go. To sum it up: I had in effect been arrested, my trucks impounded under guard in the middle of a forest miles from any town or other army units, I was not allowed to use their phone to call my unit, and they had no transportation for 35 men.

It was even suggested by one snickering MP that we try hitch-hiking. I was starting to lose my patience and was becoming hot under the collar. I discussed the situation with the Sgt. and men but no good ideas came forth. Needless to say I was not feeling kindly toward my driver.

It was now about 4:30 p.m. and the sun was going down in the woods, I had no transportation and my plea that we are all in the same army fell on deaf ears. I decided that a good offense was in order so, as an experienced combat infantry officer, I approached the MP on 'desk duty' to achieve the element of surprise. Getting his attention I ask, 'Sgt. my men are getting hungry, what time is chow.' The MP responded in a cold manner that there would be no chow. I coolly responded that since Army Regulations required that all enlisted men be served a meal at 1730 hours and since it was nearing that hour, it would appear that a problem of major proportions was developing. I suggested that if he could not resolve it then he had better inform his duty officer. Of course, I did not mention the C rations concealed in the ammo wells of our trucks and though several officers subsequently read my orders, no one ask me if I had rations aboard. A ranking Sgt. appeared and after a non productive discussion I reiterated my demand that my men be fed or they would file charges against someone. The Sgt. who appeared confused said he would call his superior and I was feeling I was on the right track. When his Lt. arrived I went on the offense with my demands for compliance with regulations or I would refer the matter to the Army Inspector General. The Officer became very upset and defensive as we argued for several minutes, then he left to get his Captain who arrived about 1715 hours. I immediately put him on the defensive by demanding that he feed my hungry men in 15 minutes. He said he had no provisions to feed my men and, and feeling confident, I told him that was his problem. My bluff appeared to be working but I was worried as the Captain showed less inclination to panic. I continued to press him for about another 15 minutes at which time he made a telephone call and informed me that a report would be sent through channels of my violation of their rules and in the meantime my vehicles would be released and I could resume my trip. I instructed the men to mount the trucks and get going before anyone got wiser. Needless to mention, as

we left the compound numerous cat calls and unprintable words and gestures were exchanged by my men and the MPs. The men had a lot of fun with how we had outsmarted some of Gen. Patton's finest.

We resumed our trip stopping at Dachau concentration camp where we saw the huts with rows of boards on which prisoners slept, the people who were nothing but skin and bones, the alleged showers where the people were gassed, the furnaces with cremated remains still in them, the hanging and firing squad execution areas, pits of ashes of the remains of prisoners, the room with walls spattered with blood where vicious dogs were set on inmates to tear them apart while spectators watched, and many other horrible things. Naturally, very few of us felt like eating C rations that night. The men were constantly urging me to get them some hot chow. Late this particular evening I stopped at two units to beg a meal but both said that they did not draw enough provisions to feed 35 extra men so in a cold mist we pulled off the road, ate our cold C rations and slept as best we could in and under the vehicles.

The next morning as we were preparing to leave, I saw an army unit in a field a mile or so down the road. At the urging of the men we stopped and as I sought out the mess Sgt. I was mentally searching my mind for a way to con him into feeding us. I made my request and got the usual answer, he only drew down rations each day for each one of his men present for duty and he could not feed 35 extra men. He followed that with, "You are with the 100th Division; do you know my brother Bob, he is in the 397th Infantry." Of course, I did not know his brother, but sensing an opening I took a chance and replied, "Yes, I know who Bob is, but have only seen him a few times." Looking at the Sgt. and feeling Bob was his younger brother, I said, "Bob is about 20, about your height, black hair, brown eyes and real nice looking." (I actually gave the Sgt. a fair description of himself) The Sgt. beamed with excitement and told me that they were having pancakes for breakfast with lots of coffee and he would stretch his food out to feed all of us. I went back to the men and explained my conversation with the mess Sgt. and told them that I wanted every one to thank him for the meal and for just a few of them to mention that they had met his brother. We had a good hot meal with lots of coffee and afterward every man did as I

requested and we left a happy and smiling mess Sgt. whose day we had made. Of course, he had made ours also.

Mounting our vehicles with full stomachs we were on our way in Southern Germany and Austria, visiting many towns, fantastic churches and castles, tourist sites and other places we voted to see. Some days later, in the afternoon, we arrived in Berchtesgarden, a town in Barvaria, near Hitler's famed 'Eagles Nest' that we were to visit the next morning. We put up at a small but cozy hotel and after I got the men settled down I instructed them on what they could do and how I expected them to behave. I had maintained mail contact with a family friend, Jullian Grubb, who worked with my Dad. Jullian was a Sgt. in an Armored unit located about 8 miles from Salzburg, Austria, about 25-30 miles from us, so I decided to drive over and visit with him for a couple of hours. I informed the Sgt of exactly where I would be and that I planned to return by midnight. We drove up past Salzburg and located his unit. Julian was there and was pleased that we had come. We visited for about three hours when I explained we had to leave to get back by midnight. Soucy and I left him about 2200 hours to drive back to Berchtesgarden. The night was very dark with no moon, the wind was blowing hard, and it was a very damp chilly night. As we passed south from Salzburg the black top road became very narrow with sharp curves as it ran along a small river whose banks had been built up with stone walls to contain and control the river. The river was within several feet of the road most of the way. The roadway was wet so I specifically cautioned Soucy not to drive over 35 mph. I told him to keep the jeep under control and not take any chances as the road was narrow and very curvy. It had now begun to rain and was cold so I wrapped an army blanket about myself and dozed off. I awoken immediately when I heard Soucy utter a loud epithet and I felt the jeep lurch as he had taken a curve too fast for conditions. I was upset and told Soucy that he was disobeying me and he was driving too fast for conditions. I again ordered him to slow down as I wanted to get back alive. He kept inching up on the speed so once more I instructed him to slow the jeep down and sometime later I dozed off again. It was about midnight.

Suddenly I woke with a start dimly remembering that I had heard Soucy yell something. As I fought my way back from the

depths of sleep, I instinctively realized that the jeep was out of control, the rear was skidding around counter clockwise. I was frantically fighting to get out of the blanket as the river was on my side of travel and I felt we were going into it. In just seconds the jeep spun around and smashed through the guard rail and I heard Soucy, who was now hanging half out of the jeep yell as the guard rail hit his backside. I was trying to get clear so I could dive out but before I could do that, the jeep slid over the wall of the river rear end first. The jeep then flipped all the way over with us in it turning upside down and landing in the river on the hood first. Soucy was thrown out of the jeep but I was still trying to get out when we hit. As we entered the water, I could feel the mass of the jeep on me and there was a real danger that I could be pinned under the jeep in the water. They say that in moments like this, your whole life flashes through your mind. I can vouch for that. In what was just seconds memories flooded my mind of my family, how would they handle this, what would the Captain say, and Soucy, the culprit. I landed on my hands and knees on the gravel at the river bottom, the jeep flipped as it hit turning on the drivers side with the motor hitting the bottom first, and the entire vehicle landed on my back. I was struggling to crawl frantically out from under the jeep and again a kaleidoscope of images from childhood and thoughts flashed through my mind. I instinctively realized that the jeep would oscillate at least once from front to back and I would have one chance. When I felt the weight lessen on my back, I crawled with all my might and as the jeep landed once more on my left leg, I was able to pull it free and surface in the water about four feet deep gasping for breath. What seemed to be eternity actually was only seconds and as I stood up I could hear Soucy calling, "Lt. Gregory, Lt. Gregory." It was very dark in the river and I could barely see him a few feet away. With anger welling up, I made my way to him and rapped him in the head and will always recall that I said, "Soucy, Why aren't you down there looking for me under the jeep. Standing here calling for me will not help." The jeep was still lying on its left side in the water about 2/3s submerged. We had to explore the stone retaining wall for several hundred feet before we could climb out soaking wet and very cold.

At that instance we saw the headlights of a jeep come into view driven by a Sgt. from the 42nd Division. He told us there

had been several wrecks on that curve and when he saw the headlights of our jeep go up into the night sky, he knew we had gone in the river. The Sgt. took us down the road to an old German farm house. I recall the house vividly and that we entered it from the north side into a kitchen where there was a big roaring fire in the fireplace. The wonderful and caring Sgt. helped us get out of our wet clothes and hung them up to dry, gave us blankets to wrap in by the fire and plied us with cup after cup of steaming hot coffee. I later realized that he was trying to prevent shock because as the impact of the wreck set in , both of us ran to the outhouse several times.

I was in worse shape than Soucy. The elbows of my field jacket and woolen shirt had been completely ripped open and I had hunks of gravel and dirt driven deep into my elbows, arms and hands. My pants were ripped open at the knees with gravel and dirt driven deep into the knees and shins, the buttons were ripped off my jacket and I had a big hole in the toe of my right boot. In addition, my face was bruised up and some gravel was driven into my right cheek . The next morning, early, the helpful Sgt. arranged transportation to the 42nd Heavy Maintenance Company to get a tow truck to pull us out of the river. On the way we stopped at their medical station for an examination. A concerned Doctor took one look at me and went to work. He picked all the gravel and stones out of my legs, knees, elbows and face, washed me good with a solution to clean out the dirt and then he, naturally, gave me several shots. That's all I needed, a sore rear end also. He too was concerned about shock and marveled that I had survived the wreck. Soucy was unkempt but he was not injured. We finally got the truck to the accident scene and after much work by the crew, the jeep was pulled out of the river and set upright on the road with the water pouring out of it. The current in the river was so strong that it had stripped the jeep of every thing including the seat cushions. I lost everything including my clothes, sleeping bag, shaving gear, maps, correspondence, orders, trip log, yes, every last thing was gone. Soucy and I had to wear what we had on for the next four days. It was almost panic time when the truck crew said it would take at least four days to get my jeep cleaned up and running. I was beginning to worry about my men as it was now 8:00 hours and they had no idea where I was. The jeep

was towed back to the to the unit where the fenders were pulled away from the tires, flat tires were repaired, front window frame straightened out though the window was broken out, and the engine dried off as much as possible. Soucy got in and turned the motor over and it ran as if nothing had happened. We were off again at last.

We drove back to Berchtesgarden but the Sgt. had already taken the men to Eagles Nest so the inn keeper gave us some wine and we went to bed and slept until the men returned. When the Sgt. looked at me his eyes got real big and he said, "Lt. Gregory, where the hell have you been and what the hell were you doing there?" He had been extremely worried when we did not return as planned. I explained to the Sgt. and the men all that had happened to us since we left them. We continued our trip visiting Innsbruck, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Oberammergau to list a few places and every where I went people stared and me in wonder at my ragged appearance, including a few MPs. We stayed in Innsbruck a couple of days and the men were unhappy when I insisted on a guard on the trucks. I was in a lot of pain and my body ached all over. One of the men suggested I needed a good steak dinner so he took me to a café where the owner admired we Americans. I had steak, french fries, salad and fresh bread. It was a real feast.

We were on our way to home base when we came to Munich in the late morning so we decided to find a Red Cross place and get some coffee and doughnuts. What with the appearance of myself and the rest of the group, we had to fast talk a lot of MPs to even get into the city. We found a Red Cross unit where they served what we wanted so Sgt. and I got into the line first so we could monitor the men as they went through. I got a cup of coffee and four doughnuts and started for a table when an American Red Cross lady in her uniform said, "That will be 25 cents, please." Sgt. and I looked at each other stunned that we had to pay, but we paid the money rather than argue. We realized that the men were becoming belligerent when they were asked to pay so leaving our food untouched we immediately got the men out of the place. The comments made by the men about the Red Cross, the people who ran the place and what they would like to do to the place were unprintable and unforgettable.

We proceeded on our way and about noon we were in a town in the rear area of the 7th Army. As we drove through the town I observed a black quartermaster unit lining up for chow in an open field. The men wanted to get a hot meal from the unit if they could. Suspecting what might be on the menu I made each man promise that if they would feed us, each man had to eat every thing he was served and empty his mess gear so we would not embarrass our host. They all agreed so I approached the mess Sgt. who was a large genial black man. When I explained it had been several days since my men had eaten hot food, he replied, "We have plenty and you are welcome to eat with us if you will take pot luck." He showed me their meal consisting of large serving containers of beans, greens, diced onions, hot cornbread, butter and coffee. I went back and told them we could be fed but they had to take what was served and eat it all. All my men were from the New York area and I am sure none had ever seen a meal like that, much less eaten one. I was right, it was comical watching the expressions on their face as they ladled out big spoons of hot beans and then spread spoons of diced onions on top. Most of those men had never eaten greens or cornbread, however, as agreed each man ate all his food. Later some of the men made numerous comments about southern food and where it could be sent. They all did as I requested and thanked our host for the hot meal and coffee.

We arrived back at our unit at lunch time the next day and I walked into the officers mess with my dirty clothes in tatters, unshaven, with large sores and abrasions on my face, arms and legs. I noticed a look of consternation on the faces of all the officers. I explained the trip in detail and how very fortunate I was to be alive, despite my driver. There were recriminations voiced and the Captain apologized profusely for forcing Soucy on me as my driver. Now, don't get me wrong – I liked Soucy who was a nice pleasant guy, but a horrible driver.

I was informed that I had to see the Regimental Commander at once. I immediately went to his CP as I was. His eyes actually popped wide open when he saw my condition. The Colonel had known that I did not want Soucy to drive me on the tour. He had a report from the 3rd Army on us but after hearing the details as I related them, he laughed as he tore up the report and told me to forget it as I had been through enough!

Immediately after the war it was the job of the armed forces to prevent any uprisings, maintain order and guard vital facilities while a civilian occupation government was being formed. We were part of what was called operation Tally Ho. In this operation we sealed off areas, set up road blocks and searched for SS men, war criminals, soldiers hiding as civilians, contraband, arms and explosives to name a few duties. We would be called to regimental CP and told that certain villages were to be searched. I would be assigned a village to search with my platoon on a certain day. I would have to check out the village and decide how to seal it off completely while we searched it. I would call my men together and explain exactly how we would seal the village off, what buildings and houses would be searched and who would do it. I tried to impress on them the gravity of the operation as they would be going into homes and searching everything. Naturally I hammered into them that they must still respect the people in their homes and they were not to break anything, steal anything, or mistreat the people in any way. We would then hit the village just at day break and search for weapons or contraband. I really hated the job. Imagine being awoken at day break by a group of soldiers who brush you aside and search your house from cellar to attic looking into every thing including the food cooking on the stove, the sugar and flour in the containers, dresser drawers, under mattresses and missing not one thing or place. We scared a lot of people but we carried lots of candy bars and chewing gum to make some friends. We, also, got lots of surprises at what we found, some quite comical. Many times we flushed out soldiers in bed with German girls and confiscated a lot of contraband. There was an order in effect that American soldiers could not fraternize with German civilians. Sometimes we worked with the company and sometime attached to another unit.

One woman in particular I remember. She lived in a stone house on the outskirts of a small village we searched. While I was searching her small home, she conversed with me in very good English. She had lived in Brooklyn for five years and returned to Germany before the war. She had two small kids and her husband had been killed in the war. She asked me to come back that night for refreshments and to talk about her chances of getting back to America. I was busy and declined. I

am sure she wanted to be friends and find out what she could do to leave Germany.

In some cases in the larger towns we might use a company or even two companies to conduct the search. Some mornings early we would be out searching fields and out buildings. Most of the time when we started searching people would come to us and turn any weapons that they might possess. I am sure a lot of antique guns went by the wayside. We also operated roadblocks on various roads at times and check the identity of all people who passed, and also, we searched the people and vehicles, be they wagon or auto. I recall one day about 5 miles from us on the autobahn a road block was set up. A car came down the autobahn fast and two soldiers ordered it to stop and when it went past a machine gun opened up on the car hitting it several times. The car then stopped and out stepped a very shaken Jack Benny and his lead female singer. He made jokes about the incident many times in his appearances.

I remember once when I was in the company CP I was told that the officers would be issued a liquor ration about twice a month and we had to pay for it. The ration had a bottle of American whiskey, bottle of cognac, bottle of Scotch or vodka, bottle of wine and a bottle of champagne. There were seven officers and since we rarely drank more than one bottle, if that, of the ration, we piled the rest in boxes in the kitchen of the house where we lived. There were at least three full boxes as I recall.

One night the men were having a party in an old beer garden near the CP for the men being rotated home. The garden to the beer hall was fenced with a large tree in the middle and tables and chairs spread about. I was assigned by the CO to go and monitor the party. Prior to the party, the NCOs had talked the Captain out of all the surplus bottles of booze we had accumulated in the kitchen and it was all transported to the beer hall. I watched as they fixed up the place for the party. A Sgt. came in with a great big round tub. The men then started pouring the bottles we gave them into the tub, mixing bottles of wine, whiskey, cognac, scotch, champagne and vodka. Then they filled the tub up with beer and stirred it up. That evening the men all drank that mixture and if I could have foreseen the results, I would have stopped the whole party. Practically the

entire company got so drunk they were not fit for duty the next day. The CO was upset and came down on me and that ended the parties. I recall that I only sipped two small glasses of it, but when I started to leave, I walked right into that big tree and ended up sitting on the ground. I recall I felt relieved when I arrived at the house and Frank helped me into bed.

About July 28, 1945, I was given leave to the Riviera for seven days plus travel time that took 14 days. Before we got on the train several other officers and myself were placed in charge of the whole train which contained only American soldiers headed for the south of France. We had to keep track of all soldiers going to and coming back and report any delinquents and handle any problems arising. The trip was interesting as it took at least two days and one night to complete. We would be riding along and the train would just stop on the tracks and Lo, there in a field would be a kitchen set up and rows of toilets. We would make use of the toilets, wash up and eat and board the train to continue on our way. At the next meal time we followed the same procedure, three times a day. It was a great way to travel by train. At the Riviera the officers got off and the men continued on to Nice.

ETO Headquarters had issued a directive that brothers in the ETO should be allowed to get together after the war. I went to the Cannes Provost Marshal's Office and had them call my brother's unit that was located near Marseilles at the time. The call was unproductive as the Major was told that there was no one on duty who could authorize leave for Clinton to come to Cannes to visit with me. The Major suggested that I go to his unit and visit him. The Major then cut orders for me for seven days with travel authority. I recall that I spent the evening on the beach and at a night club with a nurse I had met until taking my leave I caught the train at midnight for Marseilles.

In Marseilles I caught a ride with a soldier driving an army truck who took me right to the headquarters of Clinton's unit, arriving there about 10 a.m. Clinton was not in his tent so I made use of his cot and promptly went to sleep. He was one surprised guy when he returned and found me asleep. We had not seen each other in over two years and the reunion was joyful. We went to his Headquarters where the 1st Sgt. informed me there was no one on duty that could authorize Clinton leave

to go to Cannes with me. He informed me that no one was to get leave as the unit was under orders to ship out to the Pacific and all the officers in the unit were on leave to Paris and Cannes. When he told me that, I just blew up in complete rage and frustration. I demanded that the 1st Sgt. obtain transportation for me to go to the General's office to file a complaint. The Sgt. made a call and a jeep came and took us to their highest Headquarters. There after reviewing the facts I presented and without further ado, the top Sgt. on duty wrote Clinton seven twenty-four hour passes to Cannes, smiled at us and told us to have a good time and summoned a truck to take us to Marseilles. It was now evening so we ate at some transient mess and found a place to sleep in railway cars parked on a siding for that purpose. They were for army use for a nominal fee. We over slept the next morning and leaving in haste I forgot my wallet with all the papers under my pillow. Fortunately, I found it missing and rushing back to the car I retrieved it and we just made the train to Cannes. Since Clint was a Corporal the Major suggested that I pin one of my 1st Lt bars on him to avoid trouble in Cannes which I did and we were off to enjoy our vacation.

We were given a large room in a nice hotel on a hill side overlooking the sea and waterfront area and the food was excellent. The Air Force had a hotel right on the beach and at night that was the place to be. We checked it out every night along with a few other clubs with lots of action. There exists a photo of Clinton and I with a nurse between us. We have always said that the nurse was the other one's date. There was a special hotel for the nurses on the beach and there were always lots of nurses around. One night we were at a very nice night club out of town on a high bluff with a tremendous view of the coast and the sea. I recall it was very late because we had left the nurses at their hotel. We were having drinks, eating and watching the floor show. Suddenly the MC said he wanted to introduce Frances' favorite son and he announced Maurice Chevelier who took the floor and did four song and dance numbers to the delight of the crowd. We had a terrific time at that place.

One night I met a nurse at the hotel who had just gotten there that day. She wanted to dance so we went to several clubs and

ended up at the club at the Air Force hotel (called that because most AF officers were put up there) which was the best on the beach. There was a lot of 'cutting in' on the dance floor but partners united after a number finished. About 2300 hours my nurse date told me that she was being hassled by a Brig. General and asked me what should she do. I suggest the cold shoulder treatment. Shortly afterward she told me she could not handle the General as he was insisting that she go to his room. I then went to the General and informed him of my dates complaint of harassment and suggested that he cease his unwanted attention. He was slightly plastered and had the gall to invite me up to his room so we could all have fun. I told him his proposition was insulting and demeaning and I intended to ask for a court of inquiry. He sobered considerably and became apologetic and later he came over to our table and apologized to the nurse which helped ease the tensions considerably.

Clint and I had a wonderful time in Cannes together and I hated to see him go as his unit was scheduled to leave very soon for the Pacific theater of operations. Watching him get on the train and waving goodbye brought a lump to my throat and left me depressed so much I did not want to go back to the hotel. Instead, I stayed down on the beach and spent time in the clubs with several of the officers I had met there. Our time being up, we met the train as it went back through Cannes and found all were present except one soldier. Our trip back was same as the one going with stops for meals along the way.

I think it was after I returned from Cannes that I was appointed Currency Control Officer for the company. The Army imposed a currency control system to be imposed on all troops in the ETO. I had to travel to Stuttgart for instructions on the currency control, how it was to be instituted, how it worked, when to do it, what could be declared in a lump sum and how to record it. The government had issued American printed Francs and Deutsche Marks for use in France and Germany. The DM was valued at 10 cents or 10 to the dollar and the Franc at 2 cents or 50 to the dollar. Neither the French nor the Germans valued their currency that high so large sums could be made on the black market. In the local market the soldiers actually lost most of the value of their money. For instance: In Paris I would go into a bar to buy a drink of cognac which was priced at 60 francs.

The French valued the franc at 1/2 cent. Based on this difference the bar was charging me in effect 30 cents and based on the rate to me the drink cost me \$1.20 an extremely high price in 1945. All American francs had to be turned over to the French government by the merchants and they were reimbursed at the rate of 1/2 cent per franc and then the government turned them into the American government at the rate of 2 cents per franc making a cool 300 percent on the deal. The American soldiers who had fought a bloody war took the brunt of this exchange rate and lost again to those arrogant French who made 300% on every cent spent in France. Another reason to despise most of them. The Germans on the other hand did not want the American DM but preferred to be paid in their own DM.

It is apparent that this difference in the valuing of the currencies encouraged a black market. I could take a carton of cigarettes that cost me \$1.50 and in France sell them on the street for 5,000 or more francs. At the pegged rate, it cost the French person \$25.00 but the francs were worth \$100.00 to me. Or, I could sell a carton to a Russian where the DM was valued at one cent to the DM. He would pay \$40.00 in his marks that immediately became worth \$400.00 to me at our valuation. Based on the exchange rates and the black market, I heard that some American soldiers were sending home huge sums of money by using our postal services in the ETO. This is the reason I suspect they instituted the currency control

On the day the program was instituted all the Officers and Men had to appear before the currency officer (Me) and declare their assets (money). It was like opening a checking account with all your money. Since they could go to any control officer, I actually handled hundreds of soldiers not in my unit. For about a week I sat at a desk in our company CP with another officer and NCO and I processed anyone who came in. I entered the declared sum in a small black book, similar to a savings account book, and after that anytime they spent money it was deducted from the book and additions could only be the monthly salary, percentage of gambling winnings, or money earned. In the initial meeting I was only able to enter into the book: three months salary, other documented earnings or money from home, a reasonable amount of cash on hand and gambling earnings and a few other exceptions. I was allowed to use my own

discretion as to the final sum I would enter into the book. It was an interesting week as most of the men tried to get me to exceed the limits and I heard more interesting stories than most traffic officers.

One morning a soldier walked in to declare his money and laid bundles of francs, DMs and American money on the table and ask me to declare it in his book. I really sat up and took notice as he emptied his bag on the table. I then asked him, "How much do you want to declare?" He answered simply, "Fifty thousand dollars for me and fifty thousand for you!" A very disappointed soldier left with about \$98,000 he could not declare and the firm understanding that I would not go to jail or lose my rank for any sum of money. It was amazing the amount of money some soldiers had from gambling and I know that to be true because I saw some dice and poker games in which huge sums of money were being bet. After that, there was a scramble to convert money into diamonds, other precious stones, gold, silver, paintings and other assets to get it home. I was satisfied to gain enough from the sale of some of my cigarettes and other items to pay the expenses of my trips to England, Scotland, Paris, Switzerland and other travels and buy the things I purchased.

Some time later the Captain called me to his office and advised me I was scheduled to take a troop train to Belgium. I was tired from all the extra duties I had been working so I informed him that I would only take the trip if I was specifically ordered to do so and then I would go under protest. Frankly the thought of traveling with that responsibility did not appeal to me just then. He said he would see if he could get another officer to take the troop train. He later informed me that they had another officer and I was off the hook, which was just fine with me.

For some reason I had the occasion to travel back over some of the areas we had fought through in France. I was amazed to see the field telephone wires still hanging from the trees and buildings, many remains of animals still laying in the fields, and the debris from the buildings still lying around. In Germany by this time the evidences of the war were mostly cleaned up and cleared away. I spoke with some of the French people and my opinion of how lazy they were was reinforced. They kept asking me when we would be bringing the Germans to clean up the

results of the war. I tried to explain to them that would never happen but they insisted the Germans must clean up their land. Months later when I went through the area again, it still looked the same.

Later in the summer I received orders to relocate my platoon for occupation duty to an area in southern Bavaria south of New Ulm. I had my platoon consisting of myself, my driver, my platoon Sgt and three squads of ten men each to handle our responsibilities. Our mission was to maintain order and to make sure the Germans in our area were not bothered by any one so they could get back to their farming. You guessed it – I was on the manure circuit. We covered an area the size of a small county. There were numerous villages in my area and I decided to put the platoon and our CP in the village of Mehrstetten. Before I moved into the area, we were briefed on our mission and I was informed that my area bordered on the French occupation area. It seems that the French soldiers had been hassling the local people and stealing from them. I had to put a stop to that. I put my platoon up in an old school house and I had a room in a house nearby. Since I did not have enough vehicles or gas to effectively patrol the area, I set up guard posts in key points and moved them around while running some patrols. The house I had a room in was typical for the area with the animals on the first floor and living quarters on the second. My mattress was a covering stuffed with fresh straw and my comforter was also a covering stuffed with fresh straw. Across the street was a small dairy operation so I had no trouble awaking in the morning. In the front court yard of the house was a square stone pit where the manure was pitched each day and early every morning they watered the contents. The smell in the summer time was heavy in the air. Later they pumped the liquid from the base of the pit into big barrels on wagons and sprayed it on their fields. We called the wagons ‘honey wagons’ and if you drove through while they were spraying, you came home with a brown stain all over.

I constantly drove around the area on the dirt roads until I knew the area very well. The French occupation forces were only a few miles from where I stayed with several villages between us and their area. The French were aware of our presence in the area and several times we were sorely tested by

their soldiers. They kept coming into my area and forcibly taking things from the citizens but would be gone when we got there. They avoided our guards and road blocks. We got called out so many times to protect the citizens from those soldiers that we felt like firemen on constant call. I decided to try for better communications with the citizens so I began calling on the Burgemeester of every village and making friends to impress on them the sincerity of our purpose and to keep me advised of any thing that went on in their areas. It began to pay dividends later.

One day a Burgemeester sent me information he had heard that French soldiers intended to raid a certain village in the afternoon. I immediately took two squads with a trucks mounting 50 cal. MGs on a ring mount and ten men to each truck. They were heavily armed with rifles, bazookas, burp guns and grenades. I set the squads up in covering positions on the road between the village and the French zone and put out scouts in the event they tried to bypass me. Some time later we intercepted a large mobile force of French officers and soldiers in several trucks moving toward the village. Speaking through an interrupter, I informed their senior officer that they were in the American Zone of Occupation, they were interlopers with no authority, and they would not be allowed to harass the civilian residents. We argued at length with the officer losing his temper. He demanded to know what I would do if his men got into their trucks and forcibly raided the village. I told him that my mission was to protect the local populace at all costs and under such circumstances we would be forced to open fire and that would result in "one hell of an international incident." By prearranged signal my men loaded their weapons and assumed the ready position. A startled and confused officer having been bluffed took his vehicles and men and retreated to his zone followed by us in our trucks. As a result, I had to set up roadblocks and guard posts in several areas which were staffed 24 hours a day for over two weeks and, sure enough, they tried several times to penetrate the area but were always turned back by armed men. We were determined to provide reassurances to the local populace and to impress on the French soldiers that we were sincere in performing our mission.

A short time after I had discontinued the roadblocks an excited Burgemeester from a town several miles away rushed up

to me and asked me for assistance. He was shaking in terror and with tears in his eyes he told me that French soldiers had come to the village in several trucks and they were cleaning out his village. Again, taking two very heavily armed squads of men with the Burgemeester in my jeep and two trucks, we raced at breakneck speed over the narrow dirt roads to the village. Though it was early morning I could see that the soldiers had been busy and we could not believe what our eyes saw. The French soldiers were in the town square forcing all the citizens to completely empty their houses and load every thing on their trucks, and I mean everything. They were taking all mattresses, quilts, cooking utensils, furniture, radios, clocks, animals, grains and all foods. They were in effect cleaning out the town to the very bare bones, leaving nothing behind. Observing the scene, my opinion of those French soldiers reached zero as I angrily confronted the officer in charge. I immediately ordered my Sgt. to secure the square and everyone in it. I ordered the officer to allow the people to unload the trucks and retrieve their property or I would create an incident that "Ike, would have to referee." I told that officer that if they ever came back into my zone I would no longer exercise patience and they would be given no more chances as I would use all the force at my command. Realizing that I meant business, they allowed the trucks to be unloaded and returned to their zone followed by us. The townsfolk were appreciative and thanked the men profusely. The Burgemeester later invited me and my Sgt. to lunch and gave me as a gift an old beer stein and took us on a tour of the village.

I began to realize that all the Germans referred to me as "Lt. Schwartzkoff". I asked the Burgemeester why they called me by that name. He explained to me, that not knowing my name, they called me that as it meant the Lt. with the black hair. As long as I was on the manure circuit where ever I went from village to village I was addressed as "Lt Schwartzkoff."

Farming in Germany was not what I was used to in the U.S. as the people did not live in farm houses on their land. Farm homes were grouped together in the villages and the farmers drove out to their fields to plant and tend the land. There was not much to do in the villages so on Sunday, after church, the farmer and his family packed a lunch and off to the fields to lie on blankets, eat, talk and relax. You could see them most every

Sunday, watching their crops grow! I began to understand why they hiked and walked so much and their feelings and attachment to the land.

One day I was called to the regimental CP where the Colonel informed me that every regiment had to name a Special Services Officer to handle USO shows coming into the area and he was assigning me to handle the job. I protested that being on the manure circuit he knew I was very busy, especially with the French soldiers trying to clean out the towns. He said that was in addition to my other duties and would only take a little bit more of my time. I could not talk my way out of the job which I found out included: getting a schedule of all USO tours coming into the regimental area, finding a convenient location with an auditorium and stage or similar set up for the performance, meet the group at an agreed on location, shepherd them through the performance and escort them to the next location or meeting place. I was extremely grateful that Division Special Services Officer was responsible for their meals and lodgings, not me!

An USO troupe was usually composed of 5 persons, commonly three men and two women. One man was in charge and was the Emcee, others were comedians, dancers, singers and musicians. Usually one woman was a singer and the other a dancer. My experience with USO troupes was so negative that I seldom watched a performance. Most of the members of the troupes I dealt with were snobbish, aloof and some even arrogant. Most acted and talked as if they were making a great sacrifice to leave big jobs in the States to perform for soldiers in Europe, when in truth, I doubt if most of them could stay booked, so they opted for big pay in the ETO. Many other officers told me that they found the members of the tours to be self-centered, demanding, and it was impossible to satisfy their wants. They were always dissatisfied with the places I could locate for the performance, as if I could produce an opera house in the middle of old German farming country. I was completely turned off to them for the dirty jokes they constantly told that we all thought offensive and unnecessary.

I recall one tour group that I was scheduled to meet at a rural crossroads. The area was new to me and we made a wrong turn making us late, however they also had gotten completely lost. Driving around I finally met them on a dirt road on a hilltop just

about one hour before performance time. For that evening I had picked the Burgemeester's meeting hall in a small rural village for the performance and I had trucked in hundreds of chairs as I had been informed that the hall was going to be packed that night. We hurried to get to the town on time and immediately they were dissatisfied with the location as there was no stage, no sound amplification and mike, the room was too crowded and on and on! (After this incident I always asked if they wanted sound and if so, division had to furnish the equipment as I had no resources to do so.)

Amid all the confusion and complaining, the lead singer came running up to me in tears, telling me that she would not sing if she could not have warm milk to drink. I tried to explain to her that this was not the States and there was no milk available in rural Germany, especially at this time of night, but she only cried harder and threw a real temper tantrum. As I recall, the Emcee of this tour was a decent guy and he appealed to me to try to appease her. I talked with the Burgemeester and his wife who were in a back room. She finally understood what I needed and said she could only get goats milk. She left and shortly returned with the goats milk that we split with water, added spices, warmed it up and gave it to the singer. She complained of the taste, which I blamed on German spices, but she drank it and performed. I recall one comedian was quite dirty which I did not condone and I was told that most of the soldiers were turned off by his jokes. I always tried to talk to as many men as possible for their opinions to pass that information on to the next officer taking over the group.. This particular group did not give an impressive performance but it was a cold night and a place for the men to go. I was always glad to load the tour groups into their vehicles and take them to meet with the next Special Services Officer.

One of my biggest problems was that many of the performers expected me to provide food and drinks, however I had no authority or means to draw food or drinks and I was told that was not part of my job. As I escorted tour after tour, they vocally filled my ears with their opinions of me and of the army. I was berated by many of the tour members, who accused me of disrespect for them as I did not have drinks on hand and food after their shows. I and the soldiers assisting me became

increasingly disenchanted with the USO and some hostile feelings surfaced at times. In a couple instances, I had to physically hold back some of the men, since some of the performers could make one hopping mad in a hurry.

I had one USO tour coming in and due to the timing and location of the troops involved, we looked everywhere but could not find a hall or building suitable for that size audience. One of the men helping me suggested a beer garden on a hill several miles away. I checked it out and it was a great location with an outdoor garden with tables, chairs, benches and an out door stage with a sound system. It was large enough for the crowd expected and was ideal for a relaxed atmosphere. I agreed to allow beer, and only beer, to be served and provided my own men to police the performance. A notice was sent to all units that any unruly soldiers would be dealt with severely. Later I met the typical USO group. It immediately became apparent that the Emcee could not be satisfied and would become a real pain and problem for me to deal with. The rest of the performers in the tour seemed realistic. When the Emcee saw the location for the evening he became very nasty in his remarks about the place even though I explained that it was the only place available in our area for such a performance. It was really a lovely setting for a show, also, it was a warm summer evening with a full moon and the men were anxious for the act to go on. After a lengthy discussion the act went on stage and about 20 minutes later the Emcee came to me practically purple with rage. He shouted that he was a true professional and was not use to performing in beer gardens or where beer was being served. We had a real heated exchange of words, none complimentary, and he informed me that he was canceling the performance as he would not perform in a beer garden and, also, he was going to file an official protest. I pointed out to him all the men I had present to maintain order and then told my Corporal to remove the men at once, which he did. I told the Emcee to go ahead and get up on the stage and tell hundreds of combat soldiers that he would not perform because the men were drinking beer in a beautiful garden on an ideal night. I advised him that if the men acted adversely to his announcement, then it would be his problem, not mine. He thought that over and said he would continue if I agreed to stop serving beer to the men. Again, I told him to take

the stage and tell the audience that he would not allow beer to be served while they were performing and I could almost guarantee him a riot and I would not be the one lynched. I finally agreed to stop serving during performances and serve beer only during intermissions. The men were agreeable but grumbled aloud and the performance continued. Several of the USO group apologized to me for the conduct of the Emcee as they appreciated the problems I encountered. I escorted the group out of my area that same night and offered nothing to eat or drink. The Emcee did file a complaint but since there was no disorder and considering the rural area we were in, my actions were not questioned.

I was informed of another troupe that was coming in to perform that was staying at Division Headquarters and working out of there. According to my source, the troupe expected to have wine or schnapps before and food and drinks after performing. I was also told that one of the girls in the troupe was having an affair with one of the full Colonels at Division. In this one instance I was able to find a hall large enough to accommodate the crowd and it had a stage with sound equipment I obtained from Division. Food was my real problem. I contacted every mess Sgt. in the area and was able to scare up some cokes and Spam sandwiches. Class A rations were just not available in this region. When I met this troupe to escort them to the hall, I knew immediately that I had a bad bunch. Of all the groups I had encountered this one was the most selfish, conceited, arrogant and demanding bunch I had to deal with. They were out for everything they could get for themselves. They kept suggesting items in Germany that I could get for them to take home, on me of course. The girl having the affair with the Colonel approached me several times with requests that I get her expensive glassware and steins. Backstage during the show she told me about a 35mm German camera she wanted and said if I would get one for her before they left, she would spend the night with me. After dealing with the greed of all the members of the group, her proposition infuriated me to the point that I responded that I did not mess around with American girls in Germany. I had heard from good sources that many of the girls in the troupes made extra money by charging for their favors. I guess I must have insulted her since the entire group became

more uncooperative as I refused to honor their requests.

The payoff came after the show when we took them to the room where the food was set out. The expression on their faces when they saw the Spam sandwiches was priceless. They looked at the food with utter disdain. Taking their remarks in stride, I got them into their vehicles in a heavy rain to return to Division at which time the Emcee told me that he would file a complaint over the perceived poor treatment he had received. The next day I received a phone call from that Colonel at Division demanding an accounting of my treatment of the troupe and why I refused to honor their requests. I informed him that I had not asked for the job dealing with such individuals and they had made demands on me that were in violation of Army Regulations. I explained to him that I was propositioned by a female member of the tour in exchange for a camera and I found that completely offensive. I told him that he knew that I had no authority or provision to feed such a group as it was up to Division to do so and lastly, I intended to file a formal complaint against the group backed up by witnesses. I added that I had been told by a reliable source that he had a personal interest in the matter for reasons other than had been mentioned. We had a rather heated discussion for a short time, but I was not concerned as I had acted above board and had many witnesses to their demands. That was the last I heard of the matter except I heard from a lot of other officers who ran afoul of that group.

There were several other troupes I handled: some too lousy to even waste time watching and some that were just fair. A few of the groups were friendly and very reasonable and some just the opposite. One night in a heavy rain I did get lost for several hours and the performance was late. Later we moved to another area and I lost the job and the title that went with it. The Colonel told me that he was making the job full time and giving it to a 2nd Lt new to the regiment. HO HO-HO

In addition to all my other duties, while I was the regimental SSO I was informed by the Colonel that I was also the coach of the regimental soft ball team which job I had until I was relieved by the new SSO. I traveled a lot in southern Germany having at least three games per week in different locations. It was a very good ball club and after I left them they ended up playing in the ETO championship playoffs.

Sometime in early fall all of our units were moved back into the town with the CP and things reverted back as before with guard duties and traveling. Later the Captain told me that I could have ten days, plus travel time, to visit England and it would not count against my accrued annual leave. I was very happy to know that as I had hoped for a trip to England. The trip would have been much more enjoyable if I had been going with a tour or with someone else from the unit. Transportation, food and quarters were furnished and as it turned out, I ended up traveling alone. I finally arrived on the coast of France on a cool dreary overcast afternoon and I was driven in a jeep to a large Chateau on the coast. It was a big old place obviously with a lot of history about it. I was taken to a bedroom on the second floor overlooking the ocean. It was a large room with two beds. I was tired and alone and it was now approaching the dinner hour. I remembered the two pints of American whiskey that I had packed in my suitcase that was on the bed. I took out a pint, opened it and raised it to my lips to take a drink when suddenly the door opened. There stood a Captain, probably in his 40s and a horrified feeling enveloped me as I spotted the two crosses on the front of his blouse – a Chaplain. Mortified, I hastily replaced the cap on the bottle and shoved it into my bag. I know I must have stuttered a little, in my embarrassment, as I introduced myself. He introduced himself apparently ignoring what he had seen. We talked awhile and I suggested that we take a stroll around the Chateau before dinner. Suddenly he said, “Your are going to finish having that drink before supper, aren’t you.” I took the bottle out of the bag and offered it to him. He tilted it up and after the third gurgle, I grabbed the bottle back and had a good stiff drink myself. I realized that we would get along fine but that pint would not last anytime I played quite a few games of ping pong with the Chaplain that night and he was the absolute best player I had ever encountered. The Chaplain made it abundantly clear that once we reached London he would be going his own way, alone. He told me that he had friends in England who would have a good supply of scotch on hand for him. I got the impression that he had spent a lot of time in England some time in the past. We traveled to England together and caught the train to London where we shook hands and parted company. I never saw him again after that time.

I checked into the hotel listed on my instruction package and began to get acquainted with London. By that time, there had been so many American soldiers in England for so long that I was just another person on the street. In just a couple days I learned how to use the Underground to go to any destination so I visited many historic buildings and places. The second night in London I ran into a pleasant young lady and struck up a conversation. I knew that food was strictly rationed in England but she told me that she would take me to a club where we could get an excellent steak dinner if I would pay for the meal. I agreed and she took us to an elegant night club on the second floor of a building in the center of London. We had drinks and an excellent meal in courses for which the cost was very reasonable. We danced some and walked about downtown sight seeing and early in the morning I put her on a double deck bus for home and did not see her again.

I wanted to go to Scotland so after a few days I caught the Scottish Flyer, a high speed train to Edinburg for two days. I stayed in a nice hotel near the train station and there, also, I spent most of my time seeing the sights and historic places. I had a date one night with a young lady (do not recall where I met her). We went to the movies, then to a big hall to a dance where they frisked everyone before they could enter the dance hall and we ended the evening with fish and chips in newspaper at an old restaurant. I caught the train back to London riding in a compartment with several people including a British soldier. Late in the afternoon he asked me if I would like a spot of ale and I accepted. He pulled two green bottles out of his traveling bag and handed me one of them. We finished the trip to London talking and sipping the warm ale. I under estimated the power of that warm ale because when we got off the train, I was lifting my knees high. Back in London I stayed a night in the same hotel and that night I attended a stage play at one of the theaters. They got the tickets for me at the hotel as I did not want to stand in a long line to get a ticket. When I went to my seat a very pleasant female usher asked me if I would be taking tea and I said that I would. I was sitting next to an older English couple and as I was not laughing the lady started explaining the jokes to me and then I was able to understand the humor and get the jokes. I believe the play was "How to succeed in business

without trying". At intermission time, and for only a few pence, we were served a pot of tea and cookies.

One sunny afternoon I had been sight seeing and arrived at Picadilly Square where I was constantly being propositioned by young ladies of the street. A Lt. walking past spoke to me and I was delighted when I recognized him as a fellow student at W. Va. University. As we stood there talking about the students we knew and what happened to them, one girl kept propositioning us and would not leave us alone. I saw a Bobby and called him over and told him what she was doing. He took the girl into custody and said to us that at last he had finally met some one who objected to being propositioned. I guess our actions were very unusual for Picadilly Square and when the Bobby left several girls come over and asked us why we had called the Bobby. We explained that we would do it again if they could not take no for an answer. They got the message. The Lt. and I went to a bar a few blocks away and downed a couple pints as we talked. He had to leave to keep an appointment and I continued sight seeing.

Leaving London, I went to Paris for a day and night where I traded my pounds sterling for enough in francs to pay for my trip and have that amount left over when I returned home. This was my third trip to Paris and I, for one, was not impressed with Paris or the French people that I met. Most of them were arrogant, patronizing and unfriendly. I had previously been to Paris twice and had looked forward to the trips only because I got a rest from combat. Having fought through France, I had formed an opinion of the French people that my trips to Paris only reinforced. I did meet some nice people out in the country. I recall my first trip to Paris crowded into the back of an Army truck. The weather was damp and cold and the trip was long, but at least we stopped at transit messes along the way for food and hot coffee. I recall that I and another Lt. were assigned to a room in what appeared to be an old third rate hotel. In the bathroom there was a toilet, sink and one other bowl sitting in the middle of the room. We really felt foolish when we asked the bellboy what it was and he laughed and explained its purpose. On all trips to Paris I did a lot of sight seeing and learned to go anywhere I wanted to go on their subway. I ate most of my meals at places approved by the Army and there was no cost involved. Of course we never went

on one of these trips without lots of cigarettes, candy, gum and soap as we could sell those items on the street for enough to pay for our trip, everything we bought and return with twice as much as we spent.

In Paris. I recall going into a café and bar one afternoon to get a drink which was 60 francs (\$1.20 to me and 30 cents to him). The bartender was a very friendly man and as he started to serve me he looked at a man standing up at the front of the bar and as he poured me a drink the told me to drink it quickly. I did and as he filled it up again the man came running back and demanded to know if I had paid for the first drink. The bartender and I both averred that I had, so he left. When I asked for another drink the same scenario was repeated. The game was comical and I wished I could have continued but I was beginning to feel the drinks I had consumed, so I left smiling at the bartender who grinned back. I did some shopping for the family, had my picture taken at a portrait shop for the family, did some sight seeing and on the last night sold all my cigarettes to finance my trip which was more than well covered.

Back at the company it was now late fall and winter was approaching. Lt. Frank Pierce and I had been together since Ft. Bragg. Frank and I discussed our situation several times and realized that we would be transferred elsewhere as the 100th Division was preparing to ship home for deactivation. Soldiers who had enough points to go home were being transferred in to the unit and those with not enough points were going to other units. One day Frank told me that he was going to 7th Army Headquarters to try to get a transfer into Special Services and wanted me to go with him. I went with him for the interview but did not think that I would be interested in Special Services again and opted to stay in the infantry. Maybe I made a mistake as Frank later became a ski instructor at an Alpine Resort for soldiers for the rest of his time over there. Me, I remained in the Infantry.

On Nov. 21, 1945, I received orders transferring me to the 3rd Infantry Division and thus, I began further adventures in the ETO.

OCCUPATION PART TWO

As the late fall of 1945 approached, we had all received official word that the 100th Infantry Division would be rotated to the U.S. for deactivation. This meant that all soldiers who did not have enough points to go home would be transferred to other units for occupation duty and the 100th would be filled with men with points to go home as the division shipped for the U.S. Since I did not have enough points to go home, I knew that I would soon be transferred to another unit in the ETO.

On 21 Nov. 1945 I received a transfer from the 100th Infantry Division to the 3rd Infantry Division. Finally the day came for me to proceed on my transfer. By this time most of the men that I fought with had been transferred out and my friend, Lt. Frank Pierce, had been transferred to the Special Services 7th Army and had left the unit. I said my goodbye to those left in the Anti-Tank Company, 399th Infantry Regiment and climbed aboard a truck with all my belongings to travel to Division Headquarters. At Division I said goodbye to those I knew and climbed into another truck to begin my journey to my new assignment. It was a cold cloudy November day, snowing off and on with a chilling wind blowing. We all huddled in the back of the open truck trying to keep warm and, I am sure, contemplating our new assignments. I recall being driven from town to town, being transferred to other trucks several times without a chance to eat a meal and finally as darkness began to fall along with the snow, I got into a truck that was destined for the 3rd Division Headquarters. The ride was long and cold and it was well after dark and quite late when we arrived. The snow had changed into a steady cold rain. It was past the supper hour but a very kind Mess Sgt. fixed me up with some cold sandwiches and hot coffee which I really appreciated and due to the late hour, I was assigned quarters for the night. The next morning I signed in at Division Hqrs at which time I was interviewed by a Colonel who told me that I would be assigned to the 15th Infantry Regiment, which was known as the "Old China Regiment" based on the units' past assignments in China. Later in the day a truck was made available to drive me to the Hqrs of the 15th Infantry and

fortunately I arrived just in time to have a hot meal in the regimental officers mess and meet some of the officers. It was late so I was assigned quarters for the night. The next day I was interviewed by the Acting C O. as the regimental commander, Colonel Hallett D. Edson was in the U.S. on leave. After we finished the interview, the Lt. Col. I was talking with, stated the he would assign me as a Company Commander of one of the rifle companies. I suggested to him that, having no experience as a C.O., I needed some experience as a Company Executive officer first. He said he did not want to do that but after some persuasion by myself, he agreed to assign me as the Ex.O. of H Company, 15th Inf and furnished a jeep to transport me to that company.

On arriving, I met the 1st Lt. Commanding the company. He was a very likable guy and easy to get along with. He had landed with the first troops in Africa as an enlisted man, fought with the 3rd Division through Africa, Italy, France and Germany and had received a battle field commission. He had been severely wounded several times. After a couple days getting acquainted with the company, its assignments and the NCOs, I began to feel that I had been set up by the Lt. Colonel because the Lt. spent his entire days at Battalion Hqrs and not with the company. All the NCOs and Officers were bringing their problems to me for decisions. For the first week I spent the evenings with the Lt. discussing the company, its strength, mission and other details. As I said, he was a very nice individual and we got along great, except he was uncomfortable to be around. In some of the things he did, he reminded me of a man who had been knocked down one time too many.

My suspicions about being set up proved out. At the end of the week the Lt. was transferred to the Battalion staff and I was ordered as the Company Commander of H Co. Oh- well, I had one week as the Ex. O.

At the time I took command of the Company, it was located in Marburg, Germany. Also in the town were: a Rifle company, Battalion Hqrs, and the Third Replacement Depot, a small Army Hospital and some other small units in or near the town, including trucking and supply units and Quartermaster units. The 3rd RD was a Depot that processed men for shipment home and new men coming in from the states were processed and

assigned in the ETO. There were usually several hundred men being processed by the unit at any given time. Had I only known the problems and headaches that I would encounter in the next eight months or so, I would gladly have gone with Frank into Special Services.

Many of my problems to be faced in the future arose from the men assigned to the company. Once the war was over with Germany and Japan, the Armed Services was under pressure to get the men who fought the war home as soon as possible. To achieve this end, the Basic Training for new men was shortened from 13 weeks to 6 weeks. In other words, some of the men we got were less than two months away from home. They were poorly trained, poorly disciplined, and most had a chip on their shoulder. This I would have to deal with later.

H Company was had its headquarters in a small stone building and the men were living in a row of two story stone buildings nearby. The Officers lived in a large home several blocks away. The company responsibilities included: security for the railroad yards (protecting supplies, coal, gas, food, etc), guarding a German hospital that held prisoners and quarantined civilians (had social diseases), guarding an art museum that held many art treasures, guarding the local jail where army prisoners were held including two men being held for a capital crime, and providing security generally in the area. As I recall the company should have had a complement of about 6 officers and 175 men. When I took command, the company consisted of 2 other officers and about 140 men including NonComs. With this manpower we were barely able to carry out our duties. With only three officers, we had to take turns checking the guards and we rarely got a good night of sleep. The three of us would gather at the kitchen table and deal out bridge hands. Lt. Craig had a book and we would bid and study the book at the same time. We spent hours at this and we all learned how to play bridge. I made a pest of myself at Battalion and Regimental Headquarters asking for more men and officers. Some of my men were starting to reenlist and were being rotated back to the States for one month of leave. These men were not being replaced and combined with illness, rendering men incapable of duty, I was now down to about 120 men available for duty and had trouble covering my guard assignments. I was able to pass off a couple

of my duties to 'E' Company, the other company in town.

One day my 1st Sgt. came to me with the Morning Report (daily strength report and location of all personnel assigned to the Company) and he was visibly upset. According to the report we had less than 90 men available for duty and he would have to put the men on extra hours to handle our guard duties. He advised me that many of the men had Scabies (caused by an infestation of small vermin that dwelled in blankets, clothing, and mattresses, I was told) and each day those men went on sick call with more going each day. At the aid station all that the Doctor did was to cover the affected areas with Calamine lotion and send the men back to duty. The next day as the men were going on sick leave, I checked each one myself. There were about 20 or more and many had open sores on arms, legs, chest and backs. In all, I had about 80 men that were itching and scratching. I had checked on them for two days and observed that they were overly tired and listless. One morning I had all the men going on sick call fall out in formation with a Lt. in charge. I instructed him to tell the Doctor that the men were incapable of pulling guard duty, that the Calamine lotion was not curing the men and it appeared that additional medical intervention was necessary. The Lt. marched the men to the sick bay. About two hours later he appeared with the men and informed me that the Doctor had treated the men with Calamine lotion and that the Doctor would call me about the matter. Shortly thereafter, I received a call from the Doctor who stated that he would not tolerate my interference in his diagnosis and treatment of the men. When I informed him that he was more interested in proving himself right than in the welfare of the men, he really blew up and "told me off". Realizing that arguing with such a self centered egotist was useless, I immediately called the Battalion Commander and fully explained the entire matter and happenings to him. I informed the Colonel that a proper medical evaluation of each man was essential or in just a matter of days, every soldier in my company would be a medical casualty. The Colonel assured me that he would handle the matter immediately. The next day a full medical team descended on my company and inspected each man individually. By that time I had over 80 men affected and miserable. They were all diagnosed as having scabies and arrangements were made to

start treatment of the men the next morning. The next morning a medical team arrived with several trucks loaded with men, supplies and new clothing and bedding. They made the men strip and sprayed them from head to toe, then marched them to the showers where each man washed thoroughly and then they were sprayed again and they were given them new clothing to wear. They burned all the clothing, bedding, mattresses and pillows and then they sprayed the entire building from top to bottom. Each and every man was treated individually by the Doctor for his sores. Every day for three days the men and building were sprayed and treated individually. Within ten days my company was back to duty with only three men who were not well and I sent them to the hospital for further treatment. The Doctor never spoke to me again and fortunately I did not require medical attention while in the unit.

As a follow up on the above, I should note that the Doctor was responsible for checking the mess hall and cooking areas of each unit once a week and was required to submit a written report to the Regimental C.O. I was aware that he checked my unit and the mess Sgt. kept me informed when he was in the unit area, but he never expressed dissatisfaction with our unit mess. When I met with Col Edson just before leaving the unit, he told me that the Doctor had submitted an unsatisfactory report on my mess hall every week. I asked him what he did with the reports and why I was never informed of them. Col Edson told me that he had checked when he got the first report from the Doctor and his staff told him that the Doctor held a grudge against me because of the Scabies incident. The Colonel laughed and told me that after that time he had thrown all the reports into the circular file.

I was made aware of the plight of two men in the company who had been recommended for the Purple Heart Medal for wounds received in combat. I was advised that the award had been refused for the men. It seems that the men were among those fighting through a small village and were staying against the buildings for protection as they moved ahead. They were standing on the small porch of one of the houses when an artillery shell came in and landed under the porch. Both men were blown up into the air and on landing broke several bones each that required hospitalization. I wrote the citations up a

second time and sent them in for consideration for the awards as they had been wounded by enemy fire. The citations came back a second time refused. The reviewing board acknowledged that the men had been wounded by enemy fire but stated that to get the medal the wound had to be the direct result of enemy fire and the army considered their wounds to be the indirect result of enemy fire. So we lost the word game and no medals.

Another convenience that my company enjoyed that had been instituted by the former C.O. and was due to cause me trouble. Each company unit in the army kept what was called the "Company Fund". All sums of money that the company received, i.e. share of profits from the Post Exchanges, donations and other revenues, had to be entered into the company fund book and documentation maintained for receipts and expenditures. The former C.O had created a second set of books in which they listed receipt of money they received from a club the company operated. Shortly after I took command of the company, several matters were revealed to me that were kept confidential within the staff.

Over all, the men in H Company had it quite good compared to other companies as I learned after getting firm command of the company and learning "the ropes", so to speak. I inherited their supply of "spirits" that I was told amounted to several thousand liters. The entire supply was in the care and custody of several very capable Non-Coms but I never knew the actual amount or location of the "spirits" I had inherited and I did not want to know. Many times when I was at Regiment or Battalion Headquarters, some senior officer would make some oblique reference to my cache of whiskey and would request that I share it with them and their men. On one occasion the Battalion C.O., a Major, called me into his office and stated that they were starting a Battalion enlisted club in Marburg for all the enlisted men in the Battalion and they had plans for a very nice club. He said that it had been agreed that all the companies in the area would participate and all would combine their stocks of beer, wine and whiskey. This agreement was news to me as neither me, Lt. Walker, or any of our Non-Coms had been a part of any such meetings regarding that club. I informed the Major that I also had heard rumors that H Company had a supply of "spirits" and I considered it just that, a rumor, as I had never seen a

supply of whiskey in H Company since I had taken command. I informed him that I had no knowledge of the location of any whiskey except that which the men contributed to the club in our Company. He indicated to me that he did not believe me and I later found out that some of my Non-Coms had been followed but that ended quickly. A Battalion Club was established which was never as successful as ours.

Sometime after assuming command, I was informed that our supply of "spirits" was getting low and we needed to replenish our supplies of schnapps, brandy, beer and other spirits. We had accumulated a store of sugar, candy, gum, cigarettes, soap and other items for trading purposes. We checked and found out that the only suitable distillery to brew what we needed was in the British Zone. This could be a problem as trips for our purposes would not be approved trips. We needed certain grains, sugar and other items to work a deal with the distillery. My enterprising NCOs were equal to the task and all the essential items were procured. I allowed the NCOs to take two trucks into the British Zone to the distillery. I did not know exactly where they were going but I knew it would take some conniving to pull it off. After all, American cigarettes and bottles of whiskey could open big doors. Several days later the NCOs reported their trip was a success and all stocks had been increased. I heard a figure of 5,000 liters to 7,000 liters but left the exact amount and accounting to the NCO in charge of it. I did tell the NCO in charge that I had heard that we might have to move to another location and in that case the movement and storage of the spirits would be his problem.

The former C.O. had taken over an old tavern and converted it into a very nice club that was open several nights a week. They even employed a small German band to play several nights a week so they had music and dancing in the club. Coke, pop, beer and liquor was sold in the club for 5 cents or 10 cents depending on the drink. All money received was accounted for and entered into the second set of books as was all expenditures. The club was open to all men in the company and other men assigned to the 15th Infantry, however men assigned or passing through the Third Replacement Depot were not allowed into the club. Obviously, this caused some hard feelings reflected in relations with that unit. One of my Corporals was a

very large man who did not drink. He and another man volunteered to police the club every night it was open and as long as the club was open the two men did an outstanding job of keeping order in the club. There were never any problems in the club and dress was maintained in the club. The men were quite amazed that I showed up at the club a couple nights a week and lingered over a couple of drinks as none of the previous officers had ever visited the club. Realizing the potential for trouble where alcohol was sold I wanted to stay on top of any possible trouble spots. The bartenders (volunteers) had strict orders to stop serving drinks to any one intoxicated and to shut down temporarily if any incidents arose. None ever did. The club space was not very large so when it was filled with the number of persons we allowed into it, no one else was admitted until some left the club. The men from the 3rd Repl. Depot tried several times to crash the club but the Corporal was always prepared to handle such things. At least once a week I met with the Corporal and other NCOs regarding precautions in operation of the club to avoid problems. We discussed specific situations that might arise and prepared for them in advance. The dangers of incidents at the club were always foremost in my mind. I recall one night before Christmas a party was scheduled on a Saturday night and invitations were allowed. It was cold as blazes out side and very hot and crowded inside the club. Drinks were flowing freely and everyone was in a happy and jovial mood. Planing for the party with the Corporal and his men I realized that we would have to transport men to their quarters so I ordered the motor pool to have four trucks at the party that night. The problems I had anticipated came to pass as the men were leaving the club at closing time and just before. I stood outside with the two guards I had with me and watched the men as they left the club. Once they left the hot room inside and walked into the cold air outside, it was like watching an old comedy routine. Many of the men would become "rubber kneed" and start going down but the Corporal and his man would grab them before they could hit the ground and then they put them into a truck. Some would just suddenly go down and others would wander aimlessly a short distance before they started falling. My men and the trucks got a work out that night taking men to their quarters but there were no incidents and no injuries due to our planning ahead of time.

One day I was summoned to Battalion headquarters where a Major tried to make a point that there was a Battalion club in the city and my club and if we would combine clubs we could have a much larger and better operated club. He tried to convince me that two clubs were unnecessary and if we combined resources we could better serve the men. He told me that he had heard that my company had a supply of liquor on hand and wanted to know how much I had and where it was stored. I told him that I did not involve myself in such details but left it up to the NCOs responsible for operating the club and that I would try to find out the information for him. It was obvious that he did not believe me but with my denial he could do no more. I had heard that the Battalion Club was having trouble getting whiskey or schnapps. Until we moved, the Major was constantly after me to combine resources and clubs. He even tried talking to my men to find the whiskey, but only 2 or 3 NCOs knew where it was located.

As mentioned the money taken in at the club went into a fund that was recorded and tracked in the second set of company books. The men had a large mess hall at one end of their quarters building. The money in the fund paid to have curtains on windows, table clothes on tables, pleasant murals painted on the walls, flowers on each table and a string quartet that played every evening for one hour at dinner time. I was really surprised the first time I walked into that dining room as it was unusual to say the least. Since an officer had to eat a meal at least once a day in the Enlisted mess, (usually the Officer of the Day), I ate in the mess many times and found it to be an enjoyable place.

Sometime later the Army decided to institute strict inventory controls on property, funds and related matters. My problems with the two funds began one day when a dour Officer (possibly related to an Internal Revenue Officer) showed up at my headquarters to audit the company fund according to the directive and regulations. He had with him the record book for the original company fund that had been placed with Division for safekeeping when the unit shipped overseas. According to him, the company fund contained about 5,000 dollars when the unit shipped overseas early in the war and as the present Commanding Officer of the company, he insisted that I was responsible for the money and its whereabouts. The second set of books he maintained was an unofficial fund and was

completely illegal and we could get into real trouble regardless of our good motives. After discussion, I agreed to disband the second fund and put the assets into the regular company fund to which he finally agreed. (We subsequently created an unofficial fund to continue the club and its activities). The officer insisted that I was responsible for the money that was in the fund years before and my protests that I was not even in the army then fell on deaf ears. For weeks I "slugged" it out with the officer and other auditors over the alleged missing money and my responsibility for it. I wrote letters to the Dept of Army, War Dept, Payroll Dept and other agencies with negative results. I sent out men to interview anyone we could find who had been in the 15th Inf. when they shipped overseas. Finally they located one man who said he had heard at the time that all units put their funds into bonds. I sent a letter to the Treasury Dept. to check their records., and to the delight and relief of all, after weeks of this stressful experience, we received a letter back from the Treasury advising that the fund had been deposited in bonds and was being held in escrow by the Dept. of the Army. I triumphantly entered the letter and the authority in the company fund book and took it to the officer and auditors who with chagrined faces approved the audit as accurate and final. We all felt lucky and glad to have that problem behind us. No one had ever entered into the Company fund book that the bonds had been purchased and where they were held. That oversight caused all the problems.

I do not now recall how many vehicles Company H had assigned to it but I believe there were about 20 to 25 jeeps and trucks. Battalion officers were constantly trying to requisition my vehicles for their own purposes and did not return them as agreed causing my motor pool constant problems. The Company was assigned a new 2nd Lt. and after determining that he had no leadership potential I put him in charge of the motor pool, where he performed very well. It was his job to schedule the vehicles, keep track of them and to keep them on the road. He operated well in the motor pool being a mechanic at heart.

One day the Lt. called me to come immediately to the motor pool as there was a real problem. On arriving there I was met by a 2nd Lt. (who must have been related to the one who audited my company fund) who told me that he had been sent

out to check the vehicles assigned per directives and regulations. He had with him the company property book listing all vehicles by Vehicle Identification Number (VIN), Motor Number (MN) and other descriptive data at the time that the unit shipped overseas to fight in North Africa. With a straight face and in a very serious manner he coldly informed me that he would have to confiscate most of my vehicles. I looked at him in utter amazement and promptly informed him that he would have to fight my entire company to do that, therefore he had better explain himself before I got upset. He stated that the VINs and MNs on most of the vehicles did not match the numbers on the property book that he had been given and therefore, I had illegal vehicles that would have to be confiscated. He insisted that I would have to produce the proper vehicles to match the numbers in the book. I studied the Lt. thinking that the situation was in some sense comical to the men standing around with stunned expressions on their faces, except, the Lt. was dead serious. I explained to the Lt. that the list of vehicles recorded in the inventory book was several years old and as the company had been in combat for several years, some vehicles had been destroyed completely, others had been cannibalized to make one vehicle, and that some vehicles had been furnished by supply during combat without recording any documentation. I explained that, obviously, after years of combat the numbers would not match and the proper thing to do would be to start a new property book with the vehicles and numbers as they were then. The Lt. was dogmatic and knew his job. The numbers did not match, and that was that. The men standing around hearing the exchange just shook their heads in disbelief judging the Lt., I am sure, to be unreaaonable. After an extended argument, realizing that the Lt. would not give ground, I told him to make any report he desired and I would handle the problem through the chain of command. I immediately took the matter to the Battalion commander for resolution of the problem and he took the matter to the higher command. It was finally agreed that once I had an accounting of all the vehicles assigned to me the Lt. would return and make out new pages for the property book listing the numbers on the vehicles I had on hand. Now a big problem that I did not realize existed suddenly became apparent as I began a thorough check of the vehicles.

I realized that we were short four jeeps but the paper work showed that they were signed out to Battalion staff members. After investigation, I determined that one of the jeeps was signed out to a Lt. Colonel who was now assigned to 7th Army Hdqrs and he should have returned the vehicle but instead he had converted it to his own use. I called him and he promised to return it. When he did not return the jeep as promised, I sent my Lt. after it. The officer denied that it was our jeep, claiming it was one issued to him and refused to let the Lt. see the numbers on the jeep, pulling rank on him. When he reported that to me, I was angry because I knew in his job the officer did not have a vehicle assigned to him. I called my best procurement Sgt. and asked him if he could retrieve the jeep. He was all smiles. Taking a jeep and two men he set forth and returned several days later with the jeep. He said they had to follow the officer for several days to get a chance to steal it back as he removed the rotor arm and parked it where he could watch it. One night he went to a club in town and they had their chance at last and made the most of it. They had a spare rotor arm that they put in the motor and drove the vehicle home. The numbers on the jeep matched the numbers on the paper work checking the vehicle out to the officer originally, so we had our own jeep back. Would you believe that the Lt. Colonel had the gall to call me and demand that I return the jeep to him. I probably told him to sue me! One down and three to go.

Another jeep was checked out to a former Battalion staff officer. Talking with some of the officers who remember him I found out that the officer had been transferred to Brussels, Belgium and was still there to their knowledge. When he left he had just taken the jeep with him. I figured calling the Colonel would be a waste of time so I turned to my dependable Sgt. again. He took off with a jeep, two men, spare parts, food and bottles of cognac and schnapps to retrieve our jeep. He would have to locate the Colonel in Brussels and steal our jeep back. After he had been gone for several days I was starting to get uneasy, envisioning many scenarios, all detrimental to me. But, return he did with the jeep and the numbers matched the check out paper work so now it was just two to go and I could reconstruct my motor pool property book. The reason it took so long was that the Colonel had been transferred again in Belgium

and they had to find him and wait for an opportunity to take the jeep back. The last two jeeps after much investigation appeared to have been stolen from the units that had checked them out and they had not reported the thefts.. I knew that units going to the States were parking their vehicles in a huge storage lot up on the coast of France. I turned to my reliable Sgt. and explained the mission. He had to penetrate that storage area and steal two jeeps to round out our assigned complement. He was up to the job. He left with two jeeps, each with a driver, a Sgt. and one other man. To help on the mission we loaded the jeeps with whiskey for bargaining power. Again, they were gone for over a week and sure enough when they returned they had two jeeps more than they left with. They told me that the area was so huge that they had trouble locating the storage area for the jeeps and then they had to make approaches to determine with whom they could deal with using the whiskey. It took all the whiskey but they were given access to the storage area long enough to get two jeeps in good condition running and on the road. I contacted that Lt. who came to the company and with my Lt. they corrected all the pages of the property book to match the vehicles we had on hand to be carried forward as the property of the company at the time of audit. Another very stressful month or so finally put to rest.

My biggest problem was manpower. I was short of men and officers. Good officers were hard to come by and as soon as I got one, he was transferred. Lt. Craig was a very competent young officer and after a few weeks was transferred to Battalion as a staff officer. Lt. Floyd Walker from Huntington, W. Va., was transferred in as my Ex. Officer and I was really happy. Within two weeks he was transferred as Company Commander of E Company the rifle company in our town. We continued to work very close together and share the guard duties in Marburg. My motor pool 2nd Lt. was transferred out and at one time I was down to just one officer. I continued to live in the big stone house at times by myself.

Living in the large house caused problems as we did not have time to clean up the place. I talked with some people in the Military Government and they suggested that I apply for a civilian worker through the Military Government. I did so and several German civilians showed up for interview but none was

acceptable to me. One day a young very stout and very plain young lady showed up to interview for the job of housekeeper and maid. She had no experience but was just what I had in mind, so I hired her. I hired Hilda because she impressed me as a person who was eager to work and indeed, she had a great attitude and worked long hours. Hilda impressed all the officers who lived in the house and she kept the place spotless. I was so happy with that arrangement that I later went to the folks at Military Government and applied for an employee to be my butler. I had met Professor Josef Lukacs either through my work or Hilda knew him. I do not recall how we met. He was a former Professor, who was in his mid 60's, unemployed and looking for a job. He was very talented and intelligent. I felt uneasy at the prospect of hiring a man of his background as my butler, but he wanted the job and there were several tasks to be done in the company that I knew he could handle. He was desperate for a job so I agreed to hire him as a butler and I made the arrangements through the military government. Both he and Hilda were paid through the Military Government at a rate set by that unit. Professor Lukacs was very grateful to me for employing him and was always present to handle any task. He painted a landscape for me that I still have. He also painted some scenes on the walls of the Company dining hall. Needless to say, Lt. Gregory was known and envied as the only Company Commander who had his own maid and butler.

I recall that Colonel Edson had returned from the States and a reception was being held for him in Wetzlar where his headquarters was located, about a one hour drive from Marburg. I was very busy that morning with company business so I told my maid, Hilda, to lay out a clean uniform for me on the bed with all the brass on it as I would just have time to dash in to dress and leave. It happened just that way and I arrived at the reception on time. As I entered the room, one of the officers came up and said, "Lt Gregory, Colonel Edson is a stickler for dress and you have no bars on your uniform". Alas, my maid had not followed instructions and I had been so busy and in such a hurry that I failed to notice. My uniform had just been cleaned so there were no spare bars in the pockets. None of the other officers had any spare bars and the Senior Officer was becoming frantic. Finally a Major who was housed in the building came up with an old set

of his bars and I got them on my uniform just in time. I met the Colonel and found him to be a very impressive officer. I got to know him quite well later. When I told Hilda the next morning that she had embarrassed me by failing to put on my brass as I requested, I thought she was going to die from shame on the spot. She wanted to quit immediately but I talked her out of leaving.

Several times during my trips to Regimental Headquarters and my meetings with the Colonel, he mentioned that I had it pretty good as I was the only Company Commander in the Regiment with a full time maid. I could tell from his questions and comments that he was suspicious about my maid.

One winter night I came back to my residence from checking the guard about 9 p.m. It was a very cold, windy night and rain was pouring down. I had put on dry clothes and was sitting in my living room reading when there was a knock on the door. I opened it and there stood Colonel Edson and his driver cold and wet. I invited them in and fixed him a good drink and we talked for over an hour. He told me that he had been in another town checking on a unit and was on his way to his headquarters when he remembered I was nearby so he said he decided to call on me and get warmed up. I didn't question what he said but figured he must be checking on me as I was not that close to the road he was traveling on. A short time later my maid, who had been washing and ironing downstairs, came in to tell me she was leaving for the night. I noticed that the Colonel looked her over closely. After another drink he said he had to get on his way and took his leave. I was right about the visit. When we became better acquainted, one day he confessed that he had heard stories about my maid and wondering what might be going on he just had to stop and see for himself. He said after seeing my maid he was confident she was strictly just that, a maid. I must admit she was heavy and very homely but she was an excellent maid.

I had occasion to go to Regiment frequently and had many conferences with Colonel Edson. Several times we discussed his status in the army. He told me that his permanent rank was a Captain and all his field grade promotions were temporary. He was concerned that he might be reduced in rank and lose his command. I told him several times that he was too good an

officer and I figured if anything that he would make General officer before he would lose rank. One day he talked to me about staying in the army. Colonel Edson was always honest and direct in our dealings and that made me very comfortable in dealing with him. He told me that if I would sign up to stay in the army he would promote me to Captain immediately, I would get 30 days leave in the states, and would have my job as CO of H Co. when I came back. He said, "You know Lt. that I have to save my promotions for the men who are staying with me. If you decide to go home I cannot give you a promotion." I thanked him for his honesty and later told him I had decided to go home when my time came. He told me that he had declared me as an Essential Officer for six months and would evaluate whether I could go home at that time. I told him that was just fine with me. I have often wondered whether I made a mistake. The Colonel told me several times that he considered me to be one of his best Company Commanders. I later heard from others that he did in fact get promoted to a General Officer.

I know that I approached Col. Edson many times for more men and officers but he had the same problem with most of the units in the regiment. I was down to about 100 men fit for duty which was only a little over 50 percent of strength for the company. I received word that I was going to get replacements and one day they trucked in about 65 men as I recall, and I thought I had problems in the past. They were just starting. The new men had received only 6 weeks of training before being shipped overseas. Some of the men admitted that they had never even fired a weapon during the basic training. They were an undisciplined bunch with perceived contempt and hatred for the Germans. Actually they were not soldiers at all but a liability for me and were just bodies that I could put on guard. I discussed the situation with the NCOs and all agreed something had to be done to make soldiers out of the men, so we started a schedule of close order drill, group physical training, and classes on military subjects, all in addition to their guard duties. There was a lot of bitching and grumbling but the group showed a steady improvement. At any one time I would have 2 or 3 men under detention for assaulting German civilians. We held classes and discussed their feelings for Germans and we told them that if anyone should hate the Germans it was us, but we

understood the war was over and we had to help the Germans reestablish themselves. We were concerned about the attitudes of the new men, but no matter how hard we tried, we just could not get through to some of the men. The assaults against the Germans were increasing and one night I learned that an aged German doctor had been beaten badly. The next day I was summoned to Battalion Headquarters where the Colonel told me the situation was getting out of hand and since I was in charge of security, I should start considering ways to curb the violence. I went to the 3rd Replacement Depot and talked to the commanding officers but they just shrugged their shoulders and said there was nothing they could do as the men in the outfit were all in transit. I sent word to all units in the area to advise them of the situation and that we would take severe action against any soldier identified for assaulting civilians. Things did not chance a lot.

One day I was summoned to Battalion Hq. again and I found the C.O. hopping mad. He informed me that he had a report from Regiment that the Venereal Disease (VD) in the Battalion had increased dramatically and was over 50 percent with large numbers of men absent from duty. He was practically shouting when he told me if I did not get the VD under control I would be reclassified and transferred. I realized there was no use continuing the discussion as he was in no mood for realism. Marburg was a fair sized city with hundreds of American soldiers frequenting bars and restaurants and lots of girls about. I sat down with my officers and NCOs and we discussed possible actions we could take to solve the problem. Keeping the men from the girls would be nearly impossible so some how we had to remove the infected men and women from any associations until they were cured. We contacted all the units in the area and started a program of education, but that showed no positive results. I had one man in my own company who was part of the percentage as I learned he had contracted VD twice and was hospitalized for treatment. I called him into my office and counseled him about the dangers of VD. He said he could be treated for VD and it was no worse than a common cold.. I tried to get him to understand the future dangers as he could have a relapse of the VD that could do damage to his body, but I could sense that he was not listening to me. I ordered him to stay

away from infected women and if caught with one he would be prosecuted. When the soldier turned up with VD the third time I had a Sgt. take a detail and follow the man as I wanted the woman involved arrested. By the next evening the Sgt. advised me they had taken the soldier into custody with a woman who was checked by a German doctor and determined to have VD. The soldier was placed in custody for treatment and the girl was turned over to the German hospital for detention and treatment. The hospital had a large fenced compound where the women were held and the German Doctor in charge had been ordered to hold all women committed until they were cured. One of the NCOs came to me the next day and told me that the woman arrested and committed the night before had been seen walking in the town. Taking my best Sgt. and two men I went to the hospital. I was furious what with all the pressure on me and faced with a German doctor who was being uncooperative. I asked him for the woman and he told me that he had released her as he had no room for her. I informed him that he was ordered to process the women committed and not to release them until cured. He argued with me and I ran out of patience. I told him if he did not totally cooperate, I would send him to one of his own concentration camps as a Nazi sympathizer who was absolutely uncooperative with American authority. Before I left I got through to that doctor and we had no more problems in that regard. The men left and returned with the woman who was turned over to the doctor with curt instructions as to what would happen if he failed me.

The percentages continued to worsen according to the Colonel. Meeting with my staff, I decided that the time had come for decisive action. We decided that a curfew to get the soldiers off the street was our best approach as it would impress the soldiers more than anything we had attempted so far, at the same time realizing it would be very unpopular and difficult to enforce. I discussed it with the Battalion commander who was not in favor of it but agreed to back me up for a trial period. I outfitted five jeeps with machine guns on a post mount with 1,000 rounds for each gun. To each jeep, I assigned a driver, a Sgt. in charge and one man armed with a rifle and ammo. I believe that curfew was set for 11:00pm and all units in the area around Marburg were advised in writing about the curfew, signs

were posted through out the town and on unit bulletin boards. The mission of the five patrols was to arrest all individuals violating the curfew. If the soldier was with a girl then both were immediately subjected to tests for VD and if positive they were committed for treatment at that time or later if the tests took time to complete. If the soldiers were alone they were taken to their units and a complaint filed. A couple of weeks went by with the five units kept completely busy every night. At times I even had to put extra units out on patrol and it was affecting my manpower needs. One situation finally shifted the equation to our side. Several times the teams had been forced to fire warning shots as authorized so to do. One night a jeep patrol came upon three American soldiers on the street in the wee hours of the morning. When they were ordered to halt the soldiers took off down an alley. The Sgt. without hesitating, activated the MG and fired a burst of about 100 rounds down the alley. After the screams and yelling subsided, three ashen faced and totally shaken soldiers came out of the alley meekly begging for the shooting to stop. The three men were from the 3rd RD and the next day the word spread like wildfire among the units that we would now fire on the troops to enforce the curfew. A week or so later a very happy Battalion C.O. advised me that the VD rate among the soldiers had plummeted way below acceptable rates and he repeatedly congratulated me and the company for a job well done.

Shortly after I took command of H Company in Marburg, I was called to Battalion Headquarters. The C.O. advised me that one of my men was being held in jail in Frankfort and he had been in jail for over a month. He said that if I did not prefer charges of desertion against the man immediately that I might be subject to court martial myself. I informed the C.O. that my company strength was accounted for on each Morning Report and I had no soldier in jail according to that report. He told me that he had been contacted by the Criminal Investigations Division (CID) and they insisted that the company had a man in jail and they were giving us only 48 hours to resolve the matter. The C.O. gave me the name and serial number of the soldier. Returning to the Company, I checked with every man who had been in the company before me and no one recalled the man. Every available record of the company was checked but no record of

the man could be found. I call all the old-timers I could find in Battalion and Regiment but found no one who could recall the soldier. The next day I drove to Frankfort with the 1st Sgt. and a Lt. and went to the Prison where American Prisoners were held. The men we talked to in CID were not pleasant or understanding when we pointed out that we could locate no records on the soldier.

Finally we were able to interview the soldier in the prison and he looked like he had been through a very hard time. He explained to us that he had gone into Italy with the 3rd Division at which time he was a Private assigned to H Company, 15th Infantry. In an engagement, he had been slightly wounded he claimed and said that he was sent to a field hospital. In the confusion of combat, he was dropped from the company morning report and he should have been picked up on the hospital records, which he evidently was not. (This was my speculation based on the story he told.) He said that he then deserted and began living with an Italian family in a small village. He claimed that he had to hide from the American soldiers as they became more numerous in the area. He moved several times but always lived in very poor circumstances, at times going hungry. He claimed that he wanted to turn himself in to the authorities but was frightened of the consequences. Several months after the war ended he turned himself into the Army in Italy and had been in prison since that time. We spent the next two days trying to confirm his story but we could locate no record of the soldier. Since we could locate no records or witnesses who knew the soldier, we could not prove desertion based on the facts according to the Legal advice we obtained. I arranged to have the soldier transferred to a Replacement Depot and he was subsequently flown home because he had so many points. I guess justice was served in a way. He had lived a hard life isolated in Italy, spent almost a year in prison and he would have to live with his own conscience for the rest of his life.

For a long time there was still the matter of the two men subject to capital punishment confined in a local jail where I had to maintain one machine gun and men on guard at all times. I felt if the men faced that type of punishment, they should be confined at 7th Army Headquarters and not in my area. I had approached the Colonel several times to try to get them

transferred with no luck. One day a black Captain from one of the Quartermaster outfits nearby came to see me. He told me that he had heard that the men of the two Quartermaster units near Marburg had threatened to arm themselves and attack the jail to free the two men confined there. The Captain was concerned that the men might foolishly try to free the men and make matters worse. The next day with two NCOs I drove out to the Quartermaster Units and talked with their officers. While not overtly uncooperative, none of them acted as if they would go out on the proverbial limb to quell such an action. I pointed out to the officers that the MG at the jail would inflict heavy losses to any group attacking the jail. I went back and set up four sections of heavy mortars in the court yard next to the men's quarters with plenty of shells and then zeroed in all the guns on the court yard around the jail. The next day the Captain called me and related that he had heard information that indicated that a gang of the men might try to free the prisoners that day. I called the C.O. of one of the Quartermaster Units and told him what I had heard, that I had zeroed mortars in on the jail area, I was instituting armed patrols and I would use force to repel any attack on the jail. I had been in contact with the Colonel, so I called him and told him that I would open fire if necessary to protect the jail and my men inside. He indicated he would get right on it with higher headquarters. I immediately assigned five of my jeeps with MGs, driver, Sgt and two armed me to act as a mobile patrol to screen off any groups of men and act as a deterrent to frighten them off. That night I increased the patrols and guards but nothing happened, for which I was grateful. The next day the two Quartermaster units packed up, loaded their trucks and departed the area. I was told by the Colonel, that they had been transferred out of the 7th Army area. Some time later the prisoners were moved out of the area and, thankfully, I was relieved of that responsibility.

One morning the 1st Sgt. brought me the morning report to sign and explained that three men had not reported for duty and had reportedly gone AWOL. The three were newly assigned to the company and were very young and inexperienced soldiers. It troubled the 1st Sgt. and me that young soldiers would go AWOL in Germany. Several days later some of our soldiers returning from leave reported that they had been in a bar in

Frankfort and had seen the three AWOL soldiers, who were bragging that they had pulled some armed robberies and had stolen a jeep from a Colonel for transportation. I reported the information to Battalion Headquarters and the Commanding Officer suggested that I go to Frankfort and get the men. I sent two of my best Sgts. and four men, all heavily armed, in a truck to Frankfort where with the help of the MPs, they caught the men and returned with them in less than a week. The MPs were called to escort the men to the stockade and in the meantime I had the men confined in a room with bars on the windows and instructed that there be guards in the room with the men and guards on the outside of the door. A Sgt. disobeyed my instructions and placed guards only outside the door to the room. When they went to secure the prisoners, they discovered that they had escaped by removing some of the window frame and squeezing under the bars. A lot of men received extra duty over that escape. During the ensuing weeks, we received information that the men had stolen vehicles and pulled many armed robberies. Finally the men were apprehended in the British Zone and returned to prison. I attended their court martial and talked with the British MP who had arrested the men by himself. He was a short cocky guy with a typical British accent. He told me that he had stopped the American jeep to check the soldier's papers as their conduct had aroused his suspicion. He related that the soldiers had no papers and produced pistols. Being alone and faced with three armed men, I was anxious to know what happened next. He replied, "I took the guns from the blokes and gave them a good thrashing!" I was impressed with the courage and determination of the British MP as he was sincere and was not bragging. The three soldiers were given Dishonorable Discharges and were sentenced to ten years in prison at hard labor.

One of my men I really felt sorry for, but he would not listen to any advice from concerned Non-Coms and caused his own downfall. He was about 18 years old and one of the men with 6 weeks training. I learned that the soldier had been getting drunk a lot so I called in the knowledgeable Non-Coms who informed me that they had been counseling the soldier and working with him but could not get through to him. I called the soldier into my office and had a long talk with him. I tried to use his parents and

family as a reason for him not to get into trouble and he promised me that he would straighten up. That was not to be. One evening he was in town drinking and was returning to the truck to return to the unit when he saw a man carrying a radio. He got out of the truck and tried to take the radio from the man and when the man would not let go of his radio the soldier pulled out his Bowie knife and stabbed the man. Taking the radio he calmly climbed back into the truck but soldiers call the MPs and my man was taken into custody. Fortunately for him, the civilian recovered, but I later was told that the soldier was convicted and sentenced to 5 years imprisonment at hard labor and a dishonorable discharge.

I mentioned Lt. Floyd Walker who was made C.O. of Easy Company. He had later moved his company to a nearby town to handle new responsibilities. One afternoon late when I was returning from Regiment, I swung by to see Floyd to discuss and coordinate some activities that would involve both of our companies. It was another one of those cold dreary days and the rain was falling. I was in my jeep with my driver and I recall that when we arrived at E Company, I had to walk up a steep flight of stairs to get to the headquarters on the second floor. Lt. Walker and I talked for about an hour during which time he offered me a drink. His 1st Sgt. poured us both a drink of schnapps in canteen cups and mixed it with the lemon drink that was included in C or K rations. As I left his headquarters some time later, I recall that I felt 'odd' as I walked down the stairs and as I rode home in my jeep. As we neared my company headquarters, I told my driver to let me out and I would walk to my quarters about five blocks away. He protested and insisted that he drive me to my quarters as it was raining hard and I had no raincoat. I insisted and started walking to my quarters. I recall the rain felt good to me so I walked around for a long time and by that time I was soaking wet. I dimly remembered getting to my quarters where a very distressed and concerned maid helped me out of my wet clothes and into the bed where I promptly passed out. I awoke the next morning feeling terrible so about 7:00 a.m. I went to my office and had coffee sent in to me. A couple of cups later I still had not improved, so I grabbed the phone to call Lt. Walker. His 1st Sgt answered and said that Walker was still in bed. I told the Sgt what had happened to me

and he replied that he thought it odd that after I left, Lt. Walker had fallen down the stairs and passed out and had been put to bed. I told the Sgt that the only cause that could account for what had happened to us had to be bad whiskey. He agreed and said he would have all the whiskey obtained from that source destroyed at once. It took Lt. Walker and I about two days to recover from the bad whiskey.

One incident happened, I think it was during the Christmas holidays, which I really did regret. The nurses and doctors at the hospital in town gave a dance and sent out invitations. We determined that none of the Infantry officers in the town had been invited to the dance. Since we provided security for the hospital and guard duties in the area, we felt offended and insulted so some of us decided to crash their dance. Four of us, all 1st Lts, went to their dance, drank their whiskey, danced with the girls and became somewhat intoxicated. To our discredit, I am sure that at times we were obnoxious. I recall that about 1:00 a.m. we went to their mess hall and after some argument with the cooks on duty, they served us breakfast. As we left the hospital in our jeep being driven by one of the officers, the two guards at the gate gave us a hard time and started an argument during which time one of the guards made the mistake of displaying a pistol. One Lt. promptly decked him, took the pistol from him and threw it away. We then left and drove to our quarters. The next day I received a call to report to the Battalion Headquarters where a Major 'chewed me out' over the incident with the guards and because we crashed the dance. He insisted that we go to the hospital and apologize to them and said that in the future the Hospital was off limits to us unless we had business or was invited. We did go to the hospital and apologize to the Administrative Officers at which time I reminded them that security would be difficult to provide in the future as the hospital was off limits to us, unless we had invitations. The point was understood by the Officers since after that we received invitations to all meetings and to all dances or parties.

Those new men – what headaches they continued to cause for all of us. We felt more like baby sitters than Infantry Officers, since we had to give them constant oversight. The attitude of most of my young soldiers was very poor. I started conducting classes with the new soldiers with the other officers and NCOs

lecturing them on their conduct and responsibilities. I was getting very worried over the number of courts martial for drunkenness, assaults and even robbery. About a couple of months after those men transferred in, I started receiving letters from distraught parents who had not heard from their sons since they left home and wanted to know why. The letters were all addressed to the C.O. H Company. This placed an additional burden on me as I felt obligated to answer all the letters allaying their fears and promising that their son would write soon. We are talking here, over a period of weeks, about 30 letters from parents. I could hardly believe it when I received a phone call from a Congressman in the States inquiring about one of the men. He was very demanding, as I recall, and I told him all about the six weeks training, the attitude of the men and my job did not include being a nursemaid. After a short conversation I assured him that the wayward son would contact his family by letter. At first, I called the wayward young soldiers into my office, one by one, and talked with them about their parents and the grief the man was causing them. I extracted a promise from each one that they would write a letter that day. Finally after receiving letters from two Congressmen requesting information on soldiers who had not written home, I decided to take immediate action using a drastic approach to solve my crises and that would be a letter writing hour every Saturday morning from 11 a.m. to 12 a.m. in my office.

The next Saturday morning I had the 1st Sgt have plenty of tables and chairs with paper and sharp pencils in my office for writing letters. I had the Non-Coms round up all the non letter writers and bring them into my office. I accused them of bringing sorrow and grief to their families by their negligence and attitudes and I now, once and for all, intended to change their attitudes especially to their parents. I ordered the men to immediately write, at least a two page letter to their parents and if they refused then my NCOs would make sure that they came to regret their decision. They all wrote letters as requested, addressed the envelope, sealed the letter in the envelope after I verified it was as requested, and then gave the letters to me for posting. How delighted they were to find out that the procedure would be repeated every Saturday morning for the next two months, at least. I felt a little silly and took a lot of kidding from

fellow officers about being a Kindergarten teacher but the results were positive and I received an equal large number of letters from appreciative parents. Several praised me for being a concerned officer as their sons told them what I had done. I heard that some other units followed my lead and started letter writing 'to the parents' hour.

I recall that shortly after I took over the company and at the time we were trying to locate our jeeps, I was ordered to attend a Company Commanders school for a week at Heidelberg. I did not want to go at that time but the Colonel insisted. I recall that it was a miserable week not well spent. The trip down there in an open jeep in a very cold rain did not set the stage for the week. The instruction was lousy as was the weather and the food was just a poor. I was glad to get back and the only thing that eased my mind was I had a good officer running the company while I was gone.

During March, 1946, our regiment was transferred to the vicinity of Schweinfurt for occupation duty. E Company and H Company were assigned to an old German Cavalry Post on a hilltop near the small town of Hammelburg. Regimental Headquarters was in Schweinfurt and Battalion Hqrs was on the post with us. The other companies in the Battalion were stationed in the vicinity of Hamelburg. On our post there were few trees and many buildings. There were buildings for offices, mess halls, billets for the soldiers and a row of very attractive stone houses where the officers were housed. We lived in an old two story stone house that had been officers quarters. Lt. Walker and I had adjoining rooms. We kept a small table with a cribbage board and cards on it and a small keg of beer nearby at the ready. The Battalion Commander lived in a large stone house a few hundred feet down the road from us. I might add, that during this, time we had a constant turn over in Battalion Commanders.

When we moved to Hammelburg, I had to make a decision about Hilda. She wanted to go with us and continue her employment but I could foresee problems with that as I would not have separate housing there. I hated to let her go as she had done such an excellent job for us but with many tears on her part, we said good bye. I did arrange a good job for her through the Military Government before we left. I arranged through

Military Government to have Professor Lukcas go with me as an essential employee of the Company. I recall one incident when I gave him a pair of much needed new boots. He was actually overjoyed with the gift. As it turned out several months later, when the Regiment went to "spit and polish" in quarters, Professor Lukacs designed and built a company bulletin board for us which was set up in front of the company headquarters. That bulletin board was the envy of every unit in the Regiment. The Battalion C.O. and Colonel Edson always brought VIP's to the company to see the bulletin board. Professor Lukacs built it with lights and mounted the Division and the Regimental Insignias in three dimension relief so the lights in the bulletin board shined through the insignias. He was a very talented artist and did many creative things to improve the dining area and other areas in the company. He was still with the company when I transferred out to come home.

Moving onto the post posed a lot of problems for me at the time as I was short of officers. We had to set up the company CP, the supply room, the mess hall and most importantly the motor pool. We were still trying to furnish all units in the Battalion with vehicles on request and we were busier than a car rental agency. I had trouble securing and training good careful drivers, and that I insisted on having. Our job on the post was very important. On the post there was a former POW compound that now housed 5,500 former German SS Officers and NCOs. My company was assigned to handle the perimeter guard on the compound and E Company was assigned to handle the housekeeping for the compound. There were towers with heavily armed guards 24 hours a day and also heavily armed walking guards about the compound. I had to work out the lighting, plan for backup lighting, plan for small or mass breaks and engage in company training at the same time. In addition, I had to provide the guard for a vital facility in the town that meant a drive just to check the guard.

We were getting settled in when we got a new Battalion C.O. He was a Major, quite young, and a West Point graduate. He was a good horseman and while at the Point he had been on the equestrian team and had performed in some high level competition. Being a cavalry post there were lots of barns and riding areas at the end of the post. The C.O. had a large

number of horses brought on and stabled on the post. Men were assigned to take care of the horses and I know that they were not at all happy with their lot. I recall that several times when I had to see the Major, we would have to go to the stable area and there in the rink of a large show barn the Major would be riding his prancing horse performing different movements. We would have to wait for him to finish to conduct our business. In true West Point style, the man had to bring order out of chaos, or was it chaos out of order?

One day the Major called us, the Senior Officers and unit Commanding Officers, into his office and told us that he was taking our jeeps away from us and in the future we would have to use horses to perform our duties, check on our guard stations, and especially for a formal changing of the guard every day. He had decided to institute a formal guard change every afternoon and the officers of the guard would have to be mounted on horses. From the comments I heard later, I knew that all the officers opposed the idea but were bound by his order. Lt. Walker and I were really upset as neither of us knew how to ride a horse properly. I recall most of the Officers stated that they would feel like fools sitting on horses in front of their men, especially trying to mount and dismount. We all felt that it was dangerous for the officers and men to be using horses as we were not experienced in use of them.

The Colonel was not through yet. He issued orders that Lt. Walker and myself would have to be mounted when we went to the compound and when we checked the guard posts and towers. I was short of officers and a lot of the checking of the guard fell on me. To check the guard, we would have to walk down to the barns at the end of the post day or night and wait to have a horse saddled. We would then have to ride across the post to the compound, dismount at each guard post, remount and ride to the next one and repeat it all over again. Any other place we needed to go, we either had to ride a horse or walk. I know the men laughed at us but they also sympathized with us. I felt strange sitting up so high on the big horse they assigned to me and she was not at all cooperative in going the way that I wanted to go. Several times when Lt. Walker and I were checking the guard, the horses would refuse to go the way we wanted to go and by the time we got finished it took about

double the time. Guess those horses' just did not understand English and we did not have time to teach them.

I remember the first time we had a formal change of the guard ceremony. The Major was present sitting impressively on his hand picked mount. I was mounted on the big horse assigned to me and the other guard officer was on his mount. I felt then that I looked as awkward and clumsy to the troops as I felt sitting atop that horse. I know that the men felt a little uncomfortable for me, especially my 1st Sgt. He had his own ideas of how a Company Commander should look and conduct himself, so he was always trying to improve my image. I often walked around the company area with my hands in my pockets. Sgt. would come up to me and say, "Does the Lt. have his hands in his pockets because they are cold, or is he playing with something". Out would come the hands and 1st Sgt. would smile as he walked away. He was constantly correcting my posture, walk, and uniform. If I was walking bent over he would say, "Does the Lt. have a heavy burden today or is his suspenders too tight", always followed by a big smile. He was a great 1st Sgt.

Messing with the horse took up a lot of my time. If I wanted to check all my guard posts, I had to get the horse, ride it to the compound, dismount at a guard tower and tie up the horse, climb the guard tower and speak with the guard, climb down, untie and mount the horse and ride to the next tower. Then I repeated the process until all posts were checked as well as checking the outer perimeter. I then had to ride the horse to my outlying guard posts of which I had several. I objected to having my jeep taken away as I had an important guard detail in Hamelburg. The Major assigned some other unit to check my guard detail and this made me uneasy. Without a jeep, I was beginning to feel confined (I was not alone in this feeling) and I was ready to do battle.

One bright sunny day, Lt. Walker and I had to check out the area around the post for planning purposes regarding security of the post and the compound. We had to cover the entire post and the compound with the prisoners and, of course, had to ride those darn horses. I was riding my big old horse that would not cooperate and Lt. Walker was mounted on a very frisky horse that he was having trouble controlling. By the time we worked our way to the back of the Post, the horses were not responding

well to our commands and the reins. Both of us talked about the difficulty that we had trying to get the horses to go in the direction we wanted to go. We did not have riding boots or spurs, just our combat boots and even turning my horse was real work. It was just about lunch time and Lt. Walker suggested that we ride off to our left about one kilometer to check on an area before we broke for lunch. I started trying to turn my horse to the left and he would not budge. Lt. Walker tried to turn his horse and it started bucking. Sitting on top of that big uncooperative horse made me very uneasy and suddenly he started prancing about and would not respond to the reins. Suddenly Lt. Walker's horse bucked hard and I saw his saddle start to slip and slide to the right. I yelled at him to hang on and watched in horror as the saddle slide under the belly of the horse with him hanging on for dear life. His horse then took off in the direction of the barn about 1 mile away at a full gallop. The last I saw of them was the horse at a dead run with the saddle under his belly and Lt. Walker yelling and hanging on for dear life. I was sure that I would find him dead or seriously injured somewhere along the way. Suddenly the whistle blew for the noon hour as it did each day and my horse, fighting the reins, turned and headed for the barn at a fast trot with me bouncing up and down on that big horse. It really hurt my body and I know how ridiculous I must have looked. No effort on my part could change the direction or speed of that animal. Evidently he knew it was lunch time and he was headed to the barn. When we got to the barn, the groom took my horse and explained in amazement how Lt. Walker's horse had arrived at the barn with him still clinging to the saddle beneath the belly of the horse. He and others could not understand how Lt. Walker had managed to hang on in that position during the run to the barn as he might have been killed for seriously injured. The groom said that Lt. Walker apparently was not badly injured but was really shaken up as he had hit the ground hard several times and that he had gone to his quarters. I was shaken myself and I felt like I had a severe case of whiplash, not to mention a very sore rear end. I quickly joined up with Floyd in our quarters and we discussed the entire situation over a cold beer. We both agreed that our horse riding days were over and the jeeps were back, despite the Major's orders.

After lunch we went to see the Colonel and with little formality we demanded that our jeeps be restored to us as we would never ride a horse again. We both explained our feelings about his order, how our men perceived us on horseback, what had happened to us and the dangers of using horses by untrained men. We showed him the current Table of Organization and Equipment that prescribed a jeep for each Company Commander, not a horse. He tried to smooth over the incident and told us to cool off and take riding lessons if necessary. We then played our trump card. We told the Major, if we did not have our jeeps and drivers restored to us by 1500 hours, then we would go to Colonel Edson and demand that we be subject to courts martial for refusing to obey the Majors order that we ride horses that were not authorized equipment for a Company Commander. Floyd told the Major that he had exceeded his authority and we were not bound by his orders as he was exposing officers and men to unnecessary danger that we had not been trained to handle. We left a rather upset Major telling him that the matter was no longer open for discussion. Net result was that we had our jeeps and drivers back and after that time we would not go near the horse barns even to meet with the Major. When we advised our officers and men of what had happened and our decision, they were delighted to be rid of the horses.

My motor pool was located in some service buildings and was next to the main road running through the post. The drivers liked to roar out onto the main camp road and there had been some near accidents. A large hedge ran along the main road on both sides of the entrance and came almost up to the road for entry and exit from the motor pool area. I instructed that large stop signs be put up to force the drivers to come to a complete stop before they entered the road from the motor pool area. I issued orders that the hedges were not to be cut back so the drivers would have to stop before going on to the main road. There was constant traffic on the road as I had to use all my vehicles to supplement and supply transportation needs of battalion and other companies. Several times the men and NCOs ask for permission to cut the hedges back but I denied their requests to force the drivers to enter the roadway cautiously. All the men in the company knew my position on the matter. Later I had a

chance to take a tour of Switzerland on the army that took me away from the company for about eleven days. It was late night when I got back and early the next morning I was headed to the mess hall for coffee when I stopped dead in my tracks. In violation of my orders the hedges going into the motor pool had all been cut back at least 50 feet on each side. I also found out that there had been two accidents with considerable damage after the hedges were cut back. When I got to the orderly room I was angry and started chewing out the 1st Sgt, who knew I did not want the hedges cut back. He informed me that while I was away a new 2nd Lt., had been assigned to the company and that he had authorized the men to cut back the hedges. Sgt. said the Lt. authorized the cutting of the hedges even though he was advised that I had issued specific orders that the hedges were not to be cut back. Again, I stormed down to Battalion Headquarters, angry that my orders had been disobeyed and because I had four damaged vehicles as a result. There was not any argument from the C.O. The 2nd Lt. was immediately transferred out of the Battalion.

A lot of the young men were going into town and getting drunk. I realized that in the event of an emergency I would need all my men fit for duty, especially in case of a break out or power failure. Also, with the return of the regular army "spit and polish" and formal guard change, there had to be daily inspections of the guard. This brought a crack down on discipline because many of the men were showing up unshaven, dirty and poorly dressed. The NonComs were assigned to handle the details but morale of the soldiers was low. Most of my privates were young, resentful with attitude problems, little training and very little desire to improve. I had instituted physical training each morning, close order drill once a day, and instruction on dress, courtesy and other military subjects. Finally, as a last resort, I instituted a bed check with no exceptions and I limited the number of men that could go into town. The NonCom on duty each night had to do a bed check and report his check to the officer on duty in the company each morning. Disciplinary action had to be taken against some men but things were coming under control. A few days after I got back I came into the orderly room very early as I had checked the guard towers and had coffee when the mess hall opened. My 1st Sgt. came to me and said that the Corporal

on duty was reluctant to make his report to me as an Officer was involved. I called the Corporal into my office and he told me that he felt trapped over what had happened. He related that one of our privates had been in town drinking with a new 2nd Lt. and had returned after bed check. When told by the Corporal that he had missed curfew and bed check and that he would be reported, the 2nd Lt. told the Corporal that he was to ignore my order. He was then ordered by the 2nd Lt. not to report the matter to me and was told to report the private present at bed check. I was incensed over the matter and praised the Corporal for following my orders and my 1st Sgt. for his actions but my anger and frustration with the 2nd Lt. steadily increased. The Lt. was assigned to Battalion Headquarters. I stormed into Bn Hq. and I informed the Bn. C.O. that I was instituting court martial charges against the 2nd Lt. for insubordination, conduct unbecoming an officer (drinking with one of my enlisted men) and for countermanding a written order without permission or authority. I stated my case against the Lt. and left. I returned to my office and got the 1st Sgt. busy typing up the specifications for my charge. Things heated up fast. The C.O. called and asked me to change my mind but as I was on solid ground, I refused to do so. The 2nd Lt. came to see me. He was almost "white as a sheet", scared and very contrite. When he expressed sorrow for what had happened, I told him that he had overstepped his authority and that involved his judgement. Enter a Senior Officer to mediate the matter in an attempt to stave off the court martial which he admitted that I had just cause to pursue, but he hoped to reach an accord that would save the young Lt. I did not dislike the young officer personally so I agreed that I would forget the matter if he apologized to me and the Corporal, and also apologized to the full Company drawn up in formation at retreat. This involved a loss of face for the Lt. but to his credit he did as I requested and we then dropped the matter.

Just after we moved to the German post, the mess Sgt. called me to come at once. Again, I was faced with a young 2nd Lt. who had a list of the property of the mess facilities at the time the unit shipped over and he was trying to reconcile what we had with the property lists. I was getting experienced about this time so I told him to come back as some property was on loan and we

would have to get it back. Then I called my supply Sgt. a regular army man with 19 years of experience. We discussed our shortages with him and he just smiled and told us not to worry as he would take action to cover the shortages. I asked no questions but turned him loose. He was true to his word and we had the Lt. back for the audit and all our shortages were covered. We all gave a hearty thanks to the Supply Sgt.

I think that I mentioned that I had an excellent 1st Sgt. and Supply Sgt. Both were regular Army soldiers with over 19 years of service. They were very efficient and helped me run the company. I recall one evening I was alone in quarters as Lt. Walker was gone for some reason. I was trying to read but for some reason I felt very blue and despondent. Trying to shake the feeling, I left my quarters and checked all the guard posts at the compound. About 9:00 p.m. I went to my office to catch up on some work. The 1st Sgt. who was in the orderly room looked at me in surprise and ask me why I was in the company area. I told him that I had gone out and checked the guard as I was having a bad night and I was feeling the pressure. The 1st Sgt. picked up his phone, without saying a word, dialed and said, "Supply Sgt. the C.O. is in the Orderly Room. He is having trouble sleeping and needs a pillow. Please bring him one." In about five minutes the Supply Sgt. appeared and handed me a pillow. The 1st Sgt. told me to take the pillow to my quarters and have a good night. I did not question the Sgt. but took the pillow and left the company and returned to my quarters. I noticed that the pillow felt heavy and once in my quarters I found a bottle of American whiskey concealed in the pillow. I do not know where the Supply Sgt. got the bottle of whiskey and did not ask him. The only reference the 1st Sgt. made to the incident was to ask me if I slept well. Actually, for some reason I did not and arose early the next morning, checked the guards and was at the company mess hall for coffee at 6:00 a.m.

Finally I started receiving 2nd Lts to bring me up to strength. Over a period of time I received four Lts, all graduates of West Point. These officers were sharp, knowledgeable and not afraid to take charge of a situation. There was one that I really felt had potential but in a couple of weeks he was transferred to a staff job at Battalion. That left me with three. I recall that I had a lot of problems and disagreements with the three young officers

and this was discussed with the NCOs as they were also having troubles working with them. The main source of the problems was the superior attitude the men used in dealing with me and the NCOs. I really liked the three officers but there was always an attitude of resistance, clearly evident, whenever I gave any of them an assignment. I knew it had to stop for the good of the company, so one afternoon I sat three chairs in front of my desk and called the three officers into my office. When they came in, they failed to knock and they did not salute. I ordered them to sit in the chairs and followed with a long lecture on Military Courtesy and how I perceived wanton disrespect in their attitudes and conduct toward me and the NCOs. I then ordered them to take off their gold bars and lay them in a line on the desk. Once done, I took off my silver bar and laid it on the desk ahead of theirs. I asked them if they could see the significance of the position of the bars and I could tell by the look on their faces that I was making a point they understood. I told them in no uncertain terms that my army time and combat time outweighed their West Point diploma and that my silver bar outranked their gold bars. I also told them if they could not figure out who had the voice of authority in my Company they had better apply for transfers. I reminded them that an unsatisfactory efficiency report from me would put a blemish on their Military Career. They were good officers and, understanding my points, they apologized for their past actions and attitudes and pledged to cooperate. Needless to say, when they stood up to leave, they gave a snappy salute.

After that, it was a pleasure working with the three young officers. They could handle situations without oversight, they had imagination in carrying out their duties and they were competent. One of the three I relied on a lot as he made my job easier with his ability as a junior officer. He had a pleasant personality and was liked by all the men. I knew that his father was a three Star General in the states. He was a handsome man and I heard he had a lot of girl friends in the Washington, D.C. area. I asked him why he had not ask his father to get him assigned in that area when he finished his training so he could see all his girl friends, He smiled and said he had done just that. He said he called his Dad from Fort Benning, Ga., and requested an assignment in Washington and his Dad told him, "I

earned my three stars the hard way, now you go out and earn yours." That backfired, he said, as he was on a plane in three days headed for Germany.

The compound, we guarded, was surrounded by a high wire fence with sharp surfaces at the top to cut anyone climbing on it. There were guard towers outside the fence that could see every part of the exterior area and lights were on the towers. Inside the outer fence was an inner barrier consisting of a big roll of barb wire that prisoners were prohibited from passing. If they attempted to pass the inner wire then warning shots would be fired and the area secured by my men. When I returned from leave to Switzerland I found that one of my guards on a tower had shot two men who ignored his warnings and getting through the barb wire had approached the outer fence. The incident had been well handled by my Junior Officers and thankfully, there were no repercussions.

Several weeks after we got to the German Post, I was in the area of the village and saw a car that I liked. The name of the car was "TATAR" and it resembled the Batmobile in the comics. It had big fins on each side at the rear to scoop in the air to cool the motor that was in the rear of the car. I talked with the owner who said the car would not run and needed a lot of work. He offered to trade for it. I had one of my mechanics check it and he said he could fix it up in no time so I traded the German for it. My mechanic fixed it up and it ran like a charm. I motored about the area in my "batmobile" and drew lots of attention. I kept it at my quarters to drive when I want to go places as I would not have to call my driver. Once I loaned the car to one of the Lts. on the Post. He was the dare devil type and when he returned the car the hood and roof were damaged. I recall how angry I was when I saw the car because I had loaned it to him. He explained that I had a great car that would really run as he was doing 150 kilometers per hour when the hood flew up and hit the roof. Fortunately he was able to get the car stopped before it wrecked. I had the car repaired and shortly thereafter, I learned that a Senior Officer in the area intended to try to pull rank and take the car away from me. I arranged to have it stored in a garage in a small town nearby and drove it for pleasure.

I never was able to find out the identity of the Senior Officer who wanted the car, however, several times when I was driving

the car I saw a small observation plane that appeared to be following me about, I assume, to find out where I stored the car. Each time that happened, I changed the location where I kept the car. I really enjoyed my "batmobile" as it was comfortable and would really take off and run. When I left for the States, since I could not bring my car home, I sold it to another officer in the area for one hundred dollars in American currency which was a good price at that time. .

In May, 1946, I was cleared for a ten day vacation to Switzerland. I had read and heard much of the history of the country and was glad to be able to see it myself. Our tour guide was a fine gentleman who had worked for Cooks Tours for many years. He was experienced, had many contacts in Switzerland and knew the country well. Thorough out our trip our guide stayed with us and advised us where to go and where and what to avoid. There were 35 soldiers in my tour and very soon after we got on our way, he discretely inquired as to our interests. In other words, were we interested in dancing, women, shows or some or all. All of us agreed as one that we came to tour Switzerland and that was all we wanted to do. He said that we were a most unusual tour group, but in the end, he agreed that we all had a great time.

We stopped first in Bern and saw the bears and other sights and continued on to many cities and visiting many scenic sights. For the first time, I had to draw money from my Currency Control Card so my funds were limited on the trip and we were allowed to bring only a certain amount of money into Switzerland. As the tour was entering Switzerland, we were asked if we wanted to call home and most of us did. We had to pay in advance for the call at that time and I think the cost was \$15.00 for a certain number of minutes. The money for the call was deducted from the amount we could take into the country so that made our funds a little tighter. We were told not to worry as they would get our calls to us before we left Switzerland, and they did. We traveled on the electric railway cars and I was really impressed with them. They were clean, quiet and ran on time almost to the exact minute, and the scenery was almost indescribable. I joined up with some of the other officers on the trip to pal around together.

When we were staying in Geneva, another officer and I

decided to go shopping. We were looking around at the merchandise on the first floor of a large department store when we were approached by an older well dressed man. He asked questions about where we were from, how long we had been in the army and in combat, how we liked Switzerland and other questions. I could see that my pal was looking at the gentleman very suspiciously. The man said that he made it a policy when he met soldiers to invite them to his home for an evening and extended the invitation to the two of us to visit his home. I had not decided to go but when he offered directions to his home on the outskirts of town and the bus to take out there, I wrote it all down. Later I ask my pal if he was going to visit the gentleman, who had also given us his name. He said, no way, as he thought the man might be gay or something. Having nothing to do that evening, I decided to take the man up on his invitation and caught the bus out to his residence at the time appointed. I, of course, told the tour leader exactly where I was going, who he was and when I expected to return. He lived in a lovely home on the outskirts of town with a tremendous view of the mountains. Just past his house were the typical Swiss chalets we saw in the movies, people herding their goats and steep hills. I visited for several hours with him and his wife and they served a sparse but tasty meal. When they found out that I liked cheese they insisted on giving me most of their ration stamps as they maintained that they did not like cheese and would not use them. My host and I took a long walk through the hills with him showing me the typical Swiss Chalet, where the animals were kept, where they lived and much more. I learned much about the Swiss Military System, customs and beliefs of the people from him. As we walked in the hills, we could hear people yodeling and he translated their conversations for me. Yodeling is a way of talking from hill top to hill top. The view on our walk was spectacular. Our conversation was fascinating to me as my host was the Number Two man in the Swiss Intelligence Service and told me many stories that kept me enthralled. He told of many of the tense moments when they faced invasion by the Germans and that all tunnels and bridges into Switzerland were mined. A select number of men sat 24 hours a day for months with their fingers on the buttons to blow every thing to impede any invasion. They were delighted that I had accepted the invitation

and wished that my pal had come also. I was equally as happy that I had visited with them as it was an evening not to be forgotten.

Late one afternoon we were in Geneva and all of us stopped at an outdoor café to indulge in some good wine. The place was crowded so we sat in a row of chairs in front of the café facing a canal across the walkway. I had to go to the restroom and when I returned I found my glass of wine missing, a man sitting in my chair and the guide and men arguing with the man who spoke French. I asked the man to replace my glass of wine and vacate my chair but he only argued with me loudly and violently waving his arms. Suddenly the owner dashed out the door to the café and what followed took us all completely by surprise. The owner asked the man politely to give up the seat to me and when he refused, arguing very loudly, the owner grabbed him by the shirt front and bodily yanked him out of the seat. He then grabbed the man by the shoulders and back belt and started pushing him toward the street as the yelling continued. The owner, who was now silent, suddenly kicked the man in the rear end with his right foot on which he was wearing sharp toed shoes. He kicked that man so hard that, I swear, he lifted that man completely off the ground about one foot. When he returned he apologized to me and said that the man did not like Americans and that was the only way to handle him. I took my seat and the owner brought me more wine. We finished enjoying our wine with lots of laughs as the man stood at the end of the block for a long time glowering in the direction of the restaurant, giving the universal gesture and talking loudly in French. Later our guide took us to a dance and showed us professional “gigilos” at work.

Early on Sunday morning about five of us were sitting at an out door table at a café having coffee when I noticed that the man sitting at the next table was reading an American newspaper. He was reading the Wall Street Journal that was dated the day before. We struck up a conversation with the man who was in Geneva to attend a United Nations function. He had flown over from the U.S. and had just arrived. We had a very pleasant conversation with him bringing us up to date on happening in the U.S., getting the troops home and other events. He was very knowledgeable, but I forget who he represented.

Near the end of our tour, I was staying in a hotel in Montreux

and at about 2:00 a.m. I was called to come to the lobby as my call home to Morgantown, W.Va., would be placed shortly. Sure enough, after about ten minutes the phone rang and the folks were on the other end of the call. The Phone Company had called them to make sure they would be home to receive the call so they knew it was coming. We were all excited and I got to talk to every one in the family for the first time in two years and it did lift my spirits. While in Montreaux we visited the historic castle of Chillon and rode a boat on the lake. The castle was really impressive and I took a picture where the Prisoner was chained

Our Guide told us many fascinating stories about his work as a guide during the 1930s. He said that he was selected many times to take small tours of young ladies from well to do families on tours of England, France and Switzerland. He said those tours were exhausting as he had to protect the young ladies from themselves and the "gigilos". Some of the young ladies had heard of the shows in France and wanted to see one. The guide made arrangements with a very reputable house in Paris that catered to the well to do to accommodate the young ladies in the tour who wanted to go and all usually did want to go. The shows were given privately for his tours alone and he left when the show began so the ladies would be alone. He said the ladies in his tours were given the full treatment and they ended the visits in quiet and mostly stunned amazement rendering most of them speechless for a period of time.

Much of our trip was uneventful and we were busy seeing as many sights as we could. We left Switzerland feeling that we had a great vacation but left much to be seen. It was during this trip that I ran into the man I used to work with at the Ten Cent store in Morgantown during the summer of 1940. He was on transfer to another unit as he did not have enough points to go home.

Several weeks before I left on my vacation, we had gotten a new Battalion Commander. He was a real creep and none of the officers liked him and none could get along with him. We had heard that he was a short timer waiting to ship out to the states. When I returned, he was gone and we had an acting C.O. I was told that a 1st Lt on the Battalion staff was dating a beautiful blonde German girl who had been in the movies prior to the war. She was living in the village to be near the Lt. One day the

Battalion C.O. sent him on a mission that took him away from the camp for a couple of days. After he was gone the C.O. cornered the girl and attempted to seduce her. When she resisted the C.O. beat her up giving her bruises and black eyes. When the Lt. returned and saw what the C.O. had done, he went to his quarters and obtained a loaded pistol and went looking for the C.O. He was one mad combat dude and I can believe that he was serious and would have shot the officer. At any rate, some one called Bn. Hqr and alerted the C.O. who hastily jumped into his jeep and left the camp with the Lt. in hot pursuit. He never caught up with him and we never saw that officer again.

Later we got another Battalion commander, a Major, who also appeared to be a short timer. As a commanding officer he was not a "barn burner" but as I recall, we got along. He was not a "hands" on C.O. but left matters to his staff while he went his way and made trips to the larger cities. He had a girl friend that I heard from Battalion Officers was a Red Cross worker. Some weekends this girl came to the Post and spent the week end in the Major's quarters. This activity became common knowledge as they were very open about it. At this time we had another 1st Lt. living in the house with us. He was a tall lanky Texan who spoke with a drawl and whom we called "Tex". Tex was not at all fond of the Major. For some reason the Major's activities "got under his skin" and he was very vocal about it. One Saturday I had heard that the woman was coming to the Post to visit the Major. That night several of us, including Tex, were at a club in Marburg where we all had a few drinks. Feeling the effects of the evening,, we returned to our quarters in the early morning for a snack before retiring. We knew that Tex was pretty well 'tanked' and as we were eating, we suddenly missed him. Suspecting that something was going on, we all began looking for him. As we looked without results, one of the Lts. exclaimed, "The Major has his girl friend with him!" We hurried down the road to the Major's quarters and, there was Tex humming a song to himself and pouring gasoline from a five gallon gas can onto the side of the Major's residence under his bed room on the second floor. Just as he pulled out his lighter to light the building we arrived and took the lighter and gas can from him. Tex was in a jovial mood and laughingly said he wanted to burn the building down to see if the Major and his girl would run out of

the house naked. We got Tex and his gas can out of there in a hurry. That Major never knew how close he came to a real disaster.

On the Post we had a small Regimental Officers mess as we had a fair size group of officers on the Post, assigned or passing through. It was an informal mess hall and on Sunday the breakfast hours could be anywhere from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. The kitchen detail did not mind as they had to work all day and it was a small mess that worked at a slow pace. One Sunday morning about 9:30 a.m. Floyd and I were in the mess having a cup of coffee while about eight to ten officers were leisurely eating breakfast. The door opened with a bang and in walked Colonel Malone with another officer. Colonel Malone had been my Regimental Commander in the 399th Infantry replacing Colonel Tychsen who was promoted to Brig. General. He was not particularly well liked by his officers. We had heard through the rumor mill that he was up for transfer out of the 399th and wanted to go home to the States but no one in the States wanted him so he would be left in the ETO. We were "sweating it out" over the chance that we might get him as a C.O. if Colonel Edson was transferred out, which I am glad did not happen. As it turned out, Colonel Malone was assigned as C.O. of the 30th Inf. Reg. In our Division.

I recall that I had run into the Lt. Colonel who used to be the EX.O. under Colonel Malone. He had been an extremely well liked officer in the Regiment. I asked him why he was transferred to 7th Army Headquarters. He told me that Col. Malone was driving him nuts so he called Gen. Tychsen and told him that if he was not transferred out of the 399th he was going to get his pistol and use it on Colonel Malone. He said he got his transfer and was very happy with his new assignment.

At any rate, having had a lot of contact with the Colonel I was familiar with his demeanor and facial expressions. When he walked into the mess hall, I could tell from his facial expression that he disapproved seeing Officers in the mess hall at that time of day. The Colonel and his companion were served a good hot meal as the rest of us merely greeted them and continued with our own discussions. An argument almost broke out when Colonel Malone made the statement that if he were the C.O. he would not allow officers in the Mess at that hour of the day. Lt.

Walker replied aloud that he was not our C.O. and therefore he had absolutely no authority or say about the operation of our mess. He bluntly told the Colonel that he should be happy that he was getting such a good meal for free as we could charge him and his companion for the meal they were eating. Relations cooled abruptly and after that exchange, every one studiously avoided the Colonel. The Colonel and his officer finished eating and left the mess without additional conversation.

One day on the Post, I ran into a Protestant Chaplain. I asked him why we never had any church services at the Post and he replied that no one had asked for or expressed any interest in church services. The Chaplain told me that he would be very happy to hold Protestant services if I could secure a suitable building for the services and get some men to attend. With the help of two of my men, we located a building that was suitable and got it set up for church services. That meant of course, cleaning up the place and bringing in chairs and benches. I arranged with the Chaplain for a date and time for the service as they had to bring in a small organ in a truck. We put up notices of the scheduled church service on every unit bulletin board and in every mess hall. I contacted each Commanding Officer and Senior Officer to solicit their cooperation in encouraging the men to attend the service. To insure a full house for the Chaplain, I caused all my men, not on duty, to fall out in formation. I dismissed all those of Catholic or other faiths and all who professed to be non-Christians and marched the rest to the church service. Needless to say, my motives were good but I was called on the carpet by the Battalion C.O. for the methods I used. I even got a letter from a Congressman, which I answered and several letters from parents thanking me for taking their son to church services. These I answered also. Well, at least I got some church activities started on the Post that continued afterwards. I took some ribbing from my Junior officers over the incident.

One of the biggest headaches I had in the unit was the motor pool. As I said, since I had the majority of the vehicles in the Bn., our vehicles were constantly being requisitioned by other units and we had to set up a dispatching unit to schedule and keep track of the vehicles. Keeping all my units up and running had become a real problem. Spare parts were next to impossible to

get so we had to borrow from down units and engage in a lot of moonlight requisitioning. The roads in Germany were in poor shape and the vehicles were constantly getting flat tires from nails, glass, shell fragments, and other road hazards. More often than not, when the motor pool opened in the morning, the tires on most of the vehicles would be flat. We had to establish and train a detail just to repair the tires on the vehicles each morning in order to get and keep them on the road. We requisitioned spare parts and tire repair material on a daily basis to no avail. Forced to use our imagination we tested many methods for patching the inner tubes in the tires so they would hold the air. Believe it or not, we found that by mixing orange marmalade, we got from the kitchen, with a small amount of gasoline, applying that to a patch cut from an old inner tube, putting it into the tire and immediately filling it with air, would temporarily solve our problems. Using this method we found that the tires would stay inflated for about 15 hours to 18 hours and then they would go flat again. It worked out for us as we put a time limit on how long the vehicles could be gone. One day we were informed that a two star General would be touring the post. It was the responsibility of each unit C.O. to report to the General and escort him through the company, viewing what ever he wanted to see and to answer any questions. I was escorting the General through H Company and we came to the motor pool. We had one large barn we had converted to a service area where repairs were made. It was quite early in the morning when we arrived there and my detail was busy repairing flat tires in a production line effort. Seeing all the activity, the General walked over and watched the men intently, and finally his curiosity getting the better of him he said, "Lt. Gregory, what in the world are those men doing and how are they doing it?" I told him that we had tried to get tire patching equipment and spare parts to no avail and then I show him exactly how we fixed the flats using gasoline and orange marmalade and told him how effective it was. The General seemed satisfied and we continued our tour. I had saluted the General as he was preparing to leave when suddenly he turned to me and said, "Lt. Gregory, any officer and men who display the imagination and perseverance you and your men have to get the job done, should have a little help". Turning to his aide he ordered him to

get a list of what we needed and send a plane to Paris the next day to get them. And, thanks to one fine General, within two days we had adequate spare parts and tire repairing material.

HOMEWARD BOUND

As I have previously stated, I had developed a very good working relationship with Colonel Edson. I found him to be very fair and straight forward in all our dealings. He was a good commander and leader and I trusted his judgment. Any time he came to our Camp he always came to see me and if he had VIPs he always gave them a tour of my Company. He told me several times that he would like for me to remain in the Regiment as one of his Company Commanders and that I could remain in H Company. For some reason I could never bring myself to sign over. I guess I could not see the Army as a future at that time. I recall one day when I was visiting the Colonel in his office we were discussing our futures. He was concerned with keeping his full rank and I assured him that if anything, he would get promoted. He again asked me to reconsider my decision to leave the unit and told me that he could declare me as an essential officer and could bind me over for a six months period. I assured him that I trusted his judgment and if he believed that I was essential then I would abide by his decision. I felt very comfortable dealing with him.

As summer of 1946 neared, a 1st Lt. Troxell was transferred into the Company. I was told that he would be taking command of the Company when I got orders to return to the States. At last during June, 1946, I was ordered by Colonel Edson to turn my Company over to Lt. Troxell as I would be going home. Shortly there after I received orders to proceed to an embarkation camp for shipment home. I recall Lt. Troxell very well. He was a slow prodding and very methodical officer. He went through all the books in the company over and over again. I approached the checking of the company and all paper work with mixed emotions. I must confess that for a brief time I felt remorse at leaving the company. Over the period of time and all my troubles, I had developed a very good company. It was fully staffed with good officers (most West Point graduates) and excellent Non Commissioned Officers that were mostly Regular Army men with good experience. The discipline, moral, appearance and attitude of all the men had improved to the point

they were in danger of becoming excellent soldiers – to a man. I was actually starting to have second thoughts and regret over leaving that company. Lt. Troxell was starting to get on my nerves with the slow process of checking the company books. After two days he started arguing with me over a set of books and indicated that he could not sign off on them. That was the last straw for me so I said to him, “Lt. Troxell, I am suppose to leave tomorrow. If you do not sign the change of command right now I am going to call Colonel Edson and tell him that I have decided to stay as the Company Commander and you can either stay as Executive Officer or request a transfer.” Needless to say, within the next few minutes, he signed all the books and the change of command. Now for the first time in two and one half years I was with out a command and was as free as a bird, so to speak.

I do not now recall if Lt. Floyd Peterson was still in the Battalion when I left, but I feel sure that he was still there commanding Easy Company. Some time later he was mustered out and returned to Huntington, W.Va. and I received an invitation to his wedding. I recall that I went to Huntington and stayed with his parents at their home leaving the day after the wedding. They were happy to meet me and did everything to make my visit a pleasant one. I saw Floyd several times after that at which time he was the manager of Baileys Cafeteria in Huntington and was a very busy man.

I do not recall much about leaving the Camp and Hamelburg. I had twisted my right ankle the previous summer when I was Special Services Officer in a soft ball game. It took me several weeks to get over that painful ordeal. Rushing around the Company as I prepared to leave, I twisted the ankle again and it was so painful and swollen that I could barely put my weight on it. The day came to leave the Camp and I was feeling ill in addition to my swollen ankle. I was afraid to go on sick call as I would miss my connections for home and would have to wait for new orders. I remember that I caught a train but do not recall where I boarded it. I was having trouble with my luggage but friends helped me get every thing on the train. I have forgotten the details of the train trip except it took several days to get to the coast for some reason. I was sick and feverish and some of the other officers wanted me to leave the train and go to a

hospital. I would not do that and located a Medic aboard the train. He wanted me to seek medical help and said he could not help me. After much discussion he finally agreed to give me sulfur tablets and cautioned me to drink a lot of water with them. By the time the train arrived at the Le Harve I was feeling a little better but we were all a very tired and dirty bunch of soldiers. With the help of other officers I got every thing on a truck and finally arrived at Camp Lucky Strike (I think that was the name of it). By now my ankle was really swollen and I could barely walk but I ran into some officers I knew and they helped me to my quarters with all my luggage.

As I was hobbling along to the mess hall for supper I ran into my friend, Lt. Frank Pierce. By sheer coincidence he was going home on the same ship with me. I did not know that he was going home and since orders came suddenly on transfers there was no time to write and notify friends ahead of time. I continued to take the sulfur tablets and my fever was now gone and I was feeling better except for my ankle. I was having trouble finding the time to stay off my foot. I had gone to a Doctor at the camp. He gave me some pain pills and told me to stay off the foot. We were in Le Harve for several days waiting for a ship to take us home. I was not able to get into town or see the sights as walking was a problem. Finally we were told that we could board our ship and we were trucked to the dock. Fortunately, Lt. Pierce and other officers helped me with my luggage as we inched our way forward to the gangplank and onto the boat.

I sailed home from LeHarve on the USAT (United States Army Transport) Algonquin. It was a fairly large ship and had formerly been a hospital ship. Returning home our passengers included in addition to the Officers and Enlisted Men, War Brides, Nurses, Red Cross girls, civilian employees and others. Having all those women on board was not a plus, but in fact made the entire trip home very unpleasant. We concluded that there were as many unpleasant Military Police (MP) on board as there were women. At night, every nook and cranny of that ship was lighted with flood lights. There was so much light on deck that we could not see the stars in the sky at night. Also, the MPs patrolled the deck constantly and what a tongue lashing one got if he or she took the wrong route about the ship. About the

second night out of port, I was feeling a little sea sick so I decided to go on deck for some air. There was a nice breeze and I was sitting on a bench under a flood light by the rail. Two MPs approached and started questioning me: Identify your self, Why are you sitting here, why are you on deck, and other questions. I completely lost my patience and was very unpleasant so they finally moved on. Since I could see other MP patrols moving about the deck and knowing the same thing would happen over again, I retired below deck for the night. Most of the passengers, both male and female complained to the head transport officer about the harassment by the MPs and the confrontations eased up a lot but they still made the trip unpleasant.

The weather was beautiful for the trip and the ocean was relatively calm. Since there was not much to do to pass the time on the ship, Frank, a Doctor, another Lt. and myself played a lot of bridge on deck and sunned a lot. The mess hall was great. It was open for extended hours and we could eat meals at any time we chose to eat. The food was excellent and we could actually order from a menu or take the house specialty. One of our group of Officers made friends with a 2nd Mate who invited us to his cabin for drinks. He was constantly worried about the Captain and us making noises so we left after having a couple of drinks. We did learn from him that certain cabins belonging to crew members could be rented for ten dollars for one half hour. According to him, having whiskey in the cabin cost more. Some of the female passengers tried to be friendly but just talking to a girl for too long a time would invite a swarm of MPs with their harassing questions. Rather than be harassed, my group of Officers steered clear of the problem and held conversations to a minimum.

The morning dawned bright, clear and sunny on the day of our anticipated arrival in New York City. By 7:00 a.m. practically every passenger had eaten breakfast and was on deck straining for a view of the shore. It is difficult to describe in words the feelings and the thrill of returning home from a war, seeing the shores of the United States and suddenly the sight of the Statue of Liberty as it came into view. There was just a complete silence on the deck and there were tears in the eyes of most of us. The range of emotions at that time would be hard to explain.

I was amazed at the size of the pier and the size of the warehouses that towered over the ship.

It seemed like we were forever getting off the ship. Every one had their luggage with them and all were ready and eager to disembark. My leg had healed fully so I was mobile and able to cope with my belongings. We were held up on the ship for about an hour as men in civilian clothes came on board and later left with an officer. We heard that the men were CID investigators who had arrested the officer for theft of art masterpieces that he had on board with him. We had little time to have sympathy for the officer in our eagerness to get ashore. Finally we were moving slowly down the gangplank and on to the pier. On the pier, we were given free time to visit the booths set up by the Red Cross and other agencies that were serving coffee, doughnuts, cold drinks, cookies, sandwiches, candy, gum and other goodies. We then went to a pre-designated area to catch our bus to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey.

On arriving at Camp Kilmer, we were assigned to the usual two story barracks. Our group was on the second floor in a large room that had double bunks and slept 40 to 50 men. I climbed into one of the top bunks and stretched out to take a nap as I was really tired from my recent illness and the rigors of the trip. I recall that an officer I knew only slightly asked me if I would watch his valuables while he took a shower. I told him that I would remain in my bunk but I would probably fall asleep, and that, I promptly did do. Later, the officer awoke me and said that he had put his money under my leg and left and when he returned his money was gone. I did not see his money, did not see him place any money on my bunk and I had no knowledge to verify the amount he said was taken, that I think was around one hundred dollars. I only had his word that he had put it there and the amount taken. I was not surprised that an officer would steal his money as I had met some really bad officers during the past two years. Several officers were aware of his loss so we took up a collection from all the officers on the floor and restored his lost money to him. We contributed about three dollars each and that was enough to do it. He was one happy guy. We had been told that immediately on arriving at Camp that we would be served a full steak dinner. Shortly after we arrived we were told to go to the mess hall and we were served a steak dinner with all

the trimmings. There was no limit on how much or what we could order for the meal.

Later that evening myself and three other officers from the trip home went into New York City and visited several of the more famous night clubs downtown. Among those I recall we visited were Jack Dempsey's Broadway Cocktail Bar and Café, the Coconut Grove, Café Zanzibar and several others. We had our pictures taken at most of them. The four of us went to a night club where the Mills Brothers were appearing. A gentleman sitting at the table next to us at the club asked us if we were just returning to the States, where we had been stationed, how long had we been gone, and had we been in combat. We answered his questions at which time he told the waiter to make sure that we got everything we wanted and to put it all on his check. He expressed his appreciation and thanks to us for our sacrifices on behalf of the country. That gracious gentleman helped make our evening very pleasant. I recall that Lt. Pierce and several other Officers I knew were no longer with us as we had been sent to different Camps to be discharged depending on our home State of record.

We spent a couple days at Camp Kilmer doing nothing except filling out a few forms and relaxing. We were authorized to go into the City any time we desired. As I recall, the four of us spent most of the time sight seeing in the City. Part of our group was then ordered to go to Fort George Meade, Maryland, for final discharge processing. We boarded a bus and were driven to that Camp where for the next three days every thing proceeded at a leisurely pace. We had to complete thorough physical examinations and reams of paper work. We attended classes on returning to civilian life, reserve obligations, Veterans insurance and other veteran matters and then, more paper work. While at Fort Meade, I did not go into Washington or Baltimore as all the officers I had known were now gone and I had no place of interest to visit. Also, I was starting to become anxious to finish the processing and get on my way home.

I will never forget the last night I was at Fort Meade. I was alone as every one was going their own way, so about 7:00 p.m. I walked over to the officers club to have a drink. The club was practically deserted so I was sitting at a table by myself having a drink and listening to the juke box. I recall that Perry Como was

singing "I Cover The Waterfront" and, suddenly, I felt totally alone in the world. I was becoming deeply depressed and it was as if a great big black hole had opened up and I was in the middle of a great and vast emptiness. As I sat there I remember that in my mind I was starting to rehash some unpleasant events of the past.. This was a feeling that was to return often over the next few years resulting in some depression. At any rate, I left my drink and the bar and started looking for a small poker game to occupy my mind. I later realized what a great loss happened to me very suddenly. I had lost all the buddies and comrades I had depended on for years for support, friendship and advice. Yes, we were all finally separated and I was alone.

The Army provided buses to take departing soldiers to various cities near by. During the afternoon of the third day, I boarded a bus for Washington, D.C., to catch a train to Grafton, W. Va., where I had caught a train on March 19, 1943, to begin the adventure that now was now coming to an end. I had call home and told the folks when I would be leaving Washington and when I would arrive in Grafton. I was sitting in those hard seats in the train station waiting room with my ticket in hand and I fell asleep. Naturally I missed the call for the train and when I awoke I checked with a ticket agent and discovered that the train had indeed left the station. The ticket agent was very helpful. As I cashed in my train ticket, he called the bus station and learned that a bus would be leaving in about 15 minutes that would arrive in Grafton a couple hours after the train. I was lucky to get a cab and arrive at the bus station just as the driver was loading to leave on his trip. The driver stowed my gear and waited for me to go inside and purchase a ticket. Settling down in a seat on the bus, I am sure that I thought about what the home coming would be like and what the future would hold. It was not too long before I dozed off again and for most of the trip. We arrived in Grafton about two hours after the train and Dad and my sisters were waiting for me. They were upset that I was not on the train but figured that I had missed it so they waited for the bus to arrive. Naturally, when we arrived at home in mid-morning Mom had prepared an enormous meal that outdid any thing that I had eaten in many years.

Little did I realize how difficult the adjustment would be in returning to civilian life. The discipline, routine and purpose that

I had followed for several years were gone and the comrades I shared life with had now gone their individual ways. As I look back now, I recall that I had a feeling of being lost. For months, I would put three cigarettes on the night table and in the morning I would have awoken and smoked all of them just as I had done in combat. I contacted John Adams who was at home in Sutton, W.Va. and he invited me to come visit. I caught a bus to Sutton and spent a week with him. It was not the same, of course, as he had his future wife, Kay, visiting at the same time. I had a pleasant visit and John took me back into the mountains where small kids followed the car around as some of them had never seen a car before or had seen very few. I was amazed at how isolated some of the people were.

John still showed the effects of his time as a POW of the Germans. He was not the same man I had known as he was not nearly as strong and healthy. He was now attending the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor working on a Masters Degree. In the fall of 1946, I got a letter from John confiding that he and Kay were planning to marry and that he wanted me to be his best man. I do not recall the date now but it was to be on a Saturday afternoon so I wrote John that I was happy to be included in his wedding and that I would arrive on Saturday morning in time for the wedding. On Friday night, the day before the planned wedding, I caught the bus for Ann Arbor. The bus stopped at the bus station in Columbus, Ohio, for a rest stop of about 20 minutes. The bus was not crowded and most of us had been sleeping as best we could. I recall that three men and I got off the bus and we sat down together at the restaurant counter in the bus station. We all ordered coffee and something to eat. There was one lone man working at the counter taking care of cooking and filling the orders. I asked him if he knew how to fix an egg sandwich and he assured me that he knew how to do that as he had graduated from a very good cooking school. When I asked him how he would fix the sandwich, he replied that he would scramble an egg on the grill and put it between two slices of buttered bread that he would toast on the grill. I noticed that the other men were intently following the conversation. I told the cook that I wanted an egg sandwich prepared as follows, "Put mayonnaise on two slices of white bread, fry one egg over easy, put the egg on one slice of bread and put the other slice on

top". The cook did not move to comply with my request but just stood there with a defiant and hostile look on his face. I said, "Are you going to fix what I have requested?" He replied, "I will not fix an egg sandwich that way because that is not the way we were taught in school to cook an egg sandwich." The rest of the men were just looking at the cook with stunned expressions obviously not expecting that kind of an answer from him. Realizing that time was getting short, I asked the cook if he would fry me one egg over easy. He agreed to do that and started frying the egg. I noticed all the guys had smiles on their faces as if they knew what I intended. I then asked the cook for two slices of bread that he served up. When I got the egg I asked the cook for some mayonnaise which he also gave me. As I started putting the mayonnaise on the bread a horrified look came over the face of the cook as it suddenly dawned on him what I was doing. He quickly lunged forward and made a grab for the plate with the egg on it. I grabbed it away from him and quickly made the sandwich. He loudly demanded that I return the food to him as he would not allow an egg sandwich to be served in that manner at his counter. I put the money for the food on the counter and taking my egg sandwich we all got back on the bus just in time to leave. Everyone had a good laugh at the strange conduct of the counter cook.

I arrived at the bus station in Ann Arbor about 8:00 a.m. and carrying my bag I walked out to the rooming house where John lived. He had written me the directions to his residence so when I got there I went upstairs to his room and knocked on the door. I had to knock several times and then I heard someone stirring and two people talking. Finally the door opened and there stood John with a surprised look on his face and Kay standing behind him. "What are you doing here Bill", John asked. "I came to be the best man at your wedding this afternoon", I replied and handed him the letter he had written to me asking me to be his best man. "Here is the proof", I told him. He quickly read the letter and said, "OH my God! I put the wrong date in the letter. The wedding was yesterday afternoon, not today, and we all wondered where you were. I am so sorry that you made the trip up here for nothing but we were married yesterday afternoon." For what seemed like several minutes we all just stood there not saying anything. Finally Kay said, "You must be tired after your

all night ride. The man who has the room next to ours is gone for several days and offered the use of his room to you for as long as you need it.” They took me to the room and I said that I would retire and get some needed sleep and they said they were going to do the same. I undressed and got into the bed and had not been in bed for more than just a few minutes when the door flew open and there stood a rather attractive young woman. The thought of locking the door had not even occurred to me. “Where is Bob”, she asked. I was still surprised and a little confused at the events so I told her that I did not know Bob but had been told he was out of town and had offered me the use of his room while he was gone. She told me that she was his wife, that they were separated and she had a score to settle with him. It was obvious she was angry and fired up. Suddenly she calmed down and asked who I was and why I was in bed. I explained the circumstances to her and we talked for a few minutes. This woman was full of surprises. She was standing in the middle of the room and when I told her that I had just gotten out of the Army and had been in combat and had come to Ann Arbor for John and Kay’s wedding. A big smile came over her face and she said, “What you need today is a loving woman to take care of you.” Having said that, she started unbuttoning her blouse and it dawned on me that she intended to disrobe and get into bed with me. At that very moment the door burst open and Kay came into the room followed by John. “What is going on in here”, she demanded to know. The young woman calmly buttoned her blouse, remarked to Kay that she was looking for her husband and since he was not here she would contact him later and she then left the building. Kay told me that she had seen the woman entering the building and recognized who she was. Kay said, “I have heard all about that woman Bill and when I saw her enter this room I immediately came over here to protect you!” As I thought about it later I was not sure that Kay had done any favors for me. Since I could not sleep after that, John gave me his ticket to the football game and I went to the Michigan stadium and watched Army and Michigan. It was a great game with Army winning by a score of 13 to 7 as I recall. The next day I caught the bus for home as John and Kay had things planned and would be busy.

PART III.

1.

ESSAY ON GRANDPA

BY

CASSANDRA J. BLACKFORD

2.

ORIGINAL

‘SONS OF BITCHE’

BY

CHRIS GREGORY

CASSANDRA J. BLACKFORD

2/6/04

Did you know, Grandpa, that scientists say the earliest thing a human being remembers is smell? I think that's very interesting because I do associate smells with people quite a lot. You might like to know that one of the people I associate a smell with the most is you. I've always wondered if it was your cologne or aftershave. Maybe it's just *your* smell. I don't know. I do know that I look forward to the scent when we visit you, or you us. It makes me feel safe and loved. It reminds me of some of the happiest memories of my life. (You might think that's very silly considering my life thus far has been relatively short, but I know they will remain some of the happiest!)

If I had to describe you to someone it would be really hard. In fact, I'd probably just tell them two stories: the fried cakes order and the short order cook at the bus stop who wouldn't give you the fried egg sandwich. I laugh now just thinking about you grabbing that plate before the cook could take it back! I probably appreciate these more because of my own experience of your determination in culinary situations. One of my most vivid recollections of being a small child is sitting alone at the fold out table with only meat left on my plate. I can see you "closing the kitchen" by turning off the light above the sink. I'm still in therapy for that one, Grandpa!

I think it's time we settled some things. While I don't remember clearly, yes, I probably did sit on your lap and suck my thumb just to irritate you. However, let's not forget all the time I spent protecting myself from your fingers with my trusty pillow that Carolyn so savagely sabotaged with the sign "tickle me". I now declare: we're even!

I'm probably the patriot that I am because of you, Grandpa. You didn't use to talk much about your time in the military. I don't know if you think we don't want to listen, or it serves no purpose. I can understand if it's had for you. But I do think it serves a great purpose. Just so you know in the future, I always want to listen. Even if you've told it before, I like to hear it again so that I'll remember better. And I always try to get you to keep writing

because I think we need to remember. I was so proud to do that project about your military service my eighth grade year. I was thrilled to sit at the dinning room table with you and listen about rations, ranks, and towns being occupied by Nazis while you were asleep! Thanks for letting me read what you had written. I cried then, and I still cry when I recall your description and evident horror at the bodies being laid along the road and encounters with wounded soldiers. I don't need to go on because I'm sure you remember it all, but I want you to know that along with sadness I felt joy to be learning more about you. I'm happy to know you better by your past. I'm aware of the sacrifices you made during the depression - earning money and giving it to your siblings, and during the war - which you admit played a part in dropping your forestry degree. I've never said this because it's not enough, but I'm prouder than words to be your granddaughter. Thank you for being so willing to give. I remember, Grandpa.

"My grandpa was in the FBI." That, Grandpa, is one of the best things you've ever done for me. The moment those words come out of my mouth you are officially the coolest grandpa of anyone in the room. Do you remember sitting around the table one time when you were talking about some of your FBI cases? Well, I know that's happened several times, but I remember specifically the case when you were arresting the steel worker. His wife turned out to be pregnant and the workers in the area rioted against you. We laughed and laughed about that. But I learned something else about you that day, other than the fact that you sometimes make untimely mistakes. You have a lot of - I'm not sure what it's called, but you kept mentioning the wives that you tried to help and explained how you saw it as your responsibility because you were the one arresting their husbands. I was so impressed by the way you expressed it as a simple matter of fact: you had more duty than just putting men in prison. You needed to help those in hurt. I started to recall all the times you would start an arrest story with "He was really a good kid. . ." It's so neat to see how much hope and compassion you had for people you could have easily looked down upon.

I was never so proud to be associated with someone as when the gentleman you worked with at C.E.T.A. stopped us in the store this summer. After all these years he still recognized you

and remembered how honest you had been. I remember him saying that everyone knew you were the one to go if they wanted a straight answer.

Who can truly know you without knowing your babies? Yes, I'm speaking of the girls, I mean, boy and girl. It's not the constant pampering, taking them to be groomed, feeding them gourmet meals, letting them sleep in the bed, giving Brandi his own chair or other spoiling behavior that worries me. It's when we're sitting in the basement and you start saying to them, "People say you're dogs, but you're not dogs, you're people. You're *little* people, but you're people." It worries me because I start to forget that they're dogs. They *are* dogs, Grandpa!

I'll always admire the way you cherished Grandma. You did your share of the cooking, took her coffee up to her every morning. I've observed your chivalrous acts so many men have stopped taking time to do, like opening doors and helping with coats. I hope I find a husband like that.

Grandpa, you define "grandpa". You always make sure there's chocolate milk in the refrigerator when I come to visit. You always have plenty of candy, grapes, black cherries, and peanut butter - the very sources of life for children. You make a point that no one ever goes hungry at your house, always asking, "Did you get enough?"

Of course a grandpa isn't a good grandpa unless he does some naughty stuff. You eat lots of chocolate - which in itself automatically makes you a good man. There are also the endless hours of watching you play poker on the Internet.

You're always willing to play a game of pool. It's practically a matter of honor to challenge me to one game each trip! Because of this I'm quite willing to forgive you for passing on to me your curse of consistently sinking the cue ball, even when it defies physics. I just hope I can keep your sense of humor about it. Christina and I will never forget the time in our basement when you yelled triumphantly, "I got the round one in!" Yeah, Grandpa, the cubes are easy, but those round ones - they're killer.

Something I wish I knew more about was your faith. I desire to learn how God taught and sustained you through the depression, war, Grandma's cerebral hemorrhages, and this past year. You're the head of this family, it's important that you share those things with us to better prepare us for our life's

trials. I've been so pleased to see you looking to the church for support! We're all excited about what God can do in your life.

I deeply believe that God has something more planned for you. Uncle Craig is not beyond God's reach or your fatherly direction. Your correction has always been, and still is the most influential thing that could bring him back to the truth. It reminds me of that poem that says, "Rage, rage against the dying of the light. Do not go gentle into that good night." I'm not sure what the author meant by that, but to me it's saying not to die without purpose to live longer. We always have something left to accomplish. Even on our death beds we must share wisdom God has granted us and live the love that he has showed us.

I get all these things from you, Grandpa. And, most importantly, because of you, I will always remember that a "fried cake" is a pancake - not a doughnut.

ORIGINAL 'SONS OF BITCHE'

BY

CHRIS GREGORY

Historical Information

The 100th Infantry Division entered WWII in October 1944 when it departed from New York. Their convoy had ten troop ships and five combat vessels. There were 13,000 men in the convoy. The convoy hit a really bad storm. The trip took 15 days. The 100th landed in Marseilles, France on October 20, 1944. When the troops landed in France they had to hike 12 miles to where they were supposed to camp. After test-firing their weapons and getting organized, they took their convoy to Baccarat, France. This was a 500 mile journey. The 100th took over for the 45th Division on the front, near the Meurthe River. The 100th Division was in support of VI Corps. At 5:11 p.m. on the first of November, 1944, they fired their first shot of the war. The 100th had officially entered the Vosges Mountains campaign.

VI Corps attacked the heavily-fortified German 19th Army Vosges Winter Line during the month of November. They succeeded in doing something never done before, they breached the heavily-defended mountains and fought on into the heartland of Germany. The 100th, as part of VI Corps, fought their way through the vosges mountains and on to Heilbronn. It was a long, difficult, and costly battle. The 100th participated in attacks on the German Winter line from 12 - 20 November, 1944, pursuit of German forces through the Low Vosges from 8 - 11 December, 1944, the battle for Bitche, France from 13 - 21 December, 1944 operation NORDWIND from 1 - 7, January, 1945; and the Battle for Heilbronn from 4 - 11 April 1945.

After 175 days on the line, 100th was placed in the reserve. They patrolled around Stuttgart and had to stop French troops from destroying the area. Elements of the 100th relieved the French occupation army and occupied the area around Stuttgart

and restored order. On 10 May, the Division was ordered southwestern Germany near Heilbronn and Ulm. Their orders were to secure the area, maintain order and allow farming to get started again. The 100th remained there for the summer of 1945.

Charles W. Gregory

Charles W. Gregory was born 21 October 1921 and graduated from high school in May 1939. He attended college at West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia. He majored in Forestry and was in the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). He completed Civilian Pilot Training as a Cadet, but was under age and his parents would not allow him to complete military flight training. His class was pulled out of college during the last semester of their senior year, sworn in as enlisted men in the Army, sent to a training camp, returned to college to complete the year and graduate. Because they had missed some required ROTC training, they were sent to Officer Candidate School (OCS). Charles W. Gregory was commissioned a 2LT on 6 December, 1943. He joined the 100th Division and deployed to France with them.

People usually remember what they were doing when an important event occurs. Charles W. Gregory said, "On Pearl Harbor day which was a Sunday, I was out in the woods chopping cord wood all day and I got home about 4 pm." He recalls that his mother was crying when she told him that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. His sisters cried. His Dad got real quiet, but talked with the boys later. The boys knew for sure that they were going to war. Two brothers fought in Europe, a younger brother fought in Korea. One brother, an Analytic Chemical Engineer, was declared essential to industry and was not allowed to enlist.

Charles Gregory was in the convoy that left New York in October 1944. He went over on the USS McAndrew, a converted cargo ship. It was a very small ship that only carried about 800 men. He recalls that the 100th went over with two other divisions, so there were a lot of ships, war ships, navy cruisers, and destroyers, in the convoy. Most of the 100th went over on the USS George Washington that carried about 8,000

men. Charles Gregory recalls,

...the worst Atlantic storm in the memory of the captain...We were buttoned up for three days, nobody was allowed out on deck...The seas were so rough that our ship being so small would go way up in the air, maybe 50-60 feet, with a wave and start down...the bow would go down and the propellers would come out of the water. The change in torque would cause the ship to just shake and vibrate. It made everyone sick...We almost rolled over, got sideways in the waves...One time during the storm we almost ran into the George Washington...It was a bad storm. We finally got through that...that ship sure did smell bad and being a little bit sea sick anyways, I don't think I ate anything for three days but crackers. So we finally made it and got into the Mediterranean and ran into the worst storm they'd had in the Mediterranean for years. That lasted 24 hours. I got seasick all over again. So I was glad to get off that ship.

Conditions changed, but did not improve when the 100th arrived in Marseilles. Now there were two enemies, the weather and the Germans.

We got into harbor at Marseilles, France. There were so many sunken ships in the harbor that we couldn't dock...(We) ran walkways from one sunken ship to another and we walked about six sunken ships to get to shore. ...When we got to shore of course it was a port - it was people going every place, screaming, machinery moving vehicles moving, gear, it was just a real mess, everybody going every-which-a-way...we marched in formation up the hill out of Marseilles...It was about 10 miles we marched out to the camping area. It started raining on the way...We were all sopping wet. When we finally got to this camping area it was probably 1 or 2 in the morning. So we all just threw our shelter halves down on the ground and rolled up in them and went to sleep. We didn't bother to pitch a tent. We woke up in

the morning and it was still raining, a muddy mess, and we pitched those tents in the mud.

The tents were the green canvas two man tents composed of two pieces each. Each man carried half of them and two people would put a tent together and sleep in it. The only floor in the tent was the mud.

The weather didn't get better during the campaign in the Lower and Higher Vosges and combat was brutal. Charles Gregory recalls the Vosges campaign,

We were in a mountain area, then it was the flatter area once we got through. When we first went into combat it was into the Vosges Mountains, for November, December, January, February, up to March,...We were never in a building for weeks on end. We were just out in the woods in the rain and the snow, three feet of snow, sometimes drifted higher. If you were in a hole you tried to cover it with something. If you weren't, you just rolled up in your bedroll on the snow. Not much else you could do. If you'd light a fire, they'd throw a mortar shell on it...

You got some sleep. You were always constantly worried about the enemy moving in on you or shells coming in. Wartime was constant shells coming in at night time, you hear them screaming overhead. You always heard machine gun fire, small arm fire during the night. Every time you wake up or you dose off you could hear this aura of noise of battle going on all the time day after day, you get to the point you wish you didn't have to listen to it. Cause it went on day after day, night after night...

And I remember one time I got some coffee from home. The guys talked me into building a fire and making some coffee in a tin can. And I knew better than that, but we hadn't had any coffee for several weeks and the guys were dying for coffee, so I let them build a fire and suddenly there was an over and under, and if you know anything about artillery you know if there is an over and under, the next one is going to hit you. So the

the next one landed right on the fire and blew my coffee all over the landscape. By that time we had got out of effective range.

If a shell comes in to the ground the forward position of the shell when it explodes, you can envision a shell landing like this (using hands to explain), then this part down here is going to be blown into the ground, so it is kind of wasted, right. The shell at the top, a certain position of it is going to be blown out and up, it is wasted, right. The only thing that might hit somebody is the round part that is in the position to blow out. When you have a tree burst, it hits the tree, it blows practically all that stuff down. You get a much more effective distribution, maybe 30 more percent of the fragmentation of that shell. And it is like raining steel that will kill you. That is a tree burst, very dangerous. The tankers could never get it through their head that a tree burst would not hurt them.

Even when behind the lines, soldiers were not safe. German artillery shells could travel for miles.

I remember one Sunday, Frankie Pierce said he was going to go to church, asked me to go to mass with him...we go to this church out in the open...everybody has machine guns and carrying machine guns and is sitting down leaning on their guns. The priest gets up there to start the service. About that time a shell came in and landed on the ground about 5 yards away. The priest said that's the end, God bless you all good bye. That was the end of that church service. You're never really safe.

Communication in the war zone was difficult. Letters to and from home and with friends also at war were important, but often slow arriving. Charles Gregory's brother, Finley, was also in the Army in Europe. They kept up with each other by letters. Mr. Gregory recalls that information about the war outside their unit was very limited.

I fought in a Division and with supporting units. And when you're in battle you are pretty limited on your area and your knowledge...We were in the 7th Army and we were in our Division. Other than running into French units, we never ran into anything else. It might be weeks before you learned things that happened,...you are pretty confined in a combat situation, you are not going anywhere; you are not getting any news. Back in those days we didn't have the kind of radios you've got today. All the radios we had were big tube radios, we didn't have...cell phones. It was difficult to get information. So sometimes you wouldn't find out things that had happened for weeks. We heard Axis Sally and Tokyo Rose; we just laughed about it. We knew who we were and what we were and where we were going. We didn't pay much attention to that. They would drop leaflets on us, telling us we were losing the war and to surrender but that was propaganda and we didn't pay attention to it....You know we were full of confidence.

The 100th moved through France and into Germany. Everyone was affected by war, soldiers and civilians. When asked about the 100th's reception by the civilian population, Charles Gregory recalled,

We'd fight through towns and we'd clear them out and go through. The French would come out and line the streets, cheering and dancing, carrying on, waving flags, and as you'd go by they'd hand you bottles of wine and loaves of bread and cakes and cookies and stuff like that, ...it was nice. There was always another battle coming up, so the soldiers could not stay and celebrate with the French townspeople.

One of the towns captured was Bitche, France, and Bitche, France was a fortified city that had never been captured in the history of wars in Europe. Mr. Gregory laughed when he said, "The mayor said we were Sons of Bitche. So they (the U.S. Army, after WWII) formed an organization and we became the Sons of Bitche."

He recalls that fighting through German towns was very different. "The Germans would stay locked in their houses in the cellars, ...So all the German towns we went through were all deserted, except for Heilbron." He was glad the Germans stayed hidden, it made it easier for the troops. He stated, "You don't like to kill a civilian, you know."

When asked to describe the change in the war once the 100th entered Germany he states,

(Fighting) just got worse in Germany, because we were fighting in the German home land and the German command ordered their troops to fight to the death. So we ran into much heavier resistance, much more fierce resistance, more dedicated resistance. Where when they weren't in Germany they might fall back, now that we were in Germany they weren't going to fall back, they were going to fight. We ran into a lot more concentrated artillery fire and machine gun fire, mortar fire, and small arms. Especially since in the homeland, they had a lot of places already zeroed in for artillery, that they knew the range and everything, they could just fire...

Heilbron, that was a horrible battle....we had to cross that river and just on a pontoon bridge...across in that jeep with my men and guns behind me. The Germans had observation on those hills behind Heilbron, so (the US Army) lay down smoke to cover the bridge. When you hit that bridge in that river you are in bad shape....On the other side...we were driving down the road and we'd come into this square...I looked and I (saw) dead American soldiers and dead German soldiers and I said, 'Amberger, we're right in the middle of these people...Man, take a left turn and get out of here.' So we roared out of there, man. We hit there right in a lull of the fight. It was so bad in Heilbron we didn't know where the Americans were most of the time or where the Germans were. It was kind of a trial and error method. They (Germans) had these big railroad guns. I was standing there on an observation point watching and I saw this big shell fired...it looked like one

of these railroad tanker cars coming across the sky. It hit a five story building and it (the building) picks up in the air and settles as a pile of dust. It wiped out that whole 5 story apartment building. And that was a heck of a battle. Went on for days.

After VE day, when the 100th was securing the area around stuttgart, life was different but not boring. Charles Gregory remembers,

We had to set up blockades and check people for weapons and such. We'd go in and seal off towns and go through every building in the town for weapons and anything in the town that might show resistance...Jack Benny went through one of our roadblocks one day, about half a mile from where I was at another roadblock. they told Jack Benny to stop. The driver didn't stop, so the guy (soldier) cut loose with a machine gun and fired several rounds through the window, and old Jack was pretty nice about it but he was scared to death. He said after this he told his driver, you'd better stop when those boys say stop or we're going to be dead.

Summer and fall of 1945, CPT Gregory was "put on the manure circuit south east of Ulm, Germany" to act "like a sheriff of a county." He was responsible for a county sized area. He was to provide the security of that area and make sure nobody bothered the Germans. The French were raiding German towns and "liberating" the town's possessions. Charles Gregory recalls,

I was up in Mehrstetten with my platoon. I'd sent about half of them out on patrol with 30 caliber machine guns...the bergermeister came running up. He was crying...He said the French were cleaning out the town. They're taking everything out of the houses, the mattresses, the radios, the pillows, and everything...I got in my jeep with the driver and SGT on the 30 caliber machine gun and (went) roaring in...This French Captain said he had the right to raid this town. I told him he

didn't because it wasn't in his territory and if he didn't get out I was going to shoot him. He said you wouldn't dare. I said well try me. You're violating the law and military law. If I have to shoot you to stop you then I'm going to do it. So, finally he unloaded the trucks of all their stuff and dumped it back in the town square and he and his trucks roared out of town. They (the French) tried two more times to bust through the road blocks I had set up. the last time I shot at them and they never came back any more.

In November, 1945, CPT Gregory commanded H Company of the 15th Infantry. His unit furnished the guard for a prisoner of war compound in Hammelburg, Germany that held 5,000 German SF prisoners. He came home in July 1946.

The trip home was much nicer than the trip over, the weather cooperated. He recalls,

We went home on a converted hospital ship. It was a much bigger ship. It was the last of July, the first of August. They didn't take the northern route....so the seas were much calmer and so it was a nice pleasant trip.... We weren't as crowded sleeping, only three or four guys to a room instead of 12, as we had going over... For the meals, believe it or not, we didn't have to line up and go through in a line. They had open seating so we could go in anytime in a two-hour period and eat... The only problem with going home on that boat was there were too many MP's around and you couldn't go any where or do anything because they had a bunch of nurses, war brides, the red cross gals and WACS on there and the MP's were afraid you going to even get close to one of those girls. We were pretty confined in what we could do on the boat, which was an inconvenience. But it was a good trip, I wasn't seasick coming home and it was nice sunny days. We would drink, play bridge, read, and take it easy. We got home in less than 5 days where it took us 10 days going over. It was a nice trip.

After arriving home, he visited with family and friends, but had a hard time settling down and going on with life. He recalls,

I smoked back then. And I would lay down two cigarettes at night. When I would wake up in the morning, those two cigarettes would be smoked and I wouldn't remember waking up and smoking them. I got up several times during the night and smoked cigarettes because that is what I did in combat. You realize that there is unsettledness. When you look back on it years later you realize there was an under current of being unsettled... You had to be moving. It was hard to sleep. It took me several years before I could sleep all night. What you had seen changed your outlook a lot on life, about how important some things are and how unimportant some things are. And it took me about a year and a half of going to university of Michigan and not really being serious about what I was doing, drinking a lot of beer, running around, before I could finally get serious and go to law school... It is just a transition period of adapting back to orderly society. The good thing that you do learn through all this is the self-discipline to carry you through.

Charles Gregory did settle down and go back to school. He earned a law degree, served his country again, this time as an FBI agent. He stayed in the reserves until 1962 and when he was retired with the rank of Major (USAR).

Charles Gregory tells stories well. The stories show some of the horror, terror and losses of war, and how war personally affects soldiers for the remainder of their lives. The stories also tell of miracles of surviving and hope. He said, "...in war, some things will strike you as being funny, other things are horrifying." Here are a few of his stories.

Horror

...We were fighting up a hill...we were losing men pretty fast. We'd run into a heavy defensive position, German defensive position in the mountain... We'd been

fighting there for a couple of hours... I'd gone down the hill with my jeep driver and went back to battalion headquarters for some reason and (were) coming back up the hill. Right at the foot of the hill the road forked and went up on either side of the hill. I was going up the left side, but as we got to the fork in the road, there were two big army trucks pulled up in front of us, one going up each side of that road. Amberger, my driver, had stopped. We were sitting there watching them throw bodies of American soldiers out on the ground. Other guys would grab them. They would just line them up, going up each one of those roads... They were lining them up like this (hand motions) as the other guys just tossed them off unto the road like sacks of potatoes. I looked at Amberger and he was as white as a sheet and I'm sure I was too because I guess the thought struck you about here were guys we knew that were human beings and now here they were being handled like sacks of potatoes and in an impersonal way. That had a profound impact on both Amberger and I. The impersonal way that you are handled when you are dead in combat, just left a bad feeling in the pit of our stomachs.

One other day we were sitting there and I was looking at the map and there was a German soldier over there (points), and here came one of our tanks and ran right smack over him. I could see those guys laughing about it. Again the thought struck me, here was a human being and they just deliberately ran over him with a tank. So there are a lot of things like that, they have an effect on you, on your inner being, and almost on your personality...

Terror of Weapons Man Made

They had like a 30 caliber rifle slug and they'd put a firing pin under it. If you stepped on that bullet with enough force to push it down in that firing pin it would go off and shoot you right through the foot - that is an antipersonnel mine. Then they had the 'bouncing betty'.

It was an explosive in a can with another can around it with 22 caliber slugs, hundreds of them around it in a second can with an explosive in the middle and a primer. They'd run a wire, maybe 25 yards away. If you are coming along and you trip the wire and this thing has an explosive that kicks it up about 5 feet up in the air and it explodes hundreds of 22 caliber slugs all over the landscape. It can kill a lot of men because there are hundreds of these slugs the size of a 22 caliber slug going out like being fired from a rifle, except they are being blown out. Then they had the shoe mine. I was standing beside SGT McNevil when he stepped on a shoe mine...The shoe mine was like a shoe box... It had a quarter pound charge of TNT with a detonator and it worked on a pressure principle, if you stepped on it....then it would blow up. Frank and I yelled at SGT McNevil not to step off...but he did and kaboom, there was this explosion and it blew his right leg off. That is an antipersonnel mine. Now a land mine had a pound of TNT up to 5 pounds of TNT and they set them in the roads in different places to knock out trucks and tanks and self propelled guns. If you stepped on that it wouldn't go off. It took the weight of a tank or truck to set those things off, people can't set them off

Humor

I remember one day Amberger and I were sitting there watching these guys clearing mines out of the road. Up comes this Colonel and drives right up and stops his jeep. This soldier, he's got his bayonet, he's sticking it in the ground and taking out these land mines, he goes over and pokes under the left front wheel of the Colonel's jeep and he says to the driver, "Will you back this thing up about two feet." They backed it up about two feet. He scrapes off the ground and picks up this land mine off the ground and walks off with it. They'd been sitting there with a wheel right on top of that land mine. Fortunately for them the darn thing had gotten a little bit wet and it didn't go off. We just laughed 'cause

this Colonel took off in the jeep, when he saw that. I'm sure he turned a little bit white, and he took off. We thought that was a little bit funny.

Loss

I wasn't a POW, but my very best friend in college was. My mother used to say that Johnny and I were closer than brothers. We went through 4 years of ROTC together, college and OCS. I wrote him a letter, and it came back and said 'missing in action.' I felt terrible. He was my very best friend. It turned out he was in the first day-in the Battle of the Bulge... (Johnny) was captured. He was a farm boy, a big strapping guy, 185 pounds, stronger than an ox. And when he was liberated as a POW he weighed less than 120 pounds and he never recovered his health really after that. He said all that they (Germans) did was march them back and forth, it seemed like, everyday they'd march them all day long one place to another. He said it was terrible, they would put them in a barn and the guys would tear up the floorboard to fight over old rotten potatoes just for something to eat. He said it'd make you cry. So Johnny had a hard time of it. He said a lot of guys died. It was a very bad time for them. He's the only one I talked to after the war who told me about his experiences as a POW.

Foolish Faith

Faith helped you to accept the situation you were in with the belief as God, as it says in the Bible, would not give you more than you can handle. That God would only give you what you could handle. Your belief that God while he wouldn't give you more than you can handle, you had to handle what you got. During combat you'd see guys, the bullets would be coming in, the guys would get up and walk and you'd say 'Hey you fool get down or you are going to get hit!' (They'd say), 'I believe in God. pre-destiny, and God's up there and he is taking

care of me and if God needs me to get hit, I'm going to get hit.' I'd say 'Wait a minute. God will only give you a certain amount and not more than you can handle, but what he gives doesn't tell you to get up and walk around like a fool and get yourself shot. You're supposed to follow the basic reasonable things to take care of yourself.' But in combat there were a lot of guys that would get up there and walk around.

Miracles

I remember one day we, Corporal Grady Folsom and I, were standing at a road junction where we shouldn't have been. We were arguing about whether you could hear a mortar shell coming in. And I told Grady, I've taught mortars for three months, you can't hear a mortar shell coming until it hits. We were standing looking across this street about 20 feet. All of a sudden right in front of us was a beautiful red ball you have ever seen surrounded by a black boarder. It didn't take any time for Grady and me to realize we were looking at a shell going off. I remember Grady screamed, "You win, LT." There was a house behind us and he went right down that corridor into the door and I was right behind him on his back, sliding down that hallway... There is a certain amount of luck in all this stuff. That shell landed in a bank so that we were defiladed from the explosion. We were right behind it in a dead area. It killed three guys from Able Company that were standing across the road from us. We just happened to be in a defiladed area. Maybe God was looking out for us.

Conclusion

War changes men. Describing these changes, Charles Gregory observed,

With all of the guys who had been officers in the army and in combat. We were very highly self-disciplined bunch of men. We didn't lack for any

confidence. We'd been through a war and had lived through it. We had faced death. We didn't find it pleasant. We weren't afraid of it. We were very confident men in our profession... We were open to learning. Most of the guys I knew had a lot of compassion, because you learn to feel that when you see what happens in combat. Combat is bad. It does change you a lot. It changes different people in different ways. Some people cannot handle the death. It affects them mentally... The mind just couldn't accept some things that you see, they're too hard. The rest of us could take it and deal with it. But it leaves a lasting scar.

THE END