The Blue Star in the Window

A Memoir of the Army Service of William R Hill in WWII

Dedication

It was the custom during WWII, as in other wars, to put a banner with star in the front window of the home if a relative was in the service. The one Mother used was a cloth one about a foot square with a blue star on a white center with a small gold fringe on the bottom. Usually it was a

blue star, however in the case of a death it was a gold star. This memoir is named in honor that banner hanging in my home while I was away.

Mother put the flag up and carried the dread of what might happen. In my maturity I now appreciate the deep anguish, the fear and pain she felt until she was fully sure that I would make it out alive. It is with deep regret that this comes too late for her to read. I am sure she would have liked to have known. Dad I am sure had many of the same thoughts concerns and anguish, but from quite a different perspective.

I dedicate this memoir to all my family who were at home; Mother and her husband Arthur, Dad and his wife Mable, my only Grandmother Ellie, and my brother Bob, who all loved me unreservedly and feared the absolute worst especially while I was overseas in combat. At the time my half-brother David Beltz, was an infant living with us. My other half-brothers, Mike and Mark Hill, were born many years later, and I had no sisters. Grandpa and Grandma Mabee were alive, but not around at that time.

Also, another special dedication, is given to my precious wife Jeane, and this is because she was the one, who in all reality had the most to lose. At the time I went in the service, her name was Jeane Bartholomew. She pined for my presence and prayed that I would return so we could live our lives together and fulfill our dreams.

Chapter One War is at Hand

In Europe in the thirties Hitler was preparing Germany for war, and in Asia, Japan's military forces were already ravishing China. At that time I was in grade school living with my family on the east side of Indianapolis, Ind.

Hitler, the German dictator, covertly manipulated politics in Germany to seize power, and soon propelled his country into war in Europe. His first military move was to occupy the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia. That was a memorable event for me, and I vowed I would never forget it. From that time on, even as a boy, I tracked all the movements of the German Army and Hitler.

The Japan was headed by Emperor Hirohito. His military War Lords had control of their country, who wanted to not only conquer China, but secure dominance in the orient. For years I followed their terrible actions in China, Southeast Asia and the South Pacific.

Benito Mussolini was the fascist dictator of Italy. In the late thirties Mussolini wanting to impress Hitler so attacked a vulnerable Ethiopia in Africa. This primitive nation defended themselves with spears. Later on Italy was allied with Germany and Japan.

We received daily news of the war by radio. It was interesting listening to the often-dramatic evening national broadcasts. Short wave radio transmissions from miles overseas often resulted in garbled and tentative voices from war correspondents. We heard Edward R Morrow and other reporters, from London, France and other cities. We were also kept informed via daily newspapers and upon occasion we saw newsreels at the movies. I took the war seriously, and wanted know all about my world.

There was the playful side to all this. As a young boy I enjoyed the political cartoons, like ones of Hitler with his stern mean looks. Kids my age would imitate him by holding a black comb under our noses and while extending our right arms in a Nazi salute saying “Heil Hitler”, or “Zieg Heil”. Some imitated the German Army marching techniques that used the high kicking steps called the “Goose Step.” We saw several cartoons that depicted Hirohito, the Japanese leader, with slanting eyes, oversized teeth and sinister smile. Even Benito Mussolini, was known for the way he strutted around with his arms folded in front of him, and the famous defiant smirk on his face, was often imitated.

Kids at that time played war games as well as “Cowboys and Indians” and “Cops and Robbers” We even made wooden swords and imitated Errol Flynn the movie star, in his sword fights. Our snowball fights had strategies where we would build up a supply behind our snow forts and wait for an attack, or do the attacking ourselves, which helped to develop spunk and working together, and in a sense we were all learning to bravely attack a machine gun nest or fly a fighter plane into action.
I also vigorously played football and softball after school, and that also helped me become a team player and to be competitive.

As the war progressed in Europe and Asia, we in the United States were aware of the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians, and so we agonized with all people who were defending themselves while losing their homes and their countries . At a young age, about twelve or so, I began to feel deeply sorry for what was happening to these people. I would listen to the sadness of the music of the Warsaw Concerto. Inside me welled strong feelings for all of humanity and the wrongs of the world.

Our country stayed on the sidelines for years throughout the thirties. But we Americans knew war for our country was inevitable. Many could see no real rationale in going to war for a European or Asian problem, and were very uneasy about our getting in and sending our own young men into combat overseas, however many of us Americans were in sympathy with the nations involved in the war. Our country sent tons of supplies and overage ships to England and to Russia as the war progressed. It did neutralize some of our sense of guilt; however those nations in pain wanted us to declare war and help win the war.

I felt that eventually I would someday be involved in the war. My parents were probably dreading the thought. When looking at a map of the Philippines one day, I pointed to the city of Manila and predicted to my Grandmother that I would be there some day. Ironically it came true. I was in the Army there before I came home.

I began attending high school at Arsenal Technical high school in Indianapolis in the fall of 1939, when I was thirteen. There were older kids in the school who volunteered to get into the war before our country was in it, by lying about their age and going in the services and also there were some going to Canada and enlisting in England’s Royal Air Force.

My mother married Arthur Beltz and we moved to Edgewood. He was employed at the Beech Grove shops and it was considered an essential occupation. Here is their wedding picture:

The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, our main naval base in the Hawaiian Islands on December 7,1941, inflicting heavy losses of men and ships. The U.S. Congress declared war on

Japan, Germany and Italy the next day. Our country was now totally committed to World War II. The Japanese Ambassador just previous to this attack, had been in Washington, answering pertinent questions, and country were given false assurances.

Immediately after the attack at Pearl Harbor, many thousands of men and women immediately volunteered to serve their country. The Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard and the Merchant Marine were busy signing people for enlistment. These people were angered and very patriotic and were stepping up in the defense of their country. . A lot of these were high school kids, and some of whom I had known.

I was fifteen years old when we heard the news of the bombing, and living at 5859 S Hardegan in Edgewood just south of Indianapolis with my brother Bob, mother, grandmother, (Mom), and my stepfather, Art. I remember making a chart to record the number of times we would be hearing the "Star Spangled Banner".

Many things immediately changed in our country. Sugar and meat as well as the gas and tires, were soon rationed. Metals were diverted to the war effort. Because of that my Dad had the leave the Chamberlain Weather-Strip Company, and go work for Mallory; a defense plant on East Washington Street. They made boilerplate, (hardened steel) for Army tanks. I enjoyed listening to him telling how the plates were tested on the artillery firing ranges. They would analyze the hole made by a projectile puncturing these plates. There were many defense factories all over Indianapolis. One was Allison Division of GM. They made thousands of the famous fighter plane engines, the V1710, which went into The P-51 Mustangs, which was a highly respected fighter plane. I worked there after the war.

At that time women were being called on for everything too. They joined the Army, Navy and Marines to serve mostly in support. Many of their husbands were in the services. Many women went to work in the factories along side the men. There were also many volunteer groups like the Red Cross, Salvation Army and the USO, (United Service Organization), where women volunteered to entertain men with local dances, serve food and provide entertainment at cities all over the country. A lot of churches opened the doors. Movie Stars not only were involved with stateside visits but entertained overseas with the USO as well.

There were many movies made during the war that influenced me. "Mrs. Miniver was about the English in the Battle of Britain. Action in the North Atlantic, which was about Sailors in the Atlantic and their survival on a sub.

Movie stars also spearheaded bond drives. Americans were all asked to support the war by buying war bonds. The smallest one was for $25.00 and was purchased for $ 18.75. We bought 25-cent stamps and filled a book, which we redeemed for the bond. I saved 50 cents a week for stamps from the allowance I received, for a long time.

Our country also sponsored scrap metal drives for the war effort. At our high school we accumulated a large pile of scrap iron. I carried scrap metal in a basket from our home in Edgewood, all the way to school via the bus and streetcar and added it to the heap.

We as a nation distrusted anyone of Japanese descent. There was so much hysteria that the Federal Government stepped in and incarcerated many Americans on the west coast. This not only

that we removed the possibility of espionage; it also protected them from unthinking people who could possible hurt these innocent American people in their righteous anger. It was learned later that the US Government also seized property and was grossly negligent in respecting the civil rights of these Americans. The U.S. government meagerly reimbursed them afterwards for their large property loses.

A federal draft had previously been set up set up and immediately after Pearl Harbor there was a flow a flow of men going into the services, also there was a set of deferment rules put in place; those people in critical war jobs in the factories, some who were in hardship situations like farmers, and those in college had deferments. We also had the conscientious objectors, like the Jehovah witnesses, and other religious groups that were exempt. However lot of these men volunteered to be noncombatants and served as medics on the front lines.

As the war progressed, service men could be seen everywhere in downtown Indianapolis. Camp Atterbury and Ft. Harrison were nearby, so we had a lot of Soldiers. The Great Lakes Navel Training Center was in Chicago so we had Sailors too. There were also a few Marines, Coast Guardsmen, and Merchant Seamen passing through.

At my age having a car was a real luxury. Those just a little older than me were on some kind of military deferment could find an old clunker somewhere; however gas and tires were rationed. Only those working at a Defense Plant could get extra gas. We used busses and streetcars and bicycles to get around so it really cramped our social lives. I took a summer job with Eli Lilly Paper Package Company in Indianapolis and rode the bus then too.

I graduated from Arsenal Tech in June. Here is a picture of Bob and me. He was 14 and grew several inches more. Look at the hair styles.

The spring and summer of 1944 I had a job with Bowes Seal-Fast Company in Indianapolis. This is where I met Jeane. She was working in an office there. My job, at another nearby location, was to assist the engineer. At lunch I often would sit outside the pressroom, out on the dock with my shirt off soaking up the sun. I often saw Jeane walking on the sidewalk across the street going to lunch on her lunch-hour.

Seeing this chick in her office clothes, dark flowing hair and pretty legs attracted me. Hopefully, I would meet her later. She was young and looked about my age. Fortunately I did meet her at a company luncheon on her 18th birthday on June 2. It was my good fortune to be invited to attend it too with my boss. This young lady actually ended up sitting right across from me! It was my opportunity to make a move.

We were served iced tea, with a most generous amount of ice in each glass leaving little room for tea. I quickly drank all of my tea, and my glass was sitting in front of me when the waitress asked me if I wanted more tea. I proffered the remark;" I could use some more ice." Jeane heard it and giggled', and I knew I had made successful contact.

I did manage to have a few dates that with her that summer, and we became better acquainted. I remember going on a rented bicycle ride with her, and she had on a chintz dress when we went to an amusement park known as "Riverside." There were two roller-coaster rides and, a Tilt-a-Whirl, the Mill-Shute, and the Dodgems. Jeane and I went to a company picnic.

At that time the only way for me to get around seeing her was by bus into down town and then by streetcar, which was very time consuming. Consequently we didn't see each other as much as we would have liked. At that time, Jeane was staying at 2346 North Central Avenue in Indianapolis, and there was a convenient swing on the front porch where we passed many warm and romantic summer evenings together.

I began that summer looking for my options into the future. My subjects in high school were geared toward engineering and I was contemplating going to General Motors Institute to be a mechanical engineer, however I knew I couldn't get enrolled in time before I reached 18. I had also taken an interest in the Civil Air Patrol but didn't follow through on that. There was an Army Specialized Technical Personnel college program that I checked into, but that was being eliminated because they needed so many more ground troops. That could have given me a start into college had it been available. I did qualify for entry into ASTP with my high school grades.

The war was raging in Europe and in the South Pacific and so my being in the service was just a matter of time.

The war was raging in Europe, in September of 1944, and American ground forces were advancing all along the front slowly pushing the German Army East. It was the deadliest part of the war; and everyone knew Germany would fall soon. In the Pacific, B-29s bombers were dropping bombs on Japanese forces in China, as Americans are taking the battle to the Japanese in the Philippine Islands, east of the China coast. Other troops are still on the attack on other islands in the South Pacific.

American military leaders reasoned that because Germany is on the run, now they can make a focus on the Pacific. So soldiers and marines were being trained at bases all over the country to go to the Pacific.

I didn't relish the idea of being a ground soldier in the infantry, so Dad went with me to the Navy recruiting office to see if I could get in. I admitted to the clerk that I already knew I was red-green color-blind and with that knowledge he advised me that I wouldn't be able to pass the physical. I was at a loss for what to do with my life with no other options, and so not wanting the lingering suspense of waiting I appeared at the draft board and told them to take me. Shortly afterward I received the famous notice of the times," You are hereby officially requested to appear," which ordered me to report for my physical. I reported at the US Armory on north Pennsylvania Street in Indianapolis on September 11,1944.

It was my turn to serve.

Chapter Two Induction

.

I arrived at the Army Armory on north Pennsylvania Street in Indianapolis, about 7:00 a.m. on September 11, 1944. I walked inside and found myself in a group of about twenty-five young men talking and standing around in little groups. Most of them were about my age and a little older.

The building was large and impersonal. The interior walls were slick brown, glazed tile blocks. There were official notices stuck here and there on the walls, and in the central area there were several partitioned rooms. The voices of the Army cadre bounced and echoed around the walls as they talked and made preparations. I was apprehensive; what was going to happen to me?

Soon a no nonsense guy with a few stripes on his sleeve, began loudly reading our names from a list on his clipboard. We were told to line up and to take all our clothes off but our shoes and socks, and to report to each station in each of the respective rooms. (We carried our clothes around in a basket.)

It started with the urine sample. Test by test followed for about forty-five minutes. There was a lot of lining up and standing around, then a quick test, and then more waiting. The cadre men were in a hurry to get this job done were brisk and for this reason accuracy was suspect. We joked that all they really wanted was a warm body. Some of the cadre men were curt. I heard one affronted recruit at one station loudly sound off and inform one of these medical men that he wasn't in the Army as yet and as such" wouldn't take crap off of anyone" until he was. I was impressed.

When everyone was properly signed off, and dressed, we were directed to form a line. I do not remember being sworn in, but there was a document read to us, and if we agreed we were told to step forward. We all stepped forward in unison and as such we were officially inducted into the Army. I was naive and surprised as I thought that I had only reported there for a physical. This was final; I was in the Army now.

Army chow was next. It was a meager fare of cold cuts, cold bread and black coffee. It's now all free; we belong. Soon a small Army bus appeared, and we filed on. We were strangers heading into a new world going to a processing center in central southern Indiana at Camp Atterbury.

Traveling down south on Indiana State Highway 31, we passed within just three blocks of my home in Edgewood and amusingly my thoughts drifted back to an event that happened just a month ago. I just had a date with my girl friend Jeane and as normal I stayed as late as I could, and so I had to catch the very last bus.

But this time I was to late and I missed my normal bus ride home. So the one I took later that evening was full of Soldiers also staying out as late as they could, before going back to camp. I went to sleep like the rest of the men and woke up about four miles farther south than my stop. I had one real long walk back home. It had turned daylight on the way back. Mother of course was really worried and yet quite relieved when I came in. I told her why, and then I had to prepare to go to work shortly.
Here I am now on a bus, only this time I too am a soldier. I am on the very same highway and headed to that very same place those soldiers were. How ironic.

"I'm in the Army now and not behind the plow" as the old song begins.

Chapter Three Atterbury

I enjoyed the lazy bus ride down through central Indiana. It was summer and I enjoyed the scenery and pleasant breezes coming through the open windows.

We arrived at Camp Atterbury in the early afternoon, and pulled up alongside the guard post on the median.

The Military Policeman waved us on. When our little bus carried us inside we heard Soldiers repeatedly yell at us, “You’ll be sorry.” That was very surprising and amusing. Our bus wound around the streets and soon stopped in front of a long row of white barracks. We dutifully filed off the bus with our personal bags and were met by a soldier in fatigues. He led us to a grassy spot between two of the barracks and were told to wait.

We spent the rest of the afternoon watching everything pass by us on this street in front of us. Everyone that glanced our way knew our feelings; they had all been there too. We were the fresh batch of green men just brought in wearing civilian clothes. We were now orphans in a new strange world at the whim and command of the United States Army.

Some Soldiers were in khaki uniforms and some wearing neat garrison hats, those with the brims, who walked with seeming vested authority and on a mission. Quite in contrast were those in the sloppy looking fatigues and caps wearing the large clodhopper army shoes. We also saw the well-dressed erect officers with the gold and silver bars on their lapels, and other men with stripes that showed their rank on their arms. There also was an occasional open jeep or a four-wheeled truck pass by.

All of us stood for a while, squatted, and sat down on the grass and just watched and watched hour upon hour, knowing we had been forgotten. I wished I had something to read with me, because it was so boring that afternoon. We kept busy just watching the shadows of the barracks inch over the grass.

About five hours later; 6:30, (1830 Military time) an official looking guy came up, and asked us if we had had anything to eat. We told him we hadn’t, and he directed us to follow. Finally, our waiting was over; we were going to get some food. They hadn’t lost us in the paper work after all. The ‘chow hall’ was a long hike several streets over.

The mess hall, its real name, was a large plain metal building with a high ceiling. We walked inside on concrete to lots of noise and thick humidity filled with the sure scent of cooked food. We each took a warm wet metal tray from a waiting stack and fell in back of a long line. Shuffling along, we proceeded to each station. The kitchen workers behind the counter, those men on Kitchen Patrol, KP, gave each man his food with a ritualistic slap to each tray. It was not attractive but it was grub and I was hungry. The last stop was a cup of warm black coffee. I turned around and scanned the rows of wooden tables for an open spot found one and sat down. It was tasteless food; but all there was. After finishing I joined others already gathered at the doorway and waited.

When he appeared we followed him back around the streets again. Being early fall and late in the day, the sun was almost down and it was a pleasant hike. We were expectantly wondering where we were going. We soon found our empty barracks and our guide led us in and left.

The barracks was a frame structure which enclosed a large central open bay about eighty

feet long and twenty feet wide. Its bare wooden floor supported ten foot high wooden columns spaced about fifteen feet apart down the center. Bare light bulbs hung down on wires from the rafters, and windows were evenly spaced along both sides. The latrine was just inside the door on the right, and had separate sleeping quarters for cadre on the left. Smelly tin cans hung strangely on nails from each wooden column.

Waiting on us were twenty crude wooden bunks with mattresses, each with a worn wooden footlocker out on the aisle. We claimed a bunk and dropped our bags down. We had been lugging them everywhere. It was certainly a relief to be somewhere, even as impersonal and bare as this.

Soon another official soldier arrived. I rushed up front with others who gathered there to catch all his words and instructions.

”Line up in ten minutes at my whistle outside for linens,” he shouted. We quickly barraged him with typical questions.

“Hey, where can I get a beer?”

“Where is the phone?”

“Hold it.” He barked. “I will answer you all later; just look at the bulletin board out front.”

We learned was that Reveille was at 0430 and lights out at 2200. It hit us; we were now living on military time; US Army time.

When he returned he read off our names and told us to follow him.

We stepped out in the early evening and saw lights on the lampposts scattered on the streets and in front of each barracks. We again had questions.

“Where are the phones, the PX, the beer hall and when do we get our clothes?” they posed.

He gave us some directions and filled us in on things as we walked. We also learned that he was called an NCO, (a non- commissioned officer), and that we were buck privates, the men at the bottom of the pile.

We soon arrived at the commissary. I thoroughly enjoyed the brand new garment smell. It was late and everyone there was in a hurry to get us out of there. We loaded up our arms with mattress covers, sheets, pillows and a pair of wool blankets and followed our leader back to the barracks.

I claimed a bunk and put on my mattress cover and blankets and locked my valuables in the footlocker. It had been a long long day starting about five for me. I stripped and hit the sack and soon it was lights out. The lights in the latrine stayed on, and random talking began. A little of this and the resident cadre man popped his head out of the adjoining room. In a loud authoritative voice said. “Pipe down; lights are out”. Quickly it became quiet.

As I lay there, a deep-sinking, dreadful feeling in my chest hit me hard. I was in the Army. I

pondered what a bad situation I found myself in. What was going to happen to me?

I was tired and quickly dropped off to sleep. The first thing I heard was a repeating shrill whistle for Reveille. It was still dark. We could also hear bugles blaring from loudspeakers. It was about 4:30, and time to get up. A cadre man told us to line up outside immediately to answer the roll call, so we all had to hustle to get dressed.

In the darkness we could hear the shouting of reports from all the barracks around as soldiers were all being accounted for. This morning counting procedure was imperative, because men have been known to skip out of camp. Most all of them that left would be caught and were court-martialed and put in stockades to serve sentences. It is a federal crime to leave an Army base without permission. That was called AWOL, which means, "Away Without Official Leave."

Today would be a big day for us and it had already started. We were lead as a group to the mess hall and waited in line for about an hour. It took us a total of one and a half hours for watered down eggs, greasy bacon, half burned toast and bitter black coffee. I decided that tomorrow I was not going for breakfast. I would go back to my bunk after Reveille and sleep some. I did manage a quick shower and shave that morning under crowded and strange conditions before the cadre man arrived. One of my plans was to call home and call Jeane as soon as I could to tell them where I was. I also needed to get a candy bar, cookies or crackers for snacks, as Army food was bland and I wasn't eating breakfast.

Our first trip in the morning was to take another hike and draw our clothes. from the commissary. The full bins and stacks were impressive. Here we were measured and issued a heavy cloth duffle bag. We carried our measurements on a sheet of paper to each station. In the bag went the khaki pants, shirts, the Garrison caps, ties, web belts, olive drab tee -shirts, shorts and socks. To get our shoe size we picked up two buckets of sand and the clerk looked at the shoe chart we were standing on. I took size 10 EE, and they were out of shoes that size so I had to wear my civies. I was disappointed. However in the very near future this would turn out well for me.

We headed back to our barracks and put on our new clothes. It was still early in the morning, but it was turning warm in the barracks. There were no fans. Our new clothing was stiff and uncomfortable. Most of the clothes fit and a lot didn't. They actually did try to fit each guy right even though sometimes it was a hassle. The clothes were not ironed or pressed and so had a lot of wrinkles but they smelled good. I had no clue about where or how to do laundry.

I found out what the hanging cans were used for. They were "butt cans," where cigarettes were snuffed out. Some butts began smoldering and its drifting smoke often raised quite a stench. The only way to fix the problem was to douse it in the latrine.

Our next objective was noon chow. Again we left together in a group and joined others in long lines. They had a lot of men to serve, as this depot was processing many men. Most men would be leaving here soon to go to other camps for basic training. The war was going strong and they needed more men all over the world as replacements.

After chow we gathered to send our civilian clothes home. We were lead to a building where we boxed them. The guy in charge was a happy one for a change and amused us with picturesque military humor. Mother I am sure felt sad to receive my clothes.

It is a real adjustment for a lot of men just to leave home. Some of those men were true momma's boys and hadn't left home before. Some had wives and kids at home and this separation was painful. Some were the misfits in society, and would soon find it difficult to fend for them in a strange environment. I remember one man in a bunk near me pining away because he had just left a new wife at home. He just sat quietly and stared ahead for several evenings.

I didn't know a single person in the barracks and I did not get acquainted. I really didn't trust anyone and felt very vulnerable to theft. I had not been threatened but I was in an uneasy situation.

Occasionally we would see convoys of trucks loaded with men pass near us. These we learned were the men of the 101st Airborne Division that were in training. These were the men who would later be in the battle for Bastogne in Western Europe in 1944 that heroically held off the Germans.

Camp Atterbury bustled with activity, and about 1700 (5 o'clock) the bugle call for "Call to Colors" was heard everywhere. At this point in time every soldier was required to stop, turn toward the central flag, stand at attention and hold a salute while it was playing. I thought it was great formal ritual of respect.

This was an interesting time for me at Atterbury as I was exposed to people from all walks of life and from many parts of society. Some of course were crude, rude and pushy. A few were those who carried a chip on their shoulder. Then there were those like me that hadn't been out in the rough and tumble of grown men. I gravitated to the guys like myself and whose language was like mine.

I was getting an education in language. It was universal expression for all but the most devout. In many ways it was shocking. It was quite descriptive and some heard was creatively humorous. It was a novelty for me and was really fun to express myself without fear. I thought little about it; after all I was far away from home. I enjoyed it, because as a young kid, I was being one of a group of men.

Of course there were confrontations between men but these were at a minimum. As rough as it could have been, I saw no fist fights. Most of the men respected others. If someone stepped ahead in line they were quick to hear about it and some physically removed. There were of course, thieves. Some had bad habits. Some weren't as responsible as they would learn to be.

We all soon blended into guys. What you looked like, where you came from or your dialect or religion was enjoyed. A lot of the men however, kept their respective religions private. No one wanted to have the hassle.

One morning we all took the Army General Aptitude Test. It was used as a guide for placement. I scored a 118, which qualified me for advanced training.

I found out that there would be no passes to go home. One thing about it was that some men would hide from authorities if they ever got out. But as luck would have it, I did see Jeane one time while I was there at Atterbury.

I did call home and also one to Jeane, but it wasn't easy. There was a long wait for the phone

and my time was very limited. I did learn that we could meet at the gate. So we made plans to do that a few days later.

I hiked a long way to the outside gate with a new acquaintance early one evening. Prearranged, Jeane brought a girl friend. The MP graciously let us out the gate to be with them. The guard was bending the rules. It was a chance for me to do some making out with Jeane. I really was fond of the fact that Jeane's friend became acquainted with the other soldier. We said our goodbyes and hiked back in the cooling evening happy for the brief encounter. We got back in time for lights out.

In the morning we were reminded by our cadre man to keep a close eye on the bulletin board because the KP list would contain names. He then led us on another hike to a medical facility for shots and a check for venereal disease. This was called the raincoat parade because of our lack of clothing. A medic would make a visual inspection of each mans sex organ after the raincoat was lifted. Humorously and throughout the Army it is called the 'short-arm.' Occasionally a guy didn't pass this test and was pulled out for treatment.

I didn't pass the dental exam, so later on I had to have two teeth filled. I was impressed with the facility. It was a two-story building like the barracks and was completely full of lines of dentists all in white. The fillings I had, I thought were OK, however they wanted the military ones.

We had to mop our floors and keep the latrine scrubbed on a regular basis. The area around our barracks was to be kept free of any debris and cigarette butts. Everything was closely checked for cleanliness by a fussy and bossy sergeant. On occasion, right after morning chow, they would come in the barracks and quickly get a few volunteers for a work detail to go over an area for 'anything that didn't grow.' This began by lining men up in a long line and proceeding perpendicularly forward. It was an assignment that took away free time and obviously we tried to get out of it.

That became a universal Army game. Don't volunteer for anything and watch out for any sudden details of men needed. It was bad news. In other words get out of the barracks because this is where the get their patsies to get jobs done. We would kid each other about getting caught. Now as far as KP, an all day detail; I missed them all. I found out that it was because I wasn't yet issued regulation Army shoes. Great!

Along about this time I got my Army butch haircut. A couple of quick passes over the skull with the electric clippers and we were done. For the most of us it was a symbolic transition from civilian life. We all had it in common. It was a novelty to look that way and we admitted it was a lot easier to take care of and especially easy to shower.

We were issued two metal tags on a little chain we all called Dog Tags. We had our name punched into these along with our blood type and religious preferences. It you were not Catholic you were automatically marked P for Protestant. My blood type was A+ and I also had the P. We were required to wear these tags all the time.

We were provided with a hand printer and permanent black ink to mark all of our clothes, and instructed to put the first letter of our last name and the last four digits of our Army serial numbers in a certain spot. (H 8335) Identification settled ownership issues. Each man had to be responsible

for his own gear.

My stay at Atterbury lasted for about a week. Finally my name came up on a list to leave. I emptied the footlocker, put on my suntans and put everything else I had in my new stiff duffle bag. I then joined others gathered outside, and a truck came and we loaded on. We were taken to a platform on a railroad spur where a train was waiting.

I didn't know it then, but there was a large military hospital known as Wakefield General at Camp Atterbury for the wounded veterans . Here is an aerial photograph.

And I might add; we were introduced to Kilroy, the cartoon character scrawled on walls everywhere. An inscription stated "Kilroy was here".

Chapter Four Train to Blanding

I lined up with my duffle bag, and shuffled along in the line with a group of men, and loaded on the troop train. Then we hurriedly rushed around to claim a seat by a window, so we could see out.

Included with our train were a diner car, a laundry and supply car, and quarters for the cadre, a mail car and our Pullman cars. The engine on our train was one of the old workhorses; the old faithful steam engine. It was the noisy dirty coal fired boiler type job, with the typical blasting steam whistle that we all loved to hear. Its black smoke continually puffed up above the engine and passed back over all the cars and past the caboose. The flow of sticky soot blackened the air, and gradually fell on the countryside.

We enjoyed the novelty of riding on the train as it gently jostled us back and forth, and we enjoyed the rhythm of the steel wheels. The steam whistle blew the usual four blasts at the crossings.

We occasionally played cards, read books and talked, but most of the time we passed the long hours by leisurely gazing out the windows at the slowly passing farms, trees and streams. I pondered what basic training would be like, and where I might be going. However our destination was kept secret.

Occasionally I saw a glimpse of a car or truck on one of the little dirt country lanes. When the train went through small towns I heard warning clangs at crossings, and I often got a quick look into the open train depots and the clerks at their tasks. Often local people waved at us, and some of our men in their enthusiasm, responded in turn, by extending their arms and bodies out the windows and waving.

Getting chow was a novelty. It was accomplished one car of men at a time. We formed a line while carrying our gear, and walked forward through the mess car and to the other cars at the opposite end of the train. Then we turned around and get our food on the way back to our original car. It was a chore to keep from spilling our food on other passengers as the train rocked, and also

to negotiate the constantly rising and falling walkway in between the cars. The meals were served the same way for all three meals. Men from other areas of the train in turn walked past us and turned around just like we did. The food was passable, and under the circumstances pretty good.

One of the things that were vital to us was finding where we were, and from any information we tried to figure out where we were going. We followed the only clues we had; quickly passing signs we saw in the little towns. We were disappointed because we passed many towns no one had ever heard of, and as a result we didn't even know what state we were in most of the time. When we did get to stop in a town we yelled out a lot of questions and that helped

I was now in the military, and as such I was restricted. I was not allowed to get off the train for anything. There were men on our train who would go "Over the hill;" the Army slang for those who disappeared, or went AWOL

We were in the Pullman cars, the type with the beds that folded down, and that was an adventure for most of us. When it was time to turn in for the night, the porter assisted us in making our beds with fresh linens. We didn't represent the usual traveling public, with customary good manners, however for the most part the Negro porter was tolerated and respected. I am sure many on that train didn't appreciate his race or his presence, but he had a job to do. It had to have been trying for him.

Retiring for the night on my bunk, I retreated into my private world. I really enjoyed the evening ride with muted clicking and the gentle rocking. Little unknown towns with small lights passed by during the night, and bells clanged at the intersections. Often I was awakened in the night by shouting. When the train stopped, there were those men who sought information, and also took the opportunity to share good wishes. Every morning we removed our sheets, lifted up the beds and started our daily routine again.

I enjoyed discovering the scenery in different parts of the country. We had quickly passed out of Indiana and into Kentucky, and from there we went on into Dixie on an undisclosed path. However we were on a troop train that didn't have the priority that other trains had, so we forced many times to wait on sidings to allow the other trains to pass through. We had no choice but to patiently stay on the train and endure the waiting, the heat and humidity.

It became warmer as we traveled south so we had to keep the windows open. As a result the smoke and soot began entering and passing through the car, and we slowly become uncomfortably grimy. I did change clothes a couple of days out, and stuffed my soiled clothes back in my duffle bag. After another day or two and my spare clothes needed to be changed too, but there were no clean clothes available. Each man there needed a bath and it was warm and taking a long time to get to our destination.

We soon arrived in northern Florida, and the first town we identified there was Stark. It was exciting to learn its name and location after all this traveling. We felt with certainly that our camp was in this state. It was also a lot better to be here than lot of other places we could all think of. Men excitedly talked to some of the young women they saw near the platform. They were a welcome sight and sound. They reminded us of the girls and the stuff we all left back home.

As it proved, our destination was a short seven miles or so down the track from there. Our

destination was the Infantry Replacement Training Center, Camp Blanding, Florida. We learned it was located about halfway between Jacksonville and St. Augustine on the Atlantic coast.

When the train stopped I grabbed my duffle bag and anxiously waited. I anticipated getting off and getting to breathe fresh clean air again. I eagerly followed the man in front of me through each car, and passed out the open door and down the metal steps.

I found it pleasantly warm in the morning sunshine. I looked up and around and enjoyed seeing the tall pine trees against the sky. I could see someone waiting for us on the platform. We dutifully formed a line and waited for all the men to get off.

Chapter Five Basic Commentary

In basic training, the cadre was the group of men assigned to train us. They had a tough assignment, because training recruits was a big responsibility. Men had to be prepared to go on the front lines and be ready to fight a real tough enemy.

A lot of these fresh recruits were but 18 years old, immature, irresponsible and totally lacking in self-discipline. The cadre had to take these men and instill the basic idea to kill or be killed in 17 weeks.

They had to teach recruits to obey orders explicitly, be responsible for their actions, the safety of everyone around, and to work together. They had to be taught how to use several weapons, how to apply first aid, be familiar with tactics and to protect themselves from enemy action.

The cadre would need to subject their recruits to strenuous activity and help them develop endurance. To this end they would conduct continual personal inspections, punish them for their mistakes, and also reward them for their successes.

Over time the cadre will see their men gain confidence in themselves and become proud of there status as infantrymen.

In retrospect basic training is something I will never forget. In its essence it was intense military indoctrination, similar to jail seven days a week, and 24 hours a day. I belonged, body and soul to Uncle Sam's Army, starting out as a buck private, obeying their rules first and fast. I was on their schedule, using their equipment, sleeping in their beds, and eating their food the whole time!

Much physical effort was required, continual calisthenics; close order drilling and long marches. I had to endure the mental stress of adhering to strict rules.

I did not particularly like living in the presence of the lofty Officer class, and carried that disdain for a long time.

I enjoyed the precision of the military down to a properly executed salute. I liked the simple rituals and formations, and the formality of the chain of command as it was bellowed up and down to

us in the ranks.

I enjoyed hearing our shoes thump together as we marched down the roads in near perfect unison, the close order drill and the crisp movement of rifles. I enjoyed the feeling of camaraderie, of belonging, and bonding to that group.

.

I was awed by the noise and cruel possibilities of the weapons I fired.

I became aware in basic that I had an innate work ethic, and that was a black and white issue with me, either do something right or don't do it. Where that work ethic came from is anyone's best guess, because I didn't exhibit any of that I knew of, with any of my efforts, or even around my family.

When basic was over I felt like there should have been more, and I didn't feel I was properly prepared. I made it through it all; which was an accomplishment, however I did not feel there was enough emphasis on concealment, nor what to do if immediately thrust into action. I also wish I had taken it a lot more seriously, and had paid more attention to details.

On a personal note, I wish had made the effort to have a camera, had taken pictures and kept a lot of addresses and written a journal.

In summary, I was proud to be an infantryman, and all that I could do, if I truly had to. I also felt good in my dress uniform.

.

Chapter Six Basic Training

Infantry Replacement Training Command, Camp Blanding, Florida,
September 25, 1944

Standing on the long concrete platform on that bright summer morning was a spiffy Second Lieutenant in his immaculate freshly pressed uniform. He was a smiling friendly sort who immediately set us at ease with his manner, and welcomed us to Camp Blanding. He assured us we would all be assigned to quarters right away.

We must have been a sight to see because we were all in our grimy clothes. Smoke from the train's smokestack had been passing inside the open windows of our troop car for days. One man emerged from our group wearing a clean uniform, and the Lieutenant stood him in front of us as an example. He didn't know that the man had sat in the same dirty clothes for the last four days, and had changed his uniform at the last minute. A wave of irony passed through us because we all knew he was a fluke.

Olive drab buses soon lined up along the platform, and we loaded aboard with our duffle bags. The bus traveled into the camp past a large mowed parade ground and clusters of white buildings. The paved road circled around a large blue lake in the center of the camp. We soon arrived at our new company area. It was a cheerful and beautiful site with the tall pines reaching into the bright blue sky. Rows of small huts were spaced methodically set among the trees.

There we met a soldier who read our names off a clipboard and led us inside our company area. The ground here was bare yellow sand, and little tufts of scrub grass here and there. I was assigned to the second row and to the second hut on the left, on the company street.

My hut was a wooden structure sixteen feet square, with horizontally screened open windows that had hinged shutters propped up out of the way. There were five bare wooden bunks evenly spaced around the walls. I took the first one inside on the right. A small stovepipe extended up from the stove through the center of the roof, and one lone light bulb hung down from the rafters.

It was a little musty inside, the floors and walls were clean, and it was as cheerful as a vacation cottage in the woods. A nice warm breeze drifted through and welcomed me into my new army home. It didn't seem all that bad. I was optimistic and anxious to get settled in.

Corporal Winter pushed open the screen door and walked inside. He cheerfully introduced himself as a member of the company cadre and said he would be one of the leaders of our squad. He led us to the supply room, where we drew our bed linens, blankets and towels, and our new fatigue uniforms. (These are the uniforms that have metal buttons everywhere, and the pants those bulgy side pockets.) He told us where things were in our company area and helpfully answered many of our questions about chow, the beer hall, the PX, and the phones.

It was here we learned that everything we received was now characterized as Government Issue; Or GI. We had GI Blankets, shoes etc. All of Soldiers were known as GI's. It was humorous, and we made that connotation to everything from then on.

After getting my bunk made, I hurriedly tossed things in place. It was getting warm inside the hut, and that added to my sticky filthy condition. I had to get a shower now that I have the chance. I hadn't showered for four days. The showers were in the latrine building, down the company street diagonally off to my right, and these were in a large bay that accommodated about forty men.

After returning to the hut I heard the whistle for chow. All of us in our new wrinkled fatigue uniforms lined up in the bright sunshine at the far end of the company street and slowly filed in. We took our trays through the serving line, received our food, and found a spot to sit at one of the long row of wooden picnic style tables. I enjoyed the spacious open ceiling and screens all around and the freshly scrubbed floors. It was a much smaller chow hall than the large mess hall building at Atterbury, and a lot more personal. We enjoyed generous portions of good food, and casually returned to our huts, and waited for instructions.

Our company area had four rows of huts and many pine trees scattered around. Our company street was about 100 feet wide and packed sand. At the end opposite the mess hall, were the latrine and an attached boiler room. Perpendicular to those facilities and to the right of my hut was the mailroom, supply building, quarters for the cadre, and continuing around on the right was the company headquarters, and the orderly room.

Cpl. Winters came back and showed us how to lace up our leggings. Leggings are made of heavy canvas with hooks on the outside, and are laced up from the bottom to fit the snugly on the lower leg. They extend over the tops of the shoes and extend beyond trouser legs at the top. Trousers are pulled up and then bloused over the top. Infantrymen often carry heavy loads for miles,

and leggings are designed to support the legs and ankles.

The rest of my day was spent learning several general things, like how to stretch the top blankets of our beds and make special hospital corners, and what order to hang our clothes on the rack over the bunk, and many other military rules to follow.

We were told to watch the company bulletin board over by the orderly room for daily instructions. A lyster bag full of drinking water hung nearby on a wooden frame, and a flag pole was centered in front of the company.

I shared my hut with total strangers. Across from me was Horn, from Florida. On my right was Herdon, from West Virginia, and next around left was Hogg, from Kentucky, and the last man Hartman, was from Virginia.

At this time we actually enjoyed our new home in balmy weather. In the back of our minds we were wondering what was basic really about. We soon had our evening chow. I wrote to Jeane and Mother that first night giving them my new address. Getting in to call on the public coin phone was a hike and possibly a long wait, so I didn't call. I enjoyed the novelty of writing the word 'free on the envelope where the stamp was normally placed. After a casual evening, we heard the loudspeaker play Taps, someone yelled "lights out," and we soon went to sleep in new quarters.

At 5:30 the next morning, shrill whistles began to blow. "Up and at 'em" the sergeant yelled. "Reveille, everyone up, come on get up." I was startled out of bed from a deep sleep. "What? Get dressed?" I said. Someone in my hut said. "Yea Hill, it's Reveille," I began fumbling for my clothes as someone turned on the light. I slipped into my shoes without tying them, and drew my pants on without snapping the belt. My shirttail was trailing as I headed out the door. I followed everyone two blocks over in the darkness and joined the men in my squad already standing there.

Our newly found squad leader; a squat pudgy guy, in the darkness surprisingly looked into our faces to see who we were. Then each man counted off one by one, and finally everyone appeared. "OK" he said. "Now everybody stay put." The Platoon sergeant asked for a report in. "First squad present, Second squad present" etc. continued until all reported. Then the Company Commander shouted. "Platoons report" and in turn each platoon sergeant loudly shouted in turn, "All present and accounted for, sir;" until all had reported.

Then the Battalion Commander yelled from far away, demanding his Companies report. So our Company commander responded loudly, "B Company all present and accounted for, sir". At the end of this ritual, our Company Commander shouted "Company-dismissed," and we enthusiastically rushed from that formation to the chow hall and jostled each other forming into a line. Some were actually accommodating.

Breakfast chow was usually a slapped on gob of scrambled eggs, some bacon, a few potatoes, and fresh bread with marmalade, and black coffee; all of which was not bad at all. I soon returned to my hut, put away my clothes in the footlocker and tried to make the bed military fashion; with absolutely no wrinkles in the blankets. I had slept very well that first night. I was already accustomed to those sticky woolen army olive drab blankets. The time between chow and the first formation was a good time to do a lot left undone items from the night before. Things like a shaving, etc., and mostly making sure I was properly dressed, flaps buttoned and everything neat; and

maybe write a hasty letter.

The Platoon sergeant blew his whistle and we casually drifted out into the company street. Each squad leader began instructing us how to line up and square off at arms length. We were shown how to stand at attention; then we lined up in four rows, which formed our second platoon.

We learned there are commands to do almost everything, and specially close order drill. These commands consist of two parts; one the preparatory and the second; the execution. This is how it works: When the squad leader wants his squad to stand at attention he shouts." Squad (pause) Atten---Shun", the first words were designated who the command was directed to, which is followed by the two parts of the command. Likewise if he was to dismiss us he would say." Squad, Dis---missed". It is used when commanding all the simple commands such as facing left or right. Commands would be "Squad, right----face" etc. Other commands were, about face, oblique march, half step, in place, and parade rest etc.

We were also taught how to salute. The eyes and head and body are held straight toward the officer being saluted, and at that time the upper right arm is brought up at right angels to the body. The fingers are carefully extended straight with the thumb rigidly bent tight and in perfect alignment with the fingers, which are placed on a forty-five degree angle, at the edge and above the right eyebrow. This position is firmly held until the officer salutes, and then the arm is quickly swept strait down to a position parallel and alongside the body. This salute is executed with military precision. A lazily performed salute, or presented with a curved or limp arm is a disgrace to the man and the unit he serves in.

Saluting is a ritual sign of respect for the officer's rank, not the person, and in its formality is an element of pride in oneself as part of the conducting of a formal exercise. It is not to be taken lightly and we were given lots of training to get it absolutely correct. A salute is required at any time when an enlisted man approaches an officer, or when addressed by an officer, or when meeting the officer while walking. Following this recognition of rank the officer is always obligated to return the salute. This sign of respect is not given to noncommissioned officers, which are corporals, and sergeants.

This type of training began on the first day, and each session usually continued until everyone got it. The army uses these formalities to instill military pride and as a form of discipline. It was boring stuff, really boring because I had all that stuff back in the Boy Scouts. It was ho-hum for me and when will it end. I was really glad to get each boring day over. It wasn't all that comfortable out in the sun hour by hour especially and it was taxing on the cadre to constantly go over and over each move. They did get testy at the slow learners. We did have a break at each hour where men could smoke, and two hours off at noon. It helped to pass the day.

A lot of the men smoked and so there were butt cans for them to but their cigarette butts in, in all the informal buildings, the however not everyone was always neat with paper wrappings etc., so that was a problem keeping the area policed and neat. Smokers were also instructed to field strip their cigarette butts by rolling them between the fingers until it was nothing but crumbled tobacco. It was a good habit for smokers because in combat no one would be able to tell if a smoking soldier had been at that spot before and give the enemy information.

The shrill whistle in the darkness caught me the second time on the second morning as the

sergeant passing quickly between huts, blowing it then right past my head. It was the same thing, another short night and I again not ready. I again grab my clothes, slip in them as fast as I can, and hurriedly go to the Reveille formation. At least I know where it is and will be ready to rush to chow. Maybe tonight I will have things handy for the next morning. Chow was good and I came back to the hut and got ready for the 0800 formation.

A cadre man stepped in and with authority said, “OK you three come with me.” I was one of the unlucky few. We were required to stop what we were doing, form a line at the extreme end of our company and walk in unison, with a lot of other volunteers all the way to the other side of the company; picking up everything that didn’t grow. The sergeant said that all he wanted to see was elbows and rear-ends. I was really perturbed by being volunteered for this detail. I had lots of things I really wanted to get done. I hadn’t been to the latrine and didn’t have a lot of my things ready at all. Fortunately this detail didn’t last long. We had this same detail at Atterbury, but then it was for a much larger area. It became a game. Don’t get caught. Hide if you can. Stay away from places they can find you. We kidded each other about getting caught.

Sand was always a problem for us. It was always in our shoes, clothes, hair and pockets. It wasn’t easy to keep our equipment clean, nor our quarters. We figured it came in on the air. Every morning we brushed sand out of our beds we had just slept in, and each morning after chow we had to sweep the sand out of the hut we had tracked in and then mop the floor.

Someone in our group had to go get the mop and the bucket and put it all away etc. every morning. We had to learn to share the work and be collectively responsible for cleanliness inside our quarters and all around the outside. Then we had to make sure that our beds were made perfectly and everything had a good appearance, because while we were away during the day our hut would be inspected. We would hear about it if it weren’t perfect.

In the mornings we were soon into a regular routine. The first sergeant blasted his whistle, and we soon learned to rush out of our huts witch meant screen doors banged and down the company street. Our squads formed into a platoon, and then the top sergeant called us all to attention. After that he looked us over and commanded us be “At ease.” The Top sergeant always has a few choice things to say to us as well as the CO. When that is over the next commands were passed down to our platoon. Then our sergeant or Lieutenant barked “Platoon, right-- face, forward-- harch.” We usually marched in column of twos on paved streets. This happened day after day in first few weeks. I was irked because they often took the long way around to our destination.

Immediately after evening chow we always had mail call. It just a casual walk away for me among the pine trees to the front of the mailroom. There I waited with the others for the mailman to blow his whistle.

I routinely walked over to the bulletin board as it was close see what our formations were going to be, and what gear I would need to have ready and also checked on the war news there.

The mail orderly had a whistle with a distinctive double tone. There was one guy in the first platoon whose was usually waiting outside the mailroom. His name was Alton who learned how to whistle just like the mailman, and I thought that was neat, so I learned how to do it too.

I got a letter almost every day from Jeane and some from other family members. I waited

until all the mail was passed out and proudly walked back to my hut and set on my bed and opened my treasures. I cherished these as they were all from home. I was fortunate because some guys waited a long time to get mail. Some lucky guys got nice packages. I did too on occasion. The cookies and candy were especially great, and the pictures I received carried and displayed. I carefully stashed all the letters and shared what little goodies I could, as it was the custom to share.

I wrote a lot of letters, especially to Jeane, and many after lights out, when I could use the sparse lights of the latrine and showers to see.

It put me short on sleep during the next day, but I was indulgent; I needed the time to write. It was an emotional need. I can remember feeling very lonely while watching the moon when it passed through clouds and silhouetted the pine trees.

I soon accumulated dirty clothes and that meant I had to do laundry. Mother at home did the family laundry on her wringer washer, and I had often helped her hang things out to dry using wooden clothespins, but I never used the washboard or did any hand laundering; she did it. Now in the army I will have to learn how, and keep my clothes clean and stand the scrutiny of an army inspection.

We did our laundry on a large tilted metal shelf attached on the outside of the latrine. The smartest way to get them done was to hustle back from chow to get the hot water and a spot at the shelf, and have several pieces ready to do at a time. Faucets spaced along the shelf supplied the water. We used large brushes and a large bar of green smelly soap from the supply room. Sometimes we shared ringing to save time. We hung them on a close line near our hut and kept a close eye on them. They didn't dry to well in the evening. We had but two of everything, so that meant a lot of repetitious work. In order to press them I usually put them under my mattress when not quite dry, and then tried to hang them straight. These clothes are heavy and clumsy to wear until they have been laundered several times. I struggled to keep my clothes clean; it was a chore and a lot of daily work and responsibility.

On the opposite side of the latrine was the boiler room. It was coal fired which meant we had a lot of smoke at certain times that occasionally passed over the company area. This wasn't a strange smell as many of our homes at that time were heated by coal. The attendant had a permanent job and he was part of the residential cadre. There was a coal pile on the end that was handy to get to for the coal we used in the stoves we had in our huts. We used coal in late December and January.

I had a lot to learn about taking care of all my things, and being responsible. I remember asking one guy how he managed. How did he discipline himself to get all the things done in the time allotted? A lot of the guys even found time to go to the beer hall and maybe a movie. Some of the guys actually got around to see some of the boxing matches. We had one guy in our company by the name of Scherer that boxed, however I never saw him box. I was lucky if I found time to go to the PX, and there were bars of candy over there to entice me. I am sure that my mother at home had gotten on me about cleaning my room, but it that idea didn't fly then, so the army had a job to do to get me to be responsible, and here I would learn that or I would pay the price.

Clothing identified us, so I felt like a second-class citizen all the time; which I actually was. I wore the new stiff fatigues. Our cadre had slightly faded clothes, which to us was a mark of tenure

and status, as their clothes had been washed many times. They also looked neat because they bloused their trousers so well. The officers had the benefit of wearing khaki, (dress clothes): and they sent their clothes out to be laundered, and as a result they had creases pressed in front and across the pockets of their shirts, and razor sharp edges on the trousers. Our CO wore winter wool officer uniforms that were quite dressy. The cadre wore stripes identifying rank and years of service, and the officers had their gold and silver bars on their hats and shirt lapels, with infantry gold crossed rifles on the other. We, the low life privates, had absolutely nothing to show.

In the hut at the end of the days training we talked about everything. How dumb some guys were; how far we had to hike, and how boring some exercises were. In the conversations, we sized up all the cadre men and the officers. Some incidents were funny, especially for a mistake someone in our hut had made. A simple mistake could get a good laugh among friends at times. (Nothing like a little peer pressure to change one's behavior.)

These interactions helped us get acquainted. Horn and I were near the same age and size, he was a real southerner from the Deep South with a real accent. Herndon was one of those pale-faced individuals with a worn face and of small stature whose age was always in question, and he was not long on talking. He was a back woods sort with strange observations. Hartman was a slim six feet and when standing stood a little hunched over, and he always had a crooked smile, like actor Harrison Ford's. He had an affable manner who made us all laugh with his folksiness. Hogg was also six feet tall, only he was big-boned, and had a Kentucky brogue. He was the quiet one, was a little older, and when he talked we all listened. He had an air of quaint authority, as he spoke from experience. Many times we talked about women and their anatomies, jobs, cars we had owned and also told many jokes. We did develop friendships that I miss. I do keep in contact with one member of that group; Alton.

One of the more serious jokes was on me, as I had acquired body lice. It was commonly known about the camp as a dose of the crabs. Some said they came off of the third stool in the latrine. They are described as little creatures that have legs on both top and bottom. The sure cure I learned was to use alcohol and sand. The little critters get drunk on the alcohol and then throw rocks at each other. I was issued blue ointment from the dispensary. I was kidded by my hut buddies and respectfully kept away from. I did win out.

Our platoon at first was a sorry sight hiking on the roads because we could not march in unison. Some of us bobbed when others didn't. To overcome this we were taught to keep in step by following a cadence. The drill sergeant marched beside us and would shout "Hup, two, three, fo-were, hup two three fo-were." In turn then we would shout it back to him. Admonishments followed. "Close it up Hill." "Line it up." "Hey Jones, and you Pete, quit bouncing, you are throwing everyone else off," Ok count cadence, Hup two etc.

These hiking trips wore me down mentally, not that they were physically tiring but it was the fact that we spent a lot of our time hiking; and the cadre seemed to lead us the long way around. However that was just the way things were and we had to endure whatever the training they had. This hiking did however; build up our legs, which were usually tired or sore at the end of the day. We did enjoy the 10-minute breaks when were out hiking somewhere, if it was convenient we took off our shoes and raised our feet. We did enjoy the Florida breezes although they were warm most of the time and they also helped to dry our sweat.

Over the span of a week we spent several hours with calisthenics. We did push ups, sit-ups and jumping jacks to cadence. We also lined up and moved telephone poles up and over our heads. We slowly got into pretty good shape. We even had obstacle courses with rope climbing, jumping over water, hand over hand on overhead bars, climbing fences, running through tires and swinging on ropes.

We returned to the company area at the end of the day tired and in a hot cloud of dust. This was an official time and a strictly regimented formality. Each platoon formed side by side, squad leaders stood at the end of each squad, the platoon sergeant up on the right, and with our Platoon officer out in front on the company street.

Standing at a rigid attention was our Lt., the CO and the Top Kick at his side. The first sergeant called the men to attention and then that command would come down to us and after we responded, the sergeant did a smart about face and saluted the CO who acknowledged the company was in formal attention with his salute. The 'at ease' command from the CO put is all at ease. It was a ritual we learned that was soon ingrained in us as the proper way to close the day. When done with precision, it became something I enjoyed for its crispness and authority.

This usually was the time of the day for the CO to chew us out by telling us how bad we were, about found candy wrappers and cigarette butts. How sloppy someone's hut looked; how disappointed he was in his men etc. Then the CO turned the session over to "Top," the first sergeant. Announcements were made at that time, and names of the men who would be assigned extra details for punishment. At the closing of each formation we were called to attention and dismissed. We joyously rushed to our huts with newfound energy, dropped off our packs and rushed over to get in the chow line. It was a great time of day, as the formal day over; we hungry for some chow, and now some time do things our way.

.

A few words about Top; we had several choice names for him. Top was the enforcer, He told the platoon sergeants to give extra training or gigs to platoons, and everyone strictly followed his orders. He wasn't exactly nasty or mean but he had the authority and knew how to use it. He had other training cycles before and knew his stuff. He also knew the exact and energetic way to salute and we respected him.

Every day we were becoming better soldiers. I became a little more organized and began planning ahead. Our squad and platoon were making the formations better in the mornings and afternoons. Cadre and officers were demanding faster responses and better execution of commands. They did require us to do push-ups for small infractions of the rules, like failing to say, "Sir" or obviously being slow, doing something really dumb or too late. I saw our top sergeant kick one slow guy in the rear for moving too slowly making formation. Evidently the men were forming too slowly for the C.O. and it was making Top look bad so he lost his cool. As a rule, however, our cadre did their jobs, some were more lenient than others, or strict and with an impatient streak, but no one in the organization crossed over the line of proper behavior. No officer or noncom carried a grudge, or was out to get anyone, but they remembered who the lazy or stupid ones were and acted accordingly.

The day came when we drew our light backpacks, leggings, rifle belts and helmet liners. Everything had to be marked in a certain spot with permanent black ink. We used the last four numbers of our Army serial number and the first initial of our last name. My designation was H 8335.

We taped our last names to our helmet liners in the front. This was for the convenience of the drill instructors and the officers in charge to see. When the officers yelled at us they could see our names. Instead of, “Hey soldier,” it was. ”Hey Hill.” The equipment we drew at this time was worn on a regular basis at all formations.

The packs we used carried our mess gear and a bayonet and small things like extra socks or candy bars etc. Our canteens were filled with water, and along with a mess cup we also had our first-aid kits hooked to our cartridge belts.

We had several weekly movies about the reason our country joined the fight in World War II called the ” Why We Fight” series. Over a span of time they explained in detail through the newsreels and movies the actions of Hitler and the German Army as well as Japanese actions. It helped us to have a focus and to be informed. This gave us the necessity of being in the Army, and to motivate us to help win the war.

These movies were shown in a large wooden building with long benches and patricians for seats. We had to be alternately spaced in the seats with rifles on our laps and we were under close scrutiny so we wouldn’t go to sleep. The role was called when all were seated and each man in turn had to report in as,” Hear Sir.” Once in a while some dummy would report in without saying the Sir. It was not to the officers’ liking; however it did get a chuckle among the rest of us. Pete was the most likely man to do that.

One morning we had the International Articles of War read to us. These explained our rights and obligations under the rules of international war, as agreed upon by the Geneva Conventions of nations. We were told with emphasis that when we were Prisoners of War we were required to give only our names, rank and serial numbers. Further paragraphs elaborated on the treatment of officers and escaping laws.

We also had very detailed and graphic movies that explained the effects of venereal diseases, and how important prevention was. It made quite an impression on many of us. The Army threatened us with the penalty of Court Martial for sexual infections as well as the requirement to sign up and procure condoms before leaving camp. We continued to have the raincoat parades regularly to detect any diseases.

We had a talk by the Chaplain in the theatre program one morning about the families at home and how we felt about leaving them behind. He said we tend to worry how sad everyone one is now that they are gone, and then as they adjust we worry if they miss us as much as they should. I think the whole purpose was to get some things out in the air about our very normal feelings. I came out of that meeting realizing that this Army service was serious, as some of us might not really get back to our families.

We were always glad to be back in the hut at the end of the day. And like a family we became comfortable with each other and shared our opinions. All the indoctrination films we had been watching gave us more opportunities to interrelate. Hogg and Hartman were my closest buddies in the squad. Other members of my squad were in another hut and we shared experiences out in the field during field operations at that time and work details. I felt good about our relationships in our hut. We cooperated with the work and didn’t get any demerits for anything. We were a congenial even though we strange mix of men of different regions and disposition.

However some of the men in other huts had real personality problems. One day I heard a bad rumor about one of the men I knew in another squad. He had been accused of stealing from another man in the hut. He may have been roughed up. I walked in and asked him what was going on as we had talked a lot at other times; however he wouldn't respond to my question. I supposed the officers settled it without a Court Martial. There was some real bad blood in that hut.

> **NEWS ITEM:** American troops make an amphibious landing October 20th in the Philippine Islands as MacArthur makes good on his promise. "I Will Return". The Deadeyes of the 96th Division were there to make the assault.

Unknown to me I would be joining them next May.

In another squad there was a Jewish guy named Kirshner. There were some who called him, "Jew Baby." He was a slim guy about my size whose life was repeatedly made miserable. At that time in American society, the popular way of treating anyone different than you was to call him a name and others would chime in with a demeaning label; especially if they were a member of minority group. The victim had the choice of fighting back violently against bad odds or just fending it off the best he could and living miserably with it.

If blacks and whites, as well as those that were gay had been in the same units during this time in our country there would have been a lot of violence because of prevailing attitudes; men in both groups would have been badly beaten up and/or knifed if caught out somewhere unprotected. We came from many parts of the country, and back woods as well as urban men, and many were rough characters before coming into the service. They even offered some men in prison paroles if they performed Army Service honorably.

We had a hut in the next row over where the cooks stayed. In their group was Japanese looking guy, and some of the men were inclined to make snide remarks about because they wondered what he was doing there. Evidently I had taken it personal because my buddy Hartman said I had awakened from my sleep one night and sat up and said there wasn't going to be any racial prejudice around here. I didn't remember saying it, but Hartman and I both were amused.

One time I had put an undershirt out to dry in between our huts on a clothesline and someone stole it. We were threatened with a court martial for not taking care of our equipment and I felt that it was a real possibility. I was also afraid that when under the scrutiny of an inspection that they would discover it was missing, and then I would come under the threat of punishment of some sort. How would I retrieve it? Who would I go after? Who would admit they took mine? I would have looked like an idiot to even ask. I even wrote home asking them to send me one to get me off the hook. In retrospect the army discipline was having its effect on me because I feared the consequences of what the army would do to me if I didn't obey and that included not losing things.

After a few days of this fear I ended up in the hospital after reporting to first aid. I remained in the hospital for two or three days, for a pain in my side, possibly a case of appendicitis. I do not remember how the situation about the shirt resolved. I did return from the hospital and was quite irked when I discovered someone in the supply room had cabbaged on to my radio; however I did get it back after claiming ownership. It felt strange coming back to the empty hut and later on being with the guys, because it was as if I had never, ever had been there before. I did miss firing the

37mm. anti-tank cannon and some other training, but I soon fit right in again.

We really ate well in basic -even the food brought to us out in the training areas was good. We were expending a lot of energy so we needed it. We had a lot of meat, bread and potatoes, and usually had seconds. I especially enjoyed the fresh limeade. They always provided black coffee. Many of the men were experiencing eating three meals a day that they hadn't enjoyed at home.

KP was duty no one wanted; but we all had to do it. It always started really early, like 0330. The mess sergeant was the boss and usually tough, and I mean really tough. He had the responsibility that all the food and all utensils and area were spotless and that the men strictly followed all directions. We began by preparing lots of food and cleaning lots of crusty pots and pans, and slopped much soapy water on our clothes. The lucky men were servers. A lot of us spent time with mops and scrub brushes on the tables and floors. If the sergeant found even the slightest particle of dirt or food on anything we had to do it all over again. If we finished it too soon, we had to do it all over again. It was drudgery and hard work all day long until about 8:00 or 9:00 in the evening. We ate well but without much time, so we had to gobble our food down. We were usually dog-tired and smelly when we got off and gladly walked back to our huts.

I had latrine duty, which meant cleaning toilets and the basins and mopping floors. This was demeaning work. Those men who had done something wrong, like forgot to say sir, or dropped a rifle usually had to do it. It could have even been a candy wrapper found near our quarters, being late to a formation, or forgetting to shave.

Corporal Winter was frequently in charge of exercises and had us all do the small arm circles. This is with the arms fully extended widely, and in eight inch circles . He would challenge the entire company to see if we could do them as long as he could. It got to be kind of a game. Many saw it as an opportunity to stop circling early and let the dummies continue with him. Well as per my temperament, I stayed on and on until I was exhausted.

But one day I decided to put Winters down. I made a personal vow to myself that I would stay along with him regardless the pain. Winters and I challenged each other in front of the whole company while sweat ran down our faces. The men actually cheered me on. I wouldn't say it was a world's record; however I kept circling on and on, and won!

Often we had work details. The army is usually good at keeping people busy one way or another to keep mischief at a minimum. I remember a detail I was assigned to when we were making a new walkway with logs. We had to remove the old logs that were on each side of the path and install new ones. We had to scoop out the sand and put the logs down so they were stabilized on each side. We had a stack of logs to replace those that had to be hand carried to our work site and shovels to work with. We had no supervision on the job, but we did have a task to perform.

I realized that we were on an honor system and if a cadre man returned and found that we had been goofing off then we would all have to pay with maybe more details or whatever. There was one big problem to this entire job. No one wanted to do anything. They wanted to get the other guy to do something. It was also the element of being lazy and the other one is they didn't want to be seen complying with what was expected as that would make them look bad.

However, a little of this standing around got to me, because I would have no part of this

goofing off. I cared less about what anybody thought about me looking bad in their eyes. I wasn't going to rat on anyone, as that would have be suicide; however that didn't prevent me from energetically getting into the job. I am sure I said something to the effect of come on guys lets get this done. I started dragging logs by myself to the site. I took a shovel and the wheelbarrow and began energetically shoveling the sand and installing the new logs. I did get some limited piecemeal help, but for the most part they laughed at me. And that made me even more determined to get more work done, so I continued righteously on busting myself the balance of the time. What a bunch of goof -offs! I am sure they talked about dumb Hill later on in their huts, but I didn't care.

A word about responsibility to ones group: if anyone does something wrong, it is a poor reflection on their squad, platoon, company, and battalion, etc. In fact that is the way punishment was rendered, and that depended on how bad the offense was. For example, if someone in my company went AWOL, (escaped from camp) everyone in the company would not only get punished; the commanding officer and all the noncommissioned officers would get additional punishment too because of responsibility.

For example we could all lose our weekend pass privileges, and the officers might have to attend extra meetings to address their lack of attention to details of their commission. If our hut were found to have a dirty floor or messy condition, all the men in my hut would pay the penalty. Likewise if some one would have gotten hurt in training, many would have to pay the penalty. If some one would have gotten sick on food from the mess hall, the penalties would be really harsh. And all this leads of course to cover ups. No one wants to get into trouble, and so many times men cover for their buddies. So responsibilities are a big thing in the military, and especially because that is what the services were created for i.e. being responsible for the protection of the country.

Guard duty was duty no one really wanted. First off we had to learn all the post orders. These were the guidelines we had to follow regarding suspicious activities. One order I remember was: "Halt and be recognized." And the fun one: "Walk my post in a military manner, and take no guff from the company commander." (See documents)

When on guard duty on our post we had to walk to a slow count and carry our rifles at right shoulder arms, in highly visible locations. Each shift was for two hours, and then rest or sleep four; so that meant two sessions. The Officer of the Day strictly inspected us on our post and any infractions to duty were reported. As this duty is often in the middle of the night, and each man is by himself, it was very tempting to try to get a little nap in, however that had serious consequences. That could be a consideration for Court Martial. I had guard duty twice. This training helped us to be responsible in combat.

In basic I had the opportunity to transfer into the paratroops after basic for $10.00 more a month but I declined. I also went to the orderly room one day and requested that I go to Officer Candidate School, but I was refused.

We had to have immunization shots on a regular basis. At one time I remember getting at least three shots and they had hit me in both arms. These medical corpsmen gave us the shots as a regular routine for them. I wouldn't say they were brutal about it, nor careless, but it was going to be painful, and men would just have to get used to it.

Some men were squeamish about getting a shot and so it was fun watching the responses

that some men had, especially after you had already had yours. Some guys actually passed out and had to be caught before hitting the ground. We were amused about it and shared these stories when we went back to our hut.

On Sundays we had Protestant church and other faith services available for us in the local chapel a few company streets away. The services consisted of a couple of songs from the songbook and a sermon from the Chaplain. We dressed up in our khaki uniforms with ties for this service. There were but few in attendance the few times I went.

We had a chaplain available to see on our own time, if we wanted to for any personal problem we had. Things would not seem fair at times and I am sure many felt that they had no recourse to treatment they were getting and were truly not happy. Many were really stressed at the discipline and being away from home and the prospects of being a soldier and maybe having to go overseas into combat.

We developed a way to tease a buddy with his problems when he griped about something. We told him to go to the chaplain and get his card punched. We called it the TS card. Of course he couldn't do anything with his card even if it were full of holes. It was a way to cut down the griping. The name stood for Tough Stuff.

Alton hailed from Bruceville, Indiana, a small town in the strip mine area near the Illinois border. He was a chow hound. He loved to eat. He tried to be first in line and then he would get back first in line for seconds. Another thing, as Alton and I both knew how to whistle just like the mail call, we often thought how neat that would be if we were in combat someplace in a jungle somewhere where we would signal to each other. It was remarkable, because that is what actually happened in April of the next year. His first name was Ralph.

We received our Army pay every month. We formed a line and in turn signed our name on a dotted line and received our cash. At that time I received about two dollars a day. We had to pay for our own life insurance policy. Payday was a happy day, because we usually were broke then and had some good place for more money. For some it meant good times: times to drink, party, and gamble. I am sure that the cadre and officers knew that all of this was going on but conveniently looked the other way; that is if things didn't get out of hand. This was important to know about because the brass is always responsible for every man in his command.

It was a wild time for some men, as they seemed to have an outside source for hard liquor and it was also the time for poker games and for shooting craps. It was an interesting time for even a bystander. It was easy to find the hut with all the action and it didn't take long for some to go bust and lose all their money. It was interesting to listen to their words in the craps game. "Come on little Joe." Meant that his point (or task) was to make was a four. Craps has a universal language with little variation around the country. When the games were over the games were pretty well over until the next payday. In the meantime the losers had to borrow money all around to make it to next payday. The same thing happened every month with the same men going broke all over again. There was one man I remembered, as his name was Jackson, from Anderson, Indiana who was a consistent winner. He really knew how to play the odds with craps. I seriously doubt he was cheating, because if caught it would have had serious consequences to his health.

There were weeks and weeks in basic that were really trying mentally and the long days kept

going on and on. I wasn't used to all this regimentation, strict rules and constant supervision. We had mail from home and some laughs among us that helped get us through it all. Passes were really special for us and few and far between.

As far as recreation goes there were no sports available. This meant no softball, volleyball, soccer or even boxing matches to give us some relaxation. Maybe that was all on purpose.

In late December and January it began to get cold. It was really chilly in the mornings so we had to use our stoves to keep warm. Stoves were messy and were a lot of work. Someone had to get the coal in the bucket, and make the fire, and others had to clean up afterwards. This meant taking out the ashes and mopping around. We had limited time in the mornings anyway before making the imminent company formations so that meant a lot of hustle. The heat didn't last very long.

The beer hall was a place many men spent a lot of time. Here they served 3.2 beers. This is the low alcohol beer that was a necessary substitute for the real stuff. Guys would really have to guzzle lots of it to get out of hand and want to fight, which was the tendency of too many; and so the low alcohol beer. I had tasted beer at home but I was not a beer drinker who had to have it. I visited the beer hall for curiosity; however, I wasn't one of those rough and tumble men who regularly gathered there. I didn't even smoke then. In fact I was a typical loner, and I had no beer-drinking buddies

We hiked and trained with light packs on our backs for about three weeks before getting our rifles and steel helmets, and we were anxious to get them. All those movements we learned in marching and moving, (Close order drill) were now performed with rifles. We also we learned the manual of arms, which was all the positions we used the rifle in hiking and in standing formations. The commands were; right shoulder arms, left shoulder arms, present arms, port arms, at a trail, sling arms, inspection arms and parade rest. The positions used in firing were separate. Our 3l cal. M1 Garand rifles weighed 12 pounds, and through constant drills and having it in our possession all the time, we gained hardened muscles and developed strength and endurance.

We took pride in being able to do the rifle manual of arms in perfect rhythm. At each crisp movement we noisily slapped the hand rest and stock with our open hands, holding our bodies perfectly erect. We practiced on our own time. Some of us went out into the company street and called out commands to ourselves marching around and doing every movement. I remember one man by the name of Boykin who practiced out in that area that learned to perform so well they made him our company flag bearer. The ability of each man to perform the manual of arms individually is best seen at the formal Saturday inspections.

We carried our rifles everywhere including all field duty out away from our company area. We hiked longer and longer distances to several training areas as the weeks went by. It was interesting meeting other units marching towards us on the roads We could pretty well judge how long these men had been marching by how well they were coordinated and the precision of their movements. It became a matter of pride to all be in unison; especially in a march. These guys below are sloppy buck privates.

Over time I grew attached to my M-1 rifle. Its last five serial numbers,11106, will stay with me. It was heavy at first to maneuver and carry everywhere and a chore to have, but as time passed it

became my buddy. I liked its strength and its purpose.

Our rifles demanded close attention every day. We had to keep them clean; immaculately clean. They went with us everywhere and we were instructed to take care of them like a close friend because they could keep us alive when we were in combat. The officers and instructors constantly demanded it. We were taught how to completely dismantle and clean every part and keep it working. To clean them really quick was to get very hot water at the wash shelf. It completely stripped all the oil and dirt away. It was imperative to get the hottest water and then dry it immediately or the rifle would rust. Behind the butt plate there is a tool to use to take them apart, a brush, a bottle of oil, and cloth swabs to swab the bore. The bore had to be cleaned for three successive days after firing. And our cadre made sure we did it by constant inspections. This ritual kept us busy in the evenings.

We had a lot of bayonet training. These were attached to the rifles, and were always covered with sheaths. This added weight to the weapon, so these were vigorous exercises. We were taught several movements, which we combined. These were the parry right, parry left, long thrust and withdraw horizontal butt stroke and slash, all in an energetic advancing and deliberate sequence. We were also encouraged to make noise. This was of course to familiarize us with the possible movements if they had to be used. We often had dummies to thrust bayonets in, and in a sequence to help us get some realism. It really conditioned our muscles and helped coordination. Under battle conditions, we were told, if a long thrust was made to an enemy's chest that the bayonet could stick between the ribs and if that happened the best remedy was to fire the weapon, which then would blow a large hole and the bayonet would be easily withdrawn.

We looked forward to Saturdays, as a part of a weekend off of the routine. This is the day we get often had passes on Friday if lucky, and to be able the leave the post and got a look at the outside world. This was a chance to have a little freedom from all the close scrutiny. Even though we had to get up for it for the formal inspections at least it was a most welcome change of the daily grind.

On these days everyone rushed around after morning chow to get everything spiffy clean. Our hut had to be thoroughly mopped, all ledges wiped clean, beds made perfectly, clothes hung in true military order, the outside of the hut was checked, including underneath for any cigarette buts, and candy wrappers. All our clothes had to be clean, including shoes, fingernails and the foot lockers had to have everything in correct positions. This meant a lot of hustle all over the company. An officer and a member of the cadre would inspect every hut with everyone in the hut present. It was a time to be sure and to be ready because no one wanted to have a price to pay for a demerit, like losing a weekend pass or having extra KP.

It was suspenseful and I dreaded failing. As time drew near we carefully watched the company street for the inspector's whereabouts to be sure we were ready. As some of the men in my hut smoked they had to be careful not be caught with a burning cigarette laying anywhere when the officer came in.

When the team came to our hut the first man to spot the officer walking in was required to call everyone to attention. We silently stood by our respective beds with eyes straight ahead while the team made a close scrutiny of us, our open foot lockers and everything in our hut. If asked we answered with a quick and respectful," Yes Sir", or "No Sir". After the officer left we relaxed and

prepared for the rest of the inspection out in the company street.

At that time, the commanding officer called our entire company to attention. Rows and rows of men in our company of 180 men formed and stood at attention in company formation, looking straight ahead for often an hour. The inspecting officer critically looks every man completely. He checks clothing, facial hair, fingernails, and cleanliness of person and equipment, which includes a complete rifle inspection.

The official “Inspection Arms” routine begins for each soldier when the officer sidesteps in front of him one arm’s length away. The soldier immediately makes six crisp moves with his rifle to the inspection arms position, then quickly pushes the bolt down, then snaps his head down, checks for an empty chamber, returns head to straight ahead.

When the officer’s arm slightly moves towards the rifle, the soldier immediately releases, and the officer seizes it. The soldier then snaps both arms to his sides, and fixes eyes straight forward. After the officer makes his inspection he offers the rifle back to the soldier. With his left hand he seizes it with authority; with the right hand he slaps it. He methodically reaches over and returns the bolt to close the chamber and with four sharp moves he returns the rifle at his right side, and snaps to attention.

After every soldier is inspected this way the officer makes a tour from the back of the row checking all clothing, hair length, bayonet and condition of clothing .and each bayonet.

This whole process is usually silent and one man at a time. Occasionally the inspecting officer breaks silence with a remark to his aide or the soldier may be asked a question. If that occurs, it is always respectfully and quickly answered and finished with an emphatic ”Yes Sir,” or “No Sir.” The officer’s aide takes notes and records the imperfections. From this list they make up work details, give out demerits and gigs and cancel weekend passes, as they deem necessary. It is from these inspections we were forced to perfect ourselves as soldiers.

I received one of the nicest compliments from our cadre man Corporal Winters. I have remembered it all these years. He told me that of all the men he had ever witnessed, that I had performed the best inspection arms routine that he had ever seen. I really felt great about that, because I had practiced each movement energetically to get perfection, and his compliment carried a lot of weight; because he had seen hundreds of men do the inspection arms.

On Saturday afternoon, (If you didn’t have a pass), things were more relaxed around camp, even though we had to be careful and not be around to get tagged for a work detail. We had to plan our lives for that probability, and as a reminder; no on lays on his cot during the day trying to take a nap.

On the rifle range everyone was being constantly reminded to obey strict safety. Keep the muzzle pointed down range was the constant yell. We were always under close scrutiny by cadre, and as a result many men have had to do a lot of push-ups for minor infractions to get the idea across. We had to be ready for actual combat by repetitive drilling, and we had to know how to fire from all positions. We were always on the sand and crawling on it.

We used the rifle sling to hold the rifle in the several firing positions. I was wearing glasses at

the time, but it ended up that I didn't wear them long. The rifle butt is tucked into the shoulder, and while sighting the target we are required to bend the neck and thereby putting the cheek up against the stock. In the heat and sweat and sand my glasses had a tendency to continually slide down so I decided to quit wearing them and got along fine.

The week after that we went to the actual firing range with live M-1 ammunition. It was a real experience for me to be on there. My first time to fire it on the firing range was an experience with a sudden explosion near my head. That was a strange feeling, with the ringing in my ears, and the smell of gunpowder on everything. My shoulder took the painful backlash, in a sudden jolt, and I realized how dangerous, strong and powerful it was. However, I vowed to be sure it was snug and in the right place the next time. My ears rang for at least a week. We had no ear protection.

There was one test we had to pass where we started from a standing position. First we ran toward the target, shoved the rifle forward, and then quickly dropped our arm and rifle to the ground. When impacting, we pivoted on the rifle butt, and rolled to a prone firing position. Then we fired one round, twisted around, pullout a clip of bullets from the ammo belt, and inserted it into the chamber, and fired another eight rounds on target in 45 seconds. This one test required a lot of practice and supervision as it duplicated combat situations

There was a ritual we all strictly adhered to on the firing range. The men in the pits to assured us the targets were ready and that it was ok to fire by using a red flag. When all was ready, the flag was raised and broadly waved and quickly lowered. The cadre on the firing range yelled; "Flag is up, flag is waving; flag is down, commence firing." What followed was a volley all down the line. We had a neat metaphor for the red flag: "Maggie's Drawers".

Everyone spent time in the pits taking care of targets, while the men were firing. The pits were concrete structures below ground. Targets were large white paper sheets, about six feet square, which we pasted in place on wooden frames that we moved up and down. With a long stick we marked the holes so that men could tell where the shells were hitting. The duty in the pits was a little dangerous, as we didn't want to ever be where some dummy could kill you with an errant shot. The paper targets cracked loudly, and to my knowledge no one was injured.

It was fun duty there as we often had time to talk, and time like that is prized. There were but few cadre-men there and no officers. It was here that I meet Pooley. He was a tall slow talking intellectual sort of a guy that loved math problems, and so we shared many. One I remember was getting more gold out of a square. I always enjoyed talking to him and looked him for him in a crowd

We were required to qualify at several positions, and at 100, 200, and 500 yards and therefore it took many days for all men to shoot each distance. . Some men qualified in all the firing positions quickly and earned the better rifle badges. I was lucky to get Marksman, which was one step up from disqualification or 'bolo' as they called it. Without my glasses the bull's eyes at 500 yards were really difficult to see. The cadre thought many men didn't want to have a record of being good at being a good shot so to get out of a bad infantry assignment overseas, so there was a lot of pressure on to make sure we all passed one way or another.

After receiving the standard six weeks of introductory basic; our company was given advanced specialized training as an anti-tank company. This is training with the 37mm and 57mm cannons. The 57s have a barrel about six feet long with a bore of three inches in diameter. These

were mounted on rubber tired wheels about 7 feet wide. The projectiles had armor piercing tips, so they were used against tanks. The 37mm is a much smaller weapon, and so is used for smaller targets like machine gun emplacements.

Six by six trucks, also known as prime-movers, pulled these cannons. They were equipped with flexible tandem wheels in back and a canvas roof over the bed in back I enjoyed chance to drive them and shift the manual gears. It was quite a trick to learn how to double clutch. It was fun to feel raw army power under my control.

We had many early morning trips out to selected spots out in the field in these trucks where we practiced combat conditions. I learned the art of sleeping on the way.

When we arrived at a training spot the trucks circled around, the 57's were then unhooked and then we manhandled them into position These were training exercises where we simulated combat by moving our trucks to different field locations and putting the weapon in and out of action. I might add this is not particularly easy as these cannons were difficult to move in the sand.

The weapon has a thirty-inch recoil, and the breech could kill a man standing behind it when fired because of the recoil. The crew worked together to make sure each man was clear. We also used part of the back thrust to set the gun in place when firing the first round. At that time the crewmen stood on each of the trails in back so the backlash would shove the spades into the ground. This procedure stabilized the weapon for more accuracy in firing.

We had lots of drills without live ammunition. Each man had a job to do and had to work together to fire correctly and not get killed by the recoil. These drills simulated men getting killed in combat and others "stepping up" to all positions. These were boring times and we really didn't get the feel of being in combat or as if we were being fired upon.

Shells are stored in boxes about sixteen inches long and stacked in back and off to the side of the cannon for easy access. The shell is loaded into the breach from the right side and is cradled in the right arm. The pointed end of the shell is slid into the open breach with a forceful forward thrust of the left fist. When the shell slams into the end the automatic breach forces the fist upward and the cannon is loaded and ready to fire. The gunner yells fire when he knows all is ready. There is a metal rod extending across under the barrel that is a trigger and it is jerked back to fire the cannon.

We a lot of responsibilities keeping those cannons clean In addition to taking care of our personal army gear. They required a lot of manual labor and working together, and most of the time after our regular training hours. Everyone hated that and bitched because it took up personal time. We usually all hustled to get it done and get back. In the army we did a lot of griping called bitching and this was a great example.

The 57's were awesome to fire, very noisy and shook the ground around us. Our targets were old army tanks in a firing range hundreds yards away. The projectiles were so fast they could not be seen, as the muzzle velocity is the same as an army rifle.

Days and days of this went on. Getting us hauled here and there; many long marches and calisthenics, problem solving out in the field simulating battle conditions, and getting us ready to be

able for what the war would be like.

One day near the end of our basic training we had one last glorious firing. We had at least six of these cannons dug in along the firing line and several rounds ready in a pile to fire, and we were expected to load and fire them rapidly. It was really special because we had the detested pip-squeak, Lt. Col. Ingalls there (I wasn't the only one that did), to properly oversee the firing. He was of small stature, a dried up looking man in his forties, whose demeanor had lorded it over all the officers in our company during the time I was there. We called his bullying chicken manure.

The firing began in a volley much like the roar of a battleship at sea. As each cannon continued firing the ground shook with such force that the little Lt.; Col. actually helplessly bounced around on the ground he was standing on. It was hilarious seeing that scene continue as shell after shell fired and kept him continuously shaking. As I was in a firing crew, I could see it all happen out on the side and in back of me. We all were very delighted and amused.

We did do some marching in our dress khaki uniforms. We wore ties, garrison caps, cartridge belts with attached bayonet, and bloused our trousers smartly over leggings. We learned how to do this formal parade review with rifles. Learning how to do it right takes a lot of time. We formed and marched in rows of twelve across with the squad leader on the extreme right, in a company formation. The color guard out in front of our company dipped our flag in front of the reviewing stand as we passed.

When we approached the reviewing stand, we were given the command; present arms, which extend the rifle parallel to the body and straight forward. Then we were given the command to do an eyes right, which requires us to turn our heads half right while continuing to march. During this time, the officer in charge, who is usually in step and off to the side, makes the commands. The squad leader salutes his rifle, now at the left shoulder position, with an arm across his chest and keeps his head facing straight ahead. This parade review is used when an officer is reviewing his troops and is a time for a spiffy clean uniform and pride of person and outfit. Even though it took a lot to accomplish, I was proud to be able to do it and do it with my unit.

Later on we had full-field packs, which carried everything we would need in combat. These were designed to carry extra clothes, two blankets, a shelter half, tent pegs, rain gear, extra shoes, and food rations when provided. We had a shovel attached on the outside or a pickax. As time went on we hiked farther and, and often faster and that required double-timing.

We grew to be tougher and tougher soldiers. A five mile hike in sand became nothing. We did ten miles many times in the later weeks, which were in December when we had one forced march of nine miles, which we had to complete it in a set time. We alternated between double time and regular time when the weather was hot and we all worked up quite a sweat and swigged a lot out of our canteens. A lot of the time these marches on loose sand, which is much harder to hike on, because sand is not stable underfoot. We had become just like those soldiers on the roads we had admired earlier for their coordination and quite correct military precision.

There was one not so clever soldier who paid a heavy price for a trick he tried to play on that forced march back to camp. He stashed his rifle on the mess truck to let them carry it back for him. One of the cadre noticed what happened and so the guy had to pay the price. He had to carry his rifle with him, including sleeping, to the latrine, and to chow for seven days wherever he went; so

much for trying to get out of things.

Captain Lewis our commanding officer, personally monitored some of these marches, but I doubt that he went the whole length of the course. I remember on one occasion when we were double-timing on a hike when he appeared and ran at double-time around us backward. He yelled at us to keep up the step. “What are you a bunch of nannies?” he yelled. A little belittling pushed us to try harder.

We often held our rifles at sling arms, which meant the rifle sling was over and around the right shoulder. We were always kept in step by the cadences,” hup two three four, hup two three four” chanted by the cadre, which we always had to shouted in return. We even used the Japanese words that sounded like ”itchy knee, chansee, itchy knee chan see.” It did help us all to keep in step. We were getting into good condition day by day, and learning how to take care of our feet. In the early days of our training we would get big blisters from the hikes.

We learned to really keep in step and proud of it too. It also helped us pass the time on the long distances. I do not ever remember anyone singing a song, however. we did have one cadence I liked;” I left, I left, I left my wife with nothing but gingerbread left,” Which was answered with; “Your right, your right!” The command to double time was a time to hustle and we did a lot of it. It was usually noisy and an energetic time and we still counted cadences. It was a time to build us up physically and a time to build self-confidence and it did for me.

After several miles hiking, the entire load was very tiring. With full field packs we were continually shifting the load on our shoulders. The young men thrived on the longer distances and grew stronger by the day, but for the older ones, (those in their thirties), it was quite an ordeal. I felt sorry for those guys. They didn’t recover as fast, and I could tell that they were exhausted at the end of the marches by the weariness in their faces. We had salt sweat lines on our shirts, but many times the older men had sweat lines almost reached their waists by the time we got back to camp. Each day we were glad when those marches were over. We sure looked forward to seeing the company area and our huts once again. It was like coming ho.

It was a Friday in late October when I received my first weekend pass. I was given permission to actually get away, out into the civilian world. Believe me I left as soon as I could, and I didn’t have to be back until 0600 Monday morning. What a nice experience to have. I anxiously put on my dress Khaki uniform, tie and garrison cap, and hiked to the guard gate about a mile down the road, where several soldiers were waiting. I took the military bus to St. Augustine about forty miles away. It was great to be on my own for the first time. I knew I could contact the USO there who would help me find my way around and find fun things to do.

They found me a place to stay Friday night and then offered me a place in a private home the following Saturday evening, which included breakfast, so I signed up. I spent my time Saturday morning just looking around and exploring the city. Later on that evening, I followed the map they gave me and searched for the house. I was enchanted by old St. Augustine and its cobblestone streets. It was as if I had stepped back in time. I was in an old hushed residential neighborhood away from the din of city traffic. A canopy of trees stretched high overhead. Masses of thin Spanish moss randomly hung down from the upper branches in long gray beards.

Many of these large old homes had little tranquil flower gardens out in back. Rays of sunlight

scattered among stone sculptures and little bubbling fountains. It was so quiet that I could hear horses clopping a block away. When they turned my way I could see they were pulling a shiny black tourist carriage.

When I arrived at the address an older lady greeted me and showed me to my room. It was so nice walking into that homey atmosphere. I bided my time by spending the evening alone in a quite bedroom. I enjoyed a strange breakfast the following morning on a table in a small kitchen. The meal was served on china with a real tablecloth. The conversation was cordial. The whole situation was surreal. It was much like I had slipped through the front lines in the civil war and I was living in that home as a federal spy.

After breakfast I walked back down town and discovered a large old stone fort right on the Atlantic Ocean, and to my delight, I saw two long rows of stately palm trees that curved along the adjacent bay. I saw several service people walking about downtown St. Augustine that Sunday morning and but few stores were open. I was bored being alone there, wasn't familiar with the town, and had little money, so took an early bus back to camp. I hiked from the main gate back my quarters and got there early that Sunday evening. The grim reality of army life began anew as I entered my hut.

Passes were not available all the time, but on my next pass, over the Thanksgiving weekend I went to Jacksonville. It's a much larger city and much like Indianapolis, and is forty miles the opposite direction than St. Augustine. Alone in the city, I leisurely explored the downtown and it's busy streets. It was a city loaded with sailors and noisy bars. I stopped at a shop and bought a gold locket and chain for my girl friend Jeane for Christmas, which I mailed home.

There was a notice posted by a Church at the USO, offering a meal for two servicemen, so I signed up. In the meantime I took advantage of the free cookies while I waited. The Church brought a bus. The whole idea was a nice gesture for lonesome men away from home, and the food was home cooked and good.

However, I felt strange being the center of attention and wondered about my table manners. The best thing I remember about the southern hospitality there was the attractive young ladies wearing sweaters with attractive bosoms, and sporting diamond engagement rings. It was from that brief and pleasant point on in my life, that the southern expression, "You-all," transformed into something absolutely memorable and beautiful.

I had three passes overall and I took the last one back to beautiful St. Augustine. This gave me a relaxing change from Army life. I spent a lot of lonely time on Friday evening just leisurely walking along the bay near the fort. The light reflecting off the water through the stately palm trees was beautiful. But I wasn't happy; I was pining to be home and see my family, and most importantly; Jeane.

Meanwhile and back to camp…We had a lot of training out in the open areas out among the scrubby grass and pine trees. Here we had a lot of those lectures where the cadre and often our platoon officers used flip top charts. It was here that they would explain a lot of military matters. We sat around on sand in a large group, with the cadre and officers circling around to make sure everyone were attentive.

Out in the field we stacked our rifles in triangular threes and positioned our packs in rows. As you might expect some men had problems remembering where they put theirs. We had one guy so dumb that he had to carry a sign with his name on it and then stick it in the ground by anything he had. It was humorous, but not for the cadre, as he was a hassle. Some men would move the sign to further confuse the man. Cadre had to straighten it all out before any training could begin, and cadre can be grumpy.

It was out in the field that I learned about many weapons and how to break them down to clean them. I was amused with the word nomenclature as were others. Nomenclature, we learned, was a fancy name for all the parts of something, like say a machine gun.

The rifle can also be used as a grenade launcher. This is used to give the grenade a greater range. We had lectures on them, and some of us fired them. We also had lectures on the use of the 60 and 81mm mortars, but didn't fire them. If we had more advanced rifle training, instead of getting anti-tank training we would have had more opportunity to be trained on them.

We were shown how to use gas masks and what to do if gassed. We had to take our masks off, and put the masks back on while inside the building that was full of tear gas. In order to make a mask work you have to expel all breath through the exhaust vent and then secure the mask tightly. Naturally gas got the in our eyes when the masks were off. It was a good experience and they put the test on well. In order to survive an attack you have to be well trained and not panic.

This field training continued all except the last two weeks, and it grew colder and colder in sunny Florida. It was so cold that ice formed on puddles and we are not used to the cold, especially sitting around in the breezes while some cadre man drones on something important for us to learn that we are bored with. A lot of the time we formed into little uninterested groups of three or four tearing down some weapon.

Some men, of course are total goof-offs, who often tried the patience of cadre, and distracted those who wanted to learn something that could save their lives. For me to truly learn something I need to get my hands on it, and do it a few times to really know what I was doing. So that meant I really had many of the features explained, but I did not really know the weapons because of time.

Grenades were dangerous, especially in training new men. For that reason we were expected to explicitly follow the rules, because one little mistake like dropping one, if not grabbed and thrown away could quickly detonate and send steel shrapnel into several men. We had barriers to stand behind and each man was closely supervised.

Each man had one grenade to throw and when he did he ducked behind the stand. Those little handles on the grenades pop open and takes five seconds for the grenade to explode. The recommend way to get a grenade on target is to lob it like a shot put, because grenades are actually too heavy for the average man to throw with accuracy.

We had training in the use of TNT, percussion caps, and primer cord. These items were used to set off satchel charges to blow open enemy pillboxes. These items were also used to set explosive charges to destroy bridges and buildings. I was never comfortable with these weapons.

I enjoyed what brief encounters I had with machine guns. We fired the 50 cal. that were

mounted on trucks. They throw a lot of lead in a hurry and are loud and lethal. The water-cooled heavy 30 cal. Machine guns have tripods positioned in the ground and are slower. These are used in support of the infantry companies and are usually fired from farther back to cover a given area. We also had the smaller air-cooled 30 cal. guns, which are easier to move and are used by the front line rifle companies.

The most disappointing weapon I encountered was the 45 cal. pistol. I found it too cumbersome to handle and fire. The barrel jumps up and to the left when fired and requires a lot of grip to hold it on target. If I was in need of protection at close range I would rather have a 38 cal with a short barrel. I could control it a lot better and move quicker. I really doubt anyone could fast draw the 45 cal. I think the logic is that the 45 cal. would knock a man down where a smaller cal. would not.

We also had some training with the bazooka, which is a small rocket launcher tube designed for close combat to destroy or disable a tank. It requires two men working together; one man holds it up on his shoulder, while the other man arms it. Then the first man aims and fires. In combat it would require a lot of courage to stand patiently in front of a tank coming at you, while the other man loads and fires. If the men in the tank saw anyone preparing the rocket I am sure that they would draw fire.

We had several classes and hands-on experience in compass reading. This included both reading and orienting a map in location to landmarks and shooting an azimuth. We were shown how to vector enemy targets, and follow roadways. Topographical maps and elevations etc. helped to understand terrain.

We also had a lot of first aid training to stop bleeding, how to splint bones and care for burns. The small first aid pack attached to our rifle belt contained a pouch of sulfa powder to be used on large wounds, and we were shown how to use it.

The mess crew routinely brought hot meals to us out in the field on trucks, and set up a food serving line, and a gear-cleaning line. They used gasoline-fired submerged heaters in three large cans of boiling water to clean the gear. Each can was galvanized and three feet high with a small smoke stack. They all had a distinctive smell of fumes and hot boiling water.

After chow we lined up and scraped off uneaten food into one can, then used a small mop and soapy water from the first can of water, and then rinsed our gear in the last two. This procedure kept us all from getting dysentery. It is the Army standard for cleanliness. If we had no food delivered we ate canned rations and cleaned our gear in the sand as well as we could.

Our mess gear consisted of two aluminum plates, steel knives, forks and spoons, and a canteen cup. The plates were creatively designed with a handle that locked all utensils in place. We carried them in our back packs, and the canteen cup surrounded the canteen.

I received a lesson in taking care of my equipment one day out in the field. I had just finished my meal and went over to the cleaning line with my gear. I hadn't used my knife so I left it by a tree. When I returned it was gone. A cadre man had taken it to the Commanding Officer Captain Lewis. I learned he had it so I went to get it. I approached him with a salute and told him that I had left my knife by the tree;" Sir." This gave him the opportunity to dress me down for not being responsible. I

did get my knife back, but sulked on my way back. I needed to get my TS card punched.

On another occasion out in the field, we had a small package of ice cream for dessert, which was wrapped in paper. Well as one might imagine some guy did not put the wrapper in the trash. Captain Lewis found about it and called us to an immediate assembly and called us a bunch of pigs. He said. “As you’re all a bunch of pigs, now everyone get down on your knees and act like pigs. So that is what we did. 160 men crawled on all fours in the sand with a resulting bunch of humorous snorts scattered among the troops.

It was here that Capt. Lewis once showed his more human side. One day in relaxed atmosphere, where we were assembled out in the field, he asked one private where he was from. The private answered “West Virginia Sir,” and Capt. Lewis answered,” West by God Virginia.” We all had a laugh. Captain Lewis continued on with banter and a few little friendly anecdotes. That was good for us all, because we respected him for it.

I had some more personal discipline one day when I failed to salute our Lt. Col. Ingalls when I met him from the other direction while walking on a battalion street. I thought I was far enough away to get away with out saluting, but he yelled at me.” Soldier” and then hit my helmet liner with his swagger stick. I was told with strong emphasis that I was not properly respecting a superior officer, and furthermore it would never happen again would it Pvt. Hill? After several agreeing,” Yes sirs,” on my part he let me go. Fortunately nothing more came of it. I had been thoroughly chastised, and I hated it.

One of the most strenuous exercises I had was crawling under live machine gun fire. It was conducted in an area that was designed to simulate actual combat, with random explosions, obstacles to crawl over, and under several spirals of barbed wire. Bullets passing overhead were higher above me than I thought, but there were real bullets and it was fearful. I wasn’t terrified, however it was really dangerous and I respected the terrible possibility. This was the infiltration course.

I had to crawl on my stomach in the sand with my rifle cradled in my extended arms, and keep my head and shoulders down below the bullets. I clumsily labored forward and plowed the sand on alternate elbows and knees, trying to keep the sand out of my mouth, my shirt collar, and most importantly my rifle. It would be inspected when I reached the end, and had to be clean. I also had to somehow squirm closely over several imbedded telephone poles, under barbed wire and dodge the areas where explosions were going off. It was conducted in a large sand lot, and covered a length of about 50 yards. I was really tired when I finished and my rifle was clean, but all had to go through twice to pass this test. I was exhausted when that day was over.

Near the end of our cycle we had long outdoor training exercise called bivouac. It was advanced training that simulated many actual battle conditions we might have to encounter in combat. We were told that we would be leaving at midnight on New Year’s Eve. We packed our full field packs with the shovel hanging down on the back, brought our rifles and waited in our huts. We spent about an hour just relaxing and talking until it was time to leave. It was dreary. We knew we would be taking a long march so we were ready with double socks on our feet and pads ready to protect our shoulders.

It was scheduled to be 25 miles, but it turned out to be but 18 or so. As it was in sand we

figured it was about the same. We hiked in the darkness in the middle of the night for fifty minutes and slipped our packs and shoes off and rested for ten every hour in the darkness until after dawn. We raised our feet up on breaks at every opportunity. When we finally arrived we were dead tired and sleepy; however we still had to dig a foxhole and pitch our tents. I might add that no one dared to try to sneak a nap.

Foxholes are dug by ground troops to protect them from artillery shrapnel and small arms fire. As we might need to live and sleep in them it was necessary to make them big enough. The sand was easy to dig in Florida.

We opened our c-rations and ate quickly as we had a formation to make right away. We stashed our heavy packs in our tents and left. We had a military exercise with the 57mm. canons, which lasted about two hours. We were told to report back in an hour or two for noon chow, and try to get some rest. When we returned we found that wild razorback hogs had invaded our area. Some guys had brought extra goodies with them in their packs and the hogs got into them. I didn't lose anything, but they did tear down my tent.

It was out in the field, that we learned the formations of a rifle squad in combat situations. The smallest unit in a front line rifle company is a squad and ideally it consists of twelve men in a diamond formation. The front two men that lead are scouts. There are three men on each flank, three men in the middle form a Browning automatic rifle team, and then at least one man brings up the rear. The squad leader is responsible for the communication between everyone and directs all the actions of the squad.

We did spend about three days there in that bivouac area. It was a lot of physical exertion on the sand, in the sand, sand flees, and pine trees. It was boring doing all the simulation exercises, and hiking here and there. The food was the usual blah fare and we were glad this strenuous activity was over. We could tell by the way the cadre were acting that they were glad too. Then we had to march back; the whole 18 miles. Marching back in the sun for those few hours was quite a sweaty ordeal. My little wooden hut on the company row really looked good. I was soon out of the several day old sweaty clothes, and off to the showers. This experience was probably good for us.

I do not every remember it raining at Camp Blanding, but we did have the threat of a hurricane in January. We had to suspend training and take cover in large concrete block building. It lasted about one really boring crowded day and night, with the cadre keeping close watch on us.

NEWS ITEM: Gerd von Rundstedt, the noted German General, mounted a last ditch massive German counterattack across France on December 16, that totally surprised American leaders. There were thousands of men killed. This was known as the Battle of the Bulge and extended past and around Bastogne, France.

Because of this emergency our national leaders cut our training short two weeks; from 17 to 15. They did this to be able to move additional troops in if needed. It was good news for us, because we had been optimistically looking forward to finishing up and leaving this place and all its hated discipline. We joyfully learned that we were actually through. We would actually be going home right away, and it was hard to believe.

We gathered around the company bulletin board to read the official details. Sometimes we

would get rumors, as one might expect, and a lot of big stories were told around just for kicks. After awhile you get savvy and not believe a lot of what is heard, so the bulletin board was a viable check. However, not at any time had anyone received any paper work saying that we had completed basic.

After adjusting to the news it turned out to be a very happy time for a lot of us. However, it came as such a quick surprise we weren't emotionally ready. The men we had developed a friendship with in the stress of basic, would not be around anymore, so we hastily exchanged addresses and a few pictures. A lot of the men left camp immediately, but some of us were not told exactly when we would leave, as paper work was not complete. I was a surprised to learn that of our training company of 160 men, 55 of us would be going to the Pacific.

It was a time for separating. Soon it thinned out around our company and the lines at chow time were short. It was a strange time. It was a relief to live without having to get up in a hurry to make formations by a certain time with all our packs and rifles. Instead it was time to turn in our rifles and packs to the supply room and account for everything we had.

The memories of some acquaintances would soon pass away, but a lot friendships made would not be forgotten soon. My close buddy, John Hartman, went to Italy. Alton, whom you will hear more about was shipped out long before I did, and he went to the Pacific. Some of the cadre men said their goodbyes quickly and got their well-deserved passes. There were a couple of them got out so quick I didn't get to thank them, and some were good guys to be around, notably Corporal Winters. There was even an officer or two I would have wished to thank with a salute and a handshake if I had had the opportunity to do so. (Under different circumstances I am sure they would have been great to know.).

Our company was soon down to a few men. For a while I had the lonesome quarters for myself. There were the empty beds and clothes racks around me. I was free of a lot of obligations and yet it was a little quiet around there late in the evenings. We still had Reveille to pull at 0600 though, and I still needed to make a fire in the stove.

While I was waiting for my orders and my tickets home, I was assigned on a work detail before dawn delivering bread, on a large delivery truck, and I really enjoyed it. There was a big Army bakery that served the entire camp, and I had to get up about 0300 on those days to get the bread there in time for morning chow.

I saw empty company streets and rows of buildings with lights here and there as I stood holding on in the back of the truck. I had just finished hiking over some of these same roads mile after mile in sweaty dirty clothes. It was a different perspective that I enjoyed.

I was in a crew of three men that snacked on fresh bread on any time. Bread was baked in loaves that were cut in the company mess halls, so we just broke off chunks and ate the bread before it cooled. When we delivered the bread, we found that other chow halls had eggs, and bacon and fresh juice just like anyone else, which was great because we ate breakfast more than once. Marmalade went well on fresh bread.

I was busy on this route for about a week and the time went by quickly. The strange thing about this was they were using German Prisoners of War at the bakery. They were used as bakers. This was interesting to know. It was strange for me to see them and contemplate where they had

actually come from. These Germans looked like anyone else, but I wondered if I really trusted them to bake for me to. On occasion I could hear them speaking German privately.

When the day's work was done one day, I was called to the orderly room. I had a telegram. My Grandmother (Mom) I learned had just died and the folks back at home wanted me to come back tight away to be with them. They thought I might get to come home for the funeral, as she had been a part of my family.

I asked for an early furlough, explaining the situation; but I was denied. I didn't understand the logic; it didn't make sense; basic was over. They really didn't need me there and I really felt bitter about it.

A few days later I received my orders to leave. I found I did not have a furlough, which could have been two weeks at home; all I had a measly 5 days en-route. I was given a date to report for duty at Ft. Ord in California. They issued me civilian train tickets to Indianapolis through to Salinas, California. Failure to be there on time would be a Court Martial offense, so I knew I had to watch my time very closely. I immediately packed everything I had into my duffle bag and got on the first train I could for home. I was really anxious.

I had been issued all new woolen olive drab winter OD clothes. This included an outer dress blouse and a cap with blue Infantry piping and an "Ike" jacket It was one like the General wore. I also had in my possession the only badge I had earned for rifle marksmanship, which I pinned on my shirt. I felt good about it. It was the only thing I had earned. The blouse did have the brass infantry buttons on the lapels. Everyone would like to see me in my best, I thought, even though the badge was just for Marksman one step above bolo.

There were other soldiers on my train that departed at different spots going home, and we bid each one off with well wishes. This helped to build my anticipation. I would see my folks soon. I anticipated that Mother and Art, my younger brother Bob and Jeane, would be there. My Grandmother had died a few days ago. I wanted to see Jeane, and spend some time with her; she and I alone.

Sitting looking out the window and enjoyed everything go by, I saw the trees gradually change, and things look a little more like home. Being real winter up north, the view of the country changed, as snow had fallen all around the countryside. It was Kentucky. I stood up to get a bigger view and rocked back and forth with the train and enjoyed it all. I was getting closer and closer to home and to my folks once again.

My family and Jeane did meet me at the train at Union Station in Indianapolis. It was refreshing and nice to be home again to the comfort and joy of mother's cooking, my own bed in my room and to see everybody. The only real problem at home was time was so short, and I kept close count on the days I had left.

Gasoline was still rationed and so we didn't get around much. I wore my Army clothes everywhere as they didn't want us to go civilian.

We just sat around and talked and ate and shared everything. Jeane and I did get some privacy. I cherished that time we had. Jeane and I agreed on an engagement, and we went down to

Nichols Jewelry Store in downtown Indianapolis and bought an engagement ring; one we could afford. Which meant it wasn't a very big diamond but one with some white gold around it, which I thought gave it a little more sparkle.

We had a snapshot taken on the steps of the house where I am holding Jeane's hand up, to show off the ring.

Jeane and I also had professional pictures taken together and another view with Mother and me. The pictures taken were somber. We were not in the mood to smile. The whole idea of leaving struck me hard. I was leaving home for a long trip and how long I would be gone was a something I did not want to think about. Would I get wounded? The thought didn't make sense. The real thought in my head was whether I would make back at all. They soon drove me back to Union Station downtown and we all went up the stairways to the train waited on the platform. All our time together was gone. We all kissed each other goodbye with some real, and some suppressed, tears. The train pulled out and I was off to war. It was a sad day that 23rd of January in 1945, and the flag with the blue star was proudly displayed in the front window at home waiting for my return.

The news of the engagement traveled to the office where Jeane worked.

The Bowes Seal-Fast Corporation, company newsletter they called "Just-Us" covered the engagement in a little snip-it article in their February 1945 Issue

Chapter Seven Train to Ft Ord

Having just left those at home, I was on a train heading west. I had a lot of time to think about a lot of things in my recent past and wonder what was next. I do not remember the route but it took at least four days. I was literally glued to the windows and enjoyed discovering this part of the country. This trip was different than down south as the towns were farther apart now and it also seemed a lot less personal. The train whistled dutifully along the way marking each town. The sound of the clicking wheels continued a melody of its own. There were several service people on board as well as civilians. Checking around I discovered some of these men on the train were going to Ft Ord too.

We had dining cars but no Pullman facilities as on the train to Blanding so in the evenings we slept in the coach haphazardly sprawled over and around the seats. The windows were not opened so we were not exposed to coal soot. The scenery was pretty blah as it was wintertime everywhere, until we traveled through the mountains.

The train stopped in a town in Utah. I took the opportunity to step out alongside the train in the snow and look around. Mountains completely surrounded us and it was a dull overcast day and it was so cold that the snow crunched under my feet. The air was refreshing to breathe and I enjoyed that short quick stroll in my shirtsleeves.

The train continued on its journey through the snowy scenic mountains and when we came into sunny California, we traveled a southerly direction through a lot of nice different towns

I departed at Salinas, which is a little town South of San Francisco, and shared the room in a hotel with soldier I did not know. The next morning, he told me with a wry smile, he could have robbed me of what little money I had. I guess he wanted to tell me he was a good guy and honest. I guess I was a little careless; but at this point I was thankful too for I needed what little money I had for extras like phone calls etc. We took a bus to Fort Ord and arrived that morning.

Chapter Eight Ft. Ord

I took a bus from downtown Salinas to Ft Ord, California. It was an advanced training center on the coast, where the Army had trained thousands of men before me. The buildings were in neat military rows all painted white. The streets were paved and there was a lot of military traffic, and it appeared to a place very well organized. They quickly signed us in and assigned us to a barracks. The weather was pleasantly mild during the day and really cool in the evenings. I was with complete strangers most of the time.

The bugle calls on the PA system were loud. We had long chow lines and strict inspections of our quarters. I enjoyed being off evenings, which began around 1700. I did see a first run show or two there and enjoyed their large PX.

There was a great big beer hall, with a beautiful view of the coast and the Pacific Ocean. It was crowded with boisterous soldiers in suntan uniforms and lots of steins of beer on the tables. I did not join them.

The biggest thing I remembered there was the strenuous infantry course just like in basic; crawling under machine-gun fire. This time however, it was on real dirt.

We did a lot of repetitious training at Fort Ord., as in basic, with lots of emphasis on calisthenics, marching and obstacles courses meant to keep us all in shape.

I was there in sunny California about a week and departed on a full troop train one morning in February and headed north. This was a relaxing beautiful winding trip through the mountains. The long inclines the slowed train down, and when we went around S curves it was interesting to look out and see the entire length of the train. There were lots of beautiful trees in Oregon that stretched often above and below us.

We departed the troop train later that day to Ft Lawton. It is located near Seattle Washington. It was a dismal overcast day.

Chapter Nine Fort Lawton

Fort Lawton was an Army Camp set in a nice wooded area high up on a large hill. It reminded me of an Indiana State Park back home. It was charmingly set among tall pine trees, with asphalt-paved roads that wound all around inside the camp. The camp was neat and well kept.

The barracks was small and dingy, with black overlapped roll roofing covering the outside walls. These had probably been constructed in the ‘30s, and it was quite possibly an old CCC camp.

Each building was about 80 feet long and 25 feet wide, with framed sets of windows on each side. These buildings were scattered haphazardly around among the trees, and graveled walkways connected them all. Each one had a black metal stovepipe sticking up out the roof, as we burned coal, and a typical army bulletin board out it front.

In spite of the overall pleasant appearance of the camp, it was a sad and dismal experience, because we knew this was the last place we would be in the states before shipping out. That was the prevailing mood, and it could be seen in everyone's faces the entire five or six days I was there.

Usually I did remember where I had seen someone before, or had conversations with previously, where we had discovered something in common; but here I found myself with many strangers. I had always sought those I had known, and to try to claim a bunk nearby, but having been separated from my buddies in basic, the chances now were few. Most of the guys now were about the same mix of ages as the men I knew in basic. These were men drafted of many ages up to about 35 years old, but most were the young ones 18 to 25. At this camp, it was also a true cross sectional mix of men from many parts of the country.

One thing I began to do was to try to try to identify just where each man was from by his dialect. The humor from everybody around the country was also a novel discovery for me to enjoy, and I learned to detect the little subtle differences.

The curiosity at Ft Lawton was the presence of Japanese-American soldiers. They had served in combat as infantryman in Italy. It was interesting seeing them in the showers. They had scars all over them, and surprisingly to me; they spoke good English.

The question about the preference of us going to combat in the Pacific rather than to Europe was openly debated in our casual conversations. We all felt were going to the best place. We didn't really relish going to the Pacific to fight in the jungles, with all those bad conditions we had read about, even after training for it, however we felt that it was better than going to fight in Europe, where those battles were often intensive and hand to hand, and were against the Germans defending their fatherland with very deadly weapons.

To us at the time, the Japanese were little, slant eyed, low lives, we regarded as sure losers. It wouldn't take much imagination to think that we as an individual soldier would relish killing one if we had a chance; considering their attack on Pearl Harbor, the inhumane treatment of our men in the Philippines, and the atrocities committed by the thousands in China.

I saw the biggest crap games of my life at Ft Lawton, and they were fascinating . There was that uncertain energy around to take a chance. "Maybe this time I'll get a big win" attitude, that drove men to get in the game, and take their turn at luck. Two games started out one evening right after chow on the day we got our partial pay when we had money to burn. Two Army blankets were spread out on the floor at apposite ends of an empty barracks and ten men were crouched or hunkered down on their knees in a circle around each one. Several other men circled around the outside and often tossed in their dollars.

The dice used were placed in rubber cups and thrown against the wall. This made it almost impossible to use a crooked set of dice possibly hidden in the hand. As there is a lot of money at stake, some men are tempted to cheat, however there are severe consequences for anyone caught.

I always felt that there were, consequently, many honest games.

The men faded (Challenged the bet of the man with the dice), and made side bets as well. They could be heard saying, “He will “or, “He won’t”, or “Covered” or “I’ll take ten”, and then laying their dollars down on the blanket. Each man, upon taking his turn with the dice, had his favorite saying like “Do it baby” while rolling. Or the favorite “Come on seven”. They used names from back home as they threw to make their point like “Craps, Little Joe, Snake Eyes, Box Cars, Fever, etc. Each man took his turn with the dice when others “crapped out,” or lost. As this continued on into the evening, men would lose their betting money, (go busted) and leave. That’s the way of the game; win, or lose as a defeated man.

I watched this excitement for a couple of hours, fascinated with this novel exchange of money. I left and after a while, I came back to see the results. The game had taken on a life of its own, and eliminated men one by one until there were only three men left at each blanket, then more lost, then the winners joined at one blanket. This game went on for at least four hours, and finally, two men had all the money. I saw a lot of $50 bills at that point in the game. They figuratively kept “bumping heads” and they couldn’t put the other man down. They had all of the money lost by at least 40 men between them and bulged out of every pocket they had. One was a Japanese-American and the other one was a guy I knew from basic training, from Anderson, Indiana. After realizing that to continue was futile, these last two men shook hands and parted, each quite satisfied with their take. I am sure no one bothered them on the way back to their barracks, even though they were carrying a wad. They were honored.

Over the last few days in that dismal setting, I stayed in a somber mood. I reread letters from home I had stashed, doted over photographs and wrote some letters. In this mood I often took a private hike down one of the winding roads to a high vantage point, where I could look down through the trees and see the distant twinkling lights of the city below. I missed my family and Jeane, I was dreading leaving the country, and I didn’t know what was coming.

We did get some immunization shots there, including one painful one for Yellow Fever. I spent some of my partial pay at the PX on candy and gum and some stationary. I saw a movie or two, and otherwise it was boring and nothing to do to kill time but read, check the bulletin board and wait in the chow lines. All the food was the standard Army fare. I do not remember if I received any mail, as my address had changed so quickly. We had no training.

The time there slowly dragged on, and when our orders came down to us, we loaded up and rode trucks down to the dock in Seattle. There was a small ship now tied up by the dock and one by one, with our duffle bags on our shoulders we walked up the gangway. We saluted the officer waiting there, as is the navy custom, crossed the steel deck, stepped up and over the hatch doorway, and disappeared down in the hold.

Below decks the strange smell of diesel fuel, fresh paint, latrine, and dim lights welcomed me to my navy home. I claimed a bunk, threw my duffle bag down, and was soon back topside watching it all. We were soon underway and out in the Pacific Ocean sailing to an unknown destination.

Chapter Ten Voyage to Oahu

We left Seattle in the morning of February 12, 1945, in a stiff cold ocean breeze. After stashing my gear many decks below, I joined several men at the rail and watched the coastline pass in front of me. Our small ship wended its way out of the bay around islands and headed on a course parallel to the coast and south for most of the first day. The sea was choppy and presented an interesting challenge for me, as I had to hold on a lot of time to get across the steel deck. The fresh open air was cold and invigorating.

Everyone had to wear a Mae West life preserver over everything at all times. They had been previously used and had an odor of their own; however they kept us warmer topside. They were blue and the type that drapes over each shoulder and ties in the front at the waist

We spent a lot of time on this voyage topside watching the ocean waves churn and I soon very bored with it all. Few of us had anything to read, and there was no place to play cards, so it became a matter of enduring.

My bunk was several steel stairways and decks down, and was made of canvas, which was stretched and secured by ropes over a metal frame. Bunks were stacked five high, and so we were really cramped for space. We had to climb up and down on these and store all our worldly goods in duffle bags at our feet. As we were close to each other and the ship small, our body odors mingled in the bunk area.

The crowded mess hall had rails on the tables to help prevent our trays from sliding off when the ship rolled, and we had three meals a day of tasteless food.

The toilet seats were nothing but two twelve-foot long planks of wood secured to a trough. Sea water was continually pumped in one end and flowed out the other. As the ship rolled, the water surged from each end back and forth.

Showers were salt water and we had salt-water soap. This is a function almost without merit. I suppose we were a lot cleaner but I felt like I had salt all over my body afterwards. I just didn't feel clean.

Soon after evening chow it became dark. They didn't allow us topside at that time and were reminded not to smoke topside so that we couldn't be detected by enemy subs. This meant a lot of time spent in the very close quarters below. It was time to read and write letters home. Lights stayed on until 9:00, with limited lighting on afterward. It was strange sleeping that first night as I could feel the ship move.

Every day on board ship, life started with the same rude awakening. Mornings began about five or six, with battle sirens startling us awake. This noise literally blasted us out of our bunks from a dead sleep. Sailors ran as if in terror through the passageways. They caught their hands on columns and swing their bodies up stairways taking several steps at a time, as they rushed to get to their battle stations. My adrenaline and fear had to be dealt with immediately, for at that point I had to decide if this was just a drill or if we were really under a sub attack.

The first time I heard this it was a shock, but I soon learned that I had a choice to either calm down or then get back to sleep, or go to the head and freshen up and then wait around for the chow line.

As it was crowded down there, and I always tried to be respectful, however it was a problem ether way. So I opted to sleep in and take my chances on being too late for food and get more sleep, and get out before they ordered me topside.

The sailors were constantly busy keeping the ship functioning and everything clean. We were in the way topside as the sailors continually moved long snaking hoses around as they washed down the decks. There was an important reason for all the attention to cleanliness.
.

There was one thing that made this the most miserable of all experiences. 99% of the soldiers on this ship were seasick. I was one of them. I was sick most of the trip. I couldn't keep anything down. Even the smell of the galley turned me off. I lay down in my bunk as often as I could to save my energy. I drank little water and actually took little nourishment.

At the bottom of each of the stairways and randomly elsewhere, were large garbage cans for seasick men having problems. It was a repulsive sight in many places because many men didn't quite make it to the cans. The stairways became slick too.

I can only remember one man I knew that the rolling ship didn't bother. His name was Hogg, and we were in the same hut in basic. He said he thought it was because of his ability to hold his whiskey. He just ate his meals as they were offered and enjoyed the trip.

This miserable voyage took about six days, and then we came upon the beautiful island of Oahu in Hawaii. We sailed past Diamond Head Mountain and cruised into Pearl Harbor. I remember seeing some of the remaining sunken ships still protruding up out of the water that had been sunk in the surprise attack on December 7th. I was happy to be off that stinking ship, and happy to arrive at a place I had heard so much about. The weather was balmy and the view fantastic. We gathered all our gear, and walked down the gangplank and lined up on the dock.

Chapter Eleven Oahu Island

We looked about and discovered a narrow gage railroad line which lead to a spur line along side the dock, and a long train with wooden empty cars was waiting. Curiously the cars were but four feet high. Happily we swung our duffle bags up on our shoulders and walked aboard.

The train lurched a couple of times and moved slowly into and up around in the mountains up the valleys and disappeared into the interior. We traveled among rocky hills about an hour, and much like relaxed tourists, we enjoyed the weather, and the lush magnificence all around. The sides of the purple mountains were strong, magnificent and rocky; almost straight up. There were very large metal doors imbedded in several of them. It was a mystery and I wondered what was stored there.

We saw the famous "saddle", which was a low valley in the mountains where Japanese planes passed over in their December 7, 1941. The ships down in Pearl Harbor slowly disappeared from our view far below us, as we passed over and around the mountains to our camp site.

It was a pleasing sight to see the sparkling white barracks all in neat rows in the sunshine;

quite in contrast to the dismal ones we had in Ft. Lawton over a week ago. They were about the same size as the ones back in Ft. Ord, and were painted inside. There were many wooden walks connecting them and strangely, the soil around them was small pieces of red gravel; volcano soil, however these walkways kept us from getting the sticky red mud over everything. When it rained it dried off because it the gravel was porous.

The weather here was fantastic the entire time I was here. Breezes were gentle and the sunshine warm, and a little cooler in the evenings. It was extraordinary.

The inspections of our quarters were strict and the resident cadre always maintained control, via a continual nasty disposition. This we discovered that rather quickly one day when the floors in our barracks did not pass inspection. The red soil presented a problem. It seems that mopping leaves a thin residue that requires continuous mopping to clean it thoroughly. To do it right requires rinsing the mop several times. We had to mop the entire floor three times to pass inspection.

I lost track of anyone I had known. Once in awhile I would see someone in a chow line or at the PX, but most of the time I was with strangers. There were hundreds of men being trained here and they were not all from the ship I arrived on. We were always seeking someone from back home or we had known from somewhere to talk to.

We did get mail here but it was in bunches. It was warming to hear about things at home in such impersonal surroundings.

Reconnaissance bombers appeared overhead and noisily thundered near us every morning. These were the B-25s with the blunt noses, painted a flat olive drab, and they were beautiful to watch passing in the blue sky. I was impressed and quite pleased to see them. These craft were undoubtedly searching for Japanese subs in nearby waters.

The PX here was great. We had the choice of a lot of candy and gum etc. We hadn't seen any for a while and we could buy a full box here. The food served in the mess halls was tolerable, and I could enjoy keeping it down.

.

One day I was tagged to do KP. It started around 0430 so we would have the chow prepared and the chow line ready by 0600. The hall was a large wooden structure and we on were stuck in a large room with four large sinks with a limited view outside. Oddly there were six of us guys named Hill assigned to pots and pans. These were large heavy gauge aluminum and steel and required much hot water, soap, mops and intensive labor to get them clean. They came to us continually all day. We did eat well, however it was back on the job right away. I never knew it took so many pans to feed everyone. Undoubtedly we did several of the largest ones two or three times that day. We were weary and our clothes drenched and smelly and we didn't leave there until 2100 or 2200 that evening, which was about seventeen hours. That was a real workout and one I won't forget, and I missed training that day.

Usually we hiked in columns of two to our training facilities and traveled through Dole pineapple fields. We were told not to bother the fruit but you know how that went. Many broke ranks, rushed out, grabbed a pineapple and rushed back to the cheers of others who admired the courage. They were not the mature fruit but we had to try it. We began wondering if some enterprising soldier would take a pineapple or two and stick them in his helmet overnight with water and try getting it to

ferment to make some booze.

.

Each training area had a name. As I recall they were named " Wyaneye," "Greencourse," and "Helimonta." Schollfield Barracks was a famous Army base on Oahu, but we never saw it. One of those areas we trained in was a desert.

We had crude latrines out in the field, which were out in the open sunshine. It consisted of about 30, 55 gal drums sunk into the ground in a double row alongside each other in a cluster, sat deep enough to make seating comfortable. Each had a hole cut with a welding torch. There was a long olive drab canvas pitched over the top with no privacy.

To clean these drums, they dumped fuel oil into each one and then set it on fire, which resulted in a stench like burning feathers. We often had to wait patiently. The seats had to cool before we could use them. They also had wooden troughs for urinals extending out both ends, and rolls of toilet paper hanging conveniently on wires here and there. It wasn't pleasant around there; however this configuration presented a good opportunity for our humor. One had to be careful. Etc.

We had our usual raincoat parade here, as well as the Kilroy cartoons, and the, 'you'll be sorry" comments. We all participated in this and kept it going.

One day we had a lecture on emergency food to eat if we were trapped in a jungle. The setting was unique. We all sat on the ground in a small amphitheater in a clearing away down among overhead trees. The presenter was interesting and humorous. I was hoping I wouldn't need to survive in a jungle.

NEWS ITEM: Marines land on Iwo Jima February 19, 1945

In another area we were shown what to do if we had to abandon ship. Of course we would have life preservers and lifeboats in some cases but we could still be caught in the water without any. They suggested that we tread water while removing our pants, then swing them up and overhead to fill them with air and to tie them together and use as a floating devise. They also explained that if it was necessary to abandon ship and one had to jump into the water from any height to cross the legs to minimize the impact. We were also told that the water may have burning oil on top, so we would need to keep splashing, to avoid burns.

I feared we would have to practice these things in water over our heads and that I would just surely drown, because I had a real fear of water and did not know how to swim. We did practice going down cargo nets as if we were debarking to a landing craft. I always felt that I needed the experience in the water even though I feared drowning. I needed to know how to survive and I didn't get adequate training on this while there.

We did not have passes while there to go to Honolulu, but once we did hike past some civilian homes. I noticed some attractive women there with beautiful skin tones. I also saw a Japanese garden, and a sacred oriental grave site and memorial that impressed me.

Rain was a novelty. It did rain while I was there but no one usually carried rain gear. The weather was so pleasant that if you were rained on it dried quickly. One evening I took my poncho and hiked to the outside theatre to see a movie. Suddenly and without any clouds overhead, it

started to rain. I quickly covered my poncho over my head and watched the movie in the rain, while with stars sparkled overhead. I was told that the rain had blown over from a nearby mountain.

We had a lot of hiking and calisthenics here at this camp. We also had an obstacle course and it included some rugged terrain and a crossing over a ravine using a rope bridge. We had neither rifles nor other firearms to carry or fire while we were in training here.

In conclusion, we stayed on Oahu a total of two or three weeks with further instructions and varied demonstrations.

The paper processing for leaving was completed so we packed our gear, boarded the little train, and took the scenic return train ride down to Pearl Harbor. We loaded on a large troopship, an APA, heading towards a new destination, and carried many military memories of this beautiful island and its fantastic weather.

Chapter Twelve Voyage to Saipan

Unlike my voyage to Hawaii this trip was better in many ways. This ship was a lot larger and didn't bob around as much and so a lot of us had a chance to enjoy it a lot more. I may have been a little queasy at times but generally I got my sea legs. The food was tolerable. We had time to read and play some cards and get to know each other some. I did know a few guys. The time spent below decks was better as I was not seasick. It was still crowded with men and the stacked bunks were stuffy, however I could actually read my letters again and have some personal time that I didn't have before.

Several Navy ships escorted us day and night and our convoy took continual tacking maneuvers to elude submarines. About the only contact we had with Sailors on board was watching them in the mornings when they scrambled to their battle stations and when they hosed the decks down. They had their own mess and quarters and kept apart from us with their other routines.

After sailing a couple of days we stopped at Eniwetok. This was a small island in the central Pacific the navy used as a major refueling station. There were several ships scattered about in the harbor. After sitting in place a few hours we picked up another convoy that took us on. This voyage was deep in enemy waters and in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

There were many monotonous days of the same old routine. Several men were always at the rails. The rec. room had but an old board game and dice. One man took the dice and filled them down and made dice to cheat with. He fixed one pair that would not ever come up a seven and a pair that would always seven. He knew how to hold one pair in the palm of his hand and then switch. He learned that in prison. He was given the opportunity to serve out the balance of his sentence in the army, providing he had an honorable discharge. He also had some interesting stories to share. His last name also was Hill. (Our country was hard up for men to serve.)

Finally those of us on a vigil began to pick out small dark forms of islands appearing on the horizon. In the sky I also began to see several of our country's largest bombers of the time; the B – 29's. These were the Super fortresses, and they were coming back to home bases from a twenty

four hour a day bombing raid on Japan, but many were up so high that it was hard to make them out.

They were coming from slightly different directions. At times I didn't see any at all; then two or three. By the gaps in between, I knew some wouldn't make it back, and those I did see I felt were indeed lucky. Some came in so low they barely cleared the water and some had smoking engines and some had large holes in their fuselage and wings that I could see through. Some had their entire engines missing, having had them blasted away. I was sure many men on board had a lot of terrifying experiences.

As our ship moved in, I could see newly loaded bombers taking off one of those islands from its most distant coast; probably Tinian. Laboring dangerously low over the ocean, they were taking a long time to gain altitude, being so heavy with bombs. They had the unenviable flight to take many miles over the ocean, before arriving at their target and then surviving all the deadly ack-ack (anti-aircraft fire) over their targets.

The water was smooth as we moved in and one island began taking shape right in front us. There were several small gray vessels at anchor around here and there, and as we wound our way in closer we could see docks begin to take shape. We gradually pulled in when it was our turn. We changed course slightly to make an alignment parallel to the dock. We coasted to a stop and sailors busily wound a long rope around a post, fore and aft, tying each end off. After about a week's long voyage we had finally arrived at Saipan, one of the Marianna Islands in the central Pacific.

> **NEWS ITEM:** The US Cruiser, the USS Indianapolis, is hit by a Japanese Kamikaze while on picket duty off Okinawa, and is sent back to San Francisco for repairs.

Chapter Thirteen Saipan

It was a hot tropical sunny day when we arrived at Saipan. The voyage had been long and we glad to get off the ship and its hot steel decks, and get here, wherever it was. We gathered at the rails to see what the island looked like, and watched the activity on dock below. There was a large stack of cardboard boxes about 8 feet high and about 20 feet square neatly arranged on skids, and a soldier on a fork truck was loading them on a truck. Some of us realized the boxes were full of beer. Wow! beer? Yah, beer! "Hey, buddy", one soldier yelled down, Throw us up one", "Yah, throw us up one," several more yelled.

Then the fun began. The soldier on the dock ripped opened a box and began chucking cans up to us, one long arching heave at a time. Several cans of warm beer smacked indiscriminately against the steel structure and bounced on to the decks. Several anxious men scrambled around looking for one as each can slammed the deck. However it was a disappointing, because when they opened the can it was nothing but foam. It was fun and a little bit of excitement in our lives, and a case of warm beer on that dock simply disappeared.

Trucks soon arrived to meet us and we filed down the gangplank in the bright tropical sunshine heavy with all our gear, lined up and loaded on. We were soon droning around on gravel roads, and generating a dry swirling dust cloud.

When we arrived at our new area we found rows of abandoned empty tents mounted on wooden platforms. My tent was hot to touch, so hot I could smell the odor of the fabric. I knew it was going to be sweltering here. I quickly claimed a cot on the right side, dropped my duffle bag and stretched out. Across and behind my row of tents I could hear the activity of men getting assigned here and there as more men arrived.

The first day or so at a new place is always a fresh experience and there were different guys around to get acquainted with. I did have a little free time to get settled in and I learned that the guy in the cot across from me was John Heifner and he was from Arlington, Indiana. We were assigned to Casualty Company 74, APO 15798.

We wondered what was in store for us. In back of our minds we knew there would be a lot more training. We also wondered where and when we would eat and how bad the grub would be, and hopefully better than that we had onboard ship. Maybe the PX would have some special treat like a candy bar or chewing gum.

We did see the usual little hand drawn cartoon figure on everything, “Kilroy was here,” and heard the “You’ll be sorry,” routine from guys already here, delivered in the usual singsong fashion. We already knew we would be sorry and who owned us.

Our training company was housed in about twenty tents, each one was about twenty feet long, sixteen feet wide, and eight feet high, and accommodated eight or ten men. All the sides of the tents were rolled up high and randomly tied with cloth straps, to catch any possible breeze. At the end of the company street was a wooden bulletin board, and out in the sun was a rubber-coated lyster bag suspended from a tripod sagging heavy with warm water. The water was delivered in tanker trucks and treated with Halazone tablets to make it safe for drinking. The warm water tasted like rubber and the chemical.

Nearby I could see several random trees, and more groups of trees filling the background and gradually extending and blending up into the hills. Our area was flat and dry bare dirt with a single tuft of weed or two. The permanent buildings around us were within thirty or so yards away and parallel our company area. Everything around had a dry layer of yellow dingy dust.

The company buildings were Quonset huts about twelve feet high. They were made of curved galvanized metal sheets and the vertical ends of these buildings were also made of metal, with inset wooden doors. Some buildings had windows on the sides. These buildings were made of various heights, widths and lengths. The ones I saw there had been in place for a while and were discolored with yellow dust like every thing else.

The permanent cadre men staffed the buildings for the PX, sickbay, chapel, supply, administration buildings and the recreation hall. Motor pool and ordinance buildings were not in our general area. The Red Cross was usually nearby with their offices in with someone else. Officers had their own quarters somewhere and probably complete with fans.

At right angle to us, and set among several trees, was the mess hall. It was a large building with room inside for storage, a kitchen, and several wooden picnic tables. They used heating oil for the hot water and cooking, and I can remember the oily smell of smoke.

To its left was a worn-out latrine building. It contained the toilets, showers and laundry facilities that were on the outside. Both were nondescript buildings, but well maintained inside.

We were definitely in the tropics during the summer. I do not think it even hinted of rain the entire time was there. It stayed hot and we all did lots of sweating. We wore fatigue uniforms and had to wear our sleeves down except to sleep. Our tent was very warm in the evenings and even as young as we were it was often difficult to get to sleep, and it didn't cool off until early morning. We had to have our mosquito bars tucked in place around our cots, which I thought interfered with any breeze. The mess hall was fairly comfortable in the morning, but hot and humid in the afternoon. As the food was cooked there the heat accumulated during the day. Sweat ran down our faces while we ate evening chow. Our hot noon meals were taken to us in the field or we ate c-rations.

We knew a lot about our schedule and the required uniform, packs, and gear for the day by referring to the bulletin board from day one, like when "Reveille" and "Lights Out" would be, and each formation, etc.

Cadre in charge of our training was a half-friendly sort, not the tough-minded basic drill instructor type we had in basic. We had no drill instructors now. These men were usually a staff, or buck sergeant, with a few corporals mixed in.

There were a few thousand soldiers on the island, all training at the same time. These were divided into replacement companies, which we often saw marching towards us on the roads. We had a lot of long hikes in the hot sun to and from all training locations, and we carried our rifles slung over the shoulders at route step rather than at right shoulder, and we didn't count cadence, as this was not basic training anymore.

We were usually required to wear light packs and not like the heavier ones we had in basic, and we now wore steel helmets all the time. We were a hot bunch of guys, sweat a lot and drank lots of warm water from our canteens. The back of our shirts had salt sweat patterns by evening.

We had calisthenics regularly, and many times with rifles. We did a lot of those jumping jacks, arm circles and pushups. There also was a challenging obstacle course that included going up a wall and those long ladders to go across, using our arms to propel us across the rungs. We also had a long single rope swinging bridge to cross that extended high over a jungle stream.

We had refresher and advanced instruction on a lot of things such as first aid. Instructors covered the basic body pressure points to cut off bleeding, how to apply a tourniquet, make a splint, and how to carry a man and use a stretcher correctly.

We carried a first aid pouch on our rifle belts. In it is a packet of sulfa powder to use when treating battle wounds. During the training sessions we were given instructions on how to apply and use it effectively. There were a lot of important things to go over and to know. We knew we were getting closer to combat and didn't need to be told to pay attention.

We were reminded that we were to closely adhere to the rules of conduct set by the International Geneva Convention on the conduct of war, which was strictly not to reveal anything to the enemy but our names, rank, and serial numbers.

NEWS ITEM: American forces land on Okinawa April 1st.

The 96th Division; the group I will shortly join landed along with three other Army Divisions and two Marine units. They met with little resistance. The Marines went north and the Army went south and the Japanese were waiting. The battle will soon begin.

W e had demonstrations on a subject I wasn't really comfortable with; explosives. Fortunately that was left to the experts. They did a lot more explaining to us rather than giving us hands-on experience. Make one mistake and you are dead. However they did have live demonstrations. This covered fuses, primer cords, TNT, and the new satchel charges and hand grenades.

Hand grenades always held a fascination for most of us. We did not become experts here. We had the type that when released the handle pops loose in the air on the way to the target and then explodes 5 seconds later.

Satchel charges were made of canvas in the shape of a satchel and contained blocks of C-2, which are a little harder than paste and as powerful as TNT. We were also shown the Bangalore torpedo which is a long tube of explosives meant to blow open something long, like a length of barbed wire, or as a weapon to attack a battle tank. Trip flares are explosives set up in front of an infantry group as protection from infiltrators at night. They are made to actuate when an intruder brushed up against a taut wire, which would actuate a mechanism which would propel a flare overhead and explode. This would illuminate the immediate area and reveal the enemy position.

We were issued brand new M1A1 Garand rifles. Each had been packed in Cosmoline, which is a very sticky heavy grease to keep the moisture out. Not only is it applied as a thick exterior coat; it is also filled all the interior cavities too. It was a real bear to get off. We began the process by wiping. Get all you can that way, then painstakingly clean it out of every crack from every little part.

After cleaning and reassembling, we took the rifle it to the steaming hot water faucet and washed it. It really works and without hurting the metal! Just lubricate the little parts inside with but a film of oil and you are set. The cloth web needs a lot of scrubbing with strong soap. This new rifle will have to be zeroed in on the range. We had been without a rifle for three months. Having it in hand was like having an old friend back.
We did get additional training in 'field stripping' and cleaning our rifles and the 45 cal. pistols. There is a set procedure to follow to clean them. We did have more information on the carbine and machine guns.

We had a demonstration on the use of the "grease" gun. This was a real novelty to me because I didn't even know this weapon existed. This is a .45 cal weapon that is fired from the shoulder and handles like a Tommy gun. The term 'grease gun' is used because that is how the bullets must look as they come out. The problem encountered firing was holding it on the target. With a quick burst of ten or fifteen rounds, it had a tendency to fly up and to the left. This weapon could come in real handy in close combat. The cartridges are fed into the chamber by a foot long magazine that is snapped in from the bottom. The whole thing looked like a heavy-duty coat hanger and as such looked very flimsy. Later models looked much stronger.

One of the handiest things we learned on one of our daily training days was how to fire our

rifles from the hip rather than bring them up to the shoulder. This was accomplished by holding the stock of the rifle down on the hip and pointing it forward, and then jumping side to side toward the targets that popped up.

This was great and seemed so natural. It is accurate, and surprisingly so. We even had the opportunity to use that technique with a light machine gun which we held in place by a strap over the shoulder firing burst after burst with live ammo, complete with spent brass shell casings flying out.

I enjoyed firing the .50 cal machine gun from the back of a truck. We had fired a .50 cal previously, so this wasn't new. This time we fired at a sleeve pulled along by long line by an airplane flying over the ocean there were tracers in the sky to watch go into the sleeve. Grasping the two handles and then pulling back on the double trigger like a rifle is the way this weapon is fired. It puts so much power in your hands and it is very noisy. The power vibrates your hands, your arms, and rapidly jars the head and shoulders.

When the shuttle mechanism inside strokes, it drives each round from the cloth feeding belt, into the chamber, and then ejects the spent casings. Your quota of rounds goes pretty quickly. When we fired them the brass shell casings spurted out all over the bed of the truck, left a deep clinking carpet to walk on.

We were shown the machete. This is a knife with a long wide blade about 16 inches long and 3 inches wide. We had these for chopping through dense foliage.

We had some training in jumping up from a sitting position and growling. This was done in unison taking turns in pairs. We would try to slip up and tap the other on the shoulder. We had to be alert so when someone approached we jumped up and growled. This was meant to surprise any attacker. We did it enough to become a habit. We would humorously growl at each other in the tents in the evening. It was a novelty. I hadn't really thought of that before. Anything like that may actually save your life, so why not.

We had other advanced tropical jungle training. This was designed to get us ready for anything out on a patrol, in simulated combat conditions. I participated in this exercise one very hot sweltering afternoon. We took our turn after a short wait for the man in front to have a lead, as they wanted men spaced out. This was to simulate walking through the jungle as if alone in enemy territory.

I carried my rifle on my hip with a bare bayonet pointed in front of me. I began by making my way cautiously, following a well-worn smooth path on the ground through heavy vegetation. This area had many large banana leaves extending overhead and some extending down in the way. These rustled as I pushed them aside. I put myself on constant alert watching for anything that moved. A slight clearing between the foliage opened on my left, but nothing was there.

In front of me a surprise dummy popped up. Then a figure swung in front of me coming from behind an overhead tree. I lunged forward with my bayonet, yelled and stuck it; so far so good. Walking alone for some little distance, I had the feeling that I was alone and quite vulnerable. Now it was up to me to take this seriously and learn from it. So I reacted quickly to not become a stupid statistic. The path twisted around, up and down among dense leaves. The path was often muddy

and especially slick on an incline.

Many targets popped up and were very realistic. I bayoneted and simulated killing and once a butt stroke. I was aggressive and noisy, again and again. I continued deeper into this hot jungle with Jap dummies dropping at me. It took so long that it was getting darker as I moved forward and it was a welcome relief from the heat not to be under direct sun. I was careful not lose my way. Another dummy came out of a tree; Click.

It was along about this time a scent of death came from a rotting body in the jungle out there somewhere, mingled in among the hot vegetation and damp ground That odor created within me a somber mood that made me think of real possibilities ahead.

I moved on in this path alone for a quite awhile, and wondered if I could have gotten lost. Click. Turn, Click, and a quick lunge with the rifle and I again used the bayonet. In total it was about a half-mile or so long, counting all the twisting back and forth. The whole exercise consisted of thirty of so encounters and it proved to be good experience. I felt that I was better prepared because of it. I had been in similar training exercises, but this was far the best.

Late one evening, we even had an exercise in night patrolling. I had never had anything like this before. I was in a patrol that had to ford a stream and push through high grassy vegetation and meet at a certain rally point. It was one of those really dark nights and it was very hard to maintain contact with each other without making noise. We were to try to move around undetected as group. It was a fiasco, and proved almost impossible to do without a lot of practice.

It didn't turn out very professional, and I was disappointed because I was taking it serious. Some of the guys began to laugh before it was over. It ended up as a hopeless endeavor, and I really thought that if it had been carefully thought out it we could have reached our objective. In reality scouting and patrolling at night was dangerous because it was a good way to get lost from your unit and end up in enemy territory. I could have easily gotten lost.
.

The officer in charge, who explained the mission, critiqued us afterwards and told us the training proved a point. He said communications are difficult and was the prime reasons we do not often do it in combat situations.

On occasion I did attend church services in a small chapel on Sunday mornings. We usually respectfully changed into our dress "sun tans" complete with a tie. The Chaplain usually read a couple of verses of scriptures, had a short session of commentary along with a song or two and closed with a prayer. It lasted about a half an hour. A few men attended these services. There were separate Catholic services. I do not know if there were any Jewish services.

There was the pile of snail shells a surprising four feet high near our area. I did not know if snails were considered a delicacy or if it was a last ditch effort by Jap soldiers to avoid starvation. Who knows, maybe it was the results of a party, which was complimented with sake. It was a novelty to ponder.

Our days in the field ended about 5 or so. The hike back to camp gave us a feeling of relief, because the workday would soon be over. We usually had sweaty clothes from the heat and hiking, which required a lot of laundering. A quick warm shower first maybe that is if we got back in time because the next thing up was chow.

Evening meals were something to endure. It was so hot and humid inside the hall that we ate chow with sweat trickling down our faces. I suppose meals were nutritious. The army had a real logistic issue finding enough food for so many men. We had some rations from Australia. Also a lot of the food we ate had been dehydrated. The meat and beans were terrible. The eggs and milk were the powdered kind. The butter was a fake slick stuff, however it did spread. The gravy was thin. They often mixed a little dried beef with it they put on toast. We had a name for it. We called it stuff on a shingle.

Sometimes for breakfast we did have some tasteless flapjacks. They called the lemonade mix we had; battery acid. It was made with tap water; as there was no ice around for at least 2000 miles (However we suspected the officer's mess had it.) Often we would have mess sergeant that was not very creative, and that is what we had here.

There was a rumor about that there were a few Japanese soldiers that had been hiding out in the jungle were slipping into the chow lines in the early mornings. Ha, no one cared. Let them have it if they are that desperate.

The evening meal was one I often skipped. I just did without it because it was so bad. Instead I went into the beer line, which was really well popular because there must have been 200 in line. All we did was look among the trees to find where the line began, and if we had timed it right we would get 3 small bottles. After the first beer we would just get back in again, and drink the one we just got along the way to get another one. It was a very low alcohol content being the 3.2 variety. It did have some calorie content. It was not cold as it had just kept in sawdust in the under a few trees. It did taste good. Being hungry probably improved it.

Somewhere along in the early evening was mail call, which we didn't pass up. Of course some of the men didn't get any mail for days, and some got 2 or more letters from sweethearts and mothers on a daily basis; men were teased about the girly letters. If someone you knew received a box you always tried to get some of it. Even a cookie was a treat. Candy was even better. Guys always shared.

It was the custom to share the wealth. Do not try to have a stash it somewhere. You will be found out. And besides these men are becoming buddies and a lot closer than in basic.

> **News Item:** The Army on Okinawa moving south has attacked the Japanese Army, and the battle is fierce. Three hospital ships have been filled with seriously wounded Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Air Force personnel. The Navy and the Air Force also sank the **Battleship Yamato** as it tried to get back to Japan. It was their largest battleship left afloat. Allied submarines have sunk almost all of the Japanese merchant fleet and civilians starved.

As a rule, soldiers like boxing. They like to watch and some try their hands at it. It does have stature in our society. All it requires is a set of gloves and any kind of makeshift ring is quite acceptable. We had boxing matches in the evening, near where the beer lines were, with an elevated ring with ropes. We had the 12-ounce gloves and the minutes in the rounds were usually kept track of. The usual cheering and encouragement went on. It was almost serious as some were knocked down. It was no sissy stuff. Guys had to see whom they could beat and really get tested. It was interesting to watch. There were no other feats of skill other than the ping-pong games.

As far as personal encounters go I do not recall any fist fights, nor any impromptu-wrestling matches while on the island. The hotheads had a lot of that taken out of them before coming here. The mood of this place and the heat and the physical activities of the training kept most of us tired at the end of the day.

As far as laundry was concerned, we had plenty to do. This was always done on the outside of the latrine building. It was different here than in basic as the drain here ran the dirty sudsy water away from the building and out into the field. It was an eyesore that had a bad odor.

The washing facilities were meager, so I had to wait to find a space to get in. Get in and out quickly as someone else wants to get in. If you are too late warm water is gone. After washing and hanging my clothes out to dry, I brought them back inside my tent at night and then put out again the next morning. The tropics are muggy and it takes heat and moving air to dry clothes. Out in the sun is best. Don't let yourself get behind on laundry. No one wants to start out the day in unclean clothes in this weather

Showers were much better when you were there when the water was warm. If your group was a little later than others coming back from the field, then you lost out on the warm water. Try shaving in tepid water. A lot of us were not shaving a lot being so young, but it was required. I remember getting into some near trouble when we were all given a direct order to shave and I did shave but I left a little red goatee and the officer in charge forgot to penalize me. I could have gotten a long day at KP or something worse like cleaning the latrine because of that.

Speaking of KP, I think they must have had permanent KP men, as I do not recall anyone pulling it. It was a dreaded detail everywhere I went, because the mess sergeants were notorious about cleanliness and had tight schedules to meet. Usually he was a meticulous inspector. Everything had to be clean, even if that meant doing things over and if so you did them over and over. It is by whim that your day is over.

As we were now in the tropics we were required to take daily Atabrin tablets to prevent us from getting malaria. After taking a few we all began to turn yellow. We all had that cast. Our faces and hands were also getting darker and darker because of all the sun we were in.

One of the reasons we had to wear our sleeves down was to prevent us from getting too much sun. We are reminded that anyone getting too much sun and gets burned is subject to Court Martial. If it puts you out of action you are in deep trouble. Another reason to keep sleeves down is to prevent cuts and prevent mosquito bites. There were other diseases besides Malaria borne by mosquitoes.

We received more shots here too. Some were boosters. One was cholera. As I remember we were a little surprised to be getting it. We had to take one a week for three weeks and they did burn.

For recreation some of the guys set up a dice table. A blanket was stretched tight over a rectangular table and secured underneath. This table was about seven feet long and three feet wide. A wooden board frame about 6 inches high was secured on top of this which extended around the perimeter.

They had marked several spaces on the blanket with paint or something for places to put money down for bets. One wide space for the 7 and 11 on first throw, and others for snake eyes 2 or 3, won't point 2-1 odds, will point, and a 12. A lot of small change changed hands, maybe some small bills. It was a diversion, and recreation. The dice had to be thrown against the side board.

The really strange thing about it was that it was set up in the broad sun, under the leaves of a banana tree. We stood to play, as there were no seats, and we crowded up against the table as if we had ponied up against a bar. It was fun. There were several guys coming and going from the game.

We were issued two sets of brand-new fatigues near the end of our stay. We had to drop them into a hot 55 gal drum of a soupy chemical to impregnate them. We assumed that this was to protect us from insects or mites.

The uniforms we had been wearing were hot enough in the tropics. These had been laundered time after time and the fabric did breathe. Now we get new uniforms and have to put them in this goop. They also ended up with different odor. Yuck. We know they are going to be intolerable to wear so at our first chance we rinsed them out. We will worry about bugs later on.

One day our entire training company went to a lecture standing out in the hot sun. Across from us was an elevated platform. An Officer in a pith helmet, short sleeves and shorts swaggered as he walked across to the podium. (This spectacle immediately antagonized us).

This "visionary", with his descriptive metaphors began demeaning us by speaking to us as if were children. He informed us that the "Blue chips were down." (We knew full well the chips were down. We were going to be in a lot more jeopardy than he would be and we knew it full well. We didn't need this rear echelon officers' lecture,) and we were bored long before he was through.

We had been standing there in the sun wearing our steel helmets and were sweating in our uniforms with all the sleeves down and long pants tucked into our boots, while he was dressed as cool as possible. This man of privilege actually created a lot of resentment. He was a topic of an acid laced language discussion back in the company area. (Officers as a general rule in the Army, carried the "better class" status, and as such, this lecture was a classic example of it.)

Later on and back on our own time, I took my turn at boxing. I had boxed some in high school and it was something I wanted to give a try. I had skipped evening chow that evening in favor of the beer line. It was still hot that evening when I tied on the gloves and stepped over the ropes and got into the ring. A Mexican donned the gloves in the opposite corner. I knew him. Everybody liked him. He had a nickname of "Big Dog". He proved to be not much of a fighter. He was about 30 pounds heavier and was hard to move with a punch. He came at me lunging with his head down. I would just back up as he came in and give him uppercuts one after another, bending my knees slightly and coming up. This lasted two rounds, neither one of us really hurting the other one. However I did think I fared better. I stayed in and waited for another challenger to step in.

We usually stripped to the waist to do our boxing, but the next man coming in the ring wore a one-piece work suit. He was black guy, and I had never seen him before. I was in trouble because I didn't realize how tired my arms were. I came in at him with my gloves up. With a left hook he

knocked them aside and came in with a right. He hit me Ka-pow, and I went down. Thirty seconds in. On the deck I quickly put one hand down, turned on my side, and spun up and regained my feet. I was really more surprised than hurt.

Then I moved around a little looking for an opening, blocking his punches somewhat, but my arms just were too tired to keep him out. Then he punched me again and I was down; but this time I felt it. It didn't make me dizzy, just mad at myself that I let it happen to me again. I did manage to get through the rest of the round okay.

So, my male ego said, " OK, I'm going to go another round just to prove to me and my buddies that I won't back down." So I tried another tactic. I would keep him off guard by constantly attacking him. I mean I really moved around and punched and punched. My punches had been landing on a solid rock body. I really didn't hurt him, but I did get to him and stayed on my feet. However I had had it. I was glad that the round was over and I was really tired.

I approached him while he was still in the ring and asked him to pull his shirt-top down; I wanted to see what I was hitting. Sure enough he had a double ripple of stomach muscles to back up all his punching. I asked him if he had boxed any before and he admitted he had some in Detroit and a little in Chicago. I replied." I thought so" and asked him if I had landed any real punches. He replied, "A little." (Just to console me). I moved slowly away and pulled myself through the ropes and out of the ring.

I was weak from the punching and the fact that all I had was beer that night. I slowly walked back to my tent and vowed to myself to never do that again. When I got there, I lay down exhausted, and went to sleep with my sweat-soaked clothes on.

Late evening, after all the work was done, was a special time. We had time now to read and reread letters we had stashed, and share our thoughts with the men around us. We talked of "back home" a lot. Wives and girl friends a high priority, along with jobs we used to have. But this place had a special meaning for a lot of guys. We were facing a great challenge and subconsciously we bonded better here than any other place.

There were discussions about survival in combat. We had one guy in our tent named Hicks who had trained as a machine gunner back in basic. It dwelled on his mind that he would henceforth be a machine gunner in combat. He took it a step farther. He had heard that a machine gunners life in combat was 36 seconds. He often brought it up like it was written on a rock somewhere and that would be his fate. We did get into some discussion on the matter with him but he couldn't get it out of his mind.

We had another guy in the tent that I had been around before from Kentucky as I remember, a religious sort of guy that hoarded Ping candy bars. It wasn't exactly hoarding, he just knew sometime they would be in short supply and so he would eat one only now and then. How he kept from eating more was a real question for Hiefner and me. We did have some small Hershey chocolate bars that we bought at the PX but they were often white around the edges because of the heat. They tasted pretty good. However they didn't last long around John or me.

Humor played an important part of military life. Some men I found had a way of telling stories and jokes and others didn't. If I had a comic in my tent I was fortunate. Sometimes we would get

started laughing and it would go on and on. There was a lot of kidding going on. We also had the put-down sense of humor that thrived in the all male setting. Of course language had no restraints and some men were creatively funny in this vein. There were a lot of common words known by all.

The last couple of evenings, most of us we went over to the “ec” hall after chow; just for something to do. It was in a large building; maybe 100 feet square with a dusty concrete floor and some benches, a piano at one end with some tables and chairs with a light hanging from a the rafters here and there. Once in a while there were ping-pong tables and if lucky there were paddles and balls. But usually they were stashed away. The guys just wouldn’t take care of them. If someone had cards we played and if someone would play the piano we sang. No snacks or refreshments; just guys.

The last evening a few of the guys got together and made up a play. They used their artistic talents by taking large pieces of cardboard and making a train and a boat, which hey pushed it across the floor. A black guy, who was probably from a transportation company, supported the play at the piano. There were some good laughs at the men in the play, and especially the ad-libs.

After the play the pianist sang and played a song he had made up. It started with a few simple chords. “Plink, plink” ... eight times. He answered by singing, “They say we go to Formosa,” then again on the piano, “Plink, plink”.... 8 more times. He then followed with these words. ”And then to To -ke- yo” following with more plinking. Then he sang: “You say you like the women?” More plinking, then the words “Well you can’t have that no mo” And a quick roar from the crowd. I didn’t remember, but there were probably more verses, to that comical song.

After this, the evening closed with a song session. The pianist we had at this time was a guy by the name of Ralph Black. I think he was from Indianapolis. A follow along if you know the words thing. The last song we sang was by a special request. One of the guys spoke up and said. “I just got word that my brother got killed in Italy, can we all sing ”My Buddy, for me?” After a short pause we sang the words, “Nights are long since you went away. “Etc. Singing that was a real heavy emotional experience; I was touched. When the song ended he actually made a request that we all sing it again. I was lucky to get through to the end hearing all those guys together sing through all of the sadness. The crowd broke up and I silently walked in the evening darkness back to my tent. I was in a somber mood, and retreated quietly into myself.

At Reveille that morning they announced the day’s program. It proved to be my final day of about three weeks on that island. Hooray. We were to be ready to move out early and were all glad to be leaving this hot humid place with its warm beer and rations of tasteless Australian meat and beans, night infantry training, mosquitoes and all the tropical smells, regardless of where we were going on this day.

This was it. There was only thing any of us knew; where we were going this time would be serious, very serious. Analyzing our situation, we knew we had received advance training and our clothing had been chemically treated for insects, which we thought was a clue.

After looking at the maps all the conventional wisdom said Formosa. It was the logical spot. That fit. Yes and I could feel the negativity beginning in the tone of conversations, for they as well as I knew that of all the voyages we had previously taken, this trip starting today could be our last one. The next one could be in a body bag going back home.

Now it was time to get ready; time to bust myself. I found it too late to wash any clothes, as they wouldn't dry; there was not enough time. But I had to get ready, so I grabbed my soap and towel and headed for the latrine. I pushed in quickly, got my shower and when I returned, shaved out in the back of the tent using my steel helmet to save time. I checked around on the ropes of the tent to see if any of my clothes were hanging there and rushed off quickly to the mail tent with the letters I had written last night and took the mail of two other men with me.

I looked under my blankets I had slept on and pulled out the pants I had washed yesterday. Now it is nothing but hustle for me; find it, clean it up and stuff it in the duffle bag. I had no time to neatly fold my mosquito bar so I just rolled it up to the top: I had to be ready quickly. Check around everywhere again.

Soon, we heard the final whistles from the cadre to assemble, as they now had copies of our orders to ship out. We assembled in the sun in front of the company area one by one. We were almost jovial. I lugged my duffle bag and rifle with me and joined the talking crowd and I recognized my smiling buddy John, already there sitting on his gear. He immediately yelled over at me and said. "Come on over here with me." I smiled and responded," I think I've got everything John; I wasn't exactly ready for this".

I set my gear down and asked John, "Seen Andy or anyone else like maybe, Hicks?" He responded, "Yeah, and I see Andy draggin' in now." So I yelled to him. "Hey Andy, Andy " waving my arm, "come on over, over here." Andy set his bag down and offered us a smoke and then lit one of his own. "Looks like this is it huh?" He offered and we both agreed. I shook my canteen and discovered it almost empty. "Watch my stuff guys, I'll be right back." I said. Andy unbuckled his canteen and tossed it towards me and said. "Here". So I rushed back to the lyster bag down on the end of the company street and filled them both and got back in plenty of time. So we just sat there waiting for things to happen and being typically Saipan, It was getting hot as we were all standing there.

The trucks soon came and lined up. When my name was called I answered, and the cadre man checked me off his list. I walked over to the truck, handed up my rifle , and swung up after throwing up my duffle bag, then pushed in close on a seat on one of the side benches. John had beaten me in, as his last name was Heifner. In turn each guy helped the next one up. When the truck was jammed full, the driver pulled out. You had to be an infantryman to appreciate a truck ride. "At least my pack ain't on my back," was the response. I liked to see things go by as I rode along the way to the dock.

On arrival each truck in turn formed a moving line on the docks along side the troop ship. When our driver stopped we jumped out one by one and swung our duffle bag up on our shoulders. We were greeted by the familiar smell of diesel fuel in the air from the ship and the muffled steady growls of engines far below in the engine rooms. When it was my turn. I stepped up and onto the gangplank. When I reached the top I called out my name and saluted the officer in charge who returned my salute and checked me off a list. I again stepped on to a hard steel deck.

We followed each other along like a procession of ants stepping up and over open hatches, swinging our gear up around and going down into the hold. Out of the brilliant light topside, we stepped into a different world of dim light, pumped air, and mixed odors from the heads, mess halls

and painted passageways. Going three decks below my eyes gradually adjusted. I claimed a bunk, swung my duffle bag and rifle up and headed topside anxious to see everything happening. After all when we came to this same dock about 3 weeks ago, there was real excitement. I really didn't want to miss it.

Chapter Fourteen Voyage to Okinawa

Many of us gathered at the rail to watch all the activity. Unfortunately there wasn't the excitement about beer this time. We watched for anyone we knew and yelled and waved, as we often had been separated from our friends who were in other training companies. It was busy and noisy there and I personally enjoyed it. The trucks pulled away one by one after everyone loaded on. Orders blared from the P.A. system, and Sailors hastily followed procedures to get underway.

Everyone was topside. I soon felt the ship gently move and slightly roll as our ship got underway. It had a familiar feel and I knew I would get my sea legs soon. The ocean was relatively calm and I knew I wouldn't get seasick as long as this weather held. I stood at the side rail and enjoyed myself in the salt air, which was a cool and refreshing change from the sweltering air of the tropical island I was just on. I amused myself by watching Saipan become a dark spot on the horizon gradually shrink and disappear.

Seasoned sailors had been hustling about at their assignments; attired in their white hats, t-shirts, and blue dungarees, every since we had came aboard. As usual, they kept themselves quite oblivious to all of us; we were their cargo.

I walked among the scent of fresh paint around on the top deck, and soon became acquainted with the layout. As usual there were the ack-ack and fifty caliber machine guns, and some stacked lifeboats spaced about. We had to pick our way around them as we did on the other voyages to keep from banging our heads, and so it was much the same. I found it pleasant and relaxing and I continued to look around for anyone I knew. I did find John Heifner and shared the very special thoughts with him about the last night and the singing at the rec. hall.

I was one of about a six hundred men Army had loaded on that troop ship. We were a sight to see on the deck in the bright sunshine. There were so many of us that we filled every spot. We were all wearing smelly new fatigue uniforms, which had those metal buttons and the pants with the bulging strange looking side pockets.

We continued to wear long sleeves down and our green helmet liners as protection from the sun. We routinely draped the bottom of our pants neatly over our combat boots.

Thankfully we were not under the close scrutiny of officers that insisted on strict dress codes so there were some variations. We were wearing the usual life preservers, and we were we were in a lot more danger here so it made sense to wear them. They carried a familiar odor which made them more offensive in the heat of the sun. As a matter of record, officers wore the life preservers that had CO-2 canisters plugged in the ends. There was real animosity in that difference of privilege, but I did wonder how they worked.

The time on board became boring. Paperbacks were good to read; however they were

always in short supply. Decks of cards were good too, because poker and pinochle were popular games; however it was so crowded topside that room for a game was hard to find. I played poker one time on a blanket under a flight of stairs. Some men were found read their New Testaments and once in awhile you would see a couple playing chess.

A small group of men lingered and passed in front of the bulletin board reading the latest war news and getting some sports scores. I spent a lot of quiet time, along with others on occasion by standing amidships at the rail in the refreshing salt air breeze and sometimes at the stern, watching the water churn and just gazing at the repeating patterns of foam form on top and disappear. Sometimes I enjoyed the novelty of seeing many small and florescent fish jumping through and seemingly frolic about the rolling and foaming water being furrowed by the bow.

Chow broke the routine every day around noon and evening, and we leisurely used a lot of time waiting in long, long snaking chow lines.

.

The other ships I saw in our convoy often fascinated me. Some were so close I could see the foam as they cut through the waves, and others I could just barely pick out on the horizon. Ships as a rule didn't get close to us, as many were much faster than ours. We would see these but briefly and then they would be gone. The destroyer escorts, called the DE's, were a novelty to watch as they rode so low and pushed straight through the water. On some of them we could see a string of flags stretched in a line. The ships couldn't be heard, but on occasion I could make out a sailor on a deck. Our convoy had a lot of ships. It was also my pleasure one day to see flashing lights coming from the bow of one of these ships. It was a Morse being signaled by hand from one of their stationary flashing lights. I thought that it was especially neat as that was traditionally a Navy function. I knew Morse code so I did try to decipher the letters, but the words were in code. It was comforting to know the United States Navy was doing its job for all of us on board. I felt very secure under the circumstances.

On this voyage one of the infantry officers initiated a volunteer exercise period for those who wanted to keep in shape. I took part in it. We had calisthenics out in the sun in our uniforms with our shirts off. It was about noon and soon we broke out it in a real sweat. Speaking of sweat, the only showers we had were the salt-water kind and no one wants one of those. So we developed a high degree of toleration.

We also had some impromptu boxing matches. I remember tying on a pair of boxing gloves and taking on a Mexican guy. We were pretty well matched and had been exchanging punches, until my foot slipped and while I was trying to get my balance, he moved in and hit me as I was going down. I couldn't believe it. I was astonished and surprised. This was just sport and he took quick advantage instead of backing off. Dirty! I can still remember how the other Mexicans cheered. I was wary and ready from then on and definitely wasn't going to forget.

Every day the sailors hosed down the decks and as such there were hoses snaking around everywhere. The painted deck would become slick because of all the foot traffic, at least hosing had a purpose and it broke the day up for us.

Sailors, it seemed, always had a job to do. When they manned their battle stations on this trip it was a lot more serious than the other voyages, as we were deep in dangerous waters. And we all sensed this too, especially when we were suddenly awakened from a dead sleep in the mornings

when the Sailors had their battle-station drill. We took it as a distinct possibility of it being a submarine in the immediate area.

On this voyage the sailors conducted live .50 cal machine gun practices. It was very loud and intimidating. When these guns fired, all the noise smacked and reverberated against the steel deck, cabin walls and hatches and seemingly splattered against my chest. I imagined the fear I would have had if they had been fired at me.

After evening chow and the sky began to darken we heard the announcement, "The smoking lamp is out," and headed below decks. (No Smoking) It was very crowded and busy down there, moving about with lots of traffic in the aisles between the stacked bunks. We learned to tolerate bumping and accommodate each other. There was the usual talking and noise and joking around, and some kept busy cleaning their rifles.

Evening was a special for me on this voyage; because I needed this private time. I began by opening my duffle bag and dragging out all my pictures for another look. It was the time I wrote to those at home and rereading the letters sent to me. On occasion I got out my New Testament, which I used in my search for meaning and settling of issues. I went through several emotions as I contemplated going into combat. Will I face up to whatever there is going to be out there? Will I let anyone down? Will I turn chicken? Hey get with it! Buck up it is time to be a man. Even in those circumstances I never began feeling sorry for myself.

Actually I wasn't fully aware of all of the possible terror of the moment. After all, a Japanese torpedo could hit us in the night and rip a monstrous hole into the side of the ship right near me. Would any of us survive that explosion and tons of sea water flooding in?

As far as that thinking goes, we all to a man, were very fatalistic. We felt that when our time was up it was up. That was it. No one would die until then. We had devised a simple mental way of solving the issue. I knew I was not alone in many of these ideas and feelings; because we all shared our thoughts with our buddies. Some conversations were of course, light hearted kidding about being chicken and yes, some other very serious issues about what would happen at home if we didn't come back. This undercurrent of thought prevailed.

NEWS ITEMS Italy's Premier Mussolini was killed April 28, and Adolph Hitler committed suicide on April 30th. We knew the war in Europe would be soon over.

As the evening wore on it became quieter. On occasion I faintly heard the nostalgic sound of a guitar strumming. All that could be seen after "lights out" were the small safety lights overhead here and there near the aisles, which lit our way to the heads. Rows and rows of bunks of men settling in for a night's sleep were almost totally quiet at times. On occasion, I heard the saltwater outside washing against the slanted hull and also felt the smooth roll and toss of the ship as it cast its spell upon me. In the mystery of those evenings, we all gradually drifted off to sleep, just as all seafarers have, in the centuries of the past.

Several mornings had passed before we learned that rifles would need to pass inspection. There was a big probability they would be badly needed, because it wasn't just discipline now. I didn't know it at the time; salt air has a very corrosive nature. Maybe that is why they paint so much in the Navy.

My rifle did need some attention. In the butt plant of my M -1 rifle (We routinely called them our M-1s), was a brass wire brush, and this time I used it. We developed a novel way to clean our barrels. We took the rope off of our bunk and threaded it through the barrel and out the breech then secured the other end and ran the rifle barrel back and forth on it

One of the guys I knew had taken his rifle some weeks ago and plugged up both ends and then filled it with oil. He thought that would protect the bore, however when he unplugged it he found that rust had formed in it like fur. Talk about fear! He could see court- martial for this. He worked and worked on it by sliding it back and forth for a long time on a rope. There were a lot of pit marks that I know he did not get rid of, and that is what they inspect for the most. I never did find out what happened to him or his rifle. However, my rifle passed okay.

After days of waiting we finally heard what we had been waiting for. It came over the PA; “All Army units here this.” At that time we were given assignments to report to officers at various spots on the deck. When we gathered topside all around the officer he told us to report back in about an hour for a full inspection, and this meant all combat gear, full field packs, steel helmets and rifles.

I was on an emotional plateau of reserved excitement. I went into the hold, and literally glided down the steel stairways to my bunk. The area was now a very busy place with a lot of activity and excitement. I stuffed my gear in my pack and duffle bag, and was soon topside and waiting my turn for a personal inspection.

The inspecting officer was casual in manner and seemed to take a personal interest in each man's gear by making suggestions. It seemed that this officer was different, as he was more one of us now. Not having lost his status as an officer, but his manner was more like the older brother or a dad. This is quite the exception from the gruff and impersonal manner we were accustomed, and I enjoyed the difference.

After noon chow we assembled again, fully prepared to leave. We had all our full-field packs and duffle bags ready and were issued one day’s C- rations, which were stuffed into our back packs. To our surprise we were also issued gas masks. We were reminded to check our canteens for water and bring our duffle bags topside. We returned promptly and dumped our duffle bags onto a large pile in the sun near one of the boom columns.

So now it is wait around, and wait around (the hurry up and wait routine). Later in the day we were told of our destination; Okinawa! We weren’t really aware of an island by that name, nor where it was, nor why the Army would want to take this island next. We did know that the Marines had captured Iwo Jima, and that it had been secure for some time. Now this island we have learned is close to Japan too. We were surprised at this selection. We were completely in the dark about anything going on there, but apparently we were replacements for the men killed or wounded.

As the afternoon progressed, we began to stare routinely around the horizon for the very first resemblance of anything like an island. Those that kept a close vigil promised to inform the rest of us as soon as they saw anything. What they did report was the real thing, because an island began to take a dark shape off the bow. Shortly after this confirmation, we were surprisingly issued two bandoleers of rifle ammunition, (200 rounds), and new trenching shovels.

I hadn't allowed for these so I knew I might have to make some changes. I put my pack on and the gas mask and put one bandoleer over each shoulder. I circled both around my neck like loose heavy belts. I balanced the now heavier load, and adjusted the shoulder straps on the packs so they would ride as high and as comfortable as possible. Satisfied that I had made all the adjustments, I took it all off and sat on it, then waited for the evening chow line. When it formed I stepped in and followed into the hold of the ship or my last meal aboard ship. We were all in a quiet mood with just a few comments; no jovial pats on the back etc.

Soon afterward we finished with chow, returned topside and sat on our packs again. We stood up and stretched occasionally, and walked around to get another look at that dark form on the horizon getting larger and larger.

I saw a large black cloud of smoke coming up from the right side of the island and quietly wondered. I began wondering about a lot of other things while I watched, as it was becoming a moment of truth for me; like how was it really going to be. Conversations among us were not in just an expectant mood, but also in a mood to contemplate what our part in the combat was really going to be like.

Was I really ready for this? I really didn't know what to expect. I did feel inadequate; I wished I had more training. My thoughts even drifted to back to when I decided to join the Army. Even at that point just then, I didn't think of those at home very much. Not as ease really, nor antsy, just a moment calm anticipation.

Maybe some of the guys felt fear. I really didn't. I wasn't confident, however. I always had that gut feeling that I was coming back. I never doubted that once, even though intellectually I had some real reservations.

Everyone there just wanted to survive. What were we fighting for anyway? Is it pure patriotism? Yes, somewhat, but for me it was only in a general way. Is it for glory or making a name for myself? No! Was I anxious to get in there and kick butt? No! Make the world safe from the Japanese and the Germans? No! Not as specific as that. No super-patriots here. We all knew the job had to be done and all of us truly just wanted to do it and make it back home.

Having moved in closer to the island, I saw the black cloud now looming much larger, and ugly. The smoke hanging around was probably coming from an oil fire, maybe a burning storage depot, or a ship burning offshore from an enemy bombing. It could have been knocked out Army battle tank or a plane that had been shot down. The cloud could also be the gasoline burning from any of them. It was a curiosity, and through it, I was beginning to experience something of the mystery of the area I was heading into. The sky was overcast.

Large dark gray ships were all around and behind us of various sizes all on a mission quietly and patiently waiting their turn to move. There was no enemy activity in the sky or water, or anywhere near that we knew of. Our ship soon slowed and began picking a path in between the ships; quietly coasting and aiming for a selected spot. We were the important cargo of the hour.

This was but a routine exercise for the sailors, but it was new to us and we eagerly watched everything going on as it unfolded. As we came nearer the shore we made out what looked like lights illuminating the surrounding area and we made out a ship docked on the left. The smoke we

had been watching earlier disappeared in the darkness.

Soon we moved even closer and come to a gradual stop. When darkness arrived we could see the island faintly about 1000 yards away and a slight glow near the shoreline on the left.

We were all gathered at the rails and from our vantage point topside, we saw a small landing craft bobble around in the foam and hear its engine 'rev up' as it turned and churned in the water in waves towards us. It moved in close to our ship and tried to establish a parallel position along side our ship.

Sailors on our ship manhandled and dropped a large cargo net over the side nearest the shore. It slapped against the side of the ship every time the ship swayed. It was straight down now from us, in often swelling water below.

Considerable skill was required by the skipper to keep the tossing craft, along side. However, being so close in the moving water it often collided with our ship, and repeatedly scraped and sliced at our hull.

When it was our time to debark, officers directed us to leave by going over the side four men at a time. We were really heavily loaded down, with at least a sixty-pound pack on our backs, with our rifles over our right shoulders and now heavy steel helmets strapped on our heads. Each man in turn, swung his legs up and over the side, and then clumsily followed one man after another. The net now loaded with men, swayed away from the ship often when waves came in, and caused all of us on the net to bang against the side when the waves receded.

Working my way down the net was hazardous, so I wrapped my arm around it to hold on and to keep from either dropping into the ocean, or crashing on the steel deck. Because it was dark, we couldn't see very well and so we stepped on each other's hands. As we gradually moved down the swinging net, we each in turn had to time the movement of the craft below, so we could drop in the landing craft safely. The net did not extend far enough to be safe so we had to leap at just the right time. It was a jump of faith. It is a wonder that someone did not break a leg or crush an arm because we were all quite clumsy.

After our small craft filled with men, we gradually in moved closer to the shore and formed into a line of other ships like ours, where we waited for about an hour. At that time I saw a sight I will never forget. The glow we saw earlier was bright now and on my left- front proved to be a white hospital ship illuminated in light. Olive drab ambulances, with the white crosses on the side, delivered wounded men, passing on a dirt road parallel to the shore about 150 yards directly in front of us. They were moving right to left, silently one by one about 30 yards apart in a seemingly unending flow. Huddled in the night, we waited in a bobbing little landing boat, having a lot of time to contemplate the entire meaning of those men, all our possibilities of our immediate future, and the impending concerns of all these men passing right in front of our eyes.

Meanwhile, the straps of our packs had cut our shoulders and our arms were going to sleep. Each landing craft ahead of us getting a signal finally maneuvered through the rolling swells and waves one by one and landed on the shore. It was a relief to get our signal to move in.

When landing on the beach our boat scraped gravel to a stop and we all lurched forward. The

retaining chains rattled when the ramp was released, and heavily plunged into sand. I carefully stepped out on the beach on weary legs. I took slow strides, balancing, lifting, and readjusting the heavy pack on my shoulders, and walked across the very road the ambulances had been using.

As an infantryman I actually enjoyed walking on familiar dirt once again. We hiked and followed our leader slowly passing out of the bright area into the darkness and the strangeness of the evening. We were on the island of Okinawa. It was May 1st 1945.

Chapter Fifteen Okinawa

The evening air was cool and refreshing for it had been raining. We hiked past the lights surrounding the hospital ship, and began hiking in absolute darkness on uneven ground for nearly a quarter of a mile. We stopped in a large field and it was a strange situation as all of us were talking and fumbling around in complete darkness trying to put up our pup tents. I didn't make out anyone I knew, however a guy nearby agreed to buddy with me, so we put our shelter halves together. This was difficult deciding who does what, pounding pegs where and snapping which flap first, but we finally did. I crawled inside with my clothes still on and quickly dropped off to sleep.

The military truth is that we should have dug foxholes. We all knew better; but we just did as everyone else did as if there was a leader calling the shots. We could have been killed because we were out in the open. Thousands of American troops died in WWII by bonehead actions such as these.

We were just inland from the beach and this was near where the hospital ship was. Japanese had previously fired on a hospital ship but not these waters, but there was no reason to believe they would not. Japanese Kamikaze suicide planes (400 or more by record) had been in the air attacking and sinking our ships by this time. Over four-thousand sailors would d in these waters.

This was a very busy place. The US Navy had hundreds of supply ships in the surrounding waters that were waiting and unloading, battleships shelling the island, and hundreds of ships roaming on the picket lines and others were there protecting ships and our combat troops on land.

The reason there were no attacks that afternoon and evening was because the sky was filled with rain clouds, and targets could not be seen. So we survived that evening by pure dumb luck.

I had been tired so I slept well all night, and when I got up that morning it was sprinkling rain. I looked around and found that many of the guys were already up and were already milling around, eating, smoking, and talking. I quickly realized I could have but little time; so I had to get ready quick. I opened my two cans of C-rations and used part of the water from my canteen to make cereal and cocoa, and my stomach told me I had gobbled it all down too fast. The light rain continued and as I walked around getting my gear put together, mud gathered on my boots like thick paddles. Everything was getting sloppy, but my buddy and I struck our tent and packed muddy or not.

Like the rest of the men scattered about I too began standing around in limbo waiting on what would happen next. Looking around I could see that we were in a very large open field that extended into trees in every direction.

It was so very peaceful. I enjoyed the fresh spring air and watched the skimpy rain clouds rapidly pass overhead in the sky.

Suddenly I heard the rumor going around that there was an Army unit on the line in real trouble, and that we were needed badly, real badly, and that some of us might be going up front right away. I had a sinking feeling and then suddenly an assertive feeling. Strangely a quick reflex emotion swept over me and the rifle felt solid in my hands. I knew we could be there; we could help.

(And the actual truth learned later was that some front line troops did need help, and some in this group would see action that day and very possibly were wounded or killed in their very first time in combat)

From a short distance away I could hear a strumming a guitar. I found where it was coming from and moved in closer. It turned out to be six or seven dark-skinned Mexican soldiers all gathered around and sitting on their duffle bags near the man with the guitar. I just listened, trying not to intrude or stare. I did not understand their words, but the singing had a sentimental tone, as the words may have been very serious. It was a pleasant feeling just being there and hearing them. I was envious of their camaraderie, and would have personally enjoyed bonding with them.

We discovered that our new entrenching tools wouldn't open. Shovels were the folding type and were paint stuck. Someone pounded on the locking nut, broke it loose and the problem was solved. We were all relieved.

Spring winds blew the clouds away and the sun came out, just as six by six trucks arrived. A man emerged with lists of men on his clipboard, and we anxiously crowded in. He loudly read off the names, and each man in turn answered. "Here!" Then I heard," See ya", "got your address." "Yeah, good luck." And, "See Ya," All these words and good wishes were often repeated. Men with all their gear loaded in trucks one by one, until each truck was filled. An aura of mystery surrounded each truck leaving. Not just because we didn't know where neither they going, but also if I we or they would ever be seen again.

When my name was called, I swung my muddy pack up on my shoulders as I held on to my rifle and pulled into the open truck. It was a chore to fumble around with the gas mask and the extra two bandoleers of rifle shells. The truck had no benches, so I stood up and held on to the rack on the side. Other men reached out and pulled in.
When our truck was full we moved out into the open country. I was wide-eyed and eagerly watched everything pass in front of me in this strange new land. It was pleasant and bumpy ride in an open truck on a day much like a sunny spring day back in Indiana.

One of the first things I noticed were grubby trees with but a few limbs. These were strange varieties, with twisted trunks and small scraggly limbs, which didn't look like any trees back home. Artillery shells and Navy bombs had blown most of the limbs and leaves away. Once in while I saw a small native grass huts far away among the trees. Farther down the road I saw one of our large artillery guns in place, and a couple of army tents nearby. It looked like one of those big dudes; the 155s.

It was camouflaged with green overhead netting, which extended and draped over everything. There were a couple of disinterested GIs standing there that barely glanced at us as we

went by. They were not firing.

We traveled but a few miles and were soon dropping men off. “Hey, good luck buddy,” we shouted. We were all buddies, even those we didn’t know because we were all in this together. The truck traveled inland on hilly dirt roads and passed by occasional rice paddies that were full of water. We turned off the main road and began moving on flattened grass having been made by other trucks. Our truck turned in towards the edge of a wooded area, slowed down, swung one quarter around and stopped. It was my turn, and I had been anticipating this and feeling good about it. I was at last going to join an outfit, a real Army outfit, and one that I could call my own.

M Company landed with the Division on April 1st on White Beach and continued in combat until the 22nd, when they moved off the lines to a location just south and west of the Kadena airstrip. They had this assignment to secure the area in case of a counter attack or invasion. I was one of the replacements that arrived on May 1st to get up the company up to combat strength.

I swung down off the truck to the ground with my pack and rifle, and walked toward a soldier standing there. "Where are we?” I asked. He said. “M company, 382nd, you guys are the replacements we have been waiting for.” He motioned for us to follow, and after all ten of us piled off the truck, we followed him back to a wooded area about 30 yards to an open shady spot among the trees. Three smiling and friendly and guys casually came forward and greeted us. “Where are all you guys from?” One guy asked. “Anybody from Ohio?” He continued. “I don’t know, but I’m from Indiana, anybody from there?” I answered. Then he said. “Yea I think, maybe a couple or so from Indiana”. The talking continued from there with everybody joining in.

After about five minutes of this a few other guys came out of the trees with food for all of us! We took out our mess gear and right there on the spot we were served our noon meal. I was flabbergasted. This was like a picnic among old friends in the woods that made me fee like royalty. I didn’t remember the rest of the food, but I did remember the fruit salad in the heavy syrup for dessert. I hadn’t eaten this good since basic training! They could have withheld the fruit salad and we would have never known it.

Shortly after our chow, a guy came up, probably a platoon sergeant, and called us over and asked. “Is there anyone here that would like to be in the mortars?” One of the guys that had been talking to us, Mason, pulled me aside and quietly said, “Say yes, it’s the best, go ahead say yes.” But I was a little reluctant; because the old army rule is, never volunteer for anything. I got up anyway, stood in a line of volunteers, and was the last man chosen. The rest of the men were placed in the heavy machine gun squads, and they ended being in a lot more danger than I was, back in the mortars, so I felt extremely fortunate, and especially because I had just became a Deadeye.

One of the men led us to our new company, so I followed him around among the trees, and he dropped us off near our separate squads. I was introduced to those there, and as my squad leader wasn’t around, I had to wait. I took off my pack and sat down in the shade and talked to a guy there. This gave me a chance to look around.

I made out a guy over among the trees in a pitched tent with no one else around, probably asleep, and another guy sitting on the ground reading. I had not expected a place like this so relaxed and peaceful here among the trees. They were definitely not in direct combat with

everybody being so laid back.

A tall skinny guy, probably in his late twenties, tanned and stripped to his waist like many of the others, walked up and introduced himself. He was De Hann, and they all called him Dutch. He was my new squad leader. After shaking hands, I followed him around, anxiously looking for my squad and a place to drop all my gear and rifle.

While I was following him along among the trees, I faintly heard a guy in the distance yelling something. I casually glanced up and I saw a guy about 50 yards to my right among the trees on a nearby hill, waving and yelling. I immediately saw it was Alton, so I yelled back. He moved in closer and then whistled a sound only I knew. We shook hands and were really glad to see each other. He and I had been friends in basic training. We had both left Camp Blanding in January, and I had never known what happened to him. Here is his picture.

Now here it is in April, and we are together. Back in basic we had often talked about things back home Indiana and we had that in common. Ralph Alton is from Bruceville, Indiana. Everybody needed a buddy in the Army, and as destiny would have it, we were together again.

Back in basic training, the mail clerk had a distinctive two-toned whistle that he used to announce that he was passing out the mail. Alton and I often hung around outside the clerks hut after evening chow, and waited. We both learned how to imitate that distinctive whistle, and had fun using it back and forth when we were out training. It was a little thing only he and I shared. We had always said that we might be in a jungle somewhere we would signal each other, using that secret whistle. It was prophetic, because here we are not only on the same island in the Pacific; and the same company we are in the very same squad.

I needed to pitch my tent, so Alton came over from his area and joined me. We chose a flat spot up on a little hill between some trees to put our tent, and it was an ideal spot because we had a good overview of our company area looking down through the trees. As we pitched our tent we talked about where we had been and we discovered that all the way overseas from Blanding, we had been at all the same camps, but at different times.

Soon a guy came by and told me that my duffle bag had come in. I gladly walked down and got mine. I was anxious to have it back in my hands again. I checked it out and everything was there, and that was always a relief, because there were thieves. Later on I turned in my rifle, bayonet, and all that extra ammo I had been lugging around everywhere, and then I was issued a smaller weapon, a .30 cal carbine, an ammo belt the magazines full of ammo, and the gas mask.

The sun soon moved around through the trees and leaves. It was time for chow. Alton and I followed a faint scent of food down into the mess area. I saw a line of men assembled in between the trees. It wound around in a large worn shady area, near a big square kitchen tent.

A real sense of pride swept over me when I realized that this group of men was the guys in my new outfit. I felt both strange and really great being here with them as I took a spot in the line.

The men were quietly and patiently sauntering through the line and getting their mess gear filled, I heard jovial banter back and forth, and serving spoons slap food onto each gear as one by one each man moved from station to station. I heard the Kitchen Police, (K.P.s) ask if the portion

was enough and getting polite answers in return. I followed in line and they filled my mess gear. At the end, I passed by three cans of water being heated for cleaning our mess gear. The churning, boiling water had a distinct and familiar scent of steam that rose into my face that reminded me of basic training out in the field. I would return there to clean mine when I was through eating.

I looked around and saw Alton a little ways over, and walked over and joined him. I chose a spot on the ground and set myself up against a tree and ate my chow. They had seconds and dessert if I wanted them. It was quite a step up from the experiences I had been having the last four months, and I enjoyed it.

I took a little time to take a look around and saw guys I hadn't seen before. I did spot Mason, who was one I met when we first came in. There were some other guys nearby that spoke and asked where I was from. Then I met Sam "Barney" Avery from the Frankfort Indiana area, and other members of my new squad, Harold Moss, Ken Morgan, Richard Jones, Don Johnson and Whitey Sergeant. Some of the noncommissioned officers (noncoms) and officers nearby drifted over and spoke.

It was casual and calmness prevailed. There was absolutely no saluting and I saw no rank on their clothes. Most of the guys were older than me by ten or fifteen years and even some were twice as old. Some had been in the outfit for more than three years and most had came through the combat in the Leyte Island campaign in the Philippines, just a few months ago. Some had been wounded. There was a lot of "Savvy" here. They were a seasoned bunch of pros and I was quite impressed with them.

They were all in their casual fatigue uniforms, with some wearing shirts in and some out, and some wearing just shorts. There were those with .45 cal pistols strapped on their belts. These men were wearing clothes that looked nothing like my spanking new green fatigues, because theirs had that worn look, a lot lighter in color that mine, and therefore I knew I stuck out.

At least half of these guys hadn't shaved for months and gave a formidable appearance with their big bushy black beards. They were a bunch of confident men, who had left home a long time ago, now doing a very demanding and dangerous job. . They immediately commanded my respect; just by their having survived this far. As an eighteen year old, I felt that anyone there could have slowly walked through a brick wall.

About an hour after chow and almost dark, Alton said if I wanted to go to the evening show I would need to get a blanket and a poncho. I thought this was a great idea so I brought mine and carefully followed him on a narrow path winding around foliage and trees and water-filled rice paddies. We stopped near the ten by ten foot white screen set among the trees, where several men were already sitting on their blankets. Soon the movie flickered and started; however in about three minutes, an air raid siren wailed, and the movie was over. That meant all lights out immediately, and it also meant we had to get back to our area quickly, without the use of flashlights.

Walking back in pitch darkness was tricky, and you know we didn't hold hands. Soon I heard a Japanese bomber flying high overhead. The .50 cal. machine guns on board our ships around the island, opened up on him and their tracers' arched and cross- laced across the sky. Land based anti-air craft guns were also firing and I saw several little white puffs of smoke near the bomber. We were too far away to hear any guns firing, but we could hear both the plane and the falling shrapnel

slice through the tree leaves. This activity soon stopped and we made it back OK that night without anything else going on.

The next morning I had a good breakfast and the eggs the way I wanted them. The activity last night made an impression on Alton and I, so we dug a foxhole and pitched our tent over it, trying to protect ourselves so maybe we would sleep better.

While we were there Alton and I had a lot of time on our hands, so from that day on, we went out in the surrounding countryside exploring. If we had listened to the advice we were given in training sessions, we would never have ventured out. Many souvenirs we were looking for could have been booby- trapped and we could have had a leg or an arm blown off. There could also have been a hidden Japanese soldier out there that would either killed us or taken us captive. As teenagers all we thought was it could be fun, however we did strap on our rifle belts, first aid packs and canteens, and also carried our loaded carbines and steel helmets. We left after the noon chow, knowing that we would need to get back before evening chow. We had not been told we couldn't, so we thought it was OK. We took off in the bright sunshine, in our ignorance and without caution.

We skirted around rice fields in the lower areas containing water by taking footpaths between them. We hiked over small hills and noticed the few trees around and kept close track of where we were. This obviously wasn't a good time to get lost. We approached and entered two small abandoned grass shacks and discovered they were bare. Sometimes we stirred up a chicken or two. There was nothing military around or any sounds of the war going on up front. However, we really wanted to bring back a souvenir of some value to make the trip worthwhile, so we latched on to a couple of dusty mats we found rolled up in the loft of a hut. At least we could put them in the bottom of our foxhole and maybe make our sleeping a little more comfortable. We got back in plenty of time, so we rebuilt the inside of our foxhole from the bottom up, putting the mats down first, then the blankets over them and tucked the mosquito bar in neat around the edges.

Mosquitoes had to be dealt with because we were in the tropics; Malaria was a constant threat. As a preventative we took Atabrine tablets daily that turned us all a little yellow, and we used an oily insect repellant. We were also encouraged to use head nets under our steel helmets at night.

Alton suffered throughout the next day. The mats had been loaded with fleas and they had made a feast of him during the night, biting him all around his waist. He was a blond guy with fair skin and had a smooth layer of fat over his frame. He virtually had no hair on his body, and all I could see was 50 pink welts, which was quite a sight to see. We tossed the mats out. Okinawa vengeance! I did not have a single bite

Another time when we went out we hiked a lot farther, and found a lot more; we found food for the whole M company - a cow. We tied a rope around her neck and led her along until she got stuck in an irrigation ditch. We tried everything we could to move her up and out; however we were not strong enough. She was quite stubborn and would not budge, or pull. We were quite put out over that. The next acquisition was a goat and it was also stubborn. We began dragging it along and as the legs were getting bloody, we took mercy on it and turned it loose. The last find was a hen, and that proved to be a treat. We brought it back, tied it to a bush and enjoyed the eggs.

I saw a real butchering job by the farm boys of M Co. Some of our members had corralled a cow. It was cut, gutted and bled with finesse, and took the men but twenty minutes from start to

finish. The carcass certainly wasn't cured, however it was really tasty and there was plenty of meat to go around. We enjoyed the treat but one time, because our officers were told by higher officers to stop the practice. There may have been a consideration taken for the respect of civilian property. There was also the threat of ingesting foreign parasites and as such we could not eat vegetables grown there.

Neither Alton nor I cared for coffee, so I went down to the mess tent and asked for tea. We were in luck. Alton and I made tea in our canteen cups over a small fire we made up of twigs. We called it, "Vinnishnistle,", because of some strange reason. What the word means we did not know. Only that it sounded right for the place and time. The tea was great.

I was chosen to go on guard duty once while there. I hadn't seen one Japanese soldier and I wasn't relishing seeing one now. I was positioned in front of our company, about twenty yards out, and had a loaded carbine and a couple of hand grenades hooked on my rifle belt. I was given a password to use. It was "Apple butter." My replacement guard would say apple to gain recognition. I was directed to give the password," butter" back, so that I would not be shot by mistake. These words are hard to say in Japanese. The Japanese often said words in English and so we had to be aware of that to avoid being killed. This procedure was also designed to counter that.

I sat there with my loaded carbine, beginning at about ten o'clock, in one of the blackest of nights, staring intently at close dense underbrush and trees in front of me for a solid two hours. I had to fight off sleep and not make a noise. I was edgy and tense most of the time.

My replacement guard came, and instead of tossing a pebble or something quiet to attract my attention, he called at me. I answered with the word butter, and he was mystified. Happily we resolved the issue and he did replace me; so much for the sophisticated army codes. That was not the way it was supposed to go; a lot of what ifs.
And that is a dumb way to operate, a real dumb way to get killed. My next watch took place in the near dawn, which was much better and I didn't try the Apple-butter routine again.

My mail from home caught up with me. There had been a backlog because we didn't get mail while aboard ship. I received a lot of blue envelopes from my fiancé Jeane then, and they had that special and intriguing young girly smell. They were really special. I read and read them inhaling the scent.

Those letters were not like the ones I got from family members who wrote on occasion. I had also subscribed to a left-wing newsletter named, In Fact, written by George Seldes, that I got once a week or so, which I promptly saved.

My contact with other men was at chow and I gradually recognized more and more of them. There was always an amusing story or commentary to hear about each one, like a neat nickname and why they got it. There were Slats, Jug Butt, Big Stupid, Nanny, Chief, Thin Face, Polock, Young –un, and many times the slur; smuck.

In my platoon of six squads there were about sixty men, and a total of about 150 guys in the company; counting our two machine gun platoons, so there were a lot of names and faces. My squad members had tents near mine, and I knew who they were but I really didn't get really acquainted with them until later.

I learned from some of their stories that our mortar platoon was accidentally bombed by one American bomber one day and some of our members were covered with dirt while in their foxholes and tents and fortunately no one was killed. They were buried and had to be rescued.

We looked forward everyday to the prospect of the movie. We probably did get to see one or two, but it seemed like it was stopped by an air raid every night by the same thing; a lone bomber slipping through. These bombers traveled through a wall of .50 cal machine gun and other fire coming from Navy picket ships anchored far our on the island perimeter. Hundreds of tracers would light up the sky like an umbrella, and once the falling shrapnel got so bad that three or four of us scurried into an old concrete bunker to keep from getting hit. It was large enough to for us all to stand and it had a good line of sight down a valley. The bunker had been there for a long time because of the vegetation was growing all around. This was definite proof that the Japanese had planned on defending this island a long time previous.

On May 5th our company added 10 more replacements to the roster.

There was other enemy activity to be concerned about, because several evenings in a row around ten, we could hear the scream and crunch of artillery shells, exploding a few hundred yards away. The Japanese would lob in at least four or five rounds from a large artillery gun. They had a certain critical area zeroed in. The rumors was that it was on tracks, and that they would roll it out, lob shells quickly, and then roll it back in from a place that had been bypassed. It was perplexing.

How did that happen? Had the Japanese also planned this well in advance? We knew our artillery would soon be getting a vector or two plotted on a map somewhere and take it out right away, and were certainly glad it wasn't in our vicinity because of its size. The Army did find it later, and took it out of action. It had been on tracks as we suspected, and it was a very large artillery piece, and was aimed at the Kadena airstrip nearby us.

It was that repeated artillery and the fact that we were having shrapnel coming in that motivated Alton and I to dig our foxhole ever deeper and deeper. It was at least four feet deep when we stopped digging. It was inconvenient getting in and out, and we would disturb clods of dirt that would trickle down and fall on our blankets.

One evening there was a Japanese bomber flying so low that we could see the pilot's head in the cockpit as it was silhouetted with the light of exploding ack-ack. The sky was also bright with tracers. How he was even flying was a mystery. He had to be respected him because of his courage, However he flew over the island and hit a ship or an ammo dump on the other side which we heard explode and then returned to go back over the island in all that gun fire. It was quite a sight. We could hear but couldn't see our fighter planes that had scrambled that were passing overhead. We were confident they would shortly shoot him down, and get revenge.

The weather cooled and it started to rain; and it quickly became muddy everywhere. I admired the experienced jeep drivers and their command of their vehicles as they jostled around and churned the mud. This meant they could get around most everywhere. It was also interesting seeing the other heavier six by six trucks perform. These were the kind of guys I had in my outfit, and I was impressed.

We were told the evening of the seventh of May, to be ready to move out early the next morning, because we would be going into action. With that information Alton and I knew our party was over, and morning came too early for us. We went down in the rain and got our meager morning chow, and as usual we were in a hurry to get ready. This time we had to move things in and out of that deep hole we had proudly dug, all the time trying to keep dry and work in the mud. We really hustled. We were interrupted and told to go see the squad leader, and then we were each issued a large heavy canvas pouch with six mortar rounds.

Just as we thought we were doing so well, our company commander, Captain Procknow, came by and gave us a direct order to fill our foxhole, and that proved to be to be an exercise in pure mud. We labored with shovels to move the mud into the hole, it was messy, and we had to rush. It had to be done in pure military fashion, so we filled the hole to the top and scattered branches to hide it.

We grabbed our duffle bags and slid around in the mud going down the hill and left them in the company area, and then we slid around getting back up the hill. We hurried to get into our wet packs, put on the pouch of mortar shells, and then had to hurriedly drape our raincoats over it all.

We managed some way in all the mud to join our company waiting in the rain for us. Alton and I were the typical new men, the green stragglers. Our company loaded on awaiting trucks and the convoy took us up several miles. Our mortar platoon of fifty men got out and after a lot of organizing, formed columns on a narrow road. The machine gun platoons were stopped in the vicinity of a little town of Kamazato.

Our platoon formed into columns of two, all wearing those now wet and shiny rubberized raincoats and ponchos. We began hiking in the drizzling rain, in ankle deep mud. I joined my squad by falling into the rear and took my turn at sloshing. Rain splashed on our faces in the fresh air. The scent of cigarette smoke passed through the lines of bobbing men back to me, as well as the usual interaction of bitching, kidding and banter mixed with laughter. I was a boy among men and I enjoyed the company. I contemplated my immediate future, because I was getting closer to combat. We arrived about an hour later, which finally was good, because my raincoat ed just below my knees, and rain had been soaking my pants legs and running down into my boots for some time. Also the straps over my shoulders were almost cutting grooves from carrying the load. I was really glad to stop. I was out of shape. It was late afternoon by that time, and the platoon leaders chose a spot along the back of a hill near the small town of Kochi to set up camp. I looked around and could not find a dry place anywhere to put my pack down.

We were closer to the front, so for our own safety we had to dig in. Avery and I were in the same squad so we joined forces. It was lightly raining as we started to dig in on the side of a hill. However, there was another problem; there was no dirt around to dig; it was rock. So we pounded it, pried and shoveled it, and as each rock broke away it caused another one to slide down from above. We had to have l to protect us from shrapnel from incoming shells, so we were forced to deal with it quickly.

It was taking a lot of time, so we ate our rations cold along the way. We took the rocks we had, and built a wall a foot and a half high, and as long and as high as we could in the time we had before dark. We joined our shelter halves and made some protection from the rain by spreading them across the wall with one end attached to the hillside on a root, and with the other end held in

place on the rocks up front. We put our raincoats on the ground to keep from sleeping in mud, and the two of us crawled inside for the night between the rocks, hoping to keep dry. I took off my shoes and still in my wet and muddy clothes, wrapped myself in my blanket and tried to get some sleep.

Our wall of rocks wasn't wide or long enough, so Avery and I to sleep like cramped spoons, with our knees drawn up. I did not sleep well at all, because there was one of our artillery guns in action that fired sporadically all during the night. The noise came from a site just back from us, and the sound reverberated and echoed like thunder among the hills. It awakened me time after time, however I finally I did get some fitful sleep and too quickly it was morning. It was May 8th and overcast.

Upon awakening I looked around and saw the older and wiser men sitting on their packs and drinking coffee all ready to go. I envied them. I was not savvy and I had much to do just like the day before. Avery and hurriedly took the tent apart and scattered the rocks. I put everything back into my backpack, wet or not, possibly changed my socks, and we didn't bathe or shave. I quickly ate cold C Rations. I had body needs, so I took my shovel and headed out, returned quickly and slipped into my pack. I scrambled to join the men in my squad a hundred feet or so away who were again standing in line watching us green guys drag along. At least I didn't get chewed out, but maybe "Dutch" did yell at me with a," Come on Hill," or something similar. I really didn't want to be the one holding every one else up, but I was.

We hiked out a very short way west and began a slow left turn on a road. In the curve we came upon a vehicle mine that had been placed in tire tracks, which we all carefully stepped around, with each man pointing it out to the next. I wondered how it could have happened that a Japanese soldier in the night had gotten past everybody. We continued straight ahead forty yards and traveled then east down a short hill, and then crossed over a stone bridge spanning a small gully.

Under it on the gravel was a dead Okinawa woman and her dead baby and her chest was bared. The bodies probably had been there about a week or so. This was an idea I hadn't even considered; civilians dying too.

Facing south and looking to the right center, there was a hill about one hundred yards long lying parallel to the hill we were on last night. These two hills formed a valley about eighty yards wide. It was mostly devoid of vegetation with only a small scraggly tree here and there among rocks and intersecting gullies. The entire length of the hill on my right gradually rose up about forty yards where it leveled off and formed a plateau at the top. On the side of this hill were the men from the 7th Infantry Division dug in all along the length, with many of their tents still in place.

These men were really glad to see us because we were their replacements, and, as they knew we were to be here this morning they were packed, and ready to move out. It was a scramble between the men in our company to get a good spot. Alton and I approached two men who had prepared an excellent foxhole too see if we could have it, and we really lucked out. All we did was give them our blankets, mosquito bars, and shelter halves in exchange for theirs. What a find.

As it had been raining earlier that week, the men in the 7th had taken wooden ammo boxes and laid a floor two feet down. The hole was about five feet wide and six and a half feet long, and they had cut a trench underneath the boxes, to allow water to pass on through. Their tent was

pitched over this. They also ditched around, so all rain drained well. On top of this floor they had laid at least two blankets, and complete with a mosquito bar tucked in, so it made a really great place to sleep. It was quite a lot better than the night before, and we really appreciated all their good work. We had it a lot better than the others. Alton and I found a way to be together again.

It soon became an uncomfortable and hot moist sunny day. There were a lot of muddy places in our company area so we had to pick our way around. The best places to walk were paths made by those men who had just left. After Alton and I claimed our tent, we were immediately called to a work detail. We didn't try to shirk any of this duty, which we would have back in basic, but now men gladly pitched in for the good of the company. This was true es-prit-de-corps.

The first detail was to carry the mortar ammo. The truck was waiting down the slope in the valley from us. Each man in turn took the heavy wooden boxes down from the truck by grabbing the rope on the end and by hoisting them up on shoulders. About ten of us moved in a continuous line carrying boxes to each mortar site where we stacked them. Then we were put on a water detail unloading another truck. One man in the back of the truck, up on the bed, slid heavy steel cans back to the open end. I got in line and when it was my turn grabbed the double handles on the top and swung down two cans. I then muscled them along the path to a central storage area. Another supply truck pulled in with c-rations. These cardboard boxes were a lot easier to handle than those water cans. As we were delivering them a quick count was made by our no-nonsense mess sergeant Haase. Because he watched everything, no pilfering of rations was possible.

I stopped on my way back from the loading details to watch my veteran squad zero-in our mortar with it sitting in the mud. It was fascinating to watch because they were real pros. They performed as a team with each man methodically doing his job.

> **NEWS ITEM** War is over in Europe; it is VE day. To us it was really good, but we are in combat over here and it looks like a long war. The Navy fired several volleys.

When I went back to my tent Alton and I began arranging our equipment in our new quarters just the way we wanted. We were issued our C-rations, and finally it was time to eat. We were glad to get those company details done. Now I had the chance to leisurely take my sweet time doing what I wanted to do. I sat there eating and looking at the valley extending below to get my bearings.

I knew I faced north, and the hill out in front of me was the forward side of the hill where we spent the night before. On the half left, about 80 yards away, was the small stone bridge I passed by on the way here. Looking along the slope of my hill on my immediate left was a random line of all six mortars set in firing position. Our men had their tents scattered on the hillside near each mortars. Alton and I had our tent about one-half way up the side of the hill, on the extreme east end. Not too smart.

Supplies were stacked here and there, up and down the sides of the hill, and also two company jeeps. This company position was perfect protection from enemy artillery, and supplies could be moved in the valley with reasonable protection; however it looked like a scattered disaster area in all of this mud.

One hundred yards south of us was the front line. Three rifle companies of our third battalion

I, K, and L, totaling about five hundred officers and men, were concealed in foxholes opposite the Japanese Army. Three more of battalions of our 382nd regiment covered a segment of the front line. When the mortars and machine guns of M Co. came up into our new positions in support of the rifle companies, the riflemen moved into theirs. From that point on we were all in combat. Our rifle companies were subject to Japanese surveillance as well as the Japanese was by us. This was the 9th of May. Our Mortar platoon was dug in on the backside of Kochi Ridge; the defiled position. Here is an actual picture of our officers at an observation post watching the action on the front line. (Courtesy US Signal Corps).

The men in the rifle companies in front of us pushed off all across the front lines on May 10th and were soon getting chopped up. This was proving to be vicious.

Artillery shelling had softened up the area and battle tanks in support were also pouring in shells for the infantrymen who were pushing up the hills.

Heavy and light machine guns sprayed the area ahead of them and on occasion P-63 Mustangs launched rockets into Jap positions, just at the same time heavy and light mortars were dropping shells in critical areas.

Advancing men met strong resistance. The Japanese, defending their position, used hand-grenades, mortars, machine guns and artillery on our squads of advancing men that were charging up, over, around hills, into their caves and tunnels.

Entire squads of our men were completely wiped out in some areas of the line, as enemy artillery shells dropped in and shrapnel ripped their bodies. Many died on the spot and many others laid there and bled in their pain as other men rushed by them as they continued in the attack. The medics attended to the wounded men whenever they could be reached under these frenzied and desperate conditions. These men were cautiously taken back to first aid stations by litter bearers, and then on to hospitals on board ship. Some men sustained more wounds while being carried on the litters.

Many of those battles were at close range, and often continued several hours throughout the night with grenades being lobbed back and forth. As a result they needed more bullets, hand grenades, food and water during the day and night to survive and supplies were desperately brought in for them.

Our infantrymen pressed on with superior numbers, firepower and equipment. They inflicted very heavy casualties on stubborn and determined Japanese infantry that were dug in on the reverse slopes and stayed in tunnels connecting hills. Advancing was not an easy task a most of the time, because in the advance into enemy territory, our soldiers were often caught in cross fire. It meant the Japanese had to be flushed out of their holes, one hole at a time, and under these conditions infantryman often used satchel charges and flame-throwers. In some areas 37mm howitzers and armored tanks were effective. There were many of our men, who fought gallantly, in desperate situations unable to extract themselves, and several performed unknown heroic deeds for their lives.

Everyone worked together. Squad leaders were with their men and directly moved with them. Platoon sergeants directed their squads, while the officers called for heavy machine guns and

mortar assistance and oversaw their own light machine guns and mortars. Commanding officers planned and coordinated movements and responsibilities of the complete battalion. As needed, they called for artillery to saturate the area ahead of the attacking infantrymen. They used maps made by the reconnaissance planes to direct the rocket attacks on enemy positions.

In order to keep up company combat strength to be effective on attack, the rifle companies relied on replacements; rather than replace an entire company or a squad that had lost a lot of men. Green replacements coming into the rifle companies were threaded into active front line duty immediately. Some of the men I had seen passing on my right that day were killed in their very first combat encounter. Several more of them didn't make it through the week. Many more of these men would live but sustain very serious injuries for their lifetime.

Simultaneously the battle for Okinawa raged in mass unison all across the front, all across the island and more, often in mud and rain. Some three hundred square miles of humanity was destroying itself by arm and leg, and body by body as Artillery was firing. Battleships in the nearby waters roared as they launched their large shells into the enemy territory and men were picking their way up and around rocky hills on foot, and those who could still get up and fight were often engaged in hand to hand killing.

Tanks were belching flames, machine guns on both sides were clattering and enemy shells were exploding among men. Front line Officers were frantically yelling at men and directing the action. Radios were passing on vital information and thousands of hand grenades and mortar shells were being lobbed into enemy foxholes. Men were being men and supporting their buddies and men were dying.

And the U S Navy aircraft planes came in with flaming rockets. Japanese kamikaze planes were crashing into and destroying our ships, sailors floundered in water burning in flames, while other men on shore were hastily loading ammunition, medical supplies, and food onto the docks. Trucks were delivering supplies. First aid men and medical doctors were attending to the maimed men that could be carried in from the front line on stretches to aid stations, and many medical teams were addressing the worst cases of the injured on the hospital ships, just as our submarines were sinking Japanese ships. Hundreds of B-29 Bombers were hitting the Kamikaze bases in Japan with tons of bombs to stop attacks.

Upwards to 40,000 Soldiers and Marines were fighting in parallel sectors on the ground and many of the remaining living fought all night. Many screamed for medical help and to Almighty God. Some men simply disappeared in the artillery attacks. Sailors manning their stations were doing without sleep on ships on constant alert for attacks at any time. Hundreds of our troops were moved around at night to fill the ranks with fresh men. Thousands of Japanese civilians as well as soldiers were dying hour by hour with little medical attention directly in the path of the American assault, while thousands of our own troops were being killed and maimed. Hundreds of our troops were also suffering from battle fatigue. Their minds were stressed by the enormity of battle conditions far beyond what rational minds could handle.

Oblivious to all of this carnage, Alton and I settled into a routine a way back in the mortars pretty quickly. Day after day, we slept in if we could, ate when we were ready, and took care of personal items as well as possible in the circumstances. When called to action to load up shells we responded quickly.

.

We lived on C-rations, and stayed lean because it was basic nutrition. Some required water, and thankfully there was some variety, which we traded around to get favorites. To heat them we used a wad of C-2 (an explosive) stuck on the bottom of our mess cup, which we set afire. It worked really well, and as it burned furiously we had to stir it fast. Included with the rations was a small packet of goodies: cigarettes, matches, candy pieces, toilet paper, can openers and water purification tablets.

From this position at Kochi, I often heard the distant roar of the American Army artillery, the 105's and 155's firing, coming from two hundred yards or more from the rear of us. For days those batteries sent up several flurries of between ten to thirty shells at a time, which sounded like little schools of fish swimming high overhead. These we waited to land and all enjoyed hearing the muffled explosions dropping in on Japanese positions thousands of yards away. We knew they were really catching it, and to a man we were proud of all of our American firepower and its punishing effect.

Usually it was evening when the Japanese's shells came screaming in and crunching, and thankfully many weren't close to our position. We were always aware of the possibilities. Only a couple of times during the day did I hear Japanese shells come in, but these were some distance away. One shell did however, come in a little closer to us and killed two men out of four who were playing cards at the time. It was just a random shot no one expected. One of the survivors I knew, John Heifner, said that the medics came in quickly and moved the dead away, but there was some evidence left that he was not comfortable with still there.

The valley just below me was a busy place, because it served as a general passageway for the front line companies. I often saw trucks delivering supplies, bouncing around and groaning on and off the road near the bottom. Individual soldiers were seen driving their laboring jeeps off the road and up the slopes on the assigned missions, like delivering the mail. Men coming from the front line on my right would go down and use that road too. Even new troops in groups could be seen going across in front of me and up around to my right. There was a lot of activity.

To my right the valley continued east, and about sixty yards away I could see a small Army tank that had been knocked out. Two dead Japanese soldier's bodies were spread out in the rain and hot sun on the open ground several yards away from there. The terrain was rough up and down the slopes, and there were barren tree trunks and brush here and there, but mostly it was soil and mud worn down in places by vehicles and foot traffic. Nearer me on my level was a crater twenty feet in diameter full of water created by a bomb or one of the very large Japanese spigot mortars. Farther around and behind me on my right, and up a short ways was an Okinawa tomb. Around the side of this on a short ledge was a small, dead and wrinkled Okinawa woman, which had been there for quite a while.

The rain soon became a big problem, and as it continued it made it difficult for most of the trucks to get around in this mud, as these were all rear wheel drives. The Army had six by sixes, (4 wheels driving), with winches on the front to help pull them out of anyplace they would get mired-down in. However for a lot of trucks to move forward they had to back up, change course and use the lowest gears.

Jeeps could use 4-wheel drive. The ground was saturated; water was puddle here and there,

and was trickling down to make a running stream in the valley where the main road was. It made getting around really sloppy, and that was affecting the course of combat. Supplies such as food, medical supplies, water and ammunition had to get up front and the wounded had to come back, so it was a dire necessity to have movement. Even artillery fire was affected, as the ground was soft.

When it became practically impossible for trucks to move, the Army made good use of its weasels. This tank like vehicle was designed to use on land and water. They were about seven feet wide and ten feet long and about five feet high. They had smaller tracks on each side than the big battle tanks and were flat on the top with a windshield that folded down, and even they had trouble moving their way around. Their tracks would churn and throw the muddy water everywhere and sometimes bogged down while trying to move forward.

They were useful for a lot of things, including bringing the wounded back to rear aid stations. The men on litters were lifted up and strapped on top. It was absolutely necessary to get the worst cases back quickly. Men walked alongside and shouted directions to the driver slicing through the mud here and there on missions of compassion and urgency. It was felt far more important to get those guys back than to worry about any personal inconvenience.

The rain left one good thing for me to remember. In the evenings the Japanese often used their artillery just to harass, by lobbing in six or seven shells. It wasn't directed at the front lines, as shells would just come back as far as we were and land about anywhere. We heard them coming in. Shells were not threatening so we thought of them as sport and tried to guess where each was going to land and its size. They all had that familiar scream. On more than one occasion, we heard one screaming in, that resulted in nothing but empty silence, as the ground was soft so it didn't explode.

The first time this happened, I heard the cheers from the other guys in my platoon near me up in the valley. I was surprised and amused. Actually that was a stupid thing to do, because Japanese infiltrated at night and a little noise could give a position away.

Keeping dry is always a high priority for the foot soldier that lives in and on dirt, so we were constantly affected. Alton and I had to get out in it even if there was no firing. The company had to unload supplies and it was necessary to get C-rations necessary, so someone had to go get them, and we had normal body needs. We did use that crater out on our right when the weather was better for our laundry and bathing, however it was another hazard to deal with because the rain had made it slick all around; take one false step and you could slide six feed down inside. After washing my clothes I draped them over a bush or a tent line to dry. But under the rainy conditions I have often had to continue wearing them, and also slept in them too. We often didn't bathe and developed a tolerance for dirt and body odors. We also lived in a world of biting mosquitoes and in wet weather they thrived. Flies were the nuisance during the day and became a big concern. It was agreed that the best time to take care of often life's most urgent need, was after the flies left and before the mosquitoes set in.

Our fire support was not needed every day, so Alton and I had time on our hands. Often would take off and go souvenir hunting. We didn't wander too far away unless we had someone there to be ready for action if our mortar was needed. One day, we went exploring down the hill and move on to the right where the tank was, and found it had taken a bad hit by shell. We both climbed up, and entered from the top and dropped inside, and were immediately taken aback.

We found a bloodied severed leg of an American soldier lying on the bottom. It, as well as the pants leg, was about three feet long and it had been there for some time. I was queasy. Snooping around we was surprised at how much room there was. We could see sunshine coming from the outside passing through the hole two feet in diameter made by a projectile. In all probability there had to have been men who died here, because the shrapnel from that shell exploded and ricocheted around ripping apart and tearing everything in its way, including that leg.

The truth is we were on hallowed ground, and so young and green we didn't realize it. Looking around, I did find a bottle of Old Spice after-shave lotion. In a spot in this general area, I found a Japanese canteen, and I put it along with the Old Spice, in my pack to take home.

The next thing we investigated was the two dead Japanese Soldiers lying out in the open about ten feet away. They had been there awhile in the sun and rain. They were the first dead Japanese soldiers we had seen, and they were grotesque. Their faces were swollen with their heads twisted up and mouths open, with large flies circling about. Their leggings were made of strips of cloth that wound around and up their bloated legs. I took a stick and poked around on their legs to discover how squishy they were.

Dead Japanese soldiers were well searched for souvenirs. Because these bodies had been around so long, there was a remote possibility that anything would be found on them of value. There was a lot of demand for this booty; so there was a real scramble to get to a body first and quickly grab something. Inside their helmets, behind the linings, they often kept a Japanese flag. (This was the kind with the red ball in the center.), and were so valuable that Air force Officers would trade a fifth of American whiskey for one, even-steven. Watches were often found and the better ones had an outer metal case. Japanese rifles and pistols were one of the best sought after souvenirs. The prime souvenir was the Samurai sword of which there were several and some very ornate expensive ones Japanese officers had owned. All of these items were traded around or sold. The bad part of this was, having found something; you had to lug it around wherever you went and guard it, from that point on.

I was not particularly fond of guard duty, however I drew this assignment about every other night and it was twice for two hours. We all tried to be prepared for anything, especially to be ready for any Japanese soldier wanting to slip through the lines. I had been especially concerned because there was a wide opening in the terrain just to the right of our position that led to the front.

We always wore our steel helmets, and I always kept my chin straps up, buckled on top. When on guard duty we wore a mosquito net tucked under the helmets that took the shine off our faces. We also wore gloves on our hands and smelly insect repellant lotion. I usually sat backed up to my tent, to hide my silhouette. At Kochi Ridge I had a good line of sight toward the right side and down the hill.

Each man sleeping in his tent counted on his buddies at night and knew where everyone was. It was dangerous to make any movements or noises, especially then. An infantryman worthy of the name was always ready to use his weapon, and because of this, I needed to be careful about waking the guy following me on guard. I threw pebbles on the tent to make little noise.

The Japanese soldiers, who infiltrated at night, were often just foraging for food, being so

short on rations, but they also out to kill, cut communication lines, and plant mines. American forces countered this activity at night by using star flares launched by ships in the harbor so we could see them. These flares were vital for the infantryman who was dug in waiting on the ground. These were launched with regularity and burned brightly, and they could be seen drifting for miles. A small parachute carried them along, and when they came close, I could see high up in the sky against the clouds. They swing back and forth in the wind sprinkling sparks, as they silently drifted.

These flares always created weird shadows on the ground that turned around every bush, rock and tree. I sat on guard fully alert with my loaded carbine in my hands, my eyes set, and grenades close by. I watched those shadows stagger and hide and I imagined enemy soldiers lurking when there weren't any. One night I had to really restrain myself at the sudden appearance of a cat out searching for food.

Don Johnson, a member of my squad, discovered a Jap soldier who had popped his head up one early morning near our squad and quickly took a shot at him with his carbine but missed

Normally I found guard duty very long and here on this corner, and so quiet at times I had to fight off sleep. One night I decided that if I pulled the pin on my hand grenade, I wouldn't dare go to sleep. To make a grenade explode all you had to do was let go of the handle. In all probability one could be dead in five seconds. That night I did pull the pin and held the handle down in my hand. If I had dozed off for an instant my relaxed hand would have released it and it would have rolled out on the ground. I could have died on the spot. When I realized how dumb that was, I fumbled around putting the safety pin back in, and didn't do it again.

I experienced some real excitement on my next assignment because I was picked to be a part of a four-man guard team. Right after chow one evening, we hiked up the hill opposite, and set up tents. We were detailed to guard our company ammunition dump.

It was the custom of the Japanese command, to cut their roads on the backside of the ridges and hills. These were below the line of sight so they could move their equipment unseen. The road that night was a long flat corridor, cut just for that purpose. It was about seven feet deep, eight feet wide, and ran all along the hill. We examined our surroundings and could see but a short distance down this road on the right as it curved. However to the left it extended several feet.

We just sat around up there talking and looking down on our company area eighty yards away . It was interesting talking to someone different from another quad. Soon it became dark, and the evening's silence was broken as the Japanese began firing artillery. It was about 2100. One shell came screaming in and exploded about 100 yards away. It was the largest shell I had ever heard, and the closest. The explosion was close enough to have a terrifying sound like the sound of a ripping lightening strike. It was like thunderclap heard in a rainstorm, because I heard the roar repeat itself in echoes on several hills farther away. Suddenly, another shell came screaming in. It was a lot closer this time and the ground shook under us. It was hard to tell where it landed or how far away. I feared for myself because I had not dug in and there was no left-lateral cover down that road. Two more minutes went by, then another shell. It felt like this one had impacted on the slope in front of us, but about 100 yards away and again the ground shook. The power from this one shook dirt loose dirt, and it trickled down beside us. It was a very large shell to shake the ground this far away from impact. Another angry one came thundering in and tearing up the ground not far away, the earth trembled and again the dirt came trickled down. I was wondering when this would all stop.

We were all trapped here and were very vulnerable. Then another one ripped through the air and hit somewhere down this road we were on and we all instinctively flattened ourselves against the side. Immediately on my right I heard a piece of shrapnel come whirling towards us that slashed and plunged itself into the dirt wall opposite us. The shelling didn't stop with that one, and we didn't know when it would. However I think there may have been one more.

The first thing we did when it had stopped was to find that chunk of shrapnel that was imbedded in the hill. We picked it out and it was still too hot to handle.

It had jagged razor sharp edges stuck out all around and about half the size of a man's hand and about three-eighths of an inch thick. It was a mean chunk of steel that could have ripped into our flesh pretty easily. We found one smaller piece on that road, but no one remembered hearing it come in.

There were about a total of at least seven shells that came in. It was a scary experience, and it seemed that they were getting closer to us. I had experienced real fear. These shells had passed over the men in our platoon down the hill from us. I didn't know what it sounded like down there but one thing for sure; after it was over we appreciated the peace and quiet. We all hit the sack soon afterward and got some sleep. No one stood guard nor dug in, which was pure stupidity. We struck our tents the next morning in peaceful sunshine, and gladly walked back down the hill to our company area.

Our mortar platoon got a hurry-up call one morning to put smoke up front; wounded men were trapped and direly needed a smoke screen to get out. We rushed over to our mortar and hurriedly opened the wooden boxes containing the smoke shells. We formed a team installing the correct firing increments on the bottom, and passing them up in a line to the gunner. We successfully sent several on their way without incident, and helped retrieve these men and get them back to medical attention.

I helped fire on three or four occasions. There were times when but few rounds were needed that I was not called on. I did learn to see the projectile in the sky after it left, but only a couple of times. I was proud to be a part of my squad and my platoon.

Almost every night the telephone lines were cut that lead to our observation post up front. Patterson would have to run them to find the breaks and repair them first thing in the morning, and this project made him vulnerable to snipers. On one morning, while he was on this mission, a rifle shot rang out. He quickly jumped behind a large rock and after a short wait, he moved out in the open. Another shot rang out, and it also missed, but this time Patterson didn't move. He turned toward where he thought the shot came from and said to the imaginary Japanese, "If you can't shoot any better than that I am not going to worry about you." He then went on with his search out in the open, disregarding the sniper who had been shooting at him. That takes guts.

Patterson, 'Thin Face', we called him, was responsible for the radios as well as the phone system. He had picked up this name from a code used some where along the way. (M Co. was called 'Mike'.) I went much closer to the front lines one morning going with him to run new phone lines. We went to the west edge of our platoon and then up the slope to the top. Once on this plateau, we turned south, and from here the ground gradually sloped down into an area with a lot more vegetation, a bush here and their and a lot more trees. We had traveled about 150 yards

forward and stopped.

As with anyone going up anywhere near the front for the first time would be, I was apprehensive. I carried the spool of wire on my forearm by running my arm through and played the line out using the other hand. Patterson went up ahead of me and pulled it as he needed it and I followed him only as necessary. We kept advancing closer and closer. We soon arrived at the back of another hill and began going up. Patterson signaled to stop. I did and sat down and waited for more instructions. I could hear noises up ahead. There had been artillery firing that morning, so I knew our men were pushing off on the offensive. I heard a strange sounding gun, which was not one of ours. It sounded like someone ripping sheets. Szup, szzzzup, szzzup, and I heard it several times. Patterson came back from the forward observer, having made the wire hookup and we returned to the company. I learned later what that ripping noise was; it was a Japanese light machine gun set on its fastest setting.

Patterson was a guy who liked to play single deck pinochle. I learned the total game from him. He taught me the basics. A game started when our work was done, and at the first opportunity when enough men could be found. We even had onlookers on occasion. We would often play for a couple of hours while standing by. I really enjoyed this.

The men in our mortar platoon played cards while men in the front lines were getting killed. This is an unfortunate situation, but we did our jobs by being ready and then supporting them in other ways. On more than one occasion I was a litter bearer. We went forward and met others carrying litters back and relieved them by finishing the trip back with the wounded to a first aid station. That is a heavy job.

We had to stop a second or two just to rest our arms. On occasion the terrain rose and fell and the litter had to be lifted up and over, with everyone working together carefully, so as not to jostle the wounded man. For a while, there was an aid station down the slope from my tent.

Flies were terrible. All the blood on one wounded man's clothes attracted them. I swatted them away while holding on the litter with the other hand. It was the least I could do. We finally got him to the aid station, carrying him about three eighths of a mile up over and around. He did not complain that I remember, nor talk. The doctor began by cutting his pants open and examining his wound. He said. "Soldier, everything down there is all right." It was a wound inside the leg near the groin. The man sounded a great sigh of relief because he thought the worst had happened and it hadn't. Those of us standing around there were all happy for this man we didn't know.

One morning, I saw about 100 soldiers coming up towards me from my right front about 80 yards away. I'd say they were teenagers, eighteen and nineteen to twenty years old, with some men as old as twenty-five or six. We all knew they were green, front line replacements; because they were wearing new clean fatigues and carrying their M-1 rifles They were slowly and gingerly picking their way as they came up, walking around the tank. The whole group continued on a path up the slope and passed on my right and headed towards the front and soon disappeared.

These men were reacting just like I did on my way up the other day when I helped Patterson run the wire. All these men had an apprehensive look on their faces. As they walked nearer me I could sense that they were not sure of themselves. They traveled in small groups of six and seven, as if they were drawing some comfort in that. As they passed by me they exhibited that telltale

innocence in their eyes, which they were about to lose.

If men survive combat on the front line, they get a very serious and somewhat stern and vacant look especially in the eyes. The absolute terror they have had, such as having experiencing being shot at repeatedly, and maybe seeing a buddy get killed, or hearing another man scream in pain, makes a definite and cruel impact on the mind. This was apparent on faces of men I had seen coming back from the front.

* * *

Happily once, maybe twice, while we were at Kochi Ridge, we had a hot meal, with a nice slice of beef. This was a real treat, however there was one problem; the flies were hard to keep off of the meat. The flies that had been incubated in the bodies of the dead were as big as bumble bees. Swat them off three at a time, and they would come right back. They were so bad one time that I couldn't eat. I promptly put my plate in my tent, and took my shovel and went to a spot one hundred feet south of me to a ledge near the side of a tomb, where there was a small, dead, Okinawa woman. This is where the flies were coming from, so I dug a shallow grave, rolled her in, said a short prayer and covered her with dirt. I immediately went back to my tent area, warmed the food that I had saved and ate it without the flies.

There were several of our platoon's youngest men who took turns up with the forward observer's position to assist the officer up there. This being a lot closer to the front had obviously more risks than back where we were in the mortars. When Alton went up he really liked it, because he stayed for several days. I actually dreaded and feared the assignment. But I guess it was beginning to look bad on me, because I never volunteered when that opportunity came up, and it was the thing for all to do. Going against the other guys opinion of what would be acceptable conduct, would cost heavy losses to anyone later on; especially on an issue of blatantly shirking ones duty or suspected of being chicken. I do not know how the following took place, but our company commander, Captain Procknow, had asked me about going up. At that time I told him that if ordered to go up, would gladly go, but not volunteer. That was the last I heard about it; but later I did make the decision that I would volunteer, and I would face my own fears and take the next turn up. Fortunately for me, our platoon pulled up from the Kochi Ridge location and the option never came up again.

We began to get our mail regularly and it was a treasure. I had a letter almost every day from my fiancé, Jeane.

Letters from Mother came about once a week keeping me informed about things at home, and occasionally I would get mail from other more remote family members. Mail knitted us with our families and was a silent reminder of what we were fighting for.

I think the folks did know I was on Okinawa, but they didn't have an inkling of what I was doing. All in all folks at home didn't realize how bad it was for many, because news wouldn't get back because the really bad things were kept from them. For example they would all get letters back from me, saying my letters arrived all cut up, some in shreds, as the censors had cut out information of any kind.

Naturally folks at home really worried about their sons. Wives and sweethearts really suffered

too. Children missed their dads but were probably shielded from the possibilities.

Our company commander, our CO, Captain William Procknow, was a well-respected man. Everyone did what he was told or was suggested to do because of three reasons: one, because it was an order, two, because they would have done it out of the deep respect for the man and three because he had experience. He was around thirty- four years of age and didn't move as fast as the men under him. I remember him tirelessly going here and there talking to his men. He could be seen real early or late in the evening making his rounds. Characteristically his shirt was wet with sweat almost down to his waist. Soldiers can usually find something to bitch about like the food or some noncom or a weather condition, but I never heard an ill word about him the whole time. In fact I asked about him later, from those that knew him for a long time and they confirmed my opinion. He had been with M Company for a long time and with the 96th Division from its beginning back in Oregon in l942.

I saw several American aircraft of at Kochi Ridge. One was a small Navy bomber that was often used to drop supplies during wet weather, when trucks couldn't get through and I was impressed with the skill of the pilot. The plane came in from about 200 yards on my right front and traveled east and dropped its wing flaps down. This action slowed the plane down and by timing it just right, the pilot dropped a package, immediately raising the flaps, and giving it full throttle to get the plane back to speed.

It groaned and whined, and slowly getting up to speed and it was noisy, risky, and fascinating to watch. I also saw a single-wing observation plane go down. It was overhead when artillery guns were firing, and unfortunately, because it was flying too low, was hit by a projectile, which clipped a wing. I saw the plane drop, but my view was restricted so didn't see it crash. The pilot had no chance to bale out, as he was too close to the ground. A similar plane impacted near some of our men in the machine gun platoon and some were wounded and many quite shook up.

Our third battalion riflemen, Companies I, K, and L, pushed south, successfully advancing about 1200 yards, and were now about 300 yards from both Dick and Oboe hills. The first and second battalions of our regiment had squeezed them out. We were now out of range to support them with our mortars at Kochi Ridge, so we pulled up stakes and followed these rifle companies of our battalion south.

It was about the 8th of June, on a bright and sunny day when we ambled in a line of twos moving west on the ridge we were on, over it, then down the hill, and them curved to the left. The little village of Kochi was on our far right. Several of us stopped to watch riflemen neutralize a tomb. They had rifles drawn. One of the riflemen stepped forward and kicked in the stone front, then quickly backed away. Another rifleman with a flame-thrower from 30 feet away spewed a long flame of jellied gasoline inside.

We knew it would be impossible for anyone inside to survive. They waited to see. I'm sure a grenade was also thrown in to make sure all had died, but we couldn't hang around to find out. (I had seen pictures of soldiers in actions like this in the newsreels back home, and this was the first time I had personally seen it.)

There were many hills identified. (One was William Hill but I didn't see it) The highest and most famous one was named Conical Hill. Another curiosity and a mystery to me was a long

peninsula out on my left. Had there been a lot of combat there? Would we ever have to go there? I knew a town by the name of Yanabaru was over in that direction but I had never seen it.

Later on we passed through a small place which they said it was Shuri. There was little left standing, just the shells of a few buildings and lots of chunks of broken walls. I had heard of this place, but it didn't seem like town at all.

Somewhere along the way I had learned the names of three cities: Naha, Shuri and Yonabaru. They were located in a line stretching across the middle of the island and were in effect, the main line of defense that had been broken. What little battle news we heard was that the Marines were having a hard time taking Naha. We in the Army were wondering why it was taking them so long to take it.

Alton, my buddy was fully loaded down, having picked up two Japanese rifles somewhere and a few other things as well. He was also loaded down with his heavy pack and mortar shells, some extra blankets he had managed to squirrel away, and some rations issued for our move. He was lagging behind our company twenty to thirty yards. I kept yelling at him, as was literally dragging his rifles, stopping occasionally to shift things around and just poking around. He was a case! Then he started unloading the little things he thought he could do without, like extra toilet paper etc. We just laughed and laughed at him. He did manage to catch up somehow. Along about this time I found a Japanese Army bugle along its red ornamental tassel. I thought this was small enough to carry and of some value, so I stashed it in my pack.

We traveled four or five more miles to a spot in south central Okinawa nearby Shindawaku. Our mortar platoon pitched our tents out in the open, in a large semicircle, as well as one of our machine gun platoons. Alton and I had a spot on the far left. The ground tapered down gradually from the perimeter into the center like a bowl, and was tangled with small trees and dense brush. It seemed so strange to be camped out in the open without digging in. I supposed the officers felt like the enemy didn't know we were here, so it was OK. We did have guards around and luckily it was not my turn. After Alton and I pitched our tent we ate our c-rations and in the approaching evening we lazily sat around on the ground waiting for it to turn dark and hit the sack.

Suddenly, I heard men yelling. It was coming from about 200 feet or so over to my right. Next a rifle shot pierced the air, "Crack." Then someone yelled. "Get him," another yelled, "There he goes," and then someone else said, "There he is, there he is!" Crack, crack," but the Japanese soldier evaded them by running away down the hill in front of us, into the dark brush. Some one else shouted. "Put up a flare, put up a flare," I saw several men grab their rifles. They knew there was a Jap sighted somewhere down in the brush and they all wanted a shot. A flare went up, "Floom." As it lit up the area, all I saw was a movement of our men through the bushes coming down the slopes. "Crack, crack, crack, crack-crack-crack," the shots rang out. Another flare, '"Floom." More shots, "Crack, crack". Then I heard someone crying like a baby. The Japanese soldier was painfully pleading in desperation. Then "crack, crack crack, crack-crack-crack." Then it was silent. Someone yelled, "We got him, we got him," in triumphant jubilation. It made a lot of the guys happy to get another one.

The next morning I had to go get a look at the remains like the rest of the men. I saw the soldier all spread out, who had been shot in the head so many times that one-quarter of his head had been completely blown away.

Piecing the story together, I learned it had started when a Japanese soldier had slipped through our front lines away up front, and when searching for food stumbled upon our tents. As he tried to slip through, one of our soldiers had seen him pass his tent and reached out and grabbed him by the ankle, but he slipped out of the grip and ran down the slope and into the br to hide.

The machine gunners, who were camped here with us, had several men in their own company killed just a few days ago. Many buddies had been ripped apart by artillery and they had been carried back on stretchers while their buddies listened to them moan. Peaceful men as civilians became animals last night, enraged and going for blood. Out of respect for and in the defense of my Army buddies, and disregarding that our forces had the Japanese outnumbered on this island three to one, they were in fact, doing what any Army dogface would do; hunt and kill. They had been doing this sort of thing all along, and I am sure they didn't ask that Japanese soldier last night if he was hungry.

Early the next morning I was put on patrol. Our officers thought that the small walled village near us might have some hiding soldiers or snipers, so they wanted a patrol to go take them out. Our patrol had about eight men and was lead by Danny Madrid, a machine gun squad leader. We formed a line and headed out. I was next to last. We were traveling along a stone wall when Japanese sniper took a shot at us. “Kah-zing,” sounded over our heads, and we dropped to the ground. When the squad leader thought the threat was over, he got up and waved us forward, and we followed him down the road and through a stone doorway into a little village.

The stone houses inside had many holes blown in the walls, with chunks of concrete and rubble here and about. We all slowly followed passageways as we picked our way among these walls, alert to any moving thing. I ended up as last in line, so I walked backwards for quite awhile knowing if a soldier was there and discovered us, they could wait and attack us from the rear. I was edgy and ready to blast away, and had taken my safety off my carbine. We took a path around through the walls and circled back, and went out the doorway. We returned without further incident. As it turned out it was pretty simple operation, and I was truly glad to be back with the company. I helped Alton take down our tent and pack up, and around noon we started hiking south again.

We began trip on a beautiful summer day and on my right, about forty yards away on our right I saw a gruesome pile of corpses. They were stacked about nine feet high and twenty-five feet square, and were Japanese soldiers with maybe a few native Okinawans tossed up there for disposal. They were a definite health hazard and had to be destroyed to keep down the flies and diseases. There was no one around who could identify them because those who could have were still fighting for their own lives. I saw a couple of men with flame-throwers burning these corpses to black crisp. Smelly black smoke bellowed up, and slowly dissipated. It was a sad sight to see. Even though the Japanese soldier was a contemptible object whom we would all gladly kill, what I saw was sad and unfortunate.

We had been hiking on relatively flat terrain and we could see a long way. Suddenly on my half right about 3 miles away I saw a fast P-61 fighter plane streaking south and twisting its way among the hills. It snapped its wings ninety degrees left and then did a tight 180 degrees on an arc and came right back. It was beautiful maneuver to watch.

A P-61 is an aircraft that has two props and two parallel bodies joined together by a large

wing near the front and a smaller wing in the rear. The middle pod contains the pilot. The P-61 is similar to a P-38, and is faster when stripped down and used for reconnaissance. It is called “The Black Widow.”

We continued on our way between rice fields, and saw many bomb craters out on our right and an odd looking old Japanese truck turned over on its side. I went over and got a closer look and found some prints of an oil rig of some type, which I put in my pack. I thought it was neat with all the Japanese letters on it. We also saw few more scraggly trees and some trucks and tank tracks on the path we were following. There were some mine fields around I had heard about, but I didn’t know of any close to us. There wasn’t any artillery fire or smoke in the distance. It was actually peaceful. Our company continued on its way and stopped to rest every hour or so. We approached a grove of trees and headed down toward the middle of them and when we got there so we took turns running through the area and up to a more protected area. Apparently someone thought there was a sniper zeroed in at that spot. That was it for excitement of the day.

We came to a small area where the Okinawa people had a house and at one time a cane press in operation. There was a large wooden tub in the middle with a long pole extending out from a central pole and a worn circular path all around it. There was a small cane field adjacent to it. This is the first cane field I had seen up close. The canes were mashed down and in a twisted mess. We made camp nearby. Some of the guys scouted around and got some wood to make a fire to cook with. The smoke had a strange smell. Again we did not dig in and again no guard duty for me. It was a strange there. Alton was still dragging around two extra rifles. I found a couple of artistic lacquered plates, which I discarded because they were damaged.

We got up the next morning having slept without incident. We busted out our forever c-rations, had another similar breakfast and took off. Good weather and here we were now winding left on a small path around the bottom of a hill between cane fields on my right. I heard a ‘clink’ and then a muffled explosion coming from about 10 feet back in a cane field. Guys around me rushed in through the canes to get at this Japanese soldier who had just committed hari-kari. They quickly began searching him for souvenirs going all through his clothes, while his body was still smoking. The Japanese soldier had shoved the grenade in his stomach, and it had killed him instantly. If he had surrendered he could have lived many years; instead he chose the Japanese military code of honor. Who knows, maybe someone got a gold tooth or a nice neat watch. It was a sport for the men to get souvenirs this way.

We continued on our hike in bright sunshine. I saw the P-61 again a lot closer and I heard its high-pitched propeller whine this time, then it disappeared around a hill. We began hiking to our left again, and an hour later we began seeing other soldiers. I even saw a small 37mm antitank gun, which we said was a little pop shooter because it was so small.

However, the weapon was handy for a lot of things like taking out a machine gun nests, knocking off a tank treads and putting straight shells into a cave. The next thing I saw was unique; a rack full of rockets, about forty or so, mounted on a trailer, which was attached to a small truck. I saw these rockets swish off one at a time across one row by row until they were all gone. It took about eight seconds. I waited to hear the impact but didn’t hear a thing. That was some of the stuff the Marines had, which was pretty neat even though it was Marine. We stopped and pitched our tents up north a quarter of a mile from there. It was early afternoon so we took our time setting them up. We were near Ozato and it was June 16, and we were now in the far southern end of Okinawa.

The Japanese east, south, and west of us are trapped in pockets and are desperately fighting for their lives. All American forces are closing in, including our rifle companies, and they are finishing Japanese off one by one, cave by cave, and hill by hill. Japanese soldiers died by the thousands. Only a few surrendered. Civilians however took their own lives by diving over cliffs onto coral reefs and taking their children with them. Many soldiers committed suicide with their own weapons, but most were killed outright. Many suffocated or drowned in caves and tunnels

All I knew at the time was that we had stopped here, and we were south of where we had been earlier. We knew only that the Japanese were on the run, because our officers told us nothing. Our mortar platoon is in reserve and will go into action if needed; however, we did not set our mortars in place nor stockpile ammo. I was not aware of all the mayhem, going on nearby, however we were involved with some action, as a few Japanese did get through the front lines into our area.

Like the Kochi Ridge area, we were dug in on the back of the hill, which extended south. Alton and I scraped a flat level place, and pitched our tent. We had squads of men near us on both sides. The hill gradually sloped up forty yards behind us into a road, which extended along the wall south. The hill tapered off on the north end, and afforded a way to get to the top. I scouted up there to get a lay of the land and discovered I was at the beginning of a plateau that extended south fifty yards. There was heavy vegetation on the perimeter, and tree trunks were partially battle scarred and rocks were scattered about. I could see that our company would be vulnerable to infiltration at night, because we were all camped along the downward slope of this plateau, and on the right. Others in our platoon were aware of that danger too, so trip flares were installed in several places. (If a wire is tripped, a small rocket goes up and explodes, and a small flare illuminates the surrounding area). At least twenty infiltrating Japanese died out on that plateau during the time we were there.

After Alton and I pitched our tent we took our time to get a look at our surroundings. In front of us, and twenty feet down the slope, was the road we came in on, that extended North and South. In full view of us down in the valley was a large patchwork scene of small cane plots and rice paddies. This valley was about a mile across, and extended north on our right thousands of yards, and to our south it slowly developed into a variety of scattered scenic hills, all beautiful shades of green.

This was another strange place to live, but by this time I was getting used to living on and in the ground. I peacefully ate my c-rations and waited for nightfall. The first evening passed without incident, but a Japanese soldier or civilian ventured into the space of a Marine unit on the hill opposite us, and we heard, “Halt! Bang, Bang.” Apparently the Marines by orders had to yell halt before firing. The intruder hadn’t had a chance to answer. We all thought this was so incredulous and stupid. The Army makes it simple; just shoot anything that moves. We don’t call halt in the middle of the night in combat. What are Marines doing walking around at night so that their buddies need to tell them to halt and be recognized? Any dumb Japanese could fake that game. Every time we heard this happening we had a laugh.

The following morning Alton and I woke up in pleasant weather, and after eating morning rations, helped carry water for the platoon. While we were out we discovered a place to get water to bathe in. It was a spring fed pool on my right about 30 feet away, facing the road, and was cut out of rock. Now we had a supply of cool water.

At this point in time, I had only one pair of pants having lost a pair somewhere, and the pair I had on had a rip up one leg. When my section leader discovered my plight he took mercy on me, so I soon had a new pair of pants. This gave me a spare to wash and with this new spring I had the water.

Suddenly a loud artillery shell whizzed over our heads and exploded a short distance away, followed quickly by another. I did not have my steel helmet on. I rushed up the hill behind me and found cover at the base of the hill. Two or three men had beaten me up there including my section leader 'Slats' Johnson who said with emphasis. "Where is your steel helmet Hill?" "You should have it on at all times!" Actually I did the smartest thing I thought; get to a safer place. The next thing I did was to rush down, grab it and rush back, which took me about five seconds even in the rough terrain; which actually was dumb. All together there were probably only three rounds. We did wait around awhile before coming down. That was the last of it, but we had to stay prepared.

It was interesting to watch the activity on the road in front of me. Often it was a mystery. There were no wounded. One time there was an open bed truck slowly going by carrying several dead American bodies. When the truck hit a bump, each single body would roll a little or nod in a grotesque manner, because the bodies were stiff. I was totally repulsed at the sight, so I yelled at the driver to slow that thing down. Another time there were five or six Japanese soldiers being escorted right past us. They looked like school kids carrying metal lunch pails just strolling along and seemingly enjoying the walk. (It proved out later that they were school children).

I had some spare time, so I had the opportunity to talk to the members of my squad. Whitey Sergeant, (Nicknamed Whitey because of his real light blond German hair) was our barber of choice. I needed a haircut in the worst way as I hadn't had a haircut since I left Saipan about ten weeks ago. What did he want for the job? Just pay me back in beer when we get some, was his response, so I got a haircut. He complained to me about a used Ronson cigarette lighter his wife sent him for his birthday; he received it rusted together. You could well guess what he said he was going to do with it when he got home. Most of us used Zippo lighters, and gasoline to fill them as good lighter fluid as the right fuel ran out long ago. It was a little smoky and not the safest, but at least it was handy. Flints were hard to come by so when I ran out I had to revert back to using matches, which were included in c- ration pouches.

I was getting bored and so I dug a deep one-man hole out in front of my squad. Some of the guys thought I was crazy, but it turned out pretty neat. I had a good vantage point. Besides I needed the exercise. I was standing in my completed hole looking out late one day just as it was becoming became twilight. Surprisingly I saw something in motion out in the valley, about a half a mile away. So as not to lose the location, I kept my eyes on the target and yelled at Whitey, "Come here quick. Bring your carbine, quick." He replied. "OK Kid, where, where, I never got to shoot one yet." He did spot something but lost sight and was really disappointed. It was in all probability, a civilian out hunting for food, because a lot them were starving; however it also could have been a Japanese soldier.

The trip flares up on the plateau behind us were doing their jobs; they were saving our lives. Up to this time there had been several infiltrating Japanese killed. One had come through and lobbed a grenade, which rolled down a tent, and when it exploded completely demolished a washcloth hanging on a line.

Talk about excitement, one evening it was my turn for guard duty. My watch was on the spot on the far end overlooking the plateau. On this evening I was given a Browning Automated Rifle, a (B.A.R.) to use. This is a real heavy automatic, .30 cal. rifle, with a small tripod that folds down in front that is fed from a magazine. I guess the reasoning was, my carbine was not enough firepower.

I went on duty in the middle of a moonless nigh. I put my net over my face and gloves on my hands and I tried to blend in the background, leaning against a tree, with this big hunk of rifle. My left arm extended with my hand on the rest under the barrel, with my right hand on the stock with my finger on the trigger. I kept it pointed toward the plateau. Holding all this in place for any length of time was quite tiring, so used support and changed my position from time to time. I began to wonder how those BAR men in the rifle companies did it.

Pop, a flare went up, and when it exploded it spread light on two figures I could see in the glare, ninety feet away. I swung my BAR up quickly to my shoulder, pulled the trigger and fired the entire magazine at them; and that was twenty rounds in six seconds. Wow. Nothing moved out in front, and no one else was firing! I suddenly realized that my gun was empty, and panicked. I quickly snapped the empty magazine out and found the spare, but it wouldn't go into place. I knew it slid in on an angle, and it was so dark that I couldn't figure it out. A wave of fear swept over me; the new magazine would not go in. The releasing button could not be found and I had no other weapon. I jostled it, turned it both ways, finally and thankfully it snapped in. I immediately glued my eyes south in the darkness and stood my vigil, waiting and alert for any flares or movement. There was no activity the rest of my shift, and I was really glad to see my replacement when he came to relieve me.

The following morning I checked around to see if I had hit anything, but I saw nothing. I learned however, that they found two dead Japanese bodies. Who knows? Did I do it? I had my doubts, considering the distance I had been away, and having fired a cumbersome and unfamiliar weapon. I had no way to know. I do know that I felt no remorse.

One wise guy remarked that I had sprayed the area out in front of him. I told him, there was no way I could have done that, because I knew where I had fired. Someone else remarked that the weapon shouldn't have been fired, as it would have drawn fire in return. Those remarks were nothing but a put down. These guys were not men of my squad, so I regarded both remarks as sour grapes. That is simply stupid to put a man on guard and then not fire his weapon. What was I to do, wait till someone else fired so as not to give away my position? Ridiculous! Those remarks hurt, but had no validity.

Alton and I were soon bored, so we decided it was time to go on a discovery trip. We packed our carbines, canteens and headed out. It was around noon or so in the bright sunlight. Out about a quarter of mile or so toward our left front, down in the valley, we began looking for anything of interest. Alton lead the way. Along the side of a hill, I noticed a large bucket of water. I knew it had been freshly drawn because there were no dust specks on top. There had to be something going on nearby, so I called Alton back. Searching around we discovered a vertical crack in the side of the hill we had just passed. Alton started in, as it was large enough for him to squeeze in. He quickly came back out and said. "There is a girl in there." So I said. "Go back in and bring her out. I will cover for you."

Alton quickly came out leading this woman. All she had on was a skimpy kimono. She was

holding her mouth and her crouch and woefully moaning in anticipation of what could happen. Alton went in the cave and brought out two more people, one an old man and the other a young boy with only a shirt on. We started motioning to get the idea to them that we wanted to know if there were any more people around. They cooperated and as such we found about a dozen more civilians. An old man had a bandage on his head and we gestured the question how. He gestured back by throwing his hand as one would throw a grenade. Shortly afterward, I offered him a cigarette. He took it and rolled it over and then read aloud, “Chesterfield” which was a surprise. I asked the little boy if he was soldier, and he promptly shook his penis at me. Something was obviously missing in the translation. In the meantime some of the men in our mortar platoon came over and joined us. This picture is not our group

The plan was to take these people back to a refugee camp that the Army had set up for them. However there was a problem; the old man had to take care of a personal issue. So everyone twiddled their thumbs awhile, and waited for nature to take its course. The civilians were lead off and Alton and I headed back to the company area. All together Alton and I were instrumental in finding thirty Okinawans

As of June 5th I became Private First Class in lieu of my combat experiences. I was no longer a buck private, and could wear one strip on my bare left sleeve.

We learned of the death of Lt. General Simon Buckner the commander of the battle for Okinawa while we were here. An artillery shell killed him on June 18th. while at a high observation point. We were also informed of the death of Brigadier General Claudius Easley on June the 19th, who was an observer right on the front lines when killed by enemy machine-gun fire.

We were informed that the island was secure, so our platoon hiked back North on the June 30th of with the rest of the company to a new area. The battle was officially over, however, the men in the Army and Marine rifle companies still had a lot to do. Japanese were told the war was over, but still they resisted.

Not only did they fight on, and killed our men, but also committed suicide. It was a cave-by-cave “search and destroy” battle that gradually came to an end.

The island was declared secure on June 22. The Color Guard of the Tenth Army raised our flag over the island in a formal ceremony. Representatives from the 2nd Corps and its divisions stood in formation as the band played “The Star Spangled Banner.

Near the top of the flagpole a sudden breeze swept the flag out full against the blue and peaceful sky. (This notation was taken from the Deadeye book.)

We moved to a spot near a little town named Kamazato, in south central Okinawa to a new company area. Each tent had a dirt floor, room for six cots, a little crowded, but it was a lot better than living in the ground, and a lot more civilized. We knew the war wasn’t over, but now it was great. It was also my time to get acquainted with guys in my squad, because I really didn’t know them.

A lot of things were different. One main thing we had prepared meals; we didn’t have to deal with c- rations, and we happened to have a very good mess sergeant. Some men actually shaved

and got a haircut. Some became creative with little hand made projects. We now had the time and place to gather around, sing some old songs, and play cards unrestricted. It was great to be back to all these privileges.

Alton and I are now separated, as he is in the 1st squad. However, I heard he got rid of his Japanese rifles. Maybe he sold them. I don't believe he sent them home. William "Andy" Anderson and I were amused at him because he had struggled to carry them on his back all those miles. (It was also rumored that he just ditched them.)

I thought about sending my captured booty home like some of the older guys did, however that was a little dicey. First, we never knew how much scrutiny the Army would exercise. Then the Army mail service was also suspect, because I didn't really know if I a prize package would get through. Furthermore anything of real value had to be boxed properly, so I would have to find wood to make boxes and nail them together. That would take some connections and conniving to accomplish. All together it was a lot of ifs, so I kept my Japanese bugle and canteen in my duffle bag and trusted I would get them home that way.

> **News Item**. July 26 The heavy cruiser USS Indianapolis delivers the atom bomb to Tinian.

We enjoyed an outdoor show every evening, and they were first run movies that we saw over and over, and that was ok. Usually, before the movie started, someone would read the daily news and the Major League baseball scores from back home. One evening during the movie we heard a chicken squawk, and we knew it must have been a starving Japanese soldier out there who had just found himself a meal. There were several soldiers eventually be captured, and if fact our company did take four prisoners there.

One of the nicest things we enjoyed was the hot showers, and really getting clean. These were made possible by the ingenuity of the Transport Shower Company. They pumped water from a stream, passed it through large diesel engines' cooling system, and out to the shower heads. The soapy water drained back into the stream. There were two large tents with showers continually running, and the dirt floors were covered with metal airport strips. We were furnished with soap and towels, and we could stay as long as we liked. Imagine thirty nude happy guys, all singing a different tune. We were trucked there and back over dusty roads.

One thing some men in Army were noted for was the need to consume alcohol. The Army did try to have a supply of 3.2 beer, which was available once a month at this time, for the sake of moderation. Some units could get it when available and thrived on it; however, there was none available for us. A lot of men felt a real need and several of which made very foolish decisions. It was rumored that some men from another outfit actually drank torpedo juice, which is a liquid alcohol based fuel and unfortunately they went blind or died. This actually happened in some places.

We did it a little differently in M Co. One morning before noon chow someone went" through the medics," (which they later denied), and secured some pure medical alcohol. Pour a little of this stuff in a teaspoon and when lit burns with a deep blue flame. This stuff is potent and in small quantities is risky but effective. A real high can be experienced rather quickly. Take a little fake lemonade; throw in a jigger of this stuff and wow a real buzz is quickly on. I personally witnessed six

men in the tent next to ours pass out in one-half hour and some others became very sick.

I warn you; this next scene is graphic and true. The Texan we all called ”Big Stupid,” having too much of the stuff too quickly, passed out, and being much longer than his cot, laid diagonal, with his feet extending over one corner and his head tilted over the opposite. He was a sight several of us witnessed. He had vomited, his mouth was open, and flies walked in and out on it at will. One by one the men around him gradually woke up, and took care of themselves. Not Big Stupid, he just laid there all afternoon breathing heavily. Fortunately it was in June, and all the tents were open to fresh air.

Later that evening we were all enjoying the daily movie when we heard voices in the rear. As luck would have it, Big Stupid woke up during the movie, and decided to come down and shower. He needed to, because he had defecated on himself and stunk to high heaven. This heavy odor extended down into us moviegoers, which caused quite a stir, because the shower stall was just a hundred feet away. One really brave and compassionate soul went up and helped him out. The bet was Big Stupid had one ‘doozey’ hangover, and we have a memory almost as raunchy as it gets.
.

In quite a different vein, Gen. ‘Vinegar Joe’ Stilwell, the permanent replacement for Gen. Buckner, who had been killed, requested of our division a formal Parade Review. This seemed such a strange a time and place for this; however we were all familiar with this and how to perform it. It was usually just another marching chore for an infantryman, however this time it was for a purpose, and it would be for the General in command of the Corps.

This was to be performed in our sun tan (Khaki) uniforms, weapons, steel helmets, with all pockets buttoned, and shirts smoothly tucked into trousers. We were to be clean-shaven and on our best behavior, and with no smoking in ranks or talking, as this was to be a formal review. I enjoyed the challenge of trying to smoke and not getting caught.

This was a real change of pace for a lot of us. Some of the older guys hadn’t done this for years, but I thought we all did it real well. We did all the,’ right shoulder arms and eyes right’ sequences, as our company marched by in front of the reviewing stand, all without any practice. We must have executed well, because we saw the short General, “Vinegar Joe,” Stillwell smiling, and as if he were sincerely proud of each one of us.
.

It was a moment to remember; being reviewed by a full General of renown, and being smiled at as if we were important to him. The truth is he was probably proud of us. We all knew we could be heading into combat, and he knew we were veterans he could count on. It didn’t hurt to arouse the feeling of a little pride in us with that review out in the sun. We took a lot of personal effort to put this on, and he made it worth it.

> **News Flash** July 30, 1945 The heavy cruiser, the USS Indianapolis is sunk by the Japanese.

Later on I decided to look up some old buddies, so I went hitchhiking on the dusty roads to other areas hoping to find them. I was always glad to make a connection, but most of the time I wouldn’t find anyone. I often heard who had been hit, and if any made it back. One of the guys I was looking for was Bullock, because he was with Alton and I in basic training. During my asking around I learned he had taken a direct hit while he was carrying a satchel charge of TNT. I did confirm later

that he died. Men care about each other and the well being of their friends. There was always someone passing through our company area asking around, and everyone always tried to help out if they could.

I did learn the approximate location of one of the two 96 Division cemeteries, and decided to go look as I had heard some of my buddies were buried there and this took about of three hours hitchhiking. The sites were poorly marked in the dirt. I did manage to take a picture as I had looked around among the hundreds of graves, but left disappointed.

I continued searching by going into a Marine area. Someone back home thought it would be good for the two of us to connect. I walked into their area and found myself in a strange and spooky world. It was a dull dusty area, and I found their area nothing but an array of dusty pup tents and men sleeping only on hammocks. They didn't have the big six man tents like ours! I could see they were wearing regular service shoes and leggings, and not the combat boots we had. I was surprised and disappointed not only what I had seen, but also that I left without finding anyone.

We had been at Kamazato for a month when we learned there was a large typhoon, headed toward Okinawa, and it was placing all U.S. forces in jeopardy. Destruction was imminent and we were vulnerable. We struck our tents and packed up in a hurry, and headed to the port of Yanabaru on the East coast.

Trucks pulled up in a swirl of dust one by one in our company area, and we all hustled to load them. Officers and noncoms barked orders, making it happen. They loaded all tents, trucks, mess equipment, desks, and tables etcetera on this large flat bottom landing craft; LST 712 There were some delays and SNAFUs of course but everyone worked together well. It was quite a large operation to be a part of. Men were some of the last to leave and load. We strapped our packs on our backs and each carried our duffle bags up and into the ship. M Co escaped on August 1st, before the winds picked up. The deck was soon loaded with vehicles and well secured for the impeding storm.

SNAFU is basically a military term defining chaos. It means," Situation Normal; All Fouled Up".

Chapter Sixteen Voyage to Mindoro

Unknown to us, we were headed towards Mindoro, an island in the Philippines, approximately 1200 miles away. Considering the speed of our ship, it would take a voyage of seven days good weather. We weren't in the direct path of this typhoon thankfully, but we experienced very rough weather.

Steel cables held everything in place topside. There were trucks and other equipment used by the regiment like the antitank weapons. The cargo deck below also was crammed full. Army procedures were strictly followed to secure each item, like chocking the wheels etc.

Quarters for Navy personnel and Officers were, in all probability the best, with the rest of us stuck here and there. There was a mess, shower and head areas. Strangely I do not remember any of the men on the voyage.

As we began, the fury of this storm was quickly upon us. I had to see it topside, so I put on my poncho, hiked up the steel stairway against the inside of the hull, and quickly became immersed into the noise of the fray topside. I took a spot on a side rail, positioning myself in the face of the gusty wind, and watched white caps disappear into spray. Many times the wind carried spray on me.

As far as I could see around the horizon, the ocean rippled with intermittent waves thirty foot high, which were separated by troughs of open sea twice as wide and laced with patterns of foam. The sky was full of dark low clouds racing overhead, and as I stood there in the noise I braced myself into the wind. I saw our ship rise, dip, and crash and roll in the surge of waves. It was an awesome experience.

In my life I had never seen anything like this. I was experiencing unrelenting power in a continual display of nature, somewhat grand and magnificent yet quite deadly in potential. I endured the scene for a while, and then went below to escape it.

I couldn't stand the smells and the closeness of our bunk area, so I went to the cargo deck and found a comfortable spot on a large tent stored in a loft area near the rear and wrapped myself in one of my blankets, staying there hour by hour, day and night sleeping there in denial, and hibernating. The storm roared on, threatening, shaking and tossing our little LST anywhere and anytime it wished, wave after wave. I didn't know what day it was, but I knew it was daylight when I saw light around the doors. It was damp there in the hold but the salt air was fresh, and the sleeping was good.

This storm continued at its worst for about three days and lasted for five or six. If our craft had handled this with ease I would have not been troubled. This being a flat-bottomed craft, it rode on top of the water and often went headlong into large waves that caused the whole ship to shudder with each crash. I had a spot at the rear end on the cavernous lower deck, where the lighting was dim, however I watched the whole ship bend several times as it absorbed the shock of big waves breaking over the bow. I also saw cracks of daylight and small stream of water come through the two front doors. Overall, I knew I was in a perilous situation. We did have life jackets that we wore; however I knew the one I was wearing was giving me a false sense of security.

Normally I got my sea legs right away, but not this time, because I was seasick most of the trip. I couldn't keep anything down, and at the mere smell of food, I would instantly react. By holding on to get around, I did venture two or three times to the humid mess hall area during this storm to see if I could eat, but I was repulsed by the smells. I needed to drink water, but kept little of it down. I did get topside for some fresh air once in awhile. That was where I could hold on to a rail to get around

I was able to keep food in my stomach only the last two days of the voyage; however I knew I had lost weight. The weather did clear up some and quit raining yet remained overcast with angry clouds and cresting waves for a day or two. It was good to see blue sky and clearing clouds with occasional real sunshine again.

News Item - The A-Bomb is dropped on Hiroshima. Hirashima is destroyed.

The big thing that happened near the end of this trip was a notice on the bulletin board. A big bomb had been dropped on Japan! Hiroshima was destroyed! It was called an Atom bomb. An A – bomb. The thought of it; was it big enough to help win the war? I read it again. It was hard to comprehend at this point and it did sound good.

At this point in time we had been resigned to there being more war. We all knew that an invasion of Japan was coming next and we felt we would be there. Dangerous and prolonged combat was imminent. To ponder the thought of one bomb big enough to change the war was just imagination. We were skeptical and yet we were somewhat optimistic. We were glad, but a wait and see attitude prevailed.

News Item - Second A-Bomb is dropped on Nagasaki. Nagasaki is destroyed.

Two or three days later we learned that another bomb had been dropped. This time it was on Nagasaki. This was another strange sounding city in Japan, and surely this was significant. It is cheerful news and keeping everyone's attention. Speculations abound. We were anxious to hear more details, which we learned through the ships short wave radio, which they typed and posted on the bulletin board. That was our pipeline to the outside world. We heard that news bit-by-bit, always anxious for more.

Some of our absolutely no-nonsense men confronted a situation that they didn't like on board ship; sailors had been getting better chow than we were. It was felt that the infantry had seen as much real combat as anyone around and so they informed the brass in no uncertain terms that there would not be any second-class food rations served on board the ship. The situation was corrected at once.

We arrived at Mindoro on the 11th of August around noon and we unloaded our personal effects and the company material was removed by assigned crews.

Chapter Seventeen Mindoro

Mindoro is one of the five largest islands in the Philippines, and is directly south and west of the largest island, Luzon. Our company pitched tents in an open field in an area 2600 yards inland near San Jose, a little town on the western shore. We arrived at Mindoro on the 11th of August 1945 around noon. Battalion HQ put up this sign. Ken Morgan is on the right end.

News Item: The War is Officially Over! August 15, 1945

We were all anticipating hearing the news about the war and on 15th of August we heard the good news, the war was officially over. We caught all the details. I do not remember a celebration, but there was one, and with those who could get the booze, drank, and those who still had ammo and wanted to probably fired their weapons. This was terrific news for us all of us and military forces all over.

If the war had continued, our division was scheduled to land on the beaches and go into Tokyo with the 24th Core, and we all knew it would be brutal and we would suffer many, many, losses. We were glad they dropped the atomic bombs, and felt it was entirely justified. We knew

how well the Japanese fought, and how they would do anything to defend their homeland. We also knew that with the Japanese warlords in control, the Japanese people could not accept the rational option to surrender, even to save their own lives.

Now that the war was over our mail wasn't censored, and we felt free to discuss a lot of things. I would be coming home and our thoughts turned to that. It was happy subject for all of us here and at home. The biggest subject now was when my fiancé and I would be together again. We pined for each other for months and those letters Jeane sent were, as always, a treasure.

This Island of Mindoro had suffered little combat destruction that I could see. I did find a few spent rifle shells back in the province. The main enterprise there was farming with a water caribou. The tropical scenery was beautiful with mountains looming majestically in the distance, and the weather was typically tropical and very hot and humid. We were there in the monsoon season, and many times I saw low clouds drift our way in the mornings, then move in front of the hills and mountains, and make shadows on the valleys.

With all that to view, it was a good experience, but to us this was a place to be endured until we could go home. We grew impatient. The Army set up a point system to determine priority to leave, and naturally, being so young, and having seen so little combat, I was going to be one of the last to come home. I didn't take a philosophical attitude about it, as I had expected to leave a lot quicker than I actually did, so I ended up being disappointed many times when I learned my name wasn't on the list.

I didn't really know a lot of the older guys at all. They all had the high points and left one by one right away. These men were in their late thirties and a lot of them were from one of the two machine gun platoons. I bid them well and said goodbyes like everyone else, but with not much emotion. It was a mixture of glad you are getting to go, I may never see you again, and I'm sorry it isn't me.

Now that the war was over and that left our military units without a mission, and this was great. We didn't have the military discipline to put up with, or the inclination by our officers to put anything like that in place. However, there was the usual stuff had to be done like dig holes for the latrines, keep the area free of litter, and do KP, but there was no training, inspections, Reveille, or Taps We did have sports like volleyball and softball which offered good competition as it helped us pass the time. We also had first line movies every night.

A lot of the men occupied themselves with projects like wood carving and fashioning plastic and aluminum into a variety of things. Some hitchhiked to an Air Force dumping ground, and foraged for aluminum and clear Plexiglas plastic. Many of us had no tools to work with. The clever men in one squad used their connections to get some unused construction planks and used it to build a wooden structure for their tent. The rest of us peons continued to live in tents with earthen floors and were envious.

We began to look for things to do. Some went on hikes, and with permission, some even went to the far away mountains. Alton and I were always ready for an adventure, so we took off one day on a long trip into the jungle a few miles away. We filled our canteens, took our carbines and a little food. We didn't tell anyone where we were going. We came to the river which was in back of our company where we saw the laundry women chattering and beating our clothes on rocks. They

rinsed them in the river. We crossed over, and began slowly walking inland in a large extending meadow, lush with grass three feet high when we came upon a single-strand barbed-wire fence. We had been walking on a farmers' field, and shortly afterwards, we noticed an older Filipino man. He waved and smiled as we passed his shack, and could see he had been chewing beetle-nut bark, and he had a mouth full of brown teeth.

We soon arrived at the edge of the jungle. It was sunny daylight outside and then as we ventured in it slowly became dimmer, warmer and more humid.

We pushed on in through the boughs of strange vegetation, and came upon the arms of a magnificent fern sprawled about like an octopus, which extended overhead with some arms stretching 200 feet high. The soil was wet under our feet and mud gathered on our boots, and we brushed away the insects, but enjoyed the smells and splendor all about us. We heard but few birds.

We could see well, but I could see real daylight only by looking straight up. We lost our bearings in this overgrowth, especially because we had no reference point. About a half mile inward, I became antsy to get out, and wanted to find my way back. It was not a fun time to get lost and we did not know how big this jungle was, or how dense it would get. I thought we were taking a chance that was not too smart. There could have been Japanese Soldiers still in hiding there, and wild animals and poisonous snakes etc. to consider, and furthermore I didn't want to take my chances on being lost and having to sleep there unprotected all night. If we had known how to get back I would have wanted to continue this adventure, however Alton agreed with me so we turned around and headed back.

We really didn't know where we were. All we knew was how long we had hiked. We tried to see if the leaves had been disturbed as we came in, but it was so lush that we couldn't trace our tracks. We made about three different attempts, and finally found an opening and thankfully began our hiking back to camp.

We both could have been in real trouble if we had been late to come back to the company area in a reasonable time, so when we came back it was a relief to learn that no one had missed us. We had an adventure, and we had an adventure, returned safely and were really tired.

Mindoro was a large island and we heard of distant cities there but had no real way to get to any of them, so that was a romantic mystery we never enjoyed. We had heard of the city of Calapan up north and Halcon mountain.

On another day, Alton and I decided we would go float down the river in a makeshift raft he had found someway. The contraption was constructed with a metal frame and a couple of aircraft fuel pods. We hadn't gone far down stream when it tipped and I fell out, and quite surprisingly the water was over my head. I went to the bottom and scrambled to get out by clawing at the slick muddy sides. Fortunately, Alton could swim and jumped in after me. He pulled me safely out before I got any water in my lungs. However I did get back in the boat after some coaxing and continued with him about a mile downstream, but the stream quickly narrowed and became impossible to continue. Not much of a trip but worth a try. We did get a neat view of another part of the island. It was a short trip down and a long way to tote the raft back.

One time when we were out scouting around we ran into some strange native people. These people we heard were the Moros, or, possibly Mangyans. Furthermore, it was said, some natives could talk to the birds. The one man I came close to was so fair skinned he could have passed for a girl. He wore a colorful leather loincloth, and colorfully decorated with bright feathers, and strangely had about a six inch extension of his backbone extending downward that was wrapped.

We ran into another enterprising Filipino, who had a water buffalo that he allowed us to sit upon to get our picture taken.

Our company had an extraordinary mess sergeant. Ned Hasse He was a wheeler and a dealer and did an excellent job. We had food no one else had. The word out was that, in order to get us fresh vegetables and other food, which was not standard issue. He actually connived for transportation and got them from the Island of Luzon, He also had some really good concoctions that I never could figure out. The men actually liked to pull KP for him. I never got the chance because I wasn't in. That privilege was granted through seniority.

The older men had a "Queen of Battle" stenciled on the backs of their shirts. This was the unofficial slogan of our battalion. It was taken from a pinup poster someone had created quite possibly on Leyte. On the left is the poster, and on the right is a picture faintly showing how the shirt looked. I tried several times to find that stencil but was without any luck. No borrowed status for me.

Our Regimental Commander, Col. Dill, was considerate of his men. He learned that some individual units in his regiment were being awarded the Bronze Star, so he decided that if these men were so privileged, the rest of his men would too. This is how I qualified for the Bronze Star and not direct action on my part. He also arranged to ship an LST, to the San Miguel brewery in Manila, Luzon. There he purchased beer, whiskey and Coke for the men in our regiment. Each man placed an order. I ordered Coke. When all of this returned, the Coke syrup came in a steel drum. We filled our canteen cups with syrup first and then filled our cups with water out of the lyster bag. Salazar and I had concocted a special recipe. Even though it wasn't either cold or carbonized, it had a fresh taste and we enjoyed it. The rest of the men had better booze now than the rot- gut from the local market.

In my tent was Karlosky the Polock, Ken Morgan, who was from Ryan, Oklahoma, and both Rubin Goldman and Ben Pentacurin, from Chicago. It was interesting to hear their stories about events near Taclogan and Foxhole Corners, and all the water in their foxholes It was an experience reacting with them. Karlosky absolutely hated women. Morgan was the family man, Goldman was the wheeler and dealer, and Pentacurin and I shared stories of our lives and did a lot of personal talking. I did have a good relationship with Morgan and we went several places together.

While on this island I did get acquainted with more men, especially those on the volley ball team and those in the adjoining tents. Most of the older men had little in common with us, the late joiners, because they had had a lot more experiences they shared in the Leyte battle. (The 96th division was in combat there before Okinawa.) We just hadn't proved ourselves, and to be accepted by these old timers to be anyone to associate with. Those in our tent were OK.

Volley ball games were quite competitive. The proven veterans thought they were in many ways superior, so younger guys had a tough time breaking in and getting to play much at all. After a lot of challenging and taunting, the younger guys, including me, got a team together, took them on

and beat them. That was great. The older guys were finally the losers and we had proved ourselves.

Softball games were completely dominated by our company team. The younger men never played softball, however these guys were great. The pitcher, far better than any in the division, had a fine supporting team around him and there was a lot of camaraderie, noise and hustle. There was also a monetary side to all this; they would bet on themselves. The promoters would go into another company and challenge them to a game and hustle them to make bad bets, and each team they played lost. Our team made good money.

Then they had a chance to get in a big championship tournament for the Army command in Manila. So a lot of money went down. However our teams' pitcher was" taken in", the night before by the opposition They had challenged and taunted him to drink too much, and the next day he was worthless. A lot of money was lost with the heavy bets and a chance to take it all. There was a lot of ill feeling over the sum of money lost on a big chance to clean up.

Some men it seems just have to drink. A lot of these guys bought 'Rot Gut' whiskey from Filipinos. God only knows what was in it. The men may have cut it with juice or something to make it tolerable, but it was stupid to drink the stuff.

This whiskey about the area was too much for Holman the Indian. He would get a little and it removed all his inhibitions. He remembered any offhand remark and sought to get even. Karlosky, on occasion, would kid him about being one of those Indians on the spot where the two railroads joined together for the first time. Karlosky would say "you were there weren't you, when they put in that golden spike?" It was a put down for the Holman and he didn't forget.

Late one night, when he had too much to drink, he entered the darkness of our tent looking for Karlosky. Holman was built like a Brahma Bull, square and solid. He had been out in the sun and he was definitely a redskin. He stood about 6 feet and weighed about 220. He smashed his big hulk through the mosquito net and sat down on Karlsosky who was lying on his cot. Holman outweighed Karlosky by 70 pounds. This was bad news for Karlosky, because Holman brought in an Army .30 cal. rifle with him. Holman then pulled the bolt back and a bullet slid into the chamber. He was going to kill Karlosky. Holman was too big for one guy to handle, so Morgan and I, both immediately jumped up and grabbed him and begged him to stop and to leave, and luckily, after our continual confrontation, he left. However he immediately came back inside our tent with a loaded carbine. He was too big to force him out and it took all of our talking to get him to leave. Fortunately that was the last of it. No one ratted to the officers.

Another incident happened in the next row of tents over. There was a young guy my age that drank far too much too fast and went into convulsions. We didn't call the medics as I remember. He reacted violently. We felt so sorry for him. He finally got better instead of dying which we thought might happen. Vance, it was said, was so strong he could lift a man on each extended arm if he was drinking. He and Andy had a good humorous thing going. Andy was barely over 100 pounds and he would jump into the air up towards Vance and Vance would catch him midair. He called Andy, "Young-un." We all enjoyed that.

Occasionally I did drink beer. I think we had a monthly 3.2 beer ration. Alton, Andy, and I would get together over at Alton's tent some evenings. We did have lights on in the company for a

while in the evenings, and on other occasions we burned kerosene in a beer bottle. With a beer or two we enjoyed ourselves by singing songs. Those evenings were a very special time. We were the best of buddies. Whitey Sergeant from my squad was in that same tent and had a lot of beer stashed under his cot from cutting hair and .he loved drinking it. He was in the background doing his thing.

While we were here in Mindoro, the rainy season came in. I don't remember how long it lasted, however it was sloppy to get around and keeping dry kept us busy. The only reason I remember it was because of the frogs. Not only were there a lot of them, they were large. Some of them were so large and noisy they kept us from going to sleep. Tired of the noise one dark evening I devised a plan. When one croaked I planned to immediately smash him with something mid-croak. It was raining and I did not want to get my clothes wet so I stripped off nude. I grabbed a rock or something and slowly went to the spot where I thought the frog was. Of course a frog would stop croaking at the slightest noise. So I had to wait in the rain for the frog to feel safe and croak. Sure enough I timed it just right and clobbered him in the middle of a croak. That was really funny. Anyway the signal must have got to the frog community because they all stopped croaking. I went inside, wiped the mud off my feet, dried off and dressed then hit the sack.

Doing laundry was each man's daily task. Every day a water truck would pull up at the end of the company street and fill our water cans. We carried them back and used the water to drink, shave with, bathe and wash clothes. We had army soap in large bars and washed many of our clothes on the company tables. We put them out to dry by hanging them on the tent ropes and draping them over bushes and anything we could find. We had to be frugal because the supply sergeant only had so many clothes and supplies to go around. Obviously some things were worn longer than others, and some men shaved less often etc. than others.

That is unless the Filipino girl Linda and her friends did it. The prices were right. This was not easy work for them but it was an effective way to make money for their families. They would take our clothes to the river that flowed in back of us and pound them with rocks just as they did their own. Some men did give them some soap from the supply sergeant. In the mornings we could see these girls and their helpers carrying baskets in and out of the tents on a regular basis.

There were other ways women made money. I saw two parallel lines of men under a grove of trees, which was repulsive. Condoms could be obtained at the medics. A soldier could be court marshaled for a getting a social disease; that is if a soldier didn't sign up at First aid for condoms. I heard of a soldiers' death later; apparently he was trying to muscle in on the racket.

Soldiers also made money by stealing from the Army commissary, and selling the stuff to the Filipinos. Powdered eggs were not cared for by the men so there were a lot of them available. Also some men falsely obtained Military Police armbands and then went into the Filipino population and confiscated all that was sold, and did the same process over and over again. They had quite a scam going.

I volunteered to help the Information and Education Battalion officer with his duties. This included taking the present news items and opening up discussions among the men. He thought this was a chore. To me it was a chance to get my left-wing views out to influence those I thought I could. I felt I knew answers to what was really going on in the world and after all I had my secret weapon they didn't have; I had my weekly newsletter, "In Fact," that kept me up on all the American

scandals and cover-ups.

This volunteering led into a chance for me to get involved with a school that was being set up to occupy men, and give them a chance to advance their knowledge. They used volunteer ex-teachers. I ordered books and was responsible for supplies and other miscellaneous jobs. I wanted to take a class on math but I didn't have the time. Through my efforts I was transferred to Service Company on December 13th. I had a good thing going. I had better quarters too.

Along about this time I received a little camera from home and began taking pictures of the men in the outfit. I took a picture of Ralph Alton and Bill Anderson posing, as if they had been busy, behind the mess hall. I also got my buddy from K Co John Hiefner from Alexandria, Indiana to pose.

One day, parts of the 96th Division Band came rolling by in a truck with banners flowing. Men with loudspeakers were trying to drum up support for a pinup gal. (Every Division had one.) They were pushing for Marjorie Main. She was Ma Kettle in those days in the movies. She was a rough gal in the movies with a gravel voice. The slogan was," A fighting gal for a fighting outfit." She won the election and was our official pinup gal. Other outfits had the sexy Betty Grable, or Rita Hayworth.

I heard of a veterans group forming. We were looking ahead to peacetime involvement in the political arena. This meant meeting in another company area. I attended it a couple of times, in an Officers' private quarters. (It was actually cool in his tent because he had acquired a parachute, which he stretched up high to create a dead air space between the parachute and the tent). The group was called The Americans Veterans Committee, or the AVC. It was also discussed whether we would be Legion or VFW members later on.

I was always anxious to keep involved, so I volunteered to read the news at the movies every evening. I had the mike up with the projectors in the room at the upper end of the theatre and there I read the headlines and the sports scores. I tried to make a good delivery with the best pauses etc.

Because I had his jeep, I would take my battalion officer, Lt. Ziegler, to these movies. But being not very self disciplined, I was always late, and being late didn't allow him to get a very good seat. He would chew me out regularly. After every movie they played the war favorite song "Sentimental Journey." It always made us homesick but the song had a promise.

There was one humorous thing that took place at the movies. When the Nurses arrived with the Officers, men had the habit of blowing up condoms and floating them above the crowd. Naturally the Officers were angry, but they couldn't find out who was doing it. We all figured that the Officers were really enjoying the Nurses company. Nurses were Officers, and military protocol dictated there was to be no fraternization between Officers and Enlisted Men.

Later I had a chance to help put together the regimental daily newspaper. We would get the news items by listening to short wave radios. The Army had programs dictated slowly for copying. I then typed the items on masters and then mimeographed copies. I also delivered them after printing. I often drove back to M. company area to see the guys. I had a lot of free time and what I was doing was a lot more interesting than what they were doing. I did get out of KP and digging latrines. Here is a picture of the staff, Lt. Ziggler, and me.

I taught myself to drive the jeep. I even took a trip to see how fast it would go on an abandoned air force airstrip. With the front window laid down, all I could get was sixty. It probably had a governor. Later on I was driving on a dusty dirt road and a wheel came off of a truck that was approaching me, and I could not dodge it. If I turned one way, it turned too, and it finally smacked the front end of my jeep and bent one of the connecting rods. I had to hitch hike back. Officer Ziggler was not too happy with me over that.

I got around with the jeep, and I discovered tree-ripened bananas being brought in by a small boat to San Jose from an island nearby. They were small, delicious and cheap. Along about this time we figured out a way to make our own ice cream. One man would bargain to get a package of ice cream mix from the mess hall, I brought the bananas, and another guy secured a can of crushed pineapple. We put these ingredients mix into a small hand-crank ice- cream mixer the supply sergeant had, to make the very best ice cream around. We kept our very tasty treat quiet as everyone would want some, and it might get back to the wrong people that we were getting favors. Now I had arrived, because I too had connections to get goodies in the Army.

We were also in with a guy in the supply tent. He would take care of us. He knew someone in the mess hall to get steak, among other things. He knew how to make peppered steak sandwiches. He would take a small steak and beat it with a saucer until it was paper-thin. To this he would add pepper and salt and fold it to fit in between two slices of bread. That was tasty. We may have given him some of our rich ice cream.

Before the year was out I had a brief job as a clerk typist. Patrick J. O'Reilly and I were together for the first time. The only reason I had the job was because I could type. Someone may have volunteered me. I came in there with no training whatsoever and learned on the go. In the Army everything had to be typed in triplicate or more and has a protocol for each piece of paper. I remember the frustration and Pat O'Reilly. He knew what he wanted and was aggressive. One thing in particular I remember was the task of typing the master list of those Killed in Action for our battalion, which I did on the last day of the year.

Pat was a redheaded freckled Irishman whose face often flushed and had been in I company as a rifleman. In combat he had a confrontation one on one with a Jap soldier. He said the Jap was a surprised as he was and they both hit the ground. I loved to hear him tell it. He was another buddy.

Alton wanted to go home to Bruceville, Ind. He got his chance. The Army had a new program to get men to reenlist (Re-Up) for a year. If they did they could be home for Christmas, and then serve the rest of the year someplace else. These men became Regular Army. They had a slogan for these guys. We called them the Red Apples. Alton signed up and left before the division went home. We promised to meet each other again on April 1, 1947 on the circle in downtown Indianapolis. I was sorry to see him leave. He was my best buddy. We were both nineteen years old at that time. I took a small sheet of paper and tore it in two pieces. We each signed each sheet and put the date April 1st on it. (I lost my copy and Alton kept his and had it in 2007.)

What many were waiting for happened on a warm and sunny day. It was the 15th of January of 1946, and the famed 96th Deadeye Infantry Division was going back home to the States as a unit. I came back from Headquarters Company to see the men in M Co go. A line of trucks appeared at the end our company street and one by one men came out of their tents to see it all

take place. This was in effect taking about 90% of the men in the company. We gathered around down by the mail tent and orderly room by the loading area, and watched men come out of the tents from everywhere with all the gear they could carry. They were a happy bunch, and there was a lot cutting up and kidding going on. The young ones is this group stayed.

After much shaking hands and well wishes we watched man after man swing his duffle bag up on the truck and climb aboard. Each man happily waved back, and each truck in turn left in the dust, bounced around on the road, and slowly disappeared.

It was a sad day, because the rest of us, because we were too young to go with them. Yes we did miss these guys. It was a sadness that lingered around awhile, especially when we could see the empty tents.

Some of those men of course had been away from home a long time, and many had really seen a lot of combat and had received battle citations for acts of courage. They deserved to go back and be a civilian once again, and many had wives and kids back there as well as parents, brothers and sisters to be with once again. There would soon be many happy reunions in the USA. Some of these guys were my friends and I was happy for them. However, in the back of their minds I am sure, were those they personally had known who had regrettably died or lie wounded in some hospital, and wouldn't be making the same trip back.

Men my age did not have enough points to leave too. We did feel slighted, because after all we had seen combat with these guys. Weren't we worthy too?

When the division went home the rest of us were soon scattered to other outfits and I ended up in the 617 Port Company. Some unlucky ones went to Mindinao, a large sweltering island on the southern end of the Philippines. The port company was formed to get everything military off the island, and prepare what items of value there were, for shipping back the States. I saw truckload after truckload of bombs being put on a small ship that went out in the ocean and dumped them.

I did not want to do manual labor loading those ships and working down in the hold in all the stifling heat, so I talked the proper officer into letting me continue reading the news preceding the evening movie and continue printing the daily newspaper. It was this officer's responsibility to get this done, and he didn't want to do it; so I got the job. This meant a lot to me, because I really had it made. It was easy and gave me free time. I had a jeep to get around in, and my personal quarters were in a section of a Quantsut hut. This however did not last long, because when everything was loaded, we all would be leaving.

About this time I got a package from Dad and my Stepmother Mable. It contained a lot of stuff for kids. They knew that in all probability there were those kids here that would appreciate anything to play with. All I can remember is the marbles. Somehow I found a woman with two kids, and I gave them to her. Her kids had nothing on but a worn shirt. After a short conversation I learned that she was a schoolteacher.

When I got back I talked to a couple of my buddies about them and so we went to the Supply Sergeant and asked him if he had any spare sport equipment. We knew they would be shipping back a lot of things that would end up in a warehouse somewhere or thrown away. The generosity of that man and his bookkeeping talents meant that we could have a lot of things for this school of

Filipino kids.

A friend of mine and I delivered it all and we set up the volleyball net and watched them joyfully play. We also brought them a wind-up record player and a few records. The teacher was so appreciative that she offered us to come to her home for a meal. All I can remember of this humble meal was that it included some strange food including some blue substance similar to a sweet potato, (Taro root?) and chicken. This was prepared an unusual way. She cooked and carefully skinned the chicken, and after taking out all the bones she made a mixture of vegetables and chicken flesh. Then she reconstructed the chicken by stuffing the mixture into the skin to resemble the original chicken. It was served to us by slices crossways. It was a little strange tasting but good. We suffered no ill effects. From this experience I felt like we as human beings are all much alike all over the world.

When on one of my visits to San Jose I had seen the native Filipinos dancing the Tango. It gave me an idea. Why not throw a dance before leaving, as a good will gesture? I talked it up and the idea really caught on. So I asked my Commanding Officer for permission to use one of the empty Army quonset huts for an evening. We could get a record player, some chairs, and go out and get a lot of people to dance for a farewell party. Soon we were all getting things ready for this with a happy heart.

All of a sudden a higher up officer, over my Commanding Officer, (A Captain) called me into his office. (Gulp; what have I done wrong?) I didn't even know him. He was huffy and I was on the spot. Across from his desk he informed me that he had not been consulted about this dance, and all these plans to use an Army building were made without his knowledge and without his prior approval. On top of this it was a personal affront because he was the "Island Commander", and in no uncertain terms, the dance was off. I was taken by surprise at his take on this event, and his manner. Being classically outranked, I replied without hesitation, OK Sir, I will stop it.

His being Island Commander was ludicrous. All the really big brass and almost all of the personnel had previously left. I couldn't wait to tell my Commanding Officer what happened. He did acknowledge I had received his prior permission, and by the way he answered, I knew he was on the spot. I took the clue and dropped the matter. We shared the same opinion; this Captain was a real head case. Military protocol dictated the outcome, so the issue was closed. (Why confront an idiot with rank?)

Inside I felt I had been the fall guy and been falsely accused. But all it was just a rejection. Ha, I would get the last word; we would have a dance anyway. I would find a place way back in the provinces in some way or another. I told the other guys what happened and they all agreed with me; we would have a dance regardless of this ego-driven jerk. It turned out to be a real neat experience. Far better than any we could have had on the Army base.

Getting started we went on a search and we found a spot way back in the province among the trees. It was a building just made for our purposes. It had been used for dances before and had a good wooden floor, screened in all around, about twenty feet wide and forty feet long. It was rustic and quite a perfect place for us.

We didn't invite the Filipino men, just the young women. We had a good relationship with the locals so that wasn't a problem. It was to be a goodbye and farewell for all and about ten of us guys

scattered everywhere looking for things we could use. Some one found a wind -up record player and another found some tango records and some others found other things too. Someone found the chairs and one table. I do not remember the refreshments. We also had one added attraction.

Every once in awhile a merchant ship from another country pulled up at the dock where troops had been loading ships. On this particular occasion a French man came off his ship to see us and he had only one thing on his mind. He knew only one English word as far as I can remember. He was an animated character and as such would prove be the life of our party.

The dance began in the early darkness by the light of two makeshift lamps. We lit the wicks sticking up out of beer bottles. As the cabin was set in among dense trees the dim light didn't carry very far. It all began with an awkward start, because no one knew each other. The girls sat in groups talking quietly on one side and our guys lined up on the other side, not knowing when to ask. (It is the mandatory in the Philippines that every daughter has a chaperone if they go to any function with the opposite sex. This slows everything down to the crawl of propriety.)

All of the Soldiers were spiffed- up their dress khaki uniforms and the young women were in white dresses with the traditional large puffed sleeves. With the record player playing a few men gradually ventured forth and asked the ladies to dance. We were much taller than they were and soon discovered we were not the dancers they were. So it was a bit cumbersome at first. They were not much on round dancing.

When the French man danced many of us stood around and just watched him. He was so energetic and he thrived in the attention. After dancing with a partner he danced by himself. He was a riot. He was all over the floor. We just laughed and laughed.

The evening was low-pressure and had been enjoyable for everyone. Oh, there may have been some hanky -panky going on somewhere around, but I never heard of any. I never saw the Frenchman again. About 10:00 that evening we all said our goodbyes. The men all pitched in and gathered the supplies and we headed back. There were no repercussions from the upper brass, or from Filipino men. It was a unique experience and very special. The girls got home with their starched sleeves intact.

I stayed on Mindoro until one of the very last men, and then I shipped to another island on an LST to Luzon.

Chapter Seventeen Luzon

In January of 1946 I debarked from an LST in the port city of Manila on Luzon. Luzon is the largest of the Philippine Islands and the one up north.

There I was assigned to a Tank Company in the 86th Black Hawk Infantry Division, located in Mariquina, a small town several miles northeast of Manila. The soldiers were busy with their tanks in the company area, but as they were rather clannish, I was not accepted. Some of these men in this division had seen a couple of weeks in action in Europe and after a brief stay back home in the States they had been shipped to the Pacific. As a result of these accumulated experiences the men from that unit were close-knit. Thankfully I was soon transferred to another company. There I met

another Hoosier from Indianapolis by the name of Dwinger. I had it a lot better here, with lot more options than I had on Mindoro. Now I had a decent recreation room and a good PX. It was very hot there most of the time as we were living in squad tents, however he did have clean quarters and movies to attend.

Jeane and I kept up a stream of letters back and forth. However, for St. Valentines Day I sent her a nice Valentine. Soon another item that appeared in the Bowes Seal-Fast company newsletter Just-Us back in Indianapolis: You and I, dear reader, know the rest of the story; I received a sweet thank you.

The men often had several skin problems to deal with in this tropical region with all the heat and humidity. Prickly heat rash was common. My skin began to break out, and I soon had several weeping lesions. My lymph glands swelled in my groin, and I developed a fever. I thought I had the commonly accepted skin condition we all called jungle rot.

I went to sick call and they sent me to The Army General Hospital at Clark Field, an Army Air Force base southeast of Manila. I am sure they didn't know what I had. They first treated with a complete body spray of Penicillin. The liquid vehicle for this drug was mare's urine, so I carried about a unique odor in the ward. They tried other remedies and my fever soon returned to normal. However I still had several scabby spots that never seemed to go away.

We did manage to have some fun while we were getting treatment. We had a Japanese soldier that swept and mopped the wards. The patients had taught him to point at someone, after much encouragement, to say, "No good." This was a lot of fun for all, because of his crude language skills and devilishly animated smile.

I met a patient in my ward from the east side of Indianapolis who said he hung out at Herman's tavern and at that time it was located at Beville and East Michigan streets, not too far from where I used to live in Indianapolis. We had a lot of laughs. We said we would meet there after the war.

One nurse would go around on her the night rounds and give everyone a shot of penicillin, or pills as required. I crawled in my buddies' bed and bared myself one night and took his shot as a surprise to the nurse. She wasn't too happy with me as she had to go get another shot.

We had no air conditioning in the wards and so the windows were always wide open so we all had to have mosquito bars tucked into place to protect us. So all I did was to be ready for the shot when she pulled the mosquito bar back, and it worked because she didn't know one rear end from another.

One of our nurses, a Second Lieutenant, was a chummy buddy of an enlisted man in the ward, which was the talk of the place because fraternization with enlisted men was a military taboo. She was friendly so I showed her Jeane's picture, and on it was a comment written to me about me being her "sweetness" So the nurse kidded me about that by calling me sweetness.

The hospital used Filipino girls as aides. My favorite was Marcialina Tenereo, (Naty), who claimed she was ugly but I told her otherwise. She was self-conscious about one of her broken teeth. I hadn't been around the Filipino people much so I really couldn't tell, but I would suppose she

was about my age. I showed her Jeane's picture and Marcialina pronounced Jeane's name as Hennie, as the j's are pronounced as an h's, in Tagalog; the native language. She called me William. They said my name translated into Tagalog would be: Manuel Ricardo Bontok. (Bontoc meant little mountain.)

She knew Jeane and I were engaged but that didn't keep us from being friends. Before I left the hospital she handmade me a handkerchief with my initials on it. She also produced for me a hand made army shoulder patch which was a lot of work. I wasn't aware of her interest in me, and if I was I tossed it off.

I almost got into some real trouble with one of the guys in an adjacent ward late one evening. Back in my old outfit in M. Co. we had a derogative type of humor that was well accepted and put-downs were common fun. This guy in the ward seemed to be someone that was a congenial sort so I inadvertently kidded him about his having a big nose. I thought I would get a clever response, however he told me that I was lucky that he was a good guy or he would have made me sorry. I apologized for I meant no hard feelings. (A lesson learned here)

It was generally hot in the ward but towards evening the weather cooled. It was the best part of the day and we looked forward to it because of the movie a short stroll away for those that could get around. We even had fresh bread, jelly and coffee after returning from the show. Overall the food wasn't that bad there.

We had several men with bad skin problems and other conditions in the ward. One man died there. We had one old salty merchant marine in our ward that helped them prepare the body for burial. He explained how he had to plug the body up to keep it from defecating and the necessity to tie up the penis. That was new information for me.

One time I assisted the nurse by watching a patient while he was being fed intravenously. It was a simple job, but I was interrelating in some way with his condition, and without my knowledge my blood was draining from my face and I was turning white. When the nurse returned she told me that I was too pale and told me I had better sit down. That was weird. That had never happened to me before.

I was finally discharged from the hospital and provided with sulfa and creams to keep my skin condition under control, which was the best they could do. They really didn't have a final fix for me; they just tried to suppress it. Topical application of calamine lotion helped. I was in the hospital for about a month. After some conniving on my part, I was issued two pairs of officer dress shoes to use, as my ankles often had sores.

I had made application to have an official vacation leave and go to Bagio a resort area up in northern Luzon. It was an especially nice area for service men. Before the request went through they transferred me to a rifle company back in my new 86th division, and even though I didn't get to go to Bagio I was thankfully glad to return to this outfit instead of the one I had left.

Our tents here were set among trees and in general it wasn't all that bad there, even with dirt floors. Mosquito netting surrounded the tent.These men were infantrymen and like myself anxious to go home but too short of points. We had little to do here but typical army work details and little else. These men were not the clannish type here so it wasn't so bad, however I really wanted to do

something better, as it was so boring. I met one soldier there who seemed content. He was a regular and said in effect that it wasn't all that bad. It got me to thinking. Maybe he was right, but I wanted to get home and see my family and maybe get married right away. It just didn't fit for me. I could have filled my boring time in by studying with the Armed Forces Institute which was a free service for soldiers with correspondence courses. I really didn't want to be tied down, yet I was planning on college. In retrospect I would have been better off if I had enrolled.

Fortunately I picked up a stray copy of the Division's daily newsletter, "The Blackhawk Bugle," and learned that they wanted a reporter, so I hiked to the Division's Headquarters, walked into the Public Relations Office and applied for the job. I told them that I could do it and about all the other jobs I had been doing, so they put in a transfer request for me and soon put me on their roster. That was a real big break for me in lots of ways. In addition I felt fortunate because I learned that there had been others who had applied.

It was a smaller group of men there and I had a chance to do something with my time. I even had even better quarters, an enlisted man's club to use and recreation when I wanted it. I had regular hours and always weekend passes to go into Manila, no threat of menial details; like guard duty, latrine cleaning, and especially not KP. I felt like I had it made.

My job was to compose articles about men that had either awarded a new rank or had participated in any other newsworthy event, and then forward that article back to the soldier's hometown newspapers. Often I received little information from the rest of the division about the men to write my articles so I devised and printed a form for distribution. After all I didn't want to lose my cushy job over lack of work. To make sure that form fell in the right hands I hiked around the division on foot and gave them to the right people. It was touch and go, but I soon received several responses and it kept me occupied. I always envisioned the people back home reading articles about the men they knew. My Commanding Officer appreciated my initiative and gave me other assignments, so I knew I was meeting expectations and would stay on the roster. I became creative and sent an article about myself back to an Indianapolis newspaper. My buddy O'Reilly was on staff as well as Ken Staley the artist from the 96th Deadeye outfit.

Our hours were from 0700 to 1300 five days a week. The catch to this was we had to engage ourselves in regular physical activity for three hours each afternoon. Some guys played basketball or baseball, and some worked out in the gym. Those who played baseball spent a lot of time out in the tropical sun and as a result really became brown. I tried to play basketball on the indoor court, but hadn't ever played full court ball anywhere so they cut me out. I ended up pumping iron in the gym, and that was a good deal for me.

We had an enlistment men's club nearby, which I gravitated to where we had beer and mixed drinks. Drinks were really cheap. One guy volunteered to take me under his wing just to show me how to drink. He said that was important, because in that way, I would learn how not to be obnoxious. It was fun there with all the guys and everyone got along fine. Many soldiers drink I learned, because there is often little else to entertain them, and as a result many of them in time turn into lushes. However I used restraint.

When we went to Manila on the weekends we customarily and took a shower, and put on fresh clothes. All that effort was almost lost as we rode in open army trucks in swirling dust all the way down town. We always got the driver to stop at a small brick bakery back on a dirt road on the

way, where we bought clustered hot rolls fresh out of the oven.

When at downtown Manila, I always lodged at a Red Cross facility. It was a large concrete block building with several tiers of bunks. The problem with the place was the drunken sailors that came in late. Too many had too much to drink, and they often barfed on the floors. I developed a personal rule to never take a bunk on the bottom, so I wouldn't get splashed on. I claimed one up as high as I could get, just for that reason.

We usually traveled in pairs or threes going around just seeing what we could. It was entirely safe. I often ate at by myself at my favorite Chinese restaurant that served Chicken Chow Mein. I sure wish I had that recipe today.

I had the time to go to the nurses-aid Marcialina's house a couple of times and met her family. She lived in a tropical house nearby in one of the provinces. It was sparingly furnished and the floor was made of bamboo slats. They had wooden walkways laced between the homes, and it was a winding walk from the street. These cabins were a step up from the tropical huts and were constructed on stilts because of high water during the monsoon season. I attended a wedding reception there one time for her sister. I also went to a parade with her family one afternoon to one of the native Filipino celebrations. They provided me some with weird snacks made of beans they called "Mix-mix."

I enjoyed being with the Filipinos and discovering their society. I was the only Army guy around and felt completely safe visiting them. I never saw Marcialina after I left the 86th Division, nor did I have her address to contact her. I have often wondered what happened to her later in life. In retrospect I feel she probably liked me, but I just wasn't interested.

The Filipinos were industrious but they had been in a long cruel war and they were slow to recover. There were numerous little shops along each street in Manila. They had a lot of noisy smelly bars downtown with dancing women but I never ventured inside. That was not my style.

Vendors on the street corners sold balutes. They were quite a novelty. These were fertilized chicken or duck eggs that have incubated and had been buried for a few days to mature. They are ready to sell and eat when chick inside is half-formed. They are the shape and size of a hard-boiled egg, the flesh is blue, and the feathers are small and fully formed. Filipinos crack them open and eat them raw. They have a pungent odor, but I never had enough courage to try one.

The city and streets were crowded with converted army jeeps everyone called a "Jeepny". They were used as open aired six-seated taxies. All the drivers were aggressive on the streets and noisily hawked fares. It was interesting watching them dangerously snake in and around traffic, with little more than a hand signal and a honk of the horn. We often wondered where all they came from and how they were paid for. They often shouted "Quiapo, Quiapo, the name of the downtown central Church which was the central location.

I sent a telegram to Jeane for her birthday.

I had an opportunity to take a newspaper position with the "Daily Pacifican," the largest area Army daily newspaper. The Army Brass in Manila fired the staff already in place there. Our unit in the 86th Division was chosen to replace the present staff, because of our diverse qualities and

experience of the men on the Bugle staff. I took the job.

We walked in cold to the job early one morning to a strange spacious room. There were a few open desks back to back, with scattered papers about. I was working with men I had met only about an hour ago. We had to somehow put out the newspaper from that day on, so we scrambled to get things done. It was really hectic. I jumped right in. We developed plans as we went. It was touch and go for a while, we worked long hours, and we made it work. No one took breaks and we staggered hours going to chow. We were busy seven days a week and we fell into a comfortable routine that the brass liked.

I didn't have a set job at first but pitched in by reading the typed articles and writing the headlines. I also helped type and make corrections and counted letters line by line to get the correct number in each line, for the final paste-up used by the civilian typesetters who made up pages one at a time. This setup was all spaced out with lead type and spaces just like I learned how to do back in high school print shop. Each page was set up in a frame about one inch thick and every thing was carefully hammered into position. From this they made a rounded paper mold of each sheet. This was set in the presses.

The newspaper we produced was well accepted and had a circulation of about 45,000, and also featured a special Sunday edition. We were now in the "I and E " section, a Detachment of AFWESPAC, Armed Forces Western Pacific Command, APO 707. I had a new shoulder patch to wear. On my other shoulder I wore my old favorite double diamond Deadeye Patch. Lt. Archibald our very able Commanding Officer was a West Point graduate, who commanded by a friendly intellect; not dumb discipline.

The Army retained the services of civilian Filipino men that were employed by the Army to assist the staff. These men did a lot of the typing and the handled a lot of the manual projects. They all spoke perfect English and were a big help. I had a favorite question I often asked men here and there while I was in the service. It was: what is the difference between the word ambiguous and equivocal? I finally found someone who knew the answer, and it was one of the Filipinos in our staff. He was better versed in English than many Americans I knew.

Our staff was located in a dingy old factory type building down a back street out a ways from downtown.

Our office in the building was near the pressroom. During the war the Japanese used these same presses to print their occupation money. The presses were old and noisy and hen a roller became worn they were repaired efficiently. They simply scraped the rubber composition off the central rod, heated them into a molten mass and then poured a new roller around it.

This all came about because the Army Brass of AFWESPAC felt the old reporters on the staff of the Daily Pacifican were being far too aggressive in their pursuit of their own agenda. One issue the reporters had been harping on was the presence of weevils found in the Army barrels of baking flour. After this was confirmed, the Army agreed to alleviate the situation by simply adding new flour to the old contaminated flour, and thereby cut down the percentage of weevils. We really didn't know we were eating them.

The war was over, and because of that these reporters staunchly held on to the idea that the

United States was maintaining a larger force in the Pacific than was needed. However in the larger perspective, and in their defense, I feel that the State Department may have wanted this for a strong military presence in the area, and as there were many issues in the area still in flux, our presence may have been vital for our country until the area in the larger Pacific stabilized, especially with the Russian presence.

These reporters had researched these issues and subsequently editorialized their positions. They referred to the lack of ships leaving Philippine ports and those leaving with empty berths, which supported their reasoning. They even had pictures showing empty berths. Thousands of troops from our area remained in the Philippines, and this activity they said, if the aforementioned facts weren't true, that this inaction smacked of inefficiency, and poor planning. This was a very important issue to my buddies and me because we all wanted to get home as soon as possible.

These persistent editorials effectively needled the brass too long to stomach. They undoubtedly thought that it not only could this erupt into a morale issue, if continued and so they didn't want these ideas to escalate and possibly embarrass them. Subsequently the brass fired this staff the first thing one morning, shipped them out into different units, and moved us en-mass into their desks.

We had our sleeping quarters in tents with wooden floors right along side the Rizal Baseball Stadium in the Pasay province of Manila. It was set aside from other sites and not the typical Army Base. We also had jeeps of our own to get back and forth and after hours if we wanted them. The food was good and otherwise pleasant surroundings with no quarters inspections to deal with. We hired Filipinos to do our laundry and clean our quarters. We really had it made. Some local officer in charge of the facilities tried to give us a hard time about all these privileges, not having inspections, and our lack of doing the menial jobs, but Lt. Archibald stuck up for us told him to leave us alone; we had more important jobs. (Finally we had class.)

There were many good men on our newspaper staff, and we all got along really well. Most of us had no professional writing experience. We just used our natural talents. Our photographers did have prior experience and it was apparent. They were provided with good cameras and a dark room. Our Editor was Alan Agol and rose to that position from the ranks as many other of the rest of us did. Glazer was our engraver that processed the photographs and also our pressroom liaison man. Do to his aggressive demeanor rose to a much higher rank too. He really pressed hard for his rank. Allan Kanter was a reporter; Gabe Burton was the Sunday Editor and Austin Lynn one of my reporters. We had one ingenious guy who rigged up a ham radio from spare parts. Lt. Archibald did advance a lot of the men in rank and for the most part we all deserved the new stripes. After he gave me mine I was reluctant to sew them on my uniform and he reminded me that I needed to put mine on my uniform.

Getting to First Aid at the proper time was a problem for us as they would only see us at 0900, and at their convenience. One afternoon I was driving our unit's jeep and needed some help with a skin issue so I stopped at a First Aid station in a neighboring army unit. They turned me down not only because that I was there at the wrong time; it was not my outfit. I noticed that a medical officer in an adjacent room had a Deadeye patch on his shoulder.

So I called upon his loyalty to his old unit, which was mine too, and so he had his men help me get me what I needed. (Sometimes it takes a little effort and ingenuity to get things you want

done.) In the meantime I had my third overseas bar on my left sleeve. My AFWESPAC patch is on my left shoulder because that was my present unit.

In the city street, outside the pressroom one day I saw local people throwing water on each other. I learned that this was their customary way of celebrating St. John the Baptist day.

Our offices were eventually moved to real nice offices on the third floor of the Ramon Roces Building in downtown Manila on Calero Street, and this was a lot better. Notice the Chrysler car parked in front. Because of my efforts I was rewarded with the job and title of City Editor, and this is why I was promoted from Private First Class, (PFC) to Technician Fifth Grade, by our CO, Lt. Archibald.

I had the responsibility of covering the local news, which meant I often assigned reporters and/or a photographer to cover an event. I also handled the incoming material the Army provided their with news services. which were nice black and white photographs suitable for copying and cartoon strips. I also listed the USO shows in our area, which I never attended because there were movie stars appearing that I never heard of. My assignment also included human-interest articles and numerous items that we often used for filler. I also set up the standard notices by the Red Cross and their events and the tours to the Bataan Peninsula where the famous death marches began and Corregidor Island, the last base held by the US Army in the Philippines early in the war. I had the opportunity to see those sites but unfortunately neglected to go.

I did get to go to the Island of Lubang on an assignment for the paper. This island is the main island of a chain of Lubang islands, southeast of Manila, out in Manila Bay. The Philippine Scouts were in a hostile skirmish with Japanese soldiers still in hiding there a year or so later that had refused to surrender.

I left Luzon with two other men on a fast navy crash boat one morning, and that was quite an experience bouncing and crashing on the waves at forty or so knots. I was soon on ship out in the harbor that had taken on board the prisoners. I saw some of the wounded and bloodied Philippine Scouts who were the members of the Philippine Army.

When I landed on the island I saw several grass shacks nearby and a brick school building in the center. I was surprised as it looked like a primary school back home. I went inside and enjoyed seeing several rows of seats and a large American flag up above the blackboard. Our forces were using this building for headquarters.

It was getting late and I learned that the situation was well in hand. I wanted to get back to the ship right away so I joined others and took a very small Navy craft back. It was dark. We were out in the bay going full force towards the ship in high tide when we suddenly crashed on a submerged coral reef, and couldn't get our craft off. We were fortunate because we had a small battery powered lantern with us. The sailors aboard did not know how to signal to the ship, so I did. I knew Morse code from back in high school. I told them by code that we were stuck and needed help by flipping the light on and off. They responded with a lot of K's. I thought that was strange, but I learned that the K was short for OK which meant they had received the message.

It was in a very scary situation getting back to the ship in the little alternate craft they provided as the water was choppy and was splashing over the sides. We were busy dipping with our

hands and we had no life preservers and I did not know how to swim. I was scared that I was going to drown. It was pitch dark except that the ship had a large blinding searchlight trained on us and we could not look straight ahead. I was greatly relieved to get my hand on the net and climb aboard.

The story? We missed getting our coverage back in time. When I got back to the newsroom the article was already prepared to print. A commercial reporter had forwarded the information about the Lubang incident to the wire services. The Filipino Scouts did bring the hiding Japanese soldiers back; however both sides took several casualties.

That wasn't the only story we missed. The Philippine Islands were granted their Independence on July 4th 1946. Manuel Quezon, the former provisional President of the Philippines, had escaped from the Philippines with MacArthur to Australia, when the Japanese forces invaded his country early in the war. However he died in the United States with tuberculosis during the war. We honored him and his country by bringing his remains back on July 4th at the time of their celebration. He was buried at Manila North Cemetery

As a member of the press we wanted to get a story and pictures. However as we were not professionals we did not have the right connections to access the leaders during the official ceremonies nor be in the right place for pictures, consequently our group was locked in a slow traffic jam six lanes wide seemingly going nowhere and missed it.

July the 4th would not be complete without Americans exploding fireworks. One of the guys I was with had bought some so we set a few of them off. They flew off and then exploded much like a small hand grenade. Our big prank in question was in the choice of targets. We knew there was Japanese POW camp not to far away, so we aimed a few of our rockets to hopefully land there. Whether they impacted there is doubtful, however the penalty could have been severe had we been found out. We thought it humorous; because we imagined Japs scurrying about in the camp thinking the war was still on.

One story we did not miss was the marriage of one of the top command officers in the Manila area. He wanted coverage in the paper so he invited the members of the staff there to take pictures of the reception. It was held in the Army Navy Club and was a gala event with a lot of the brass in attendance. Our newspaper crew was given special treatment in an all-officer environment. We were invited to partake of the freebee drinks at the bar. Our paper ended up with a nice spread for him,

When we could we took advantage of every freebee we could. Whenever the members of the "fifth estate," i.e. the press, were offered invitations to attend a function, we tagged along for the goodies. Our CO was probably amused at our actions; he knew what we were doing.

One time I attended such a function for the press, which included a seven course Filipino meal, at a nice downtown restaurant. We always stood out in a civilian crowd in our khaki uniforms, and I often wondered if they felt we were an intrusion in their party. The event dragged on one course at time, with speakers droning in between. I was beginning to wonder why I had tagged along, however I was finally rewarded, because the dessert was a Chinese delicacy; Bird's Nest Soup. It had a thick soupy texture, somewhat lumpy. It was a translucent mixture, and like warm tapioca, and without much flavor. I later learned that the soup is made by scraping the bird nests from caves found in China, then boiling the mixture down to a desired thickness and straining off the

twigs.

One of the very nicest of the excursions of our staff was to an island owned by businessman who owned a large fish hatchery. About three of us soldiers gathered on a dock and awaited the boat. It was a flat-bottomed wooden unwieldy craft about twenty feet long and held about ten people. It was rowed to this island in the middle of a lake about 100 yards from the shore. Upon arriving we were handed a “fish on a stick,” which had been baked. It was a type of milkfish and had been browned and basted. It was delicious. It was a little strange eating it off a stick. Food provided lavishly for the guests, displayed on two long tables each about thirty feet long. There was a canopy of large banana leaves over them and the table was also covered with banana leaves. As I remember there was a lot of variety food, which consisted of pork, chicken, rice and fruit. They had warm San Migual beer for those interested. We had no entertainment, just a lot of food bestowed on the visitors. The highlight of the boat rides was the presence a very attractive young Filipino girl with large entrancing eyes.

The American Armed services supported the arts and the local Manila symphony orchestra. Some enlisted servicemen were active participants and were housed in tents adjacent to us. In one of the rooms of Rizal Stadium I discovered an American soldier practicing in the piano. I often stood by and watched him play. He was phenomenal.

Many of the Filipino’s shops along the streets were those who had made things to sell. We were delighted to find one that made military medals, and these fortunately were the quite showy type that we wore above our pockets, so they really appealed to us. They were bars about ? inch high and were custom made of small cast metal sections that were filled with translucent colors for each award. I still have them in my collection at home.

Over time I grew to really like the Filipino people. In our private conversations we often used the derogative slang word,”Gook” at times. But in all fairness this was the word used for any Asian. We occasionally read a local paper, which was full of politics. We actually thought there was an abundance of lawyers and each one was running for some office.

We became very efficient so everyone took off each day to our varied interests after the paper was put to bed. Thomas Woebke and I discovered a friendly little bar not to far from us. It was known as “Our Little Club.” and we spent a lot of time there. Tom was a buddy of mine from Fund-a-Lac, Wisconsin. There were young attractive ladies sat with us to provide companionship. The club had a scam going, but we enjoyed it night after night. These women are known as swills. We of course would invite them to drink with us and consequently we spent a lot of money on watered down drinks. I even ran up a bill the last month I was there. For the novelty we took each glass we emptied and lined them up diagonally across the table. I do not remember having overdone my capacity, nor it affecting my ability to get up each morning and get the paper out seven days a week.

One little attractive and sexy Filipino chick; “Choly,” was our favorite. Her real name was Consolation Velez and she was originally from Mindinao, and the daughter of a Medical Doctor. I heard her make a snide remark about someone being Jew and called her to task about it. I actually met some one later in civilian life who had been in the Army in the Philippines that said he had known her dad before the war.

Woebke and I often didn’t get home until late from the club and always later than all the rest

of the guys in our tent. We were real jerks and knew it, because we always woke the men up and told them we had done them a favor because they would have urinated on themselves if we hadn't. They always promised revenge but never got even. Glazer was often our target. We liked the little enthusiastic guy.

Sometimes we had spare time in the afternoons to explore Manila. My good buddy Ruddy Emerson and I often took off in one of our jeeps. Rudy was from Cincinnati, Ohio. We visited Malacanon Palace, one of the Philippine government buildings known around the world. Tall stately trees and a smooth manicured lawn surrounded this white building. Another building we visited that was saved from our Artillery shelling was the Manila Hotel which was about the only building available to accommodate state guests.

Ruddy and I were caught driving in a military jeep in downtown Manila one night at an intersection by our Commanding Officer, also in a jeep. We were as surprised as he was, and when asked what we were doing there we told him we were simply checking on circulation. We were caught red-handed out running around on military fuel and so was he. We also wondered what he was doing. We never heard another word about it.

One time we were cruising around in Manila in our jeep and we went into an all-civilian club and after receiving a cool reception we promptly left. Filipinos were mostly friendly but I am sure we were not wanted in some areas. Manila was safe most of the time, and some men got into a lot of trouble that I never heard. Downtown Manila was but a series bombed out buildings and a lot them were boarded. More than once I saw large rats scurry across the street.

We had a man who was on our staff who took his discharge in the Philippines and stayed on our staff as the sports editor while in the civil service. He told me that our newspaper would soon be produced on presses that the Navy Times was using. He was technically in the United States Information Services. He informed me that I could do the same thing if I wanted too. He must not have had any real desire to return to the States or had found something to marry and did not want to leave. It was assumed that his pay was pretty good and the exchange rate was very favorable. The Americans were looked up to then, so he could have had a nice lifestyle.

It was getting late in the summer and I was getting high on points to go home. I really wanted to get back, however it was not a burning issue with me as I was having a good time. My military duty was actually agreeing with me. I could have moved up to a lot of good jobs if I applied myself.

Choly, the little Filipino girl from the club was waiting one evening for me at my quarters one late afternoon. I didn't know that she knew where I lived, and I was embarrassed by having being seen talking to her near the guys. I knew that I would get a lot of teasing over this. She said that she wanted me to go with her this evening as she had something to talk to me about. Wow, what was this, I thought. I was enticed, young, and intrigued and naive so I said yes.

It was raining in a steady drizzle that evening when I met her at the club. I was surprised to learn that she had hired a horse-drawn cab for us. I boarded and sat in a small cramped seat and watched everything pass outside. This little cab jostled along on uneven and strange streets and strange lights, over dark rainy streets into a civilian area I had never been before. I looked over at her and she gave me a coy look. She didn't tell me what it was all about, however I trusted her.

We arrived at a nice house about fifteen minutes later. I hadn't seen a residence like this for a long time. It had a dark entryway and we walked to the door and knocked. A lady answered and escorted us inside. It was tastefully furnished. She led us into a room full of young Filipino ladies, and I was asked to sit down on a sofa and join them. I looked around and discovered that they were all good-looking chicks, and all eyes were turned toward me. Wow, I thought, what have I gotten myself into? I was all smiles.

The charming lady in charge said that the young women here were members of a prominent sorority and attending the Philippine University, in Manila. She explained that they were having a big sorority dance, and what they wanted was American soldier escorts. They wanted to know if I had any nice guys I knew who would go to the dance with them. Choly had recommended me to them. I was rejoicing inside at my good fortune. It was really going to be fun. What an opportunity I was rejoicing inside at my good fortune. I was walking on air. I agreed to ask some of the guys I thought would be interested. Ruddy was.

Surprisingly I received word the next morning that the Army was shipping me out right away for discharge in the States. Several of us on the Pacifican staff would be leaving in the morning. Wow, what a great surprise. We had little time to contact anyone, but I asked one of the men still there to please tell Choly that I had orders to move out. I was glad to go home, but I felt really bad about missing that dance. I often wondered what eventually would have happened if I had stayed longer.

We had an idea that our time was getting close, and it came as a surprise. I am sure there were those on the newspaper staff that we didn't get to say goodbye to or get addresses. I packed quickly this time. My duffel bag had little more than two changes of clothes and a few personal items, as now I had no infantry equipment to my name.

We boarded an open truck and were so delighted to leave and go home that we stood along the sides and sang songs on the way to the ship. We were quite a happy group riding through the streets of Manila that morning. We were singing a song that we had improvised using several verses to the tune of Hinky, Dinky, Par la Vous, some of which were playfully derogative.

We boarded the navy ship The Cape Mears moored at the dock in Manila harbor and headed home on a long nineteen day cruise.

Chapter Nineteen The Voyage Home

The return trip was aboard the Cape Mears, a large troopship. This was my last voyage and it was the one going home and that was great.

O'Reilly and I volunteered to help run the ship's newspaper that was customarily prepared for the troops coming home. We took the items we wanted from the ship's short-wave radio and typed them on masters and mimeographed copies each day. It kept us busy and that was good as it was going to be a long impatient voyage home. Writing the paper was old stuff for Pat and I and was also interesting because of contribution of others onboard.

I had seasickness. I was sick, and the rough water lasted about three days. Our cabin was well forward and consequently bobbed around quite a bit. I remember just laying on the floor under the mimeograph machine using my life preserver for a pillow for hours at a time while it blew over. Outside of that the voyage was okay. We did not have to go below decks at night as in the previous dangerous voyages, so it made a lot of difference. It took a very long nineteen days to reach San Francisco from Manila. Strangely we lost most all of our tan in the salt sea air and hopefully all our orange cast from taking Atabrine pills we had been taking.

I was getting close to home so I sent Jeane a cablegram to let her know. She answered shortly.

After many long days, weeks, and months I saw what I wanted to see. The Golden Gate Bridge slowly began to take shape on the horizon took shape. Our ship passed under it and tied up at a dock. Finally, finally I was stateside. I had been overseas exactly nineteen months and eleven days.

We were to get milk; real milk; fresh milk. We had waited so long. It was our symbol of being back home. The reconstituted dry flaked milk overseas just didn't get it with me, and when I tasted it there at the Army base for the first time I was disappointed. It didn't taste like I thought it would because now I was smoking.

The Oakland Army base was a large place, I mean big. It was a typical impersonal loud reception center designed to handle lots of men quickly.

I heard the central PA system blare. "Sgt. Patrick O'Reilly please report to the main gate." It was repeated over and over. This was my buddy Pat being called. I knew he was anxious to see his folks. He was from San Francisco. I made a big mistake. I should have met them and told them he had probably been rushing home, and I didn't. The last time I had seen him was on the ship and I never heard from him again. We had been together several places and knew each other really well.

While at the camp I had a 24 hour military pass while they processed my papers. I was not going to miss a chance to see San Francisco, so I took off. One of the first things I noticed was how white all the people looked. So white I could even see blue veins in their arms. I was so accustomed to being around the deep tanned and dark Filipino people that it was a revelation for me. Even our fellow soldiers were tanned from being in the sun so long. It was great to be at home in the States especially in the city to walk among the people in my own country.

After a couple of days of humdrum at the Oakland Army base my orders came through and I had train tickets in hand for Ft. Sheridan, Illinois, a base just north of Chicago.

I did not know a single person on that train trip. We were mixed in with the civilians. One incident really ticked us off. The train had to stop in Omaha and some of the guys were really anxious to get off and get a real bottle of beer; however the police stopped them. They wouldn't allow returning vets in. We felt we were the scum not allowed in. There were a lot of decorated men on that train and were hurt. We all resented it. We took it personal. In the defense of the people of Omaha, they probably had too many bad experiences with hundreds of service people before us.

In about four days I arrived in Ft. Sheridan, Illinois north of Chicago, and called Mother at

home. While they prepared my discharge papers I was allowed to go home and come back when the papers were ready. I sent another telegram to Jeane.

They had a lot of men being processed there and as paper work was slow they sent me home to wait there and then I was expected to report back for discharge.

I was in a big washroom getting ready to leave, when elation began to fill me. I was really, really going home. I was going to be taking a train to Indianapolis, and I was walking on air. I asked around for directions and took an Army bus to the train station. I was one happy guy.

My train arrived in Indianapolis about two o'clock in the morning, and disregarding all those telegrams I had sent , I took a cab and walked in on Jeane unannounced. Mother I am sure was disappointed. I thought at the time it would be a lot more exciting to surprise Jeane first and then go see the family. Anyway let me tell you, I enjoyed the cuddling with Jeane at that most rare moment in time.

The total trip home was a joyous occasion. The pass lasted about three days. I took the train back to Fort Sheridan and as my paper work was processed I headed home for the last time.

A friend of the family, Noah Hollis, had a position at the Indiana State Prison as a clinical psychologist. I had promised to visit him there on the way home. So I made arrangements. I went inside the prison and heard the metal doors slam behind me.

It was really clean there. Everything was glistening white. The grass was manicured. I spoke to one of the inmates while he was on his knees making little snips here and there on the grass. I told him that he was a in a far safer place that I had been. Mr. Hollis showed me around. I wasn't in the prison but a short time however I did see them make license plates. From there I took the train on home.

The Army placed me on paid leave for the last two months and also gave me mustering out pay. I had served 2 years 2 months and 22 days, with 7 months and 11 days stateside and 1 year 7 months and 11 days overseas. My Honorable Discharge reads "At the convenience of the Government" effective December 2. 1946. On that date I was a real civilian once again. The kicker was that I was also placed on inactive reserve for a year.

I remember being glad to be home and with not a clue for what to do next, but coming up soon was a wedding, and Jeane and I began making our plans. I would begin my life anew.

I brought home a full set of clothes, the Japanese Canteen and Bugle from Okinawa, an Eisenhower jacket, a couple of caps, a tie, a belt buckle, and a few personal items. I got to keep my duffle bag. The top designation on the bag is 7-382 M, which means 382 Infantry M Co. My name and serial number follows under the handle. Other personal items included an address book, a New Testament and a small photo album that I carried from camp to camp for over 2 years.

Looking back at my time in the infantry in WWII sixty two years later, I am proud of my service. Even as limited as it was; I had actually seen a lot. Importantly I learned that men are pretty much the same all over the fifty states; that we love our country, our families, and just want to live in peace and pursue our lives.

It has been said we were members of the Greatest Generation, but that is flattery, especially when we all knew that we were there just to do a job. We were lucky to be alive, when so many didn't make it back. The succeeding generations of American soldiers have proven that they are just as reliable and effective as we were in WWII. True, we stepped up and did the job, really glad to have survived, and yes we are proud we were victorious considering the alternative of failure.

In combat everyone is a buddy, and most can be relied on to step up and suddenly put their life on the line even for a stranger. Men all have their emotional limits, and that is accepted . Surviving together, and often meeting the most terrifying demands, is the hardest requirement mankind has to face. True camaraderie is born.

I am proud to say that I am still in contact with four of my surviving squad members, and also several others I have met subsequently at the reunions and our trip back to Okinawa in 2000. These men are my personal treasures, my buddies; all Deadeyes.

On the coffee table in our living room is a hard copy of my memoirs. It is my pleasure to pick it up and read chapter after chapter and privately relive those moments day by day. On the wall is the framed service flag of WWII; the Blue Star flag my mother had in our front window, and on it is a little note in her handwriting that reads: "This service flag hung in my window when you were overseas."

So in that light, I have named my memoir "The Blue Star in the Window, to honor and remember the pain, the love, and the anguish in my mother's life, and all that the others endured on my behalf, while I was away in the Army.

William R. Hill Indianapolis, IN 46214
www.rememberthedeadeyes.com