

Glenn Perry and the Military

1944 – 1946



GLENN PERRY AND THE MILITARY – 1944-1946

This is the tale of my short (two years) military service. My service time was interesting, but not all that exciting except for a short period, and I have forgotten a lot about it. I was able to glean some of the details from my letters home, which my family saved for me. After reading them again, it seems to me that I did a lot of complaining. However, among the "brass hats" there was a saying that, "if they are not complaining, they are not happy!" So I guess I was not so unhappy in the service, just homesick.

Attached are pictures of Army life during that period, with most of the first ones obtained from NARA, the National Archives in Washington, DC, as I did not get my own camera until mid-1945, near the end of the war. The rest are nearly all from my time in the peacetime army until my discharge in 1946. Additional related material about that WW II wartime period can be found in several books* in my collection dealing with the war in the Western Pacific.

Background

After the war in Europe started in 1939, our country began increasing preparations for possible future involvement in some way. The military draft was begun in about 1940 and many young men were being taken into the armed forces. Others joined the service of their choice before they were to be drafted, which usually meant going into the Army.

I was born in 1925. When our war was started in 1941 by the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, I was not yet 16 and too young to be drafted. However, by the time I was a senior in high school in 1943, many classmates had left early to join the Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, or Army Air Corps, and most of the rest of us were registered as Class 1A for the draft. At that time, the services were accepting applications for special training programs at universities that would lead to officer candidate schools. One opportunity was the Navy V-12 program at the University of Washington and at other universities. Since my high school grades were pretty good, I applied for the V-12 program and filled out all the necessary paperwork. However, when I went over to Seattle for my Navy physical exam, I was so nervous that my heart was beating too fast and I didn't pass the exam. So I had to give that up. Then, when I was near graduation, I got a notice from the local Draft Board to report for a physical exam. Again, when I was examined, I was very nervous and my heart rate was very fast. I was told that I didn't pass because of a heart murmur and would be reclassified as 4F for draft deferral. My own doctor's exam didn't find any heart murmur and no heart murmur has ever shown up during any physical exams since that time. Being classified 4F was considered nearly shameful, since nearly everyone wanted to join one of the services and help win the war. One of the then current popular songs had lyrics like this women's lamentation about the shortage of available men, "They're either too young or too old; they're either too gray or too grassy green; etc.", which didn't make us civilians feel very good.

What's Next?

So, going on with my life, I went to work that summer at the local shipyard as an electrician's helper on the baby aircraft carriers being built there, expecting to be drafted at a later time. But after working about six months, I had not heard from the Draft Board again and figured they weren't going to call me. So I entered the College of Engineering for the 1944 Winter/Spring semester at the University of Washington. While there, all of us students had to take ROTC, Reserve Officer's Training Corps (or Rot Corps, as we called it). Every Monday we wore our uniforms to school and took classes at the Armory on Lower Campus. One of the classes was for learning close order drill, and we marched around with wooden guns. We also got lectures and saw films warning of the dangers of promiscuous living while in the Army. About the end of that semester, I got a notice from the Draft Board that I would have to be examined again for possible re-classification. By that time, in early 1944, all the special services had pretty well filled their needs for personnel and thus all new draftees went right into the Army. However, at times those services would open up their recruiting for short periods to fill their specific manpower needs. At that particular time, the Navy announced it was going to draft a few new members, so I thought, "A-ha! I will join the Navy and beat the Army draft". So I went over to the Navy HQ office in Seattle, volunteered for early induction, filled out

and signed all the Navy paperwork and finally passed the physical exam. I was then told to go back home and wait for the call to report. Then, in July, I received a notice to report for induction on August 7, 1944. On that day I reported at the Tacoma Armory as directed, along with hundreds of others, and waited for orders. Then we were all told, "OK, you guys, you are all going into the Army and will be going to Fort Lewis!" I didn't like that, but being just a "dumb kid," I didn't think about challenging the order and taking steps to enforce my contract with the Navy. As it turned out, I probably would have ended up in about the same place anyway, in the middle of the action at Okinawa, and maybe on one of the destroyers that were sunk or badly damaged there.

The Army Got Me

That afternoon we were delivered to Fort Lewis, where we were to begin our training and learn how to be a soldier and how to put up with a lot of nonsense. We were there about a week, drew our uniforms, went through orientation lectures, and learned how to make up our bunks. We were then loaded onto a troop train, which was quite an experience. It was pulled by a steam engine that humed coal and the RR cars were not well closed up, so we had to endure smoke and coal dust for the whole trip. We didn't have berths, but only three-high bunks for the four-day trip to Texas, so we didn't get much sleep. It was quite an interesting trip, however, my first across the country. We made a stop in Denver, CO, where my uncle, Ade Kanekberg, met me for a short visit at the train station. At every town where the train stopped or moved slowly through, there were many people waving and cheering at us soldiers as we passed by.

We arrived at Camp Hood, an IRTC (Infantry Replacement Training Center) south of Dallas, Texas, on August 22 and it was hot! I thought I was going to die from the heat right there. But we were marched to our barracks, fed, and settled in for the night. The next morning we were rudely awakened at about 5 a.m. by a loud shouting PFC (Private First Class) who outranked all of us "Buck Privates". That was to be the case for the next 17 weeks of our training. We were being trained as infantry replacements, but few of us understood what that meant. We thought we would end up in some infantry division somewhere, but didn't think much about the possibility of going in as the replacements for other soldiers who had been killed or wounded. We were later to learn what that really did mean!

One of my best friends at Camp Hood was John Rathvon from Concrete, WA, whom I met at Fort Lewis and who was in my basic training company. He is a funny guy and his nickname in the company was "Ribotic", I think. When we had time off on a weekend, we would go into nearby towns together for an ice cream or watermelon treat. Although we were separated after leaving basic training, he remains a good friend to this day and lives in nearby Mount Vernon, WA.

That 17 weeks was a busy time and we didn't get a lot of sleep. Much of my basic training time is fuzzy in my memory now, but I don't remember it as being a lot of fun. We spent a lot of time "policing" the area around our barracks. We would be awakened early every day, even earlier if assigned to KP, and roosted out for formation in front of the barracks; sometimes we were just in raincoats and boots and marched to the dispensary for "short-arm" inspection. After breakfast we would be taken somewhere for training and orientation classes of different kinds. If anyone dozed off in class, he would be awakened by a sharp knock on the top of his plastic helmet liner. We learned how to march in formation, and march we did very often over the next three months and in all kinds of weather. When it rained, the Texas soil turned to very thick, sticky mud that would build up on our boots like snowshoes.

We did a lot of marching with heavy packs on our backs. Those of us near the end of the line always seemed to have to be running to catch up, sort of how a "slinky" works. I remember that food seemed to be what we thought about most of the time. That and sleeping. We never got enough of either, although the cooks were expert and the food very good. The water tasted so bad that I learned to drink coffee and like it. Mail call every day was very important, especially when a package of cookies arrived (not so last very long in a group). Hearing the wail of a train whistle in the distance made me very homesick.

We had practical training where we used compasses to follow trail directions at night and learned how to set up tents properly to keep dry inside. We were taught how to disassemble and clean our rifles, how to handle and use all kinds of infantry weapons (rifle, carbine, bayonet, machine gun, grenado, mortar, anti-

tank bazooka/rocket), and how to fight hand-to-hand if that would be needed. We took turns sitting in bunkers in the rifle target area where we raised, lowered, and patched targets, and raised the red flag, "Maggie's denvers" if there were no hits, all the while learning the sound of live ammo flying close above our heads. We had aerial target practice where we shot at small drone target planes flying overhead. I don't think many hits were made, even with 500 of us all firing at the same time. Near the end of our training, we were taught skills in fighting house-to-house in a town setting and in crawling in muddy trenches under barbed wire with live machine gun fire right over our heads.

Off on Leave

Our basic training class graduated on December 17, 1944, and we were split up for transfer to our homes with a 10-day leave before heading for our next assignment. My understanding is that the men who had stayed at Camp Hood for some advanced training or cadre school were hurriedly shipped off to Europe when the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium began near Christmas time. I left Camp Hood by train with a group heading west and two days later we found ourselves dropped off at the train station in Stockton, CA. We didn't have any information on where and how we were to go from there, so some of us bought tickets for the Greyhound bus and headed for Washington. I arrived in Tacoma about December 20 and thus was able to spend Christmas with my family.

After my Christmas leave, I traveled by bus back to California, where I reported to Fort Ord, near the town of Monterey, for further training for overseas duty. There we were taught how to climb up and down rope net ladders for ship access and how to climb safely with our pack and weapon, each on one shoulder only, for easy casting them off in case we fell into the ocean. We also were required to demonstrate that we could swim at least a short distance in a swimming pool.

On Our Way

After the short stay at Fort Ord, I traveled with a group again north to Fort Lawton in Seattle, where we spent another week or two. Our housing there in a cold January was tarpaper-covered shacks heated by coal burning unit heaters; needless to say, they were smelly, cold places. We were then loaded onto a troop ship docked at Seattle's waterfront and shipped out for Hawaii. The ship was a strange vessel, an old one converted from a passenger ship, I think, and not very comfortable. The canvas bunks were stacked up to five high in the holds and the food was not very good. We ate meals in shifts, standing up at tables with rims to keep our plates from sliding off. I don't remember very much about that trip, but it must have taken well over a week as we zig-zagged along the way. I was thankful that I was seasick only the first day on the ship, but I did have a sore arm the whole trip from an infection by a vaccination shot given before we boarded.

When we came into the harbor at Honolulu, I looked forward to a visit to Waikiki Beach. But it was not to be, as we were loaded on trucks and taken to the 13th Repple Deppte (Replacement Depot) up on the center of the island near Schofield Barracks and Wheeler Field. I was kept there for about two weeks with no chance for a day pass to go into town and was very unhappy about that! The Army kept us busy on various chores and even sent us up into the hills to help fight fires started by artillery practice rounds.

Then we were trucked back down to the docks, loaded on a more modern troop ship, and headed west again as part of a large convoy. Every morning and every evening at dusk, we would hear the bo'sun's whistle and his announcement starting with, "Now hear this," and the ship would go to "General Quarters" alert condition. Then we all would stand out on deck in a line with our life belts on and our backs to the bulkheads watching for submarines. That was probably the safest place to be if the ship was sunk. We spent most of our time up on deck anyway, rather than down in the hot holds. The bunks there were arranged seven high, which made the top bunks too warm. On the other hand, the lower bunks were not the best places to be if anyone above was seasick. Parts of the upper deck also were not the most pleasant places to be as that is where the heads (toilets) were located. They were just long troughs with up to 10 seats in a row (no privacy, of course). You can imagine what that was like with some men seasick at the same time.

The only showers we had were with salt water, which did not leave us feeling very clean. The laundry was also done with salt water only. There was not a lot for us to do on board and many men played poker. I did not join in on that, since I was just an amateur and some of the fellows were card-sharks who made a lot of money at it. So I did a lot of reading and just loafing. It was interesting to watch the porpoises swimming and diving ahead of the ship and the flying fish trying to escape from their attackers. Luckily, we saw no submarines on the trip, and it was reassuring to see our Navy destroyers cruising nearby.

One of my close friends on the voyage was Frank Clark, son of Tacoma people who were friends of my parents. We were separated on reaching the Philippine Islands; he was assigned to the 7th Infantry Division there and later was killed on Okinawa.

After over a week's cruising, we entered the harbor of Fuzhou and anchored there for several days while a convoy was gathering. We were allowed to swim off the ship and to go ashore one day on Parry Island. I picked up some pieces of coral rock there to bring home. They were later lost with all my other belongings in my duffle bag. On the beach Frank and I met another high school friend, Frank Springer, who was there on shore leave from a Navy tanker ship. Our ship then joined the convoy and again headed west, arriving at the Ulithi Island lagoon after a couple more weeks. There were hundreds of ships gathered there and our ship joined a larger convoy heading for the Philippine Islands.

On March 5th, our ship dropped anchor off Leyte Island, P.I. and we were transferred to shore near the village of Dalag. There I was assigned as a replacement in Company B, 1st Battalion, 382nd Regiment, in the 96th Infantry Division. The division had just completed its mission in the Battle of Leyte and was building up for further action. I don't remember what squad I was assigned to or the names of many of the other squad members, but my squad leader was a Sgt. Moore. I was welcomed into the company by another Tacoma, Wilbur (Bud) Sands, a 1943 Lincoln High graduate, who had been with B Company for several months. He had been wounded once on Leyte, but was able to return to his unit. He had been a member of the ASTP, Army Specialized Training Program, at a university before that program was cancelled in mid-1944 and all those students were transferred to the infantry. The 96th Division liked to claim it had a very high average IQ because of so many ASTP college men in the organization. I was on shore for only a few days when I was assigned to the ship loading detail in preparation for the coming invasion of Okinawa. So I moved back on board another ship and thus didn't get to see much of Leyte.

Okinawa Bound

The ship I was assigned to was an attack transport, the Mendocino, APA 100, and I spent the next several days on different loading duties. Our ship sailed about mid-March, joining a large convoy. I remember we sailed through a typhoon on the way to Okinawa. I had never before seen the ocean so rough and we were expecting to have more bad weather during the landing. However, April 1, Easter Sunday, turned out to be a very calm, sunny day although that didn't make the idea of landing on hostile beaches sound very great.

Luckily for our landing forces, the Japanese had decided not to defend the beaches, but instead to fortify multiple lines of defense in the southern half of the island. The landing could have been a very bloody battle, as had been the case on other islands where the initial losses were very high on both sides. There were hundreds of ships involved in the landings on the western side of the island. That area had been heavily bombarded for several days by battleships, cruisers, and smaller vessels and by many air attacks by Navy planes.

The 96th Division landed on the morning of April 1st at what were called "Beach White" and "Beach Brown", west of the Kadena airfield area. The 7th Division landed just north of there and the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions at Beach Red a little further north. The Army divisions headed across the island (only about 3 miles wide at that point) to cut off the southern half, while the Marines headed north. I did not land that morning. I was kept on board for material and equipment ship-to-shore unloading activities, which lasted for two days. As a result, when I had any free time, I spent it on deck watching the nearby warships bombard shore facilities north of the Okinawa capital city of Naha. As the big guns fired, they made smoke rings and the firing reactions caused the warships to gradually move backward. So they frequently would move ahead again to maintain their positions. Our ship had not yet come under any attack during the day.

and it was moved well away from shore during the night for protection from air or shore attack. I do remember hearing the sound of one artillery shell going close by over our ship as we left the area after dark. Luckily it did not hit us.

The 96th Division units advanced as far as the center of the island and turned south, while the 7th Division forces advanced to the far side and also turned south. I am told that action was fairly light up to that time, although there had been some casualties. The 96th Division covered the front from the western beaches to the center of the island, with my 382nd Regiment nearest the center. The 7th Division next to us covered the front from there to the eastern beaches. Later the two Marine divisions were brought back south to cover the western beach front and two more Army divisions, the 77th and 27th, were brought in to support the center.

Late in the morning of April 3, I was transferred to shore with other men of my company. That was the last time I saw my duffle bag, which held all my not-very-valuable belongings. I assume it was later cleaned out by some rear echelon person. Before climbing down the rope net ladder to the landing craft, I "field requisitioned" a can of peaches from the stores I had been handling. (I figured that it was probably mess for some officers' mess and that I, as just a "dog-face" private, would not be getting any peaches in my rations). The can added some weight to the heavy load of rifle and pack I was carrying, but I thought it was worth the effort. I also remember having difficulty getting some ammo for my M-1 Carbine, but finally found just a handful to carry (as it later turned out, that didn't matter). At the beach we left our gas masks and moved on.

We marched single file and spread out along a beach road past the village of Chotan, where a road headed toward the top of the island. There I remember seeing my first Japanese casualty, apparently an Okinawan civilian killed in his front yard by the bombardment. We continued on up the hill during the afternoon, passing cultivated fields and occasional empty small houses, until we reached the place our company had chosen for the night's defensive perimeter near the village of Atsuniya. There I was assigned with a buddy (I don't remember his name) to a place for digging a two-man foxhole.

Our foxhole was a V or L shaped hole just deep enough to lie in without being seen. One man would be on each side and we took turns being on watch during the night. Late in the night, which was pretty quiet, when I was not on watch, I decided to see if I could get at some of my peaches. All I had for opening the can was my Army pocketknife, which had a small cut-opener like a Boy Scout knife. Since I was lying down and needed to keep my head below the top of the foxhole, you can imagine how awkward it was to work on that tin can. But finally I got it open and downed some of the delicious peaches. In the morning, my buddy asked just what I was trying to do over there during the night. I explained it to him, but don't recall if I offered him any peaches and I don't remember what because of the rest of it. Maybe I ate it all!

During that day, April 4, there was some shifting of action zones between regiments and we advanced south about 2½ miles against "minor" resistance. That was when I saw my first dead Japanese soldier, who had apparently been killed by artillery fire as we approached. We then dug in for the night at a new perimeter location near there. Early in the evening I was sent to help run communication wire out to a forward observer location. We did that and then returned to our company area after dark. It was pretty scary coming back there in the dark and having to shout out who we were as we approached the perimeter, but we were lucky and were not fired on. In the daylight, many Okinawan civilians came through our lines and were directed to safe areas in the rear. However, I am told that others who tried to come through at night could not be identified and many were killed as they approached the perimeters. At night, there were flares overhead fired by mortars, artillery, and by destroyers offshore, so the front line areas were visible a good part of the time.

The next morning, April 5, before we left the perimeter, we came under a major attack from Japanese artillery fire. I stayed crunched down in my foxhole and luckily was not injured. As we moved forward that day, we passed numerous unoccupied defensive positions. We didn't realize it, but we were nearing the first main line of defense of the Japanese forces, a fortified line of hills called Tombstone Ridge, Nishabaru Ridge, and Kakazu Ridge. That afternoon, our artillery and Marine Corsair planes pounded the tops of those hills. The regiment advanced less than a mile that day and dug in for the night at the

approaches to the hills. As we approached Tombstone, I saw one Japanese soldier running back over the hill to escape us. He was out of my range and I don't know if anyone fired at him. It was later revealed that the Japanese Army, over 60,000 strong at the southern part of the island, was dug so deeply in caves and tunnels, including all their heavy weapons, that much of the naval bombardment, army artillery fire, and aerial bombing had little effect on them.

By that time, the Kamikaze plane attacks on the ships off the coast had started and at night the whole sky was lit up like a thousand fireworks shows by the anti-aircraft fire from the ships. It was fascinating to see from the land. During the night, our regiment was hit by heavy mortar fire and there were some casualties in my company. That evening I was sent on a detail to help bring up mortar ammunition to our lines. It had been brought near there on a truck that was parked behind a small knoll. As we reached the truck, an artillery shell came screaming by and landed just beyond the truck. Lucky for us, it was a dud shell. If it had been live and had exploded, the whole truckload might have blown up and us along with it.

I seem to have forgotten just where I spent the nights of April 5 and 6 and maybe they were both at the same place. On April 7, our company was shifted slightly west to where we established a new perimeter position. In the late afternoon we came under heavy machine gun and mortar fire. I still remember the rapid "pop-pop-pop-pop" of the bullets flying close overhead and I dug my foxhole while lying flat on the ground. We could not see where the fire was coming from and it apparently was from camouflaged caves and bunkers built in the front, on top, and on the back of the ridges. During the night there was again heavy mortar fire and several men dug in near me were killed by direct hits in their foxholes. I was assigned to help carry them out to a collection point the next morning. That was very sobering to me.

Disaster for Me

The next day, April 8, we were again shifted farther west to establish another perimeter in an area below the village of Koniku, between Tombstone and Kakazu ridges, in preparation for a regimental attack on those hills the next day. In the afternoon I had dug in where assigned, but then was directed to move over to the other side of the perimeter and dig in there instead. I did so and was standing there with Sgt. Moore and a couple of other men discussing the coming action. Behind us several hundred feet away were two American light tanks that had been knocked out of action by anti-tank guns the day before. For some reason, the Japanese gunners decided to again fire at them or at some nearby targets (maybe we were the targets). Suddenly we heard another high velocity shell scream by and we all started to dive down into our foxholes as it exploded. (The old saying is not true that you never hear the one that gets you.) As I started down, I felt something hit my left side, not a heavy blow, and I said, "I'm hit". Then everything went black and I collapsed into the hole. The next thing I knew, when I recovered consciousness some time later, was that I had been bandaged and was on a stretcher being carried to a safer place. I asked for my rifle, but they told me, "You won't need it!" At least once on the way they had to drop me like a sack of potatoes when they were fired on again. Near there I was loaded on a jeep ambulance that carried several stretchers and was driven to an aid station well behind the lines.

At the aid station I was checked over and I may have been given some painkiller. I don't remember where other emergency treatment was given, but somewhere I was given plasma or a blood transfusion. I was lying on a deck along with others also wounded when I heard a voice saying, "Is that you, Glenn?" It was my Tacoma friend, Wilbur Sands, who also had been wounded that day. I replied that it was me, but I was not able to talk to him again or find out what had happened to him. Months later I heard that he had died of his wounds. Only recently I also found out that in my company that day four men had been killed and two officers and eleven other men wounded. From what I have heard and read, the next ten or twelve days were very rough fighting with heavy casualties before the ridge lines were taken, so I consider myself lucky to have gotten out of it alive.

After spending that night at the aid station, on the next morning, April 9, I was taken with others by army ambulance to the Kadena airfield, which by then had been repaired of battle damage and made operational for air traffic. Large Navy air evacuation planes were there ready to pick us up. While we were waiting to be loaded aboard, we were served coffee and doughnuts by whom I think were Red Cross girls. It amazed me to think they were active there so soon after the landings. Our stretchers were loaded aboard and the

plane took off heading for Guam, which was over fifteen hundred miles away. I don't remember much about the flight, but we were well cared for on the four or five hour trip. We landed on Guam and were transferred to beds in Quonset huts at a station hospital near the sea. Being flat on my back, I didn't see anything of that island. I was kept there for about two weeks during which nothing was done to me other than checks on my condition. I guess the plan was to fly me to Hawaii where needed treatment would be available. It was on Guam that I celebrated my 20th birthday on April 14, 1945. It was there that we heard of the death of President Roosevelt on April 12.

From Guam I was flown in another Navy plane to Oahu, Hawaii, with fuel stops somewhere along the way. I was transferred to the 147th General Hospital in the old St. Louis High School, now part of Chalmers College, on the hill above Diamond Head in Honolulu. There I spent most of the next three months.

My medical diagnosis was that a shell fragment had gone through a left rib, collapsed my left lung, and stopped just under my collar bone. Luckily it missed my heart and other vital organs. My left chest cavity had filled with blood, which the doctors hoped to be able to draw out. However, after over several weeks time, it proved to be coagulated too much, so they decided to operate. The operation was done there on May 3. My understanding is that I was treated with penicillin during the operation and that was one of the early uses of that wonder drug. Part of one of my ribs was cut out and the chest cavity cleaned out in some way. (The doctors decided not to take out the shell fragment as that would have required another separate operation, and they felt it would stay in place. So it was left in there, has been there ever since, and always shows up on my x-rays.) Then I was hooked up to a small vacuum pump to draw out the air and re-inflate my lung. There were three of us connected to the one pump for several days for the same purpose. As I healed up I had to blow into paper bags to help the lung inflate. Over time, the rib area has grown back to partially fill the gap as they told me it would. However, my left chest has always been sensitive, the muscles on that side weak, and that lung never has fully re-inflated. Consequently, I am considered partially disabled by the Veterans Administration. Ever since then I have had to avoid heavy lifting or work that exposed me to smoke or flames that might affect my lung capacity. Luckily my condition has not kept me from doing most things a normal healthy person can do.

Eventually I was well enough to be discharged to a convalescent unit, the Eighth Station Hospital in the hills above Pearl Harbor, where I spent most of the month of July. While there I was able to participate in USO and other group activities, including beach parties and visits to Pearl Harbor and to the Doris Duke mansion and pool. In addition I was selected for a five day Army R & R (Rest and Recuperation) visit to a rest camp at the mountain, Mauna Loa, on the big island of Hawaii. Also several friends and relatives passing through Hawaii on their way to assignments farther west looked me up while I was recuperating.

In early August I was released to limited duty. My weight was then down to 120# and I was pretty thin. However, the war was not over yet, so I was not sent back "stateside" to the USA, but was assigned to duty at Schofield Barracks where I spent the next year. One of my duties was to stand guard at night (2 hours on, 2 off) at a remote ammunition depot up in the mountains and I hated that! For a while I was a jeep driver taking officers around the base, and I took truck-driving lessons (I even learned to double-clutch shift a 6x6 truck). Then I was assigned to clerk duties in the 1569th (later changed to the 1758th) Engineering Base Depot Company. I was happy not being sent back to my infantry regiment, as my understanding was that the 96th Division was scheduled to be part of the coming invasion of the mainland of Japan in early 1946. Recent information I have received indicates they were to land near Tokyo and that would have been a slaughter on both sides had not the war been ended by "The Bomb".

Good Duty

Since the Pacific War had ended with the official surrender of Japan on September 2, 1945, the older men with longer periods of service and more "discharge points" gradually began to leave the organization. That left us younger men to fill in the empty spots, so we gradually moved up in rank. During that next year, I moved from Private up to T-4, equivalent to Sergeant. Any gaps in manpower were filled with new draftees from the USA as well as local young men from Hawaii itself. That is where I met my long time friend, Art Lao, with whom I have been corresponding ever since. Our engineering group was responsible for supplying equipment and materials to other military units, but with the war over, these needs were

reduced and we were somewhat involved in handling materials for surplus sale overseas. We shipped out tons of barbed wire, which I am sure were destined for the Mid-East was yet to come.

During my time at Schofield Barracks, with the war over, we could check out company trucks on weekends and take trips to the ocean beaches. So I finally got my chance to visit Waikiki Beach as well as other nice sites on the island. That made army life much easier to take and Hawaii was no doubt the best place to be stuck in as long as we could not go home. Of course, most of us finally got "island fever," meaning that we felt trapped on that relatively small island.

In early 1946, Hawaii was hit by a big tidal wave and there was much damage along the beaches. Our company was sent to the north side of the island for about a week to help in patrolling for looters. Later that year, the Army established schools at some bases where anyone who wanted could take pre-college courses of different kinds. One school was started at Schofield Barracks and I was able to take classes in Engineering Drawing and Calculus for later credit at the University of Washington.

Going Home

Eventually, the time came that I had enough "points" for discharge and I left the company in late July, 1946. Along with hundreds of others, I boarded another troopship, the General O.H. Ernst, AP 133. As we didn't need to zig-zag, it took only five days to reach San Francisco. It was a wonderful feeling to see the Golden Gate Bridge as we sailed into the bay, which many had wondered if they would ever see again. As we came into the dock, there was a large crowd waiting there, which was surprising since the war had been over for almost a year. From there we were transferred by ferry across the bay to Camp Stoneman in Oakland and then sent by trains in all directions to our home cities.

Meeting the train in Tacoma were my father, mother, and sister for a great reunion although I had to spend a few more days again at Fort Lewis being processed for discharge. As it turned out, I was discharged on August 7, 1946, exactly two years to the day from when I was inducted into the Army.

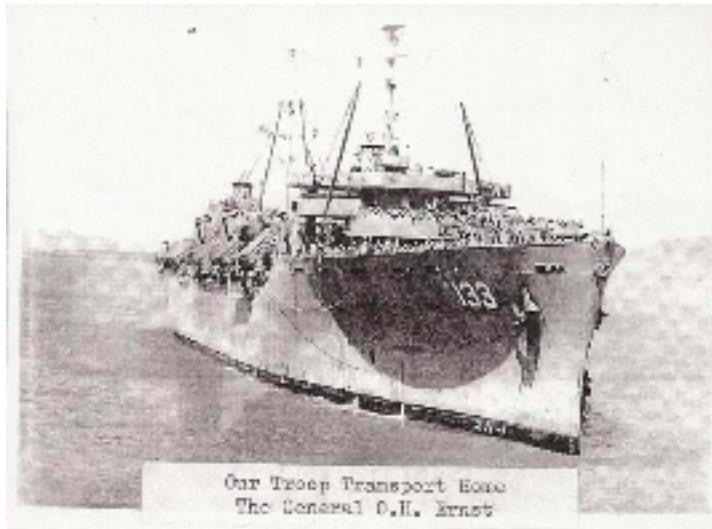
I have always regretted that I did not last longer on Okinawa and contribute more to the victory, whereas I feel that I was more of a target while I was there. I was one of the lucky ones, though. Recently de-classified Army documents reveal that, from my Company alone, in the three-month battle there were 57 men killed and over 200 wounded, including newer replacements. Thus the total casualties were nearly 150% of our initial company strength of 175 men at the time of landing on April 1. So probably very few men made it through the whole battle unscathed.

For my military service, I am entitled to wear the following awards and ribbons: Combat Infantryman Badge, Purple Heart, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, Philippine Liberation Ribbon, WW II Victory Medal, and Good Conduct Medal. In 1946, the U.S. Army XXIV Corps initiated a Presidential Unit Citation award to the 96th Infantry Division (The Deadeyes) for its extraordinary actions in the conquest of Okinawa, but 55 years went by before it was finally signed by the Secretary of the Army in January, 2001. In 1947, the Bronze Star Medal was awarded by the Army Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall, to all WW II combat infantrymen and combat medical men.

My only connection with the military now is with the 96th Infantry Division Association, where I am active as Chaplain and Historian for the Northwest Chapter that meets every June near Corvallis, Oregon, where the division was activated at Camp Adair in 1942.

Glenn R. Perry – Army Serial Number 39 479 464

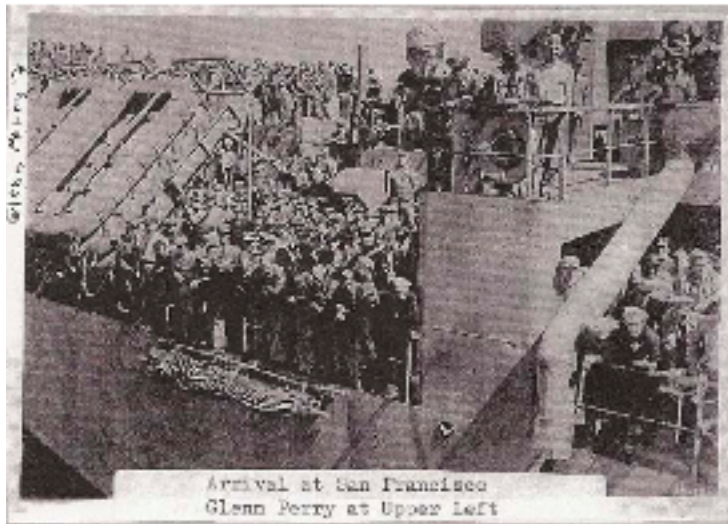
December 9, 2002



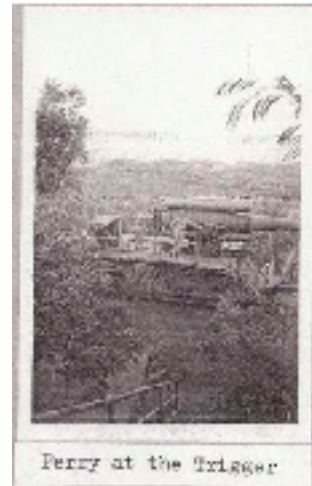
Our Troop Transport Home
The General G.H. Ernest



Coastal Defense Gun - Saifu



Arrival at San Francisco
Glenn Ferry at Upper Left



Ferry at the Trigger



We're Off for Home - July, 1946



Welcome Home at San Francisco - 1946



Glenn Perry and his wife, Janice