

★ CAMP BLANDING ★ CAMP VAN DORN ★

Blood and Fire

63rd Division Association, Inc.

• ARDENNES / ALSACE • RHINELAND • CENTRAL EUROPE •

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59TH REUNION



Tacoma, Washington

Blood and Fire

Published by the 63rd Division Association to perpetuate the memory of our fallen comrades, to preserve the *Esprit de Corps* of the division, to assist in promoting an everlasting peace.

Three Issues Annually

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FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT ...

by Marsh Allen

The 59th Reunion Committee sends greetings of welcome to you fellow "Hot Shots, 63rd RRSC (ARCOM), spouses, and families. The planning for the reunion in Tacoma is coming along great.

Our agenda includes a Memorial Service at the Fort Lewis Chapel and a windshield tour of Fort Lewis and McChord Air Force Base. For a Northwest adventure we selected a boat trip to Blake Island for a Native American style feast of salmon with entertainment featuring Native American Culture.

For those arriving by air at SeaTac, collect your luggage and proceed to the "Atrium" – our new airporter waiting lounge. It is located past Baggage Carousel 1 at the south end of the terminal. Look for information and schedules for CAPITAL AEROPORTER for ground transportation to Tacoma.

Those arriving by car will get an early start on viewing our beautiful Northwest as you arrive. The attractions in our area are many so you may want to arrive early or stay longer. Our hotel rates at the Tacoma Sheraton are available starting August 3 and continuing to August 14.

The Tacoma area has world class museums (Art, Glass, and History, Maritime), State and National Parks, zoo, aquarium, gardens and botanical conservatory, scenic drives; saltwater beaches; water and amusement parks, casinos, horse racing, and mountains, including an active volcano. Various transportation arrangements can be made.

To take advantage of a special discount on a baseball game with hotdog, chips and drink for \$9.50, contact Marsh Allen before July 15, by telephone: 253-851-3843 or email mallen2321@juno.com for reservations. Games are Tuesday evening and Wednesday at noon.

A quick note about Mt. Rainier national Park, due to winter floods we could not be assured that all areas will be open to tourists. Find updated recovery information on-line at <http://www.nps.gov/nora> or call 360-569-2177.

As you can see, there is much to see and enjoy by all ages in your family. We hope you will bring your kids, your grandkids, and even your great-grandkids. The reunion committee looks forward to giving you and your family a hearty welcome to the 59th Reunion of the 63rds Infantry Division in August.

NOTICE FOR RV TRAVELERS

The Shrine Temple will let RVs stay there. A full hookup is \$10.00 per day. Dry camp is no charge and you can use the dump station at no charge.

The Elks Club will let RVs stay there if they, or a member of their party, are Elk members. That fee is \$15.00.

Majestic Manor RV Pars charges \$32 per night and Gig harbor RV is \$34 per night.

A Memo from the Secretary . . .

Donna LaCrosse

As I write this note to you on April 16 I am wondering if we will ever have spring! It has been so cold here in Indiana the past three weeks I am almost ready, but not quite, to move to a new location where there is no cold weather!!

Not really – I do like the changing of the seasons that Indiana offers, but when winter is over, let it be spring until summer arrives!

This is the last edition of the *Blood and Fire* before the reunion in Tacoma. I hope a lot of you have the time and the energy to attend this event that Marsh Allen, Ed Bundick and Floyd Exeter have planned for your enjoyment. It will be a great adventure for us because we have never traveled in that area.

Also, a reminder that dues for 2008 can be paid anytime now. They are due before December 31, 2007, but if you send your check now, I won't have to send you a "dues due" letter in September!! I am getting rather lazy in my old age!!

If you have not done so, please consider sending an ad for the Reunion Ad Book. That money will help defray the costs of the reunion, and is a way for you to send greetings to old friends or pay tribute to a loved one who is no longer with us. You will find a form for sending a message in the *Blood and Fire*.

For those who can't make it to the reunion, have a great summer (if it ever arrives) and keep in touch – your notes, cards, calls and emails mean a lot to me; keep them coming!

From the editor . . .

Donna LaCrosse

There is a lot of reading material in this issue of the *Blood and Fire*. I hope, after reading the stories of other "hot shots," you will be ready to send me your own story.

I look forward to the mail each and every day, hoping I will receive more articles for the pages of this publication. Lately, there has been less and less mail and I wonder what you are all doing that is so time consuming that you can't fill my mail box? I know there are stories out there that should be shared with other members of this association, so get busy and write, or dictate what you want to say so your spouse, son, daughter or a grandchild can send it to me. I'm waiting!!

I am most unhappy about the increase in postage coming about the middle of May. That means extra expense for the mailing of the *Blood and Fire* and it also means that when you move and don't send me an address change, it is an added strain on the budget. Be sure you remember me when you are ready to move, and send me an address change when you notify family members of your move.

Please remember to notify me when you hear of the death of a member of the 63rd Infantry Division Association. I need that information for the files and also for the Celebration of Life column as well as for the memorial service held during the reunion each year.

I certainly hope to get the mailing list completely corrected for this mailing, but it is a time consuming project. It sure takes a big hunk out of my day and week, going over addresses, finding those people who are listed twice and making sure the new members will receive their copy of the *Blood and Fire*. I don't know how the mailing list got so messed up but when the labels are not correct, or corrected each time, the publication does not reach its destination and you "guys" are unhappy campers!!

Enjoy this issue and feel free to contact me with a problem you might have. Just bear with me and hope things even out and become smooth "mailing" one day real soon!

RECEIVED TWO COPIES?

If you received two copies of this issue of the *Blood and Fire*, please notify the editor as soon as possible. You don't need two copies and we don't need the added expense.

Thank you so much.

Donna LaCrosse

Need to replace your DD 214?

A website has been established to provide veterans information on how to replace lost, destroyed, or never-issued DD 214's.

The website is:

www.members.aol.com/forvets/dd214.htm.

I was a survivor

by Tech Sgt. Aubrey M Rogers, Sgt Major 1st Bn, 253rd Infantry

I was drafted into the Army June 21, 1941 – inducted at Ft. Benjamin Harrison Indiana and sent to Ft. Sill Oklahoma for 13 weeks of basic training in Field Artillery, after

which I was assigned to an Artillery Brigade of the famed First Cavalry Division, which happened to be on training maneuvers in Pickett County Louisiana. Pickett County was a dismal place infested with snakes, fleas and ticks. General Kruger was in command of the units that

had horses, and Major General George Patton was in command of the mechanized units. Since it was in the last part of the maneuvers when I arrived there, they put me with the kitchen crew for the rest of the maneuvers. Under cover of darkness, General Kruger quietly moved our horse artillery unit into a position where we could fire on one of General Patton's tank battalions. Just as dawn was breaking our commanding officers fired a green flare and we fired all the cannons – blank ammo of course. The tankers, all asleep in their tanks, suddenly scurried into action, but it was too late. They couldn't slip up and surprise us that way because of the terrible noise the tanks made.

A jeep rolled up and a Major, wearing a black arm band stepped out, surveyed the situation, and was talking with our Brigade commander. Some of the guys near me had seen this major before and said he was the chief umpire. About that time another jeep rolled up and Gen Patton stepped out. He was livid with anger and arguing with this Major. The Major said to the General, "Now George, you know damn well if those cannons had been firing live ammo they would have wiped out your tanks, and that is my ruling." We all thought the Major would be disciplined for addressing



The picture below was taken of T/Sgt Aubrey Rogers and Captain Herb Houghaling in May 1945 in Tauberbischoheim, Germany.

a General officer by his first name. It turned out the Major was none other than Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was almost unknown at that time and had been assigned there as chief Umpire of the maneuvers. He came there from the Phillipines where he was an aid to General McArthur. I was sitting on my horse, a roan mount by the name of King, about 30-feet from Patton and Eisenhower and could hear what was being said. It was light enough by then that I could see that famous "Ike" grin as he spoke to Patton. Patton said, "I know your ruling is right Major, but we have got to get rid of these horses. They no longer have a place in modern warfare." Eisenhower said, "You are probably right George, and I expect that will happen soon." Little did any of us know where the war would take that lowly Major.

As the maneuvers ended all the units were readied for return to their regular posts. Mine would be Ft. Bliss, Texas. After breakfast we were assembled for roll call, when a Lieutenant gave the command, "All men who know how to drive a truck, two paces forward." I suppose I have always been something of an opportunist, so I stepped out. We were given the command "left face, forward march." Soon we approached a nice neat line of brand new GMC 4x4 trucks and were given the order, "Fall out and take the truck nearest you." Then came the command to back the trucks out and face them to the left. I couldn't get my truck in reverse and this Lieutenant came rushing up and said, "What's the matter with you? I thought you said you could drive a truck." I said, "I can sir, if you will just show me how to get it in reverse." His reply was, "Oh my God," reached in the cab, pulled up on a little lever of the gear shift and put it in reverse, after which I had no trouble. As I had anticipated, I made the three-day trip to Ft. Bliss in relative comfort sitting on leather seats with a relief driver. I had officers riding in the back on wooden bench seats.

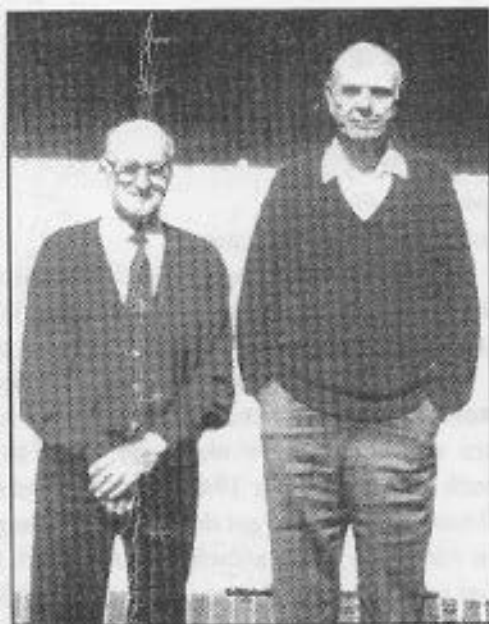
Back at Ft. Bliss I was falling out for roll call and calisthenics each morning and pulling KP Duty, Guard Duty and Latrine Orderly. I had been there about two weeks when one morning an orderly came in the barracks and said, "Rogers, the First Sergeant wants you to report to the Orderly Room." When I reported, he said, "Rogers, your service record says you know how to run a typewriter. How good can you type?" I told him pretty good, so he told me to sit down at that desk and type something for him. I sensed an opportunity so I typed real good and accurate. The Sgt

- CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

I was a survivor *continued from page 4*

called the Battery commander in and said to me, "Type something for the Captain," which I did. The Captain said, "That's

enough soldier. Go to the barracks and bring all your gear up here and put it in that room. You are the Battery Clerk and will be promoted to Corporal. You are not to leave this orderly room for any reason. The KP's will bring your



meals here, and you are not to fall out for any of the formations or other duties. You stay right here and answer the phone and do what the Sgt. tells you to do." It turns out the First Sgt. was a little smarter than the men in the ranks, but not much. He was in deep trouble with his records keeping and the Captain was taking flak from higher headquarters. In just a short time I had the Sgt out of trouble and had it made.

I never did get those Corporal stripes. On December 7, 1941 the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor. When drafted we would be in the service for only one year. I knew right away that I was in for the duration! There was a rush at all recruiting offices since war had been declared. Orders came from the Adjutant General's Department in Washington D.C. to select 820 (administrative specialists) and assign them temporary duty in recruiting offices nearest their home town. I was sent back home to Muncie, Indiana and manned the recruiting office in the Muncie Post Office for three months. The postmaster and I became good friends and when that duty was over, he said to me, "What are you going to do when you get out of the Army?" I replied, "Well, I may just come back and ask for a job here at your Post Office." He said, "Good, you do that." I was discharged from the Army October 5, 1945, and went to work at the Muncie Post Office as a "War Service Temporary Clerk" to help them through the Christmas rush. I fell in love with the Postal Service - took the Civil Service Test and made a career of it. My starting pay was 84 cents an hour! I moved up through

the ranks and 34 years later I retired as Director of Administration for the Muncie, Indiana Postal District.

After my stint in the recruiting office, I was sent again to Ft. Harrison to be the Chief Clerk of the Army Chaplain School. We were occupying a large brick barracks building. Ft. Harrison was an induction center and they needed that space for new inductees. Harvard University was an all male school at that time, and since a lot of those young men were being drafted into the military, their dorms were half empty. The Army paid rent, so Harvard officials were glad to have us. I was sent ahead with an advance detail to get the two dorms and our Headquarters in the Germanic Museum ready.

The Chaplain School was not about Theology. Our job was to teach these new Chaplains map reading, military courtesy and discipline, survival tactics, and most of all, get them in physical condition to serve with combat units. It was a 13-week course. If you had a Bachelor of Divinity Degree you entered the service as a Captain. A Master of Divinity Degree brought the rank of Major, and a Doctorate brought the rank of Lt. Col. Suddenly these preachers found themselves as officers. They didn't know how to wear their uniforms or return salutes, so this was our job. They fell out for roll call each morning - were given calisthenics and close order drill just like raw recruits. We had two tough regular army master sergeants to put them through this.

I finally got those Corporal stripes April 22, 1942; Sgt on July 22, 1942; S/Sgt September 9, 1942, and Tech Sgt May 15, 1943. We were staffed by ten WACS and eight Civil Service office clerks. The instructors were Army Officers. I reported to the Adjutant, Major A.L. Casey. We cut the payroll checks and travel orders for these student chaplains, and produced all the training materials for the faculty and students. I was sitting pretty - living off campus in a rooming house on Beacon Street in Brookline near where the Kennedy family lived, but I didn't even know who they were then. This all came to an end shortly after the Normandy Beach landings on D-Day.

An order came down for all able bodied personnel not on critical assignments to be reassigned to combat units and made ready for re-deployment to the ETO or Pacific. I reported to the 63rd Infantry Division at Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi on July 18, 1944. Captain Herbert J. Houghtaling, who was Adjutant and S-1 of the 1st Bn, 253rd Inf. Reg., took one look at me and said, "Sgt. I don't know how you got those stripes, but you've got just 30 days to show me you can keep them in this

OUR HISTORY: THEN AND NOW

by Bill Scott, 30-Mar-2007

e-mail: wjs631@comcast.net

Recently, there have been several e-mails and phone calls back and forth with a woman who is working on the history of the troopship MARINE WOLF which carried many military and civilian people from many countries between the ports of Le Havre, France and Southampton, England. This shuttle service was used from April through October 7, 1945, then the ship was also used for other trips for a grand total of over 230,000 people. Her father served in the ship's hospital as a surgical technician.

The 63rd Division's 254th and 255th regiments appear on the copied 1945 list of shuttles in late September and early October, 1945. The date of 15-Sep-45 shows the regiments and some French totaling 3,888 people going to England. That same date shows on a copied sheet of train schedules with Captains from the companies serving as train commanders. None of the companies match the ones in the next paragraph, so they must be on other pages. Some research on the September morning reports shows no reference to the MARINE WOLF, and most of the September days are not shown on most of the company morning reports. A photo of the MARINE WOLF is shown below. It is curious that a very small amount of entries were made on the morning reports in that time period.

I did find seven 254th companies that showed on the morning reports that they boarded the QUEEN MARY on the 22nd and 23rd of September 1945. They were Companies A, B, CN, F, H, HQ & SV. I have not had time to research further to see if the 255th companies were also on that ship at that time. It is very likely that all the companies were on the same ships in those several days.

If our readers could help her with some details about this project you can contact her, and possibly send me a copy of what you send

to her. The address:

The MARINE WOLF Project

Michele Weitzel

769 Rothrock Circle

Copley, OH 44321

Phone: 330-666-6728

iconart@mindspring.com

Many new tales may result from this undertaking since we came home by many different ways, depending on the individual situation and point score.

The unit morning reports for the month of October 1944 have been the focus of my research and there are many more weeks of work to finish that month and November 1944. Then the detailed editing will continue to try to get the wrong spellings corrected, men who were likely attached unassigned, and missing serial numbers taken care of if possible. Men who now use their middle names or nicknames as their first names cause a problem at times if we cannot find the connection with the military records.

At this time there are 69,554 names on the rosters of the 63rd for 1943-45 for a gain of 133 net names since the last issue. The percentage with army serial numbers is now 97.45% with a gain over the previous 97.38%, with three companies of the 363rd Medical Bn. at 100% and the other two at 99.0% or better. The grand total with the attached units is now 70,210 names.



PARTIAL data compiled so far by 63rd Historians and helpers from AVAILABLE records

COMPUTER DATA PRINTOUTS AND COPIES

PLEASE PRINT!	UNIT #1 Company, battery, HQ?	UNIT #2	COST/EACH
1943-45 Unit Roster of Men (w/rank, serial no., dates, medals, casualties, deaths, etc.)	_____	_____	\$4 ea.
Today's Unit Address-Phone list (for members only)	_____	_____	\$2 ea.
1945 Unit Medals List (w/WWII home towns)	_____	_____	\$2 ea.
1944-45 Unit Itineraries (in Bn. group)	_____	_____	\$3 ea.
Alphabetical List of CAMP BLANDING CADRE MEN with data	_____	_____	\$5 ea.
Today's Address & Phone List of CAMP BLANDING CADRE MEN (for members only)	_____	_____	\$2 ea.
Today's Address & Phone List by State (for members only)	State #1 _____	State #2 _____	\$2 ea.
1,029 Killed in Action, Died of Wound, & Non-Battle Death --- ALPHA	_____	_____	\$5 ea.
KIA, DOW, NBD, with all known men shown and sorted by ----- ALL UNITS	_____	_____	\$5 ea.
KIA, DOW, NBD, best viewpoint - Sorted by DATE, organization, unit	_____	_____	\$5 ea.
Casualty Summary compiled to date for ALL units with 8 categories	_____	_____	\$3 ea.
2005 Alphabetical list book (#33) with date on casualties, deaths, units, serial numbers, cadre, whether man's or widow's address is known, data & casualty summaries, etc. 69,179 LINES OF NAMES	_____	_____	\$63 ea.

MAP COPIES

11" x 17" 1:1,000,000 map of entire area of 63rd combat WITHOUT trail of 63rd units	_____	_____	\$1 ea.
1:200,000 1939 map of ALSACE, Lorraine, & SAAR areas thru Siegfried Line area	_____	_____	\$5 ea.
1:50,000 map of COLMAR Pocket & Vosges Mtn. area in France for 254th guys	_____	_____	\$5 ea.
1:20,000 map of SW 1/4 of COLMAR map area w/Kaysersberg, etc. for 254th guys	_____	_____	\$5 ea.
Three 1:25K maps from S. of Sarreguemines to Saarbrucken w/great detail	_____	_____	\$13 set
Two 1:25,000 1945 maps showing the 63rd's SIEGFRIED LINE area with forts, from 1/45 aerial photos with legends	_____	_____	\$13 set
1:25,000 BLIESKASTEL map that shows Kirkel, Wurzbach, & Biesingen	NEW	_____	\$5 ea.
1:100,000 KAISERSLAUTERN map that shows Homburg, Langmeil & Grunstadt	NEW	_____	\$5 ea.
1:100,000 KARLSRUHE map that shows Bad Wimpfen, Heilbronn & Stuttgart	NEW	_____	\$5 ea.
1:100,000 ELLWANGEN map from Waldenburg & Schwabisch Hall to Oberbobingen	_____	_____	\$5 ea.
1:25,000 MOGGLINGEN map shows from Obergroningen to Oberbobingen	_____	_____	\$5 ea.
8.5" x 14" 1:250,000 map shows from Mannheim to Rothenberg and Heilbronn	NEW	_____	\$1 ea.

HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

2nd Bn.-253 4-12 April 1945 events, rosters & Pres. Unit Citation award	_____	_____	\$14 ea.
Regimental histories for January-May 1945 in binders, copied from monthly combat reports: 253rd _____, 254th _____, 255th _____:	_____	_____	\$13 ea.
Reprint of 135-page 1986 softcover book, "With the 63rd Infantry Division in WWII" by Col. James E. Hatcher of 254th and 255th	CHANGED	_____	\$20 ea.
Unbound Xerographic copy of 1945 history & index for "The Trail of 254 Thru Blood & Fire" by Harris Peel, Vernon Kile, Algernon Keith & John Sontag	_____	_____	\$7 ea.
Unbound inkjet color copy of 1945 "Victory in Europe" booklet	_____	_____	\$5 ea.
1943-45 combat history of 263rd Engineer Combat Bn. by Bill Snyder in binder	_____	_____	\$65 ea.
Jan-Apr 45 Combat Unit Journals of Hq 1st Bn-254 by date, hour, minute in binder	_____	_____	\$10 ea.
Ray Restani's Report of A-254 Attack at Eschringen, Germany, 15-Mar-45 in binder	_____	_____	\$8 ea.
Short 1943-45 History of Hq 1st Bn-255 with "after action report" in binder	_____	_____	\$8 ea.
Unbound Germany's Siegfried Line history, details, drawings, & photos	NEW	_____	\$5 ea.
Unbound History 7th U.S. Army, 15-Dec-44 to 25-Jan-45, "The Other Bulge"	NEW	_____	\$4 ea.
Unbound 1944 "I am a Doughboy" booklet on inf. co. & plt. equipment, weapons, & training	NEW	_____	\$4 ea.

PATCHES, can be ironed on or sewn on caps, jackets, etc.

(A) 3.5" x 2.3" 63rd Infantry Division for uniform	_____	_____	\$4 ea.
(B) 2.5" x 1.45" 63rd Infantry Div. with "BLOOD & FIRE" below	_____	_____	\$3 ea.
(C) 2.66" x 2.35" 63rd w/ "BLOOD & FIRE" and "63rd INFANTRY DIV." below	NEW	_____	\$4 ea.
(D) 2.25" high x 3.5" wide US flag	_____	_____	\$3 ea.

(E) 2.5" high x 3.5" wide 63rd Division Siegfried Line sign patch	COST/EACH
(F) 3.5" high x 3.5" wide 253rd Infantry Regiment w/motto "QUINTA ESSENTIA" (The Quintessence).....	\$5 ea.
(G) 3.6" high x 3.4" wide 254th Infantry Regiment w/motto "DEATH BEFORE DEFEAT"	\$5 ea.
(H) 3.5" high x 3.0" wide 255th Infantry Regiment with motto "COR FERREUM" (Heart of Steel)	\$5 ea.

----- 1.2 CREST PINS w/2 clutch pins -----

253rd Infantry Regiment with motto ... "QUINTA ESSENTIA" (The Quintessence)	Not avail.
254th Infantry Regiment with motto ... "DEATH BEFORE DEFEAT"	\$5 ea.
255th Infantry Regiment with motto ... "COR FERREUM (Heart of Steel)	\$5 ea.
Colored pin description w/honors & 63rd Div. emblems ... 253rd ____, 254th ____, 255th ____	\$1 ea.

----- HAT PINS & BOLA TIES -----

63rd Inf. Div. Patch pin ____, Combat Infantryman Badge pin ____, Combat Medic Badge pin ____	\$4 ea.
Ranger Badge pin ____, Silver Star Medal pin ____, Bronze Star Medal pin ____	\$4 ea.
Purple Heart Medal pin ____, Presidential Unit Citation Badge pin ____, Infantry pin ____	\$4 ea.
MP pin ____, POW Medal pin ____, Field Artillery pin ____, Corps of Engineers pin ____	\$4 ea.
Quartermaster pin ____, Signal Corps pin ____, Ruptured Duck pin ____, 7th Army Patch pin ____	\$4 ea.
Europe Africa Middle East pin ____, WWII Victory Medal pin ____, Army of Occupation pin ____	\$4 ea.
Full Size Expert Infantry Badge ____, Full Size Presidential Unit Citation Badge	\$5 ea.
63rd Inf. Div. deluxe bola tie with black cord ____, gold cord	\$10 ea.

----- UNIT & ORGANIZATION AWARDS COPIES -----

Presidential Unit Citations copy: 2nd Bn.-253rd ____, 1st Bn.-254th ____, 3rd Bn.-254th ____	\$2 ea.
Pres. Unit Citation narrative for 3rd Bn. and Co. A & B-253rd Inf.	NEW \$1 ea.
French Croix deGuerre w/Palm for 254th Inf.: 8 .5" x 11" \$5 ea. ____, 11-5/8" x 17" \$10 ea. ____	

----- COMPACT DISKS FOR MICROSOFT WINDOWS SYSTEMS -----

95 of 1943-45 Blood & Fire issues ____, 63rd Div. General Orders for medals, etc.	\$10 ea.
853 page updated "Chronicles" history book w/photos, rosters, alpha list	\$15 ea.
Histories w/photos, rosters, & other info: 253rd ____, 254th ____	\$12 ea.
255th ____, All Artillery ____, 263rd Engineer & 363 Medical Bns.	\$12 ea.
Special Troops: HQ&HQ Co., Band, MP, QM, Recon., Signal, Ordnance	\$12 ea.
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63RD VET'S NAME

I was a survivor *continued from page 5*

outfit.” He assigned me to the Anti Tank Gun Platoon. The men in that platoon were all nice to me and showed me the ropes. Just about the time I had learned my duties, the Battalion Sgt. Major received orders to report to Officers Candidate School at Ft. Benning, Ga. Cap Houghtaling assigned me to be the Sgt. Major, which held the rank of Tech Sgt. So, I kept my stripes and was again doing what I knew best – office routine.

We departed Camp Van Dorn November 4, 1944 by troop train, and passed right through my hometown, Muncie, Indiana. I knew we were going that route, so had written my wife. She was at the depot with several people handing out doughnuts and sandwiches. The train slowed down to a crawl, but didn't stop so all I could do was wave at her and blow her a kiss. We arrived at Camp Shanks, New York November 7, 1944 and sailed onboard the U.S. Army transport Thomas H. Barrie November 25, 1944. There were twelve ships in that convoy. Everyone was scrambling for a bottom bunk. I could just envision someone in the upper bunks vomiting down on me, so I grabbed the top bunk near an air vent!

These bunks were canvass stretched over pipe frames, six deep and 24-inches apart. You had to put your barracks bag in, and then kind of roll in. If the guy in the bunk above you was a big fellow, the canvass on his bunk nearly touched your nose. I was terrified! The compartment I was in was four decks below the water line, and I knew if we took a torpedo, I would never get out alive. I was determined not to get seasick. On the second day out I was up on deck and this Major came running around a bulkhead – ran into me – bounced back, and vomited all over me. He had his hand over his mouth and mumbled an apology. I said “That’s OK Sir, I’ll just join you at the rail,” at which point I nearly vomited up my heels! From then on I was deathly seasick! It was a fourteen-day trip, and I literally lived off saltine crackers and apples. There are no words to describe the stench in that Compartment. Combined with body odor of about 50 men, vomit, and the terrible smell from the kitchen galley – it was just unbearable – at least for me. We were allowed to go up on deck for 30-minutes four times a day. I always stayed up there until the deck officer ran me off.

Those fourteen days, for me, were the worst part of the war. No one knew where we were going. Then one night about midnight, there was a lot of excitement. I ran up on deck and there in the moonlight was the Rock of Gibraltar! We knew then we were headed for the port of Marseilles, France. We arrived there December 8, 1944. So happy to be off that ship, I got down and kissed the ground. So did a lot of other guys. I will never

understand how anyone can enjoy taking a cruise! I certainly would never pay good money to go on a cruise. It's just water; water in every direction as far as you can see. What is pretty about that? And, in warfare, there is only one way to go on the water – down! On land I can dig a foxhole and get a little protection.

We were told that we would be staying in the Delta Basin Sector Staging Area. We envisioned this to be a nice warm barracks and hot food. Not so! Turns out it was nothing but a barren frozen hillside. We were told to dig two-man foxholes and try to keep as warm as possible. I teamed up with Corporal Lynwood Clark, the Battalion clerk. We put one shelter half on the ground to ward off the dampness, then put a blanket on top of that. We put the other blanket on top of us, covered it with the other shelter half – crawled in and spent a totally miserable night. Finally on December 14, we boarded a nice heated train en-route to join the U.S. Seventh Army somewhere in central France. We were served hot food – toast, bacon, scrambled eggs and hot coffee – really living it up, playing cards and blowing off. A short time later someone yelled, “Hey, come look at this. That is the only kind of good Kraut there is – a dead one!” The train was moving slowly, and everyone ran to the windows to look out. What they saw was a frozen body half way out of a foxhole – feet up – and wearing hob nail boots. A short time later we came upon another frozen body in a foxhole, only this one had on boots just like ours! Everyone got real quiet and returned to their seats. The reality of the situation had hit home, and was not at all funny.

At Sarrebourg we left the train and en-trucked for the move to the front. We moved into division reserve and occupied an old cavalry post, Camp Oberhoffen. The Germans attacked – we counter attacked and ran them back. We kept on going and ended up at Sarreguemines France on January 4, 1945. We crossed the Saar River and ran the Germans out of the village of Kleinblittersdorf, Germany on February 20. We continued liberating several small villages and broke through the Siegfried Line March 20. We approached the city of Heidleberg on March 31. It had been declared an “Open City” because General Patton's 36th Infantry Division had taken it before we arrived. On the approach march a lone sniper in a church belfry tower shot and killed our Field Artillery forward observer Sergeant. Our return fire riddled the church tower and the sniper. This Sergeant had a down-filled sleeping roll which when opened took the shape of a mummy. It rolled up into a ball no larger than a basketball and was feather-weight. I took that sleeping

I was a survivor *continued from page 9*

roll and carried it all the way to the end of the war. I could strip down to my long john underwear, crawl in that thing, lay right out on the snow covered ground and stay warm as toast. It had a panic zipper, and in case of an enemy attack, by throwing your elbows outward, it would pop open and allow you to get out of it fast.

I was a survivor! I vowed I was coming back home alive. All through combat while other guys were looting flat silverware and useless things they later discarded, I was looting clean underwear from abandoned farm houses we occupied. I wore this under my woolen long johns, which made them more comfortable. This also kept me from getting irritated or as we called it, "Jock Itch." We only had one hot shower all through combat. They parked a semi-trailer equipped with hot water shower units. There was a rubber curtain down the middle of this semi, and when the air motion slapped up against your naked body, it was a real shocker! But we did get clean uniforms and underwear after the shower. One time, when I couldn't find any men's underwear, I looted some women's cotton briefs. Guys in my unit somehow heard about this and spread the word that "the Sgt was a cross dresser." But I stayed clean, and also kept my feet dry. We had rubber shoe packs with felt inserts. These inserts became wet right away from body moisture. I pulled mine out – threw them away – filled my shoe-packs at the bottom with clean straw or hay. With two pair of socks on, this kept my feet fairly dry. I tell people I walked across France and Germany on straw. Actually, I was riding most of the time in the S-1 jeep with Capt. Houghtaling and the battalion field desk.

In the worst fight the 253rd came under fire was at the small village of Kressbach, Germany. We attacked there on Sunday, April 9 and 283 men of the 1st Bn 253rd Regiment were killed – a lot more wounded. It was dubbed "Bloody Sunday." After the battle we estimated we had killed approximately 700 German troops. It was single digit weather, and we let the bodies stay all night where they fell. Word came down the next morning that the GRO's (Grave Registration Orderlies) who normally evacuated the dead were overwhelmed by losses that General Patton's troops to our north had taken. They asked us to get the bodies back to the Graves Registration unit the best way we could. That job fell to me. There was a large German stake-bed truck in the village that was powered by charcoal gas made by a small wood-burning furnace. I asked some German towns-people, "Iss Goot?" Right away came the answer, "Ya. Iss Goot." They told me there was an old man living in the village that knew all

about that truck. I sent for him and we built a fire in the furnace and soon we had it running. We brought frozen bodies to this truck by jeeps equipped with stretchers on the hood and the rear seat. We could get six bodies each trip. These were loaded onto the old truck and taken to the rear area. We could get about 80 bodies each load, and we worked from daylight to dark that day. The bodies were really grotesque, frozen in whatever position they fell. One German soldier was frozen in a crouched position with his arms extended over his head and his eyes were frozen open and looked like glass. There was blood oozing out of his mouth. When the orderly at Graves Registration took hold of his feet to pull him off the truck, it tumbled forward with the frozen arms extended and the orderly let out a scream – dropped the body – and started running to the rear. As far as I know, he may still be running. It was a gruesome sight!

We ended up at Hiltenfingen, Germany April 27, 1945, and were relieved from combat duty the next morning by the 3rd Bn, 141st Regt., 36th Division, which was part of General Patton's Third Army. We were in reserve of the 254th Inf Regt that liberated the Landsburg Concentration Camp for Jews at Landsburg, Germany. General Patton's troops came in and took credit for that. But it was all over by the time they got there. Patton's men never had to fire a shot. Trust me, I was there!

One of the saddest things that happened to my unit was the death of Staff Sgt. Albert Finch from Tarrytown, New York. He was a squad leader of the Anti Tank Gun Platoon that befriended me at Camp Van Dorn. The war was over and we were doing occupation duty at Wertheim, Germany. Things were still kind of fluid and some troops didn't know the war was over. This included German troops, so we set up two-man outposts around the village. About 3:00 AM I was awakened by machine gun fire. It was unmistakable from a German "Burp Gun." This was followed by return fire from our own men. I grabbed the phone and asked where the fire came from. They said it was "D" company and that Sgt. Finch had been hit. The medics rushed to the outpost, but Finch died shortly after they arrived. A Burp Gun round had hit his liver and he died of internal bleeding. No one ever heard Finch use any profanity. If he became upset about anything he would simply say "Mucketts." We asked him if it was spelled with one or two "t's" and he said it had two "t's." When we asked him what it meant, he said "anything you want it to mean." They said the last thing Finch said that night just before he died was, "Aw, Mucketts."

I was a survivor *continued from page 10*

Turns out there were two German soldiers who lived in Wertheim and were trying to get back home. When our guys in the outpost challenged them, they panicked and fired on the outpost. Our return fire killed one of them and wounded the other. He was able to tell us what happened. It was a sad and tragic way for Finch to die after making it all through the war.

My unit was on occupation duty alternating between villages of Wertheim and Tauberbischofsheim, Germany until I received orders sending me back home. I left Margurg, Germany August 8, 1945 on board a freight train made up of 40 & 8 cars that would accommodate 40 men or 8 horses. They smelled like a horse stable, but we slept on nice clean straw. It didn't

matter, we were headed home! I boarded the U.S.S. Claymont Victory ship on the English Channel at Antwerp, Belgium September 23 about 4 PM, got my bunk, took two aspirin and went to sleep, determined I would not get seasick this time.

About eight I woke up nauseated, ran up on deck to the rail, and threw up on the dock! I suppose it was the motion of the ship in the water that caused me to get sick. We didn't sail until the next day about 4:00 PM and I was seasick the whole seven days of the trip, but not as bad as on the trip going over. We arrived at New York October 2 and I left by train on October 3. I was discharged from the Army at Camp Atterbury, Indiana on October 5, 1945.

Dave Perko remembers what happened way back when

by Donna LaCrosse

(The following information came from an interview two high school girls had with Dave Perko in 2003)

His name is Arnold David Perko, better know as Dave. He graduated from Westnick High School in Cleveland, Ohio in June 1944, at the age of 18. When he was seventeen, he had taken a test, and passed it, for the Navy V-12 Program, which meant he could go into the Navy, take a three-year college course and miss World War II. His parents, thinking they were doing Dave a favor, refused to sign the papers. They had lost one son, a bomber pilot, in North Africa in 1942 and were gunshy about signing papers for another son to enter any kind of service.

So, he was drafted and hoped he would not be classified as 4-F. It was Labor Day, 1944. He was a skinny 130-pound kid with ribs showing and soon on his way to Fort McClellan, Alabama where the Infantry Training Camp was located. Here he learned to shoot by practicing on the firing range, and he learned to disassemble a Browning automatic rifle and put it back together again, almost in his sleep and blindfolded! He remembers the 25-mile hikes, with full gear, that they were required to take, as being the toughest thing he ever had to do in basic.

His home away from home was a one-story barrack made out of tarpaper with about eighteen men in each little shack. There was a pot-bellied stove and a cot to

sleep on. He was also a "scoundrel" while in training, and seemed to always be getting someone in trouble.

He remembers having to stay in camp one night while the non-commissioned officers decided to have a night in town. Since he determined this to be an unfair act, he suggested they put the officers cots on the roof of the latrine. At midnight when the "celebrants" arrived back in camp, they had no beds to sleep in, which didn't make them very happy! They got the whole unit out of bed at midnight and expected someone to admit they had done this "awful" prank. No one "fessed up" so everyone was punished.

When the rifles were issued, they came in heavy tarpaper and when they were opened, the container was filled with a greasy substance to keep them from rusting. They burned the greased tarpaper in the pot-bellied stove and that created a real problem because the stoves had to be cleaned every two or three days in order to get rid of the soot or the smoke would not go out the chimney and would smoke up the barracks. Dave thought of a way to get rid of that unsavory task so he took a can of rifle cleaner up on the roof and poured it down the chimney. The idea was to send all the soot up into the air but it didn't work that way! The result was unpleasant and needless to say, there were quick orders to stop this method of cleaning the stove!

Instead of twenty-one weeks of training, he had fifteen weeks before going home on a leave for one week. Then

Dave Perko remembers continued from page 11

he went to New Jersey, boarded the Queen Elizabeth, a ship that had 18,000 troops on board and sailed toward Europe. He remembers well the Bill Mauldin cartoon that said "Traveling to Europe by rail" and showing all the guys leaning over the rail upchucking.

On the boat going overseas, they only had two meals a day and they endured one of the worse storms the Queen Elizabeth had ever gone through. Because of the extreme movement of the ship, all the food had to be grabbed from the table, and much of it was missed! It was not easy for him to move through ankle-deep food on both sides of the ship, but he was never seasick and he did survive!

He landed in France with F Company 254 on Groundhog Day, February 2, 1945. He saw 77 days of action and received a purple heart for his efforts. He remembers the most significant action as being the initial thrust through the Sigfried Line that occurred over a three-day period with close combat involved. The first night the engineers tried to blow out the dragon's teeth, those ugly cement obstacles meant to stop tanks from being successful in forward movement. They finally used a bulldozer and covered the teeth with dirt.

The next morning there were six tanks on one side of the dragon's teeth; then the men had a clear vision into the firing mission. One tank, about fifteen-feet from Dave, was hit by a panzerfause, a German rocket about the size of a basketball that travels so slow through the air you can see them moving. The crew jumped out of the tank and fell into the trenches with Dave and his companions. Minutes later, the tank began to blow apart, spilling white phosphorus through the air, thus showering "fiery rain" over the men in the foxholes.

Dave was placed into a light 30-caliber machine gun team where two people are assigned to one gun. One carries the gun and the other one carries the ammo. They walked along side of the leading element and gave them support of cover. On the second day in combat, his gunner was killed by a sniper and then it was Dave's job to carry the gun. Dave's comment after this task was completed: "I experienced the worst that I could possible experience and still I came out without being a basket case."

On his dad's birthday, April 19, as they were overlooking a town in Central Germany where the German's were giving them heavy machine gun and artillery fire, an incoming round exploded near Dave and he was wounded just enough to be taken to the field hospital, a tent where one is treated and cared for until they can be sent on to a larger hospital. Dave's injury was not that serious so his hospital stay was for only

three days. From April 19 until the end of the war on May 8, Dave was in a replacement unit until his unit could be located so he could return.

Two of the men in F Company 254 were Army Scouts; it was their job to go on missions behind enemy lines and determine where enemy gun placements were and where the enemy was located. Sam Nye and Tommy Delion were a very good scout team and one night on their mission to capture a German officer and take him to their base camp to be interrogated, they saw a light coming from a German head quarters building so they threw a hand grenade into the building and then entered the building where they found three Nazi SS men who were dead. At the time of the attack, the men had been in the process of squirreling away for shipment, diamonds, gold and silver that had been taken from the Jewish people.

Nye and Delion took the "loot" and buried it in their foxhole, thinking that after the war was over and if they survived, they would return and dig it up. Delion did not survive the war but Nye did. He informed a "person in the know" about the "loot" they had buried and 57 years later, the items were found, sold and the money given to Children's Relief.

Dave said he stayed in touch with his family via V-Mail, which he sent once a week and he received a letter from his family about once a week. Mail call was something to look forward to - he was always looking for a letter from home and if he didn't get one, he felt a little down but when one did come through, he was elated. He did not leave a sweetheart at home when he went to the service - he said he was too young to think about girls at that time!

He was in Europe for a year after the war was over and lived in an apartment house, just across the street from camp and the mess hall. The food was good and the men entertained themselves by playing poker around the clock. Since poker wasn't Dave's favorite thing to do, he went to the movies for enjoyment.

He did see the movie star, Marlene Dietrich, a German-born gal who came to the United States because she hated Hitler. After the war was over, several of the guys dressed up and put on plays so they could entertain the men as well as "kill time."

Dave didn't have enough points to go home when the war was over, so he was transferred to the 13th ordinance company whose job it was to keep all the vehicles in repair. He didn't actually do anything except supervise several German men who were paid to do the work. During this time, Dave had a three-day pass to France and another three-day pass to Switzerland.

Dave Perko remembers *continued from page 12*

Both fun trips because the war was over and the worries less troublesome.

The American troops were always softhearted and would save a slice of bread, a roll or a biscuit from their meal at the mess hall so they could share with the children in the area. The Germans didn't have an abundance of food right after the war was over so they relished every bite of food given them. The children called white bread cake, and looked forward to receiving their treat.

One of the fathers, a Mr. Hehl, invited the guys for Christmas dinner and they all enjoyed playing chess with a former enemy! The two little boys were experts on the violin and the guys paid for their violin and piano lessons. Dave received letters from the family for several years – letters telling him the boys were doing great with their playing. He thanks God that he didn't have a hatred for the former enemy, but, he said: "When you were there, you had to do what you had to do." There was a war to be fought and fight they did!

When he did get back to the states, his father met him at the railroad station, which was about twenty miles from their home (at that time) in Ashland, Ohio. His dad was not a hugger, but Dave got a hug when they met and when he arrived home, received hugs from his sister and mother. His younger brother was in the Air Force so there was no homecoming with him until later.

Dave said he had no regrets about being in the service but would not want to do it again! Every generation has to do something to maintain life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and everyone has to be willing to do their part, whatever that happens to be. He thinks every generation has to rediscover the reality of a living God, who wants everyone to honor and respect Him and all humanity.

Adjusting to "life after war" was not hard for Dave. He said there is always an adjustment factor that one goes through but everyone has to work through that individually. As much as one would like to see the end of war, war can't end until men's hearts are changed. Wars are caused by man's inhumanity to man and are caused by man's greed. If one allows the conditions around them to warp their thinking, they will never be at peace with themselves. No matter what one has been through, they have to feel confident that they were part of something that had to be done and thankful that they did their part.

His father owned a farm where they lived after moving from Cleveland. Dave worked on the farm with his father at night while his day job was in a manufacturing shop. Later, in 1957 he worked for a mapping company where they did photometric mapping. While in their

employment, he attended night school where he took a course in photometric mapping and passed with flying colors.

The company where he was next employed went "bust" while he was on his honeymoon, and the payroll checks bounced! Nineteen days later, he went to work for Uncle Sam at the US Geological Survey department, where he stayed until his retirement. The last twelve years of employment he was in the National Cardio Graphic Information Center. One of the best programs he was engaged in was at Boeing, where they were building flying models of the TFX, and the helicopters that controlled it. He helped provide the ground coverage with the TFX underneath them in modular form – the first of its kind. They didn't build it, they just supplied the data for it.

Dave is retired from Topo Map Unit USGS and lives with his wife in Virginia, "the heart of history land." He attends church with Kent Bailey, whose father was one of the regimental officers in the 254th and he serves on 25 KAIROS (God's Special Time) teams where they conduct weekends in prisons. He has also served for the past thirty years, and is still serving, as a once-weekly volunteer at the Fairfax Adult Detention Center doing mentoring and prayer call.

A few years ago Dave returned to Germany on a business trip where he spent three or four days going through some of the places where he had been during the war. Most he did not recognize – they were totally modernized and very different.

Since returning home after World War II, Dave attended the 63rd Infantry Division reunion that was held in the Northern Virginia area, and he has kept in touch with several of the "hotshots."

Dave and Rita Ellen Van House were married November 12, 1962 in the St. Charles Catholic Church in Arlington, Virginia. She served in the WAF and spent some time in Spain before they were married. They are the parents of two daughters and four grandchildren.

Mary Elizabeth is married to Bruce Tidwell and they live in Charlotte, North Carolina with their two children Lauren Grace, age six and four year old James David. Kathryn Ann and her husband, John Anthony Aveni live in East Windsor, New Jersey. They are the parents of Katie Eleanor, thirteen and Timothy James, seven.

Dave still does seventy percent of his own yard work. His hobbies are staying physically, mentally and spiritually active and to be thankful for friends.

“Rambling” Lynch had a life before and since the 63rd Infantry Division

by John S. Lynch

After sending you my observations in regard to Uncle Sam's vacation for the World War II foot soldiers, I thought it might be time I told you about other events in my 86 plus years.

I am the oldest of four. I have a brother who is 82; a deceased sister and a younger sister who is 81. I grew up in rural Pennsylvania on a dairy farm where we had the whole operation, including retail sales and delivery of the product.

We were miles from the village that we served and where I attended high school. We also lived a half mile from the one-room school that held all eight grades.

When I got my first furlough from the costal defense of Puget Sound, I came home and married Vi on March 4, 1943. While we were being married, a practice blackout was called in town!

I had first met Vi at an Epworth League Party at the Methodist Church in her town in 1936. We had the high school years to enjoy.

When the draft was put into effect, I was deferred for almost four years until my brother finished high school. Many of my customers wondered how I avoided going off to basic training, but Uncle Sam sent for me only when I could be spared at home. Therefore I was several years older than most of the men I served with.

Vi and I lived in Bremerton, Washington until I was ordered to go to Camp Van Dorn at Centreville, Mississippi.

After discharge from the service, I worked as a mechanic until 1948 and then we moved to Baltimore where Vi's sisters were established.

I took a job at an Esso Station while waiting for an opening in vending. Then I hired on with Canteen Corporation where I spent the remaining years until I retired in 1989. In 1953 we bought a home in Glen Burnie, about ten miles south of Baltimore and have done many improvements since that time.

We have two sons who are shooting enthusiasts. The older son is a Boilermaker (Welder) with enough service to retire if he chooses. Our younger son is a Special Education Teacher in West Virginia. His hobby is Black Powder Shooters at Camp Shenandoah, Virginia and he has many guns, including a cannon.

I will be 87 on June 28, Vi will be 87 on October 8 and on March 4, we celebrated our 64th wedding

anniversary.

Postscript: Before sending this to you, the latest issue of the *Blood and Fire* arrived and we were delighted to see my time with Uncle Sam in print along with the picture. Thank you so much. I am sure Jan Casey will thank you for printing her letter on page 37. Here is a brief note about the Casey family. After her husband Roy died, she became the postmaster in their town. When we first visited them, Roy was a rural carrier and had the name CASEY on the license plate of his Jeep. Their first born was killed by running into a cement head wall on a culvert on one of their local roads. Roy retired after 28 years as a mail carrier.

Visit Website to find detailed history of 63rd Infantry Division

Visit the 63rd Infantry Division Web Site page at <http://www.63rdinfdiv.com> to find a detailed history of the 63rd Infantry Division. Included is a listing of unit awards, descriptions of battles, a listing of battle and non-battle deaths, descriptions and views of all 63rd Infantry Division memorials.

There are also over 1,000 pictures of the men in training, in combat, and on occupation duty.

You will find a list of all memorabilia items for sale, information about reunions, and inquiries from members and relatives searching for information about members or buddies, plus an alphabetical listing by unit of all 63rd Infantry Division Association members, a listing of related web sites and other information of interest to veterans.

Webmaster Fred Clinton, D 254, is seeking photos and memorabilia images to be included on the web site.

Send photos by email to joyclint@comcast.net or by regular mail to Fred Clinton, 102 S. Jenkins Street, Alexandria, VA 22304. Fred's phone number is 703-751-7548.

All items will be returned when processing has been completed.

Who were those guys?

by Bob McCourt, I & R 254

This is another one of those memories that had dropped out of my mind for many years. I don't even recall the exact location of where this occurred, but I believe I wasn't doing much when I received a message by runner to report to regimental headquarters immediately, if not sooner. Since the invitation was so clearly defined, I went over there right away! All the time I was wondering what I had done wrong. This entire incident must have been in Germany.

Just as I arrived, I was met by a person I had never seen before; he had a silver eagle on his collar along with an insignia I didn't recognize. He told me to "Take these two men back to division headquarters." Since I didn't recognize this guy, I looked around for someone to confirm this order. At that time the regimental S2 (Intelligence Officer) spoke up. He told me there was a plane waiting at division to take these two men to London. After delivering these men, I was to bring back a receipt. I inquired just what the hell was going on and was told in very definite terms that was none of my business.

The two men were emaciated, filthy, un-shaven and to top it all off, were wearing the blue striped pajamas, which was the uniform of concentration camp prisoners. They were holding a tattered sack which apparently contained their meager possessions, and a beat up box containing who knows what. They sat in the back seat of the jeep and away we went! I had been supplied a map which was marked with the location of division headquarters.

The trip took a little over an hour in total blackout conditions so our speed was minimal. All the way we tried to talk to these guys in English, French, German, and even high school Spanish. They would not acknowledge any of these. They remained totally silent for the entire episode.

We delivered them and got a receipt as ordered and headed back to where we came from. We, of course, became more curious all the time.

After we got back to regiment, I went in and handed the receipt to the regimental commander and asked if I was now excused. He told me to wait a few minutes, and then cleared the room of all persons except him and me. He explained the reason I was chosen was that I had a Top Secret clearance. He said he didn't know where I received it but it was still in force. I told him it must have been a holdover from my earlier days in antiaircraft. He further elaborated I had officers training as an aviation cadet, and I was expected to

conduct myself accordingly. That means, keep your mouth shut! He also told me I was responsible for the security of my driver.

He told me these two men were Italians who were members of British MI-5, which was and is their (the British) super secret foreign intelligence agency. The British had placed these two men into a concentration camp four years earlier and they daily sent out radio reports to the Brits. The fact these two men had survived was astounding. The box they carried was their radio.

I suspect there is far more to this story, but it probably will never be told.

I came away with the appreciation of the bravery of men who were able to accomplish what these had done.

Koziolo seeks information

Herr Michael S. Koziol is a journalist and member of the staff of the Schwaebisch Hall Newspaper. He is searching for former members of the 63rd Infantry Division 255th Infantry Regiment 3rd Battalion who might be able to give him valuable information. Parts of this Battalion found an airplane assembly plant in the woods near Schwaebisch Hall on April 20, 1945. The area is specified in the war diary: "in the area between S 510585 and S 5105." At this time there had been a lot of parts of the airplanes in the woods.

In the past he has published two books about Schwaebisch Hall airfield in the suburb Hesselental: "Rustung, Krieg und Sklaverei" and "Fliegerhorst - Home Base." The last one is in English and in German. Until 1993 Schwaebisch Hall airfield was the Home of US Army Air Force Units. It was their request to do so.

The first German jet Me 262 was mounted in Hasenbuehl Woods. Herr Koziol is interested in information and pictures about this final assembly plant. It was rather important, because about 460 to 1500 airplanes were built in the Schwaebisch Hall area.

The town of Schwabisch Hall Germany is also trying to locate the US Officer who took action to save their

Koziolo seeks information ... *continued from page 15*

church during the attack on and occupation of Schwabisch Hall. This attack occurred on April 19. The building was burning and the people of that city asked an unknown US Officer for help, and received the help needed by forming a fire-brigade of three or four men thus saving the building. Now they would like to locate that officer and/or his family.

If you have information that would help Herr Koziol, please Write him at Zum Holzle 5, D-74523 Schwabisch Hall. Herr Koziol's email address is Michael.S.Koziol@online.de

Schlegel needs help with history of Achen, a village in France

Sebastien Schlegel is looking for written and photographic documents on the history of his village, Achen, France, and is asking members of the 63rd Infantry Division for their help.

He is interested in hearing from members of the

255th Regiment troops who have pictures they took or drawings they made at the time they moved into position at Achen, France on January 3, 1945.

Drawings of Achen Battles would also be a welcome addition to his history project.

Another date he is interested in having information on is January 21, 1945 when the 63rd Infantry Division advanced through Achen, France.

If you have anything that will help Schegel, with the history of his town, please write him at 4, rue de Condac, 57412 Achen, France

Think It Over

I am fully aware that my youth has been spent
That your get up and go has got up and went
But I really don't mind, when I think with a grin
Of all the grand places my get up has been.

Anonymous

Celebration of Life



The following deaths were reported after the February issue was printed. Please notify the secretary when you hear of the death of a person from the 63rd.

Leo Vern Addington, HQ 254, died March 14, 2006. His widow, Louise, lives at 3617 Village Drive, Anderson, IN 46011.

Charles E. Ball - M 254 - died June 4, 2006. He was Life Number 1278.

William J. Bell - K 253 - died March 18, 2007. He lived at 175 McKnight Rd. N #116, St. Paul, MN 55110.

John G. Bruce - HQ 254 - died July 7, 2006 at his home in Farmville, VA. He was awarded the Silver Star, Purple Heart and Bronze Star.

Dan Bulovich - MP 63 - died July 18, 1972. This is information sent by his son, Richard Brooks, who is Life #1604.

Kenneth L. Chase - AT 253 - died September 13, 2006. This information was sent by his son, William O.

Chase, associate life member #1900, who lives at 5185 Turkey Point Rd., North East, MD 21901.

John T. Conard Jr - B 255 - died January 9, 2007. He lived at 567 Old Union Rd., Union, SC 29379.

Richard M. Elchik - F 254 - Life member #1572 - died April 11, 2005. His wife Helen lives at 3110 Montcastle Drive, Aiken, SC 29803.

Richard Fagenstrom - F,G,H 253 - died December 23, 2006. No further information was available.

Harold Fagg - C 255 - Life Member #1563 - died March 4, 2002. His wife lives at PO Box 212, Seeleyville, IN 47878.

Louis E. Flaig - C 254 - died March 29, 1995. No further information was available.

Norbert S. Forcheskie Sr - H 255 - died February 15, 2007. His daughter, Kathy Shanks lives at 4070 County Line Rd., Winfield, PA 17889.

Celebration of life continued from page 16

Stafford C. (Steve) Gauldin – C 253 – died September 14, 2000. No further information was available.

Maurice "Red" Hendrickson – AT 255 – Life Member # 1400 – died January 15, 2007. His wife, Joan, lives at PO Box 214, Shickly, NE 68436

Darrell H. Hite – RECONN 63 – died 1972. No further information was available.

Donald M. King Sr. – I 253 – died February 12, 2007 of a heart attack. His friend, Associate Member James A. Gregg, reported his death.

Chester W. Maciorowski – G 254 – no death date, nor any further information was given.

Albert A. McCoy – B 263 – died February 5, 2006. He was Life Member #917. His wife Nancy, lives at 12715 Griffing Blvd., North Miami, FL 33161.

Edward L. McGrath – K 254 – died March 26, 2007. His wife, Janice lives at 5021 Amber Place Drive, St. Louis, MO 63128.

Harold Miller – AT 255 – died November 2006, just a few days before his 95th birthday. Harold had attended all but the first two National Reunions.

William G. Murphy – SV 253 – He was Life Member #589. His wife, Eunice, lives at 7303 Maple Terrace,

Wauwolosa, WI 53213-3152.

Thomas E. Quinn – A 255 – died June 15, 1987. His son-in-law, Terence M. Austgen of Munster, Indiana sent this notice.

Pasco "Sam" Roman – K 254 – died December 9, 2006. He was Life Member #1683. His wife, Wanda, lives at 6382 Breckenridge Circle, Lake Worth, FL 33467.

Robert E. Sayles – HQ 254 – died April 2007. He lived at 4243 "M" Drive, Washouh, WA 98671.

Wayne L. Scott – M 254 – died August 20, 1976. No further information was available.

Robert W. Selton – C 253 – died November 2006. His widow, Evelyn, lives at 15 Wagon Road, Hilton Head, SC 29928.

Edward B. Walker III – died April 28, 2006. No further information was available.

James E. Wilson – MED 263 – died January 2, 2006. His last known address was 3512 Bevan Road, N. Versailles, PA 15137.

David W. Hunt – Hq Co 3rd Battalion, 254th, died February 16, 2007. His daughter, Sandy Hunt reported his death. No further information was available.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Answered Prayer

Following is another poem Roman Korczynski written to his wife while he was at Camp Van Dorn.

Tonight my heart is lonely,
And my thoughts all seem to go
Back across the endless miles
To a certain place I know.
Where one so fair and lovely
Pauses at the close of day.
And clasping hands before her
Begins silently to pray.
She's praying for His blessing
On her one and only love,
And I'm sure that He can hear her
As He looks down from above.
It seems my heart grows lighter
As I think of her back there,
For I am sure I have the blessing
That came in answer to her prayer.

**59TH REUNION
AUGUST 7-11, 2007**

Donald D. King, Sr., 81, passed away at his home in Farmland, Indiana on February 12, 2007. He attended

Farmland Schools and was honorably discharged from the U.S. Army. He served in I Company 253 in the 63rd Infantry Division from March 3, 1944 to May 6, 1946. He received his basic training in Camp Walters, Texas and his overseas training at Camp Van Dorn in Mississippi.

He worked as a Machine Operator at Bacon American for 17 years, Westinghouse for 15 years

and retired in 1985.

Survivors include his wife, Wiladean; two sons, Donald Jr and wife Peggy, Robert and wife Mary; one daughter, Donna J. Petty and husband Colin; three brothers; three sisters; seven grandchildren; six step-grandchildren; four great-grandchildren and five step great-grandchildren.



A word from your buddies . . .

253 Regiment

Wiley Newman - A Company informed us that his zip code had changed and added that he really enjoyed receiving the *Blood and Fire*. He lives in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee.

Clement E. Capasso - C Company, sent this note: "We are doing good. I recently had surgery for rectal cancer. Am in remission now and feeling well." He and Carmela live at Tom's River, New Jersey.

Maxcy Brooks Patterson - I Company, wrote: "Kathleen and I will celebrate our 57th wedding anniversary on April 1, 2007. I am 81 years old and still playing golf. We have not missed a reunion since Cincinnati in 1995. I have written a book about the 2nd Platoon, Co I, of the 253rd Regiment. The title of the book is "Men of the Second Platoon." Many pictures from the book can be seen on the 63rd Division website at www.63rdinfdiv.com. To see these three pages of pictures, scroll down to the bottom of the page and put in "miscphotospage86" then check page 87 and then page 88. Enjoy! Maxcy and Kathleen live in Clemson, South Carolina.

Nicholas P. Kapesis - M company - wrote: "Lost my home in Katrina Hurricane. Am trying to get rid of colon cancer. Was radio man for forward observers and with the Division from beginning to the end. God Bless all." Nicholas lives in Covington, Louisiana.

254 Regiment

John N. Owen - L Company, sent a brief note saying he was moving and not to send the May issue of the *Blood and Fire* until he has a new address.

Art Clauter - Service Company wrote: "We have been married 65 years, have three children and six grandchildren. Health is reasonably good. We spend our summers in a mountain cabin at an altitude of 11,000 feet. I particularly like the articles in the latest issue of the *Blood and Fire* from two of the 63rd Division members whose military life paralleled mine. Since I am the editor for a little six-page paper that goes out twice a year, I know how much time you must put in to have it all fall together. Thanks for a great paper!" They live in Geneva, Illinois.

Robert T. Ziemke - D Company sent this message: "Thank you for printing those pictures I took at the reunion in Kentucky. In my book, a picture is worth a thousand words; a birdie in golf is worth a lot; an eagle is worth a fortune, I am worth a lot but not a fortune! I am sending a copy of the news I enjoyed in our local

newspaper last July. Perhaps you could use it in the *Blood and Fire*." Bob lives in McKeesport, Pa. (editor's note: Look for this story elsewhere in this issue of the *Blood and Fire*. It is titled Old Timers In League of Their Own.)

Harold P. Miller - I Company had this to say: "My children paid my Life Membership as did the children of R. Peter Hansen, but I never received the 63rd magazine. Peter is my brother-in-law and we were in the same squad of twelve men in the 63rd Division 254. However, Peter was in the Division in Mississippi but I was shipped over as a replacement and sailed on the Queen Mary in January 1945. Pete and I were from the same hometown in Iowa. I joined the 63rd and was assigned to the same Squad that Pete was in just prior to the drive to the Siegfried line. I would like to receive the magazine and might try to make the next reunion if possible and if my health holds out." He lives in Sun City West, Arizona.

John Gramolini - Headquarters - sent this message: "I was with the 254th from when it was organized at Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi until the end, then I went home on points from Bremerhaven, Germany. I am sending pictures for you to use when there is space for them."

255 Regiment

Edmund J. Simmons - I Company, sent this brief message: "I am 81 years old and have Parkinson's but otherwise in good health. We have been married 62 years and have two daughters." He and Vedona live in Mesa, Arizona.

Wayne Armstrong - C Company - had this to say: "The mystery picture on page 38 of the November 2006 issue of the *Blood and Fire* is me with my son, Tom from Dewitt, Michigan, an associate member. He was kind enough to bring all his collection of WWII gear to the Columbus, Ohio reunion for everybody to examine and gaze upon. He got lots of very nice comments." Wayne lives in Westerville, Ohio.

Remus (Ray) Miserendino - B Company - sent this note: "Annette and I will be married 57 years this coming June 11. We have four children, five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Both of us are in good health - I am 81 and Annette is just a kid at 77. Tacoma is a bit far for us but I hope it is a very successful reunion. I still keep in close contact with

A word from your buddies . . .

- CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

about six Company guys. Thank God for computers!!"

Andrew Casella - C Company - is still living in Yorktown, NY.

Med. Tech.

Sherman E. Phillips - Company 253 sent this note: "I am 85 years old and have my drivers license for five more years. I am the Medic on the jeep with Lt. Jordan in the picture shown in the May 2005 issue of the *Blood and Fire*. Thanks for a good magazine." He and Catherine live in Lyman, South Carolina.

David Mark Torsell - Company 363 wrote: "May the 59th 63rd Infantry Division Reunion be very successful and exciting for all those who are able to attend."

Field Artillery

Gilbert J. Pasquini - 861 Company wrote: "This coming November will make for 65 years of being married. Lillian and I enjoy the grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We sold our motor home, as traveling for long distances was no longer possible. Many thanks for the good work on the *Blood and Fire*. I'm sure there are many times when there is so much to do, and so little time to do it!. Thanks again." He and Lillian live in Hinsdale, Illinois.

Shirley Carl Kimmerling - 63rd Company sent this message: "December 10, 2004 I became blind in my right eye. After five lazer surgeries it became clear I would never see light with my right eye. I have had only a little tunnel vision in my left eye for years. I have no depth perception and could not drive a wheelchair through a doorway. I enjoy reading the *Blood and Fire* but sometimes it is a hard thing to do." Carl lives in Anderson, Indiana.

SIGNAL

Harold O'Neill - 563 Company sent this message: "I still have contact with only two former 63rd soldiers. One never joined the Association and I do not know about the other. Rudy Zamula was in the 563rd Signal with me and at present is President of the 83rd Civ. Association. He is busy setting up a reunion in Washington, D.C. I am in my fourth year as Chairman of the VFW Post Boxes For Troops project. We estimate we have sent boxes to over 1800 individuals and over two hundred second boxes and school supplies. Our daughter, Patricia, a Navy Captain, is retiring after 26

years. A Navy Captain is equal to an Army Bird Colonel. She outranks me, since I only made Major!"

Treacy Gibbons - 563 Company, sent this note: "I just noticed the zip code on my address label is very old. I live in the same place but the zip code has changed, so that needs to be corrected. I also want to tell you that my great-grandfather, James Franklin Gibbons, a Civil War veteran, lived in Clay County, Indiana. He was also a Hoosier!" Treacy lives in Naples, Florida

Engineers

Ivan (Sonny) Charitan - Company 263 wrote: "My wife, Dr. Carol Cohen Charitan passed very suddenly following surgery for a heart condition on February 6, 2007. My address is now 955 Pebble Beach Road, Beaumont, CA 92223."

What if -

by Harold O'Neill, 83rd Signal

What if the Germans in the Battle of the Bulge had reached the sea cutting off the British and Americans to the north in Holland and Germany?

Would the vast air superiority of the Allies have bombed the Germans day and night and helped supply the cut-off troops?

Would the additional front lines of over 300 miles strained German resources?

Would an Allied attack from the north and south in eastern Belgium cut off the Germans in Belgium?

Would the Allies have been bogged down in France?

What if the Americans had developed the Atom Bomb in 1944? Would we have bombed the Rur factories and German cities? Would it have led to new attempts to kill Hilter?

What if the Germans had the atom bomb first? Would Hilter have bombed Moscow, London and sent one-way bombers to New York and Washington?

59TH REUNION
AUGUST 7-11, 2007

SHERATON TACOMA HOTEL, TACOMA, WA
(253) 572-3200 or (888) 627-7044

The Sheraton Tacoma Hotel is located at 1320 Broadway Plaza, Tacoma, WA 98402. It's located in the heart of Tacoma between Mount Rainier and Commencement Bay, adjacent to the Bicentennial Pavilion, and just a short walk to the theatre district and specialty shopping, also the scenic Tacoma waterfront is about a fifteen minute walk from the hotel. The Sheraton Tacoma Hotel has 319 rooms. Handicapped and non-smoking rooms are subject to availability. Please request these special accommodations when making your hotel reservations. Each room features a coffee maker, iron, ironing board, hairdryer, AM/FM alarm clock, and color TV with cable channels. Guests may also enjoy the 24hr on-site fitness facility, gift shop, salon, and spa. Parking at the hotel is currently \$8.00 for overnight guests. Check-in is at 3:00 pm and check-out is at 12 noon.

The Broadway Grill serves breakfast and lunch featuring cuisine of the Pacific Northwest. **The Altezo Ristorante** serves dinner featuring authentic Italian cuisine with panoramic views of Commencement Bay and Mt. Rainier from the top of the hotel.

The hotel does not provide transportation to and from the Sea-Tac Airport. Once you've retrieved your luggage from Baggage Claim, proceed to the Ground Transportation Booth on the 3rd floor of the parking garage and arrange for transportation. The hotel suggests using Capitol Aeroporter Shuttle Service, please call 800-962-3579 to make reservations and to receive departure time information. We suggest making advance reservations due to limited availability. Currently rates are \$25 per person one-way and \$45 per person round-trip. Taxi services are also available at about \$50 per taxi one-way.

The hotel has limited space available for guests with RV's, if space is needed please contact Lisa Olsen at 253-591-4134. Should you require full hook-up service, please call Majestic Manor RV Park at (800) 348-3144, Gig Harbor RV Resort at (253) 858-8138, or KOA Seattle/Tacoma at (253) 872-8652. Ask for information, reservations, and directions to determine which is best for you. The parks recommend reservations be made immediately due to limited space and availability.

Should you need to rent a wheelchair for the reunion, ScootAround rents both manual and power wheelchairs by the day and week. Please call their toll-free number at (888) 441-7575.

Vendors, Schedules, and Prices are subject to change.

***** CUT HERE AND MAIL TO THE HOTEL *****

63rd INFANTRY DIVISION - HOTEL RESERVATIONS
REUNION: AUGUST 7-12, 2007

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ ZIP _____

EMAIL ADDRESS (if available) _____ TELEPHONE # () _____

ARRIVAL DATE _____ TIME _____ A/M/PM DEP. DATE _____

NUMBER OF ROOMS NEEDED _____ NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN EACH ROOM _____

SPECIAL REQUESTS: Wheelchair accessible room _____ Nonsmoking room _____ King Bed _____

Two Double Beds _____ Bed types are not guaranteed

RATE: \$99 + tax (currently 13.5%) Single/Double occupancy.

CUT OFF DATE: 07/05/07. Reservations received after this date will be processed on a space available basis, at the prevailing public rate.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Deposit is refundable if reservation is cancelled by 6:00pm one day prior to arrival date.

Record your cancellation number. Call (253) 572-3200 or (888) 627-7044

GUARANTEE: Reservations must be guaranteed by credit card or first night's deposit, enclosed.

MC _____ VISA _____ AM. EXPRESS _____ CARTE BLANCHE/DINERS _____ DISCOVER _____

CREDIT CARD NUMBER _____ EXP. DATE _____

SIGNATURE (regardless of payment method) _____

Mail to: Sheraton Tacoma Hotel, 1320 Broadway Plaza, Tacoma, WA 98402 Attn: Reservations

63rd INFANTRY DIVISION ASSOCIATION
AUGUST 8-12, 2007
SHERATON TACOMA, WA

Wednesday, August 8

- 2:00pm - 7:00pm **Reunion Registration Open**
2:00pm - *History Room open during the duration of the reunion*
Dinner on your own
7:00pm - 11:00pm "Meet Your Buddies Reception" with cash bar,
snacks, and soft listening music

Thursday, August 9

- 12:30pm - 2:30pm **Reunion Registration Open.** Additional hours will
be posted at the reunion, if necessary.
3:00pm - 9:30pm TILICUM VILLAGE (description follows)
Meet your Buddies Ready Room open

Friday, August 10

- 9:00am - 4:00pm FT. LEWIS & McCHORD AFB TOUR AND
NECROLOGY (description follows)
Meet your Buddies Ready Room open

Saturday, August 11

- 9:00am - 11:30am Women's Social
to include a Continental Breakfast
8:00am - 10:00am Board Meeting
10:15am - 12:00pm Men's Business Meeting
6:00pm - 7:00pm Cash Bar Reception
7:00pm - 11:00pm Banquet begins, followed by dancing

Sunday, August 12

Farewells and departures

TOUR DESCRIPTIONS

TILlicum VILLAGE

Thursday, August 9

Our adventure begins at Pier 56 on Seattle's waterfront, where you will board a boat for a narrated harbor cruise through Elliott Bay to Blake Island. Once there, enjoy clam appetizers before entering the great cedar longhouse for a delicious Native American style salmon feast with all of the accompaniments. While dining, be entertained by a magical stage presentation featuring Northwest Native American Culture. Afterwards, reboard the boat to return to Seattle, and then back to the hotel.

3pm board bus, 9:30pm back at hotel
\$93/Person includes bus, escort, cruise, and dinner.

FT. LEWIS & McCHORD AFB TOUR AND NECROLOGY

Friday, August 10

The first stop will be the Ft. Lewis Chapel for a Memorial Service honoring the members of the 63rd Infantry Division. Then we will pick up an escort officer and enjoy a windshield tour of the Fort. This is a closed Post for I Corps, Ranger Battalion, and Special Forces. It is known as the best Mast Unit west of the Mississippi. Lunch will be at the American Lake Community Club. After lunch we will visit the training facility and meet some of the troops, as well as see some of the base's renowned static displays. The group will then head to McChord Air Force Base for a driving tour before returning to the hotel.

9:00am board bus, 4:00pm back at hotel
\$45/Person includes bus, guide, and lunch.

Driver and guide gratuities are not included in the tour prices.
Please plan to be at the bus boarding area at least five minutes prior to the scheduled time.
All trips require a minimum of thirty people, unless otherwise stated.

CANCELLATION AND REFUND POLICY FOR ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC.

For attendees canceling reunion activities prior to the cut-off date, Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. (AFR) shall process a full refund less the non-refundable AFR registration fee (\$5 per person). Attendees canceling reunion activities after the cut-off date will be refunded to the fullest extent that AFR's vendor commitments and guarantees will allow, less the non-refundable AFR registration fee. **Cancellations will only be taken Monday through Friday from 9:00am until 5:00pm Eastern Standard Time, excluding holidays.** Please call (757) 625-6401 or email cancel@afri.com to cancel reunion activities and obtain a cancellation code. Refunds processed 4-6 weeks after reunion. Canceling your hotel reservation does not cancel your reunion activities.

63rd Infantry Registration for the 59th Reunion

August 8-12, 2007 Tacoma, WA

Listed below are all registration, tour, and meal costs for the reunion. Please enter how many people will be participating in each event and total the amount. Send that amount payable to **ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC.** in the form of check or money order (no credit cards or phone reservations accepted). Your cancelled check will serve as your confirmation. Returned checks will be charged a \$20 fee. All registration forms and payments must be received by mail on or before **JULY 10, 2007**. After that date, reservations will be accepted on a space available basis. We suggest you make a copy of this form before mailing. Please do not staple or tape your payment to this form.

Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.
PO Box 11327
Norfolk, VA 23517
ATTN: 63rd INFANTRY DIVISION

OFFICE USE ONLY

Check # _____ Date Received _____
Inputted _____ Nametag Completed _____

CUT OFF DATE: JULY 10, 2007	\$ PER PERSON	# OF PEOPLE	TOTAL
Join us in Tacoma!		Per Registration	
REGISTRATION FOR 2006 REUNION	\$35.00		\$35.00
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 82:00pm – 7:00pm Reunion Registration			
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 87:00pm – 11:00pm Meet your Buddies, Cash bar, snacks, soft listening music	FREE	# attending	FREE
THURSDAY, AUGUST 98:00am – 10:00am & 2:00pm – 2:20pm Reunion Registration			
THURSDAY, AUGUST 93:00pm – 9:30pm Tillicum Village Tour	\$93		\$
FRIDAY, AUGUST 10 ,9:00am – 4:00pm Fl. Lewis Tour and Necrology	\$45		\$
SATURDAY, AUGUST 11 BOARD MEETING8:00am – 10:00am			
SATURDAY, AUGUST 11 MEN'S BUSINESS MEETING.....10:15am – 12:00pm			
SATURDAY, AUGUST 11 WOMEN'S SOCIAL <i>Including Continental Breakfast and Entertainment</i> ..9:00am – 11:30am	FREE	# attending	FREE
SATURDAY (EVENING), AUGUST 11 COCKTAIL PARTY CASH BAR.....6:00pm – 7:00pm DINNER/DANCE (Assigned Seating)7:00pm – 11:00pm <i>Please choose your entrée for the Saturday Banquet:</i>			
Top Sirloin	\$36.00		\$
Chicken Marsala	\$36.00		\$
Children's Plate (Chicken Fingers and Fries)	\$15.00		\$
GRAND TOTAL due to Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.			\$

NAME _____ NICK NAME _____ UNIT/CO _____

SPOUSE NAME _____ GUEST NAMES _____

STREET ADDRESS _____ FIRST TIME ATTENDEE? ? YES ? NO

CITY, ST, ZIP _____ PH. NUMBER (____) _____

MUST YOU BE LIFTED HYDRAULICALLY ONTO THE BUS WHILE SEATED IN YOUR WHEELCHAIR IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN BUS TRIPS? ? YES ? NO (PLEASE NOTE THAT WE CANNOT GUARANTEE AVAILABILITY).

EMERGENCY CONTACT _____ PH. NUMBER (____) _____

CANCELLATION AND REFUND POLICY FOR ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC.

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- Letters and Opinions -

LOOKING FOR INFORMATION

I am looking for information about my grandfather, PFC Stafford C. (Steve) Gauldin. According to a Silver Star Citation, he was in C Company of the 253rd Infantry Regiment during the fighting at Bubingen, Germany in March 1945. If anyone out there can help me, please contact me at tmh7@virginia.edu. Or his daughter Julie at tmhall@adelphia.net. Thanks.

Max Hall

HONORING ARMY SERVICE

Thought this might be interesting to veterans and their families. This came from the VFW Magazine.

The US Army has embarked on a campaign to thank all Army veterans from all generations. Called the *Freedom Team Salute Commendation*, it provides a free package of materials that is now available. The personalized package includes a lapel pin, decal, a certificate of appreciation and a thank-you letter. It takes four to six weeks to receive these mementos. Send a letter to U.S. Army, *Freedom Team Salute*, 2511 Jefferson Highway, Arlington, VA 22202 containing your name, address, former rank and stating that you received an honorable discharge

Submitted by Ed Kelly

PLEASE RENEW MY MEMBERSHIP

My daddy was Warner "Frenchy" Esneault and a member of the Forty Thieves under Louis Warmouth. Daddy died March 18, 2003 and his wife, Marilyn died April 7, 1996.

Please renew my membership for another year.

Mary Etta Morris

A NEW MEMBER FOUND

I met Sgt. Thompson in a drug store after he noticed the 63rd Division cap I was wearing. There is a major unit of the 63rd here in Mesa at the Old Williams AFB. Sgt. Thompson was in that command and saw action in Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq. He recently left the service. Enclosed are dues for two years membership for him.

Fred Clinton and I were in the Motor Platoon together in D Company 254.

Jack Shumate

UNCLE "BUD" CONARD PASSES

I would like to inform you of the passing of one of the 63rd's own, my uncle John Thomas "Bud" Conard Jr. He died on January 9, 2007 at Wallace Thompson Hospital in Union, South Carolina. My uncle was very private about his military experience until just a few years before he passed away. He had me look up the information on the 63rd for him and he contacted several of his buddies and some family members. He kept all the letters, pictures and information he received.

It wasn't until after his death that I had the privilege of getting a look at the Bronze Star Medal Citation he received from General F.M. Harris. I knew he had received the Bronze Star, but I didn't know any of the details until the pastor read the citation at his funeral.

Uncle Bud was always helping his family. He left behind his wife, Helen. They were married for 51 years. My husband is retired military, and my son is currently serving in lovely downtown Baghdad, so I know how deep the roots of military family goes. And they never die.

Ginger McKnight, Niece

ASK READERS FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

You might consider asking your readers for contributions on the following topics—

My Non-Combat War Experience: happenings at basic training, the US, church socials, wartime Britain—their food and other odd customs.

My Occupations Days: sorting out Nazis, moving refugees, collecting weapons.

My Military Service After The War: in the Army, Navy, Air Force, The Reserves, National Guard.

My Military Family: Son in Nam, daughter in West Point, grandson overseas.

How I Support Our Troops Today At Home and Overseas: parties for Units or individuals leaving or returning, care packages, letters, E-mails, photos, hospital visits.

Harold O'Neill, Signal 563

TRYING TO OBTAIN MEDAL FOR FRIEND

I have been attempting to obtain a Purple Heart

- Letters and Opinions -

- CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

Medal for a man in my company who was overlooked when wounded. My contact has been: Dept. of the Army, US Army Human Resource Command, 1 Reserve Way, St. Louis, MO 63132-5200.

The soldier has furnished all documents and information on requested forms promptly. My inquiries have been answered six months after sent or not at all. My last trace letter resulted in a form document stating that all records were lost.

If anyone in our association could furnish a name, or indicate a venue, we would appreciate the help.

Thanks very much, Joseph B. Olinde
6725 Pikes Lane, Baton Rouge, LA 70808

BLOOD & FIRE COPIES WELCOMED

Thanks so much for the copies of the *Blood and Fire*. Even though we have been unable to attend the reunion for several years due to health problems, we enjoy reading about the fun "ya'll" have. We live in a small town, population 600 plus a few old sore heads, and do not have door-to-door mail delivery. And since we have a new postmaster, if there is no PO Box number on our mail, we don't get it. This can be a pain in the-you-know-what!

We're not sure we will be able to get to Tacoma in August but it sounds fun. Very few of the old C 254 guys left, or not able to attend.

Thanks for your hard work and love for our men – it is appreciated.

Sue and Ervin A. Yarbrough Jr.

MISSED DOGWOOD TREE IN BLOOM

Thank you for sending Edward's dues paid cards for 2008 and 2009. I wanted you to know my friend and lover of 58 years went home March 26, 2007 surrounded by his sons and family. He just went to sleep – was very tired and ready to see his Lord. He missed seeing our beautiful Dogwood tree in bloom before the frost got it. Peace and Love.

Mrs. Edward L. McGrath

ASSOCIATION IMPORTANT TO DAD

My dad, Armand R. Alioto is a member of the association. Unfortunately he passed on December 25, 2006. We lost our mother on December 25, 2004, which was also Mom's birthday. Christmas will never be the same for our family.

We want you to know how important your association was to my Dad and how proud he was to have served his country. He looked forward to receiving your publication – he would share the news with all of us and sit with my sons and talk about the war and his buddies. Because of him, my sons have a great respect for the military and realize how lucky they are to be Americans. Dad was buried with an Honor Guard and our country's flag was presented to me. How proud I am of his accomplishments.

I would be very grateful if you could send his newsletter to me at 34 Ashwood Court, Staten Island, NY 10308.

Susan Orlandi

FRIENDSHIP FORMED FOR EVER

I am sending a notice about the passing of Red Hendrickson, who lost his battle with cancer on January 15, 2007. I am also sending a copy of the poem written by Bonnie Erickson, wife of Red's Army buddy, Kenneth Erickson of Wallace, Nebraska. She wrote the poem while traveling the 150 miles to visit the Hendrickson family. It tells the story of friendship formed and existing throughout their lives. Kenneth and Red were both members of the 63rd Infantry, 255 AT Company. We thought the poem was great and is so significant of all the soldiers in World War II.

Joan Hendrickson

(A copy of the poem can be found in this publication)

SEND BLOOD & FIRE TO MOTHER

My Dad, Pasco (Sam) Roman, K 254, passed away December 9, 2006 in Palm Springs, Florida. My mother is now living with me so please update her mailing address to her new one. Dad's 63rd baseball cap with CIB pinned on it was his favorite article of clothing. He wore it with great pride – you are all heroes like my father.

Tom and Wanda Roman

RESEARCHING MILITARY HISTORY

With the assistance of my brother-in-law, Frank Hinchey, I am researching my father's military history, having recently discovered a significant amount of material relating to that service in our family archives. My father, Louis E. Flaig, died March 29, 1995 at the age of 80 in Cincinnati, Ohio. I wish to connect with

- CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

Letters and opinions continued from page 25

Fred Clinton and Bill Scott to pursue additional information. I have a good number of photos taken during his service in Europe that may be of interest to your organization.

Richard Flaig

INFO SOUGHT ON U.S. SOLDIERS

David Atkinson, superintendent of the Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery in Hornburg, Belgium is requesting assistance in obtaining obituaries, photos, and background information on Mississippi servicemen from WWII who are buried in that cemetery. It is a burial ground for the American Battle Monument Commission.

Atkinson seeks this information so that future generations will more fully appreciate the nature of these heroes' sacrifices, understand what was lost through their deaths, and see the impact that their deaths caused back home.

If you have information on any of the servicemen listed below, please contact your county veterans service officer.

Servicemen from Copiah County and surrounding counties who are buried in the Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery include:

Copiah County: Wesley L. Lowery, Pvt. 276 ENGR COMBATBN, DOD 3-17-45.

Hinds County: William P. Craig, CPL, 40 TRK BN 7 ARMD DIV, DOD 10-28-44; Thomas J. Forte, S SGT, 333 FA BN, DOD 12-17-44; William A. Price, PVT. 8 INF 4 DIV, DOD 11-21-44; Julius L. Wiltshire, PVT, 28 INF 8 DIV, DOD 12-14-44.

Lincoln County: Matthew Butler, PVT. 3193 QM SV CO DOD 10-17-44.

Simpson County: Harold B. Shorter, TEC 5, 4 RCN TRP 4 DIV, DOD 12-7-44.

Submitted by Bobbie Gates Wallace

“My Darling”

Following is a poem Roman J. Korczynski, H 253 wrote to his wife while he was at Camp Van Dorn in late 1943 or early 1944. The poem mentions their first child, and only child at that time. Ronnie was the oldest of five children. Roman died May 7, 2003.

In my dreams I see you
As your day draws to a close,
Your face is there before me,
As beautiful as a rose.

I see you carry Ronnie,
Tuck him neatly into bed.
His day is done, he's sleeping,
You kiss him softly on his head.

You turn looking on the dresser,
At a picture standing there.
It's a picture of your loved one,
Then you say your evening prayer.

God, always walk beside him,
Watch him both day and night.
Bring him home again to us
At the ending of the fight.

Your lovely eyes grow misty,
Then tears begin to fall.
How well I know your sorrow,
For I too, go through it all.

Darling, I am there beside you,
Even though I'm so far away.
In spirit and in heart, I'll be near,
Until I come home to stay.

So go to sleep my darling,
Sleep peacefully there with our son.
A goodnight kiss you'll have to miss,
Until this war is won.

Buddies

by Harold O'Neill, 83rd Signal

The fields are green and the sky is blue
And the orchards are in blossom, too.

But death is in the perfumed air
For a sniper's bullet doesn't care.

If young or old or wise
As it enters between the eyes.

I take Bert's wallet and personal stuff
And on his cigs I'll sadly puff.

For he would have done the same you see
If the sniper had drawn a bead on me.

My Soldier Friend

We were not acquainted
Til we worked for Uncle Sam
We learned war games together
And grew up to be a man

We went to basic training
Learned to be a soldier tall
For World War II was raging
Proud to serve our country's call

Rode the ship-
The great Queen Mary
Across the big wide ocean blue
On to England where we landed
Then to France for all of you

Joined the 63rd division
Many stories we could tell
How we fought for peace and freedom
In this war that sure was Hell

It was cold for it was winter
Foxholes was our place of rest
Feet were cold there was no shelter
Sure gave all us the test

Red has told to us the story
How the flak was coming down
Red and one of his great buddies
Were digging in the cold hard ground

Red was sure since he was smaller
He'd be first to fill the hole
But his buddy beat him to it
Scared they were in mind and soul

Fought the battle of a lifetime
Bridges, houses blown to bits
Battle of the Bulge they called it
Lots of Devastating Hits

Many stories filled their lifetime
Families raised, friends galore
But their friendship never faltered
For each other evermore

Traveled many miles together
The 63rd reunion called
Visited often with each other
Life's too short to not recall

Now Red's on his final journey
No Queen Mary for the trip
But we know God's arms are waiting
Welcome home my soldier friend.

By Bonnie Erickson

January 17, 2007

Written for Red's funeral on January 20, 2007



Maurice "Red" Hendrickson
AT-255

Happy Anniversary



JULY

- 1: Carol Ann & Jim Crum - HQ 253 - 1951
 3: Joyce & John J. Best - L 254 - 1953
 Irene & Vernard O. Riggs - D 255 - 1946
 4: Melba & George Dodson - K 255 - 1951
 5: Gertrude & Howard Loucks - - 1948
 6: Pat & Clark Utley - G 253 - 1992
 7: Mamie & Douglas - FA 863 - 1946
 8: Rita & Louis Maslinoff - G 253 - 1953
 9: Audrey & Fred Consolmagnò - H 254 - 1948
 14: Mary & Ernest H. Klimek - D 255 - 1956
 15: Margery & Joseph Olinde - H 253 - 1950
 Wanda & Harold G. Heavins - A 254 - 1946
 16: Naomi & Gordon Rintoul - L 255 - 1983
 17: Jo & Thomas Lazare - I 254 - 1948
 18: Jane & Wilbur Braithwaite - A 253 - 1952
 23: Carolyn & Sam Taylor - F 254 - 1949
 26: Alberta & Melvin Gobel - I 254 - 1980
 Helen & Robert E. Parke - B 254 - 1943
 ??: Grace & John Harmon - MED 363 - 1947

AUGUST

- 5: Imogene & Alf L. Crutchfield - I 254 - 1947
 Josephine & Harold D. Betts - HQ 253 - 1943
 7: Helen & John Bradley - A 253 - 1954
 10: Elish & Greg Bonifield - Assoc. - 1991
 11: Helen & George Putman - FA 718 - 1995
 12: Arlene & Robert Williams - F 255 - ??
 13: Helen & Max Gourley - C 253 - 1948
 Deatra & Jonpatriock Anderson - USAR - 1995
 14: Iona & James A. Gregg - I 253 - 1947
 15: Karen & Peter Donald - Assoc. - 2003
 RaeAnn & Donald L. Wirth - USAR - 1958
 16: Gina & Scott Iseminger - Assoc. - 1975
 18: Betty & David Montgomery - E 253 - 1950
 19: Jean & Bill J. Moss - B 254 - 1946
 Janice & Glen Rovenhagen - M 255 - 1951
 20: Ann & Jim Payne - F 254 - 1948
 Lillian & Dick Mertes - 254 - 1949
 22: Della & Lewis Disbrow - E 255 - 1940
 Joan & Henry W. Talbert - M 253 - 1945
 23: Susan & William J. Stratton - Assoc. - 1975
 25: Billie Jean & Jack H. Haight - HQ 255 - 1956
 26: Dorothy & Robert L. May - K 255 - 1950
 27: Dorine & Gerald Bungert - FA 718 - 1949
 Laura & Arthur W. Harekham - HQ 253 - 1949
 29: Gertrude & Ernest Morrell - L 253 - 1958
 30: Cele & Bill Scott - E 254 - 1949

SEPTEMBER

- 1: Jan & Quintin Sella - F 254 - 1977
 2: Irene & Seymour Kunis - F 255 - 1950
 Anna & Rocco F. Stango - RECON 63 - 1950
 3: Angela & Carmine Soranno - K 253 - 1949
 Marianne & Robert Koller - Assoc. - 1994
 5: Mayellen & Joseph Thoman - CN 254 - 1941
 5: Anne & Kenneth Greene - HQ 63 - 1949
 Gayle & Richard A. Glazer - USAR - 1970
 6: Viola & Harold Black - AT 255 - 1947
 7: Rose & Michael Cairo - L 253 - 1947
 8: Carol & Roger Bonifield - Assoc. - 1973
 Germaine & Roland Dandurand - G 255 - 1945
 Betty & Bob Anderson - B 255 - 1946
 Margaret & Donald B. O'Neill - D 254 - 1986
 9: Angeline & Howard Diepenhorst - MED 253 - 1947
 Patricia & Joseph B. Mueller - SV 861 - 1950
 12: Eva & Harold Hibbs - HQ 718 - 1948
 15: Corine & Hugh Boettcher - D 254 - 1946
 16: Villa & Harold Black Sr. - AT 255 - 1947
 18: Peggy & Robert Michajla - FA 718 - 1942
 20: Lois & Lee Axsom - G 253 - 1952
 21: Brenda & Nicholas Piazza - MED 254 - 1989
 22: Cherri & Len Zimmerman - C 263 - 1943
 27: Virginia & Leamon J. Harvey - C 254 - 1952
 Maggie & Robert E. Herzler - SV 255 - 1946

OCTOBER

- 1: Louise & Rune Josephson - FA 718 - 1950
 7: Marilyn & Henry Comb - Assoc. - 1961
 Cindy & Jimmy Montgomery - Assoc. - 1979
 8: Tubi & Jack Mayrsohn - QM 63 - 1950
 Dorothy & Herbert B. Houghtaling - HQ 253 - 1949
 9: Mae & Garrett Hocksema - M 255 - 1946
 Bernice & Carlton Peck - K 255 - 1949
 10: Betty & Rudy Lencioni - F 254 - 1951
 Anna Lee & Murrell Grant - K 253 - 1946
 11: Marlene & Anthony Dondona - H 255 - 1953
 12: Dorothy & Claude Denison - A 253 - 1940
 13: Elsie & Roy E. Sjoblad - HQ 253 - 1945
 16: Jean & Russell R. Hill - HQ 253 - 1949
 17: Mardellya & Ray L. Anders Jr. - Sp Tr 63 - 1942
 18: Helen & Charles Rudibaugh Jr. - SV 253 - 1947
 Louise & Lecile D. Self - HQ 255 - 1941
 20: Patricia & James R. Pritchett - HQ 254 - 1979
 23: Carol & Fred Bing - HQ 63 - 1983
 24: Frances & Joseph DeClerk - C 255 - 1953
 27: Georgee & Albert Kidney - FA 863 - 1941
 30: Lois & Charles G. Sunyak - G 255 - 1983
 31: Evelyn & Olaf E. Miller - AT 253 - 1945

59TH REUNION AUGUST 7-11, 2007

Lost Sheep Need To Be Found

We need new addresses for the following people. Listed below are the last known addresses. If you can help, please call, write or email the secretary/treasurer.

LaMar Allbright, A 253, Life # 1037, 3628 Del Amo Blvd, Lakewood, CA 90712.

Louis J. Danzi Sr, H 253, Life #1522, 6557 Wellington Drive, Derby, NY 14047.

Albert J. Davis, F 255, 4502 Pitt Street, Anderson, IN 46013.

Lucille Heck, Associate, 910 Norwest Drive, Carbondale, IL 62901. Her husband was Armel Heck, L 255, Life #1131, deceased.

Clarence E. Jack, E 253, Life 63, 1035 Jackson Avenue, Huntington, WV 25704.

Josephine Jacko, Associate, 11384 N. White Road, Fenton, MI 48430.

George Kangus, Toledo, Oh.

Edward P. Knechel, L 255, Life #1752, 2920 Clay Whaley Road, St. Cloud, FL 34772.

Alvin Korngold, HQ 255, Life #1505, 2751 Ocean Drive, Hollywood, FL 33019.

Hudson Leshikzar, D 255, Life # 1782, PO Box 97, Taylor, TX 76574.

Robert C. Pitcher, L 254, Life 909, 1210 W. Progress Drive, Hayden Lake, ID 83835.

Boyd E. Standra, D 254, Life #1359, 12132 Hackamore Road, Garden Grove, CA 92640.

James L. Thome, C 253, 15 Augustine Lane, Fairfield Glade TN.

Harry E. Zink, AT 255, Life #1461, PO Box 79, 129 Second Street, Bainbridge, PA 17502.

FOUND LOST SHEEP

Frank Padula, A 253, has been found! Paul Vermillion sent the following address for Frank and Carrie: 1820 RTE 197, Woodstock, CT 06281,

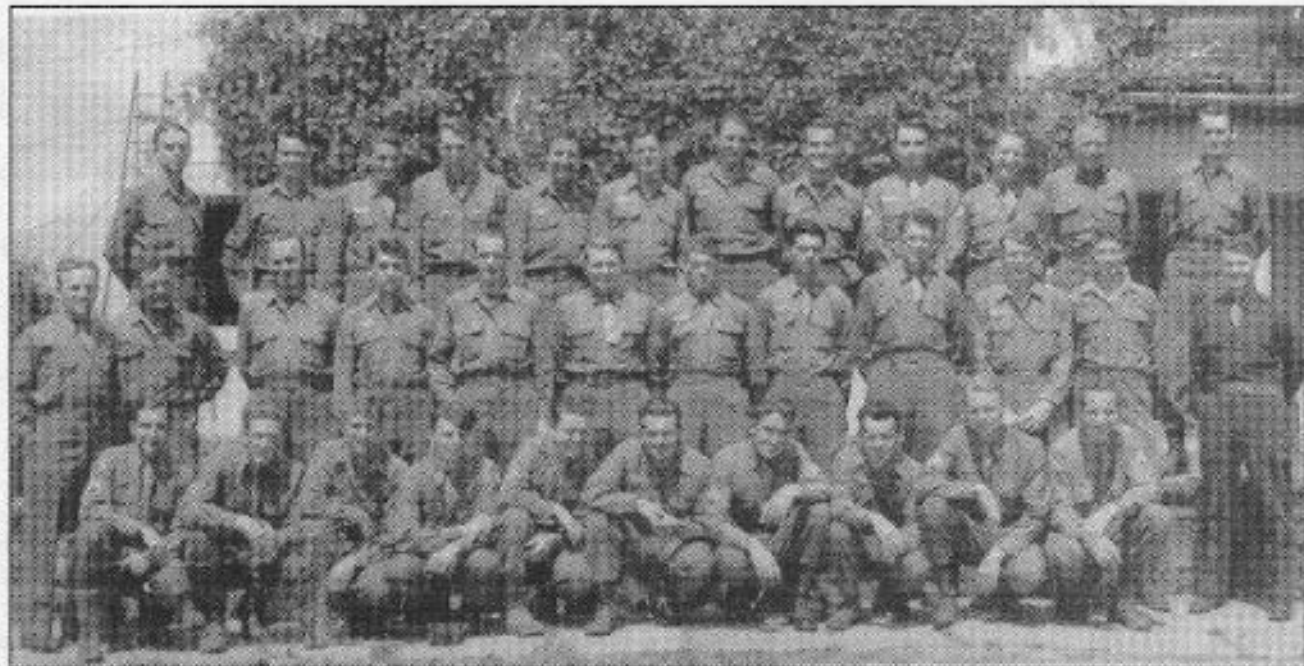
Louis Warmoth sent the notice that Robert W. Selton, C 253 of Hilton Head, SC, died November 2006.

Brothy family enjoys Kentucky reunion



Leo Brothy, F 254, in the center, his sons and their wives pose for this picture while they enjoy the Saturday night festivities during the Kentucky reunion last August. His daughter and her husband were unable to attend.

Can you identify any of these men?



Bottom Row, left to right: #1, Calvin C. Bonner and #9 is Elmer Larson from Iowa.

Middle row, left to right: #1, James Ganor from New Jersey; #4, Gale Hill, Minnesota; #6, Katzimer from Pennsylvania; #7, Francis McFaden from Ohio; #8, Smith from Texas; #9. Jack Verling from Iowa; #12, Lee Cotrol, the Lt.

Top Row, left to right: #1, Morris (Moores) from Washington and #7 is Gene Johnson from Ohio.

Gale R. Hill sent the above picture. He was in Communications platoon 1st BN, 253 Infantry HQ Company. He would like to hear from anyone in this picture who is still alive. He is #4 in the middle row. He is a retired letter carrier from a Rochester, Minnesota post office. He and his wife will be married 59 years in September. They live on the Mississippi River between Wabasha and Kellogg, Minnesota at 67820 County Rd. 76, Wabasha, MN 55981-7568.

Censoring the mail

by Harold O'Neill, 83rd Signal

Reading the mail for purposes of censorship was a boring job rotated among the junior offices or permanently assigned to some officer the CO disliked. Many censors operated under the principle, "When in doubt, cut it out!" On V-Mail, this meant black it out with ink.

Some men had simple codes to keep their girlfriends, wives or parents informed of their whereabouts. For example - if your letter asked, "How is Aunt Emma?" it meant England. Aunt Wilma for Whales, Sara for Scotland, etc. Another man wrote about buying a piece of property. The dimensions were the longitude and

latitude of his present location. He had high I.Q. girlfriends!

A few censors saw secret messages hidden in every letter. I wrote a friend about a book on the Macedonian phalanx and the censor wanted to know what it really meant" I soon discovered he knew nothing about Ancient History or Alexander the Great. Another officer backed me up; that censor never liked me after that! One censor cut out most of my letter but let the enclosed postcards of Luxemburg go through!

At times some censors drafted a couple of EM to help censor letters. This was against regulations, but helped a censor catch up with the mail or because he was lazy.

- CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

Old timers in a league of their own



Bob Ziemke, D 254, is a member of the Thursday Old-Timers League at Butler's Golf Course in McKeesport, Pennsylvania. His golfing buddies are Roland Reynolds, Al Markovich, Harry Beresfore and Tom Dainty. Ziemke is on the right.

Censoring . . .

- CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30

Many censors did not read the letters, they just blacked out the words and sentences on a random basis in case the CO checked.

One censor had a fixation on weather – any reference to weather was to be censored. The crafty enemy intelligence could pinpoint, "It's a nice day." Another worried about food as a giveaway – "we went to town and ate blue cheese in a local pub." He took out the cheese and left in the pub. One idealistic young officer was upset by "you are my only love" to three different girls from the same soldier.

Late in the war, parcels were fluoroscoped on a random basis. The newspaper, *Stars and Stripes* reported one G.I. was caught mailing home a jeep piece by piece. A non-to-bright officer in our unit was caught sending civilian shotguns home. He did not remove the German owner's nameplates from the stocks.

NOTICE

It is no longer necessary for Life Members to pay a surcharge of five dollars annually. That policy was in effect for one year, and that year ended in 2004.

This "band of brothers" makes their way to the golf course at six o'clock each morning in all kinds of weather, be it rain, sleet or sunshine, and until about eight thirty, they do their best to see who really is the best golfer. The old-timers play a different nine-hole course every week when they go out and challenge each other.

They love to play the game and they like being "out there" with each other. They get along well together and like playing with the same fellows all the time. They just like to see who can beat whom!!

In the past two years the league has not missed a day of golf and that is exactly how they like it – in fact, they are all out on the course for the same reason – to play golf and to have fun.

President of the league is Markovich, who said, "as long as we can swing the clubs we'll be out here. We all come out to play golf because we love it and nothing is going to change that. We are not going anywhere!!"



Bob Ziemke, on the left, with 63" buddies taken at the Kentucky reunion last August. Bob McCourt is the man in the center with Ray Wise on his left. Can someone put a name to the other men?

– Notice –

Please support the reunion committee by sending an ad for the Souvenir Book. There is an Ad Book Reservation Form in this issue of the *Blood and Fire* for you to use and the address of Donna LaCrosse.

~~~~~  
It is not good manners to add cream and sugar to your coffee – after you have poured it into your saucer.

# AD BOOK RESERVATION FORM

**CUT-OFF DATE**  
**SATURDAY, JULY 1, 2007**

PRINTED BOOK SIZE (5-1/2" x 8-1/2")

FULL PAGE ..... \$60.00

1/2 PAGE ..... \$35.00



1/4 PAGE ..... \$25.00

FULL PAGE = \$60.00 (4 3/4" x 7 3/4")

HALF PAGE = \$35.00 (4 3/4" x 3 3/4")

1/4 PAGE = \$25.00 (4 3/4" x 1 3/4")

1/8 PAGE = \$20.00 (2-3/8" x 1 3/4")

1/8 PAGE  
\$20.00

3 LINE  
BOOSTER  
\$10.00

SPONSOR  
NAME  
(EACH)  
\$2.00

## August 7 thru 11, 2007



2007 Tacoma, Washington

**63rd Division**

**Association** BLOOD and FIRE

• ARDENNES • CENTRAL EUROPE • RHINELAND

### "HOT SHOTS" WE NEED YOUR HELP

As you may know, the money collected from the Ads in the Souvenir/Ad Book is used to help off-set some of the reunion expenses.

Most of the money defrays the cost of the band, free beer, soda and entertainment during the reunion.

With prices constantly increasing, we are asking for your support to help us keep the reunion cost down for our retired members.

So would you please place an ad in the Souvenir Ad Book?

Make check(s) payable to:  
**59TH REUNION 63rd DIVISION ASS'N.**  
 and mail to:

*Donna LaCrosse*  
*Post Office Box 86*  
*Morocco, Indiana 47963*

Ad Copy (maximum 400 characters): \_\_\_\_\_

Ad Size: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit Served With: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized By: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# Student - Soldier - Survivor



by 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Charles D. Rhodes Jr. Retired

I graduated from Fair Park High School, Shreveport, La., in 1941. As were many guys back then, I was in the ROTC program. Little did I realize then that ROTC was only the first of my military training. I was awarded a scholarship to the Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, enrolled there in the fall of 1941, and as an undergraduate, I was automatically in the ROTC. Here then was the second of military training for me.

I was in the field house at LSU on the morning of December 7, 1941 when the radio blared out the news of the attack on Pearl Harbor. I was all of 17 years old. The significance of that day didn't sink in immediately, but as the days passed, regardless of age, the seriousness of our country's security and the threatening peril to America and our way of life swelled to a level of concern. There were three ROTC military branches at LSU - infantry, engineers and artillery. Throughout 1942, there was increasing intensity in training. We were told that as ROTC we were being groomed as candidates for Officers Candidate School. In early 1943 the entire ROTC was loaded on military

trucks and convoyed to Camp Beauregard in Alexandria, Louisiana. We were inducted en masse into the army. Following induction the entire ROTC was convoyed back to LSU where our training was further intensified. Now I really was a soldier, serial number 38381623, sir!

Ultimately orders were received for each ROTC branch to be sent to their respective basic training locales. I was in the infantry, so went by train to Camp Roberts, California. The original training period at that time was for 13 weeks. About half way through basic the training period was increased to 17 weeks. We were told this was felt necessary to help familiarize us with the ever improving number of weapons. Not only was the training period lengthened, it was a period of grading all the ROTC. There was lot of pressure. We knew that everything we did was monitored - not just written tests or marksmanship with the numerous weapons, but our every move, our reactions, our zeal, the way we handled ourselves in moments of adversity. We saw many of our ROTC "washed out."

Finally, in late summer, basic training was completed and we were returned to LSU. We were placed in the Academic Special Training Program. This program didn't stress physical activity or weaponry skills; it was designed to introduce us to tactics and the qualities of leadership. Here again the ever-present grooming watch was constant as we were being prepared to go to Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia.

- CONTINUED ON PAGE 34

*Notice*  
**DEADLINE FOR  
 THE NOVEMBER  
 ISSUE OF THE  
 BLOOD AND FIRE  
 IS ON OR BEFORE  
 OCTOBER 1, 2007**

# Student - soldier .... continued from page 33

We were finally sent to Georgia but first to what was termed Pre-OCS. This was only for a few weeks but even then we had several "wash-outs." I remember being asked, "Are you an introvert or extrovert?" I wasn't sure what it meant, and I was afraid of giving the wrong answer but I had to say something, "Extrovert." The interrogator looked at me, nodded and then walked away. I guessed right.

At last we were officially in OCS. There were several other university ROTC units that merged with us and we were divided into platoons. Each platoon had a Technical Officer assigned to it. We referred to them as Tack Officers. The Tack carried a little book in which he was always making notes. We didn't know who or what he was writing about. The pressure was there everyday, not just to keep up or perform in an acceptable way but hopefully escape any entries that would adversely affect us in successfully completing our goal of getting our commission. Lt. Alio was our platoon Tack Officer. The days and weeks finally passed and about half of our original ROTC unit was commissioned as officers. Here I stood, a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the U.S. Army. It was an extremely proud moment. I was given orders assigning me to the 63<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division at Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi. I had been trained and trained and trained! Now it was time to move to a real combat unit. I was able to go home and show off my bars for all of four days before reporting.

When I arrived at Camp Van Dorn, and reported as ordered, I was assigned to the 253<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Company H, heavy weapons. I was given the 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon, heavy machine guns by Lt. Roland St. Clair. Now I was to assist in the never-ending grind of training. This was quite an adjustment for me – for the first time I was given responsibility for lives and effectiveness of a platoon of men. I was very fortunate to have Sgt. Shoulders as my platoon Sgt., both competent and experienced. Our goal was an A-One Combat Unit.

Then came the day we had been preparing for – the day we knew would come. Orders were received outlining the steps in preparation for movement to the ETO (European Theater of Operations). I was given the task of getting the required company equipment and gear properly prepared, crated and labeled for sailing. In due course we were transported to Camp Shanks to board ship. We sailed November 24, 1944 on the Sea Robin.

The crossing lasted 14 days. Liberty ships weren't designed as cruise ships. They pitched and rolled in the Atlantic winter months. Seasickness didn't spare many of us. But, we arrived safely in Marseilles, France

December 8, 1944. The weather was rainy, cold and dreary. We were shuttled to a staging area about 20 miles NW of Marseilles where we cleaned our gear and made ready to move inland. It is difficult to remember the exact events in the order that they came. I do remember that bare knoll and was glad when it was time to leave the staging area. We moved north to Camp d'Oberhoffen, about 5 miles east of Haguenau, France. The names of the towns we passed were numerous; many seen from the 40&8 boxcars used on French railways. I looked up some of the names on a map of France and traced them pretty much from Marseille to Camp d'Oberhoffen.

When we finally got there we spent a couple of days to further clean our equipment and prepare to move into defensive position on the front line. We were moved by motor to a position on the west bank of the Rhine River. The feeling and the knowledge of that first time exposure was something entirely new. But, I felt confident and justifiable so because of the preparation and training. We were here to face the enemy and here to win the war! There was no doubt in any of our minds that we would win it. The 253<sup>rd</sup> Regiment was deployed on a north/south line from Manhausen to Neuhaeusal, France, and the chief enemy activity we faced were patrols, snipers and combat outposts on the east bank of the Rhine River. These were cold, wintry days prior to and following Christmas 1944 – not exactly the merry days usually associated with Christmas.

In the official brief history of the *Blood and Fire Division*, the Regiments of the 63<sup>rd</sup>, the 253<sup>rd</sup>, 254<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, were introduced in piece-meal fashion to combat conditions in the Alsace District of France. The 253<sup>rd</sup>, my regiment, was to occupy defensive positions in the Sarreguemines area. The heavy snow and extreme cold limited mobility but we had to learn to deal with it.

My platoon occupied a train station on Christmas Eve. We had our machine guns in strategic positions to compliment the deployment of rifle Company "G." I made periodic rounds to check our outposts the whole of Christmas Eve. This was not like any Christmas Eve I had ever known. While they weren't designated as Christmas gifts, we were issued a new style boot. It came with inner sole pads to be changed daily to avoid the danger of frostbite. Combat worthiness was essential and preventive care was a necessary practice, be it frostbite, toothache, sore throat or whatever.

It seemed we were constantly improving defensive positions. In this limited course of house keeping we learned how to make a foxhole somewhat more

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comfortable using items "borrowed" from the debris of building and homes in the area. I had to keep moving around our perimeters checking any and all elements against carelessness. The machine guns of my platoon provided an integral part of defense and the choice of their placement was to create the greatest use of firepower with the rifle companies being supported. Even in this serious consideration we remembered certain non-combative events. One day I was in a forest area checking positions. For whatever reason we didn't get our regular chow. Fortunately, in my jeep, we found some condensed milk and made snow ice cream. It wasn't the best or most nutritious meal I ever had but it sure beat going hungry!

Ultimately the company was moved to what was left of building remnants in Sarregumines fronting on the Saar River. The river was frozen over and there were no more than shells of buildings left standing. Yet, a small bakery somehow managed to continue baking bread. A number of the guys did buy a loaf or two. The fresh smell was even better than the taste. A couple of the guys found an old motorcycle and after tinkering with it, got it started. Riding it in the snow and on debris-ridden streets swiftly killed the desire to keep riding it, not withstanding the obvious possibility of attracting enemy fire as well. Nevertheless it had been a welcome diversion from total war centered thoughts. It had a positive effect on morale.

Sometimes we got in a sort of lack-a-dai-so-cal mood – our minds drifted free on a calm day. So it was with me one day, when from a point just outside of Saargueines, I found myself gazing at the distant enemy lines. Suddenly there were bullets dancing around me. Obviously I hit the ground and did a belly crawl to a lower elevation. It upset me that I should be an example and here I had acted in such a foolhardy way, a mistake I vowed to never make again. I made my way to an observation tower and with the aid of binoculars, had a clear view of the area where the shots came from. I was one more lucky clay pigeon and equally fortunate of a German soldier's poor marksmanship.

Regimental patrol activity was being greatly increased. Company H, was ordered to place our machine guns in positions more supportive to the units on patrol. In late January, patrols went out every night. It did appear that the area immediately in front of us brought the most attention. There was a house off to our right, sort of by itself, and we could go in and out of it without being seen. That very fact was consoling and though we couldn't have a fire, just being inside was great. And, to top this off there was a cellar with a

substantial stock of potatoes that the owner had harvested before we came along. The result of that good fortune was real potatoes to supplement our rations. Later the house served as the launching point for a major attack.

As the pace of patrols increased it became evident that the high ground we were facing would become terrain we would cross and beyond. The things of greatest concern were foot mines laid by the Germans. Almost nightly one of our guys in a patrol would step on one. The technical name was Claymore. They looked like little wooden cheese boxes, and we could see them go off from our position. There was a cleared space in the tree line like a fire cut in a forest. A patrol had to cross from one side of these large cuts to the other and therein was the awful but very effective foot mine. They were almost impossible to detect, particularly in the heavy snow and they didn't need much pressure to detonate them. A man's weight was more than enough.

At this point a great deal of shuffling was going on. Our 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion CP was located in a town named Soufflenheim. We were put in reserve until ordered to relieve the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion. Our Regiment was moved into camp at Oermingen, France. We marched into a line running generally east and west from Wittling through Silzheim to Hambach, where we were involved in numerous skirmishes. The 253<sup>rd</sup> Regiment CP was located southeast of Sarregumines.

The month of January was mainly spent in continuing improvement of our defensive positions, sending out patrols and generally harassing the enemy. It was cold with snow flurries that covered the ground with an estimated depth of twelve inches. I guess youth as much as anything helped us endure the cold.

On the first of February the 253<sup>rd</sup> Regiment solidified its defensive position south of the Saar River on a line that was running more or less east and west from Sarregumines through Neurkirchen, France. Again numerous patrols crossed into Germany searching for and obtaining information on enemy strength and disposition. Around the first of February we received a warning order from 63<sup>rd</sup> Division that the 253<sup>rd</sup> regiment was soon to head an attack into Germany. As we studied maps of the area we were assigned it turned out the sector we were to attack was similar to the high ground we had earlier observed with a wide clearing in the tree line, like a fire cut. From experience we knew they would have heavily mined it with Claymore foot mines. "H" Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon was to support "G"

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Company. We were to be a diversionary tactic initially while other elements of the 253<sup>rd</sup> were the main attacking force.

Company "G" launched an attack with my platoon supporting early in the morning. We were to capture the two wooded hills in front of us located between Bliersweiler and the Blies River. Our machine guns began laying down enfilade fire. We continued this for about 30 minutes, distracting enemy fire and hopefully successful in making the enemy think this was the thrust of the main attack. This gave "G" Company the support they needed to proceed with minimal resistance. Also, there was some limited artillery fire brought to bear. When it was time to cease all supportive firing, we began to move forward as I led my platoon toward our assigned objective.

To reach that objective we had to cross one of those wide cleared areas that I knew would be laced with foot mines. But, we had to cross now; there wasn't time to go another way. Company "G" was depending on our machine guns for support. Snow completely covered the ground; there was no way to detect a mine. I said a prayer and started across using the standard infantry motto - "follow me." I put my foot down, toe first. I had those big snow boots on and as my foot eased down it left a large imprint in the snow. It seemed to take forever to cross that area; it must have been at least 40 feet across. When I safely reached the other side, I let out a heavy sigh and turned around to look back as my platoon was following in my footsteps. There was only one set of footprints in the snow. I have always felt the Good Lord was watching over us in those moments.

As we made our way up to the top of the hill to our designated objective, there was considerable small arms and mortar fire. I made immediate contact with elements of Company "G" and we set up defensive positions. Digging in was very difficult due to the heavy mortar fire on all occupied positions. I set my position up as far forward as I dared in order to observe the terrain in front of us. I could see elements of the enemy in the distance and I knew they always counter-attacked. We felt our position was well prepared for that eventuality but there was evidence things were not going well on our left flank. We could hear the battle raging in the dense forest and I hastily made the rounds of each gun placement, satisfying myself we had left nothing undone.

As it turned out our concern was right. Enemy forces did attack the left flank with a sizeable force estimated at 200 men with tank support. We later learned the counter-attack overran one heavy machine section and

a couple of rifle squads. Meanwhile we faced another force with tanks counter-attacking our front. There was heavy small arms fire and accurate mortar fire on our front. It appeared the enemy forces had gained the upper hand on the left flank and with the pressure of that and the frontal assault, we had a tough fight on our hands. I tried to keep up a lot of patter with the guys, both in my platoon and the guys of rifle company "G." I wanted to defeat fear with determination.

I was looking through my binoculars when a mortar shell exploded right in front of me. Fortunately the binoculars saved my sight, but were of no further value! Other than small shell fragments on my face, I was okay. It is hard to remember exactly how long this battle went on. At the time we felt it would never end. We were concerned about the battle on our left flank. If the enemy prevailed there we were in big trouble. Just before dark the enemy on our left flank seemed less aggressive. We learned later that the Germans had come close to a major breakthrough but an artillery forward observer was able to direct massed artillery fire on their left flank. That action along with reinforcements from "E" Company repelled the counter-attack ending the threat.

We gradually became aware of what was happening over there and knowing the good results they were having, we called for a similar barrage in front of our position. This resulted in the enemy forces pulling up stakes and withdrawing all along the line. Following this I went around checking each of our defensive positions, both machine guns and the riflemen dug in around them as well. I had to leave my platoon Sgt. in charge so I could go back and report to my CO as well as get some needed medical treatment for my face. I also took two guys in my platoon, Pfc Skeria and Corporal Norton, who had minor wounds with me. We made our way back to the company CP and when he saw me, he was obviously stunned. He stood there looking at me and then said he had been told I was wounded and had died up there. I asked if he had already reported me dead? He said he had and I asked him to please have that error straightened out - I sure didn't want my death to be reported to my family. He nodded, turned to his Adjutant, Lt. Bresler, and told him to get on it immediately. Then he smiled, turned around and said: "You know you have earned a Purple Heart." We talked at length about what had happened and probably the reason why I had been reported killed.

He paused a second, patted me on the shoulder and

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then said he was going to recommend me for a Bronze Star. I wasn't expecting that but I did appreciate it. He told me to get the wounds on my face treated so I went back to get first aid treatment. With that done, I took time out for coffee and a little rest before making my way back up to my platoon. As I remember hot chow was brought up to the line, an event that was always welcome. Done then an action filled day of preparation, conflict, confusion and conclusion! Done a day of war! The true fact is war is a never-ending complication of confusion, frustration, fear, wariness, contradiction and a generous portion of certain uncertainties. Death is all over the place, riding so it seems, on our shoulders. And, there is that peculiar odor produced only on battlefields – a hellish aroma extracted from the flesh of humans and all the things of war made by humans.

We looked forward to those personal things – moments like mail call or good hot chow. And, if on the front line, one really looks forward to being relieved and sent back to a rear area. One also acquired certain skills and knowledge – like how to look at a “K” ration box from ten feet away and tell whether it is a breakfast meal or a dinner meal. We carried a little stove-like gadget and heat tablets to use with it that made practically no smoke. The flame was next to impossible to detect, a necessary requirement to limit revealing our location. These little stoves were great for heating “C” rations or anything edible that tasted better when heated. We also learned to be inventive in other ways, all in an attempt to improve our state of mind and in some small way, satisfy our bodies with some minimal comforts.

The remainder of February was more of the same – another hill, another forest, another plan, another attack, and the inevitable counter-attack and, establishing strong defensive positions. As we advanced through towns and villages with those unpronounceable foreign names, white sheets, towels or white whatever hung from windows or were attached to doors. Nevertheless our guys had to check out every building to be sure there were no enemy troops inside as well as disarm any booby traps they could find. Most of the citizens were pretty docile but occasionally we ran across a hard case, one who wore a lapel pin with the Nazi swastika and had a belligerent look.

In the continued routine of movement the regiment was ordered to prepare for a major effort. My platoon was to support rifle units in a proposed attack to capture an area described as a rock quarry and then proceed further on to seize some high ground that would serve as an advantage point. I recall there was a

lot of resistance at the quarry with heavy artillery and small arms fire from surrounding wooded areas as well. Sometimes we wished we could crawl into our metal helmets! Particularly when the sounds of bullets were swishing by. The fighting went on into the night until enemy resistance was thought eliminated. However, just before daybreak enemy re-enforcements were brought in and fighting lasted well into the morning. As the enemy began falling back the units we were supporting and my platoon made our way up to the high ground objective. Once there, we began setting up defensive positions, knowing they would counter-attack and in this case, they really did come at us. In the thick of battle the Germans displayed a white flag and all firing stopped.

The German carrying the white flag made his way toward us and one of our rifle company officers stood up and walked toward the German. As it turned out the Germans had a number of wounded with no means to treat them. It was agreed that we would accept the wounded and move them to our rear area for medical aid. The German medics wore long raincoat type coats and carried a flag with a Red Cross on a white field. The noise of battle was silenced and for a few unreal moments, the war paused.

Some of our guys helped get their wounded. All fighting stopped for quite a long time during this unbelievable drama. Finally this truce came to an end and the fighting resumed as though nothing had ever happened. The battle didn't last much longer as the enemy forces withdrew. It seemed necessary that this unusual event be recorded. Here in the middle of a fierce battle, where killing was the rule, an exception was made – without an official order – and life was granted priority over death.

The old adage that March comes in like a lion pretty much matched the way March had started for us – in an aggressive mode. Now every minute of every day was banging away. We needed time for personal hygiene, time to clean weapons and time to both write and read letters. Everybody thinks about home, mother, dad, the rest of the family and a sweetheart. Even when we were fighting with a harshness necessary for survival there was a tenderness there motivated by memories and fanned by the fuel of love in letters from home.

My brother had a German Shepherd dog named Lucky that he loved and one day I opened a letter from him and inside was some dog hair. His letter said that Lucky had been accepted into the Canine Corp. He thought so much of that dog that he wanted me to know

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it and share that deep feeling with him.

Those idle moments were getting fewer as there was plenty of action. We kept moving forward and to the foot soldier, it always seemed more upward than downward. High ground is always an advantage and capturing them is a military necessity. So every time we took another of these objectives the Germans struck back. At first we thought they would lose their desire to continue fighting but we had to admit they still had plenty of determination. Even when they surrendered they appeared well groomed. We came to recognize that from their point of view they were defending their homeland. At any rate, we could not abandon being cautious. The skills developed in war improves the odds of survival but one must expect the unexpected.

There was an unusually hard battle on another of those high wooded hills. My platoon was in close support of the rifle companies leading the attack. As we neared what appeared to be a bunker, all thunder broke loose! One of the point guys stepped on one of those foot mines while entrenched enemy machine guns laid down heavy fire. With help of protective fire by the rifle company, we set up our machine guns and began returning fire at the bunker. Suddenly one of the riflemen jumped up and raced toward the bunker. We had to stop firing to avoid hitting him with friendly fire. He was yelling something as he hurled grenades at the bunker. I saw him fall, then get up and throw a couple more grenades. That did it—the Germans surrendered. That heroic rifleman, at rifle point, had the Germans out disarming those foot mines. You could see them picking them out of the ground and flinging them aside. We learned later that the rifleman who earlier had stepped on a foot mine was the pal of the heroic rifleman. You can't vaccinate guys to create valor—you just train to do your bit.

In one of those somewhat inactive periods, I was given permission to go back to the rear for some dental work. I left the platoon in charge of Sgt. Shoulders and made my way back to the rear, hooking a jeep ride part of the way. I must admit I did enjoy the more relaxed and safer feeling! I had my dental work done, certainly not the most comfortable aspect of my rear area visit, but to offset that element I got to sleep in a comfortable cot in a large tent. I had a couple of great hot meals with both coffee and cold milk. I also enjoyed the pleasure of real toilet fixtures rather than a field slit trench! All in all it was a vacation. When I was preparing to leave, for no particular reason, I noticed a very big barn-like building. It must have been as long as a football field and at least 50 to 60 feet wide. My curiosity led me to go inside. Once in, my curiosity slapped me in the face.

Inside, on both sides of the building, were the bodies of dead soldiers lying side by side! The sight was totally sobering. I will never forget the smell of death that filled the building. While I was not a stranger to death, the shock of seeing all those guys was something I was not prepared for. It was a sight I will never forget. Those were our guys, every single one of them. The price of this war was right there before me. A whole barn full of soldiers who had paid the supreme price. I finally gathered my wits, stood at attention, saluted, did an about face and exited the building with that sight forever in my memory.

Shortly after I returned following my dental work, all officers were summoned to briefings where plans for each element of the Division were laid out to break through the Siegfried Line. Following the session that involved the 253<sup>rd</sup>, we broke down by company to go over our role in this major undertaking. We were to be in direct support of rifle companies "F" and "G." There had already been considerable activity as a general movement along the entire line toward the Siegfried Line. Forays by patrols had penetrated it at various points but the big push would involve all units in a concentrated attack. By the time the attack was scheduled to begin, we were actually at the leading edge of the Siegfried Line. I remember sitting on one of the so-called dragon teeth, a reinforced concrete object shaped like a giant tooth. It was intended to limit, if not impair, an enemy's mobile ability to penetrate it. Prior to the actual attack beginning, I looked back at the elevated terrain where we had a solid line of artillery and tanks. Never before or since have I seen that much concentrated firepower. It was apparent that we were going to break through this defense and open the door into Germany.

The Siegfried Line had belt after belt of pillboxes and bunkers. I knew the attack would be heavily defended so when the time came to begin the assault, the deafening thunder of all that artillery and tank fire was welcome. I can't remember ever hearing noise of such magnitude. It went on and on and on. Finally it lifted and we began our advance. There wasn't near as much enemy resistance as expected at first, at least not in our area. I guess the pounding by artillery and tank fire was the reason. We made our way through numerous belts of the Line, ending up near a little town named St. Ongbert. We were ordered to move in and occupy it. There was debris everywhere. We secured the town and the roads in and out, enabling our armored and calvary units to further exploit breaching the Siegfried Line.

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We also took a great number of prisoners and seized much enemy material as well. I was happy to learn that our company had a minimum of casualties and deaths. My platoon was very fortunate in that we had only had one wounded, Pfc. Driscoll, but no deaths. Considering the opportunities open to harm we were extremely fortunate. My hope was that we would continue to fare to such a degree.

Following the breakthrough of the Siegfried Line, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion marched from St. Ingbert into the vicinity of Homburg, Germany. From that point we sometimes moved by motor; most of the time we walked. There was the every present danger of being lulled to sleep by the lack of enemy resistance. I recall one such time. We were ordered to halt our advance, dig in, rest and clean our weapons. Digging in with the small shovels carried by everyone was not the easiest thing to do. The ground was frozen and we were already tired, but knew from experience that a nice deep foxhole was one of, if not our best asset when enemy fire came dancing over, around and at us. The shrill sound of an incoming German 88 was ominous, reason enough to dig nice and deep!

In the early morning we heard that rumbling, squeaking sound made by a German Tiger tank. Suddenly we were under a desperate attack by a sizeable armored enemy force. We had not properly prepared a defensive position. I'm up and trying to get our machine guns operational and there was real confusion as the enemy pressed toward us. One of the tanks was coming directly at my position. I dove into the foxhole and tried to make myself invisible by getting down in it as far as I could. As the tank approached my position, it continued to adjust the height of its gun in an effort to see its target. But, by the nature of the terrain it was unable to lower it enough to effectively fire. I ducked up and down as the tank came forward then backward, obviously determined to get a viable shot at my position. While this was going on some of the other elements of our Battalion gained a lateral position on the tank. They fired off several bazooka rounds, hitting and disabling it. A second tank off to our left flank then began a hasty withdrawal as our fire on the enemy infantry supporting the tank took heavy casualties on their force.

Following this battle we were granted some rest time before resuming our movement deeper into Germany. It was readily apparent we could not expect the enemy to just roll over – we were going to have to do it the hard way. Our lesson? Be alert whether in a forest, a valley, a

hill or some small village. Occasionally an entire enemy force would surrender in mass. Other times a nest of fanatic SS led enemy was intent on fighting regardless of the futility of such action.

Having cleared the massive Siegfried Line defenses, we were ordered to move by motor when possible. As a matter of comparison, if one used the speed of our previous movement as a standard, we were really speeding along. Progress wasn't being measured in feet or in yards, but in miles. We advanced something like 40 miles to the vicinity of Vierheim. We passed through scenic and beautiful country that reminded me of the countryside back home, only it was far more mountainous. There were some other good things happening as we advanced in this mode – we got hot chow and had the opportunity to eat under considerable less stressful conditions.

The entire Regiment moved into bivouac at some German barracks. It had been a long time since enjoying the luxury of sleeping inside a structure. The thrill wasn't extended however – the Regiment was to attack Heidelberg. My platoon was to support Company "G" again. We were ordered to cross the Neckar River and advance on into Heidelberg. We immediately ran into the problem of craft to cross the river. There were no assault boats, only civilian type wooden boats usually used for fishing or maybe paddling around. We located some paddles and with a great deal of good fortune made it safely across. Fortunately there was a minimum of enemy small arms fire. Once over we began making our way down street after street. There were pockets of fire from isolated positions, so we set up our machine guns to provide covering fire as our rifle guys darted in and out of buildings.

We were making what we thought was good headway, having cleared several blocks, when we received orders to cease the operation and come back across the Neckar River. We questioned the order to be sure there was no mistake, and then we did as ordered, using those same boats. When we finally did get back across we were exhausted. We had been extremely fortunate with minimum of casualties. We made our way back to an assembly area where we grabbed a little rest. We had hoped to remain there overnight but late that afternoon, to our surprise, we were ordered to resume the original plan. Our battalion re-crossed the Neckar River and this time there was no shortage of proper assault boats. We advanced into and through Heidelberg, coordinating the attack with other

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elements of the 63<sup>rd</sup>.

There was little resistance as we moved to some high ground east of Heidelberg where we secured a village named Kohlhof. We were finally allowed to stop, rest and re-group. However, the respite didn't last very long! In short order the Regiment was on the move, advancing rapidly. Numerous towns were secured and cleared. In this speeded up Regimental process of advance we had crossed the Neckar and Rhine Rivers and secured Heidelberg. We abruptly stopped when we came across a small camp ultimately typed as concentration or labor camps. It was a sickening sight – what with people so thin their bodies would hardly cast a shadow. For fear of disease and harm we might innocently do, we weren't allowed to mingle with them. We left what we could at the gates of the fenced area. The decision of what to do was hastily decided by higher up brass.

They decided to bring in medical and legal units to deal with what was obviously a war atrocity. It was the first time any of us had seen or even been aware of such places. If any of us ever needed a reason to quickly defeat this monstrous, evil enemy force, we sure had one now! We figured there must be other camps where this same type of inhumane treatment was going on. We moved out of the area as ordered bearing memories that would always be there. We sort of felt we had a more noble reason to be fighting than we had before, not just against an enemy but against the inhumanity of an enemy.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was ordered to bivouac near the small village of Neckargmund, southeast of Heidelberg. We learned we would be motoring more, using our Jeeps to speed up the pace of our advance. In order to keep contact and maintain a reasonable level of safety when we were in such a fast mode of advance we would be dependent on our radio for timely and accurate reports of enemy movements and any indications of resistance buildups.

I later found a reference book that compiled an overview of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division and the 253<sup>rd</sup> Regiment in particular. At this point in time we were winding up actions through March, 1945. One of the figures recorded by the 253<sup>rd</sup> Regiment showed 994 prisoners were taken. The Regiment at this point had suffered 41 killed in action, 235 wounded and 30 missing. We had now advanced about 60 miles eastward into Germany.

Here it was April 1, 1945. April Fool's Day, and we were enjoying a needed rest. There was a somewhat relaxed mood, a little short of being jovial but with

puns and jokes associated with April Fool's Day. There was a lot of motorized activity going on which indicated reinforcements were being brought into the Regiment. There were elements of both tank and engineer outfits swelling our ranks. Obviously another big push was in the works. We had a briefing about upcoming major objectives and were given a mandate requiring movement be as rapid as possible while maintaining contact by radio at all times. That alone would be difficult in the hilly, even mountainous terrain. We had sufficient provisions stowed on both our persons and vehicles. I maintained a substantial stock of rations, candy, liquors, cigarettes, sugar, etc. in a locker kept in the trailer towed behind my Jeep. My platoon received its usual monthly supply of rations April 1, which only added to the already bulging mobile warehouse. We were also given extra ammo and several of the newly introduced Burp Guns. This guy looked like a stamped out toy but functioned like a Thompson Sub-Machine Gun. Most officers carried a Carbine and a sidearm of some kind but the Burp Gun became a must. Its comfort was the firepower.

On the morning of April 2 we set our clocks forward one hour. My platoon loaded up about daybreak and headed south and east, following the route that had been plotted on the maps following our briefing. In my Jeep, I had Pfc. Johnson keeping the radio contact as best he could with the Company. Sgt. Shoulders was in the third Jeep and we were constantly in contact as a unit. We were able to proceed at an acceptable speed and made no contact with the enemy all morning. We stopped about noon to calculate our exact position and estimated we had been close to 35 miles as the crow flies. We took a short break to eat, smoke a cigarette and tend to whatever, then loaded up and took off.

We were to meet up with the rest of the company and other elements of the battalion later in the afternoon in the vicinity of a town named Gundelsheim. We neither noted nor were we advised of any particular enemy activity as we confidently drove on a steep mountainside road nearing a small village named Untergimpfern. We sighted buildings of the village as the road curved around the mountain. Off to the left was a lightly grassed area bordered by a narrow stream. It caught my eye several miles back, running sort of parallel to the road like mountain streams do. Suddenly the serenity of the landscape evaporated as bullets rained down on our column. We were the prey of a hellish ambush!

My driver, Pfc. Myers, reacted like any startled



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person would, stomping down hard on the brakes as we came to a screeching halt. The Germans had set up a strong fortified position that was undetectable until we were right under their guns. They were on the higher level to our right, looking straight down on us. As my jeep was coming to a halt, I jumped out and dove over the hitch between the jeep and the trailer, hitting the ground as I scooted to a position where I could try to be less visible and hopefully figure out what could be done. Myers lay dead to my left. I still find it difficult to understand how I was able to safely get out of the jeep, turn and dive between the jeep and trailer while Myers was on the more shielded left side and was killed. Nevertheless, that is the way it was.

From my position on the ground behind the jeep, I looked back at the column where the second jeep that carried our medical supplies was on fire. To make matters worse, Pfc. Mitchell, the driver, was apparently severely wounded and appeared unable to get out of the jeep. Sgt. Shoulders and the other jeeps were not totally trapped like our first two jeeps. I began hollering at him to get out, go back, get out, go back! Whether he could hear me or not over the noise and confusion was questionable but he could see the situation and both of the jeeps managed to safely escape. I felt confident Shoulders would contact Company and help would ultimately come.

Meanwhile I had to do something about Mitchell. He was sitting straight up in the drivers seat, hurting enough to cry out at times. The fire was getting worse by the second and smoke was increasingly boiling up as the flames licked at the trailer. I had to get him out somehow or he would burn in the flames. I started crawling toward him, probably about 25 or 30 feet, when about halfway there, I felt something like a bee sting. I kept crawling, the smoke limiting visibility to some degree. When I finally got to him, I reached up and pulled him out. As he dropped to the ground I continued to pull him back from the jeep. Both of us needed to get further away from the flames because the jeep was going to blow up when the flames engulfed it and the spare gas cans ignited.

The situation could hardly be worse. Smoke filled the air, bullets were still pelting everything in sight. Or so it seemed. I told Mitchell we had to get over to the stream where we could get some decent cover. He could hardly move and it was about that time that I began to hurt. I ran my left hand across my right side and felt blood. I knew then what that bee sting I felt earlier was - a bullet wound. Somehow, some way, I got us to the edge of the stream. I was huffing a lot and Mitchell said he couldn't go any further. I slid over the bank into the stream. It

was ice cold and deeper than I thought it would be. It crossed my mind that I might drown, so I hooked an arm over a root or some kind of growth on the bank. As I more or less hung there, my helmet fell off. As I watched it moving with the current, the Lt. bar on it rotated around and around, moving on down the stream. We knew we were in big, big trouble! I was having increasing difficulty breathing and I knew I was losing blood, not to mention my mental attitude in the plight of my platoon. This was the low point of my life and there didn't appear to be a thing I could do about it.

I don't know how long I clung there. The pain kept getting worse and I either couldn't hear Mitchell anymore or I was beginning to pass in and out. He was just above me on the edge of the stream and in my state of mind I reasoned that he probably was dead. The cold water seemed to get colder and my body started shaking uncontrollable. At that point my life was not mine to control. If I was to survive this demand on my life it would come from a power greater than any in this world. I didn't have the strength to move myself up, down, or sideways, but I felt an odd sense of peace; a sensation that seemed to assure me that I would be all right despite the entirely negative situation.

I felt something tugging at me - struggling to pull me out of the stream. I was soaking wet, which obviously made it hard to grab my slippery uniform. Too, I must have felt pretty much like limp dead weight to them. It's difficult if not next to impossible to remember exactly what was going on when two German soldiers finally got me out of the water. I vaguely recall them straining to pull me out. I heard them talking back and forth but I didn't speak German. I have tried over the years to remember if there were gestures or menacing actions made by them that indicated we were in for violent or brutal treatment. Their uniforms appeared to be the standard basic kind we had seen many times before, and I determined they were not SS.

Even in this sordid mayhem, I kept trying to ask about Mitchell. They didn't speak English, so my efforts in this area achieved no response. They more or less dragged me toward the little town. Apparently they got Johnson and Shepherd from the second jeep to help me most of the way. I was just about out of it. Finally I was taken into a house where my guys were able to strip me. They pulled and jerked until they got all my cold, wet clothes off. Someone managed to get one of our sleeping bags and put me inside. I could tell there were civilians in the house with all the foreign talk going on. Someone found two straw filled comforters and put me in

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between them because I needed the additional warmth. I didn't have any clothing on inside the sleeping bag. Either Shepherd or Johnson told me that Mitchell was just across the room from me. Knowing he was alive was a real comfort – something I was running a might short on.

As we slipped into the early hours of night, Johnson came in and said the town's people had discovered the locker in the trailer behind my jeep and were having a carnival-like celebration. I can look back in retrospect and imagine how they felt when they found candy, food, liquor and American cigarettes in the locker. Who knows how long it had been since they had treats like those? When I woke up later, a tall German man was standing by me. He looked down at me and indicated he wanted to see the extent of my wounds. Somehow we communicated, at least to the point of me understanding his motive. It became obvious that he was a doctor. While he had no medical supplies whatsoever and all ours were lost in the jeep fire, he gingerly checked me as best he could with me in the sleeping bag. He, they, or someone came up with material he placed over the wound on my side. Poking around on my chest, side and back while noting my labored breathing he used facial expressions and body gestures to tell me I had a problem with my right lung. He had next to nothing to sterilize the wound other than the contents of the first aid packet all GIs carried on their ammo belts. He closed the sleeping bag up and helped assist my guys in putting me back between the two straw filled comforters. He turned and left and that was the last and only time I saw him.

I must have passed in and out of consciousness numerous times during the rest of the night. The pain grew worse with time, and as daylight replaced the darkness, I heard a mix of shouting as well as the noises of people scampering about. I heard the sound of a vehicle motor, which turned out to be my jeep. I was bodily picked up by two German soldiers, taken outside and laid on top of the tarp covering the trailer attached to my jeep. Shortly Mitchell was put on the tarp beside me. For the first time a German soldier wearing an SS uniform passed by where I was laying. He looked at me and then disappeared. I heard what I knew were American tanks in the distance.

In what seemed like short order, there were bullets careening all around. Suddenly the SS soldier reappeared, jumped in the driver seat of the jeep, started the motor and attempted to drive off. He either didn't know the emergency brake was on or he didn't know how to release it. We could smell a hot brake lining odor as the jeep hardly moved. He finally turned

the motor off, walked back to me, pulled out his Luger, stood there briefly, then turned and ran off. I have thought about that moment many times since. Did he intend to shoot Mitchell and me? Did he feel that if he killed us with American forces that close he would be given the same treatment when captured? Or, with bullets filling the air, was it not more sensible to get the heck out of there? I'll never know the answer save he didn't use his Luger and I have lived to tell the story!

I don't know how Mitchell and I survived laying there on that tarp totally exposed to both friendly and enemy fire. Being wounded for such a long time didn't endow me with clear mind but it was clearly essential that both of us needed to get down to ground level, and immediately. I didn't have enough strength to shout to Mitchell but with what energy I could muster, I told him that we had to roll off the tarp and get on the ground right now or we were going to be killed by our own fire. I knew it was going to hurt; Mitchell's legs and my chest, side and back but when I said "let's do it" we both rolled off. I guess we had to drop at least three feet, maybe a little more. The only good thing about the fall was we were much safer on the ground. I hurt real bad and Mitchell was moaning badly again. I must have passed out moments after the fall because the next thing I remember was looking at an American helmet with a Red Cross on a white field. The medic under the helmet asked if I would like something for pain. I don't know how quickly or loudly I said "YES," but his question was one I didn't wait to answer! I asked him to look after Mitchell too, and I feel sure he did but I was so out of it I can't remember.

I have tried to piece together the myriad of things that happened to me in the hours and days following the ambush at Untergimpern. On the day we were recaptured I was loaded in an ambulance. These big guys weren't designed for creature comfort but they were sturdy and capable of going just about any place. If you were ever wounded, you were glad they could come and get you! They transported me to a Field Hospital but I don't recall much about the ride. I was glad when we got there and the bumping around stopped! Field Hospitals aren't permanent facilities but they have the wherewithal to do what's got to be done to keep you alive and insure that you will survive until you do reach a permanent facility.

They came up with a few essentials that I was grateful for, like something to wear. I didn't want to be moving here and there in the buff! They cleaned my wounds, removing dead and damaged tissue and filled me with

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Penicillin, a newly developed antibiotic to thwart infection. I also received a generous portion of blood to replace some I usually produce by myself. They didn't want to operate on my lung there, leaving that to surgeons with the best equipment, time and rehab facilities. They wanted the job done properly.

In my physical condition at that time, consciousness was a come and go thing. I feel certain I was moved directly from the field hospital to an airfield but I have no idea how far it was or when I was moved. To the best of my knowledge, I was transported there the same day but that is not a certainty. I do remember hearing airplane motors, sometimes just idling and other times revved up until their sound died out, like a dying echo. I was on a cot or litter right next to the side of the tent. The wind must have been blowing pretty hard because the curtain side of the tent kept flapping across the end of my cot and hitting my exposed feet. When I was aware that someone was nearby, I would ask them to pull the blanket down over my cold feet. I vaguely remember this scenario happening several times. It was like the reenactment of a hit play and repetitious curtain calls! I really don't know how long I lay there but eventually I was aware of being loaded into an airplane.

I guess I was periodically given something for both pain as well as infection. I have always more or less over reacted to medications; even when taking a simple sleeping pill my body would want to sleep for days and days. Nevertheless whatever they gave me or whatever the frequency, I can't say I had terrible pain. My greatest problem was breathing and I was so weak I didn't feel like I could lift the blanket covering me. One thing for sure, I didn't wake up when we took off or during the flight.

I suppose the sound of relative silence woke me or the fact we had landed and there was no movement. I did realize there was a lot going on around me. My eyes barely opened, little more than a slit. They seemed to burn and the light made my head ache. Several somebody's un-strapped my litter as I tried to see who and what was going on. As I was lifted up there was a German uniform at the end of the litter. My mind spun in a state of weird confusion – was I still a prisoner? Am I dreaming? As I was carried to the exit door of the plane the German soldier turned around and when he did, there were great big PW letters stenciled on his shirt. Rapidly the emotion and trauma I had experienced moments before reverted to a complete opposite state of relief. The world seemed right again, even in the tangles manufactured by war. I was awake

to know my body was in USA hands and maybe I would be able to rejoin my outfit again. Then everything went dark again – I was out of it!

I have no memory of what was happening to me in the time period from being carried off the plane to waking up and finding myself on an operating table in Verdun, France. I recall hearing a voice say this may hurt a little, referring to the anesthetic injection I was about to receive. I vaguely remember very bright lights and what I now know was the white masked surgeon as he leaned over me. I was finally getting my right lung repaired and inflated as well as other injuries that required the hands of a skilled surgeon. I didn't know up to that point how serious my wounds were. In the course of recovery I was told that the bullet that hit me apparently was what we called a dum dum bullet. It wasn't like a pointed armor piercing bullet but was round. This type of shell caused considerable more damage to my body in that it more or less bounced around rather than passing straight through. In my case, as I was crawling it entered my upper back, slightly chipped my spine, went across and downward, striking in my rib area, piercing and deflating my lung and then exited going upward, tearing away muscle and flesh on my right side beneath my arm.

When I finally woke up I was in a comfortable hospital bed with clean white sheets and I could freely breathe again! The doctor came around shortly after I came to and told me what they had to do. He told me I should eventually recover with some remaining disability but by and large I was fortunate to still be alive. I remember him giving me a handful of small paper bags to blow up when I felt like it. This would strengthen my repaired lung. When I asked about returning to my unit he looked at me with a sort of negative grin and said: "no way L.T., you will be going home as soon as you are able and we can arrange a state side ride for you." I should have been elated over what he said but I still wanted to get back to my outfit. With that roadblock firmly in place, I started blowing up paper bags and regaining strength.

Considering both the fury and active habits of a veteran soldier, when you are suddenly stove up in a bed there's a certain panic that comes over you. All those little things you normally do so easily become tough, if not impossible to do by yourself. I felt I had to write my folks and let them know I was okay. By now they would have received a telegram telling them that I had been wounded or maybe they were told I had been captured or maybe even killed. I asked for and was

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given some writing paper and a pen. I was so weak it took me two days to write that letter. I was determined to make my handwriting appear as normal as possible while I assured them I really was okay. Getting the letter off to them made me feel better. My not knowing what they had been told was obviously not on the same level of their concern but the important thing was that we shared and cared in our love for one another.

I kept blowing up those little paper bags; I was tempted several times to blow one up and pop it but somehow I resisted the temptation! In the early days of my recovery, blowing up paper bags was the high point of my day and if I had popped one they just might have taken this momentous time away from me. And, I wasn't too sure that I was strong enough yet to pop one and besides the whole idea was to strengthen my lung.

One day, to my surprise, I received a letter from J.B. Olinde. He was one of our original LSU ROTC who, with me, was assigned to Company "H." He was given an 81mm mortar platoon. His letter was mostly about the company and unfortunately did not have much good news. He did say I had been promoted to 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. The letter went on to say they found my jeep and trailer, full of bullet holes as well as the jeep and trailer that burned. He was now the CO in that St. Clair was wounded a day or so earlier. From the tone of his letter it seemed our company and the entire 253<sup>rd</sup> was taking a beating. I read that letter so many times it's a wonder the writing didn't fall off!

As the days passed I begin to feel much stronger. There was one thing that I was really tired of - a bedpan, which I was forced to use because I didn't have the strength to get out of bed by myself. One night I decided I was going to get up and go down to that toilet closet by myself. As I got out of bed I felt pretty confident I could make this necessary trip. Well, I got there okay but when I tried to get up I just couldn't and this presented problems. First, at night the medical staff was mostly French Nuns with big white headpieces. I sat there for quite a while and finally had to knock on the door. Being it was night and not an expected problem, to say the least, I had to knock several times until one of those fine females stood outside the door speaking in French. She finally surmised the situation and appeared shortly with wheelchair and male orderly. With their help I struggled to get in the chair so she could wheel me back to my bed. There has never been a more embarrassing moment in my life.

When my doctor came doing his morning thing he really put it down on me. Today that episode is humorous but back then that impetuous act didn't help my recovery one bit. Little by little my body repaired

itself and as I mended my doctor favored me by loosing me from what seemed an eternity of staying in bed by putting me on a light exercise routine. He kept a pretty close eye on my progress, frequently checking my breathing, obviously concerned about improvement in my right lung. Satisfied that I was doing well, he expanded his permission and actually insisted that I walk a little more each day, not limiting myself just to the area around the hospital but as I grew stronger, to go sightseeing in this old historic town of Verdun. I fully intended to follow his directions but as is usually the case, I learned that I was due to be transported to a designated recover area close to Marseilles where I would remain under medical supervision until such time as the hospital ship would become available to transport me, and lots of guys like me back to the U.S. of A.

I managed to do a little sightseeing. I had read about Verdun many times. It played a prominent role in WWI and there was a kind of mystic air about it. I didn't have the luxury of additional time for any purpose there, so I left the site of my recuperation, heading to another medical haven. I was beginning to feel really good; I could take deep breaths without coughing and my strength was continuing to improve daily. The going home flame was starting to burn in a big way. Not that there was a secret about when we might sail, the fact was no one knew. My immediate interest centered now in the present. We arrived at the recovery area near Marseilles which was a city named Aix. We more or less shuttled between two sites, the hospital and what had been a fancy hotel. Marseilles was only about 40 or 50 miles away but the wait in Aix turned out to be an OK French treat.

For the first time I had the opportunity and time to see and get a feel of what war-free France was like. I was feeling pretty good and after the doctors at the hospital checked me out in the mornings I was free to get up and go as much as I wanted to. I obviously wasn't physically able to go prancing around but by pacing myself, I could leisurely stroll around and enjoy what Aix had to offer. A fellow 63<sup>rd</sup> Division officer, Captain Pilla, the recent CO of Company "E" 253<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, like me, was capable of roaming around but on a more limited basis than me. He had been shot in the throat and could hardly talk. The guys in his company called themselves "Pilla's Guerrillas." The doctors assured him he would eventually make a substantial recovery and be able to speak in a manner that wouldn't unduly attract attention. We were both from Louisiana. He was a true

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Cajun from the southern part of the state and we quickly became good friends, sharing the many things we had in common.

A rather unique thing we enjoyed was the sidewalk cafes. They placed tables and chairs on the sidewalk in front of the permanent building, and some had bright umbrellas to offer shade from the sun when it was deemed practicable. We learned pretty fast what drink to order! They even had a form of ice cream, but we didn't feel comfortable eating civilian food; besides we had the best chow at both the hospital and the hotel. We did attempt to converse with the townspeople but most spoke very little English and we spoke very little French. Anyway, our efforts were rewarded with smiles and hardy handshakes. We felt comfortable in the middle of a town that exhibited friendship even though we weren't doing the greatest job in the area of language communication.

We were told there was music and dancing several nights of the week at a large arbor-like building near the heart of town. After eating our evening meal, Pilla and I made our way there. Here was the side of the French that signaled the release of pent up emotions that had smoldered under the heels of the German occupation. There were several groups that alternated playing what resulted in the continuous flow of music. There didn't appear to be any slow ballads or love songs, rather all moving waltzes or tantalizing lilt. The accordion was far and away the predominate instrument. In fact, I counted three or four in one of the groups. There were violins, string basses, harmonicas and even one or two flutes. There was an old upright piano on the elevated stage that was used by several groups. The people danced and occasionally the vast majority of them would breakout singing a song that seemed to have some special meaning to a Frenchman. This was the France I had always pictured; the gaiety, the music that to me had that typical French sound mixed with their smiles and a special kind of carefree air. I was glad I had the opportunity to be there at that time – to see their faces and even share their sense of country.

I struck out on my own once in a while, wandering through the narrow streets that reminded me of the French Quarters in New Orleans where the automobile had to give way to the streetcar on the narrow streets. Merchants in Aix didn't have extensive inventories, and what they did have to sell would have to be termed shelf worn. Nevertheless there are some things we had to have, and a dated something is better than nothing. American GI's are a charitable bunch, sharing much of the wealth they possessed, particularly with children.

They had reasonable access to the kid's big time favorite – chocolate candy, but had to be careful not to become a Pied Piper. Cigarettes were another wanted item supremely appreciated by the populace. They were far and away more valuable than currency. If we stumbled on something we wanted to buy, the price was usually determined by cigarette exchange.

It was quite obvious that it was going to be some time until the normal supply of civilian goods could be established, so until that time came to pass, GI's buying and selling was mostly by barter. How the populace conducted buying and selling among themselves was another matter. There was little, if any, manufacturing of goods so it was like a holding pattern with everyone participating. As I made my way around town, I came to marvel at the stamina and more than ever was glad we were allies. They had been through the fire and withstood all the evils suffered by a conquered nation. Through it all they had become stronger and more resolute in preserving the dignity of man, not with material things but in the sanctity of the human soul and the value of life. There I was in the middle of it, in a front row seat. I saw a people lashed by war say “we lived through it and we licked it.”

About the middle of June the order came – a mixture of ambulances and trucks made it's way to Marseilles, winding through the streets to the docking area where we boarded a hospital ship. I regret I don't remember the name of it. I was permitted to stand at an advantage point toward the front where I was able to watch as our guys gingerly made their way on, or were carried on and I could not help but think back to that cold December 8<sup>th</sup> morning when the 63<sup>rd</sup> Division landed there. In the seven months since that morning I had lived a lifetime. Many of my friends, including all too many of the old LSU ROTC guys, would never see the light of day again, much less see home. I couldn't help but ask myself why I was still alive and they weren't. Everyone who goes to war and survives had to learn to deal with that equation in his own way.

It took the greater part of the morning to complete the loading and finally get underway. It didn't take long to note the vast difference between this hospital ship and the Liberty-type ships we came over on. As we made way out of the harbor, I remained at my advantage point looking back at Marseilles as it slowly faded in the distance. When we were on our own, the ship didn't pitch and roll even on a not too calm ocean. There was a big side benefit – little or no seasickness going home. There was already more than an ample supply of

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sickness aboard this vessel.

Throughout the rest of the day we got acquainted with our quarters as well as meeting our new shipmates plus we donned life vests in an emergency drill. As it turned out, Capt. Pilla were assigned to a cabin with Captain Rogers from California. He had a severe lower back injury that required his wearing a brace. Our personalities jelled which made the return voyage a pleasant experience. There was a nice, comfortable dining area and unlike the trip coming over the food was excellent. The only thing boiled to eat was an egg, if that was what you wanted. There was small exercise room that Rogers made good use of. We could hardly wish for better weather. The war had come to an end in May and there was no fear of submarines. There wasn't a whole lot to do on board and consequently, I was asked to serve as the ship's entertainment officer.

I actually scrounged up what I called a "shorty" piano. It didn't have the conventional 88 key board and was short a full octave. We found the sound system, including a microphone, a passable turntable and a considerable record library. We had a bulletin board where we posted a daily activity schedule including talent show tryouts. We set a specific time for the daily morning and afternoon rest periods when the music voted as favorites were played throughout the ship. Ballots were passed out and collected each day. Unfortunately we didn't have records of every request but we had many of them. We ended up with a lot of talent gleaned from the tryouts and the daily talent show provided a big variety of doings. There were vocalist, tap dancers, whistlers, comics and pianist. There were quite a number on board who played music instruments that we didn't have, but the talent shows were big hits with a payoff of candy bars to the daily winner.

I found myself engrossed in the numerous chores I had created for myself. In one sense of the word, I over extended myself; on the other hand my activity didn't allow boredom and I felt I was doing something worthwhile. I did find time to build on my relationship with both Pilla and Rogers, particularly with Pilla. His voice seemed to be improving but it may have been I was just getting used to it. As with everyone on board, there were periodical medical checkups. I still had some difficulty in breathing. I learned to compensate for this by the simple act of going at a pace commensurate with my ability to breathe. When I toured around the ship, visiting and chatting with guys far less fortunate than me, it wasn't too hard to accept my physical impairment.

We were told we would be landing in New York on July

2. Other than having to properly store the entertainment gear there wasn't very much preparation required. I don't know if they actually planned to arrive in the morning, but that is what happened. We were passing the statue of Liberty in the early dawn, and I was overcome emotionally. There was a sense of patriotism – a feeling that America acknowledged the sacrifices made by the men on this hospital ship. Then things got even more emotional! As the ship moved in further and further the sounds of whistles, horns and bells ricocheted over every inch of the vast harbor, bouncing off ships, buildings and everything in sight.

Then before we had a chance to catch our breath, huge fountains of water appeared all around us. There were dozens of boats around us spouting enormous water sprays in the air. It was like the 4<sup>th</sup> of July! Ironically it was July 2 – two days early. This homecoming event was something special to us. Our less wounded helped get those topside who were not able to make it without help. This was the biggest salute a soldier would ever receive and every GI aboard deserved the honor to both see and be seen. The sounds and the water sprays melded with the music of what must have been a 200-piece band at the pier where we ultimately docked. My eyes must have been totally red by that time, as were those of everyone there. The band continued playing for the longest time and we all stayed, watching and listening until they marched off.

A different sound wasn't long in coming as military ambulances and trucks arrived to transport us to our respective installations. Pilla, Rogers and I were sent to Camp Shanks. We got there in the late afternoon and went through the usual paper processing mill and, were given billet assignments, then told we were free to do pretty much anything we wanted to do on July 4<sup>th</sup>. However, we had to be back at camp July 5 at which time we would receive departure orders specific to our destination. The three of us made our way over to the PX to pick up some essentials. I located a telephone and placed a call home. Mom answered and was so excited she could hardly speak. I assured her I was okay and eager to get home. I promised to call when I got to whatever my final destination was. Then we made our way to the officer's quarters and subsequently enjoyed the taste of a meal prepared on American soil for the first time in a long time. We decided to rest the next day, make it a threesome and go into New York City on the 4<sup>th</sup>. We had a great deal to celebrate and the 4<sup>th</sup> of July seemed most appropriate.

TO BE CONTINUED WITH THE NEXT ISSUE OF  
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