

April 2, 2004

## A MEXICAN IN THE USA ARMY DURING WORLD WAR II

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### DECLARATION OF WAR

I was a student at the University of Colorado, in Boulder Colorado in 1941, the year that marked the entry of the USA into the war. After a good all night party, I failed to get up early the next morning. I was sleeping in the Sigma Nu house dormitory, and when I woke up rather late, the first thing I did was to turn my radio on, hoping for some good music, but instead all the radio stations were broadcasting the now famous President Roosevelt's speech, declaring War on Japan. The date was December 7, 1941, and the American Navy Pacific fleet had been wiped out by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor.

Upon hearing the broadcast, I wanted to speak to whomever was around, but all my fraternity brothers were in the basement having breakfast. I ran downstairs yelling as loud as I could that we were at war, but no one believed me, until they also heard the radio broadcast. By the way, we did not have televisions in those days.

The next morning, a Monday, I traveled with other Sigma Nu's to Denver to the Government Recruiting Office. We all wanted to immediately volunteer, and join one of the services. Several of my friends were accepted, but in my case, they said sorry, we can't accept you, because you are not a USA citizen.

School after Pearl Harbor was a sad place to be. With so many fellows going to the services, the University looked empty. My fraternity definitely became more than half empty, even before the scholastic year was over. I definitely was not happy in school and told my Dad, that I wanted out. My father was angry, and wanted me to stay in school, so I made an attempt to enter Illinois for the summer, but my record was not good enough, and I was not accepted. With no reason to remain in the USA, I returned to Mexico, where after a lot of talking and arguing, I convinced Dad that I really wanted to get into the USA's Air Force.

My Father, even though he really was against my entering any of the services, decided that if that was what I wanted most, that he would help me do it. After trips to the USA embassy, and talking to many people, the answer to my problem became apparent, and a relatively easy thing to do, so long as my Father was willing to help. The solution was to return to the USA with a residence Visa, versus the student visa I had enjoyed, and that change would subject me to being drafted. In order to get the Visa, my father had to prove that he could support me, and that I would not become a government charge. The paper work that followed, was finalized with Dad having to pay around \$500.00 DIs for the Visa. I have always maintained that my Father paid Uncle Sam to get me in the USA's army.

I do not remember the date when I returned to the USA, choosing Champaign, Illinois as my place of residence, but I still have my Registration Certificate card dated July 14, 1943. While waiting to be drafted, I got a job in an ice making factory. The pay was little, but was enough for rent, food, and entertainment. The job in the ice factory consisted in taking large ice blocks weighing maybe a couple

of hundred pounds? (its a guess), and cutting them into pieces I could lift, about fifty pounds, which I would place in a machine that would chop them into small pieces, about the size of an ice cube, and then, I would fill large bags that would be delivered to the local bars or restaurants. I do not remember how much I earned in the ice factory, but it was enough to pay my rent, food and pleasures.

Aunt Marie who lived in Champaign made up for any food shortages I might have had, and kept me well and happy. During this time I met a girl whose name was Jane Goodsill. Jane worked at Chanute Air Field, and was a member of the American Red Cross. Jane became a good friend, and with her I shared many an evening of laughter and fun. Jane lived in the same rooming house where I lived, and that is the way I got to know her. I remember riding a bicycle built for two with Jane, plus many nights at the local bar, having a beer, and chatting away. I lost contact with Jane after the War, and only hope she had as interesting and fruitful a life as I have had.

## INDUCTION INTO THE ARMY

Somewhere among my papers is the notice from Uncle Sam, that I had been drafted, and to report to Chicago Illinois for Enlistment. While waiting to be drafted, I did try to enter the USA Air Force. I took the test, something like a two hour test, which much to my delight I passed. I was one of a few fortunate candidates that made the grade, and I received papers advising me that I had been accepted as cadet in the USA Force. Its interesting to note that I failed to pass at the University of Colorado, the previous two years, and yet I passed the Air-force entrance exam without any trouble. The exam was about a two/three hour one, and it was quite complex. There must have been close to a hundred young fellows that took the exam, but only a dozen of us passed. Shortly after my first notice that I was accepted in the Air Force, I received a second one, informing me that I was rejected because of my Mexican Citizenship. I was very upset, and visited the British Consulate in Chicago, where I offered my services to the Royal Air Force.

My father traveled to Chicago on business, so I got to visit with him before I had to report for Army service. While visiting the Zenith Radio factory, to see Mr. Eugene McDonald the President, who was my fathers partner, he started to give me a very small camera, a MINOX, which at the time as I understood it, was a Spy camera. Unfortunately, he changed his mind, and took the camera back. McDonald said that if found on me, the authorities could have given me problems, he however, gave me a wonderful Zenith transoceanic radio. McDonald, Dad, and I went to the YAR restaurant that evening. The restaurant was owned by a Russian, (former Prince) who joined us for a celebration drink, or should say drinks. After each drink, we threw the glasses against a large fire place where they shattered. I had never done that before, a very crazy Russian custom, but interestingly, a lot of fun.

While all the above was happening, the draft took effect and on October 1, 1943, I had to report to the Army authorities in Chicago Illinois, and was sent to the nearby Camp Grant for my initial taste of Army life. Much to my surprise, the entire cadre was made up of Nisei Japanese. We were at war with the Japanese, and the first faces in USA uniform I saw, were Japanese, and they were very tough. I was glad to leave Camp Grant after about one week of being there.

From Camp Grant we were sent via train transport to Camp Fannin, Texas, where we completed the 17 week training course required to become an Infantry soldier. Camp Fannin was near Tyler, Texas, and in the middle of the largest rose flower growing area in the world. The camp if I remember correctly was an Infantry Replacement training camp. In other words we were trained to use all the

weapons available to an infantry soldier. We learned the use of the Garand M1 rifle, not only to load it and fire the weapon, but to take it apart with a blind over my eyes. The same was true of the machine guns, both the 50 caliber and the 30 caliber water jacket weapon. We also learned to use hand grenades, and mortars. Accordingly, we could have become a machine gun operator etc.. but in my case I just became a rifleman. Which is what I would have wanted had I had a choice, thus, I was happy on that score. Later as we neared the Metz fortifications and Siegfried Line, we were taught demolition, and actually had to place a couple of sticks of dynamite, with a fuse, which I had to light and walk away from the explosion as opposed to running away. We were instructed in using different explosives, not just dynamite.

As you may imagine, being from Mexico, and in Texas was not the most convenient thing that could have happened to me, but there I was, with nothing to do but to accept my fate. Not many fellows befriended me, and I did not try to make friends with any, but I got along fine by myself, and I must say, that no one tried to either abuse, mistreat or take advantage of me, so I lived through the 17 weeks without any problems. Every week I went to Tyler by myself, where for \$1.50 I got myself a T-bone steak, and a piece of either apple or cherry pie a la mode. The people of Tyler were not friendly nor happy with so many soldiers nearby, and many places in town were out of bounds for us.

Training was tough, having to dig many holes, jump many obstacles, and march 20 miles hikes with full packs and ammunition, and many times in the rain. During that time I had many a blister in my feet, and hands. It seems like I was hungry all the time. The Army contrary to what some people say, actually fed us very well. The food quality was the best, although sometimes its preparation was not as good as it could have been, but we got plenty, and none of us got sick. After a full meal, I would go straight to the PX, where I would buy a quart of ice cream. I do not remember the names of anyone in the service with me at Camp Fannin, except one, of another Mexican young fellow, who was always afraid to say he was Mexican, and or speak Spanish. Perry always said that his Mother and Father were from Spain, which I found hysterical. Perry, I am sure was Mexican, as well as his parents. Perry spoke Spanish like a Mexican and not like a Spaniard.

While at Camp Fannin, and shortly after I arrived there, I was notified to present myself to the Captains office. Wondering what I had done wrong, I found myself among a group of about eight soldiers, all none US citizens. We were told that we were there for the opportunity to become US citizens if we chose to do so, by taking the oath of allegiance. All in the group, except myself, choose to become US citizens. The Sergeant in the office was not happy with me for my refusal, but my Captain understood. His only comment was that should I be captured by the enemy, I might not have recourse to the rules of the Geneva Convention, and be shot as a spy. I told him I would chance it. One of the fellows, a German Jew told me that he wished he was as proud of his nationality as I was. I was proud, and continue to be proud of my Mexican birth. It is what I am, and whom I am.

Also while at Fannin, I received a notice from the Royal Air Force that my application had been accepted. I discussed the matter with the Captain who told me that if my wish was to enter the Royal Air Force, that I could be discharged from the Army, but that it would take a long time . I choose to forget the whole thing and remained where I was. I am probably alive today, because of that decision.

When training ended, I got a furlough, and visited my parents in Mexico City for a glorious two weeks. I returned to the United States via train (flights between both countries were in its infancy). From Mexico City I traveled directly to Fort Mead, located in Maryland. I was glad my destination was

Fort Mead, because it meant my final destination was Europe, and not the South Pacific where war was being waged against Japan. Soldiers had priority for any available seats on the train traveling in the USA. Unfortunately, in my car and near me, was a very pregnant young lady. I just could not let her stand, so I gave her my seat. I stood for about five hours, after which I was able to sit next to the pregnant lady. After a while, she placed her head on my shoulder and fell fast asleep. Not being able to move for fear of waking her up, was worse than standing up. At the end of the train trip I was exhausted.

I do not remember exactly how long I was in Fort Mead. I vaguely remember getting a pass to Baltimore and attempting to locate a girl that I had met in Mexico, but the search was fruitless. At Fort Meade I had my first and only experience of having something stolen from me. My father had given me a beautiful knife, that I had planned to tie up in my right leg near my ankle, unfortunately after returning to my bunk I found my small carrying bag had been opened and the knife stolen. The incident left me with a very bitter taste, and never trusted any other soldiers, except for my later buddies, Joe and Ray.

## SHIPPING OVERSEAS

From Fort Mead, we traveled directly to New York, our port of embarkation, and in my case boarded a liberty ship named 'The George Goethal'. In the ship we were crammed like sardines, in cabins with tiers of beds, one on top of the other, with a very small space between them. I don't remember how many tiers of beds in my cabin, but there were many. Our ship was one of many forming a large convoy, headed by the Battleship Texas. There were scores of ships all around us, hundreds of ships of War, as well as other Liberty ships like mine, carrying troops, many thousands of troops.

The convoy took 17 days to cross the Atlantic and reach Ireland, our first Port of call. The weather was okay for a while, but got rough, making a lot of us sick. I recall seeing the Battleship Texas completely disappear from sight, and a few minutes later totally reappear. Those waves were enormous. We were fed twice a day, in the belly of the ship. In the morning they gave us boiled eggs, which is all I remember, because I never made it to the tables. As I walked down the stairs to the bottom of the ship, the first thing you noticed was the strong smell of boiled eggs, and that, plus the movement of the ship, made my stomach churn, and got the urge to throw up. I ran upstairs, making it to the first railing, where I relieved myself, being careful not to throw up against the wind. I don't remember what we were fed for dinner, but am sure it wasn't good. I probably skipped most meals. I must have lost many pounds during that crossing, because my pants were falling off, and I had to tie my belt tightly, but I survived.

During the voyage, only once, we came close to having a German submarine attack. We had many drills with the alarm going off, but as I said only once, it came close to being real. Apparently, German submarines had either been sighted, or heard, and a couple of destroyers broke from formation, and scrambled all over the place. After a few minutes calm returned.

Like a fool, I did not take any good books with me, so most of the time I was bored, except the few times we played CRAP. I had played the dice game in high school, so was well acquainted with it, and besides I did not care if I lost my monthly Army wages, which only amounted to about \$21.00. Accordingly, with my experience, and no fear, and lots of luck, I won close to \$3,000 Dlls. and felt,

very rich.

Upon arrival in Ireland, the Army brass formed a detail to unload the officers baggage. We were in Belfast, Ireland, and I was asked or actually told, to become a part of the detail. We stayed in Belfast for a couple of days and got to walk a bit, seeing some interesting things, such as a Scottish Officer dressed in Kilts, and a lot of people, (civilians) with sad faces. We stayed in a huge Barracks that easily held 500 troops. The bathrooms did not have any toilets. Instead, the floor had a place to put your feet, and a hole in between, where you could defecate if your aim was good. Here we were in Europe in a country much older than ours in America, but in my mind far more backwards than us, (I was thinking mostly of Mexico).

During the first night in Belfast, I heard a lot of commotion outside, and when I investigated what was going on, I found a very young pretty Irish gal (she looked about 15 years old) taking on, all the soldiers that were willing to have sex with her. At least 10 soldiers took her to task, one after the other, and the act took place inside a Sentry Booth, about the size of a phone booth, in a standing position. To this day, I still find that sordid event hard to believe.

#### TRAINING IN ENGLAND FOR THE INVATION OF FRANCE

We boarded another ship, sailing to Glasgow, Scotland, where we were loaded on a troop train, which took us to the South Western area of England, to a Camp where we lived in tents large enough to accommodate eight beds. The time of the year must have been late February, with beautiful days but extremely cold nights, the coldest I have ever felt. The nights were not dark. We could play cards outside of our tent until one or two am, with enough light to see what we were doing. We made our own mattress by stuffing a burlap bag with straw. It was so cold that I never took my clothes off. The Army provided two blankets to ward the cold, but I added my overcoat, and still felt cold. While in England we had many a 20 mile march with full packs and riffles. We got to see a lot of beautiful country. During rest periods, sitting on the ground overlooking the rolling hills, the colorful ground reminded me of a pretty bed quilt that some ladies make, using color material patches. It was incredibly beautiful.

While in this camp, which was somewhere near Taunton I met a couple of interesting characters, one of which became my best friend. His name was Raymond Johnson, a graduate lawyer, who had worked for the Lend Lease Authority in Washington, D.C., I am sorry to say that no other detail is known by me about Ray. The other person was an Englishman, who at that moment was a private in the US Army. This gentleman told us some interesting tales, which I have no reason to doubt, tales about being part owner of the shipyard in Scotland where the Queen Mary was built, in addition to being the personal horse ridding instructor to the two young Princes Margaret and Elizabeth. I do not remember his name, but he was quite a guy, and quite handsome. He said that he traveled to Argentina several times, to purchase horses for the Royal family. Before we left the camp where we were training for the invasion that was going to take place in the very near future, this gentleman left our group, and the next thing we learned was that he had been transfered to Intelligence.

Both Ray and myself were bored to death, with nothing but training, and more training. The money I had, was burning in my pocket and after several attempts to get a pass to London, which were denied, Ray decided, and I agreed, to visit London on our own, but before doing that, we would stop in Barnstable on the West Coast where Ray knew a family (a lady and two daughters, he had met in

Washington, when he worked for the Lend Lease Act) who had moved to Barnstable to avoid the London bombing. Ray thought it would be great to invite the two girls to accompany us to London. Somehow Ray got hold of two blank passes, and after Ray falsified the Captains signature, we then had two passes to visit London, and were going to be AWOL.

We left camp early one morning on foot, and by crisscrossing through the country avoiding roads so that we would not be seen by the Military Police, we reached a farm, where I first learned just how nice, though, and resolute the people of England are. Very strict rationing was in force in England, however, these farmers were willing to share with us whatever they had. We thanked them and refused everything they offered except bread which was the one item they had more of. These people were eating grass for salads. Each was entitled to a cube of butter per month that measured one inch across. During the hike, I had to jump into a ditch to avoid being seen, and my hands and forearms touched some plant that gave me a burning sensation and immediately covered my arm hands with by large blisters. Fortunately the blisters and burning sensation disappeared after an hour or so. Eventually we reached a railroad station, bought our tickets to Barnstable and were off in our adventure. A couple of Military Police climbed on the train, asked for our passes, and said, have a good day, and left us be.

After a few hours we reached our destination, and without too much trouble, found the home of Ray's friends. The Mother and one of the girls received us with a lot of warmth, but the other girl (the younger one and not as pretty as her sister) was rather serious and not friendly at all. This family which I wish I could remember their name, had already suffered as a result of the War, having lived in London and the London blitz. With the Mothers permission, we took baths which was like being in heaven. In Camp all we got was cold showers. That evening I spent some of my many dollars in a pub, where I bought drinks for everyone there. When we got home, we had drunk a lot, were tired and went straight to bed. The next morning we went horse back driving on the beach. That was a first for me, and I really enjoyed it, however, I noticed that the older sister was a bit of nutty. I learned she had lost her English husband in the War (a pilot), and had suffered trauma in the London blitz. Joan as I remember her name seemed to take pleasure in hurting the horse she was ridding, by striking him hard with her ridding stick. She also tried to do the same to our horses, until I got fed up and decided I had enough, and took my horse back to the stable. By the way, the younger sister did not go horse back ridding.

That afternoon, two MP's arrived at the residence and asked for our passes. The MP's saw the passes, looked at us, and said enjoy your pass. We thought we had made it, and were planning accordingly, until later that same day the MP's returned and arrested us. We learned that the younger sister had called the police and turned us in. The police in a Jeep took us to jail, which looked like an old Castle. The jail, was made of stone, and the cells they put us in (we both got individual cells) had thick stone walls, and two inch thick steel doors, a pot to relieve ourselves, and a concrete slab with a straw mattress, plus a couple of blankets for sleeping. Before locking us in, they drove us to the nearest Army Camp and fed us. The next day early in the morning we again went to the Camp and had a good breakfast, after which the MP's drove us back to our Camp.

I can't begin to tell you how angry our Captain was. References were made to the fact that we were the only pair with College backgrounds, (Ray having graduated, and was a lawyer, and me with two years at the University of Colorado) but obviously hadn't learned a thing. Our punishment was to pull heather with our bare hands. We had cleared maybe a sixteenth of an acre, when told to pack up and be ready to depart. Without complete knowledge of the events that were looming in the future, we did know that at any moment the big day would arrive, so when asked to pack up we assumed the day

was upon us. Thank God the MP's picked us up when they did. A few days later, we would not have been AWOL, but instead we would have been deserters, which in time of War calls for the firing squad, and also thank goodness that our punishment was not fulfilled, because even with the field clearing we accomplished, my hands were raw, and beginning to bleed.

## INVATION

We left Camp and boarded a train which took us to the Southampton area, where we were housed in barracks, and were not allowed to even walk outside. Every thing was hush hush. We hadn't been told anything, but we knew that our next destination would be France. Early in the morning, trucks took us to the port area, where every inch of space was taken by Army equipment. As far as you could see, there would be lines of trucks, tanks, jeeps, piles of boxes containing supplies etc..and many soldiers (thousands) and navy personnel that looked like ants moving all over the place. I had never seen so much of everything stacked in front of me. We were assembled near the water, and soon began boarding the ship that would take us across the English Channel. The navy personnel helping load the ship, had already been to France (Normandy) and gotten back. They poked fun at us and were down right nasty about what we would encounter on the coast of France. The day was June 6, 1944, and D-Day already in progress. As I mentioned, some of the navy guys had already been to France and back, and had seen what was happening. I am not absolutely sure, but I believe the type of the ship in which we sailed was an LST, (Landing Ship Tanks). However, I do not remember seeing any tanks in our ship. There were some vehicles but I fail to remember what they were.

Again we were in a large convoy, and protected by Naval vessels of all kinds. Even though the distance across between France and England is relatively short, we didn't reach shore until late in the evening of June 6, disembarking the following morning. I would like to point out that I am guessing a bit about the aforementioned date, however, I definitely do not remember being on the ship more than one evening, and I know for sure that we embarked on D-Day, however, my mind doesn't remember everything that occurred 65 years ago, and I could be a bit off on the date. I was totally unable to sleep, while on board our landing ship, the night was dark, but I could sense and feel, and dimly see many other ships, and activities going on. Sometime during the night, "Night Time Charlie", a German airplane, paid us a visit, dropping flares and a couple of bombs. I do not believe he hit anything. With the light of the German flares, I was able to see what seemed like thousands of ships, and many vehicles, of all kinds, already on the beach, plus balloons high above us, to deter the German Air Force, and lots of supplies on the beach. The noise of war was with us, you could hear the German artillery firing, machine guns firing, and our own forces returning fire, the sky was covered with tracer bullets, making it look like a fourth of July. The adventure had become real, and no longer a dream. We were now in the conflict, whether we liked it or not. I stood on deck all night long watching the tremendous spectacle, that just went on and on.

## ARRIVAL IN FRANCE

Landing in France was the most ridiculous, and bizarre occurrence that I remember. How the Army brass could have been so stupid is hard to believe. We were forced to land carrying a lot of stuff. Over our uniform we wore a garment (looked like a raincoat) that was covered in some kind of chemical material that made it heavy and very stiff and most uncomfortable. That chemical was supposed to protect us in the event of a gas attack. Under that, we wore our overcoats, and our raincoats. Additionally we had our ammunition belt, which held our canteen, medical kit and the

shovel, plus two bandoliers across our chests and two hand grenades which hung from the bandoliers; a Mae West belt, to keep us from drowning, in the event we fell in the ocean, and a gas mask. In addition to all the previously mentioned, we of course had our Garand rifle. Also we had our duffle bags plus our back packs. Can you imagine carrying duffle bags into combat? We could hardly move. Fortunately, all enemy rifle fire had been eliminated from the beach, so we did not become easy targets.

Our ship ramp was not far enough inland to keep us from stepping into the water, so when we debarked we got into knee deep water. Our boots were not water proof, so our socks and feet and legs up to our knees got wet. Once on the hard sand of the beach, we were assembled in a tight group, which in my mind was another Army stupid mistake. The beach was still being shelled, not heavily, but enough to worry hell out of us. If a shell had fallen anywhere near our group, the majority of us would have been wiped out. A place was chosen near us, where we all deposited our duffle bags. My bag contained all my belongings, including family photos, and also my Mexican passport, plus a box of goodies my father had sent me, which contained cigars, candy, lipsticks, lady stockings and lady panties. Dad had a sharp imagination and he knew I would be king with those items. They were worth a fortune. Unfortunately, all the goodies were stolen by those that handled the duffle bags. I say that because I never got them back, except for the photos and passport which I received a year later while in the Hospital.

After about what seemed too long a time, we were finally moved inland about 500 yards, which is where we began seeing dead soldiers, mostly German, but also Americans. I found it strange that some of the cadavers were turning black. We could also see gliders in the fields, some in one piece, and others smashed to bits. Parachutes were also lying in the fields, and a lot of army materials, which made the place look like a garbage dump. I wanted to retrieve a parachute, but never got the opportunity to pick one up. We were on the move.

The day was dreary and gray, with rain showers all day long, and heavy with the smell of gun powder, and death, and with destruction everywhere. As we were departing from the beach, we saw many German prisoners that had been gathered and were being sent to prison in England. For those lucky bastards, the war was over. As we walked further inland, elements of the famous 82nd Airborne Division were walking out. We understood they were returning to England, after the superb job they accomplished, by parachuting into Normandy the night of June 5, and liberating the first City in France, Saint Mere-Eglise). We reached Saint Mere Eglise, and marched through the town. There was no doubt that fighting had taken place, but major destruction of buildings was not seen. That is what I remember. All along we encountered more and more dead Germans. Sometime in the afternoon, we finally reached the area where the 90th Division was located, and where I got assigned to a squad. I immediately started digging a hole large enough for two people, so that the two of us could fully lie down, (I am 6 feet 2 inches tall) and deep enough to protect you from enemy fire. We were now new members of the 90th Infantry Division, and assigned to Co. A, 1st Battalion, of the 357 Regiment. We were all paired, and I was lucky to have Ray Johnson as my companion. By the way, I understood that we were the very first replacements for the Division, located at that time near the village of Loutres. Both ray and myself were Privates First Class. You can only go lower in rank by removing the First Class, but you know what? I was glad to be a private and was only responsible mostly to myself. I had three years of ROTC, but did not want to be responsible for someone else.

## LIFE IN NORMANDY

I had never slept in a mud hole. It seems like the rain never stopped, but in spite of being exhausted, sleep came with difficulty, so that by morning, I was exhausted. I hadn't slept on the ship coming across, and now on land, I still couldn't sleep. The noise of artillery was almost constant, with most of it falling far away, but some artillery pieces coming close enough to scare the hell out of us. We had to stand guard each night, sleeping an hour, and an hour on guard. I smoked in those days, the Tobacco Co.'s gave us full cartons for free, and in addition four cigarettes were included in each carton of rations, however, we could not light a match out in the open, nor handle a lit cigarette without covering the lit portion, for fear of being seen. In the dark lighting a match or a cigarette lighter can be seen faraway. Nights were fearsome, the slightest noise would startle us, making our imagination run wild and our hearts pump hard. I never got used to nighttime during the War. I was happy when the daylight began.

The land in Normandy, was made up of small plots, of various sizes, and surrounded by hedgerows. The hedgerows were like fences which divided the different plots of land, and were made up of soil, gathered over hundreds of years, and covered with trees, shrubs, making them solid and very high, well over six feet. Some of the vegetation growing in the hedgerows, was covered with sharp needles, or spines, making it very difficult to try to push oneself through them, into the next plot of land. Hedgerows were perfect hiding places, and were used expertly by the Germans to hide from us and to place their machine guns and mortars, in locations we could not see. The distance between hedgerows was maybe one hundred to three hundred yards.

A daily food ration consisted of three boxes about the size of a carton of cigarettes, with a can in each box, which could be cheese, scrambled eggs with ham, or meat with vegetables. Each can could be opened with a small metal bar that could twist, to open the can. After a few days, I got tired of eating cold food, so I heated the cans by hanging them over the edge of my cup, and over a flame provided by the box, which had an outer covering of wax. The flame it produced did not make any smoke, so we did not worry about alerting the enemy. Once in a long while, a mobile kitchen would be brought near us, and provide us with a hot prepared meal.

It seems like we never stayed in one spot more than one day. We were always on the move. In Normandy our travel was never too far. The famous hedgerows were only about two hundred, or less yards across. We were so close to the enemy, that you could clearly hear them talking, and of course they could hear us also. Machine gun fire was constant, and occasional rifle fire, but again, the artillery was the worse. I find it hard to describe the noise that an artillery shell makes when it travels through the air, and the loud explosion when it hits the earth or tree. Each shell sounded like an agonizing scream, similar to a goat that has been hurt. After a while we were able to recognize the caliber of the shells, and whether they were incoming or outgoing. The Germans had a famous 88 cannon, of very high velocity and accuracy, which was the most fearsome weapon the enemy had. Its scream was the most horrible one, and bad for our moral.

It was easy to distinguish the German machine guns versus ours. The German machine guns were many times faster than ours, both the handheld one's and the emplacement one's, also, they were much lighter than ours; however, ours were more accurate. We were also able to recognize, by the sound, whether tanks in the vicinity were German or American. The same is true for airplanes. We could tell the sound and often the make, of any plane overhead, specially at night time, when the Germans had the courage to fly over us. It was rare to see enemy aircraft in the daytime, we saw them, including fighting with our planes, but again, it was rare. I will for ever be grateful to our airmen, who

achieved superiority in the air. Germany previously had devastated Europe with their air force, but by the time we arrived, they were not a force to contend with, so we did not get strafed or bombed more than two or three times. I believe Germany lost its air power over Britain.

We never saw the enemy in Normandy, except when we captured them or killed them. About three days after we joined the 90th, myself and two others captured 14 Germans, or at least they were men in German uniform. Among the 14 enemy soldiers, none was German. We had about six Russians, and the rest were Polish, and other Nationalities. We had a fellow in our company that had been born in France, who absolutely hated the BOSCH (Germans). He was our BAR man (the BAR was a powerful automatic rifle) and one who did not like Germans. When the prisoners first came out with a white flag, Frenchy, as we called him, began to aim the BAR at them. I immediately pushed the BAR in the air, and instructed him in strong language not to do that. In effect, I saved the prisoners life, and perhaps ours also. You never know if more enemy soldiers were there, who would fight to the death if they saw their soldiers surrendering, and being shot. Frenchy, got himself killed a few days later.

Most soldiers, including me, love souvenirs. We all looked for such things as a Luggers, Leica cameras, field glasses, swords, knives etc. We heard stories to the effect that GI's had been found hanging from trees with a Luger pistols stuck in their mouths. We also learned that both GI and German corpses were booby trapped with items that we wanted as souvenirs. I never fooled with any booby traps, I saw some, in particular I remember one on the swinging door of a fence, which had a large explosive that would have caused much damage, but we were always very careful and alert. We worried a bit about becoming prisoners, and having German items in our person, but people, including me, sometimes fail to act prudently.

Another frightening thing we had to contend with was MINES. When we arrived in Normandy, paths had been cleared for us to pass through, however, as we progressed forward, the only way we learned a field was mined, other than when signs were posted, was when one or more mines exploded, taking someone's leg or his life. Mines were bad for our moral, making us very nervous and frightened. The worse mines were the one's that rose from the ground to about knee height before exploding, badly injuring limbs, and or, removing your legs.

At nighttime, we often placed some of our food cans on wire or rope tied a few yards away from our foxholes, so that we could detect by the noise of the cans when an infiltrator or infiltrators were trying to pass our lines of defense. Patrols would be sent out every night (both by us and also the enemy). Patrols are essential to fighting a war because you can learn things, such as enemy strength, and location. Sometimes patrols were asked to bring back one or more prisoners. Often patrols got into fights, and some times they were captured or killed. I absolutely hated going on patrol. I was a wreck every time I got back to my lines. Patrols took place at night, utilizing the darkness of the night to keep the enemy from seeing us. If the night had a full moon, usually no patrols were sent out.

When we moved as a unit, we marched in single file, on both sides of the road, or path, and with lots of room between yourself and the man in front. We did this for safety reasons. When soldiers bunch up and are fired upon, specially by artillery, they stand a good chance of being wiped out. However, with plenty of room between all, the safety factor increases a lot. In all formations someone had to be up front leading, but more important, the job called for scouting the area, looking for the enemy. We all had to take turns being the lead man, and again, that is one job I hated, however, I wasn't alone since everyone hated being a scout. I had to do it about three times (in Normandy) and

fortunately, I did not get into trouble, being the first to be shot at.

Foxholes were never dug too far apart from each other, and we would communicate with the soldiers in the nearest foxhole by simply talking, if we felt safe, or by whispering, or if need be, by crawling on our bellies to the other foxhole, specially if you did not want to make any noise and alert the enemy, or by hand signals when the night light permitted us to see across to the next foxhole. If we heard something, or if we had been given instructions to pass on, along our line of defense, this is the way we did it. Again, every night we had to stand guard, and every day we had to dig a hole. It fortunately didn't happen often, but I remember days when we moved positions twice or three times, which meant we had to dig as many times. My hands and arms became very strong and my hands got full of calluses. Every night a password was given to us, so that we could challenge anyone moving about in the evening.

Unfortunately, I do not remember clearly what took place everyday we were in the combat zone, except for one very important thing, which was keeping myself from being killed. There were some fellows (not too many) who overly exposed themselves, and did things that would make one think they were looking to be killed. They were supper brave, or were simply stupid and nuts. I remember one fellow in particular who during an enemy artillery bombardment, stood up carrying his rifle and firing from the hip, while walking all along the front line. Before June was over, he had a dozen kills to his credit, but just as I predicted, he unfortunately got killed himself by an enemy sniper.

My foxhole buddy was Raymond Johnson, whom I met in our Camp in England, and with whom I made the AWOL escapade I previously described. Ray and I were together during that month of June and up to July four when we parted company. We shared a daily foxhole, went on patrols together, slept together, keeping each other as warm as was possible. Raymond did not have any extraordinary stories to tell but I always enjoyed his company, and would like to think that he also enjoyed my company. Like a damn fool, I never bothered to get Ray's address, so when we parted, it was for good. The US army is not good at helping you locate other servicemen.

I did not know it at the time, but in Normandy, we were being observed by the enemy from high ground (Hill 122), as described in the Division History. While the enemy owned Hill 122 they kept an eye on all our moves, causing many casualties among our boys. About the middle of June, the 90th became part of the 8th Corps, and assigned to a defensive position, to hopefully keep the Germans trapped in the Contentin peninsula from escaping, and rejoining their Army as well as keeping enemy reinforcements from coming to help them. We were on the Western part of the Normandy peninsula around Barneville. At the same time, other 90th units were on their way to liberate the Port of Cherbourg, which was badly needed to receive troops and ammunition, etc...I was happy that we were not sent to Cherbourg.

While on our defensive position, which lasted several days of relative calm, one day I was assigned to an observation post (by assigned I mean, that I was sent there to help protect the post) and I had a lot of fun. The couple of fellows at the post had a very powerful scope, with which you literally could see the faces of the Germans we were trying to locate. At one point one of the fellows saw a German soldier on a bicycle and decided to take him out. He radioed the coordinates to the Artillery unit he was working with, and told them to shoot for effect. The first round landed in front of the bike, scaring the German soldier to pumping the pedals as fast as he could to get away. After radioing corrections, the second shot again was off its mark and the soldier made it to safety. Frankly I was glad.

It would have been horrible to see a man literally disappear in a puff of smoke.

## LEADING OUR GROUP INTO BATTLE

All during June we were either on, or very near the front lines, always moving the Germans back, and gaining a couple of hundred yards, until around July 4, when it was our unit that lead the attack, (our very first ) with drastic results for my squad. We were informed about the attack the night before, learning that it would take place before sun-up, immediately after a heavy artillery barrage, that would last about ten or more minutes. Needless to say, the very thought of leading the attack the next morning, keep me from being able to sleep. All during the night, all I could think of was: “will I survive, will I get wounded, will I become a prisoner?”. Before dawn, when we gathered for the assault on the enemy lines, my heart was beating so hard, that it felt as if it would come out of my mouth. Also, my legs felt rubbery.

Its hard to believe how anyone in the enemy lines survived the artillery barrage they received, but survived they did, and no sooner than our barrage ended and we moved forward into the enemy lines that they began to fire back, using the dreaded “88”. We moved forward in a line, and over a hedgerow, and once in the next field, we stayed close (hugging) the hedgerow walls. Like fools we bunched up, instead of leaving sufficient space between each one of us, and no sooner than we reached the hedgerow in front of the German line, that one of their “88’s” landed among us. The impact of the “88” was closer to me than anyone else, and perhaps that is the reason I was spared. Everyone in my squad, (twelve men) was hit by shrapnel, some, with life threatening wounds, and others just bad. Ray Johnson got what we used to call a golden wound, bad enough to keep you out of the war, but not to leave you seriously impaired. Ray got hit in his left hand, and when I last saw him before he ran back to the first aid station, his hand looked like he had put it in a meat grinder. Ray was white as a sheet, very scared, as I was for him. I never saw Ray again.

I was hit in my right thigh, but did not know with what until later that day. I felt a hard blow to my thigh, as if hit with a bat. I thought perhaps it had been a piece of dirt from the shell impact, and although the blow hurt, I did not see any holes, blood, or other damage, so I did not worry. I tried to help some of the worse injured men. When the “88” shell hit, all of us were on the ground in a birth position hugging the wall of the hedgerow, trying to become as small a target as possible. The most seriously wounded fellow got hit by a large piece of shrapnel (about four or five inches square), which entered his back and out around the area of his stomach. His wound was so large that you could see his insides. Much to my surprise he wasn’t bleeding at all. I sprinkled some of the sulfa powder from his aid kit, on his wound, and went on to help another fellow, who got shrapnel through the top of his thigh, and out through the back of the leg and again into the lower part of the same leg. Very little blood was coming out the wound, and all I did was sprinkle some more sulfa powder, and await a medic. The rest of the wounded men were not as bad, but all their wound were horrible just the same.

Later that day nature called, and when I lowered my trousers, I saw that my leg was black and blue, and that I had bled in my underwear. I went to the first aid station where I was told that I had received a piece of shrapnel about the size of a small bullet. The first aid man, was against taking the shrapnel out. He said that more damage would be done by removing the piece, and suggested that I leave it alone. A dressing was put on my wound and told to keep it as clean as possible to avoid an infection. Keeping a wound clean under the conditions we were living in, was not easy, but I tried my best. To this day 60 years later, I still have the piece of shrapnel in my right leg. Before leaving the first

aid station to return to my Company, I was presented with a Purple Heart Medal, for being wounded in combat, along with a document giving details of the injury.

## LOSS OF RAY AND GAIN OF JOE

In spite of my squad being wiped out, other squads in the Company reached the objective, and were no longer where they were when I left, thus, I got slightly lost getting back, and ended with an Artillery Company where I spent the night. While with the Artillery, I was given some of their food (completely different from ours) and I thought they were some lucky bastards. The food came in large boxes, and it was delicious, not like the damn cheese cans we got. The next day, I rejoined the men of the 90th, and got myself a new foxhole buddy, along with new men replacing the one's we lost. My new buddy was named Joseph Cabral. He was short and jolly, and about twelve years older than me, which made him really old. When Joe was drafted, he had been working as a Janitor at the University of California. Joe and I hit it off very well from the first day, and were inseparable until November, when Joe caught a sniper bullet near his crotch, that put him out of action until January of 45.

Joe Cabral was helpful, because he was always calm and collected. He was not a crazy brave man, but somehow he always kept his cool, and having someone like that with me, helped keep me calm and collected. Perhaps it was his age, but I do not remember seeing him scared. I wish I could remember what happened every day we were in the combat zone, but the truth is, I remember very little. I should have kept a diary, but we were prohibited from writing one, and or, I should have written this story long ago. The mind after 65 years forgets too much. The battle I mentioned above, as the one when we lead the attack, is the one mentioned in the History book of the 90th as "The Hill, The Island and the Plains" and which we referred to, as The Battle for Beau Coudray. The Hill, was Hill 122, mentioned above, which I believe was taken by the 359. Taking the Hill was a tough battle, that claimed many a casualty, and fortunately we did not participate in it. Our battle took place in the hedgerows, below the Hill.

I will always remember Beau Coudray for several reasons. It was the first time we were leading the attack, my Baptism of Fire, which proved disastrous for my squad, secondly it lasted several days, with the Cream of the German Army counter attacking, (German crack paratroopers). I learned later from reading several books, that we were up against the German Mahlman Line, which they did not wish to loose, and accordingly fought hard to keep it. Reading the 90th History I have learned that to our right, the 79th Infantry, and the 82nd Airborne were encountering equally stiff resistance. We were fighting against the 15th German Parachute Regiment. During these days of fighting in that area, a Company of the 3rd Battalion was captured. The news of the Company's capture was very demoralizing. After about 13 days the Mahlman Line was finally broken and Beau Coudray taken for good. Eventually, the Germans were forced to withdraw, but our Regiment paid a heavy toll in that battle. It was the costliest engagement with the enemy for the 357. During the more or less six days of battle, the Regiment had 851 casualties, which included about 166 dead. Myself, as well as Ray were among the total casualties of that battle.

## BREAKTHROUGH

On about the 26th of July all hell broke loose for the Germans. That day the City of St. Lo became nothing but rubble. All day long we saw and heard our bombers (B-17's) and British bombers fly over our heads on their way to bomb St. Lo. We saw the planes fly overhead most of the day, it

seemed like there were thousands. A two mile path was opened as a result of the bombing, however, we later learned that in spite of the City's almost total destruction, that every city block had to be taken one by one, with Germans still fighting back behind every broken wall. We also learned that General Roosevelt died from our own bombardment, a fact that is not true.

On about August 5, we became part of the "Weaver Task Force", which was led by Brigadier General W. G. Weaver, the Assistant Divisional Commander, whose job was to take Mayenne as quickly as possible, as well as the bridge located there. Both Mayenne and the bridge were indeed taken quickly without any problems. On our way to liberate Mayenne, we rode about 40 miles, which I understand was kind of a record. The fight for Mayenne was minimal. Wondering around the City, myself and two other soldiers entered large building (store like) and found a large cache of liquor. There were all kinds of whiskey bottles from Britain, as well as Vodka, and Gin etc.. I calculate there were several hundred bottles all together. We of course informed our Captain, and talk about a royal screwing; all the liquor was given to the Regimental Headquarters, in addition to giving some to our Company officers. Did we get any?, not even a drop, which in hind sight was probably a good thing. I don't believe a drunk soldier is a good soldier.

Somewhere in France after the breakthrough was gained, one evening a detail of three soldiers of which I was a part, was formed, and given orders by our Captain, regarding locating and apprehending another soldier who had raped an underage french girl. The orders were specific, find and arrest the culprit, and if he resists shoot to kill. Our Captain was very angry, and you could not blame him, but shooting one of your own, was in my estimation not the correct thing to order. Anyway, we failed to locate the rapist, and by next morning we left to go to another place, and I never knew what was the ending of that bad chapter.

The breakthrough had been gained, and the German Line shattered. Thankfully we were out of Normandy and out of the hedgerow country, and into the plains of France. At this time we no longer had long marches but instead rode most of the time in Trucks, and or Tanks, and instead of advancing maybe 200 yards, we began moving miles at a time.

Quoting the History of the 90th Division, a few small battles took place as we moved along. Mayenne had fallen, as well as Le Mans. The Division took literally thousands of prisoners. In approximately ten days the Division advanced about 200 miles, and fortunately only suffered about 300 casualties. There were not any defined front lines, but only just pockets of resistance. We heard through the grapevine that the British forces were stuck trying to take Caen. We had a small newspaper, The Stars and Stripes, which provided us with news. I particularly liked the cartoonist of the paper, Bill Maulding whose caricatures were out of this world. I wish I had saved them all.

Immediately after Mayenne, the 357 was chosen to spearhead the attack towards LeMans, located about 140 miles away, a distance that was covered in about three days. It became obvious that the Germans were by now disorganized, because resistance was minimal. We still received their artillery every day, and without failure Midnight Charlie came over us every night. The German Air Force rarely flew during most days. We continued to travel by truck, moving further into France and approaching Germany. I remember at one stop, we had about three Sherman tanks near us, and suddenly German artillery began falling near by. There wasn't any place to hide, or a ditch to jump into, so I chose to get underneath one of the tanks. While there, I hoped that the tank wouldn't move, but was ready to crawl quickly out in the event he did move. The German barrage did not last long. On another occasion, I remember being deployed on the highest point of a fairly high hill, and looking

down on a large Valley where German tanks were assembling (about twelve) and advancing in our direction. Along with the German tanks, we could see many soldiers, moving on either side of the tanks and behind them.

This was the first time I had seen a German soldier moving towards us. In Normandy, we never saw any. We could hear them talking, but they were not visible. As a matter of fact, I had not even discharged my weapon up to this time. In Normandy some guys fired their rifles at the hedgerows, but not at a person. We of course had seen Germans but only as prisoners or dead. The group coming at us was about a quarter a mile or less away. The Valley was, as I said quite large, just open space, without trees, so we could clearly see the enemy. I adjusted the sight on my Garand rifle for long distance, and fired a couple of rounds, but failed to see even a puff in the ground around or near the enemy soldiers. I did not hit anything, the Germans were too far away. However, our artillery began to fire, and in just a few minutes we saw two German tanks hit, causing chaos in their ranks. From where we were, the Germans looked very small, and they began running away from the shell bursts. In another minute or so, another German tank was hit, after which they turned, and ran away. The whole show was a tremendous thrill. I have no idea how many Germans died in that encounter. No one on our side was even injured. No enemy fire was received.

Somewhere in France, (I wish I could remember the name of the town or Village) we dug in, remaining in the area a couple of days. The small town was very quaint, and situated on top of a hill, with another town, a couple of hundred yards below the hill, and with a well defined road leading down, at about a 20 degree angle. The officers with binoculars determined that no Germans were in the town down below. Thus they came to the conclusion that the town below was a no-mans land, in between the Germans and us. Our Captain wanted a detail to go down and investigate the place, why? I do not know. As far as we were able to determine, the town had no military value. Anyway, they asked for volunteers to go down in the evening, and like a fool, I raised my hand. My father should have taught me to say NO.

About three or four of us went down, and carefully found the place indeed free of Germans. We found a bakery, and entered to purchase bread. The only French money we had, was what had been given to us, (invasion money) which was completely foreign to the shop owner. He wasn't happy with our money and would not accept it. However, one of the fellows still had a dollar with him, and with it we got about four loaves of good French bread. The fellows which remained in the town up above got exited about our find, so a second trip was planned. Again we waited for darkness, and left, making sure we knew the pass word for the night.

Like the first time we went down very carefully without making noise, and ready in case we encountered an enemy soldier. When we reached the bakery, the owner excitedly informed us that a German patrol was in town, so without hesitation, we got the hell out of there and back to our unit. As we reached the edge of the town where we were staying, we encountered an outpost, with good old Sergeant Myers in charge. We were challenged, and after giving the pass word, we were told to advance and be recognized, and when we did so, Sergeant Myers hit me with the butt of his raffle, in my right eye brow, creating a cut that bled like hell. I was bleeding so badly that for a moment I could not see, the blood had covered my eye. All hell broke loose, with me at the center, and angry as all get out. Myers was drunk, and he and I were not friends, so I am sure he hit me on purpose. Without going into details, after our Captain got involved, calm came, and Myers was reprimanded. When I had an opportunity privately, I told Myers never to get in front of me during an attack.

I don't believe I have mentioned that keeping ourselves clean was a difficult job. We removed the liner from our helmets, filling the helmet with water from water jugs that were brought to us, to keep our canteens filled, and to clean ourselves. I carried a bar of soap which I put to use on my armpits, crutch, and buttocks. Fortunately, somewhere in France after we broke out of Normandy, a stop was made so that we could take a shower, our first one in months. Pipes with holes were set up in a field, with a pump connected to a water reservoir. About twenty soldiers could take a shower at a time, but there were so many of us, that we were only allowed about five minutes, to soap and rinse. We all bitched, but were happy for the chance to clean up and for the change of clothes we got. That was the only shower I saw in the in the months I was in the front, and the only change of clothes we got. Too bad they failed to give us an extra pair of socks, as I might have saved my feet.

Going to the bathroom, which was done outside near our foxholes, could be quite a chore, and a dangerous one, particularly in Normandy, where we were so near the enemy, and where they bombarded the hell out of us. When we had to go, I tried to pick a time of calm when we had a lull in the artillery fire. I was successful at all times except once, when I had to run back to my foxhole with my pants half way down. That day, the artillery was so bad, that I had to dig a hole in my foxhole to do my business. I made sure the hole in a hole was deep enough. That day in Normandy we were only one to a foxhole, so I did not suffer an indignity in front of a foxhole mate. When the German artillery subsided a couple of fox holes had received almost direct hits and sadly a couple of our GI's were dead. I was so angry after at the end of the German fire, that all I could think of was kill, kill.

Somewhere in the early days of the Normandy campaign, I remember being in a foxhole very near a French farmhouse, and early in the morning seeing Mama and Papa, plus young daughter and young son, come out of their house and defecate and urinate on the ground in front of us, without being the least bit ashamed. Of the few homes I visited in Normandy none had toilets.

Somewhere in France, (I wish I could remember names of places) we came to a stop for a couple of hours. The place was beautiful. A French farm house was on our right, with a large green lawn, and on the left of the road there was a knocked out Sherman tank that had been in the service of the French Army, whose Armored elements were nearby. It was around August 10th, proceeding north together with the 2nd French Armored Division. The tank turret was open, and I ventured on top of the tank and looked into the interior. My buddies yelled at me to be careful of booby traps, but I could see that probably an 88 had disabled the tank, but probably no one had had time to look inside or place a booby trap on it. Germans were on a full retreat at that time. The inside of the tank was a mess, but fortunately there were no cadavers. I did notice a small jewelry box which caught my attention, but no Luger guns which is what I was looking for. I entered the tank and retrieved the box, which contained a wedding ring, a bracelet, a pin, and a necklace. Everyone in my squad was mad at my luck, and asked that I share with them. I kept the ring, but gave the rest away, and avoided an argument.

While I was looking inside the tank, a young girl from the farm hose came to be with us. She must have been, maybe 16 years of age and quite pretty. About half our squad was gathered on the lawn near the French home. It was a sunny day (unusual) and we were enjoying it. The girl as I said was in her teens and it was obvious she had just taken a bath. She sat among us and tried chatting with us, but all we could do was stare at her because the young lady was without underpants, and was sitting in a manner that exposed her charms. We decided to continue on our way before my buddies and I did something wrong.

## FALAISE GAP/ENCIRCLING THE GERMAN SEVENTH ARMY

Thanks to the breakthrough out of Normandy, and the lightening speed of Patton's Army, which we were a part of, the encircling of the German Seventh Army began to take place, and I really believe from what we heard and saw, that had the British and Canadians under Montgomery, moved as fast as we did, the complete destruction of that German seventh Army would have taken place. The total encirclement of the Germans seventh Army unfortunately did not occur. The Germans fought hard and kept open a corridor open through which about 20,000 thousand escaped, however the German seventh Army was, for practical purposes destroyed. This battle named "Battle of the Falaise Gap" took place between August 15th and August 20. Never in my life (hopefully) will I ever again see the number of soldiers killed (mostly German), as well as horses. The corpses were everywhere, some dismembered, missing arms and legs, as well as their heads, others completely burned, sitting in their vehicles, or sticking out of their tanks. It was a nightmare. Our artillery really did a job devastating the German units.

As I said before, there were dead German soldiers sticking out of destroyed Tiger tanks, completely burned, or from trucks, also burned. Others left on the ground like ground meat, after being run over by one of their own tanks or perhaps one of ours. Additionally all kinds of equipment destroyed or abandoned. Quoting from the 90th History, "in a period of four days, the 90th took more than 13,000 prisoners and killed or wounded about 8,000. More than 300 enemy tanks, 250 self propelled guns, 164 artillery pieces, 3,270 vehicles, and a variety of other type of equipment and weapons were destroyed. Fortunately our loses were only about 600 killed or wounded.

We were moving North along with the 2nd French Armored Division. At one point we were headed straight for Paris, which had me all excited. The thought of possibly seeing Paris was great (If only I had the package my Father had sent me containing the female items such as stockings etc.. plus cigars, cigarettes, and candy), items worth a fortune and which were stolen. I could have had a ball with all the Parisian Mademoiselles. For a while I thought we were going to liberate Paris, but the honor of doing so was given to the 2nd French Armored Division. We did get to a small village called Petit Paris. While near Paris after its liberation, one day, as I cleaned my rifle, Sgt. Myers (a first class SOB) asked me if I had cigarettes. Even though I had two cartons of Lucky Strike's, I emphatically said NO, because I thought he wanted them. Had I said yes, I would have gotten a three day pass to Paris. Sgt. Meyers and I did not get along, so he got the best of me that day, by not telling me about the passes to Paris. Thanks to Myers, I never got to see Paris, until many years after the War.

One day, we each received two fresh oranges, and I placed one in each pocket of my jacket, saving them to eat later on. The jacket pockets were not deep enough to conceal the oranges, and half of each orange was visible. That day I walked into a French pub to hopefully get a beer, or some strong apple sider, and when the two girls attending the pub saw the oranges, all hell broke loose. They had not seen oranges in about four years. As it turned out, I ended giving the oranges to the young girls, making two young girls, very happy.

Up to now, we had been transferred to different Corps several times, and after The Falaise Gap Battle we became part of the XX Corps, and back to the Third Army under General Patton's command, where we remained. We took the beautiful city of Fontainebleau without firing a shot. This was the first

and only time that we got to march through a city (instead of ridding in trucks) with French citizens lining the street on both sides, cheering, and offering wine, hugs, kisses, and flowers. While marching through Fontainebleau, I was hoping that we would be billeted in a nice Villa, or even a simple shack, but the marching continued until we were far away, out in the open, where we finally settled for the night, and of course dug holes . We saw film crews filming the scene, and I am sure that one of the cameras pointed straight at me, and had to have caught my image, as I walked long with the members of my Company. However, I never have seen the film.

We passed the places of the First World War, such as Marne, and Chateau Thierry. We could still see the craters made by the Artillery, and parts of trenches that were dug back that many years before. It was an eerie feeling to pass through the area where another War was fought, and so many died to end all Wars. Our next city was Reims which again was taken without a fight. Reims was the Capital of Champagne, (the wine). We stayed for the night, and I got very drunk, with all the Champagne that a couple of young girls brought to us. This was not my first time drinking more than I should, but it was my first time drinking Champagne, and that time I hoped it would be my last. I do not recall ever feeling so sick. I vomited until I was blue in the face. I was not able to keep anything in my stomach for about three days. I forget the name of one of the young girls, with whom I kept in touch with for a couple of years after the War. From a distance, I did get to view the Cathedral of Reims. By the way, due to my experience in Reims, I never developed a taste for that French exotic drink, Champagne. I do not like it.

I do not remember where we were, but I remember lying down at the edge of a wooded area, (lying down to keep a low profile) when two Sherman tanks came up, and parked along side us, resulting in a barrage of German artillery. Tanks always drew fire from the enemy, and one reason why I did not like being near them. Anyway, when the artillery started, I got up and threw myself in to a small ditch for safety reasons, and ended up smearing my left arm, from my hand to my elbow, with enemy smelly, soft excrement. Some SOB German had done his business without digging a hole. I was so damn angry, that I wasn't scared anymore, I just wanted to break someone's neck. It took me a long time to finally clean my jacket sufficiently good, to eliminate the bad smell.

I do not remember the place or date, but one very dark evening, after we had more or less settled down for the night, we were asked to move, and had to hike for a long distance holding on to the man in front of me, to keep from getting lost. It was very dark dark, that you could not see anything including the man to whom you were holding on to. We were in a forest, and as we walked, tree branches hitt your face or body, and we stumbled on tree roots, as we moved through the forest. At one point I momentarily lost contact with the person in front, the occurrence probably took only a couple of seconds, but panic came upon me, thinking I was lost. The transfer to a different location took about 30/40 minutes, which seemed like an eternity. When we reached the new destination, we again had to dig foxholes.

### THIRD ARMY COMES TO A STOP

September came and of all things, the Third Army ran out of gasoline. I don't remember how many days we were stalled, but enough to give the Germans time to reorganize and prepare their defenses along the Maginot and Siegfried Lines. Quoting from the 90th History, "The Division moved to Etain near Verdun, the springboard for the push towards the fortress city of Metz. The 7th Armored was to lead the attack, followed by the 5th Infantry Division on the right, and the 90th Division on the

left. The mission of the 90th was to take Thionville, establish a bridgehead over the Moselle river, and continue towards Frankfurt-am-Main". The advance to Frankfurt never materialized.

For about a month we butted ourselves against Metz, but the enemy hung on relentlessly. The fight for Metz was a tough one. I remember climbing a hill, taking two steps up and sliding down three. The weather was lousy, with almost constant rain. The ground was wet, and when we stepped on it, we displaced the growth, and created mud. My boots were unrecognizable from all the mud that was stuck to them, as well as my uniform, a fact which made walking very difficult. Besides rain, cold weather was starting, another factor that made life in general very miserable. One morning while climbing, we came upon some German casualties. I saw two very young German kids in fancy uniforms, that had been killed. The kids were nice looking, staring at the sky, with their arms outstretched. I found out later that the fortification we were trying to take, was being used as a German officers school, and the dead kids were indeed young, probably only in their teens. The dead German soldiers reminded me of some of my high school classmates at St. John's Military Academy. What a shame, and what a waste of human beings.

One morning, (do not remember date) we were attacking the fortification above and in front of us, (I believe it was Maizieres-les-Metz) , and when we reached near the top, and at the edge of the trees, and began crossing an open field of perhaps 200 yards across, and 600 in length, the enemy opened fire with Mortars, and it was obvious they had the field zeroed in. The Mortar rounds began covering the entire field by crossing from left to right with a shell exploding about every minute and about 20 feet apart, after which the Mortars were adjusted to traverse forward about another 20 feet and moving right to left, and so on. No one was going to survive such precise shelling. As the Mortar shells exploded towards us, the Germans began a counter attack. Because of the heavy very precise shelling, we panicked and started a rather disorganized retreat. All of us ran and slid down the hill for quite a distance. Our artillery finally stopped the counter attack. I was lost, and I attempted to find my squad without luck. I found a Captain on a jeep, who gave me a ride, and took me as far as the Artillery. It was late in the day, and I decided to remain with the Cannon boys, until I could locate my outfit the next day. The food these fellows got was completely different than ours, and quite good, specially breakfast. It was not pleasant when the Cannon were fired, the noise was horrendous. I was not used to that noise, and did not sleep all night.

Next day I trekked back to my outfit, and caught HELL for my disappearance. A couple of days later I was one, of a five man crew, sent to guard a bazooka team at a road intersection. We took our position in a ditch, where we could see all movement on the road, and keeping ourselves from being seen. After an hour or so, we heard a Tank rumbling towards our position and about twenty Germans on a ruck behind it. We were definitely outnumbered, (we were only three infantry, and two bazooka men) so we allowed the tank and Germans to pass without disclosing our position, we did however inform Company Headquarters about the Tank and enemy troops, which I understand were eliminated, further down the road. After about half hour later, a beautiful German automobile ( a convertible four door Horsh ) carrying a German officer and his girlfriend and chauffeur came rambling along, without a care in the world. Our bazooka man fired, hitting the car smack in front, with the shell passing through the engine into the front and back seat. All three occupants were killed. In the rear seat we found a large box of condoms, a box of chocolates, and a lot of papers. I believe the officer was a Colonel or General. I would have taken his beautiful leather coat, but unfortunately it was covered with blood. It was a shame that the young nice looking girl had to die. War is hell.

We never were able to take Metz. We fought and suffered there for a very long time, but never had the pleasure of seeing the German fortification. However, Metz did fall, for the first time in its History, and I believe it was the 95<sup>th</sup> Division that walked through the City without having to fight for it. That is one of the many idiosyncrasies of the War.

## ALSACE LORRAINE TRIANGLE

We were in Alsace Loraine, and positioned in a wooded area with railroad tracks about thirty feet in front of us, and a clearing, in front of us of maybe 300 yards, and then more woods. At each end of the clearing and close to the trees, two enemy pillboxes were visible, separated by a space of a few hundred yards. From time to time we could see a German soldier walk from one pillbox to the other. I had not experienced seeing German soldiers walking so near, in front of us. This happened two or three times during the day. None of us fired our riffles, nor did the Germans. In spite of having the enemy visible quite near us, things were relatively quiet and peaceful. Even the artillery was quiet. At night time we could hear movement of trucks and tanks as well as voices. To avoid night German patrol surprises, we strung wires that held empty food cans, that would rattle if an intruder tripped against the wire. Additionally we spent an hour on guard and an hour off. Unfortunately, I heard that the Germans did get through the first night and were able to quietly kill one of our men in his foxhole.

On our second day in that position, and being mad about losing a one our men, I decided to fire the next time I saw a German. I had been in combat four months and had not fired my rifle directly at anyone, except for the one time far away target, which I failed to hit. This was the first time when I could clearly see Germans moving, and I decided to do something about it. After a long wait, I saw one German come out of the pillbox located on the right of the clearing and walk across to the other pillbox. My rifle was ready, with the safety pin off, and the distance all set, so I aimed slightly ahead of the walking fellow, and fired. The German soldier dropped like a lead balloon, but got back on his feet, and ran like hell. I did not fire again, so I really do not know what happened. Obviously, I probably hit him when I fired, because he fell, but hopefully my bullet did only minor damage. The truth is, that I really never wanted to kill anyone, and I feel that I never did.

As we got closer to Germany, we got to see the famous V1 rockets, which looked like a torpedo with wings, and sounded like a lawn mower. These rockets flew fairly low, and slow, so we were able to shoot at them, hoping to knock them down, and were actually successful once. The rocket fell but did not explode. These rockets were aimed at England, not at us. I understand the English Air force, as well as the English anti aircraft guns had a field day with the V1 rockets, knocking most of them out of the sky. One time, besides the one that was knocked down, we were able to make one rocket turn around, and we all cheered our accomplishment. On another occasion, I was startled by a whoosh I heard above us, and barely catching sight of a fast moving object in the sky. No one knew what had passed overhead, until the next day when we saw it, and heard it clearly. The object turned out to be an airplane without a propeller. I believe that airplane was known as the ME109, the first jet fighter that ever flew. He was much faster than our own planes, but fortunately Hitler's people only produced a few.

Far in the distance, one afternoon, we saw a rocket with a long steam or gas tail, go straight up in the sky where it disappeared. This rocket we got to know as the V2, a very fast and powerful rocket, which caused havoc in London. We observed several V2's in the next few days. When we saw them, I remember counting to about 5-10 minutes, the time it took the rocket to reach London. I believe the

Germans were fairly successful with the V2 rockets, which carried hundreds of pounds of explosives, and destroyed large sections of the English Capital, killing many civilians.

I believe that by the time we got to Alsace Lorraine, I had lost my foxhole buddy Joe. Dates and places are fuzzy in my mind. We were in a small village on the door way of a house that overlooked the town church, with the church steeple facing us. Joe was standing directly in front of me, and as stated above we both were in the arch of the door, just looking for enemies, that could perhaps be hiding the church, when suddenly a shot was fired and Joe got hit. The shot hit Joe below his waist and around the crotch area. Joe went down, and we quickly moved inside, dragging Joe with us, hopefully away from the sniper. I felt devastated, my good friend Joe had been shot. A Sherman tank moved up and fired one round at the church steeple, destroying it and the sniper. Everybody was happy, but I was sad. Joe was going to make it okay, but I just did not know exactly where he had been shot. I really did not want to know and never asked, until years later when Joe and I got together again. It suffices to say that Joe did not suffer an indignity.

Somewhere in Lorraine, we had to attack a steep hill, ( a quite high slag pile) with our Battalion on reserve. Later we heard that the men on the first wave had to fix bayonets, and hand to hand combat took place. As a result when our turn came we were told to fix bayonets (first time for me), but we reached the top of the hill without a fight. The Germans had had it, and had departed from the area in a big hurry. Again we were lucky.

We reached a city in Alsace, which I remember had the name of Nilvange, or something similar. In this city a Concentration Camp was found, and the prisoners released. The Camp had not been an extermination Camp, but you could see that all prisoners were malnourished. When we released the prisoners, they just hung around as if they had no where else to go. We were told not to feed them, a strange order, when you can see that the person near you is starving. Order or no order, that day I gave my food away. After a while the prisoners departed, and some of the locals came to visit, among the two girls, one young, maybe 18 and beautiful, and the other perhaps 25, and as good looking. We all chatted and chatted, until the day ended and dusk began. The eldest girl left, and when the young one was about to leave she asked if I wanted to go with her, and the answer was yes. I asked for the night pass word in case it was very dark and late when I returned, and asked a buddy if he would take my place as a guard for the night. Can you imagine how dumb and stupid I was to do such a personal dangerous thing, only for a young strange girl? In the Military if you leave your post specifically if you were to be on guard? The punishment in time of war is death by a firing squad. Anyway, I took the young lady home. The night was dark and the city spooky. We got to her door, when I learned she had the time of the month for a girl, so it was by-by. Fortunately, I was able to get back to my foxhole without incident. I do not believe my Captain ever knew of my escapade. Seems girls always got me in trouble, until I met Eleanore.

I recall entering a small city, (wish I could remember the name) and storming into the first home in our path. One of our soldiers, making sure there were no enemies in the home, threw a hand grenade into the basement, which busted the water lines, and flooded the basement. Fortunately, no civilians were in the home. We left that home, and entered the second one near us, but this time we carefully checked the basement where we found a whole family hiding, about ten people. I thought we were in Germany, because the people spoke German, and the house had a toilet, something we hadn't seen before. I do not know the nationality of the people in the basement whether French or German, but I do know that they were not friendly. I have since learned that we were in Alsace, where the people for

years lived under France, and also under Germany more than once. While I pointed my rifle at the family, another GI patted them for weapons. The old ladies just scowled at us. We told them to stay in the basement, we let them be, and we left the home.

We entered a third home, and after checking it and finding it empty of Germans, we all relaxed, and began enjoying our momentary stay. I laid my rifle against the wall behind me, pulled out a pack of cigarettes and lit one. I was standing very near the front door, which was closed, when suddenly, it burst open and a German soldier ran in. The German soldier was very short in stature, and appeared scared to death, breathing heavily, and sweating profusely. He was armed with a machine gun, which he held with both hands, and thankfully he failed to use. He literally bumped against me, startling me. It all happened very quickly, and both the German and I did not know what to do. Its obvious he just wanted to save his life and wanted to get away from us, thus he quickly turned and departed the home. My sergeant reacted to the intrusion, and ran to a back window where he saw the German running away, and shot him. We all felt sorry for the fellow, and hoped our Doctors saved him.

In another city or village, we entered a nice empty home where I found a bag of coins, which I kept, and a book of the 1936 Olympics, bound in white leader, which I also took. The book was too heavy and difficult to carry, so I left it with our cook, who promised to save it for me. I never saw the cook again, so the book was lost to me, and I wonder what its worth today. In that same home I also found a Nazi flag which I still have today.

## CROSSING THE MOSELLE RIVER

Early in November, our Division was given the task to cross the Moselle river and establish a bridgehead. I understand that the 358 and 359 Regiments, early in the day, before dawn got across and began pushing inland. The 357, my Regiment crossed later that same day. The old French Maginot Line began on the Eastern side of the river. While the 358, and 359 had it pretty rough, when we crossed, fortunately no enemy fire was received. The weather was lousy, with constant rain, and quite cold, and the river swollen to perhaps four or more times its normal width, and the water moving quite swiftly. The Army used motor boats to get us across, but stupidly forced us to wade in the river up to our waist before reaching the boats. It seems to me we could have gotten on the boats directly from the trucks we were riding, thus avoiding getting wet, but the Army was brainless when it came to thinking about the foot soldiers. They even failed to provide us with extra socks. I firmly believe that my feet began its deterioration when we crossed the Moselle.

Once on the Eastern side we began a long march in our wet socks, boots, and pants. Eventually, things got dried. My body heat helped, but outside it was cold. We were not told much, but the area we were in, was a very heavily fortified sector of Europe, this I learned from being there, and also from reading many war books, before I began this story. With the Moselle river behind us and the French Maginot Line close by, many fortification stood in the way. The Maginot Line built by the French to keep the Germans out, simple did not work. I entered one of the forts, and went down about three floors in darkness, before I decided it was best to get out. No enemy soldiers were inside, but it was spooky, and very deep. I was just fooling around, and curious. I wasn't very impressed, the fortress was very damp inside, and it smelled like a toilet, and was very filthy.

## LAST BATTLE, CROSSING THE SAAR

We continued advancing towards Germany, and reached the edge of the Saar river very early in December. Frankly I had become a nut case. Of the original fellows with me when we were in Normandy, I believe at that point in early December, I was the only one left. I no longer had a buddy to have as a partner, and stood alone in my foxholes. It had been quite a long time, of digging holes by myself and being alone at night, and frankly, I had been on the front lines, and or near them, for too long a time, and I had had it. Our squad, battalion, company, and Regiment were far from being at full strength, and I felt very tired, worn, scared and freezing with the cold, and I felt that I was not good as a soldier anymore, and accordingly had a long talk with my Captain, who listened and said he would look try to do something about it, maybe transfer me to MP duty, but I never saw the Captain again.

On December 5, we were in a town that overlooked the Saar river. From the home we were in, we could easily see the river down below, almost straight down, about 50 yards distance. Across the river was the formidable Siegfried Line, the thickest part of the of it, and we were going to attack it. "holly mackerel". My mind was going crazy, my heart was pounding, and I was scared as hell. I wanted to find a place where I could hide, and not go across. My newest Sergeant by the name of Gray, was a good man, of many good qualities, and thanks to him, I settled down and relaxed.

Early in the morning of the sixth of December, about maybe two AM, and in complete darkness and very cold, we got into small rubber boats (I think there were four of us per boat) and paddled across ragging river, which was flooding its banks, and accordingly wider than normal. They never even gave us life preservers, thus, if the boat had capsized, we surely would have drowned, because of the weight we were carrying. We were under strict orders not to make any noise and or discharge our weapons. The idea was to reach our destination without alerting the enemy.

When we reached the shore, way down the river, after battling the swift current, we found the land covered with about a foot of water. The land was flooded, and we had to walk along, under those very bad conditions, for what seemed like a long, long way. The Germans in the pillboxes, fired flares often, and when they wet off, we froze in place, and thus hopefully, avoided being seen, however it was my feeling that we were being seen. We were standing, hundreds of us, so how could they miss us, but miss us they did, because enemy fire never occurred. At moments I felt like dropping flat, but the thought of doing so in so much very cold water, kept me on my feet. How the Germans failed to detect us, I do not know. No German artillery was fired at us, nor machine guns, or small arms fire. When each flare exploded, we could see what seemed like hundreds of pillboxes, that we were supposed to bypass. As I stated before, we were told not to use our riffles or make any type of noise. After what seemed like an eternity, we reached dry ground, but muddy. As we moved further up, the soil became somewhat drier. After a short while, I was assigned a fairly adequate foxhole, that had a nice roof on it, made of thick tree limbs, but with about a foot of water. It was a German dug foxhole.

The weather was horrible, cold with snow on the ground, and the worse part was, that when you used your shovel, water began to sip in. I tried to bail the water out of the foxhole with my helmet, but water would quickly drip down the walls of the hole. I tried digging another hole, and hopefully have a dry one, but again no sooner I had about a foot dug, water began to filter into the hole, so I gave up and stayed in the one that had been assigned to me. When morning arrived we found ourselves in a semi wooded area that was maybe 30/50 feet above the river. The area was very pretty, and we could see that German soldiers had been there before us. There were many foxholes, all of them nice one's but with water. Also, there was a well dug trench, deep enough to walk in it without being seen. The trench was very long. I have no idea how far, and where it went, but I do know that it connected many

of the fortification in the area.

When we assaulted the river, we were given chocolate bars as our daily food. This was a first for us, eliminating the normal three cans, of cheese, beef, and eggs. They weighed less than cans, and we carried only a one day supply(three bars). The chocolate in the bars, was not like a hershey bar or any other candy, but a specially made one, that did not taste that good. I took it easy with the food and water, so after the second day I still had a couple of bars and some water. I was lucky, because when we inquired we learned that no supplies would be available. The Engineers had been unable to build a bridge, the moment a bridge was in place, German Artillery destroyed it, so all supplies became short, including ammunition. I did not worry about ammunition, because I still had all the ammo I had when we crossed the river, but I did worry about food and water. I was getting very hungry.

Seems to me that we were either completely surrounded, or almost surrounded. We had the river behind us, and the Germans in front, and some on the sides. Many pill boxes were still manned by Germans. Often, a pill box was taken from the Germans, but unless GI's were left to guard it, the Germans would return to it again. When we finally ran out of water, we filled the canteens with water from whatever mud hole was nearby, and then added a pill (chlorine). After shaking the canteen, the water was safe for drinking. The water did not taste good, but it did not matter as long as it was safe.

I feel that I was smart in not exposing myself too much. We hadn't been attacked, and all was quiet, but I had feelings that all was not well. The time went by, about four days had gone by, and we found ourselves in the same place, and same hole, with my feet constantly in water. I just could not get rid of the water. Its very tiresome to be folded up, trying hard to keep warm, and trying specially not to get all wet. I did get up and out of the hole at night time, and took a few steps to limber up and hopefully restore some circulation to my legs and specially my feet, but it was so cold outside, (freezing) so eventually I returned to the hole, after a few minutes. In order to change my position at least a bit, and stretch a leg first and then the other one, while in the hole; I would place my helmet in the water and sit on it, keeping my butt dry, and then I could stretch my legs, at least a bit. I just cannot describe how horrible, intolerable, and tiring it was. With supplies not reaching us, we ran out of water, and out of food. It is amazing what the human body can endure. There are moments, when death would have been welcomed, but you keep trying and eventually the torture is gone and you are safe.

On the fifth day, a young fellow from Kentucky was returned to us after being in the Hospital for a couple of months. I do not know how he crossed the river, probably also by boat. Anyway, they put him in the foxhole next to mine, and as I was talking to him, welcoming him back, suddenly a sniper shot hit him between his eyes, right in front of me. I actually saw when he was hit, with his helmet flying off his head, and he falling straight back. Talk about bad luck, the poor guy never knew what hit him. The first thing that came to my mind, was whether he had any food in his back pack, but I never went to find out. That same day in the afternoon shortly before it began to get dark, I heard a noise, which I recognized as an enemy tank, and sure enough, I could see a German tank approaching. After a few minutes a large tank, that looked like one of their Tiger tanks, came up to the edge of the trees, and stopped. The tank turret began to turn, right, and then left, a couple or more times; obviously looking for a target. The tank's location was higher than where I was, and I believe he was unable to see me deep in my foxhole. Tanks are limited as to what they can see, and I feel that the higher elevation where he was, kept the tank crew from seeing me. The distance between me and the enemy tank was about maybe 50 feet. I am not acquainted with how a tank works, but believe they are restricted somewhat, as to what they are able to see, specially if the object is below their sights. After a few

minutes the tank backed up and departed, and I had a big sigh of relief. I was scared to death, its a wonder that I did not soil my pants, but the lack of food probably helped. The tank never fired his cannon, nor his machine gun, and no one popped out of its turret.

On the sixth day, I could not even feel my feet, so I made the decision to visit the first aid station. When it got dark, I walked to the nearby deep trench, dug by the Germans, and it took me directly to the first aid station, which was located in a very large pill box, that had probably been the German headquarters. The place was jam packed with casualties, and the Doctor in charge told me they were only taking the most serious cases, that mine was bad but that he had worse cases, and besides they were full, and that I should return to my foxhole, and to return the next day. I would have gladly sat on the floor all night if necessary, but the Dr. boss wouldn't have it.

With difficulty, I returned to my foxhole. I cannot describe how hard it was for me to move about. There wasn't any pain, but I could not feel my feet. As far as I knew, and felt, the feet were dead, because all feeling had departed them. When I walked it felt like I was walking on stumps. I hated having to go back, it seemed like I was all alone in that field, because there was no one else that I could talk to, no supply fellows, no ammunition fellows, and no food guys, no Sergeant visiting you, issuing instructions, just no one at all. I was angry, scared, and my feeling were hurt. When I finally got back, fatigue got to me, and I passed out. The enemy could have walked all over me, and I wouldn't have known.

I returned to the Aid Station on the seventh day, and they accepted me, after which a male nurse tried to remove my boots. The boots had to be cut to remove them. My feet immediately swelled up beyond recognition, with the skin breaking. Each foot was as big as my head. The male nurse said I had the worse case of trench foot he had ever seen. Next to me, was a young fellow that had been shot in the head. The bullet, probably of small caliber, had entered via his right temple, and traveled up following the curvature of the cranium, emerging through his left temple. His head was swollen beyond recognition, but he was alive, and talking. Many days later, in the English Hospital, he walked to my bed to chat with me. His head was no longer swollen, a nice looking red head. Absolutely amazing!

Later that night, four German prisoners carried me across a bridge, and I was finally away from the front. Instead of carrying me close to the ground, they had my stretcher up, shoulder high, and a lot of movement took place. However, I was under the influence of morphine, floating in a cloud, and I told the prisoners that if they dropped me, that I would kill them, no doubt that they did not understand a word I said, besides I no longer had my rifle. Across the river my stretcher was placed on a Jeep, which drove me to Thionville, to a large field Hospital, where I spent the rest of the night, and in the morning, I was flown to England in a DC-4. The only Red Cross gals I ever saw during my days at the front or nearby, were at the airfield, giving out doughnuts and coffee to everyone, plus a bag with shaving material, and other goodies.

When we arrived in England we were taken directly to a General Hospital, where I remained for about three months, after which we embarked on the Queen Elizabeth, and sailed for home. The Queen took very few days to reach New York. That ship, always traveled by itself and without escort. It was too fast for the German submarines to catch. When we arrived in New York, and when the ship docked, I remember seeing a very large rope used to tie the ship to the shore, maybe 12 inches in diameter, snap as if it was a small thread. The Queen Elizabeth was huge. We arrived in New York on March 19, 1945.

Before reaching the shore, many boats met the Queen with water hoses shooting water up many feet in the air, and horns blasting away, and USA flags flying proudly, and bands playing. It was a great thing to see, all those things happening as we passed close to the Statue of Liberty as we entered the port of New York.

On the Queen there were well over ten thousand service men, who like myself had some kind of injury that had put them out of action. I understood that a majority of the injured on the ship were members of the 106 infantry division that took the brunt of the Ardennes German counter offensive, known as the Battle of the Bulge. For those members of the 106, it was their first time in battle, and their last time also. When the battle of the bulge took place I was in the English Hospital.

Upon arrival, we went to Halloran General Hospital, in ambulances, with their sirens blasting away until reaching the Hospital. On the 23 of March we were again driven in ambulances, to a railroad station, and on to the train, and on March 25 we arrived at the U.S.A.G.H. In Camp Carson, Colorado, where I remained until I received my medical discharge. I was in Hospitals, between England, Halloran, and Carson, for almost a whole year, and most of it in bed. I literally had to learn to walk again. The first day on my feet, my legs collapsed, and of course I fell. It took a long time before I regained enough strength not only to stand but actually walk.

During my long stay in the Hospital, I came to the conclusion that the USA Army Doctors knew nothing about trench foot, and I am convinced that we (all trench foot casualties) became ginny pigs of the Doctors efforts to learn how to help those afflicted with trench foot. After my boots were removed and my feet got warm again, the color of the skin changed, after a while, with both feet becoming black. The Doctors in England told me that I had dry gangrene, and that I would probably loose both feet. I got very angry, and am sure probably insulted the attending Doctors, and told them that removing my feet was a no, no, and something I would never permit. I have no idea if my anger helped, but no surgery was performed in England. I am glad of the aforementioned, because I and the doctors learned that for cases of trench foot, time is the element that heals.

After being in Camp Carson for a good while, and the swelling in my feet subsiding, and the feet becoming normal again except for the dry gangrene, the Doctors there, began to talk about surgery. My feet, size wise, were back to normal, and the gangrene had cleared in some areas, with the gangrenous skin becoming easy to remove, and beautiful rosy normal skin replacing it. I made drawings of my feet which are found among my papers. One day while fooling with my feet, I actually pulled my left toe from the foot, leaving the bone sticking up. Here I was, with a foot without its large toe, and the toe bone showing in its place. The nurse and friends near by thought it was gross.

When the Doctors next saw me, surgery was quickly arranged and the first of two surgeries took place. The doctor that operated on me was not a bone specialist, but instead had studied to deliver babies, before the Army got him, so he was fairly new at removing feet, or toes or any related surgery. I do not remember his name, but he didn't do so bad with me. When I returned from surgery and was able to see my left foot, I felt very bad to see the amputation of all the toes, except one, the one next to the smallest one. As long as I required an amputation, I felt the doctor had botched it by leaving one toe on the foot. It looked ridiculous, and I told the doctor accordingly.

The foot after surgery was not healing properly, around the area where the large toe had been, there wasn't enough skin to cover the bone. The stitches were not holding, leaving a large opening,

which was oozing. I was not experiencing any pain. The nurse thought I was trying to be a macho man, by not crying out when she dressed the wound, but again, I had no pain. A second surgery was scheduled to remove the one toe, but without previous discussion, the surgeon proceeded to remove the remaining bone where the left toe had been, equivalent to removing one of the legs on a four legged chair. All I really needed was a skin graft, not a bone removal. The doctor really screwed up this time, and I told him so, but what can you do after the fact, nothing.

One evening after I could walk more or less normal and without too much pain. One of my nurses Virginia Guerra, of Mexican ancestry, and I went to a place within the camp where we could dance. Officers were not allowed to go on dates with enlisted men, and Virginia, like all nurses was an officer, once more I was breaking the rules, as well as Virginia, but luckily no one reported us. Virginia and her family visited me in Mexico a couple of years after I was discharged. I never asked, but believe she kinda liked me.

Little by little I learned to walk again. At first my feet swelled up, but as I said, little by little the feet got better and better, and I received my medical honorable discharge, plus money and papers, and I was on my way home. By the way, my Mexican passport and family photos that were taken from me on Utah beach, when we left our duffle bags after disembarking, finally caught up with me again while at Camp Carson. I did stop in Denver and located one of the girls I knew at CU, and had a long chat with her, and afterwards, I went for a haircut, and a shave, and had my hair washed and my head massaged. I felt like a million bucks.

I do not remember how I returned to Mexico, whether on a train or airplane, but it was great to be back with my family. However, I was lost, and I had trouble, becoming somewhat normal again. At first I had trouble finding shoes that did not hurt, but eventually I began getting orthopedic shoes from the Veterans Administration, as well as a check for \$50 dollars per month compensation for the partial loss of my feet. I was walking of course, but with a heavy limp and hurting, so I wasn't exactly back to being 100% normal. I was troubled mentally a bit with my physical loss, perhaps getting me slightly depressed. After a long time of doing nothing, and feeling sorry for myself, I asked Dad if it was possible for me to get a job in Acapulco, where he was a part owner of the General Motors Agency, to which he agreed, and I moved to Acapulco where I became Service Manager at the ridiculous salary of 250 pesos per month, at the time equivalent to about \$69 US dollars. However, that, plus my Army compensation was not too bad.

Shortly afterwards, I met Eleanore, with whom I tied my future. Luck for me was continuing. It seems I was lucky throughout the war, and now I was going to continue to be lucky with the lady that I fell in love with. Eleanore or Myno as I learned to call her, was a member of a prominent Mexican family whose Mother, the boss, was quite religious. When Eleanore finally accepted marrying me she was emphatic about how, if we had kids, they would be raised in the catholic religion. I never was a religious person, my parent did not drill religion on to me, and after living through the War, whatever religious feelings I may have had, totally disappeared. I could not reconcile then, and today, how, any God, could permit the events that occurred during the War, to take place; and I made it clear to Eleanore what my beliefs were, but I indicated to her, that I would not interfere with any religious training she wanted for our kids, and that I would actually help, so long as she would not try to change my beliefs. I kept my promise, and she kept hers, and I may say that we haven't had any problems.

I feel that I have fairly well covered my time in the USA Army. I am very proud to have served. Many people have asked me, “why did you enlist in the USA Army, if you did not have to do it” The answer, is not simple, but I can explain it as follows. I was in St John's Military Academy for three years, and simply fell in love with Military life, secondly there is the element of adventure, and boy o boy, what an adventure? And thirdly, I did not like what the Germans were doing to the minorities of Europe, specially the Jewish people, and being young, my decision was to act on what I was feeling and believing at the time, and I am glad that I did, in spite of the fact that I did not come back whole.

Following my episode in the USA Army, the next and best part of my life began, and it was my life with Mary Anne Eleanore Parra, the young lady who said yes to my marriage proposal, and continues with me as I write this story, with 63 wonderful years in between, and a written story, which I feel is close to its conclusion, “My Life as I lived It” Hopefully we will still have a few more years to enjoy with our family which may inspire me to write another chapter.