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Foreward

After a considerable amount of pestering, Staff Sergeant Leo J McLaverty (AKA Pop-Pop) finally agreed to sit down and talk about his experiences during WWII. He had given a few interviews to various grandchildren and other family members about his service when they needed to interview a veteran for a history project, but he never thought anyone would care about what he did while overseas.

As he admitted, "I was one lucky sonofabitch". His time in the army consisted of a series of events that allowed him to avoid heavy combat for the majority of the time. He was promoted to corporal just before all privates at camp were shipped out to Africa as support. He remained in the US for additional training that made him more than ready when he eventually sailed to Europe. His platoon just missed boarding the Leopoldville from Britain to France, a ship that was eventually torpedoed. His then depleted division was diverted from the Battle of the Bulge and directed to St. Nazaire to babysit 10,000 Germans penned in there. And by some additional stroke of luck, he landed in occupation duty in Austria when the war in Europe ended, avoiding further combat duty in the Pacific. He was very lucky.

To think, all of these men gave up years of their lives to serve their country. Pop-Pop served from the age of 18-21. Wow. Some who served were married with children, blue-collar, white collar – forced to leave their jobs behind.

These veterans saw enough death, destruction, and starving and homeless civilians to last a lifetime. They ate too much slop, endured too many freezing nights in the French countryside, and traveled too far over bombed-out rails in cramped boxcars, never really sure where they might end up.

To him, and to all WWII veterans, almost to a man, they were simply doing their job. Those who survived, no matter what their service record, would always defer the term "hero" to those 300,000+ that did not return.

But to us, Pop-Pop is a hero. And lucky or not, here is his tale in his own words. The majority was captured during interviews from 2011 up until he reviewed his last draft in April of 2013. The military honors given at his graveside on October 23, 2013 closed the book, but not the story.

He was adamant about not wanting any of this story to sound grand or exciting; and scratched out many notes that might be misread. He felt it was important that his grandchildren know what it was like for him to serve, and to realize that the sacrifice was worth it.

If you see a vet, say thanks.

Thank you, Pop-Pop.





CIVILIAN LEO J. McLAVERTY

3958 ELSER STEET
PHILADELPHIA, PA
Roman Catholic High School Class of 1942



During my senior year at Roman, on Sunday, December 7, 1941, the bombing of Pearl Harbor would change our lives forever. War was declared against Japan and Germany. You had to sign up for the draft when you turned 18. After graduation in June 1942, jobs were not available for us as employers knew we would be drafted soon. No-one wanted to train us and then have us called into service. We had a series of jobs.

I had one job at Exide Battery on Allegheny Avenue. I was a trimmer boy. We trimmed all the burrs off the connector bars that they made to go across the top of the batteries. One guy runs a mold, and just flips the bars out. A saw-man cut them into pieces. The trimmer boys had to file the burrs. One day, we went out on strike. First, they put a trimmer boy on a saw. Then they took the trimmer boy off the saw. So we went across the street and we sat on the steps. They ignored us for a few hours, but as the lead straps were piling up, they started to beg us to come back in. Eventually, we went back in. My first and only labor strike.

REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE NOW A SOLDIER

I received my draft letter in March of 1943. We were to report on March 31. I received a notice to report to the Armed Forces Induction Center of the 166th Field Artillery on Lancaster Avenue (now part of Drexel University.) We were given a brief physical, although nobody was turned away at this point. They looked at our teeth and down our throats, gave us a couple of needles and told when to report to the train station. We had a couple of days at home before we had to head out. We boarded the Pennsylvania Railroad at the N. Broad St. Station, Broad St. & Glenview Ave. on March 31 and headed to the base camp in New Cumberland, PA.



ARMED FORCES INDUCTION STATION,
166th Field Artillery Armory,
32d & Lancaster Ave.,
Philadelphia, Pa.

INSTRUCTIONS TO RECRUITS:

You have been inducted into the Army of the United States and as such subject to the rules of Articles of War.

You are cautioned to contact your Local Board at the end of four (4) days and ascertain from them the hour and place of assembly for your entrainment one (1) week-hence. (Note the date on Special Orders handed to you).

Failure to report to your Local Board at the designated time may bring punishment by the Army authorities. REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE NOW A SOLDIER.

Any illness or accident of a nature serious enough to prevent your reporting for travel to camp should be reported to your Local Board without delay.

Recruits with dependents desiring to avail themselves of the benefits of the Servicemen's Dependents Allowance Act of 1942 should obtain required copies of marriage certificates, birth certificates; and in the case of dependent parents or others, two affidavits of disinterested persons, prior to reporting to reception center.

R. H. Kierbach
R. H. KIERBACH,
Major, Infantry,
Commanding.

THE ARTICLES OF WAR

ART. 58 DESERTION - Any person subject to military law who deserts or attempts to desert the service of the United States shall, if the offense be committed in time of war, suffer death or such other punishment as a court-martial may direct, and, if the offense be committed at any other time, any punishment, excepting death, that a court-martial may direct.

ART. 61 ABSENCE WITHOUT LEAVE - Any person subject to military law who fails to repair at the fixed time to the properly appointed place of duty, or goes from the same without proper leave, or absents himself from his command, guard, quarters, station, or camp without proper leave, shall be punished as a court-martial may direct.

ART. 64 ASSAULTING OR WILFULLY DISOBEYING SUPERIOR OFFICER - Any person subject to military law who, on any pretense whatsoever, strikes his superior officer or draws or lifts up any weapon or offers any violence against him, being in the execution of his office, or wilfully disobeys any lawful command of his superior officer, shall suffer death or such other punishment as a court-martial may direct.

WAR

H/11/43

Mom - Put this stuff away for me I forgot to put it in with my letter

SPECIAL ORDERS)

NO. 71) (EXTRACT)

ARMED FORCES INDUCTION STATION,
32nd Street and Lancaster Avenue,
Philadelphia, Pa.,
March 24, 1943.

4. Each of the following men, inducted into the Army of the United States this date, is released from active duty this date, is transferred to the Enlisted Reserve Corps, and will proceed to Philadelphia, Pa.

LOCAL BOARD #68, PHILADELPHIA, PA.

Pvt. Edward G. Joseph	33,595,263
Pvt. George E. Hancock	33,595,271
Pvt. Myles J. Scullion	33,595,267
Pvt. Richard H. Greenwood	33,595,266
Pvt. Edward F. Jackson	33,595,269
Pvt. Joseph M. Mooney	33,595,287
Pvt. George A. Naab	33,595,270
Pvt. Joseph H. Gindele, Jr.	33,595,262
Pvt. Gibson M. Carter	33,595,272
Pvt. George W. Wagner	33,595,261
Pvt. James G. Power	33,595,264
Pvt. Joseph E. Myers	33,595,265
Pvt. Charles G. Heim, Jr.	33,595,281
Pvt. Joseph T. McCourt	33,595,297
Pvt. James P. McCool	33,595,280
Pvt. John H. Walsh	33,595,285
Pvt. Thomas J. Machalette	33,595,284
Pvt. James T. Markert	33,595,286
Pvt. David I. Goldblatt	33,595,277
Pvt. David R. Barrett	33,595,283
Pvt. Elwood J. Anton	33,595,279
Pvt. Frank J. Henry	33,595,268
Pvt. Thomas J. Gibbons	33,595,282
Pvt. Edward S. Budzynski	33,595,278
Pvt. Leo J. McLaverty	33,595,276
Pvt. John E. Barrett	33,595,289
Pvt. Alexander T. Kozachuk	33,595,293
Pvt. Charles J. Geiser	33,595,290
Pvt. Robert H. Spence	33,595,296

You keep the insurance application with your papers.

Effective March 31, 1943, each of the above-named enlisted men of the Enlisted Reserve Corps is called to active duty and will proceed from Philadelphia, Pa., to Reception Center, New Cumberland, Pa., reporting to the Commanding Officer thereof for duty.

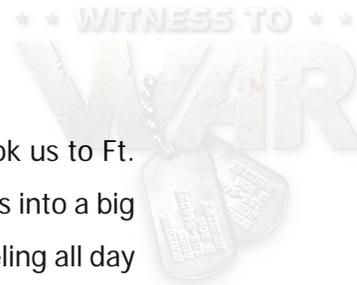
The Quartermaster will furnish the necessary transportation and meal tickets. Travel directed is necessary in the military service and is chargeable to FD 31 P 431-02 A 0425-23.

By order of Major KIEBACH:
OFFICIAL:

M. SHULMAN,
1st Lt., A.G.D.,
Adjutant.

M. SHULMAN,
1st Lt., A.G.D.,
Adjutant.

TRAIN LEAVES PHILADELPHIA, PA. - 8:30 a.m.
ARRIVES NEW CUMBERLAND, PA. - 11:35 a.m.
VIA PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD.



We were processed in New Cumberland base camp and then put back on trains which took us to Ft. Meade, MD. At Ft. Meade, we were given exams as soon as we arrived. They marched us into a big barracks for various written tests. It was about midnight. We were dead tired from traveling all day but there was no chance to rest. The tests determined what company you would be assigned to. I missed officer's training school by 1 point. I was assigned to the 66th Black Panther Infantry Division. We were now GI's, making \$55 a month.

CAMP BLANDING: FLORIDA PANTHERS

From there, we moved on to Camp Blanding, FL for basic training. Jimmy McCool, Joe Mooney, Joe McCourt – we were all together for this trip. We sang the whole way down – TV show songs, Little Orphan Annie, commercials – whatever we could think of to pass the time. It took a couple of days for the train ride south. Blanding was about 7 miles from Stark, Florida and about 60 miles southwest of St. Augustine. Not that we knew where we were. We just knew we were in the middle of nowhere. Ed Herre arrived at Blanding a short time after me. He was a Private First Class (Pfc) making about \$10 more per month and wearing 1 stripe on his sleeve.

Sgt Karlsruhe was the platoon sergeant who met us at the rail end when we arrived. He selected 4 or 5 of us and took us to our company, which turned out to be "H" company, a heavy weapons unit that was part of the 66th. The company was made up of 3 platoons: 2 platoons of water-cooled 30 cal machine guns (vintage WWI) and 1 platoon of 81mm mortars. There were 8 guns in each gun platoon and I think there were 8 mortar squads in their platoon (1 mortar each). Everyone else went to infantry.

In our platoon, one guy carried the machine gun, 1 the tripod, and 2 carried ammo cans. We eventually rigged up an ammo pack so we didn't have to carry those heavy cans in our arms. I was glad to be carrying around a machine gun and not the mortar with its heavy base plate. The mortar platoon also had to worry about their firing positions. One mortar platoon had a round go off right over their head because they forgot to clear out a branch hanging overhead.

Over the next week, we were issued uniforms, boots, etc. and we started learning the basics of army life: marching, how to drill, marching, learning about our machine guns, and marching. For several weeks we had no rifles, so we used sticks to learn the rifle drills. Every few days, more men would arrive. It took about a month to fill up the division. We passed the time doing all kinds of work around the camp: cleaning areas, taking stoves out of barracks, doing PT and short order drilling.



Finally, the M1 rifles arrived. We learned how to clean them pretty quick; the Florida air rusted everything fast. The division was just about full by Easter.

They had sunrise services on the Parade Grounds. We marched in review of General Kramer for the first time. He welcomed us and promised us all the training we could handle before going overseas. He was not kidding.

Florida was getting pretty hot; and the sand was deep and hard to walk on. At first, we were training in platoons and squads, and later by company. Many guys would pass out from the heat. If a man stopped sweating, it was a bad sign. Our green fatigues would turn white from the salt sweating out. Every soldier was required to take 2 salt tablets every morning. They were lousy and made lots of the men sick. We were also weaned to a canteen of water a day. The canteens were usually hot before noon, so many of us drank from creeks or any other freshwater we could find.

At the end of quarantine training (a few weeks), we could get a pass into town, but I had no money. I heard the training cadre non-coms had been paid, so I marched up to Fundum's office and asked him for a loan of 5 bucks. Fundum was my 1st Sergeant. He growled and told me he would kill me if I told anyone where I got it. I promptly told everyone that Fundum was loaded and a line formed at his office. He told me: "On pay day, I better be the first stop you make with 5 bucks in your hand."

Ernest Elmer Fundum was the top NCO of the Company. He ran the orderly room, which was the office right outside the Captain's office. No-one saw the Captain without going through Fundum. And no-one ever called him Ernest Elmer. He was just Fundum.

On one of our weekend passes, I went into Panama City with a few others. We used to pull the mattress off the bed and 2 guys would sleep on the floor while 2 got the bed springs. For some reason, the one night when we went to sleep, I took my wallet out of my pants and put it under my pillow. The next morning, the other 3 guys noticed they all had their wallets stolen during the night. We found the wallets outside with the train passes and IDs, but no cash. We gave that manager hell about that.

On another pass, we went down to St. Augustine. The Navy had a bunch of sailors on leave as well – the place was packed. We had a hell of a time finding a place to stay. Someone gave us a tip that there was a lady who might rent us a room. We went down to her place, and she looked us over

before agreeing to rent us her daughter's room. The daughter was up in NY. The rule was that we were not to touch anything. She rented it to us for \$4 each. In the morning, she served us a full breakfast – it was great. She even saved the room for us the next time we had a pass.

On our second trip to St. Augustine, we met up with some Navy Waves on the beach. I fell asleep and got the worst sunburn on the back of my legs. It landed me in the hospital for 4-5 days. They would send MPs around to do inspections and make sure there was no one faking an injury – some guys would do that if they thought they were getting close to being sent overseas. I still remember the pain of having to get out of that bed so that I could be checked. When all that water shifted inside those blisters – it was awful. A couple of guys came in to tell me that we were getting close to moving out. There was no way I wasn't shipping out with the rest of my company, so I told the doctor to get me out of there. My buddies packed up my stuff so that I could shove out with the rest of my outfit.

About a week later, at an evening revelry, they made an announcement that anyone who got sunburn and was declared unfit for duty because of it could be court-martialed. I didn't go back to the beach.

I was a Pfc by the time I left Florida.



Camp Blanding, FL

CAMP ROBINSON, ARKANSAS

In June, after basic training was complete, I got a 15-day furlough to go home. While home, I got my orders to report to Camp Joseph T. Robinson in Little Rock, AK. I had no idea where Little Rock, AK was, or how I was going to get there. My sister Clare had a friend, Patsy Logan, whose father worked for the Railroad. He took my orders to work the next day and came home with tickets and instructions for how to get there. I took one train to St. Louis and then another on to Little Rock.

Our division, the 66th, was known as the Panther Division. [The 66th Black Panther Division was activated on April 15, 1943, and was an active US Army Division for only 2½ years. The black panther was chosen to symbolize the attributes of a good infantryman: ability to kill, to be aggressive, alert, stealthy, cunning, agile, and strong.] Our shoulder patch was a full-length cat. When we arrived, the Arkansas paper had headlines that read “The Pussycat Division Has Arrived.” General Kramer sure did not like that. He had the patch changed to a Growling Black Panther head. Everyone liked it.



The 66th Division was made up of 3 regiments of infantrymen– the 262nd, 263rd, and 264th. Each regiment had 3 battallions:

1st Battallion made up of infantry companies A, B, and C with company D in support

2nd Battallion was made up of infantry companies E, F, and G with H in support

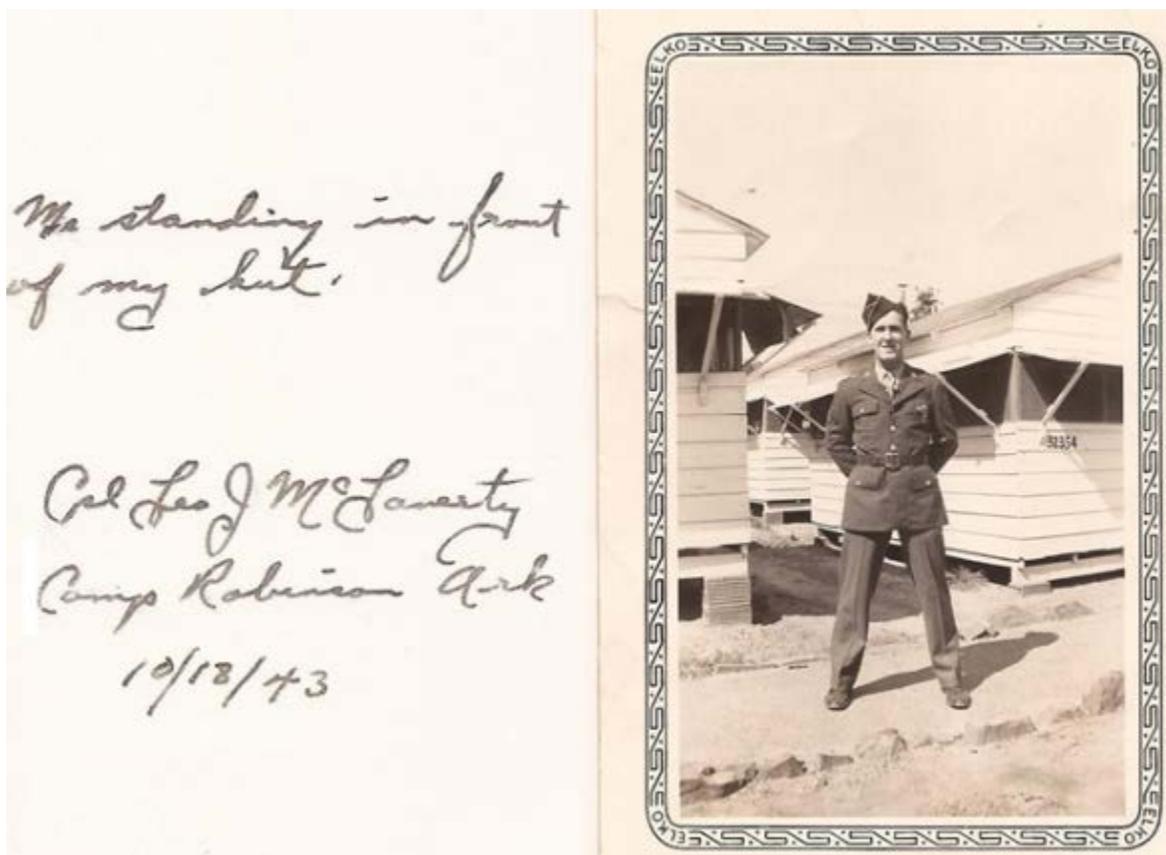
3rd Battallion was made up of infantry companies I, K, and L with M in support.

D, H, and M were heavy weapons companies.

Each heavy weapon company was made up of 2 machine gun platoons and 1 mortar platoon.

By the time I got to camp, the rumor was that General Kramer was in Washington to get our overseas orders. We jumped right back into training. The training at Camp Robinson was designed to really toughen us up, and it did. Each morning started with a march as a unit for anywhere from 5 to 10 miles to an area where we would work on attack problems. Many of these included learning to place our machine guns in defense positions, digging foxholes, and preparing for counter attacks. We would be called together and told what was right or wrong at the end of each problem. At the end of basic training, I was made an Instrument Corporal. [8/23/43]

This camp was located right in the middle of town. It was easy to get in and out of town on the public transit buses – as long as you had a pass.



Instead of General Kramer coming back with overseas orders for the whole division, it turned out that since we were so well-trained, about half of our division, including all of the privates and Pfc's, were sent overseas as replacements. Since I was a corporal, I stayed behind to train the new recruits. Ed Herre shipped out with them. He ended up in N. Africa, and then onto Italy. [He was soon captured in Italy, and eventually ended up in Germany in a prisoner camp.]



Print the complete address in plain black letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided. Use typewriter, dark ink, or pencil. Write plainly. Very small writing is not suitable.

No.



(SENDERS STAMP)

To
 Capt. Leo McLaverty
 Co. H 20³ Inf.
 88 Division
 Camp Robinson, Ark.

From

Pvt. EDWIN T HERBER
 (Sender's name)
 Co. H 3rd REPL. B. ST.
 (Sender's address)
 1270. 7th St. BOSTON
 NEW YORK CITY, N.Y.
 10/13/43 (Date)

Hi, Leo

I'm sorry for not having written sooner but I guess you know what caused the delay. The only thing I can tell you is that I'm in North Africa. Don't bother to answer this letter because I'll be moved soon and have a different P.O. number. Mack when I left you we were both under the impression that this was a labor battalion. Well it's not and there going to make a damn good outfit out of us.

Leo the training you fellows get shake everything by the numbers. Every Sunday we go on the range and fire until our hearts are content. We will be shown how to use a machine gun & mortar again. There aren't officers on your ear all the time either they'd even throw another hand grenade again. Things are taught fast and we do everything instead of reading it out of a book. Leo I only get one V-mail **V MAIL** letter a day. So long

The new guys that came in to my platoon were students from the Army Specialized Training Program. [The ASTP was a military training program instituted by the Army during World War II at a few universities to meet wartime demands for junior officers and soldiers with technical skills.] They came in with their crushed, 50 mission hats. We had those silly hats that sat on the side of your head. They were all smarter than me (more learning, anyway), and all thought they were gonna be Colonels at the end of their training. But first, they had to be privates. So we started basic training all over again with these guys: walk..walk..walk..walk; carrying machine guns and heavy equipment. Walk...walk...walk.



Me about to let go a burst at some
japs.
Mauch is my second gunner and
Luarditch is an ammo bearer

Note the camouflaged tents in the
background. They are our Pup
tents October 1943 - Camp Holman



From left to right
Helms
Ehlerg
J.P. Burns
Mauch
Luarditch
me
Banks
&
Medic
Taken out in the
Arkansas mountains
while on business in
October 1943
That so col heavy is
my pride and joy.

Fundum sent me to Ranger school in November. He didn't like me; that's why he sent me. You had to squat all the time, and everything was on the double. Obstacle courses, cliff climbing, rope stuff – it was about 10 days long. We had landmine training, explosives, grenade throwing. The machine gun replacements – their training involved climbing under the wires while we were shooting live ammo over their heads. I got a diploma – it has the pussycat on it.

Ranger



Certificate of Proficiency

Sgt. L.J. McLaverty

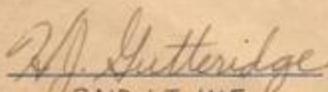
having demonstrated proficiency in the particulars hereinafter set forth is designated a ~ ~ ~

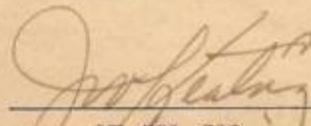
Sixty-Sixth Infantry Division Ranger

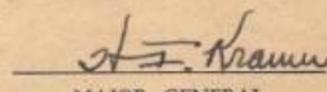
PRIDE, SMARTNESS, SOLDIERLY
ATTITUDE AND LEADERSHIP
EXEMPLARY CONDUCT
PHYSICAL CONDITIONING
HAND TO HAND COMBAT
BLITZ COURSE
BOOBY TRAPS AND DEMOLITIONS
VILLAGE AND STREET FIGHTING

INDIVIDUAL CAMOUFLAGE
CONSTRUCTION AND PASSAGE OF
WIRE ENTANGLEMENT
SNIPERS AND INFILTRATION
PATROLS AND AMBUSHING
STALKING AND AMBUSHING TANKS
IMPROVISED BRIDGES AND USE
OF TOGGLE ROPE

ISSUED THIS 24 DAY OF NOVEMBER 1943 AT CAMP ROBINSON

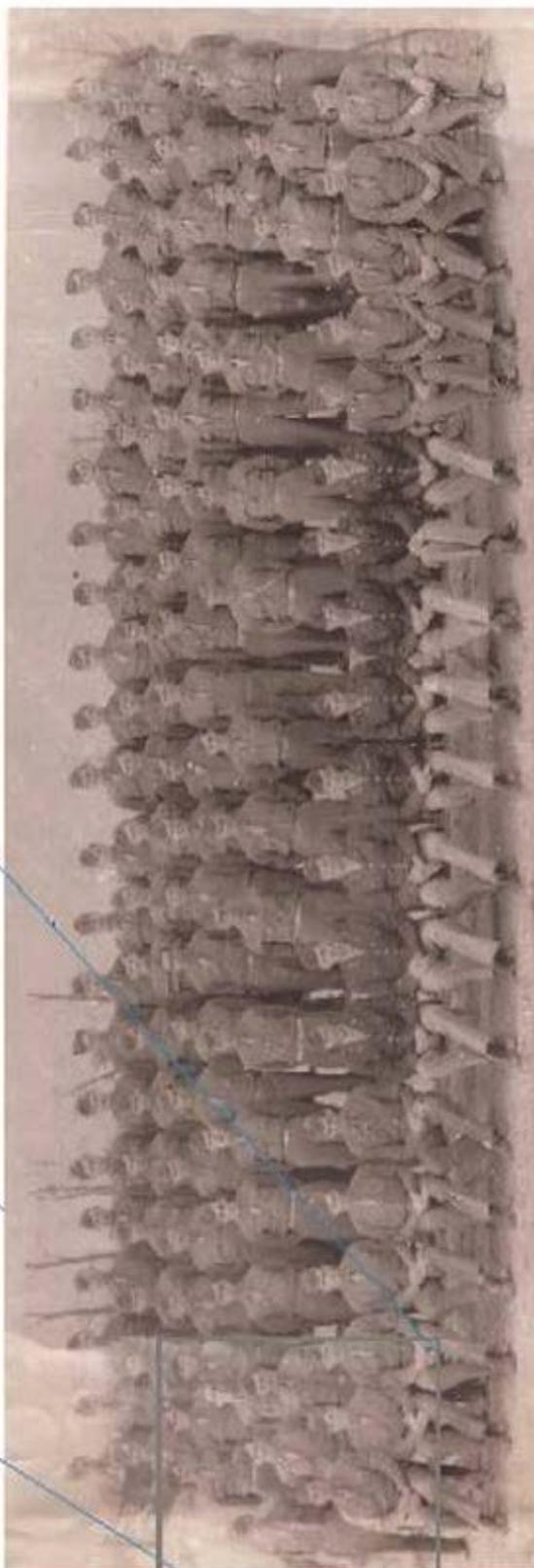

2ND LT INF
SENIOR INSTRUCTOR


LT COL GSC
AC OF S G-3


MAJOR GENERAL
COMMANDING

Company H, 263rd Infantry Panther Division
Camp Robinson, ARK Dec, 1943

That's me in the center, Roy Denny is on
my right, holding the flag.





R-E-S-T-R-I-C-T-E-D

HEADQUARTERS 263RD INFANTRY
Camp Joseph T. Robinson, Arkansas

13 November 1943

SPECIAL ORDERS)

NUMBER 156)

1. In compliance with Par 3, AR 35-320, the following named Officers are appointed Class "A" Agent Finance Officers to the Disbursing Officer, 66th Infantry Division, for the payment of EM furlough rations of organizations indicated:

1st Lt. HAZEN, JACK R.,	01293046	Headquarter Company
1st Lt. CULLEY, OTTO (NMI)	01299699	Service Company
2nd Lt. PERKINS, HOWARD F.,	01313122	Anti-Tank Company
2nd Lt. RATLIFF, RICHARD N.,	01315482	Cannon Company
Captain SINOV, SIDNEY A.,	0508302	Medical Detachment
1st Lt. KULESHA, KASHMIER J.,	0488059	Hq Co 1st Bn
2nd Lt. ORAM, JOHN E.,	01314826	Company "A"
1st Lt. McELWRATH, BROOKS (NMI)	01313275	Company "B"
1st Lt. ANDERSON, NORMAN W.,	01313549	Company "C"
1st Lt. MUSSER, HARRY W.,	01313779	Company "D"
2nd Lt. FOSTER, OSCAR R.,	01313230	Hq Co 2nd Bn
1st Lt. RAMSEY, CHARLES C.,	01313445	Company "E"
2nd Lt. BAKER, PAUL R.,	01313365	Company "F"
2nd Lt. SHAW, GLENN A.,	01313138	Company "G"
2nd Lt. NEWMAN, ROBERT H.,	01315351	Company "H"
2nd Lt. HILL, HOWARD A.,	01313608	Hq Co 3rd Bn
1st Lt. REESE, JACK N.	01313129	Company "I"
2nd Lt. NEUGARDEN, PAUL W.,	0516112	Company "K"
1st Lt. LAVRIHA, WILLIAM E.,	01313259	Company "L"
1st Lt. DOANE, EUGENE L.,	01313081	Company "M"

2. The following named EM (Pvts) having rptd in compliance with Par 7, SO #289, ASF, Eighth Sv C, MRTC, Cp Berkeley, Texas, to the Med Det, 263rd Infantry is hereby confirmed:

BIRKNER, ADAM J.,	33829820	SSN 521
CEMINO, JASPER J.,	35224390	SSN 521

3. Lv of abs is granted Captain AMES, ROBERT E., 0326126, Hq 1st Bn, for eleven (11) days eff 14 November 1943. On completion of lv 0 will comply with orders now in his possession.

4. Under provisions of Par 15 a, AR 615-5, dated 30 June 1943, the following named EM are reduced for reason of inefficiency:

T/5 O'MALLEY, JOSEPH G.	33601707	fr SSN 861 to 861 Med Det
Cpl STEINEBERG, RICHARD L.	35055636	fr SSN 653 to 653 Co L
T/4 SMITH, PAUL E.	35099868	fr SSN 014 to 345 Hq Co 2d

5. The following named EM are promoted to gr as indicated (Temp) (AR 615-5).

TO BE SERGEANT

Cpl McLAVERY, LEO J. 33595276 fr SSN 645 to 652 Company "H"

TO BE TECHN GR 4

T/5 AMICK, JAMES W. 35607950 fr SSN 060 to 060 Company "F"
T/5 WIGLON, ALAN W. 31262089 fr SSN 814 to 814 Hq Co 2nd Bn

TO BE CORPORAL

Pfc KELLY, JOHN F. 31311182 fr SSN 542 to 542 Company L
Pfc RINGIERO, JOSEPH (NMI) 32882770 fr SSN 531 to 603 Hq Co 3rd Bn

FORT RUCKER, ALABAMA

I spent a few more months at Robinson training the new men on machine guns and combat courses. They were hard to train because they were college material and thought they should be officers. By the end of this training, I was made a Staff Sergeant. [January 5, 1944]

Together, we moved out again, this time to Fort Rucker, Alabama [April 15, 1944] for "Jungle Training." This changed the rumors and we were now thinking: the Pacific.



Daley, me, Vierhoff, and Fundum. Camp Rucker, Alabama.

Daley was a squad leader (buck sergeant) in the 1st platoon. I was a staff sergeant. Fundum was our first sergeant (top dog). Vierhoff was a platoon sergeant.



our
 mascots for Co H
 August 1944
 Camp Rucker
 Ala.



Mikes was
 just came back
 August 1944
 Camp Rucker
 Ala.

In November, we got the orders to pack-up, we're moving out. They pulled the shades on the train, so we wouldn't know where we were going. I had my biggest thrill while in the army on that trip from Alabama. Because I was a staff sergeant, I had the run of the train. I could see outside when moving from car to car. On one leg of the trip I was amazed to see that we were going through Philly. I ran to the cook's car, because they had a big side door open for fresh air. I could see Budd's, TastyKake, and then Link Belt. There on the shipping platform was my Uncle John. I screamed out to him and he later said he saw that curly head for just a second sticking out of the cook's car. He ran into his office and called my mom to tell her he saw me go past. He knew the train was going to NY and figured we would probably be going overseas.

We got to Camp Shanks, outside of NYC, on November 14. There were plenty of servicemen there, waiting to go overseas. I remember when one of the black companies was getting ready to ship out, they marched down the center of the street – they were crying. They didn't want to go overseas. They had 8-10 MPs who would follow the march to make sure none of them tried to hide in the ditches on the side of the road.

I got 2 passes while at Shanks. The passes were to NYC. I hopped a train in NY to Philly and got home to have dinner. Cap would drive me back to the train station. I told him: "I don't know how many more of these trips I'll get – one of these nights they're gonna lock us in." I got the 2nd pass on November 25. I took Fundum and Vierhoff home for a turkey dinner. Fundum wrote out the passes, but again, they were only good to NYC. But the 3 of us hopped the first train down to Philly. They cleaned up that turkey dinner. Vierhoff and Fundum both came from huge farmhouses out in the midwest and they couldn't understand how we could all live in that little house on Elser Street.

When we got back to the camp, they slammed the gates behind us. That was it.

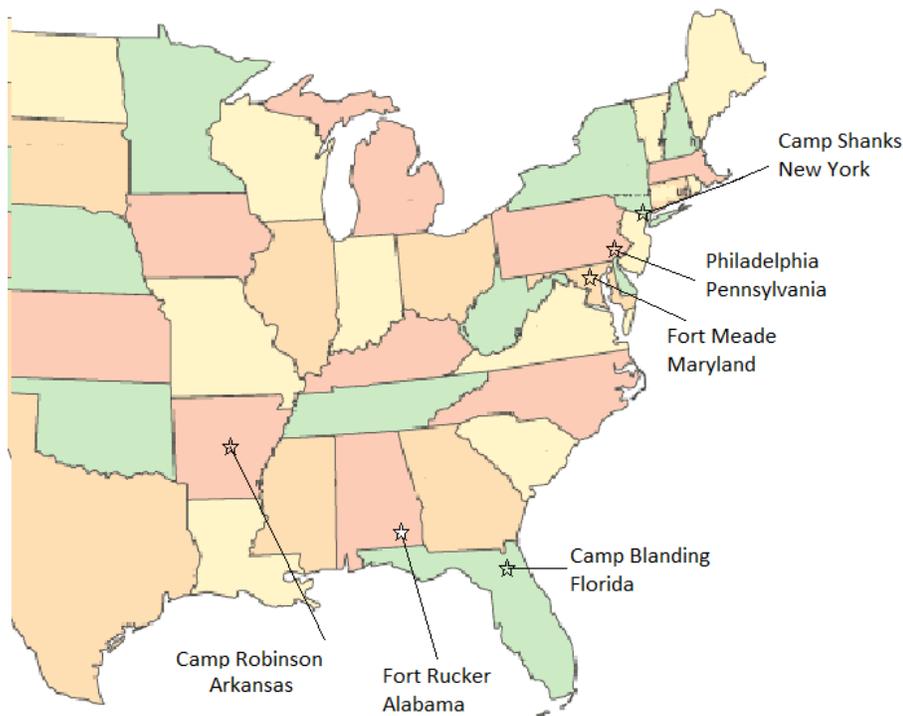


Figure 1 US Training Camps



Mildred (Old Salt) was Ed Herre's sister. She had enrolled in the Women's Army Corps.

1/21/44

Hi you old Salt,

Congratulations on your entry into the service. I like your taste Mildred, you picked the best branch of service that a woman can enter. I hope you have lots of luck in your new and different life ahead of you. I want to hear from you often and I want you to tell me about any difficulties you encounter that I might be able to help you out with. After all I guess the service is the same all over regardless of what branch you are in. I had a lot of troubles when I first came in but I wrote to pals who were in a little longer than I was and they gave me a helping hand so if you want me to I'll be glad to help you. Of course I can't tell you how to adjust to girdles or anything like that but any skill problems or terms, or anything like that. Don't forget I want to hear from you regular.

Mildred I got the news several weeks ago that Ed was missing in action. Man I was really stunned I still can't believe

it. You know there is a very high percentage of those men who are declared missing in action, who are found to be prisoners or fighting with other outfits. Let me explain what I mean. In actual battle there is a terrible amount of confusion and turmoil. Every body is running + fighting every thing is sort of mixed up. Especially up in the thick of the battle where the rifle men are. Well during the course of the fighting a man might lag behind or branch out to the side a little bit too far in order to find a shell hole to jump in or any sort of cover from the enemies fire. Well if he goes on like that for awhile he gradually gets away from his own outfit. Might sets in so what can he do? You can't go strolling around shouting "hey Joe where the hell are you?" Or "where is H Co of this outfit?" The man that does that is a dead duck. All he can do is stay with the bunch he is with and continue to stay with them until their objective is taken and there is a reorganization of his regiment or battalion or whatever it is he is fighting with. If he cannot get back to his own company he is reported as missing in action. If the medics don't



have any record of his dog tags, that is if they don't have one he is not dead because the medics take one tag from a body and leave the other one with the body.

Well if no record of him cannot be found with the medics he is declared as missing in action meanwhile he is fighting with this other outfit. The company he is now ~~with~~ with should report his presence but maybe they just don't bother, so back at home everyone is worked up while there is really nothing to worry about. I hope I have explained myself clearly enough for you to understand a little bit anyhow. I personally don't think Ed is in any trouble. I think he probably got separated from his outfit in some way and he has not been reported by the other crew he joined up with.

Ed might have been taken prisoner too but that is also doubtful but if he is a prisoner it will be some time before it is reported so I wouldn't worry too much about Ed if I were you. You know we Shelly boys are pretty tough and there aren't enough Germans in Germany to suit us. I can't wait until my shipping



orders come. I want to get over there and see just how tough those damn dutchmen are. And if anything has happened to Ed. By God those Krauts had better be careful where they poke their heads up because my machine guns don't miss and I can knock a hair off a fly's nose at 500 yds. and that's no hay.

Well Mildred I guess you are tired of reading this scribbling so I'll go back to my G.I.'s and see what I can find fault with. You know ~~it~~ now that I am a Staff Sgt. I have to be tough as hell on them. But I don't think they believe me when I tell them how tough I am going to be. To tell you the truth I would rather be a put. Stripes are nice but they are a headache too.

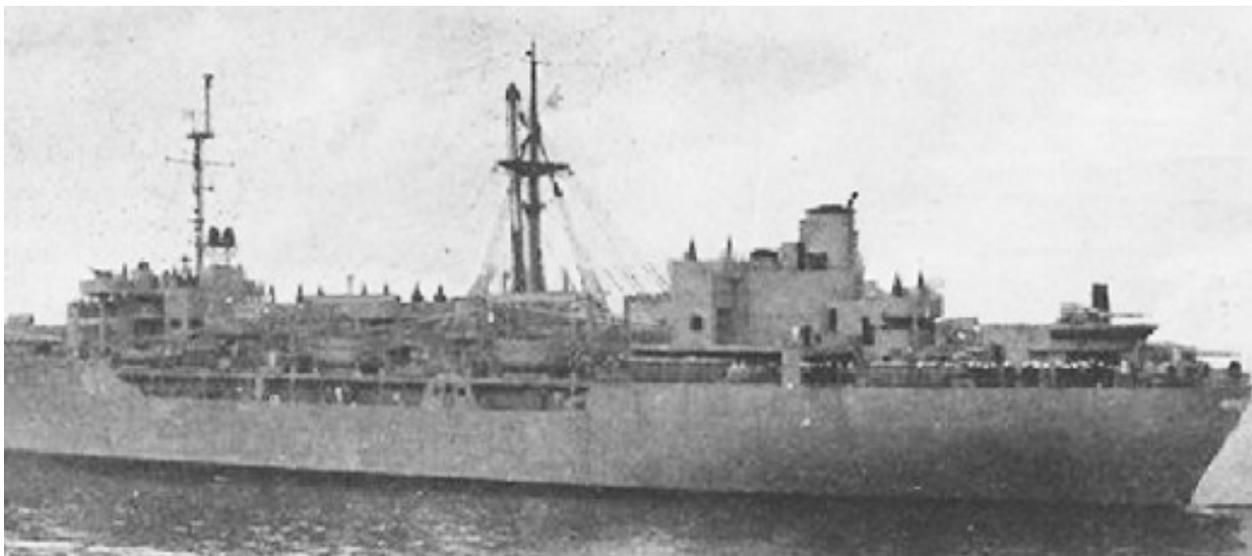
Let me know how soon you are going to get your stripes will you. I want to stay ahead of you if I can.

Well Mildred I'll really sign off now. So until I hear from you, keep punching, and always do what you have to a little better than the next girl, and do a little more than she does and you will be wearing stripes soon too.

P.S. Don't worry about Ed I know Best of Luck Lee
he's OK.

LPE NOVEMBER 26, 1944

After several days, they marched us down to a harbor in NY to prepare to go overseas. The Panthers were assigned to 2 ships. My company boarded the USS General George O. Squier. Other companies were loaded onto the USS Washington. We set sail from NY all by ourselves. But the first morning we woke up on the ship, we went out on the deck and saw boats all over the place. Right beside us was a mini aircraft carrier. Geez, talk about a target. It wasn't one of the big carriers, but it was still a target. First we went south, then up north all around Greenland. There was some u-boat activity in the area that kept us shifting course. One night, it was so rough the screw would come up out of the water and the whole boat would shake. It took us 14 days to cross the Atlantic.



USS General G.O. Squier

I made sure I got a top bunk. I was first assigned a lower bunk, but switched with a guy who thought the top bunk would be too hot. A lot of those farmers had never been off the farm. They were puking as soon as they got on the boat. By the next day, the guy I switched with was using his raincoat on the bottom bunk because the guys above were throwing up above him the whole time. Those boats were awful. We used to go up to the latrine. They had puke sloshing back and forth on the floor, the toilets were full and God - the smell was awful.

A couple of times – going down to that mess hall, the stink would come up the stairwell. It would make you want to puke before you even ate.

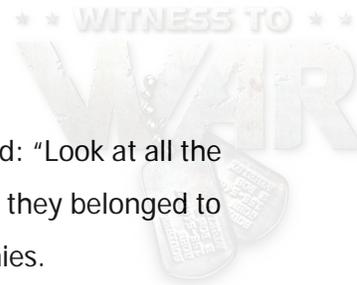
ENGLAND: YOU ARE NOW A “CHAP”

We arrived in Plymouth, England in December, 1944. The battalion was scattered all over England. My platoon, about 50 of us, went to Lyme-Regis, on the SE coast of England. We were put up in a big estate named St. Albans. This estate had been requisitioned by the British Army in 1940, and then by the US Army in 1943, for housing troops.



It was a cold winter, and we only had a little fireplace for heat. We put a fire in a drum and knocked a pane of glass out. The groundskeeper had a fit, and told us: “Oh, his Lordship is not going to like that”. We didn’t care about his Lordship. We didn’t complain too much, though, as some others from the company were living in tents.

We found a pub up the end of a dirt road out back – the beer was room temperature. The locals would get us into darts games. But they were English darts – they were so heavy we couldn’t hit the board. One night, someone brought up a regular set of American darts. We clobbered them that night.



The locals used to tell us about their rations, and how rarely they got meat. We said: "Look at all the rabbits and deer running around here - why aren't you eating them?" They told us they belonged to his Lordship. We told them what we thought the Lordship could do with his bunnies.

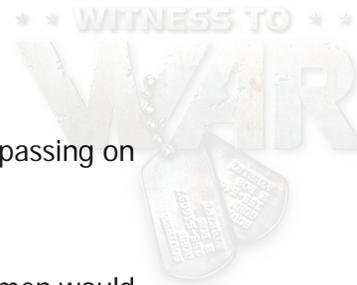
We got familiar with German weaponry while we were at Lyme Regis. Their stuff was so much better than ours. Ours was leftover from WWI. The Germans had machine guns they called Burp guns. They could fire over 1000 rounds in a minute. To keep the barrels from over-heating, they put a wood bullet in the belt every 6 rounds. The gunner had to pull the handle and re-cock the gun to keep firing. This gave the barrel time to cool. We had Browning 1921 machine guns. They fired 250 rounds per minute: pretty sad.

The German 88's (88mm) were the most feared artillery piece in the world. They could be used on aircraft or field personnel. They were accurate and quick-firing. Our M1 rifles were better than theirs. Ours were gas-operated and had 8 rounds to a clip. The German rifle had a bolt action with 5 rounds/clip. When we were issued our M1 rifles, we had to wash them with gasoline to remove the heavy grease called cosmoline before we could use them. The only drawback to the M1 was found if you drew early morning guard duty. You had to pee on the front of the barrel to free-up the gas chamber. Ice would freeze the chamber and it would not feed another round.

While at Lyme Regis, I got a weekend pass to Bournemouth, which was where the queen went in the summer. When we got there it was pretty early. We didn't pay for the train – we didn't have any money for the train. We went to the Red Cross to get something to eat. We watched the guys at the front of line get a coffee and a donut, and then pay something for them. We didn't have any money, so we went down to the Salvation Army. The Salvy gave us coffee, donuts, a place to sleep and a razor – top class. While in Bournemouth, we went to a grand tea room. It was a fancy place. They had a band and you could dance. We went there and danced with some of the girls. Then we made arrangements to meet some of them at a pub that night. But after a quick shower, we walked out the door of the Salvy into such a thick fog that we never did find that pub. We ended up catching a cab and he took us to another pub. We stayed until closing, and then caught a cab back to the SA to get another good night's sleep. On Sunday, we had to catch a train back to camp.

They also had dances in Lyme Regis that we would go to, but they were more low-key.

We got word on December 23 that we were to ship out. Mess sergeant Drury came over to ask if we knew anyone in the town. He had to get rid of the turkeys that were on tap for Christmas dinner.



We loaded a bunch into the jeep, drove into town and gave them to any woman we saw passing on the street. They were thrilled.

I remember lining up to get coffee and donuts from the women in Lyme Regis. All the women would be in line serving with their cigarettes hanging out of their mouths. And every cigarette had a long ash hanging on the end. We used to stare at that ash – waiting for it to fall and make sure it didn't fall on our donut or into our coffee.

PREPARE FOR BATTLE

Up we went to Southampton. We went right to the dock. We were in line to get on the *SS Leopoldville*, when one of the supply officers came along and said: "These men do not have shoe packs. They can't board without them." Shoe packs were rubber boots with laces in the front. So we had to walk all the way back to a big hangar where you picked up your gear. Our hands were full, our packs were full – all they could do was hang a pair of those boots around our neck. One size fits all.

When we got back to the line, the gangplank had been pulled up. We were told the boat was full. We were sent to a smaller boat further down the dock. We boarded the British boat *Antana*. I went on with my men, another bunch, our jeeps and trailers full of machine guns and ammo. We knew there'd be no swimming if this boat got hit. There was known German U-boat activity out in the Channel; so we were docked, waiting for the all-clear to go. What we didn't know at the time was that the *Leopoldville* had already been hit.

My guardian angel was working overtime that night. The *Leopoldville* went down and the 66th Division lost approximately 800 men who never lived long enough to pull a trigger. For 50 years it was kept a secret. Folks back home were told their sons were missing in action. Christmas Eve is not a happy night for me.

For the first time, in 1994, the newspapers wrote: "50 Years Ago Tonight the *Leopoldville* was Torpedoed off the Coast of Cherbourg."

THE SS LEOPOLDVILLE

Since the beginning of WWII, the *SS Leopoldville* had been under charter to the British Admiralty. Beginning in 1940, the 11,700-metric-ton Leopoldville had transported over 120,000 men safely to their destinations across the English Channel. She completed 24 trips, never being hit by enemy fire.

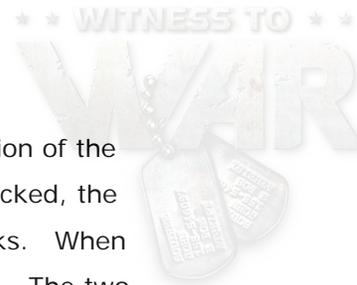
The Leopoldville made her final departure from Southampton, England into the English Channel on Christmas Eve, 1944. She was carrying 2235 men of the 66th Infantry Division (the Black Panthers) headed to serve as reinforcements for the Battle of the Bulge. Five and a half miles from the coast of Cherbourg, France, the Leopoldville was struck by a torpedo from a German U-boat. Several hundred of the troops were killed in the initial blast. Although the ship sank slowly, a combination of errors and communication problems resulted in the death of several hundred more. As result, approximately 763 soldiers died that night, less than 5 months before the end of the war in Europe.



The S.S. Leopoldville

Boarding Ship

Two days before Christmas, 1944, approximately two thousand paratroopers boarded the Belgian troopship *S.S. Leopoldville* at Pier 38, Southampton. Shortly thereafter, they were told to disembark. Someone had made a mistake and they were told they were on the wrong ship. As with the men of the 66th Division's Company H, little did they know how lucky they had been.



On that same day, after weeks of waiting in camps in southern England, the mobilization of the 262nd and 264th Regiments of the U.S. 66th Infantry Division began. Duffel bags packed, the troops headed out to the harbor, for what turned out to be a six-hour wait on the docks. When boarding finally began at 0200hrs on Christmas Eve, it seemed to follow no clear plan. The two regiments were mixed together, companies were separated, and platoons randomly distributed throughout the Leopoldville and on the other troop transport of the convoy, *S.S. Cheshire*. Men were ordered to board as they appeared, which eroded the command structure and led to confusion and chaos. Later, it complicated the task of determining which soldiers were missing, and which had arrived safely in France.

Typical of a massive troop transport experience, conditions on board were extremely crowded and uncomfortable. Enlisted men spent anywhere from 12 to 18 hours sitting on benches in the converted cargo hold or asleep on the floor. Some discovered hammocks and learned how to hang them. As the ship left the docks at Southampton, seasickness quickly set in. [Some credit the nausea with saving their lives, as they were on deck or in the heads rather than in their assigned compartments when the torpedo hit.]

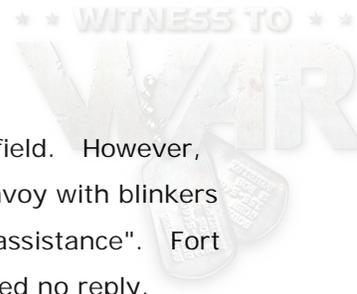
At about 0900hrs, the small convoy drew away from the docks. The Leopoldville, followed by the *Cheshire*, was joined by *HMS Brilliant*, *HMS Anthony*, *HMS Hotham*, and the Free French frigate *Croix de Lorraine* after passing the harbor submarine nets.

Five and one half miles off Cherbourg, German submarine, U-486 lay submerged, awaiting a target. When Leopoldville came into her range, she fired. The torpedo struck the Leopoldville on the starboard side aft and exploded in Number Four Hold. Compartments E-4, F-4 and G-4 were flooded and stairways were blown away, but a few of the three hundred men in those compartments managed to escape to higher decks. Men in other parts of the ship who felt the blow began to make their way to the deck. There they lined up in formation and waited for instructions.

Instructions were given, but not to the infantrymen. A series of contradictory messages over the loudspeaker announced variously that a tug was on the way; that men would be transferred to other ships at sea; and that the ship was not sinking. At 1816hrs, *Brilliant* signaled Leopoldville to drop anchor; having done so, at 1825hrs, Captain Limbor ordered all but essential crew to abandon ship.

Delays in initiating rescue operations were many. First, *Brilliant* had to signal Portsmouth rather than Cherbourg because the US forces in France were tuned to a different radio frequency than that used by the British, and could not read the British code. Portsmouth's subsequent telephone call to Cherbourg was delayed for nearly an hour for reasons as yet unexplained.

A second delay was the failure of any ship of the small convoy to reply to blinker signals from shore. The Americans at Fort L'Ouest (Cherbourg) noticed immediately that the convoy had



stopped, and soon observed that one of the vessels was drifting toward a minefield. However, repeated attempts on the part of Fort L'Ouest to signal Leopoldville and the convoy with blinkers brought no reply until 1825hrs, when Brilliant signaled: "Leopoldville hit, need assistance". Fort L'Ouest blinkered back inquiring as to the kind of assistance needed, but received no reply.

Another important cause of delay was the Christmas holiday itself. In the harbor at Cherbourg lay several hundred vessels which could have served as rescue craft, but all were lightly manned due to the holiday and all had cold engines. All posts on the base were minimally staffed due to attendance at holiday parties, a situation that significantly slowed communications, decisions and orders.

The other escorts in the convoy were still hunting the U-boat, as commander of Brilliant and Convoy Commander John Pringle judged that the Cherbourg rescue craft could take all the remaining men off before the ship sank. He was later to be questioned on this error in judgment. The convoy heard no call for assistance from the Leopoldville

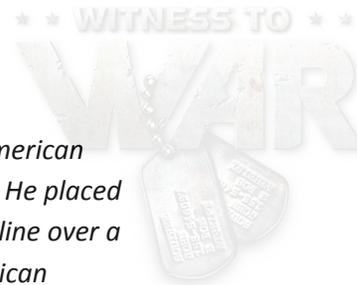
After the majority of the crew had abandoned ship on Limbor's order, at 1825hrs, having signaled Fort L'Ouest, the Brilliant approached and maneuvered alongside the Leopoldville. This was a difficult task, because the empty lifeboat davits were out on the port side, and two lifeboats were swung out on the starboard side.

From the view point of Royal Navy sailor John Dixon aboard the HMS Brilliant:

H.M.S. Brilliant went along the port side of the troopship. We had put our starboard fenders over the side; the sea swell was causing a rise and fall of between 8ft and 12ft. The scrambling nets were hanging down the Leopoldville's port side and the American soldiers were coming down on to our upper deck. Some men had started to jump down from a height of approximately 40ft. Unfortunately, limbs were being broken when they landed on the torpedo tubes and other fixed equipment on the starboard side of the upper deck. Some men fell between the two vessels and were crushed as the two vessels crashed into each other. To avoid any further injuries, if possible, all our hammocks were brought up from our mess-decks below and laid on the starboard upper deck to cushion the fall of the soldiers as they landed.

The servicemen were asked to spread themselves as evenly as possible all over the ship, above and below decks to avoid the possibility of capsizing. At 19-20hrs, having taken on about 500 men, we pulled away from the Leopoldville as there were only a few inches of free board. I was very much aware of this, as I was standing right on the stern port quarter. To use an old naval expression, we could easily have been "pooped." As we headed for the port of Cherbourg we passed the some of the rescue craft heading for the Leopoldville. The other escorts in the convoy were still hunting for the U-boat 486.

The scene on entering Cherbourg harbor was one of chaos; most of the ships along the quay had suffered the fate of being scuttled by the Germans. There was one berth available on our port side as we entered the harbor. There was just enough space, lengthways, to get along side but the captain



was unable to berth the ship just by using his two propellers. After about 15 minutes, an American soldier came to the rescue with his jeep. A line was thrown to him from our stern section. He placed it over his Jeep's tow hook and slowly pulled the stern along side of the quay then placed the line over a bollard. He repeated the same action at the bow. The gangway was put out for the American servicemen to start disembarking. I saw them putting their English money into a GI's tin hat as they left the ship, which was handed to one of our officers. No doubt it was showing their appreciation at their rescue. It is on record that HMS BRILLIANT rescued approximately 500 men at that first attempt, but on our return to rescue more men, the LEOPOLDVILLE had sunk.

At 1920hrs, the battered and overloaded Brilliant pulled away, having taken on about 500 men. As she headed for shore, she passed the first rescue craft which were finally leaving harbor and heading to the scene of the sinking ship.

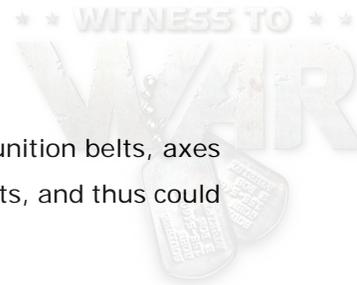
At this time, a few rescue craft began to approach and take men off, but it was a slow process. At 2000hrs there were still 1200 troops on board, as well as 25 Belgians and 10 British officers. At this point, Limbor ordered the remaining Belgians and British to abandon ship, although he himself remained on board with a few of his crew who stood by him, thus leaving virtually no one with any knowledge of seamanship to aid in the rescue process. After the crew had departed and with the loudspeaker no longer operational, Limbor walked around the ship giving the order to the troops to abandon ship. Since he gave it in Flemish amid scenes of much confusion, it had little effect.

At some point between 2020hrs and 2040hrs, two explosions were heard from the bowels of the ship, and hatch covers blew off, sending some men into the water. Then the foundering vessel began to heel sideways as well as sinking stern down. Rafts and other equipment broke loose from the deck and swept men into the sea. The rest of the men soon followed, either jumping, walking down the overturned side into the water, or simply stepping off as the deck fell away beneath them.

Ross Saunders had just turned 20 when the torpedo struck the compartment adjacent to his, killing about 300 soldiers instantly. "I went down and got an armful of life preservers," Howard said. "I was one of the last ones off. It seemed forever. I slid down the side of the ship. I paddled off. A small American harbor craft threw me a rope. My fingers were frozen. They told me to tie it around my arm."

Clarence Ash was below when the torpedo hit. He recalls being thrown from his hammock, then smelling gunpowder with dust coming out of the walls. At that point, the inside of the ship went pitch black. He made his way in the darkness to the top of the ship.

It was winter and the air was very cold. The seas that night were rough with high winds and 5-foot waves. The 48-degree water was suddenly crowded with hundreds of struggling men. In the more than two hours they had stood on deck, no one had instructed them to prepare to enter the water by removing their heavy clothing or gear. Now they were in a rough sea weighed down by



their full field kit. Most quickly divested themselves of their boots, rifles, ammunition belts, axes and entrenching tools, but their heavy winter overcoats were under the life jackets, and thus could not be removed.

Others were already dead, killed instantaneously by their own gear. They had not been instructed how to safely enter the water wearing their lifejackets and helmets. On striking the water, if not tied together tightly, the two pillows which formed the front and back of the jacket snapped up with great force and broke the wearer's neck. The same occurred with helmet straps if not unfastened.

Captain Limbor went down with his ship, the only officer not to survive the sinking. The official number of US infantry dead was calculated at 763.

The U-486 was sunk on April 12th, 1945 in the North Sea northwest of Bergen, Norway, by torpedoes from the British submarine HMS Tapir. All 48 crew onboard were lost.

Those bodies which had been recovered (493 were never found) were buried on 25 and 26 December in Blosville-Carentan and other nearby areas, and the incident was buried with them.

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FRANCE: PANTHÈRES NOIRE

They kept us stationed on the *Antana* until we pushed off on December 29. We landed in Cherbourg. There was no dock – just a huge freighter that had grounded and turned on its side. We had to walk the length of the freighter to even get to the dock. From Cherbourg, we were trucked to Rennes. We bivouacked in a big field, where we collected our gear and re-grouped.

Then we moved in to Saint Nazaire on December 31. Saint Nazaire was a sea port on the coast where parts of the German Army headed when Patton split them up after the break thru at St. Lo. The Germans thought they could board ships, go thru Mediterranean Sea and get back to Germany. However, those seaports were blockaded by the British and American Navies. That left them in these pockets with no place to go.

Saint Nazaire was a large submarine port. It had so much concrete on top that even with the bombing it was hardly scratched. The coast was also solid rock, so bombing never hurt the U-boat pens that existed there. We were stationed in a town called Faye De Britayne. Up on the line, the ground positions were already dug - thank God. The machine gun positions could be up to 10 ft wide, and we would have had to dig each one of them out. We relieved the 94th division.



Figure 2 England to Faye de Britayne

The 94th division took our assignment as replacements for the Battle of the Bulge because they were a full division. We were down 800 men from the Leopoldville. We later learned that the 94th suffered heavy casualties at the Bulge. Our guardian angels were still on the job.

We went on line that night - December 31 – in the dark. I was in charge of 2 machine guns. John Hensley and Roy Denny were my squad leaders. I stayed with Hensley, because I knew Denny could handle things. The next day, I just made my way back and forth between the two gun positions to familiarize myself with the path between. My machine guns were about 150yds apart, with nothing in-between. Each position had 7 men with them. The Germans shelled the hell out of us. But these krauts didn't want to fight. They had a good position. They just wanted us to know that they knew we were there.

There were 14 submarine pens located in St. Nazaire and another 3 in the Lorient. The enemy was dug in with some of the toughest troops Germany had to offer. Artillery duels, including limited objective attacks, patrolling, harassing and capturing enemy personnel were carried out. Our orders when we went up were: "You cannot move back from these positions. Do not retreat. Do not leave. Do not abandon the gun positions." There were about 55000 Germans penned in this pocket around Saint Nazaire. Our job was just to keep them there and fight it out.

I remember going to Mass on Sunday mornings. I timed my trip to platoon headquarters to pick up the mail so I could make the 10 o'clock Mass at a country church along the way. When the priest rang the bell to start the service, all the women and children went into the church. The men all turned and faced the church and pissed on the wall. I have no idea why they did it, but I saw it every week. I always hid the jeep behind the church and took the rotor out of the distributor so it wouldn't start.



1945 brought the coldest winter to Europe in 25 years. Our gun position was cold and damp, so a couple of the men went off to some bombed-out houses in the rear of our position and came back with a wood-burning stove and some smoke pipes. We had heat at night when the smoke was not visible. It also dried out the gun position. We no longer had to sleep with our wool hats in the breathing hole of our fart sacks.



Right to left me - Mr Crocker Gira
 Miller & Calabotta.

Taken at Jaks 4 MG outpost
 May de Bretagne France
 March 1945



Sgt Hruby one of my eqpl files
 & Paul Calabotta in the DP
 dug in one of the hedgerows
 We used this one to keep
 the Krauts from sneaking
 up on our blind side.
 May de Bretagne France March 1945

Our routine was 2 weeks on the line, 2 days off. Our rest area was in a little cow barn a couple of miles back from the line. The 2 day relief was spent the same way each turn: Day 1: we cleaned the gear. We emptied our canvas shell belts and tore the guns down, cleaned and checked everything. On Day 2, we went into Nantes to a pub. Trucks picked us up at 7am and drove into town; we'd be in the pubs by 8am. We were told what corner to be on at about 4pm. That was your ride back and you didn't miss it. Everyone would head back all slopped-up.



Sando McCafferty Sgt John Hensley.
Quinn Eldridge Greenberg Milles
McGara McCusker Froggott

The best thing about these 2-days was you could sleep all night – no guard duty, no chance of anyone breaking in. We were a couple of miles back from the line for relief. And we had hot breakfasts. Up on the line, we'd get breakfasts delivered in these 5gal mermide cans that were supposed to preserve the heat. We'd get flapjacks that were so hard you could shoot them. I was at the end of the line, the last stop to get fed, so I never got a hot meal. I used to ask the cook:

"Did you bring more of that cold slop up again tonight?" And he'd say, "Yeah, but it's different cold slop than last night."



Horse Barn
OUR BAR Hotel
Fay De Bretagne



Calabotta Hensley McCusker Milles
Keilly - me McGara Froggott Eldridge
Notice the nice orange mud.
Taken in France.

We had to keep 1 man outside at all times, all through the night. I remember one night that was my turn: I was stationed outside the tent, when I suddenly heard this terrible racket. I didn't know what was coming at me, but it was making a helluva noise. I pulled the pin on a grenade in preparation. Then I realized it was a big red fox that was taking a run at me. The snow had a frozen crust on it that cracked with every step, and in the dead of night, it echoed like mad. I had to throw the grenade out in front of our position.

The only sound that came from inside the tent was McCusker: "You all right out there, Mac?"

I used to take some notes while up on the line. I kept them in a small, pocket-sized address book. If you were captured, you didn't want the enemy finding anything on you that might hold information. Here is a sampling of the notes:

Jan We got 5 and the mortars must have got about 10 because there were 15 killed in all. Most disastrous scene I have ever witnessed.

Jan 14 No pattern. Shelled us pretty heavy closest 150yds

Feb 2 Start 2 days off-line

Feb 3. Nantes: Beautiful town – bombed all to hell.

Feb 4. Few 88's. No close ones

Feb 8 Burps at it last night

Feb 9 Burps again 81's gave them hell hit a few Deacon Damon sent a few 81 shells in front of us to quiet things down.

Feb 10 All quiet



Sards on
my baby.
right behind
Troy DeBretzke
a couple of days
before VE day.



T-H-E C-O-M-B-A-T-E-E-R
263D INFANTRY DAILY NEWS
12 MARCH 1945
* * *

LOCAL FRONT: Orders issued yesterday by Division Headquarters awarded to the 263d Infantry Regiment the honor of being the Division's first Combat Infantry Regiment, entitled to wear the streamer for such award on its colors.

The Regimental Commander extends his congratulations to all members of the command for their work in making this real distinction possible.

WESTERN FRONT: The American First Army bridgehead over the Rhine is now more than three (3) miles deep and nine (9) miles wide. The Americans are fighting in towns over four (4) miles to the North and South of the Remagen Bridge. They have shot down more than half of a force of 47 aircraft which tried to destroy the bridge.

Further North the Wesal Bridgehead has been wiped out by United Kingdom, Canadian and American Troops. The Allies hold the West bank of the Rhine for about 150 miles. Third Army columns are only a mile North of Coblenz.

British Mosquitos last night gave Berlin its 20th night attack. During the day 3,300 Allied aircraft from Britain attacked other targets in Germany.

EASTERN FRONT: Russian spearheads are about ten (10) miles from Danzig and across the Vistula; other forces are 17 miles from the port. The people of Danzig and Gdynia have been told by their Gauleiter to prepare for a long siege.

ITALIAN FRONT: American troops of the Fifth Army in Italy have edged forward again South of Bologna.

BURMA FRONT: Troops of the Frontier Force Regiment in Burma have made a frontal attack on Fort Duffrin, the stronghold in the heart of Mandalay. They were halted by machine gun fire.

continued-----over.

INDIA FRONT: The fine work done by airmen of India has been honored. Their air force is to be known as The Royal Indian Air Force.

PACIFIC FRONT: On Mindano, most southealy island in the Philippines, American assault troops are nearing the airfield of the chief port. They have already got four villages.

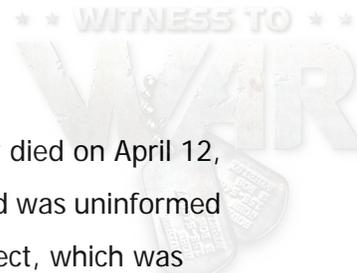
300 Superfortresses from the Mariannas have attacked the Japanese industrial city of Nagoya. They sent down 2,000 tons of bombs.

GENERAL NEWS: Nearly half the 70 German prisoners of war who escaped from a camp in South Wales have been recaptured.



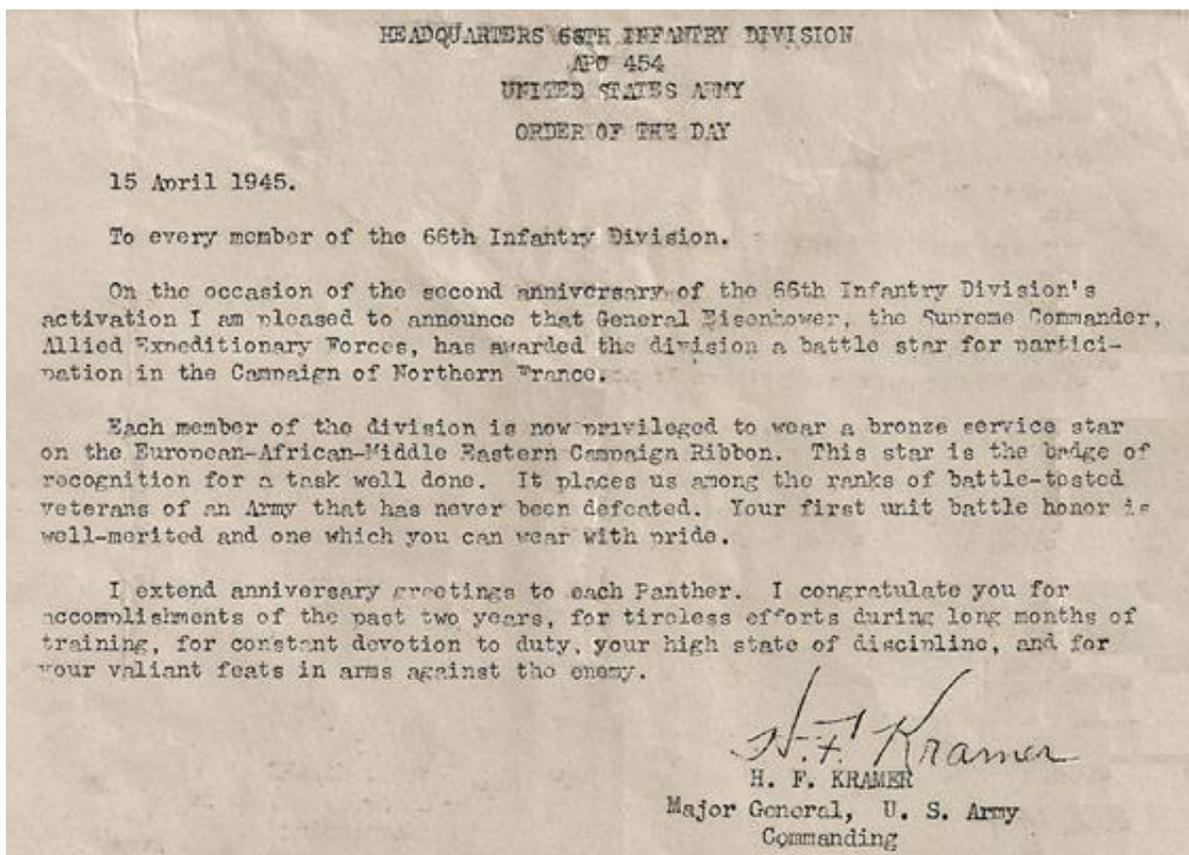
I am on
right Flank.
Cronick in Middle
France
March 1945.

Helms me Damon
Vaccaro Karlesrud
Burke - } Koceling
Cronick. }
France March 1945



[Harry Truman had been vice president for only 82 days when President Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945. He had rarely discussed world affairs or domestic politics with Roosevelt and was uninformed about major initiatives relating to the war including the top secret Manhattan Project, which was about to test the world's first atomic bomb. Shortly after taking the oath of office, Truman said to reporters: "Boys, if you ever pray, pray for me now. I don't know if you fellas ever had a load of hay fall on you, but when they told me what happened yesterday, I felt like the moon, the stars, and all the planets had fallen on me."]

On April 15, 1945, to mark the second anniversary of the 66th Infantry Division, General Eisenhower, Supreme Commander Allied Expeditionary Forces, awarded to the division a star of battle (battle star) for its participation in the campaign in France. "Your first reward of honor is deserved and you can wear with pride."



SURRENDER: SAINT NAZAIRE

In early May 1945, our troops from the 66th Infantry Division were informed that we would soon be replaced by French soldiers of General de Larminat. But we did not want to miss the surrender of the pocket of Saint-Nazaire, which was figured to be close. On May 3, 1945 Major-General Kramer, accompanied by his Chief of Staff, met General de Larminat in his headquarters in Cognac to arrange delay of this replacement for a few days.]

Germany surrendered unconditionally in Rheims on Monday, May 7, 1945 at 1441. The protocols signed during the surrender on May 8 stated that the Germans still had 2 days to clear the access to the pocket, stow their equipment, make it intact, and park themselves in prison camps. On May 11, in Saint Nazaire, the Germans surrendered to the 66th Division, liberating 856 square miles of French territory.

Inside the liberated territory were some 180,000 civilians, virtually held prisoner by their

German captors and forced to share with the Nazis the constant bombardment of the 66th Division Artillery.

The U.S. 66th Infantry Division started to prepare to enter the pocket on the evening of May 10, 1945. We had to march about 5-6 miles to get inside.



Surrender ceremony, Saint Nazaire

When we went into those U-boat pens, the Krauts had fresh fruit and newspapers only a week old. It was also a dry dock – they had 1 submarine that was in for repair.

Our battalion confiscated a truck load of booze one night that some French were trying to sneak in to the German prisoners. They were gonna sell it to them. Each man in the company was given a fifth – of something. I think I got a bottle of brandy. There were all different kinds of booze, and each man you ran into asked you to try theirs. I got so loaded I couldn't even stand up. I remember leaning up against a tree and feeling myself sliding down – there was nothing I could do about it. I fell asleep under that tree. Lucky for me, when it started raining that night, someone came by and threw a tarp over me. I was hungover for days. First and last load I ever had.

Someone took the opportunity to shave half the bushy moustache off the second-in-command. Fundum was probably the only sober soldier that night. Someone had to stay alert. But he got his fifth the next night.



One spot we set up in was LeBaule. The army would set up the chow lines out in the street, and the GIs would make their way through with their mess gear. The local women would all gather around, waiting to see either what was left in the pots or what the GIs would spare. Lots of the GIs would just scrape their mess gear right into their buckets. These people had no food – it was pretty sad to see them scavenging like that.



Bay.
Le Baule
Scene from our ^{May 18} Hotel in Le Baule France.
There are blockades to keep landing barges from coming ashore but near side of bay. Tides were out.



Dunn Sande Ellis looking over pill boxes along shoreline at Le Baule. Pill boxes were built stronger than most banks in USA
May 18, 1945.

ON TO THE NEXT MISSION



*all aboard in Germany
 Our pullman cars.
 Part of H company (263rd)
 Bellino - Ellie*

The army had a point system in place that determined whether or not you could go home. A soldier was awarded points for his months of service, for the medals he received, for the combat stars earned by his unit, and for the number of children he had.

The higher the score, the higher the probability of being sent home for discharge. For those of us who didn't have enough points earned, we prepared for our next assignment. By mid-May, we were getting ready to leave for Germany towards the city of Koblenz for a mission of occupation and control of German military activity there. The following are some of my notes from that trip:

May 20 Left Prinquiau assembly area headed for Koblenz, GER. Went through Nantes and Angers

May 21 Another Day on the 40+8's. [40+8's were the boxcars we rode on the rails] France is slowly recovering from the war.

A little reconstruction is being done. While riding the 40+8's, if you wanted to shave, you had to run up to the engine. For 2 cigarettes, the engineer would fill your helmet with hot water from the steam boiler.

May 22 Went through Metz and Chateau Thierry – beautiful country. Hit Luxembourg today. Not too much destruction here.



Ed Plesucha

May 23 Left Luxembourg last night – now in the fatherland. Went through Bastogne which is leveled. Arles, Neuchatel, Marche, Liege, Aachen. This last town has been bombed and shot up something terrible. Really looks good. Now stopped in a town called Duren. This town is also a mess.



*One of Germany's
 beauty spots. Nice huh.
 Whole towns - Bastogne
 such cabling are all like
 this*

Germany May 1945

Still eating C and K rations with a few sardines thrown in. We have crossed the Seine-Moselle, Meuse, Rhine, Marne and Ruhr rivers. We have traveled a roundabout route. Most of the rails have just been re-laid. Yesterday, we passed trainloads of prisoners, Dutch and French – all going home.



Men, women and children are all living in these damn boxcars. We have 25 men in ours and it's crowded as hell. Those poor people were jammed in till there were 40-50 in one car. I was talking with one frog and he told me the Germans worked him 16h a day, and gave him little or no food.

*Station Sands Gira
 me-squatting.
 Our special reserved
 car to Germany.*

May 25, 1945

May 24 Morning again. Went through Remagen. Saw the famous Remagen Bridge across the Rhine.



U.S. Capture Remagen Bridge during World War II

The Ludendorff Bridge (known frequently by English-speakers during World War II as the Bridge at Remagen) was a railway bridge across the River Rhine in Germany, connecting the villages of Remagen and Erpel between two ridge lines of hills flanking the river. Remagen is situated near and south of Bonn.

The bridge is notable for its capture on 7–8 March 1945, by American forces during the Second World War Battle of Remagen, which allowed the Allies to establish a bridgehead across the Rhine.

The German commandant at Remagen wanted to keep the bridge open as long as possible. His intent was that as many German soldiers as possible and their heavy equipment would be able to cross the bridge. The responsible bridge officer demanded a requisition of 600kg of demolition explosives, receiving at 1100 hrs only 300 kg of Donarit, a considerably weaker industrial explosive used in the mining industry. He tried to use them for a quick blast on the right bank side.

At 1340 hrs the main American attack began. The first blast of the Germans, who set fire to a portion of the charges, tore a 10-meter-wide crater in the left bank ramp. At 1540 hrs, the bridge itself was blown up by order of the commandant, but remained standing. It lifted a bit and then dropped safely back in place, as an explosive cable had been destroyed. One of the last intact Rhine bridges had been taken by the Allies.

Allied journalists termed the capture the "Miracle of Remagen." General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower declared the bridge "worth its weight in gold" and "one of those bright opportunities of war which, when quickly and firmly grasped, produce incalculable effects on future operations". It remained functional (but weakened severely), despite the German detonation of one small charge and a stronger charge a few minutes later.

The bridge capture was an important strategic event of WW2 because it was the only remaining bridge over the Rhine River into Germany's heartland and was also strong enough that the Allies could cross immediately with tanks and trucks full of supplies. Once it was captured, the German troops began desperate efforts to damage it or slow the Allies' use of it. At the same time, the Allies worked to defend it, expand their bridgehead into a lodgement sufficiently large that the Germans could no longer attack the bridge with artillery, and kept it in repair despite the ongoing battle damage.



*Our convoy moving
along a road in Germany
you could hardly go
a 100 yds without seeing
a wrecked tank-truck-
airplane or set along road
May 1945*

May 24 After another night in a boxcar, we unloaded this morning and moved to an old airstrip where the regiment is bivouacking in Parade ground style. We are now outside of Koblenz. I heard a reliable story today that the Russians are taking everything in Berlin and shipping it home. They are all drunk and living high, using the German women as they please. Our regiment has been attached to 23rd Corps for a special mission, otherwise we would not be here. We would be in our town that we were going to occupy.

May 25 Still here on airstrip Neidermenzig. [With the end of the war, Niedermenzig Airfield was closed on 11May1945. The ground station was taken over by Army units as part of the occupation force. United States Army forces moved out of Niedermenzig in the late summer of 1945, as French forces moved into the Rhineland as part of their occupation zone of Germany.]



*Boyd Dunn Wiley Williams - cool
in front of our car
going to Germany
Doc Walker on right
May 25, 1945*

May 26 Rumors of moving to Marseille. I guess it's the Pacific for us. That suits me fine. Other rumors say we are going to process troops going to the Pacific.



Niedermerzig
 May 26, 1945.



The airstrip at Niedermerzig
 The home of an infantry
 man is his pup tent
 which you see here.
 May 27th 1945



Bevauaced an air strip
 at Niedermerzig Germany



Company Street
 Niedermerzig Germany
 Frank Lewis has
 the guidon

Bobby Breen
 talking to
 Lt Franzen in
 Niedermerzig
 Germany



May 27 Heard Mass this morning Struck tents (had a picture taken here). Finally got loaded on boxcars once again. Once we started out, we passed through Koblenz – completely destroyed.



One of the many bridges destroyed at Coblenz



*Daley - Deckenbark - Olaneson
 Salem Moore. Needham
 Powell May 1945
 Coblenz Germany*

Rheims: the cherry trees in this section are many and full of cherries. Passed a POW camp on a large plain; must have been 4 mi long. Passed through Boppard, St. Goar, the Bacharach Mountain ranges on the right of the Rhine. Looks like a gigantic sandtable – miniature towns in deep valleys (9 o'clock snack of sardines) On to Niederhambach.

May 28 Didn't move much today. Crossed the Rhine at Mainz. Saw the FDR Memorial bridge, and then passed through Mannheim.

May 29 We are traveling pretty good now. I think we are out of Germany. We are in a little town called Saverne. Now in Saarbrucken – went through the Saarbrucken – Alsace-Lorraine territory and Strasbourg.

May 30 Really moving now. Went through Troyes and Dijon. We're not far from the Swiss border, passing through the outer edges of the Alps. Beautiful mountains, really pretty country. Went through Lyon, St. Etienne, Le Puy, now in Valence. The farther we go the better I think it's the Pacific. Went through Avignon. Stopped about 13 miles north of Marseilles at the Delta Base center: POE to Pacific. Now we hear we are to process troops again. Looks like I was wrong.

May 31 Arrived at this Delta base sector and it looks like processing troops is our job! [Starting from May 26, 1945, most of the 66th Infantry Division headed to Marseille to be redeployed to the Pacific War, or sent home to the United States. This was an enormous task. The officers and men build two huge camps with tents in Arles and Saint-Victoret on the dusty plains. A tremendous amount of paperwork was required to prepare tens of thousands of soldiers and thousands of tons of equipment for shipping.]

June 1 H company was assigned to a plateau outside of Marseilles (Vitrolles) to guard a motor pool of jeeps, tanks, trucks, and ambulances. The French were trying to steal batteries, rotors, and any other parts they could get their hands on.



Figure 3 St. Nazaire to Marseille



M Lavery
Shaving
Sept. 1945
Victrolles
France
Notice the basin
(Helmet)



Nicky Williams - Norman Riley - Alank - Fregot
"Chow" St Victrolles France June 1945



Ken Cronick with
some of his superman
detail putting up
tents
St Victrolles France
June 1945



General Kramer
addressing 263rd Regt
in June 1945
at St Victrolles France

MARSEILLES

INSTRUCTIONS
 When this pass is cancelled the holder will report direct to his organization. Failure to comply with these instructions will subject him to trial by courts-martial.

I certify that I have been instructed in military courtesy, proper wearing of the uniform, off limits area, and deportment.

LJ McLaverty
 (Signature of Holder)

Headquarters 2630 INF
 St. Victoret Staging Area.
 Date Issued 18 JUNE 45
 To: McLAVERTY LEO J S/Sgt 33595276
 (Name) (Grade) (ASN)
 Organization Co "H"
 entitled holder, whose signature appears below to be absent from his organization from 1000 hrs 18 June 1945 to 2300 hrs 18 June 1945.

I certify that this soldier was inspected as to proper uniform upon issue of this pass.

Arthur E. Doys, 4th Lt.
RICHARD C. RAMSAY
 (COMMANDING OFFICER)
CAPT.
 (Grade)



In Marseilles, they always had photographers out on the street that would snap your picture as you walked by. They would give you a ticket and then you could go back the next week and pick up a copy of the photo. I had a bunch of pictures taken in Marseilles. Most of the photographers were taken on the Rue de Canebière, which was the main street of Marseille.



Mo
 Klenowski
 Wiley Williams
 in Marseille
 France
 Sept. 1945.
 Rue de
 Canberre



met Snakey
 Gordon walking
 on the Rue de
 Canberre in
 Marseille France
 6/18/45.
 I was whistling
 when they snapped
 this picture.



Klenowski
 Mo **CARTE**
 Company Commander
 Eldridge.
 Marseille
 Oct 3, 1945
 I was looking
 to see if I had
 any buttons
 open.



USO Camp Show, Vitrolles



Mickey Rooney here at Vitrolles.



Bobby Breen here at Vitrolles. France

performed with Bobby Breen in Vitrolles in August of 1945.

In 1941, the U.S. Army made a plea for entertainment for troops preparing for the war in training camps around the country. In October of that year, USO Camp Shows, Inc., was designated by the War and Navy Departments as the "Official Entertainer" of the men and women of the armed forces. The USO's tradition of bringing entertainment to service members around the world was born.

During the peak of action in 1945, USO Camp Shows were presenting 700 shows a day, with more than 300,000 performances overseas and in the United States, to an audience totaling more than 173 million. Camp Shows entertained as many as 15,000 soldiers seated on the ground, as few as 20 in jeeps based at a lonely outpost and at the bedsides of wounded soldiers recuperating in military hospitals.

Celebrity draftees like Mickey Rooney entertained troops in stateside training camps, staging areas and overseas units across Germany. Soldier Jeep Shows and Special Service Company Shows took live entertainment to combat areas. Rooney was a member of a three-man unit on a jeep tour to entertain the troops in Kist, Germany on April 13, 1945. He

Aug 15 At 1240 this morning, we heard the announcement that the US had accepted Japanese unconditional surrender. Thank God for now we will be getting home to our loved ones.

[On August 15, Emperor Hirohito delivered a radio broadcast announcement of the acceptance of the terms of the Potsdam Declaration at noon, Japan standard time.]

Sep 28 I'm a man now [21 years old]. Moving from Vitrolles to St. Victoret.

Oct 5 53 men left the 66th to go to 42nd division, and on **Oct 10**, 26 more men left for 42nd.

OCCUPATION DUTY

Oct 16, 1945 Left St. Victoret today, and went up to Arles by truck, then got loaded on 40 + 8's. Started out at 2130. Went back through Avignon - Valence

I remember the kids standing along the railroad tracks when our boxcars would be cruising past. They would be begging for us to throw them the bars of chocolate that were packed in our C rations. It was a solid block of chocolate, and most of the GIs saved it for when we would come across these kids.



Oct 17 Passed through Vienne Now at Lyon. Spent 2 hours here, looked the town over.

Oct 18 Went through Mulhouse this morning. Guebwiller – Colmar – Selestat – Erstein

Oct 19 Strasburg – Aukein – on through Austria. Bahnstenz completely demolished

Oct 20 – Hit Salzburg on this Saturday morning, but we're turning back to Rosenheim – went too far. Bavarian Alps are very beautiful. Now in Tiesendorf. Got off just outside of Rosenheim and walked to 781st replacement Co of 42nd. We're housed in an old German tank corps barracks. It's really beautiful in this section of the country. Bavarian Alps in the background are really beautiful.

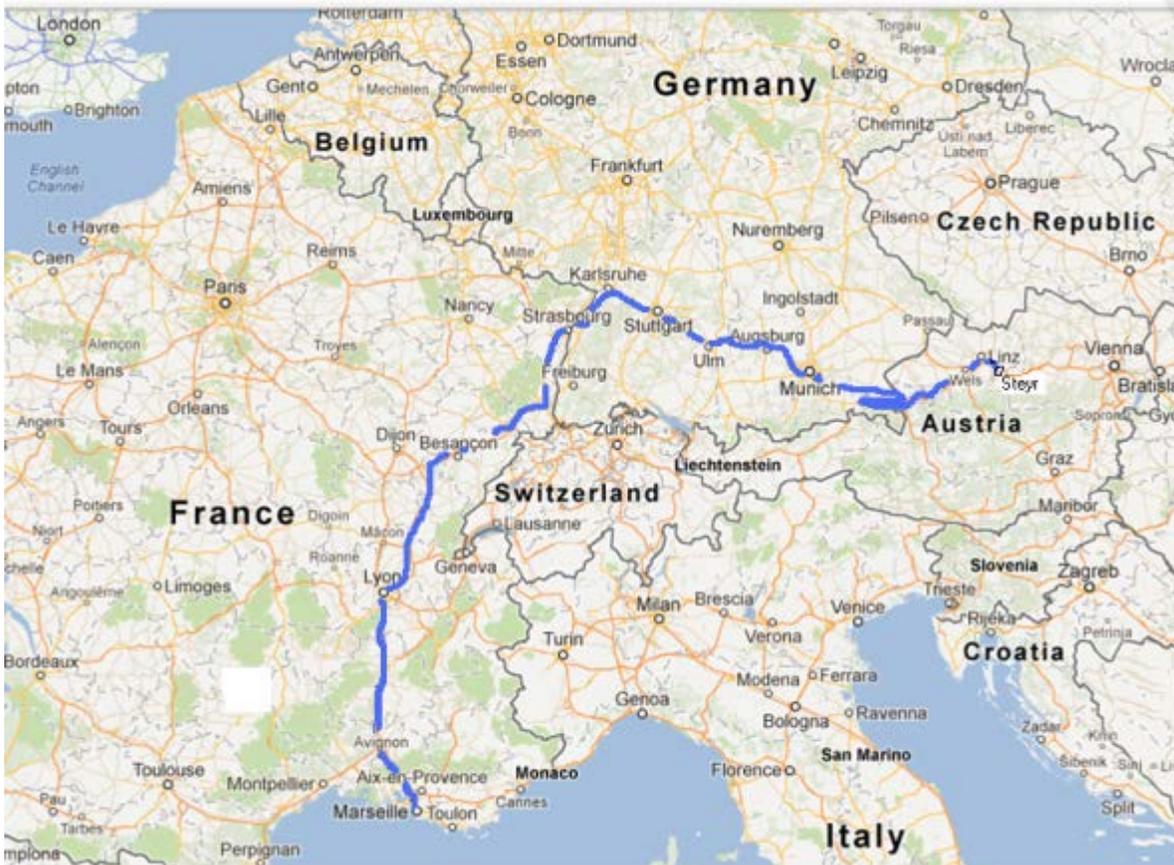


Figure 4 Marseille to Wels / Steyr

Oct 21^t – Just spent the day looking around here. Good PX and quarters but lousy chow.

Oct 22 Moved to the Linz area on the Danube River. We are assigned to the 331 Combat Engineers for food and lodging. We are a 5-man Labor Supervision Company: Co 1701 Labor Supply. I was made a supply sergeant and given a 2 1/2 ton truck. My job is to haul supplies for the prisoners in our stockades. The 5 of us are the only ones allowed inside the Lager. The 42nd Division walked guard duty outside the Lager. We were billeted at Eblesburg, Austria. I rode a trolley car every day from Eblesburg to Linz to work.

Oct 23 – Shipped out today from Linz to permanent quarters here near Wels. Nice town. Good PX and good living conditions. Still driving a truck, but it sure beats walking.



'Orphan' Unit That Tied Up 53,000 Germans Disbands

Camp Shanks, N. Y.—(AP)—The 66th infantry division, whose job it was to keep 53,000 of Germany's toughest troops bottled up in the Lorient and St. Nazaire pockets while Allied forces swept through France, turned in its glorious records Wednesday and quietly passed out of existence.

There were no ceremonies. Brig. Gen. Francis W. Rollins of Providence, R. I., sat down and told a news conference this story:

The 66th division was an orphan. No army claimed it. Its one job was to see that the Germans stationed around the submarine pens of Lorient and St. Nazaire, impregnable fortifications, got no chance to break through and menace other Allied forces.

There were 25,000 Americans and 10,000 Frenchmen in the division. It got no publicity. Most of the other outfits overseas never heard of it. Its commander was Maj. Gen. Herna (Dutch) Kramer, selected for the job because he was one of the two American officers who had been graduated from a German war college. Kramer now heads the 97th division in Tokyo.

Idea Breaks Stalemate

The Germans had plotted every inch of ground within the range of their guns and by pressing a button could "sterilize" any spot. The German commander had a communications system which enabled him to talk to anyone or to all his scattered troops in an instant.

Day after day the two forces engaged in artillery duels. With one shot the Americans sank a 5,000 ton ship in Lorient harbor. But it looked as if the Germans could never be taken until finally Col. James Ham-

ilton and Lt. Col. Ralph Ganns had an idea.

"They questioned such individual Germans as could be captured until they found out the names of every German officer and his position on the other side," said Rollins, "and then our gang really went to work on the enemy."

They did it this way:

First the 66th division rigged up a public address system by which all the 53,000 Germans could hear announcements from the American side. Early last May 1 the Germans heard an announcement from the loud-speakers: "Watch Col. Schmidt's headquarters. In 10 minutes we will blow it to pieces." The warnings were repeated every minute until finally in 10 minutes every American gun was turned on the colonel's headquarters and, sure enough, it disappeared from the face of the earth.

Buried in Concrete

"We are now going to wipe out Capt. Reuther's company—just look that way and watch it," the loud-speaker said next, and the threat was made good.

Thus German units were destroyed one by one, and Nazis began surrendering in ever larger groups until finally Lt. Gen. Fahrnbacher of the luftwaffe surrendered all his forces May 8.

Capt. Jack G. Garrison of Richmond Heights, Mo., public relations officer of the division, said that when the Germans built their thick walled fortresses at Lorient and St. Nazaire they mixed hundreds of French men and women in the concrete, alive. Garrison said that when his division captured the forts they forced Germans to break up the concrete and remove the bodies. "We recovered 43 bodies the first day," he said.

Unit Deactivated November 8, 1945

I was usually given a stack of trip tickets at a time. The company commander didn't want to be bothered signing off every time I had to move some coal in a truck, so he signed off on a stack and told me to fill them in for wherever I was going. If you were stopped, you had to produce a trip ticket that said you were permitted to be driving. I was constantly picking up fresh supplies for the prisoners – fresh potatoes, pipe tobacco. I used to stop and let the cook for the GIs get some of the fresh potatoes to use instead of the dehydrated kind we were used to getting. I'd also let the GIs who smoked get a crack at the tobacco.



S/Sgt McLaverty on guard.

The 66th was essentially split up – lots of men were reassigned to Patton's Rainbow Division (42nd), and others were sent to various occupation duties in France and Germany. I was assigned to the 5-man labor company of the 331 Combat. Another group had been sent back to the US. They took our division flags and everything back with them, where they were officially retired. We didn't know it was happening at the time, as we had already been reassigned with new orders.

Nov 11 – Left Wels, drove 42kilometers to Steyr, Austria. Living here in an apartment house. Pretty good deal. Lived with Deacon Damon and Roach. Same crap with the truck: hauling 7 ton of coal in a 2 ½ ton truck from Volkbruck in the mountains to the Stalag in Steyr.

Coming down the snow-covered mountains, I would always keep the flap open on the truck. If it started to slide, I planned to jump out and let it go.

Nov 12 We spent the day fixing up our room. Damon, Roach, and I are living together in one big room on the second floor. Medic office on the first floor – they spray the locals with DDT.

Coming down the mountain in one snowstorm, I had to open the split windshield to see. The wipers were hand-operated. By the time I reached the bottom of the mountain, I was damn-near frozen. I was swearing like mad. Another GI standing there agreed with every word I said. Then I saw he had a cross on his collar.

Nov 17 – PWs came in today; about 250 of them.

Dec 25 Christmas in Steyr, Austria

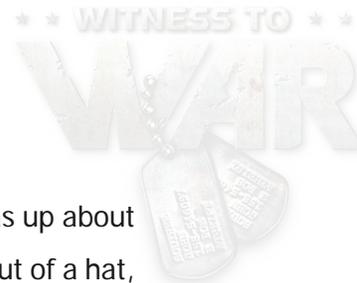
1946

Jan 18 – Moved to Lager Haid in Kromsten, guarding more German prisoners. Found out we'll be going home in April.

[Lager Haid was a large camp located near Ansfelden, Austria, and was once a Jewish prison camp. Later, German POW's were held there. Eventually, it became temporary housing for refugees.]

Jan 21 – moved back to Eblesburg to take over Lager no 5. Living with 11th Engineers.



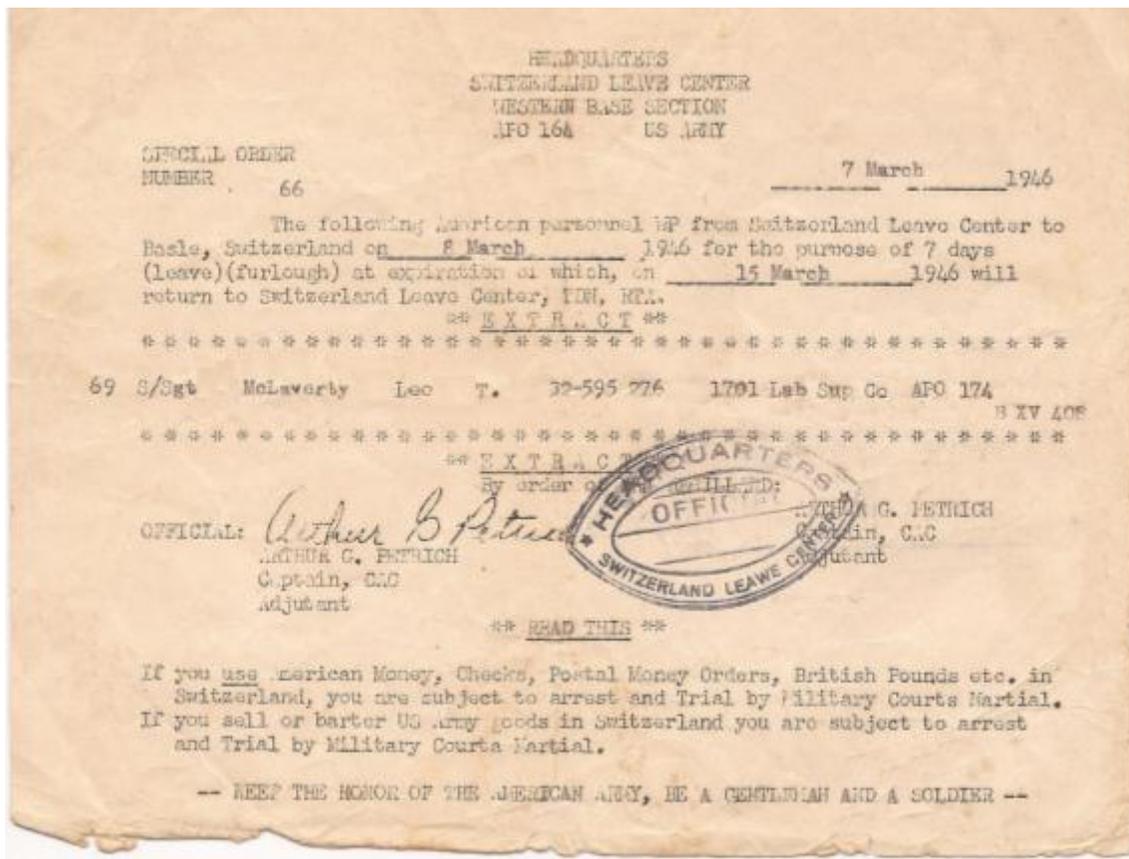


FURLOUGH TO SWITZERLAND

On March 4, I had about \$10 to my name. I was in a craps game and couldn't lose. I was up about \$200 bucks when one of the orderlies found me to tell me that my name had been pulled out of a hat, and that I was one of the winners of a raffle for a trip to Switzerland. The tour was to leave from Mulhouse, France, but I had to get myself there to join it.

Mar 5 - Got a train to Munich. Hitchhiked from Munich to Karlsruhe in any ride I could get: jeep – ambulance – civilian car. Spent the night in Karlsruhe. Nice club, pretty fair hotel. Saw the floor show at EM club.

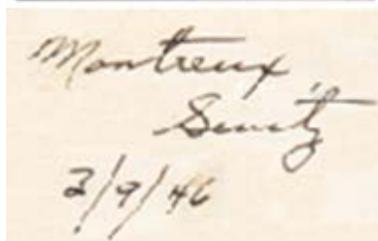
Mar 7 – Left Karlsruhe 0800. MPs took us to edge of town. Caught a Henie truck for 10kilometers – French messenger jeep to Baden Baden – French civilian car to Strasbourg. Went through Roesatt and crossed Rhine once more. Now in Strasbourg at Swiss Leone Center sweating out more transportation. Heard one train was wrecked so they are sending 300 men back from Mulhouse. Everything happens to me.



All this time we have been traveling, some Lt. Col has been tagging along with us. We found a civilian train that was leaving so we took it and got to Mulhouse OK.

Taking Tour 15. Got processed and all shined up. Take off for Switzerland tomorrow.

Mar 8 – Got to Basel, finally.



Mar 9 – Montreaux. Had a free day.

Mar 10 - Arriving at Zermatt, I got a pair of ski boots, skis and poles. We went up a gentle slope. I fell 3 times coming down. Took off the boots, stuck the skis in the snow in front of the hotel and asked the man where the nearest pub was. That was it for the skiing.

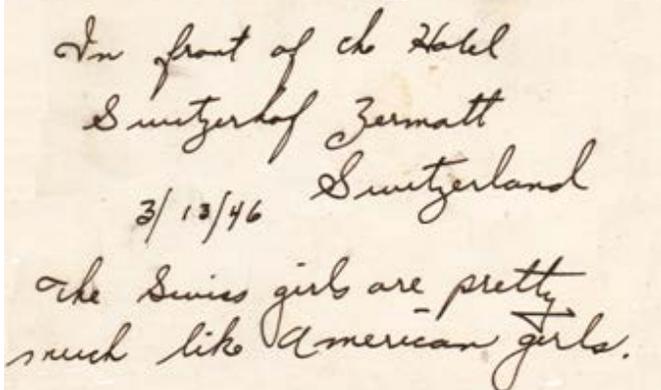


I went into a bake shop with another guy and just

stood in the back smelling all the cakes and cookies.

When 2 women left, we went up to the counter and asked for some cakes. The lady said you can get them now because the 2 women in front of you left stamps for you to get whatever you want. The stamps were part of the rationing program in Switzerland.

Everyone that I met in Switzerland was great.



[During the war, food was scarce, and the Swiss authorities aimed at a fair distribution with rationing. Each person was allowed to buy only a certain quantity of food and goods of daily use per month, and monthly rationing stamps were delivered to control this. Many things were rationed: sugar, pasta, rice, wheat, corn, butter, fats, oils, textiles, shoes, soap, coffee, tea, cocoa, cheese, eggs, milk, meat, honey, jam, chocolate, and gasoline. The rationing was not completely waived until more than three years after end of war.]

Time to start hunting down rides to get back to camp.

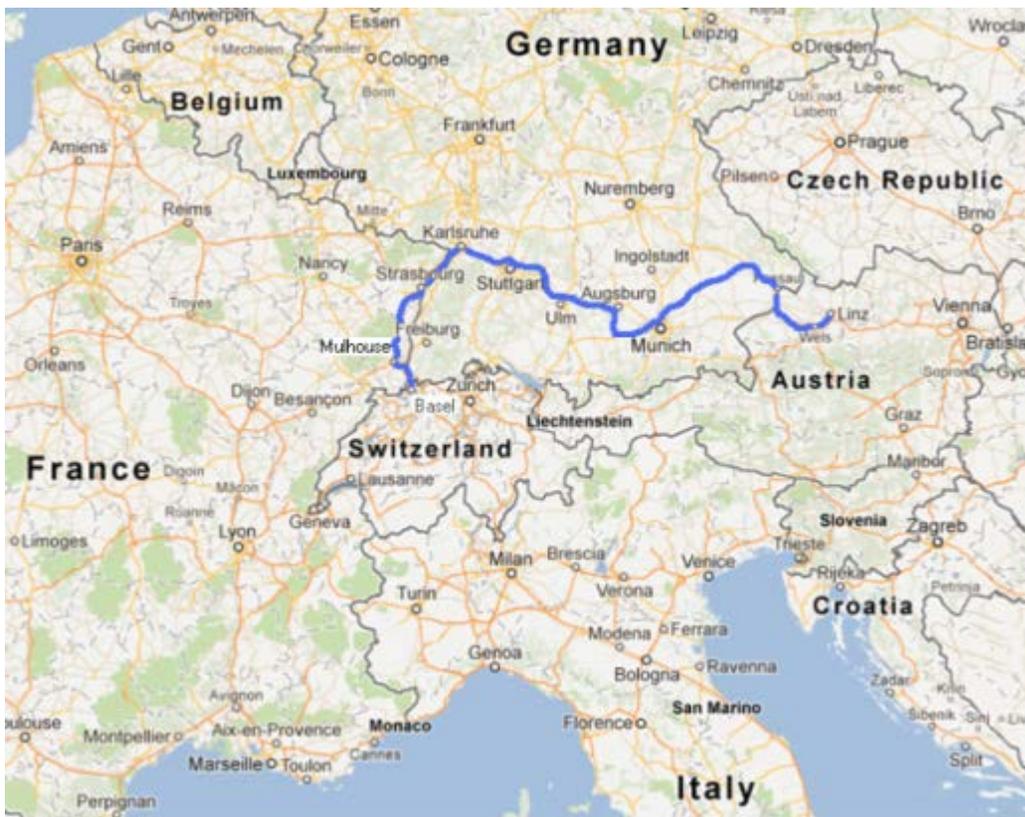
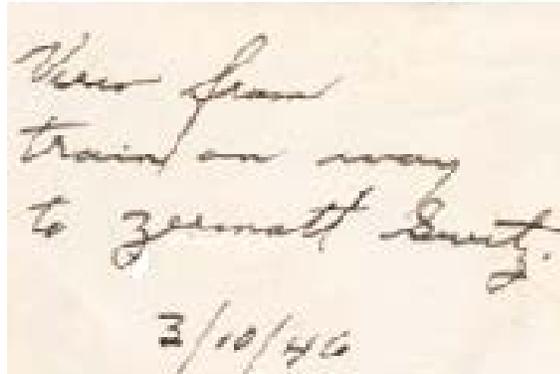


Figure 5 Steyr to Basel



United States Forces
European Theater of operations / Leave-Action in Switzerland

Swiss-Tour B XV
March 1946

Days in chronol. Order	Note weekdays and calendar date here	Towns visited	Train- schedule	Program and general information
1st day	<i>3/8/46</i> <i>H. W. Gradol</i>	Basle Basle Neuchâtel Neuchâtel Montreux	arr.08.16 dep.11.30 arr.13.06 dep.16.06 arr.17.45	Change train, border control Sight-seeing. Second-larg- est town in Switzerland; very important trade, industry and banking center. Cathedral, Town-Hall, "Spalentor", Museums, Zoo via Delémont-Bienne Lunch 13.30 at Rotonde or Du Lac Sight-seeing. Nice town on Lake of Neuchâtel, renown- ed for its schools. Old ca- thedral. University via Yverdon-Lausanne Overnight. Montreux is a famous resort on Lake Ge- neva with mild climate and beautiful scenery. Chillon- Castle
2nd day	<i>3/9/46 called home</i>	Montreux		Rest-day. Optional excur- sions. Sight-seeing
3rd day	<i>3/10/46</i>	Montreux Viège Viège Zermatt	dep.10.34 arr.12.22 dep.14.15 arr.15.40	via Martigny-Sion Lunch 12.30 at Bahnhof- buffet or Mont Cervin by mountain-railroad via Stalden Overnight. World-renowned alpine and winter-sports re- sort (5300 ft.). At the foot of the Matterhorn (14 870 ft.)
4th 5th 6th day	<i>11</i> <i>12</i> <i>13</i>	Zermatt		Rest-days Winter-sports Optional excursion to Riffel- berg and Gornergrat (10 130 ft.)
7th day		Zermatt Berne Berne Bienne	dep.09.00 arr.13.08 dep.17.30 arr.18.02	via Viège-Brig-Lötschberg- tunnel-Thoune Lunch 13.15 at Börse or Sonne Sight-seeing. Berne is the capital of Switzerland. Most original and charming old city. Houses of Parliament, Town-Hall, fine gothic ca- thedral, clock-tower, foun- tains, bearpit Overnight. Industrial town which has rapidly developed in the past 20 years. Watch factories
8th day		Bienne Basle Basle	dep.08.33 arr.09.47 dep.11.00	via Delémont Change train, border control for Mulhouse End of Tour

BACK TO CAMP

Mar 15 – Arrived at Mulhouse at 1200. Ate there and talked an MP into riding us through Colmar to Strasbourg. The other 2 guys I was traveling with decided to keep on going to Karlsruhe but I'm staying here to get a good night's sleep.

Mar 16 – Left Strasbourg in jeep and got to Karlsruhe. There I caught a Henie truck to the autobahn – jeep – horse & wagon - 2 ½ ton truck then another Henie truck to Salzburg. Salzburg to Wels in a Stars and Stripes ¾ ton truck. Hit Wels at 2400 and stayed all night. Thumbed into Linz early Sunday morning.

Mar 18 – Got back from Switzerland. Received my orders to report to the 133 Combat Engineers for shipment home. Happy Day.



loading to go
to the boat



getting
ready to
come home

HEADED HOME

Mar 19th – took off to Wolfgang to 133Eng to start home. When I arrived at Wolfgang, Austria, I found out I'd be living in a Marine Barracks.

Mar 29 – Hit the 40+8's once more. We're headed for LeHavre. Went to Bad Ischl in 2 ½'s, and then back on to the 40 + 8's.

We are traveling through Gmunden – Salzburg – Frankfurt – Hamburg – Marz. Should sail somewhere around the 6th or 8th.



Figure 6 Linz to LeHavre

Apr 1 – arrived at LeHavre, France. Don't know as yet when we are shipping out. Met Don Nave, he's been in the bull pen for 21 days. Tilly is here, too. Also Guio

Apr 7 – Leaving today aboard the USS General Anderson carrying 5000 troops. Boarded the ship around 1800 today. Won't sail until tomorrow. Only 2 meals a day if you don't pull a detail.

Apr 8 – more troops came on this morning. We sail around 1400 today



Apr 9 – As of 0800 this morning we were 410 miles from LeHavre! Ocean is pretty mild. Stomach is jumpy but so far I haven't had to hit the rail. Bucking for a detail – getting hungry.

Apr 10 – As of 0800 this morning, 832 miles out. Saw something interesting today. Around 1800 we sighted a tanker – Port Henry of Oregon. She was sitting still. We pulled alongside and lowered a boat. There was an injured man on board but they didn't transfer him because a hospital ship was coming along behind.

Apr 11 – As of 0800 we are 1306 miles out. Volunteered for KP duty and I worked my neck off. But I'm eating 3 meals a day now and able to go to the show.

While working a steam table so I could get my 3 meals a day, a GI threw up in my area. A Navy chief told me to get a mop and clean it up. I grabbed my shirt with my stripes on the sleeve and told him where he could stick his mop. I grabbed the rest of my stuff and told him to get someone else to run his steam tray.

Apr 12 – As of 0800 we are 1801 miles out with 1447 to go. Better than half way there now. I had the day off today – nice weather.

Apr 13 – Nasty weather – waves coming over the bow

Apr 14 – Nasty weather again.

Apr 15 – Pulled into NY today. Ship docked at 1800 - one of the greatest thrills I have ever had. A tug came out in the harbor to meet us with a delegation of girls on it. They sang some number over a loud speaker system. People all waved to us and the ferries all blew their whistles. It has really been a wonderful day. Well, it's all over now and I thank God I came out of it as well as I did.

Apr 16 – arrived in Kilmer, NJ. This is just a waste of time.

Apr 17th – leaving for Dix today. Went through a lot of baloney.

Apr 18th – Waiting to get a ruptured duck so I can be processed for discharge. (Ruptured Duck was the nickname given to the emblem on the patch that was sewn onto your uniform when you were discharged.)



Apr 20th - Mom and Cap picked me up at Dix and took me home.



Discharge



LEO J MC LAVERTY

To you who answered the call of your country and served in its Armed Forces to bring about the total defeat of the enemy, I extend the heartfelt thanks of a grateful Nation. As one of the Nation's finest, you undertook the most severe task one can be called upon to perform. Because you demonstrated the fortitude, resourcefulness and calm judgment necessary to carry out that task, we now look to you for leadership and example in further exalting our country in peace.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, which appears to be "Harry Truman".

THE WHITE HOUSE



Army of the United States



Honorable Discharge

This is to certify that

LEO J MC LAVERTY 33 595 276 STAFF SERGEANT
263d INFANTRY REGIMENT

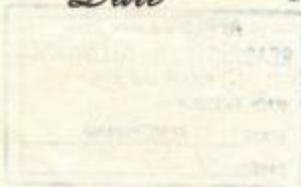
Army of the United States

is hereby Honorably Discharged from the military service of the United States of America.

This certificate is awarded as a testimonial of Honest and Faithful Service to this country.

Given at SEPARATION CENTER
FORT DIX, NEW JERSEY

Date 20 APRIL 1946



L R Walker

L R WALKER
LT COL. AG



ENLISTED RECORD AND REPORT OF SEPARATION
HONORABLE DISCHARGE

1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL McLavery Leo J			2. ARMY SERIAL NO. 33 595 276	3. GRADE S Sgt	4. ARM OR SERVICE Inf	5. COMPONENT AUS
6. ORGANIZATION 263d Inf Regt			7. DATE OF SEPARATION 20 Apr 46	8. PLACE OF SEPARATION Sep Ctr Fort Dix NJ		
9. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES 3958 Elser St Phila 40 Pa			10. DATE OF BIRTH 28 Sep 24	11. PLACE OF BIRTH Phila Pa		
12. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE SOUGHT See 9			13. COLOR EYES Hazel	14. COLOR HAIR Brown	15. HEIGHT 5-9	16. WEIGHT 170 LBS.
17. NO. DEPEND.			19. NO. DEPEND.			
18. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE SOUGHT See 9			13. COLOR EYES Hazel	14. COLOR HAIR Brown	15. HEIGHT 5-9	16. WEIGHT 170 LBS.
17. NO. DEPEND. 0			21. CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND NO. Machinist II 4-75.010			

MILITARY HISTORY

22. DATE OF INDUCTION 24 Mar 43		23. DATE OF ENLISTMENT 31 Mar 43		24. DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE		25. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE Phila Pa	
26. SELECTIVE SERVICE DATA YES NO X		27. LOCAL S.S. BOARD NO. 68		28. COUNTY AND STATE Phila Pa		29. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE See 9	
30. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY AND NO. Section Leader 605				31. MILITARY QUALIFICATION AND DATE (I.e., Infantry, aviation and marksmanship badges, etc.) Rifle M1 MKM 156 29 Jun 43			
32. BATTLES AND CAMPAIGNS Northern France GO 33 WD 45 as amended							
33. DECORATIONS AND CITATIONS American Campaign Medal, EAME Campaign Medal, Good Conduct Medal World War II Victory Medal							
34. WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION None							
35. LATEST IMMUNIZATION DATES SHALLPOX TYPHOID TETANUS OTHER (specify) Mar 44 Jun 45 Sep 44 None				36. SERVICE OUTSIDE CONTINENTAL U.S. AND RETURN DATE OF DEPARTURE DESTINATION DATE OF ARRIVAL 15 Nov 44 ETO 26 Nov 44 8 Apr 46 USA 15 Apr 46			
37. TOTAL LENGTH OF SERVICE CONTINENTAL SERVICE FOREIGN SERVICE YEARS MONTHS DAYS YEARS MONTHS DAYS 1 8 19 1 4 1				38. HIGHEST GRADE HELD S Sgt			
39. PRIOR SERVICE None For convenience a certificate of eligibility No. 2258627 has been issued by the Veterans Administration to be used for the future request of any authority or insurance benefit under title III of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, as amended, that may be available to the person to whom this separation paper was issued.							
40. REASON AND AUTHORITY FOR SEPARATION Conv of the Govt AR 615-386 15 Dec 44 and RR171 Demobilization							
41. SERVICE SCHOOLS ATTENDED None							
42. EDUCATION (Years) Grammar 6 High School 4 College 0							

PAY DATA VC 93588

43. LONGEVITY FOR PAY PURPOSES YEARS MONTHS DAYS 3 0 27			44. MUSTERING OUT PAY TOTAL THIS PAYMENT \$ 500 \$ 100		45. SOLDIER SEPOY None		46. TRAVEL PAY \$ 2.70		47. TOTAL AMOUNT, NAME OF DISBURSING OFFICER \$214.49 J HARRIS COL FD	
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INSURANCE NOTICE

IMPORTANT IF PREMIUM IS NOT PAID WHEN DUE OR WITHIN THIRTY-ONE DAYS THEREAFTER, INSURANCE WILL LAPSE. MAKE CHECKS OR MONEY ORDERS PAYABLE TO THE TREASURER OF THE U. S. AND FORWARD TO COLLECTIONS SUBDIVISION, VETERANS ADMINISTRATION, WASHINGTON 25, D. C.											
48. KIND OF INSURANCE SEL. SER. U.S. GOV. SER. Alignment Direct to V. A.			49. NOW PAID X			50. Effective Date of Aliotment Discontinuance 30 Apr 46			51. Date of Next Premium Due (One month after 50) 31 May 46		
52. PREMIUM DUE EACH MONTH \$ 6.50						53. INTENTION OF VETERAN TO Continue Continue Only Discontinue X					

54.	55. REMARKS (This space for completion of above items or entry of other items specified in W. APPLICATION FOR READJUSTMENT ALLOWANCE) Lapel Button Issued Inactive ERC from 24 Mar 43 to 30 Mar 43 ASR Score 2 Sep 45 - 44		56. APPLICATION FOR READJUSTMENT ALLOWANCE MADE THROUGH STATE PENNSYLVANIA DATE 4-30-46	
	56. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED Leo J. McLavery		57. PERSONNEL OFFICER (Type name, grade and organization) (signature) H SILVERMAN 2nd LT SIG C H. Silverman	

WD AGO FORM 83 - 58
November 1944

This form supersedes all previous editions of WD AGO Forms 83 and 55 for enlisted persons entitled to an Honorable Discharge, which will not be used after receipt of this revision.





Army of the United States



SEPARATION QUALIFICATION RECORD

SAVE THIS FORM. IT WILL NOT BE REPLACED IF LOST

RP 68

This record of job assignments and special training received in the Army is furnished to the soldier when he leaves the service. In its preparation, information is taken from available Army records and supplemented by personal interview. The information about civilian education and work experience is based on the individual's own statements. The veteran may present this document to former employers, prospective employers, representatives of schools or colleges, or use it in any other way that may prove beneficial to him.

1. LAST NAME--FIRST NAME--MIDDLE INITIAL MCLAVERTY, LEO J			MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS		
			10. MONTHS	11. GRADE	12. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY
2. ARMY SERIAL NO. 33 595 276	3. GRADE S SGT	4. SOCIAL SECURITY NO. UNKNOWN	2	Pvt	Inf Basic Tng (521)
5. PERMANENT MAILING ADDRESS (Street, City, County, State) 3958 Elser St Phila Phila Co Pa			1	Pvt	Heavy Machine Gunner (605)
6. DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE 31 Mar 43			7. DATE OF SEPARATION 20 Apr 46		
8. DATE OF BIRTH 28 Sep 24			4	Sgt	Survey and Instrument Man (228)
9. PLACE OF SEPARATION FORT DIX NEW JERSEY			24	SSgt	Section Leader (605)
			4	SSgt	Supply Clerk (835)

SUMMARY OF MILITARY OCCUPATIONS

13. TITLE--DESCRIPTION--RELATED CIVILIAN OCCUPATION
SECTION LEADER: Served as section leader of a section of heavy 30 calibre machine guns and 15 men. Was responsible for control and coordination of section members and weapons. Was awarded the Combat Infantry Badge. Served in European Theatre of Operations with the 66 infantry Division.



MILITARY EDUCATION			
14. NAME OR TYPE OF SCHOOL—COURSE OR CURRICULUM—DURATION—DESCRIPTION None			
CIVILIAN EDUCATION			
15. HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED 4 Yrs H S	16. DEGREES OR DIPLOMAS Diploma	17. YEAR LEFT SCHOOL 1942	OTHER TRAINING OR SCHOOLING
18. NAME AND ADDRESS OF LAST SCHOOL ATTENDED Roman Catholic H S Philadelphia Pa			20. COURSE—NAME AND ADDRESS OF SCHOOL—DATE NorthEast High School Philadelphia Pa. Machine Shop
19. MAJOR COURSES OF STUDY Academic			21. DURATION 4 months 1942.
CIVILIAN OCCUPATIONS			
22. TITLE—NAME AND ADDRESS OF EMPLOYER—INCLUSIVE DATES—DESCRIPTION MACHINIST II Roessler Machine Co. Philadelphia Pa. Set up and operated engine lathe, drill press and grinder in machining parts from various types of metals. Worked from blueprints and to close tolerances. Used calipers and micrometers to check dimensions of parts being machined. Worked at above job for 3 months in 1942.			
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION			
23. REMARKS None			
24. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED <i>Leo J. McLaverty</i>	25. SIGNATURE OF SEPARATION CLASSIFICATION OFFICER <i>W. W. Von Schlichten</i>	26. NAME OF OFFICER (Typed or Stamped) W. W. VON SCHLICHTEN MAJ AGD	

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE—O-857477



SERVICE SUMMARY

Record of service: France 29Dec44 – 23May45
Germany 23May45 – 27May45
France 28May45 – 24Oct45
Austria 25Oct45 to 29Mar45
Road to Port 29Mar46 to 7Apr46
Sailed 8Apr46 to 15Apr46
Discharged 20Apr46

Medals: Good Conduct Medal at Vitrolles 27Jul45
CIB issued 5Feb45
ETO issued 1Feb45
Victory Medal II
Bronze star
American Defense Occupation Ribbon

Promotion Record:	M.O.S. No.
Pvt 3/24/43	Gunner – 605
Cpl 8/23/43	Sqd Leader – 653
Sgt 11/13/43	Sec Ldr - 652
S/Sgt 1/5/44	Survey & Ins – 228





Panther Veterans Organization (PVO)



PANTHER VETERANS ORGANIZATION
██████████
~~LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS~~
P.O. Box 2507
San Antonio, Texas

OFFICE OF THE
HONORARY PRESIDENT

N. F. KRAMER
MAJ. GEN. U.S.A. (RETD)

March 13, 1953

Mr. Leo J. McLaverty
442 Somerville Avenue
Philadelphia 20, Pennsylvania

Dear Mr. McLaverty:

Recently I wrote to Mr. Walter J. Roach, Jr., of North Quincy, Mass., with reference to the Panther Veterans Association and he kindly submitted your name as one of the men with whom he corresponds. I am making an attempt to build up a live file by States and Organizations for members of the P.V.O. but have found after running a check mailing list, our present Directory is practically obsolete. Later on, when we get sufficient names on hand in this file, we will attempt to reorganize the P.V.O. I have taken this upon myself for the time being due to the fact that our National Committee has more or less collapsed and it is difficult to get any organized action out of them.

After we have built up such a file by States and Organizations, we will try to get some of you together in each State and set up a new organization for each State. Then, in turn, we will reorganize the national set up. Having done that, we will attempt to have a Division get-together somewhere in accordance with the wishes of our members.

Would you be so kind therefore as to give me all of the names and addresses of the men with whom you correspond so that we may add them to this file? We had such a splendid Division that I would hate to see its spirit completely disappear.

I was retired some five years ago and have been in business since. I am now living in San Antonio, Texas; for three years, I lived at Little Rock, Arkansas. I travel a great deal over the United States and it may be that if we can get set up, I will be able to meet with many of you from time to time.

Hoping to hear from you as soon as convenient, I am

Most friendly yours,

GENERAL KRAMER

Panther Vets



Camp Blanding June 24 2005



880 World War II Monument 8-95

Fundum at the WWII Memorial at Camp Robinson, AK.



PVO Reunion, June 2009

Laying a wreath at the grave of General Kramer in Arlington National Cemetery.

Dad and 2 other vets were assigned to lead the "moment of silence."

Dad's silence was broken with:

"I don't know why she's got us laying a wreath on his grave. We hated him."



Receiving a commendation at the WWII Memorial, Washington, DC, 2009.



I guess survivors of the Leopoldville are entitled to their own sense of humor.



PVO Reunion, 2009: Denny, McLaverty, McCusker.

FREEDOM

adapted from Father Denis Edward O'Brien, USMC

It is the soldier, not the reporter
Who has given us FREEDOM of the press.

It is the soldier, not the poet,
Who has given us FREEDOM of speech.

It is the soldier, not the campus organizer
Who has given us FREEDOM to demonstrate.

It is the soldier,
Who salutes the Flag,
Serves under the Flag,
Lies in a coffin draped by the Flag,
Who gives a protestor FREEDOM to burn the Flag.

It is the soldier, not the politician,
Who has given his blood,
his body,
his life,
For these FREEDOMS!



Epilogue

In 1995, the mayor of Paris, France issued a proclamation celebrating the 50th anniversary of the end of the war, recognizing all who had served in France during World War II. All servicemen who could prove they had served at any point during the war within the country of France were eligible for recognition.

When Pop was notified of the honor, he submitted his records and received in the mail a very nice certificate, naming him an "Honorary Monsieur of France." It came with a personal note from the mayor, explaining that the award was presented in appreciation for helping to free France and keep it liberated. The certificate hung in the dining room for years, just below Pop's medals.

In April 2000, another ceremony was hosted in the Paris suburb of St. Denis by their city mayor, Didier Paillard. A street there was being named for "U.S. political prisoner" Mumia Abu-Jamal. [Mumia Abu-Jamal is a convicted murderer, guilty of the 1981 execution-style shooting of Philadelphia police officer, and army veteran, Daniel Faulkner. In July of 1982, Mumia Abu-Jamal was sentenced to death. The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania heard the defendant's appeals and upheld the conviction in 1989.]



When Pop got wind of that ceremony, he promptly removed his Honorary Monsieur certificate from its frame, rolled it up, and returned it to the mayor of Paris, with his own personal note:

"The next time the Germans come knocking,
Don't call me."

