

John D. Wilson

8 Sept. '05

Dear Betty:

This is in reply to John Hackney's nice letter asking for an account of my WWII experience.

Hopefully, this is reasonably accurate, because it was written from memory. My records were ^{largely} destroyed by vandals.

In the same manner as General Eisenhower, I had no combat experience.

But Eisenhower knew how to impress the right people. On one ~~one~~ occasion, he so impressed Anna Roosevelt Dahl that she praised him highly to her father, the President. He then passed over more than 300 with more seniority and appointed Ike Commanding General of the Allied Expeditionary Forces. He never had combat experience but, ^(army talk) brownnosed his way from MacArthur's staff to the top command.

Shortly after Pearl Harbor, I talked with my father, himself a Spanish American War veteran, about enlisting, then went to the Naval recruiting station in Raleigh.

They would not even talk to me because I wore glasses, so there was nothing ~~to~~ to do but wait for the draft.

On 7 February 1942 I was sent to Fort Bragg for basic training.

I was afterwards assigned to Field Artillery, Sight and Sound, where microphones were placed at intervals to locate enemy gunfire. This was changed to another kind of surveillance, I believe.

Then I was sent to Camp Sutton, Monroe, a

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Quartermaster Depot and assigned to Army Finance.

* After sometime I was transferred to the Army Airforce Base, Mountain Home, Idaho, about 50 miles from Boise.

At that time the Army and Airforce were still one unit.

Towards the end of the war, I was among those sent to Fort Benjamin Harrison for infantry conversion training. The twenty week course was cut to ten weeks. Daily seven ^{hikes} miles with full field packs that seemed to weigh as much ~~as~~ as I did, laid the foundation for later foot problems.

We were sent from Camp Shanks, N.Y. on an uneventful troop transport to Le Havre, France, then three days by 40/8 freight cars to Bonn, Germany.

Because of sniper fire we were forced to stay in the cold cars overnight. Another acquired sinus condition sent me to a field hospital, then to the general hospital in Aachen.

When I left the hospital, I refused a partial payment because my outfit was nearby and I expected to get full payment on return.

However, I was sent in the opposite direction to Verrier, Belgium for reassignment.

The army finance office was packing to leave so they sent me to the Red Cross.

I told the Red Cross man that I had given the Red Cross ten dollars just before I left home and would like to borrow it back, then it could be deducted from my pay.

My request was turned down cold. I ~~guess~~ guess

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they ^{were} afraid they might not be able to access my records and get it back, because of the momentary confusion.

I was broke. Several of the boys offered me money. Hopefully they received the repayments I mailed to them.

I saved a coupon stub from the purchased book we used to buy coffee and doughnuts from the Red Cross canteen, so I would not forget all that was done for us.

The war was over, so military officials had programs to keep idle soldiers busy.

I was in a group of eight who were sent in an open truck for a special program in Oberammergau, Germany, the site of the world famous Passion Play.

On the way, we passed the Dachau Concentration Camp about which we had heard so many terrible things. It had just been reopened, so we stopped to see it.

There was no gas chamber for ~~prisoners~~ ^{P.O.W.s}, only a delousing chamber for clothing and corpses that could not be cremated immediately.

The S.S. mistakenly mixed ^{with other P.O.W.s} ~~delousing~~ Soviet and Polish P.O.W.s who brought typhus infected ^(fleas) lice that spread quickly ~~to others~~.

Prisoners died so fast there was no way to cremate them immediately. The bodies seen in pictures were stacks of deloused corpses killed by typhus and not holocausted by Nazis.

I was assigned to ~~and~~ E (Information and Education) of the station complement in Marburg, the capital of Hesse.

Hessian mercenary soldiers who fought against

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George Washington's patriot army of the American Revolution, were hired by the British East India Company and paid for with dope trade profits. Franklin Roosevelt's grandfather established the family fortune in the China dope trade.

A leave in Paris was followed by a six week's assignment in Birmingham, England to learn more about government at the Council House.

On weekends I visited London and other interesting places, such as ^{Shakespeare's} ~~Shakespeare's~~ home in Stratford on Avon.

In Edinburgh, Scotland I saw historic sites and discovered an interesting family connection.

After returning to Marburg I was later sent back to Fort Bragg and discharged on 13 March 1946.

John D. Wilson

* P.S. - Mountain Home was a new base. Recently cleared ground and wind created desert dust that put me in the base hospital with a sinus problem for over a week.

Please excuse errors in grammar, and punctuation and spelling. I do not have my unabridged dictionary or Strunk and White.