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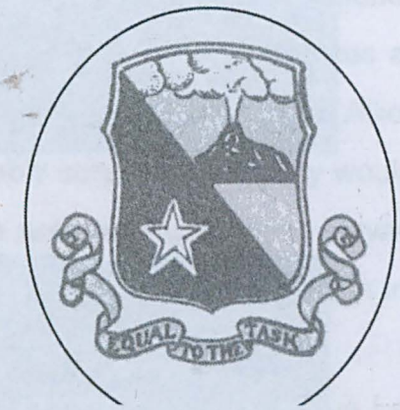

A Personal History

4th Edition

BY FORMER CORPORAL

John William Quinn

201 Hodgson Road
Charlotte, NC
28211
704-362-0165 H
704-957-4376c

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MOIRA QUINN
DAVID KLE
AVERY TA
EMMA Quinn -88 E

BILL QUINN'S WAR – 1942-1945 (and Aftermath)

PROLOGUE

On September 1, 1939 I was working at the Canoe Club on Pontoosuc Lake in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. My job was to answer the phone, operate the soda fountain, cook hot dogs and hamburgers, hand out keys to the bath house, make change for the Juke Box, and rent out canoes – all for 25 cents an hour. I was 17, due to become 18 on September 21. September 1st, that's when the news was announced that Germany had invaded Poland and that England and France, which had guaranteed the borders of Poland had declared war on Germany on September 3. England and France had stood by hopefully for years with a policy called "Appeasement", while Adolf Hitler's armed forces annexed the Rhineland, Austria, the Sudetenland and Czechoslovakia, But when the Allies declared war on Germany on September 3, Hitler was probably surprised that they would take aggressive action in the case of Poland. There had been a previous agreement between Germany and Soviet Russia to divide up Poland, so, on September 18, the Soviet Union invaded Poland from the East.

Three days after Labor Day, the end of summer at the Lake, I took off for Springfield to start assembling the things I would need to take to my Freshman year at Holy Cross College where I had been given a full, four year scholarship, beginning on September 16th. I planned on taking one suitcase with me, everything else was to be packed in a steamer trunk to be shipped to Worcester, Massachusetts via Railway Express and delivered to my dorm room. On arrival there I discovered that I had two roommates, instead of one, due to a new dorm not being ready.

The days that followed were the period of the so-called "Phony War" in Europe. England sent a British Expeditionary Force (BEF) to France and the French manned their "impressive" Maginot Line, which they fondly believed would prevent the Germans from invading France. But, neither side took warlike actions, other than some gentlemanly patrolling. Then, on May 10, 1940, the Germans attacked through the Ardennes, bypassing the Maginot Line and scooping up Belgium the Netherlands, Denmark and then Norway. The French were surprised

by the German Blitzkreig (Lightning War) tactics and their own inefficient command structure. The result ----it was all over by June 25, 1940 when the French surrendered.

In the meantime, the British Expeditionary Force with a number of French troops had been trapped in Northern France by fast moving German columns. Between May 26 and June 4, 1940 the British and their French Allies retreated to the small port of Dunkirk where a motley flotilla of French and British warships, joined by volunteer yachts and small crafts, capable of negotiating the English Channel, arrived and evacuated some 330,000 troops but without their vehicles and heavy weapons to live, re-equip and fight another day.

The United States was officially neutral but American companies produced war goods for the Allies; began the Lend-Lease Program on March 11, 1941; shipped vast amounts of war materials to England, France, China and the Soviet Union. The U.S. also traded 50 over-age destroyers to England for access to ports in the Caribbbean and had destroyers on convoy duty. My Dad, William F. Quinn, was Office Manager of the Baush Machine Tool Company in Springfield, Massachusetts. Baush produced multiple spindle drilling machines. One model could drill all of the holes in a rotary aircraft engine without leaving the machine. They also made drilling machines for the Russians, and for the British. Dad got me a job as a Parts Chaser the summer of 1940. My job was to locate parts that had moved from one machining position to another and seemed to disappear. Remember, this is before bar codes and computers. The problem with this job was that individual foremen were convinced that I was spying on them.

In 1940 the United States was completely unprepared for the war that was to come. The American Army consisted of about 140,000 men and what was to become "The Arsenal of Democracy" did not have the necessary tools in place, particularly machine tools. The Baush Company was a real old firm and I watched one day as they opened an abandoned, storage shed and pulled out a boring mill that had a raised letter date , "1820", on its base. Technicians installed new parts and electric motors and put it into use for the defense effort.

The next summer, 1941, I decided to go in a different direction. I got a job with the Army Corps of Engineers which was building airfields in various locations in New England. My job was at an airfield site in East Hartford, Connecticut, some 25 miles south of my home in Springfield. You could thumb a ride real easy then and I always managed to arrive on site before 8:00 AM. My job was axman with a surveying crew for which I was issued a 12 pound double-bitted, lumberjack ax, honed to razor sharpness. The surveyors would lay in a line and I and my fellow axmen would remove any trees in their line of sight.

Then on June 22, 1941 Adolf Hitler did another dumb thing. He launched "Barbarossa" and attacked Soviet Russia. Benito Mussolini, Hitler's Axis partner, made a prediction.. He said that three great Generals would defeat Hitler after he invaded Russia in June 1941. Those were "General Mud, General Snow and General Distance". Back at the airfield I kept swinging an ax until I got hit with a double whammy of Connecticut poison oak and poison ivy. My legs swelled up to twice their size, my hands swelled up and oozed making it impossible to bend my fingers enough to hold a knife or spoon. So I had to be fed. It took weeks to heal up since all we had to fight it with then was calamine lotion. That treatment lasted until September, time to go back to school.

Then came December 7, 1941. Suddenly the United States was at war. It was a Sunday afternoon. A gray day, like most New England winter days. With other Juniors at Holy Cross College in Wheeler Hall, I was taking the day off. The radio was on and most of us were half-listening when the program was interrupted by a bulletin, telling us, somewhat hysterically, that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. The next day President Franklin Delano Roosevelt announced that, on that day, which "would live in infamy", we were at war with Japan. About a day or so later we got word that Adolf Hitler, the dominant partner in the Germany/Japan/Italy Axis, had declared war on the United States. So, we were not only in the European war, that we really thought we'd eventually be drawn into, but in a War in the Pacific, as well.

During the pre-war days the America First movement took root in the United States. Basically it called for letting the Europeans fight out their war by themselves, leaving the Americans alone. For most college students this made a lot of sense. However, with the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 and the German declaration of war America First died. The rush to volunteer began in earnest.

Officers were needed badly. Even boys who had only Junior ROTC in high school were being offered 2nd Lieutenant commissions. Having political connections also helped. Each of the Armed Services began offering Officer Training Programs to college students. The Navy had its V-5 Pre-Flight program and the V-7 program for Deck Officers. The Marines had similar programs for infantry officers. The Air Force had pilot officer training. My problem was that all of them required beady 20/20 eyes. Therefore, I signed up for eye strengthening programs at an optometrist's office in downtown Worcester. I stared into a machine while green objects went round and round. Result — improvement but not enough to make 20/20.

In the meantime Holy Cross set up a physical training program and we were all required to sign up for it. The School issued us T-shirts in the School colors, purple and white, and ran us around the track which surrounded the football field. My roommate, Steve, was unimpressed with the program and he managed to be involved in something of an extremely pressing nature back on campus whenever the PT sessions were in progress. Steve never even got his purple and white T-shirt off its hanger.

Actually, I don't believe that the physical training program did us much good. At least it got the boys who avoided intramural exercise out into the fresh air and provided a general feeling that at least we're doing something pending our entry into service.. Then there was the saying, "Don't you know there's a war on" which, repeated ad infinitum was responsible for a lot of things being done, or not being done, in the name of contributions to the war effort.

WE'RE AT WAR, SO WHERE DO I FIT IN?

Then I discovered that the Army had a Reserve program. So, since I didn't want to be drafted, on August 3, 1942 I went into the Recruitment station at Springfield, Massachusetts and signed on as a Private in the Army Reserve. They said don't go anywhere. We don't know now when we'll be calling you but we don't want to have to look for you. That summer I got a job in Springfield as a roofers' helper — $35 a week. First job was repair of a slate roof on top of a very tall Church. The next job involved carrying 90 pound packs of shingles up a ladder to the top of a three story residence. The job after that required removing a flat, built-up roof on top of a very noisy, drop forge plant. We had to go to work at 4:00 AM to chip off the tar and then quit at 1:00 PM when, in New England, tar melted. Later we put down new, tar paper, hammered tin discs and then, using a small windlass, hoisted hot tar to the roof, spread it with huge, stiff brooms. Finally we put gravel all over the tar. Dirtiest job I ever had.

The Army Reserve left me in school until accelerated graduation, late December 1943. By then most of the boys in the Navy, Air and Marine programs had been called up and I'm wondering why I'm not hearing from the Reserve. We didn't have a graduation exercise. No Prom. We were told to go home and diplomas would be mailed. After a day or two at home, I was bored and got a job in a saw mill. Few companies would hire anyone who was waiting for a call-up. I worked that job for about two weeks when I noticed that I was the only one in the shop who had all his fingers. So, I quit. (Back in 1943 safety devices were few in number). Anyway, the next day a letter arrived from the Army Reserve ordering me to report to Ft. Devens, in Ayer, Massachusetts, northwest of Boston.

My group arrived at Ft. Devens on an Army School bus. We were ordered out and formed into a ragged line. Just then a detachment of raw rookies came by, new recruits who had gotten processed into the Army one or two days before us. They gave us the usual greeting, "YOU'LL BE SORRY" (which we passed on when it was our turn). Immediately I was assigned to Guard Duty. This is without a uniform. It's cold in Massachusetts in January, so I was wearing an

overcoat and a felt hat (everybody wore hats then) and gloves. They handed me an unloaded shotgun and told me to challenge everyone passing my post and demand the password but they didn't tell me what the password was. After a couple of hours of that I was led into a Quonset Hut that was overheated and sent down a line with medics on either side with syringes. When they got to me I received two shots (of what I don't know) in both arms, took two steps and hit the floor. First and only time that ever happened to me. The next day my group was given a skinhead kind of haircut and issued a bag full of uniforms, underwear, socks, most of which fit, and shoes which, to my surprise, came in my size.

After some unimpressive interviews, information about any specialty we might have was entered on punch cards which were spit out whenever a training camp sent in an order for rookies. Depending on how badly some camp wanted people, it didn't matter what your specialty was. You still went where they needed to fill spaces. That's how some very surprised men became cooks. Now, at Holy Cross I was a pre-med with a Chemistry major. Back in my Junior year I had decided that what I really wanted to do was major in English. But then came Pearl Harbor and I figured that the country really needed Science majors more than English majors so I determined to tough it out. My punch card said "Student College, Chemistry."

That's how I ended up assigned for basic training at Camp Sibert, Attallah, Alabama, a Chemical Warfare Camp. To get there we left Ft. Devens, by train, on a red, State of Maine, wooden passenger car with straw seats. (The government was using anything that would roll). Some of the boys claimed there were arrow heads in the wooden sides. There was no heat and the most comfortable spot on that train car was on top of a stack of barracks bags.

We arrived, three days later, at the platform in tiny Attallah (on what is now I-59), in northeast Alabama, between Birmingham and Chattanooga. There was a kid on the platform, checking out the troops, munching on a slice of pie. One of the boys from Massachusetts asked what he was eating and the kid said, "Swee' tayta pah". The Bay State boy was appalled because back in Massachusetts pie was made out of pumpkin and squash, but not sweet potatoes. Trucks

were waiting to transport us to our new home for the next three months. Camp Sibert, a treeless mud plain, consisting of one story, tar-paper-covered barracks with stoves at either end. These did little to keep anyone warm except for those in the two double deck bunks right at the stoves, especially in February 1943. Our first day there we had an ice storm.

Basic Training was now our business. "Basic" meant rudimentary infantry training. We learned how to march, take orders (that was most important) and, because we were a Chemical Warfare base, we had some specialized Chemical Warfare training. One morning we put on gas masks and were led into a tent where some device was spewing out a poison gas. We were then ordered to take off the gas masks. Immediately eyes burned; we were choking, gasping. Finally, just before the situation got dangerous they led us out of the tent. We had to do that several times more later — exposure to even worse poison gases. They said, "Now you know".

About taking orders. The Army had a saying it was fond of repeating, "Around here there are three ways to do things: the right way, the wrong way and the Army way. Around here we do things the Army way". The Army also had a saying to the effect that they might not be able to make you do something but they were in a position to make you wish that you had. One result of not responding to an order was digging a 6'X6'. A sergeant issued you a shovel with instructions to dig a hole six feet wide, six feet long and six feet deep. This sometimes took two days. When it was finished to the sergeant's satisfaction, he tossed in a cigarette butt and told the digger to fill up the hole. Our Civil War had a somewhat, similar punishment. Soldiers who messed up back then had to bury a large, dead horse.

We also learned about "volunteering". Don't do it. One instance. It was a hot (usual) summer day in Alabama when one of the sergeants came around and asked, "How many of you guys can type?" That sounded like an opportunity to get out of the hot sun for a while but I was suspicious and didn't volunteer. Those who did were loaded onto a truck and taken down to the railhead to unload two boxcars full of typewriters.

We also had to take turns at KP and Latrine Duty. KP (Kitchen Police) meant peeling potatoes, cleaning out grease pits, washing greasy pots, riding on and working the Garbage Truck, etc. all unpleasant tasks. Latrine Duty was as bad. This included scrubbing out company-sized bathrooms: sinks, faucets, toilets and shower rooms, floors and windows until all passed a "white glove" inspection by a 2nd Lieutenant. Then there were those 10 mile hikes with full field packs, designed to toughen us up. Naturally we didn't look forward to them.

To supplement army chow there were PX's (Post Exchanges) where you could get hot dogs and sandwiches, candy bars and other snacks and 3.2 beer (almost water). There were Post Theaters which operated at night showing current Hollywood movies. We had the princely Private's salary of $50 a month plus "GI Room, Board and Uniforms". Sunday was usually a day off and there were Post Chapels all over the camp providing services for all denominations.

One of our trainers was a 2nd Lieutenant we learned to dislike intensely. He was a smoke jumper from Colorado and delighted in demonstrating what good shape he was in (and we weren't). We didn't know how he did it but his uniforms were always immaculate with a knife-edge press. We were out on a 10 mile hike one day carrying just an ammo belt with attached canteen and the Lieutenant had a pack on his back. At the half-way point he let us in on what was in his pack. It was loaded down with about 80 pounds of bricks. However, I can report that by the end of basic training we came close to measuring up.;

EXCITEMENT IN GADSDEN

I went into town one time. To nearby Gadsden, Alabama, population, then under 10,000 in population. It was wall-to-wall soldiers from 40,000 strong Camp Sibert, looking for something to do. I spotted a banner hanging across Main Street. It read "See the Big Hog. Weight — 750 lbs." I figured if that was all the excitement in Gadsden, I'd take the next bus back to Camp Sibert. It was, so I did.

My Camp Sibert Training Company included boys from all around the country but most were from Alabama and Mississippi. However, due to how the draft worked, there was also a large group from the same neighborhood in Bayonne, New Jersey. Now, the Deep South and Bayonne boys each thought that the other's accents were real hilarious so they'd get a boy from the other group, start him talking and then snicker UNTIL they discovered that they were doing it to each other. That took all the fun out of it so they agreed to knock it off.

One of our most important basic training tasks was to learn how to fire a military rifle on a 200 yard range. Due to shortages, we were issued the 1917 Enfield rifle. This was a World War I amalgam of American and British designs. It was heavy, had a jolting kick and operating the bolt took a real effort. The result was that our interest in becoming an expert marksman was sharply curtailed. The whole idea of this rifle exercise was to, at least, hit the target. Now, if you missed the target completely, (and some boys did) the Army had a way to embarrass you. The soldiers operating the targets would then happily wave an enormous red flag which the Army had named "Maggie's Drawers". You didn't want to see "Maggie's Drawers" and I can report that I didn't have to. It was great later to trade in that terrible Enfield for the vastly superior Garand. (Besides the Springfield Arsenal, Two of the other companies manufacturing large quantities of Garands – Singer Sewing Machine and Remington Typewriter)

In Camp Sibert the rule was that all men would have to keep their shirts buttoned at the neck and sleeves buttoned at the wrists, regardless of the temperature. I had gotten into some

Poison Oak and the Medics recommended that I roll up my sleeves, unbutton the neck and apply white calamine lotion several times a day. After about a week, the poison oak cleared up but I was enjoying having my sleeves rolled up so I kept applying the calamine to my arms and neck. That went on for about two more weeks until the training non-coms caught on and made me button up again. My first attempt to beat the system!

The Army also kept lecturing us on other matters — such as what to say if captured. I was to say "Quinn, John W., Private, eleven-o-seven-eleven-o-three", name, rank and serial number That's all. (It could happen. During the Battle of the Bulge, the new 106th Infantry Division lost 8,000+ to capture.) Serial numbers did provide a little more information. Serial numbers with only 6 numbers were Regular Army. "1" numbers like mine, were volunteers. Numbers beginning with "3" and "4" were draftees.

Once, after announcing a 10 mile hike, a Sergeant lined us up and said, "Men, the US of A Army has issued you meatballs a lot of valuable equipment. To make sure it don't get stolen, we're gonna take it with us." So we loaded up everything, except what was in our foot lockers, making for a full field pack which we shouldered and headed out into that hot Alabama sun. where several times we would get the command, (Double Time) meaning RUN.

Finally our three months of basic training were over. We were all promoted to PFC (Private First Class) and received 10 day furloughs to go home. I went home to Springfield, Massachusetts, made the rounds of family and got the obligatory photo in our dress uniform and then it was time to report back to Camp Sibert.

YOU'RE IN THE ARMY, BUT YOU'RE ALSO IN COLLEGE

On our first day back at Camp Sibert the First Sergeant lined us up and said something like this, "Listen up, especially you college boys. If you were planning to go to OCS (Officer Candidate School) forget it. The quota for this Camp, this month, is four and you'd better figure that the cadre (camp staff) here will get those four slots. The Army has just started the ASTP program. That's Army Specialized Training Program. I recommend that you go for it. Now, if you don't, you'll be assigned to one of the Chemical Companies. Dismissed." What bothered us about that was we knew, pending any gas warfare, the Chemical Companies were operating as Laundry units. Since none of us wanted to be laundrymen, all of us who could, opted for ASTP, whatever that was.

In my case I didn't go very far from Camp Sibert. The group, I was with, left Attallah by train and headed southeast through Birmingham and on to Tuscaloosa, home of the University of Alabama. There, to our amazement, we were assigned to live in the Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House. This was not as luxurious a change from Camp Sibert as you might think. The Army had filled the house with double-decker bunks and hadn't added any bathrooms. We were in a Tuscaloosa residential neighborhood and our neighbors complained constantly about the noise.

The nation's colleges and universities had been pretty well emptied out by the Armed Forces so there was plenty of room everywhere in the country to set up ASTP and park soldiers. We were, of course, still in the Army which required us to report on the parade ground every afternoon at 5:00 PM, the hottest part of the day, for "Retreat", the flag lowering ceremony. This was attended in great numbers by people from Tuscaloosa who used to make bets on how many soldiers would pass out from heat exhaustion and hit the ground.

However, I was able to stay on my feet. I had gotten used to the heat at Camp Sibert where, on one blistering, hot day, the entire camp, 40,000 men, was assembled on the parade ground

to greet Wendell Willkie, a Republican from Indiana, who was running for President against Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the 1944 Presidential race. Willkie, accompanied by the Camp Commander, roared past us in a Jeep. We stood at attention and the Band played. While this was going on, men to my left and right were passing out and hitting the ground as if a giant hand had swiped them. You can figure that the Republicans probably lost a lot of votes that day when it was 108 hot degrees out there.

Now, the main reason we were at the University of Alabama was because, as a Regional Test Center, its mission was to search out skills that would benefit the army. The main talents they were looking for were language ability and technical backgrounds. The University decided that I was a Civil Engineer and as a result I was sent to North Carolina State College in Raleigh. On arrival in Raleigh I was assigned to a third floor dorm room with three roommates. One was an apple farmer from the State of Washington whose family used to send us boxes of apples. The second was an engineering student from Ohio and the third was a basketball player from City College in New York and me, from Massachusetts.

We got along just fine. We were, however, less than impressed with our dorm commander. He was a lieutenant who, apparently had messed up somewhere and, for punishment, had been assigned to an ASTP dorm. We called him "The Mouse" and tormented the poor man by starting on the third floor with someone shouting "Mah-oo-uu-ss" which got picked up corridor to corridor and floor to floor. "The Mouse" was never able to catch anyone but he tried.

Luke Sapin, the basketball player was 6' 7" tall and everything about him was big. I traveled with him one time on furlough as far as New York and it was a wild and crazy trip. It was October and the Army just wasn't prepared to fit him with a proper uniform. Instead of wearing OD's (winter olive drab wool uniform) Luke was still wearing the suntan, summer, cotton uniform. The sleeves were too short, above his wrists, and the collar came nowhere near closing, so he filled up the gap by tying a large Windsor Knot in his tie. The Army couldn't fit him with size 17 shoes so he was wearing Moccasins. The moccasins especially got us

flagged down by every vigilant Military Policeman who spotted us. But since his orders, were rock solid and covered Luke's Suntan uniform and Moccasins, the MP's just shook their heads in disbelief and passed us on.

About Basketball. At North Carolina State the Pre-flight Air Cadets lived in barracks across the railroad tracks from the ASTPs. While we, ASTPs, moved from place to place, class to class, to the mess hall, etc., in what we called "mob formation", the very GI air cadets marched in cadence (counting hup-hup-hup) everywhere they went. Naturally they got to feeling that the ASTPs weren't much as soldiers and probably not much good at anything. So, to prove the superiority of the Air cadets, they challenged the ASTPs to a basketball game. Now many of the cadets were just out of high school or had a couple years of college. What they didn't realize was that the ASTP's included a great number of former, varsity players from some of the top basketball schools in the country, such as the Big Ten, Pac 10 powers and well-known East Coast Conferences.

The game was a disaster for the cadets. The ASTP's kept the ball away from them and scored at will and just crushed them. The result was that we didn't hear any more insulting remarks from the air cadets. However, we were somewhat fond of the cadets since, because of them, at North Carolina State, the College Mess Hall served Air Force rations. That included milk, desserts, and other foods that just never appeared on Army Base menus.

Since so many college professors from around the country were serving in the armed services the Army was really having trouble in providing faculty to teach the ASTP students. The solution was to bring former professors out of retirement and use refugee professors from Europe. My mechanical drawing professor was from Vienna. His German was excellent but his English was pretty bad. We rarely knew what he was talking about, which annoyed him as much as us. Somehow we understood enough to keep on attending classes, and checking out dull, downtown Raleigh.

However, as 1943 ground to an end, the Allies were taking heavy casualties in the Italian Peninsula, bogged down at the Germans' Gustave Line, south of Rome. In the South Pacific the Japanese were finally on the defensive but the Americans, particularly the Marines, were suffering heavy losses. In the meantime, American combat units, together with support groups, were being sent to England and Northern Ireland. Planning was continuing for the invasion of Europe sometime in 1944 at a point to be determined. To free up additional troops, the Army made a quick decision to disband ASTP.

All Troops in ASTP were to be returned to the posts where they were serving, prior to signing up with ASTP. For me that meant going back to Camp Sibert in Alabama. When I and the boys with me got off the truck that delivered us to Camp Sibert, things looked very different. This was not longer just a basic training post. Instead of young recruits wandering around wearing helmet liners and without rifles, we saw a bunch of hard cases wearing steel helmets with knives in their boots, carrying Thompson Submachine Guns.

Finally a sergeant arrived and asked, "Are you men in good shape?" and we said, "Hell no, sarge, we've been in college for the last six months". So he said, "Well, you will be. You men just volunteered for the First Separate Jungle Assault Battalion". Sure enough, our names were on his roster of volunteers. We quickly discovered that this outfit was experimental, designed to relieve Marines in the South Pacific who were held up by Japanese pill boxes. It consisted of two sections of flame throwers, two companies of infantry equipped with Thompsons, BAR's (Browning Automatic Rifles) and Garand rifles; a company of heavy machine guns and two platoons of 4.2" Chemical Mortars. I was assigned to one of the Mortar platoons. Now, to be honest, neither I, nor any of the other Chemical Warfare men, had ever heard of the 4.2" Chemical Mortar, which had been developed by the CWS to fire gas shells. It was then discovered that the 4.2", the only mortar with a rifled barrel, was extremely accurate and could also fire HE (High Explosive) shells, HP (Phosphorus) and HS (Smoke) shells and, therefore, had great value as an infantry support weapon.

So, if you can imagine this, we practiced "jungle "assault methods all over northeast Alabama. The 4.2" mortar had three parts, the standard, the barrel and the base plate weighing a total of 350 pounds. Each mortar required four, two-wheeled carts with large bicycle type wheels and a long handle pulled by two or four men, uphill, downhill through rough country and through creeks. Two for the Mortar, two for Ammo. We got so tired, pulling those carts at night over rugged Power Line Rights of Way, sometimes we just fell down and got run over by the carts. We were beginning to wonder if all of this is real. Do they know what they are doing?

One big problem in the South Pacific was humidity and heat. Another was swamps. In Northeast Alabama, in December, we had frost, not heat, but we had swamps, creeks that overflowed after hard rains which we had in abundance. One training exercise had us marching through the woods (substitute jungle), fording a stream and making an attack up a hill on the other side. The night before we had a downpour but were lined up at 5:00 AM in the rain to make the hike (without the mortars). On the other side of the woods we were wading through knee-high, cold water which continued to a line of trees marking the creek bed. At the edge of what would have been the creek bed, there was a lettered sign saying "Jump", originally meaning "Jump over the Creek". All we could see was water in every direction. At that point the "powers-that-be" called off the exercise and we turned around and waded back through, what seemed miles of cold, muddy water. The net result was that half the unit was treated for exposure at the Camp Hospital. (We didn't know it at the time but that could be considered good training for what we later faced in Europe.)

It was shortly after this that the same "powers-that-be" decided that the First Jungle Assault Battalion hadn't worked out as they had planned and would be disbanded. We were not surprised. Except for the 4.2" mortarmen, all the other soldiers were assigned to various Infantry divisions. We were told only that we were shipping out. What his meant was that many of us were now without a place to belong. When you're in an organization like the Army, you need to be able to answer the question, "What's your outfit? Being in what the Army often called a Casual Unit presented problems. Since you were waiting to be assigned there could

be issues about your Army pay. It wasn't much but $50 a month went a lot farther back in 1942-46. But the worst part of being in an unorganized casual unit was that you were out of the loop for promotion.

Anyway, I was glad to get away from Camp Sibert which was one of those places the Army picked where you could be marching through mud while dust was blowing into your face. I was the only one sent to Ft. Indiantown Gap in Pennsylvania, a few miles north of Harrisburg along what is now I-81. The Fort was on the Swatara River which had cut a "gap" through nearby Second Mountain. I spent a dull month there as a "casual", without any duties, not knowing why I was there, how long I was going to stay or where I was going. It was now late February 1944. (I'd been on active duty for about 14 months. Still no army "home" still a PFC (Private First Class).

I was obviously unaware at that time of statistics stating that, if you had to be in uniform during World War II, it was safest to be in the U.S armed forces. On the other extreme a citizen of the Soviet Union was a hundred times more likely than an American to die in the war. But this included the massive Soviet civilian losses (of which the United States had very few). A Soviet man of military age was about thirty times more likely to die than his counterpart in America. Of all the major combatants, U.S. Troops had the lowest rate of dead and injured. Even if we had known about that it would have been of little comfort as we later lost good friends to enemy action in Normandy, France and Germany.

STILL A CASUAL BUT LEAVING INDIANTOWN GAP

Finally, I was on the move again. This time I arrived at Camp Shanks on the Hudson River, just above West Point. Shanks was a POE, "Port of Embarkation", a gathering spot for both army units and casual units to ship overseas, mostly to Europe or Africa. I did get some leave time while there and went into New York to date a young lady, a Nurse, I had known from Albany, New York.

I was then given a really dubious promotion. I was made a "Salt Water Sergeant" in charge of a detachment of "Boat Jumpers". Staff Sergeant stripes were sewn on all my uniforms. Just stripes, no increase in pay. "Boat Jumpers" were boys who, on arrival at a POE, figured that if they went overseas, they might not like it or they might get hurt. So, at their first opportunity, they took off for New York City where they thought they could hide but where the Military Police, who were very good at their jobs, picked them up. The "Jumpers" were all in the Camp Shanks "Stockade" (Military Jail). Next came move-out day. The MP's, all armed with loaded Thompson Submachine Guns, escorted me and my "Boat Jumper" detachment on board an Albany Day Liner, a tourist boat, tied up at the dock.

The MP's stayed with us while the Day Liner serenely sailed down the Hudson River and around Manhattan to the Brooklyn Navy Yard which was full of ships, all types, all sizes. That included one sort of nondescript, C-2, rusty, cargo ship with the deckhouse at the stern. The boys spotted it and said, "Tough for the 'sad sacks' that have to sail on that thing". Of course, that turned out to be us. The MP escort, still armed with their loaded Thompson Submachine Guns, marched us up the gangplank and down into the hold that was filled with stacks of six high bunks, all with less than two feet of clearance but with some limited clear space out in the middle. They said, "Pick a bunk". Then they shut the hatches on us.

(About Thompson Submachine Guns! Elizabeth Quinn, my mother, had a wartime job with the Army's Ordnance Department where, she was a buyer of Thompsons.)

The next day, March 23, 1944, our ship moved out into the Atlantic Ocean to join our Convoy. We had no idea of where we were going so the Rumor Mill went to work as we zigzagged along, sometimes north where it was cold, and the rumors said we were going to Iceland. Sometimes heading south when it was hot on deck and the rumors said we were going to Africa. We sailed along in really rough seas most of the time. The ship was good at rolling to the "port and starboard" sides (Navy talk) and pitching up and down. Some of the boys were brave enough to try the on-board food. That meant contending with plates sliding down the table or into their laps. As a "Sergeant" I had to order "Jumpers" to go below to handle KP jobs. They didn't last long before they were back at the rail. I spent as much time as possible on deck lying on my back staring straight up at the sky. If I looked at the horizon going up and down I would be joining others at the rail. The ship had a small store which sold snacks, such as candy bars and crackers. I found that the only thing I could keep down was a Clark Bar. So I lived on those for the sixteen days we sailed on that tub.

Once we were passed by the Queen Mary, a huge British Liner, stuffed full of troops, but travelling alone. Her high speed made it possible for her to outrun German U-boats. During the course of the war, the Queen Mary carried over 510,000 solders across the Atlantic. Her sister ship was the Queen Elizabeth which, on one trip, carried the entire American First Division of 15,026 men. Together, these two British Passenger Liners carried 24% of the total US troops transported to Europe, 37 crossings. As for my crossing - we sailed at the speed of the slowest boat, which, for all I knew, could have been us. I did feel sorry for the sailors on our Destroyer Escorts. Even in relatively calm weather, when our C-2 was sailing along sedately, the small DE's were taking water over their bows.

The typical North American convoy consisted of forty-five to sixty merchant ships, formed into nine to twelve equal columns. In nine columns a forty-five ship convoy would have a front of about four miles and a depth of about one and a half nautical miles occupying an area of about six square miles. Merchant mariners, a notoriously individualistic bunch found this uncomfortably close and straggling was not unusual, particularly early in the war. Dispersal

however was bad. The idea was to keep the convoy as close together as possible, the safer it was. It's a big ocean and a lot of ships all in one place are more difficult to find than the same number of ships scattered all over the ocean

We had gamblers on board. These included the boys who had been Boat Jumpers and hadn't been paid for some time. However, before we left port, some good-hearted civilians gave everybody a bag of oranges. Since these were all the gamblers had to bet with, they shot craps in the open area until one of them owned all the oranges. I never was able to find out who the top gambler was but he certainly couldn't have carried many of those oranges very far, not with the load of government-issue he was carrying.

There was one submarine scare on this trip. It happened about two o'clock in the morning when just about everyone was trying to get some sleep in those stacked bunks. Remember, they were six high and only about two feet apart. We had been told by the sailors that, if we heard a klaxon horn sound to get up on deck as soon as possible. So we kept our shoes on. The horn went off. Everybody jumped down to the floor. But the space between bunks was only two feet. We were jammed in. Struggling to get out. It kept getting worse until the "All Clear" sounded and only then, one by one, were we able to work our way out of the pack.

There were no further incidents and some of the boys even acquired "sea legs", at least to the point where they could stand at the rail and keep down what passed for food on that ship. Two days later on a grey overcast day, typical of most days we experienced in the British Isles, we sailed into the Irish Sea and docked at Swansea on the southern coast of Wales, sixteen days after leaving Brooklyn. There had been an air raid the night before and we could see the damage from the ship. However, there was a large group of Welsh girls on the dock to greet the American troops. One boy, (apparently he had been briefed), started a short, noisy riot when he waved a pair of women's nylon hose. As far as we could tell from later observations, there just were not any nylons available for any price in the British Isles.

We didn't get an opportunity to meet any of the Welsh girls. We were hurried off the boat and into a waiting train that carried us into England and then up through the Midlands to a place called Oulton Park. There on a damp, drizzly day in early April 1944 we were moved into a former British camp which was unlike any American Camp. The double deck bunks were only about five feet high and short for six footers. The mattresses were stuffed with straw. There were stoves but no wood or coal. Then they told us exactly where we were. We were in a "Repple Depple", slang for Replacement Depot. It was also made clear to us that we were D-Day Replacements and weren't going anywhere until the invasion occurred and we would be needed to replace casualties. Not exactly welcome news. Still casuals.

They kept us busy the usual way, long marches through the English Countryside and drilling on the parade ground where we were often buzzed by British pilots flying two engine, plywood Mosquito Fighter Bombers. Not only were these planes exceptionally fast but their wood construction made them invisible to German radar.

In spite of the buzzing we were impressed with the Royal Air Force. Winston Churchill said this of them – "Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few" .The RAF had defeated the Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain largely because of the radar warning system that allowed ground controllers to efficiently concentrate the outnumbered British fighters on individual groups of German bombers. As effective as this was, 69 percent of the British Fighters sent to a specific location where the controllers thought the German bombers would be found, found nothing. This applied mainly to the Battle of Britain. The radars of that time were crude, and the information they provided was subject to misinterpretation or false alarms. Still it was good enough and the pilots rarely complained. And there were improvements as the war continued.

WERE'RE IN DULL PLACE AND WISH WE WEREN'T

Oulton Park was a real dull place, no movies, no PX (Post Exchange). For some reason the sergeants at Oulton Park were stingy with passes. No pubs were anywhere near Oulton Park either so to save time we went across country which required climbing over and crawling under fences and that's where I and most other Americans discovered nettles. These are sneaky briars that hide in the ground and sting like needles when you encounter them.

There was a village just outside the camp gate at Oulton Park, Little Budworth, with quaint, thatched roofs and numbers of Italian POW's (Prisoners of War) squiring British girls around. We watched them through the barbed wire fence that kept us in. The Italian POW's, from the North African campaign, had no money but they were men and available. Also they were regarded as completely harmless, which was why they were allowed to run around loose. We understood that Italian POW's weren't locked up in the US either.

Next we were moved closer to the south coast of England, near a large town called Yeovil, close enough to London that we were roused out at night by air raid sirens and had to stay in trenches until the "all clear" was sounded. There, we were housed in six man pyramidal tents. The base, called Barwick House (pronounced Berwick), was commanded by a weird Colonel who insisted that all men would fall out for reveille each morning wearing freshly-laundered uniforms. This was a completely stupid order. Since we only had two uniforms we had to wash one each day in cold water and hang it on the tent ropes to "dry'". Since it rained most every day, we had to line up each chilly morning in a wet uniform. He spent a lot of time being driven around the base hunting for soldiers who failed to salute him so he could chew them out. For a full Colonel to be commanding a Replacement Depot we figured that he had messed up a previous assignment and had been demoted. We were not happy campers.

Again, they kept us busy on long marches on cobblestone lanes through the English countryside. One thing we got a kick out of — we were marching past a small cottage and the

owner, an elderly Brit, was standing at his gate watching the Americans go by when his wife came to the door and shouted. "Alf, you better come in. Your beer is getting cold" That was another problem in England — warm beer. About those cobblestones. Marching on those gave me shin splints.

In the meantime, men in the established units were getting time off to meet the British girls, do some sightseeing, but mainly to meet British girls. Of course that didn't always go well. Now, in my case, making $50 a month, we Americans were the highest paid troops during World War II. British soldiers were paid a pittance of 3 shillings a week. Since it took 20 shillings to make up a dollar, British soldiers were making about three dollars a month. Now you can easily figure who the British girls wanted to go out with. This led to the British referring to the relatively flush GI's as "oversexed, overpaid, and over here". Less well known is the phrase often said of the less-affluent British troops, "underpaid, undersexed and under Eisenhower", (American Gen. Dwight Eisenhower being the Allied Supreme Commander).

The other effort to keep us busy was drill on the parade ground, rain or shine. On the morning of June 6, 1944 we were out on the parade ground, as usual, and the sun was shining when the announcement was made that Allied troops had made a successful landing on the Normandy Beaches. We cheered. Not because we were anxious to get into combat. We were finally getting out of those miserable Repple Depples. There was one large building on the Barwick site. We called it the Castle. In its basement there were a few showers which occasionally had hot water. Some of us, I was one, got a shower at the Castle since we weren't sure of when we might get another one. Then we were alerted to move out.

After the usual delays we were loaded up on trucks and headed out, due south past numbers of solemn-looking British civilians to the port of Weymouth, an embarkation port for Normandy. There we were issued impregnated uniforms. These were cotton, fatigue uniforms that had been soaked in a waxy substance and were supposed to provide some protection against

poison gas in case the Germans decided to greet us with some. We were also equipped with gas masks encased in waterproof pouches.

On June 11, 1944 we were finally loaded onto a British channel steamer which, pre-war, carried passengers between Dover and Calais. There were signs in French and English on the boat, but anything that would interfere with loading soldiers had been removed. We arrived off the coast of Normandy, at Omaha Beach, the morning of June 12th, Replacements, still without a clue as to where we going. (Apparently we had actually been assigned to units, but which, we wouldn't know until we got there.)

As long as we're talking about the replacement system — let me digress. With me, the system worked. I joined an outfit that, while it was on line, I was taken under the wing of "Veterans" and learned my trade on the job with their help and support. For the usual poor infantry replacement it was not like that at all. American Infantry Divisions took tremendous casualties especially in Normandy, where it took weeks for us to figure out how to fight in the hedgerows. Later, during the winter of 1944-1945 American Divisions were searching frantically to find replacements, where ever. I can remember one particular, cold night when it was snowing and the Infantry Regiment to which we were attached, was processing a new batch of Replacements. They were known as "the new guys". It was obvious they were scared to death. And no wonder. Most of the boys in that group still had 8th Air Force patches on their uniforms. A few days earlier, they had been serving as ground crew members in England assigned to warm barracks. The prevailing opinion, among the Brass, was that anyone who had infantry basic training was a ready substitute in any Infantry regiment. The American System was to throw these untrained boys into combat often with a regiment that might be fighting for its life. The result was that they often arrived at night, were sent out on patrol with no knowledge of what they were supposed to be doing. Next morning they were turned over to the Graves Registration people. No time to serve with and under veterans. No time for them to learn their jobs. Worst of all, there was not time for anyone to even know their names.

The Germans were much better at this than we were. Replacements were all sent to an outfit that was off line, being refitted and reorganized. They had time to know fellow soldiers and learn under the veterans. When German replacements went into combat they did so with some sense of belonging that American Infantry Replacements rarely had. However the Germans had problems themselves as the war dragged on. Eventually they had to take in unreliable troops from the East and just to give you an idea of how desperate the Germans got was the Stomach Regiment.. This consisted of men who had diet restrictions, any kind of stomach problem. They were grouped together and put on line.

.Back to our ship offshore at Omaha Beach. The British sailors threw cargo nets over the side and lowered LCA's (Landing Craft Assault) small British boats with a ramp at the bow) We, with a full field pack, rifle and ammunition belt, gas mask, etc. were told to climb down toward the boat which was bobbing up and down in the surf. They had good advice for us. "When you get close to the water, wait for the boat to bob up and then jump. If you wait until the boat is going down you'll break a leg". Since, unlike the D-day troops who had previous training experience with cargo nets, we had none, so we heeded the advice and everyone in my party made it into our LCA without incident.

Our LCA then headed toward the Beach. It was early on the morning of June 12th, D+6. No one was shooting at us though. We had a British Coxswain who looked to be about 14 years old so we didn't have much confidence in him. We were right. He landed us on a sandbar and lowered the front ramp. We took about three steps and then went to the bottom. I can tell you that the English Channel is cold. However, though soaking wet, we all made it to the Beach where we were directed to go to the top of a bluff to get a Physical Examination.

On the way up off the Beach we figured this was a strange time to check to see if we were physically able to fight in France. At the top of the bluff there was a field littered with huge chunks of shrapnel from navy guns. The examination line moved kind of fast and I found out why. At the end there was a Doctor in a steel hat sitting on a rickety chair. The exam was a

"Short Arm Inspection". Now if you're a World War II Veteran you probably still remember what this was. However, for others I don't believe I should describe it here.

It seemed fairly quiet there in that field except for some boys from the 82nd Airborne Division, armed with Thompson Submachine Guns. They were walking around shooting up into the few trees that remained. Said they were looking for snipers. OK!

(The nearby village was Colleville sur Mer. Today, the village is the site of the Normandy American Cemetery where 9,387 American men and women are buried plus 307 Unknowns. There are 33 pairs of brothers buried side by side and four women. General George Patton is also buried there. There is a Memorial Section for the 1,557 Missing plus a reflecting pool and a 33 foot bronze statue entitled "The Spirit of American Youth Rising from the Waves")

There were many, many George Patton stories. I liked this one which happened in North Africa. In early 1943, Ruth Baldwin Gowan, an experienced reporter for the Associated Press arrived in North Africa. Now there were a number of people there who objected to her presence, holding that women could not make good war correspondents. Such doubts were dispelled at the highest level.

It seems that shortly after Ms. Gowan arrived in North Africa she chanced to run into George S. Patton, the ultimate no-nonsense soldier. After being introduced, Patton gave her the once-over. Then he asked "What is the first law of war?"
Ms. Gowan quickly replied, "You kill him before he kills you."
"She stays", said Patton, much to the disappointment of those who expected him to send her packing with an earful of cuss words.

WHEREVER IT IS WE'RE GOING, WE'RE ALMOST THERE

There were four or five trucks waiting for us. To this day I have no way of knowing how I got on the right truck going to where I was supposed to be going. I guess someone looked at a paper I was carrying and figured it out. We rolled away from the bluff and went through Bayeux, a small Normandy market town in the British Sector. We saw some laid-back British officers there with swagger sticks, in dress uniforms, as far as we could tell, window shopping. Out the other side of Bayeux a German shell landed in front of us throwing up a big cloud of dust and smoke. We drove through the cloud and on the other side, next to the road, was a pile of dead German Soldiers, stacked up like cordwood. **Welcome to Normandy!**

One thing we quickly learned, Normandy smelled bad. It was agricultural country anyway so there was the smell of manure everywhere. In addition, there were also thousands of dead horses and cows that had been killed by bombs and shellfire and they were rotting in the occasional sunshine. Dead Germans too. Nobody had the time or the inclination to bury them. So we lived with the smells. Eventually we also smelled pretty bad.

My truck headed southwest and stopped not far from the town of Isigny, about one and a half miles in from the beach. The driver came around to the back and asked "Which one of you is Quinn" I said, "I am" and he said, "This is where you get off – 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion". I could see a couple of 4.2's dug in to my right so I walked over, saw a sergeant and said, "I'm Quinn, a new man" and handed him my paper. He said he was glad to see me, that I was now a member of C Company, 2nd Platoon".

He asked if I knew anything about communications and I said "No". He said I'd have to learn because 2nd Platoon needed communications men. So I asked a dumb question, "'Sarge, how come we need communications men" and he said, "Cause they all done been killed or captured." Just then I heard a loud swishing noise overhead. I assumed it was an artillery shell and dropped to the ground. The sergeant just stood there. When I got up, feeling a little foolish,

he explained that the noise I heard was a German shell heading for the beach which I had just left. Next, I learned that C Company was attached to the 38th Regiment of the 2nd Infantry Division and that we were in a place called Les Ailers,

I also learned that those two wheel carts on bicycle wheels that we had trained with in the 1st Separate Jungle Assault Battalion were long gone. The 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion was now motorized. We had Jeeps and Trailers.

As time went by in the process of becoming a veteran, I learned to distinguish artillery shells coming in and the need, when necessary, to jump into a fox hole; the sound of shells going overhead and by, the sound of really heavy artillery shells that the boys said made a noise like they were dragging logging chains; the whomping sound of mortar shells coming in — the sound of the Germans' fine 88 which was so fast that, if you heard the report it had already missed you.

One night an odd thing happened. Around one AM we woke to a loud ratcheting sound, the poison gas alarm. One of the boys on guard duty smelled new mown hay, the odor of Phosgene Gas, and gave the warning. Most of the boys had tossed away their gas masks on the way in from Omaha Beach so mass confusion erupted. Then we discovered that the guard had smelled the odor of new mown hay because he was standing in a field of new mown hay.

There was one World War II poison gas event, that I know of but, for obvious reasons, at the time, news of it was suppressed. On December 2, 1943 the harbor at Bari, Italy was jammed with over 25 ships. This got the attention of Germany's Luftwaffe which bombed the harbor. One of the ships at anchor was the S.S. John Harvey whose cargo included 100 tons of Mustard Gas, stored in Bari in case the Germans resorted to gas warfare. The Luftwaffe bombs hit the Harvey and set off the Mustard Gas bombs whose contents quickly wafted over the port causing most of the 1,000 casualties in and around the area. The remaining casualties were caused by the bombing. At first it was believed that the Germans had dropped

Mustard Gas Bombs but, when the S.S. John Harvey's manifests were checked, the 100 tons of Mustard Gas were listed there. (We later learned that the Germans had also stockpiled Poison Gas in case the Americans used it, which we didn't.)

The 81st had a mixture of men from all over the country but most of them were from Mississippi. In some respects, except for the color of the uniforms, it was like being in a Confederate Regiment. But they were good boys and good soldiers. The 81st had landed on Omaha Beach on D-day, attached to the 1st Infantry Division and took a terrible beating on the Beach. The Battalion Commander, a West Pointer, had been killed along with three of the four Company Commanders, additional officers, non-coms and members of the rank and file, including communications men.

Since I was now a Communications Man, I was issued a TL Kit. That was a little leather case that hooked onto my ammo belt. It contained a jack knife and a roll of tape. One of the remaining communications men showed me how to splice 110 and 120 wire. They also had a set of lineman's climbers and had me climb a nearby pole, my one and only pole climb. They brought out a Model 300 radio (Walkie-Talkie per the media, not us) and showed me how to operate it. The next thing I knew I was a radio man with the Forward Observer. That meant that I was up front in a far forward position, dug in with the rifle companies, assigned to one of our 2nd Lieutenants who were the Forward Observers. His job was to spot where our mortar shells landed and make any necessary corrections, like "100 yards short", "50 yards right". My job was to operate the radio, if in service and, if it wasn't, to stay in phone contact with the gun commanders back at the gun site. We had to use phone mostly because the Germans made our hi-tech radios useless. They jammed all our frequencies 24/7 so, if we tried to use the radio, all we could hear was a high pitched wobble sound

It was there, really up front, that I remembered my efforts back in college in early 1942 to strengthen my eyes in order to become eligible for one of those officer training programs. And

it was there that I recalled another old army saying, "This ol' boy don't see so good. Put him up front where he won't miss nothin'.

We were bogged down in Normandy by those terrible hedgerows and the very skilled and stubborn German defense. We didn't like the Germans but we had to admit we were up against some very well-trained, veteran soldiers and we were just learning our combat trade. Our infantrymen were able to make a few advances but it was only a hedgerow at a time. Norman farmers over the centuries had marked their fields, mostly small, by throwing up mounds of dirt around the edges. These mounds had expanded over the years and large trees were growing out of them. Every field was actually a fort manned by Germans with overlapping machine guns at the corners and full fields of fire. American infantrymen got slaughtered trying to assault those hedgerows.

The job of the 4.2" mortars was to support those advances but, our efforts, while helpful, couldn't do the job. Finally, an Armor Sergeant devised some triangular cutters made out of angle iron that had been used as obstructions in the water at the Beaches. These cutters were welded to the front of Sherman tanks. Therefore, the tanks could crash through the hedgerows in several locations at once and lead the infantry to the next hedgerow. But it was still slow.

One morning just about everyone in my Second Platoon was out in our hedgerow doing various chores since, at the time, we weren't receiving any incoming mortars or artillery rounds. An Allied fighter-bomber flew low above us. We just glanced at it casually and then reacted with consternation. The pilot had pulled the wrong lever and had dropped a 500 pound bomb on us. We watched frozen (there was no place to go). The bomb bounced once, twice and a third time, then came to rest. It was a dud. Had it gone off, everything and everybody in that hedgerow would have been obliterated.

In the early days of the Normandy Invasion the Brass was concerned with Security and set up a system whereby they went through the dictionary picking out words in order, starting with the A's. They didn't skip any words which meant that some outfits got names they weren't pleased to have such as one I saw, Nutty CP (Command Post). Full unit names also included colors and numbers. 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion was a good example. Our code name was Van Dyke. C Company was Charley; Second Platoon was Blue. Company Commanders, Executive Officers, Officers and Non-coms had numbers. As Instrument Corporal I had the highest number "8"

Here's what actually happened. A GI would be looking for a particular CP (Command Post) and none of the posted signs made much sense such as Robin CP so he'd ask around and someone would tell him where to find, for example, Ist Battalion, 2nd Infantry, 5th Division and the asking soldier would say, "Thanks, buddy". I suppose that an English-speaking German could have learned the location of all important units simply by walking around and asking. I decided to try out the system. I called our Forward Observer. He answered and said, "Who's this?" I took a deep breath and said "Van Dyke, Charley, Blue, Eight". He said, "Wha?". So I said, "It's Quinn". And he said, "Then why the hell didn't you say so."End of Security Measures.

Normandy Report by German Generalmajor Fritz Kramer

"Our divisions always reported high losses of lives for the enemy, Our troops tended to over-estimate enemy losses, but we can safely assume that in the sector of I SS Panzer Corps prior to 20 June, his losses were extremely heavy due to the fact that the enemy time and time again put in breathing spaces between his attacks. Many attacks certainly could have been successful if there had been better cooperation between infantry, artillery and air forces. We observed for instance, that enormous artillery would start at daybreak and last for several hours. Usually this was considered preparation to enemy attacks but sometimes these would not take place. As enemy troops gained combat experience this situation changed. As observed from the German side cooperation between artillery and artillery spotter planes was excellent. Of course the planes were undisturbed by our Luftwaffe."

WE SEEM TO BE STOPPED HERE IN NORMANDY

If we stayed in one place and ran a lot of fire missions, the guns' recoils would force the gun base plates into the ground and we would have to keep digging out around the guns to keep them level and firing. One time we ended up in four foot deep pits. But then the pits offered great protection from incoming mortars. On the Fourth of July we took part in the Great Independence Shoot Out which called for firing one round from all the guns on the entire Normandy front at 1200 hours. A dumb idea.

We stayed busy complying with firing support requests from various Infantry units. But then C Company had an unusual smoke mission requested by the Infantry. It lasted all day. Our job — prevent German observation of the important town of St. Georges d'Elle which we could see from our gun site. We fired smoke shells continually and for an entire day the Germans, looking out of their pillboxes on our front, saw nothing but smoke.

One of my Communication jobs was running new telephone lines up nearby Hill 192. We tried to run them in a straight line which required that sometimes I had to run a line over dead Germans. At Hill 192 the bodies were often those of the really vicious teenagers from the Adolf Hitler Youth Panzer Division, dressed in camouflage uniforms. I may have run lines over them but I knew better than to touch them. Many were booby-trapped.

.St. Lo was a large market town that had six highways radiating out from it. One of those roads was the Bayeux/St. Lo highway on top of Hill 192, which the Germans could see. It was here where I learned you could run pretty fast, bent over with a 300 radio in one hand and a rifle in the other. The first time I was up there with the Forward Observer he handed me his field glasses and said, "Take a look". I did and found myself staring down the barrel of a German 88 poking through the next hedgerow. Not a pretty sight.

To say that the Germans were determined to hang onto St. Lo is a huge under-statement. The nights on top of Hill 192 (the key to St. Lo) were the worst. That's when the Germans hit us with both close-in and long range artillery. We could only hunker down in our foxholes and pray has we wouldn't take a direct hit. During those night hours I could hear constant calls for "Medic!" The unarmed Medics, who rushed out under fire to help where they were needed were, to me, the bravest men in the Armed Services.

On morning about two weeks later, the First Sergeant called a few of us together and asked, "How many of you guys have had calculus?" Now I thought about that remembering that scam back in basic training with "How many of you guys can type?" But then I figured they certainly aren't going to pull something like that here in Normandy and anyway what could be worse than the job I have, so I spoke up, "I've had calculus, Sarge". And I was the only one who did so. Not good. The First Sergeant then said. "Okay, Quinn, you're the new Instrument Corporal for the Second Platoon. The rest of you guys can go".

Now I knew that the Instrument Corporal was the one who aimed the guns but I didn't know much about the job since I spent all my time with the Forward Observer and running phone lines. So I asked, "Sarge what happened to the Instrument Corporal we had?" He said, "Well the first one got killed and the second one, Cpl. Emerson, just got pretty badly wounded and has been shipped back to England so you're it". This wasn't sounding like a big improvement.

They gave me Emerson's Instrument Corporal's Aiming Circle and said, "Learn how to use it". Now an Aiming Circle is much like a surveyor's transit. It had a compass in it, a 360 degree face with a sight. Since we were usually operating in areas that had been fought over or where we had taken incoming mortars or artillery, the ground was often strewn with all kinds of shrapnel and other metals. This could play havoc with an instrument containing a compass, so one of the first things was to find locations where the compass needle wouldn't be affected. The Instrument Corporal also could not wear a steel helmet so he was the one walking around bareheaded and without his rifle. I also got Emerson's map case and firing manual. First thing

I discovered that calculus had nothing to do with an Aiming circle (which back then was also used by the artillery). The operating principle was the first proposition in high school plane geometry. "When two parallel lines are cut by a transversal, the alternate, internal angles are equal". Everybody remember that?" And you thought it had no practical value. Admittedly, not being a surveyor or engineer, I haven't yet found a post-war use for alternate, internal angles.

With constant radio jamming by the Germans (as reported earlier) just about every unit in Normandy had to count on using telephone lines. In a static position, like Normandy was for some three months, telephone lines were running everywhere. One main result was that tanks and half tracks were constantly driving over lines along the side of a road, especially bundles of wire, so that phones were continually ringing with linemen trying to find their outfit's cut line and plaintively asking who you were.

We had two kinds of telephones. One was the more fancy EE8B (Double E, Eight B). This was in a leather case and had a hand crank which, when turned, would ring a phone on the other end. We also had Sound Power phones which had a shorter range but were activated by voice and sounds. These were especially useful in locations where you didn't want to have a phone ring and pinpoint your location. With Sound Power Phones you had to get attention by whistling or blowing into the mouthpiece. That needed someone close to it. At times we had telephone lines out along the road to First Platoon, to Battalion and to the various Infantry CPs whom we were supporting. A nearby unit of Tank Destroyers seemed to take pleasure in driving over bundles of telephone wire and cutting them. One of our guys solved the problem. Somewhere he had gotten a big sign with red lettering reading "DANGER! 1,000,000 MICROVOLTS". 1,000,000 microvolts wouldn't hurt anyone but the Tank Destroyers didn't know that and were careful to avoid our lines.

OK, HOW DOES THE 4.2" MORTAR WORK

As Instrument Corporal I always had maps of the area where we were located. Therefore, I was one of the few GI's who always knew where he was and where he was going. The Forward Observer would indicate the coordinates of a target, which I would locate on a map. But first I would have to find a location that was metal free and where, hopefully I could see all four mortars. Next I would compute the angle (azimuth) to it from our gun position and set that up on the Aiming Circle, Then the mortar gunners and I would aim the guns approximately by twisting the base plate, if necessary. The gunners would then place their sights on the mortar barrel and move the barrel from side to side until they came up with the same angle as mine which would be the same alternate internal angle. Finally they would set out aiming stakes which were used to make adjustments called in by the Forward Observer. Its sounded complicated but this was something we could do in a hurry.

What made the shell fly a particular distance was the number of powder bundles that were applied to the shell and the up and down angle of the barrel – up for short distance, down for longer shots. We could fire way under 500 yards but didn't like to do that because both we and the Germans could track the shell flight with the naked eye. We could get out about 4,000 yards but that was our limit. Most firing missions were much shorter.

There also was the "X Factor". This was the distance under or over the computed distance that a shell actually flew per 1,000 yards depending on air pressure or weather causing us to be 60 to 100 yards longer or shorter so we had to figure it in to save ammunition. A constant fear of all Instrument Corporals, was that we might set up the guns backward, due to not noticing quantities of metal in the ground or getting disoriented by moving into a built up area surrounded by buildings. We did like to set up in what we called "Defilade". That meant behind a hill or in a barnyard – any location that kept us out of the enemy's line of sight. This tells you more than you wanted to know about the Instrument Corporal's job but some of you may have found it of interest.

It was now July 11, 1944, the start of the great final attack on Hill 192. In Europe they used the Metric System so Hill 192 was 192 meters or 630 feet high) C Company continued to support the 38th Infantry Regiment of the 2nd Division firing some 3,195 mortar rounds in 14 hours, mostly while the Regiment was attacking up through a draw the Infantrymen called "Purple Heart Alley. It was around this time that we kept hearing a new noise in the sky — V-1 Buzz bombs flying overhead on their way to London.

On July 26th the 2nd Infantry Division finally jumped off for St. Lo with C Company's 4.2" mortars following closely. We went through St. Lo which was flattened by bombs, mortars and artillery and out the other side. That night a bomb was dropped on C Company. We were all in our holes when the bomb set fire to the Jeep that carried most of our .30 caliber ammo. That exploded the ammo which kept going off pinning us down in our foxholes. I had leaned my rifle up against a hedgerow with my raincoat but didn't dare reach for them. Exploding rounds from the burning Jeep blew my raincoat to pieces and took a chunk out of my Garand Rifle's stock. I was never able to replace that raincoat.

We were again relocated and received an order to smoke still another town. Then on July 31st, C Company demolished and set fire to the town of Torigny sur Vire where the Germans were offering stubborn resistance.

On another occasion I was with a group in three Jeeps that got caught out in the open by direct small arms fire. By chance, while making a run for it, we found a draw that was heading in the right direction for us. But, in it were a number of dead Germans. To get through the draw quickly we'd have to drive over them, a no brainer decision we made, not out of meanness, but because we had no other choice if we wanted to get away from there fast—alive.

Obviously, in countries like Belgium, Germany and France, there was a lot of wine to be had. There were also some potent home brews. The Belgians had a fiery juniper-flavored Eau de Vie. The Germans had Schnapps. In France the farmers made Calvados, a fierce apple

brandy. I would often visit the various mortar squads where I would have to accept the only hospitality they could offer which, in France, was always Calvados. Somewhere they had "liberated" a few tiny liqueur glasses which was a good thing since Calvados went down like a shot of lye.

One constant. We were always tired. I can remember one time falling asleep in the front seat of a Jeep which was being driven at night crosswise over a plowed field. What with night moves, night missions and trying to sleep in a hole while the area was being shelled was tough to do. On rare occasions we could find a stone farm house and gratefully fall asleep on the cement or dirt floor in the cellar among the cabbages, sugar beets and turnips.

At one time the Second Platoon had a Communications Jeep that had run over something that damaged the muffler so that the Jeep, particularly at night sounded like a tank to the Germans and they would cut loose with everything they had. We couldn't live with that, so two of the boys drove the Jeep toward the rear looking for a Motor Pool. They found one and talked to the Sergeant in charge who listened to their story and sympathized but said he didn't have Jeep muffler replacements. However, he said, "See that track over there. Well, at the end of it is s cliff. You run your Jeep over that cliff and I can give you a new Jeep but I don't have no mufflers". So the boys did as he suggested, returned with a bent steering wheel as proof that their Jeep was totaled and drove back to our gun position in a new, quiet Jeep.

During World War II, the US Armed Forces used the Phonetic Alphabet. This was to make sure everyone knew exactly what was said. For example – A-B-C-D-E-F were ABLE, BAKER, CHARLIE, DOG, EASY, FOX. Now the phonetic alphabet continued from GEORGE on up to X-RAY to YOKE to ZEBRA. However, we didn't have any entities needing names above GEORGE . If someone came by using a name above GEORGE we looked it up.

I'M A SMOKES AND SNACK DISTRIBUTOR

The Army gave combat troops all the cigarettes we could smoke. What the boys liked in order were Camels, followed by Lucky Strikes and Chesterfields. Not too popular were Old Golds and Philip Morris and Kools. Nobody worried about coughs and shortness of breath. The French Civilians noticed what the GI's were smoking and, even though they had no French cigarettes, would often refuse cigarettes out of the top three. Everybody liked American chocolate bars. Mostly we gave those out to the kids, Somehow, the US of A Government was convinced GI's were gum addicts so we always had lots of Wrigley gum to give out to the kids too.

One of my jobs was to distribute the monthly ration of cigarettes, pipe tobacco, chawin' tobacco, snuff, chocolate, etc, It went into five piles, one for Headquarters Squad and one each for the Mortar Squads. When I completed that job, making each pile as equal as possible, the squads sent representatives to make their selections. For example, if I shorted one pile on Camels I made up for it with extra Prince Albert Pipe Tobacco, Black Maria Chawin' Tobacco, or Chocolate so the piles would be tough choices. I had done a good job when the squad delegates stood there agonizing over which pile to choose.

Infantry Regiments were always pleased with the support they received from the 4.2" mortars. In spite of the obvious need, only two new 4.2" Mortar Battalions were authorized for the entire European campaign and that was done by converting two Anti-Aircraft Battalions into 4.2" Mortar Battalions after giving them a quick run-through in England.

Meals usually came up in a Jeep pulling a trailer. Sometimes the kitchen would include cold, greasy pork chops which we devoured with pleasure. Our cooks were mostly from West Virginia, They thought they were signing on as warriors but ended up shocked by being sent to Cooks & Bakers School when the new 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion in Marfa, Texas sent in a rush order for cooks and the West Virginians were made available.

There were times when the drivers of our hot meal, Jeeps took wrong turns and drove across into the German lines where the Germans captured them, the Jeeps, the trailers and our dinners, which, I'm sure they regarded as rare treats. This wasn't stupidity on the part of our Jeep drivers. Both the Americans and the Germans had instances where the lines had gaps which made possible inadvertent penetrations. I was driving a Jeep one time and suddenly found myself on the German side of a river. Up ahead I spotted a narrow bridge and got back over on our side without being noticed by the usually vigilant Germans.

Six weeks after the allied invasion of Normandy, Operation OVERLORD showed distressing signs of stalemate. More than a million American, British and Canadian troops had come ashore in France by mid-July 1944, but we all remained wedged within a narrow bridgehead roughly fifty miles wide and twenty miles deep. Both German defenders and allied attackers had suffered more than 100,000 casualties; it was small comfort to the Allies that the enemy wounded included Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, commander of Army Group B, who was critically injured in a strafing ambush on July 17. Fighting was intense, grim and unspeakably violent, with daily advances often limited to as few yards. The great war correspondent Ernie Pyle told his wife, "Sometimes I get so obsessed with the tragedy and horror of seeing dead men that I can hardly stand it. But I guess there is nothing to do but keep going. "
As a New Zealand officer serving as an observer with the British Second Army wrote, "I realize that the enemy's morale is lower but ours frightens me".

German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel described the Battle of Normandy succinctly. "Normandy", he said, "was one terrible blood letting".

THE NORMANDY BREAKOUT

It was now August and the Germans still had us pinned down in Normandy unable to break out. But there was a plan. The plan for a Normandy Breakout consisted of two phases. Operation Goodwood, under General Sir Bernard Mongomery's British and Canadian troops in the Caen region were to hold down the bulk of German Armored forces while the Americans tried to force a breakout under General Omar Bradley, First Army Commander. The American Operation Cobra Breakout Plan called for carpet bombing by the 8th Air Force heavy bombers to smash the German lines followed by concentrated attacks by American Infantry and Armor. My C Company was to hold where we were which was a good spot to watch the 8th Force coming in to our right where they were dropping their bombs. As we watched we were saying to one another, "Did you know that our line was bent so far backwards to the right?" Only it wasn't. The 8th Air Force was bombing short. Their bombs smashed into the 30th Division causing many casualties and just about wiped out our sister 92nd Chemical Mortar Battalion. (Also killed by the short bombing was Lt. General Lesley McNair, the American Ground Forces Commander.) We were pulled out and sent over to relieve the 92nd.

The 8th Air Force, however, also managed to bomb their target German positions creating incredible damage. German General Fritz Bayerlein told what happened. "It was hell. The planes kept coming overhead like a conveyor belt and the bomb carpets came down, now ahead, now on the right now on the left … the fields were burning and smoldering. The bomb carpets rolled in great rectangles. My front lines looked like a landscape on the moon."

"At least seventy percent of my personnel were out of action ... dead, wounded, crazed or numbed. All my front line tanks were knocked out. Late in the afternoon, the American ground troops began filtering in. I had organized my last reserves to meet them — not over fifteen tanks, most of them from repair shops. The roads were practically impassable. Then, next morning the bombing began all over again. We could do nothing but retreat. Marshall von

Kluge sent word that afternoon that the line along the St Lo-Perriers road, must be held at all costs". "It was already broken". But a new SS tank battalion was coming in," (the Marshall said) with sixty tanks to drive to the Vire River and cut off the Americans. The tanks arrived, not sixty, but only five. Allied Fighter Bombers had gotten the other fifty-five.

General Eisenhower reacted strongly to the casualties caused by the short bombing by the 8th Air Force saying "I gave them a green light on this show, but this is the last one." Infantry air support then was assigned exclusively to the 9th Tactical Air Force (Fighter Bombers), commanded by Lt. Gen. Elwood Quesada. Gen. Quesada believed in using his 9th Tactical Air Force to support ground operations. This endeared him to Gen. George Patton and together they made a formidable team.

We continued on over the Vire River and finally on August 16, the Battalion was relieved and assembled in the vicinity of a southern Normandy village where the Engineers had erected a shower tent. I'm not sure where this was but think well of it since we were loaded on trucks and carried to that shower tent where they took away all of our uniforms except for our shoes, leggins and helmets. Then we got showers with real hot water and real soap. We were given laundered wool pants and shirts, underwear and socks. The uniforms we had on were, I think, burned. Remember, we had had them on for 69+ days. These were the impregnated fatigues, soaked in a waxy substance to protect us from poison gas. Over the time we had them on they had turned stiff and black from dirt and smoke. The smoke came from the little fires we made to heat the K and C rations. (The K-ration, wax — coated box was also fuel.) Getting clean uniforms after so long in those impregnated outfits, was living in luxury.

The 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion was enjoying two days off at the Engineer Shower Tent when we were alerted on August 20 to join with other elements of the First Army and travel some 180 miles south to take up a position south of Chambois. There we were assigned to the southern arc of what became known as the Falaise Pocket. We set up our guns but were

ordered not to fire since Germans trapped in the Pocket were surrendering in large numbers and it was feared that our firing could discourage them from coming in.

Also on August 20, 1944, the newly-arrived Third Army under General George Patton had broken through the German defense lines in southern Normandy near Avranches and swung around in a half circle to the southeast in an effort to surround most of the German 7th Army trapped in the Falaise Pocket.

The Canadian First Army attempted to close the gap from the North. This took time and a great number of Germans escaped but without their heavy weapons and vehicles which the Air Force destroyed. The Germans who got away were forced to walk back toward the Seine River and to Germany. But they were re-equipped and we saw them again.

The Falaise Pocket was a scene of tremendous destruction. Heavy tanks and vehicles of every description within the Pocket had been reduced to rubble by artillery and air strikes. The ground was also littered with damaged and destroyed weapons and equipment and strewn with German body parts. Falaise smelled bad, real bad. If ever there was a place where soldiers did little souvenir collecting this was it.

The overall result of this action eliminated the German 7th Army as a fighting organization. Some 57,000 German soldiers had been killed and around 250,000 were captured. What German Marshal von Kluge described as “One hell of a mess” was about to turn into a nightmare. “The Allied General the Germans most feared, General George S. Patton had moved in to “fulfill his destiny”, as one Military Historian put it. C Company was now attached to the 4th Infantry Division and they, and we, were transferred from the First Army to Patton’s Third Army. (Those infamous slapping incidents at the hospital in North Africa were now behind him.)

WE'RE HEADIN' OUT TO PARIS

The Battalion then moved out in convoy for the race to Paris, 122 miles away While Companies A,B & D had transferred to the 3rd Army, C company was still attached to the First Army's 4th Infantry Division. However as we set off for Paris C Company was re-attached to Third Army and to the 110th Regiment of the 28th Infantry Division. That trip to Paris was unusual. Several times during the run to Paris we kept reaching out to our right to see if we could make contact with any American troops but never did. Conclusion: we were the right flank of the 3rd Army and as the military types said, our flank was in the air.

As we headed out on our assigned route, we kept coming to blown bridges. Some streams we could ford but in other cases we were just lucky. The Germans were in a hurry and only took time to blow the bridge spans in the middle. We were able to cross using winches to slide our vehicles down to the bottom of the "V" and then winch them up the other side. Eventually we found ourselves moving with other American troops.

In the meantime there was also the problem of Gas. Everyone was running out and our dash across France toward Paris was beginning to stall. The Air Forces helped by flying C47's loaded with cans of gas ahead of the troops and landing on impossibly short fields. Everywhere, trucks, tanks, jeeps, half-tracks, every kind of military vehicles were on the sides of roads, out of gas. As an independent battalion finding gas was especially tough for the 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion. However, we noticed that somehow, the Cavalry seemed to have Fuel Dumps with lots of gas in barrels.

Now, our Jeep bumpers were stenciled with "81G. The Cavalry' bumpers were stenciled with "C". However over months of combat all of our bumpers had gotten so worn and scraped that 81G might pass for 81C. We decided to try. We pulled up to one of the Cavalry Fuel Dumps with three Jeeps towing trailers loaded with empty gas cans, hoping to con somebody. A Master Sergeant came out, looked at our bumpers and asked, "Where're you guys from." We

mentioned Marfa, Texas, the really obscure post in West Texas where the 81st had actually been organized. The Sergeant didn't want to appear ignorant of Cavalry Posts so he made a safe comment. "That's some hell hole, ain't it"? One of our boys said, "You just ain't a woofin', Sarge. Can you fill us up? We're runnin' on fumes. The Sergeant said, "For the 81st, sure". We thought it prudent to take off fast as soon as all our cans were filled. We ended up with enough gas to get the 81st to a Paris suburb, a place called Brieres.

On the night of August 28th I was assigned to a night Jeep patrol that went into Versailles. I still don't know what we were trying to accomplish. There was a blackout in Versailles and the word was that there were Germans holed up there. We were not operating the lights on the Jeep but drove slowly, navigating by looking straight up since the sky above was lighter. This caused us to crash into a monument in the middle of the road. A crowd gathered immediately including the FFI, (French Force of the Interieur) the French Resistance movement, (unfortunately infiltrated by the Communists). They were eyeing our Jeep enviously so we decided to get the hell out of there. We worked out way back to Brieres where the next morning we loaded up and moved into Paris, itself, pulling up beside the Bois de Boulogne. "They" said we were to be in the big August 29th Victory Parade in Paris with the 28th Infantry, ordered to shave and put on clean uniforms. Well, we shaved as best we could in cold water but we didn't have clean uniforms so we brushed the dirt off the ones we had on.

Now there had been an earlier, small victory parade down the Champs Elysees, led by French General Charles deGaulle with German snipers in attendance on August 26. While we waited for the big parade to start, the girls of Paris were swinging by on bicycles, going to work or somewhere. These were the first real girls we had seen since we left England. The Normandy women were unfriendly since the invasion had wrecked their business with the Germans in Paris: milk, butter, cheese, etc. (Then too, they were sort of dumpy peasants, hard to tell different from the female, slave, farm laborers who could come into a barn, sling a 100 pound sack of "whatever" over their shoulders and then march off with it. The Paris girls were slim, wore makeup, had nice hairdos and wore filmy dresses which they let blow. We had some

waiting time before the parade began so we ran an informal survey which indicated that the first choice of the young, lady Parisian, bicycle riders who passed us, was blue panties, two to one over other colors.

The 28th Division marched through Paris because they were the closest American Division when the Allies wanted to put on a parade. My C Company got into the parade because we were attached to the 28th Division. As a "mounted" unit, we drove our Jeeps and Trailers. In Center City Paris, the Arc de Triomphe stands in the middle of the Champs Elysees. It was there that the Allied Generals were gathered. Generals Eisenhower, Montgomery, Bradley, Patton, Dempsey, LeClerc, deGaulle, etc. with march music provided by the Paris Firemen's Band. The French were passing in loaves of bread and bottles of wine. We drove around the Arc de Triomphe and continued down the road, out of Paris, not stopping until we came to suburban St. Denis where we envied all the troops who had been able to stay in Paris. The 28th Infantry had kept going too. In St. Denis the FFI was busy rounding up girls who had been dating the German soldiers. The FFI's were clipping off their hair and shaving their heads. I met a British woman who had chosen to live in St. Denis. She told me that every day, since she had heard of the invasion, she came out of her house and looked down the road to see if the Americans were coming and finally we were there.

The day after that we mourned the loss of three more of our people. Normally the Germans put up signs reading "Actung Minen" if they had mined an area. Our Engineers would clear the area and then pull up the signs. If the German had time they would just remove the signs. My Company C pulled off the road in what looked like a cleared area. I was riding in our Weapons Carrier and behind us a Jeep was carrying the First Sergeant, his driver and two mortarmen. They followed in our track but then veered off to the left where their Jeep ran over a Teller (anti-tank) mine. The driver was the only survivor. I was particularly upset because one of the riders killed was a boy from Richmond, named Beverly Winston, who had become a very good friend. I wrote a letter to his family expressing my regret. Some fifteen years later a strange thing happened. I was at a house party in Florence, South Carolina and, among the men, there

was some war story talk. "81st Chemical Mortar Battalion" was mentioned. At that, one of the women attending came over to my group and asked if anyone there had been with the 81st and had known her brother, Beverly Winston. I told her that I had. I was able to assure her that he hadn't been alone, as the family had worried. His friends had been with him; he had died instantly; never knowing what had hit him and we had contacted the Graves Registration people before leaving, heading north.

Company C then took part in a 110 mile drive to St. Quentin where the only resistance was a German self-propelled gun which fired off a few rounds. St. Quentin was liberated on September 2. Then on September 5, C Company backtracked to the south and again north to enter Belgium on September 8th. On September 10th, the Company lost a lieutenant whose reconnaissance party ran into machine gun fire. We kept going toward Bastogne but a blown bridge forced a change of direction into the city of Luxembourg on the night of September 11 where C Company guarded Radio Luxembourg, the most powerful radio transmitter in Europe.

Infantrymen were always my heroes. Theirs was the toughest job of all. Their mission — to take and hold ground. Our job in the 4.2" mortars was to support those efforts. One hard-to-forget day we changed positions and came up over a hill and on our right there was a ditch. Sitting in the ditch was a squad of infantry, apparently a patrol. All holding their rifles. All of them dead.

It had rained the day before and the rain caused streaks on their dusty faces. There were two Bazookas lying on the ground but apparently a malfunction had prevented one from being fired. To the left there was a disabled German Tiger Tank and tracks of another Tiger. The patrol had held its ground but, with only Garand Rifles and a Bazooka functioning, they had been no match for the machine guns on the Tigers. Regiment had listed them as "Missing" until our Captain radioed and reported we had found them. We just stood there in silence. Finally, one of our boys said "God Damn Krauts". Then came the order "Mount up, Move out". We left to set up for our next firing mission.

INTO GERMANY AND THEN OUT AGAIN

C Company now moved north through Bastogne and then east through Luxembourg to cross the Our River into Germany on September 12, still attached to the 110th Infantry of the 28h Division. The weather had been reasonably dry and warm in France but turned cold with steady rain. C Company set up our guns in the small German town of Hecklusheide and commenced the most continual firing, since Normandy, against the German Siegfried Line. Here also, the heaviest artillery and mortar counter-battery fire ever was received. In the sector where we were located, we provided constant support as the 28th division slammed itself into the cement and steel of the Siegfried Line, taking terrible casualties. C Company received much credit for our support during this operation but we will never forget the sacrifices made by the 28th Infantry Division.

This wasn't like the bocage country of Normandy but there were lots of openings (about 8 feet wide) in overgrown areas. We quickly learned that the Germans had all those openings zeroed in. When we came up to one, on foot, we stopped, paused for a moment, and then made a mad dash for the other side, hoping we'd be too fast for the Germans to react.

About the 19th of September, C Company was pulled out of Hecklusheide and sent south to the Metz area, where the French had built a number of excellent forts before the start of the 1870 Franco-Prussian War. They had subsequently reinforced them during the ensuing years. (We later learned that Hecklusheide was one of the points where the Germans had piled through at the start of the Battle of the Bulge late in December. C Company would have been overrun, if we had stayed there.) The forts were now occupied by well supplied Germans.

A woods, east of Marrielles, was C Company's first position, facing the fortress city of Metz where the perimeter forts were Jeanne d'Arc, Marivel, Guise and Driant. Where we were assigned was in a long, thin, salient extending north toward Metz. The area was part of an ex-gunnery school for German officers, an area the Germans knew very well and had zeroed in

every spot on site. As a result, enemy artillery was accurate and heavy. In addition, rain fell persistently turning the low ground into lakes and the high ground, once travelled, into a quagmire. Enemy counter-attacks made our position untenable so we retired to a set of trenches and bunkers that, ironically, had been built by the Germans in 1870 for their attack on Fort Driant. We were now attached to the 5th Infantry Division but were joined later at Metz by the other 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion Companies A, B, and D.

Like most combat units the 81st was desperate for replacements. There were no replacements with mortar experience available. Even worse, there were no replacements available, period. Our solution, a hard one, was to break up our D Company and distribute its men, mortars, Jeeps and equipment to bulk up the other companies ---A, B and C. but this left us with one less company to support the hard-pressed Infantry. This was planned to go into effect following the actions at Metz, scheduled after what was hoped to be a successful elimination of the perimeter forts, including Fort Driant.

Our target was Fort Driant where we supported three, unsuccessful 5th Infantry attacks. Many smoke screens were fired to deny enemy observation on advancing infantry. We were effective against open emplacements surrounding the Fort and the 4.2" mortars were able to silence enemy self-propelled guns but mortar shells and heavy artillery shells simply bounced off the walls of Fort Driant. We watched the air missions that were flown against the Fort but 500 pound bombs ricocheted off the Fort like rubber balls and exploded in the air. And the rains continued without letup.

The attack to reduce Ft. Driant was finally determined to be a waste of men and material so the attack was abandoned. A holding force was left behind. Driant actually held out until the end of the war. We were then pulled out for the attacks on the nearby city of Metz where we fired continuously, day and night, all kinds of missions: smoke screens, anti-personnel harassing and counter-battery. Metz was finally taken on October 29.

IT'S REALLY DAMP OUT THERE

C Company was re-attached to the 2nd Infantry Regiment of the 5th Infantry Division when it moved into position west of the town of Sillingy. We dug in for what turned out to be a six week stay. Much time was spent improving fox holes and trying to keep warm and dry. The gamblers even dug a special "rec hall" with a reinforced roof, for poker by candlelight. Toward the end of the six weeks the rain became so intense that all of the fox holes filled up with water and the roads in and out became bogs. We were in a wooded area on the edge of a wide field which was interest to night-time enemy patrols.

This was also the area where we got introduced to the German Nebelwerfer, a six barrel rocket launcher that luckily was somewhat inaccurate. Guard duty was, of course, a necessity, but only one hour per man. It was here I discovered that a D Ration bar (a rock-hard, supposedly highly nutritious chocolate bar) took an hour to eat although biting a chunk out of it cracked in the night like someone stepping on a dry stick. You also had to guard against breaking off a tooth. However, it kept you awake and alert on guard. The C Company Mess Sergeant undertook heroic duty. Almost every day he was able to get us somewhat of a hot meal by travelling over heavily shelled roads to our group of damp and weary mortarmen. Often that hot meal was "Corn Wully", the name we gave it. Corn Wully was a mix of everything that was on hand in the battalion kitchen, such as desiccated or canned lima beans, corn, green beans, squash, tomatoes, carrots, etc. and, of course, corned beef which gave it the overall Corn Wully taste. No matter what the mix of vegetables, it always tasted the same
.

Some good news! Since we were rarely relieved, just re-attached to the relieving infantry regiments, we learned that the rear echelon had set up a two day rest camp in a place called Pagny where we could wash clothes, get some sleep, listen to music and get in some unauthorized extra-curricular activity.

Shortly after leaving the Sillingy mud pit we passed through a German town where one of the boys in C Company picked up a German Shepherd who was quick to change sides. The Americans had really fine dog food (C Rations) and Jeeps that he could ride in. German Shepherds are work dogs so he had to have a job. He decided that his job was guarding the Jeeps. If a German civilian approached, he became most unfriendly. Anyone in an American uniform though was OK.

We didn't see many German planes during the day but we always had "Bedcheck Charleys" at night when they were usually safe from American fighters. These were single, German, two - engine Junkers bombers with unsynchronized engines that made a whir-whir-whir sound, instead of the steady whir-r-r-r-r-r of American planes. A "Charley" was the one responsible earlier for bombing our ammo Jeep, which he could see on a bright moonlight night when someone failed to throw a camouflage net over a high visibility, color panel.

C Company next swung from the south side of Metz, on November 10, 1944, back across the Moselle River with orders to join the 10th Armored Division's drive to the northeast, across the Moselle River and into Germany. While on the road to join the 10th Armored Division we passed the St. Mihel American Cemetery from World War I. It was November 11, Armistice Day. Many clean and neat American GI's were parading there, shoes shined and stripes sewn on. When we stopped there we mortarmen just looked at each other — plastered with mud, wearing an assortment of uniforms, unshaven, dirty and tired. Basically, we felt out of place with these nice-looking soldiers and, just maybe, felt ourselves to be more comfortable back in the rain where mortar shells burst without warning, stripes attracted snipers' bullets. And where nobody had any shoe polish.

In travelling back and forth between assignments we often found ourselves having to go through intersections that had been interdicted by German Artillery. The Germans had great maps, and could pinpoint any possible target. (We also used their maps.) Our map people

reprinted them by the thousands so I always had German maps to use in lining up the guns of C Company's Second Platoon. Small problem-- converting from meters to yards.

On one occasion (that I remember well) we came to an intersection where a Military Policeman was directing traffic but where a German mortar was dropping a shell on it every 35 seconds. Since the Germans were so methodical, we could count on their timing and the MP would check his watch and direct quick dashes through the intersection. (Americans drove the Germans nuts. We'd fire varying intervals, sometimes 20, 30 or 40 seconds, sometimes as long as 50 seconds, all mixed up.) I was waiting for our turn when the 35 second German shell arrived, off target, and landed a short distance from me. I took a piece of shrapnel in my left forearm and called for our Medic. It was a painful, but not too serious, wound so the Platoon Medic bandaged it up and I went on. But, no Purple Heart. In the 81st you had to be carried off to get one. 65+ years later, I still have a white mark on my left forearm as a reminder, but no permanent damage.

The Army was solicitous about our hearing since the 4.2" mortars made a very loud WHOMP noise. So we were issued ear plugs, which we wore briefly until we discovered the flaw in using ear plugs. While they helped to protect our ears against our own mortars they, unfortunately, made it impossible for us to hear incoming artillery and mortars, so we could take cover. We kept them in our pockets in case someone from Battalion asked if we were using them.

A little later while we were running an early morning firing mission, some boys from the 5th Rangers, who had been out on a night patrol, came back through our gun position. Since they had not seen 4.2" mortars before, they stopped to watch. Then one of them came over to me and asked if he could fire off a mortar. So I told him "Yes" since he had been watching what our people were doing. He dropped the round down the barrel OK but, instead of ducking down out of the muzzle blast, he just stood there watching the round slide down the barrel. The blast blew off his helmet, singed his eyebrows and gave him ringing in his ears (he said) and

powder burns. I ran over to see if he was badly hurt. He looked at me and gasped "Man, I wouldn't have this job for nothing". I wasn't about to tell him that he had just done a dumb thing, not paying attention to what our gunners were doing. But, if he wanted to think that mortar gunners had to be iron men, fine, but then there was no way I'd want to swap for his Ranger job either. Later we supported the 5th Rangers on still another operation.

By this time the 5th Rangers were really a beat-up unit. Citing only three of their difficult actions ----the 5th Ranger Battalion has been credited with breaching the Atlantic Wall on Dog White Beach on D-Day; attacking and capturing German Forts on the Brest Peninsula: holding the Irsh-Zerf road 10 miles behind Germans line in Germany, waiting for the Armor to relieve them. Zerf was where my Second Platoon was asked to provide support to the 5th Rangers (see more later).

Today not many people know that the modern day Ranger's motto is "Rangers Lead the Way!" Here's how that came about. On Omaha Beach, General Norman Cota (Assistant CO of the 29th Infantry), while under heavy machine gun fire, walked towards a group of Headquarters Company, 5th Rangers and asked, "What outfit is this". Someone yelled out "Rangers". To this, General Cota replied, "Well, goddamn it, Rangers, get up and lead the way". It was at this time and place that the Ranger motto was born.

In 1944 the Germans also requisitioned some 6.2 million stamp pads to help them keep their paperwork in proper order. It's worth noting that the strength of the German armed forces at the time was only about 7 million. The Germans loved stamping papers but this sure sounded like overkill.

About this time bean counters announced that 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion had expended 154,567 rounds of ammunition. Many outfits had made a great ceremony of firing their 100,000th round. We didn't have a ceremony since we didn't learn about that mid-war figure until the war was over anyway, but then we would have been too busy to play number games.

LOOKING FOR THE 10TH ARMORED

On November 12 we were still on the road heading for the elusive 10th Armored Division supposedly setting up to attack across the Moselle River. On the way we passed through Luxembourg again where we got a warm welcome from the Luxembourgers. It was there I had impressed on me how deficient most Americans were in the matter of language. Of course we had some boys from Massachusetts who spoke French and Italian boys from New York who spoke Italian but that was all. Except for Charley Koenig of the Second Platoon who was a pre-war language major from St. Louis.

He and I were standing on a corner in Esch (Luxembourg) when a young girl wearing a Girl Scout uniform, came by. I figured her to be about 13. Charley said, "Watch this". So Charley began talking to her in French and she responded in French. Then in mid-sentence he switched to German and she switched to German. After a few moments he switched again to English and she switched too. After she left Charley noted that she also spoke Luxembourgois, a local patois, as well. Now she wasn't unusual. All Luxembourgers spoke three to four languages. So much for our high school or college French 1 and 2.

On the night of the 13th, we crossed the Moselle again, under cover of darkness and smoke screens. At dark on the 14th we finally caught up with the 10th Armored column and moved with their 3rd Tank Battalion. The rain and heavy shelling made that a miserable night. No place for cover except close to or (chancy) under a stopped tank. In order to keep up with the Combat Teams it was necessary to leapfrog the First Platoon and my Second Platoon but, as the Armored Division spread out, it was impossible for the Platoons to keep in touch, so leapfrogging was abandoned. That night we lost one killed and several wounded because of the continued shelling. About Combat Teams. Those were Combat Commands with attached units, such as our Mortar Platoon. Infantry Divisions were organized with three Regiments while Armored Divisions were organized with three Combat Commands. All using the same nomenclature: Combat Command A, Combat Command B and Combat Command R (R

meaning Reserve). 10th Armored was a new, just arrived outfit, going into its first combat action, so C Company didn't know what to expect of them.

Problem! Due to flooding of the Moselle River, caused by the incessant rains, the armored drive had been postponed, giving the Germans time to organize strong defenses. In addition, roads had been mined and my Second Platoon, travelling with no armor protection of any kind, continually encountered German troops bypassed by the tanks. Next morning, another gray day, A Signal Corps photographer came by and took a photo of the Second Platoon Headquarters Squad. We were putting on tire chains because of the mud, not exactly prepared for a picture. The First Platoon went off with Combat Command B while we, the Second Platoon, went to Ritzing, Launsdorf and finally further east into Germany with the 10th Armored's Combat Command A.

Here the thin, 10th Armored screen in front of the Platoon pulled back, without advising us, leaving us and our 4.2" mortars out in front, alone, in full view of the Germans who hit us immediately with small arms and mortars. Time to get the hell out of there. It was still raining but German observation was excellent and we were attempting to withdraw up a hill with no roads through almost impassable mud. Everybody, except the Jeep drivers, was out behind pushing. So we moved back slowly, zigzagging as best we could, followed by flights of mortar shells which, when they hit that mud, luckily, did not create much of a blast area.

Still mortar rounds hit two trailers and another wounded several men but each of them was struggling to make it out on his own. Suddenly a large shell fragment hit Pvt. Tester's helmet knocking it off his head. Tester was saved from injury by a wad of toilet paper he had inside his helmet. The helmet flew forward and struck Pvt. Oakes in the back. He threw up his arms and yelled, "Lord take me, I've been hit". Those of us who heard him, saw that he wasn't injured and laughed, a light moment in an otherwise miserable situation. We had to abandon those two trailers, including a complete mortar, but we fought our way out to the top of the hill, with nobody left behind, and over the crest where the entire 10th Armored Combat Command A

was safely drawn up. When we got over the top of the hill, I was on the far right and was accosted by a new second lieutenant from the 10th Armored who yelled "Who gave you men permission to withdraw?" That really was a dumb question. I looked at him. He was wearing a nice, clean uniform with shiny boots and, so help me, he and all of the 10th Armored personnel were wearing ties. As I went by him I said, "Go to hell Lieutenant....Sir", and left him with his mouth open. I guess he figured there was no point in pushing that matter with a soldier as mad, as I was.

We remained unhappy campers with the 10th Armored Division until November 26 when we were attached to the 359th Infantry of the 90th Division. This was accomplished, again, as a night move, extremely dark and drizzling. We were headed for a place called Rehlingen but stopped briefly. I got out of my Jeep to stretch but took my rifle and the all important Aiming Circle, (in a fiber case), with me. When I got back to the column it had already moved off. In the dark and because I rode in various jeeps, no one missed me. So I started trudging down the road asking all the infantry guys I met if they had seen a column of Jeeps with trailers going by. Finally, I came across one soldier who said that he had seen such a column but they had turned right at the next intersection. There was a sign there pointing to Rehlingen so I turned right also. (The Germans made a habit of switching signs around when they withdrew, so I was hoping that this sign was really pointing toward Rehlingen.)

The road was wooded. It was pitch-black and I had to feel for the road with my feet but then I stepped off into air and found myself with my equipment sliding down into a huge shell hole where by touch I found that I had come up against a knocked out Sherman tank. I climbed out and continued down the road until I came out in the open where it was lighter. I kept walking, and finally got into the village of Rehlingen, passing suspicious Infantrymen standing guard in doorways. To make sure they noticed who I was, I made a lot of noise and sang a little. Finally I came to the end of the road and there were the boys of the Second Platoon who were as glad to see me as I was to see them. The guns had been set up and pointed toward the river.

OUR STAY IN REHLINGEN

They filled me in on exactly where we were. Rehlingen was reached only by a long, completely open road which I had discovered the hard way. Rehlingen, itself, was in a hairpin curve of the Saar River so that we had Germans on three sides of us and they had the high ground. Orders were to start firing across the river.

Our people were saying, "Who picked this dumb site for us". Oh, one other thing — we had one "Chicago Piano" for support. That was an anti-aircraft, half-track mounting four .50 caliber machine guns. They had jammed a hole in a house wall and were pointed across the river but didn't have much of a side-to-side firing angle. The 4.2" mortars were all in a large barnyard but we needed a firing angle so I picked one and set up. The river was less than 100 yards wide there. At night we used tiny lights so I could find the gunners' sights and they could find mine. There was a lot of metal scattered around and, as usual, I had to take off my steel helmet and keep moving. Unfortunately, the tiny lights had gotten the attention of a persistent German across the river with a machine gun. He was pretty good with it but, while he couldn't actually see me he probably figured that we were up to no good. He was higher and angling his fire over the barn. He came close a number of times, while I was trying to line up the guns, and actually put a round through my hair without drawing blood. I had just about finished laying in the guns when he finally quit, a considerable relief to me.

During the daylight hours to get in and out of Rehlingen, a Jeep had to get up to about 45 miles an hour, top speed on the rutted, cratered road, while the Germans tried to pick it off with artillery. Rehlingen was where I had another close call. We had taken over a house which, out in back, had a very nice (for rural Germany) outhouse. Now , our normal condition was either Diarrhea or Constipation. I was in there the next morning, feeling a little bit safe, since the outhouse was made out of brick, when an artillery round landed outside. A large piece of hot shrapnel crashed through the tile roof and landed about an inch away from my left leg. I don't recommend that as a remedy for Constipation but I can assure you that it works.

Once, much later when I was making a talk at a Charlotte middle school one of the girls asked, "What did you do for bathrooms?" Good question. The only places, where you could find the kind of bathrooms we had here in the States, were in the large cities and we never got to stay in a large city. We were always in rural areas, the boondocks, where three hole outhouses, for example, were high tech. What we had mostly was Army Field Hygiene. That meant we first dug our foxholes, then we dug a slit trench, left a shovel there and sometimes a roll of toilet paper on a stick. Just to be sure, we carried our own toilet paper inside our helmets. GI toilet paper was Khaki colored. One form of Diarrhea was intense enough to have you evacuated. I know, I had it. One time I had just made it to the outdoor slit trench latrine. It was pitch black and I had gotten so weak I fell over unable to move. I had to crawl back to my foxhole. In the morning the Captain had me sent back to Battalion, (not to a hospital), where I recovered in about three days and came back on duty. The platoon hadn't moved while I was gone.

During our stay in Rehlingen Second Platoon fired more ammunition than in any other period of comparable length. The 90th Division Infantry exhausted itself just to hang on to our bridgehead. Counter-attacks were fierce, often supported by tanks and pinpoint mortar accuracy was necessary at all times of the day or night. Actual ammunition expenditures amounted to some 2,000 rounds per day, all of which had to be brought into Rehlingen at night. Most of the Germans were in pill boxes that were somewhat resistant to our HE (High Explosive) mortar fire. But White Phosphorus (WP) was effective. Occasionally the Germans ran up their mortars or self-propelled guns and we could pick them off with HE (High Explosives).

At Rehlingen, Artillery ammunition was often in short supply so the 4.2" mortars were often called on for the bulk of the fire missions. Artillery shell shortages were not uncommon in the ETO (European Theater of Operations) to the point where the Artillery could zero in, but then had to hold off firing except in the case of a counter-attack. (The shell supply problem was eventually fixed by the "Red Ball Express", trucks that ran rain or shine, 24/7, hauling shells and all kinds of supplies from the Beach to the Front.) Because of the Artillery Shell shortage

our 4.2's often ended up being "Division Artillery", tied into Division Fire Direction Centers where our fire missions were directed by Artillery spotters. That sometimes produced strange results. We were firing for an Artillery spotter one morning and getting odd firing corrections so I asked, "Just for the record, what are we shooting at?" And he said, "There are two "Krauts" out here skinnin' a hog." We were not pleased with his playing games with our ammunition. (By the way, the Germans called the Americans "Amis".)

.Now the standard American artillery piece in World War II was the 105 (millimeter) howitzer. The 4.2 inch mortar (107 mm) fired about the same size round as Division Artillery except that we operated closer to the front as infantry support weapons. However, the 105 Artillery units were happy to use the nearby 4.2" mortars when short on their ammunition. Of course, we couldn't come close to matching them in range. But we were happy to be of service.

The 8ist Chemical Mortar Battalion was an Independent Battalion, that is not an integral part of an Infantry Division. We were actually Army troops, for us – First Army and later Second Army. Now Army would attach Independent Battalions to various Infantry Divisions. The 81st had four Companies. In practice we could end up attached to four different Divisions .The Divisions would then split up the 81st Companies so that a single platoon would be attached to an Infantry Regiment or, as often happened, to an Armored Command. This is how my Second Platoon, attached to the 110th Infantry Regiment of the 28th Division, became part of the August 29th Victory Parade in Paris. We got together as a full Battalion only on rare occasions.

The following are the attachments for the 81st Second Platoon only. (The list would be different for each platoon in the Battalion.) The Divisions are listed in numerical order: Ist Division; 2nd Division; 4th Division; 5th Division (5th Ranger Regiment):10th Armored: 11th Armored; 28th Infantry: 30th Infantry: 71st Infantry, 90th Infantry: 94th Infantry plus various assignments in the XX (Twentieth) Corps which I don't remember. (Also we had repeat attachments with some of the above, in particular the 5th Infantry, the 90th Infantry and the 94th.)

IT'S COLD AND SNOWING OUT THERE

In early December arrangements were made to send us back to the rear in groups to see the Dentists. Our Jeeps' tops were kept down and it was freezing cold but we liked getting away for a time where mortar and artillery rounds weren't dropping in. The Dentists' location had heaters, electricity and lots of records that we could listen to. Sometimes, if our mouths hadn't been messed up, we might even get something good to eat. Then we noticed these boys from the Quartermaster Corps walking around in great looking boots. These were GI shoes that had buckled tops that could hold the bottom of your pants snugly. We were still wearing World War I leggins and thought those boots were real sharp, We asked what they were and how could we get some. The Quartermasters just stared at us "out of touch mortar types," They're combat boots" they said. "We issue them." But apparently not to all the combat troops.

Finally, we were pulled out of Rehlingen and assigned as part of a holding force that was left along the Saar River and the Siegfried Switch Line extending from Merzig west to the Moselle River. Then on December 16th, 1944 the Germans attacked through the Ardennes, just north of us, in what came to be known as the Battle of the Bulge.

Suddenly we switched from the offensive to defensive when troops of all descriptions were pulled out heading for the Battle of the Bulge leaving only a real slim holding force, including us. C Company was sent to Mondorf on December 22 on the Saar River opposite Merzig where we were attached to the 94th Infantry Division. Close cooperation with the few Infantry units in the area was quickly established in case of a counter-offensive in this area. The first night we moved in, a heavy artillery barrage came down on our Company CP (Command Post). Since we thought the barrage was too accurate, we figured it was being observed by civilians in the town. All civilians were evacuated and things settled down. Three days later we had an excellent Christmas Dinner provided by the Mess Sergeant — turkey, dressing, all the fixin's and close to be being warm after its cold Jeep ride from back in Battalion. We had a White Christmas too but there was no way we could be pleased about that.

Our orders were to fire 24/7 across the river. Now, over there was part of the German 11th Panzer Division which outnumbered us heavily. So we hoped they wouldn't get irritated enough to find some boats and come across the river. I was in the Mortar Headquarters Squad so I got to see the G-2 Intelligence reports that came down from Division and the S-3 Intelligence reports from Infantry Battalion. These reports kept detailing how much the Germans outgunned us and kept us edgy. On occasion we'd see our "neighbors", German Tankers, drawing water from the river. Our job, along with the 94th Infantry was to keep the 11h Panzer people so busy that they wouldn't be able to get up to the Battle of the Bulge and hit the Americans in the flank. The only support we could find, anywhere near us, were three light Cavalry Recon Tanks. These American tankers did not inspire confidence since their tanks were turned to the rear and they kept their engines running most of the time. In addition, we were seeing German paratroopers landing behind us nightly. We worried about that because, as far as we knew, there were only a few scattered Infantry formations between us and the Third Army's main dump in Thionville. This is what the Army called "a Calculated Risk".

On January 9, C Company, with the 94th Division, moved to the Siegfried Switch Line in the Saar/Moselle Triangle. We kept moving from town to town, depending on our various attachments within the 94th. The 94th's job, we were told, was to create a diversion, then to take part of the Switch Line in the continuing effort to keep the crack 11th SS Panzer Division (our old adversary), still in the vicinity, from heading north to the Battle of the Bulge. Later, with assistance from the 10th Armored, a breakthrough was made. General Patton ended up very fond of the 10th Armored but we never did warm up to those boys.

One thing you can count on is that the average American unit is able to come up with a variety of skills. Now in C Company we had several West Virginia Bootleggers. They had discovered a working still in our barn, plus a huge wooden barrel of hard cider. They ran the hard cider through the still, over and over, until they came up with a mind-boggling applejack. We had on hand a number of five gallon water cans coated inside with a yellow enamel. When the applejack took the paint off the inside of the water cans, the West Virginians pronounced the

batch "right". They generously offered me a drink but I declined since I knew about their "test". Some of the very few troops left in our area had asked for samples, and then for refills, so news of our "beverage" soon got back" to the Third Army installation at Thionville. They sent up an Engineer Colonel in a Jeep with explosives and orders to blow up our still. Spoil Sports!

After the Normandy breakout we didn't see much of our British Allies. On an earlier occasion we were making a change of gun positions driving on a road that was the dividing line between the British Second Army and the American First Army. This turned out to be chaos. The British were trying to drive on the left, the Americans on the right, which would have been OK if the road (two lanes) was one way, but it wasn't. After several near misses we came to an intersection where a British MP was attempting to direct traffic through. Before we had chaos, we now had the biggest, wildest, traffic jam I ever saw with much cussing and several fist fights. Finally, we got all of the British and American vehicles unwound and went on through.

After we got settled in our new gun position we heard this terrible racket moving up on our left. It was a British regiment coming on line. Now, the Americans had a "No exceptions" rule. All men will wear steel helmets at all times. The British usually wore cloth overseas caps when not in actual combat. We didn't have any overseas caps. So, the Brits arrived with back packs on which they had hung their steel helmets and their tea pots. Those banged together with every step they took. We were afraid the Germans would notice all that noise, but they must have been otherwise engaged. The British were very competent soldiers though. At that stage of the war the Germans said that they were more concerned about British Infantry than American Infantry. About our steel helmets - I saw too many of them lying on the ground with bullet holes through them. Our helmets fitted over a plastic helmet liner. If you lifted it off the liner you had a great wash basin. Of course the British had been at war for two years when we arrived. Eventually we caught up so the Germans became quite concerned about American Infantry Divisions also.

STRANGE THINGS ARE HAPPENING

In the meantime, just after Christmas our Rear Echelon had established a rest camp for the Companies at Fontoi, France. Since things had simmered down in our sector, Chester Sims, the Instrument Corporal for the First Platoon and I were given a couple days leave to go to Fontoi where they had showers and movies but not much else. Now, remember, this is during the Battle of the Bulge. There wasn't much exciting to do in Fontoi, (which our boys pronounced Fontoy) except to get a haircut which I did. Chet and I decided to hitch rides and go into Luxembourg City. We had passes but nobody checked them. With the Battle of the Bulge still raging, Chet and I felt strange about being on leave there in Luxembourg, but you play the cards you're dealt.

Traffic was heavy traffic in town, mostly tanks and other vehicles in camouflage white. They were heading out to the German breakthrough areas in Belgium. We had the usual problem of finding something to eat. The only place we could find open and serving any kind of food was a sort of bistro whose menu consisted of (you won't believe this) apple pie and ice cream. The place was crowded and some careless GI picked up my rifle by mistake giving me a later problem since I now had a rifle with a serial number that didn't belong to me. So much for excitement in Luxembourg.

The Army was rather uptight about equipment and serial numbers. Once when we made a stop on a movement forward, I found a mine detector that some engineer had left beside the road. Probably when unloading and reloading. I thought that would be a handy thing to have so I picked it up and put it in our Weapons Carrier (3/4 ton, Dodge Truck). Somehow the mine detector got listed on the Company's T/E (Table of Equipment) charged out to me. Later the same thing happened to me that happened to the original owner. During a stop on a forward movement we unloaded some equipment and then started reloading when the order came down, "Mount up; Move Out". In the confusion, that order usually caused, my Mine Detector got left by the side of the road. Later one of the officers back in Battalion called and asked to

borrow the Mine Detector. When I couldn't produce it, there was an attempt to charge me with losing a piece of US government property. Since Battalion Headquarters was in the rear and I was way up front they didn't make much of an effort to catch up with me and the matter somehow just died down.

One not so special thing happened as we were leaving Luxembourg. Chet Sims and I were walking down an unpaved (normal) road when a Jeep bore down on us at high speed. We could see the three stars on the front and figured it was General George Patton so we snapped to attention at the side of the road, and saluted. It always seemed to be raining there and his driver veered through a large mud puddle and threw a sheet of muddy water over both of us. Didn't even slow down.

There was a lot to get annoyed about in the army but one thing really bothered us 4.2" mortarmen. Unlike the Mortarmen in Infantry 81mm Heavy Weapons Platoons, who got combat pay, along with their riflemen, we did not get combat pay. That was an additional $10.00 a month, not a lot of money, even back in 1944-45, but it was the principle of the matter and we were pretty hot about it. Then we learned the red tape reason why we didn't get combat pay. You see, the 4.2" mortars were developed by and assigned to the Chemical Warfare Service which was officially designated as a Service of Supply (non combat). The 4.2" mortars had been placed on standby to fire gas shells IF the Germans used any against us. BUT then the upper Brass learned that the 4.2" mortars could fire HE (High Explosive rounds), WP (White Phosphorus rounds) and also fire HS (Smoke) Missions. Mortar troops were then supplied with Jeeps and trailers and given the combat mission of providing close support to infantry regiments. When the Korean War broke out five years later on June 26, 1950, the "Problem" was solved by dropping the word "Chemical" and transferring the 4.2" mortars to Infantry Heavy Mortar Companies. 4.2" mortars were also assigned to the Marines. You can bet they got combat pay.

On the way back to Fontoi we got tired of walking and flagged down a small Renault. In it were a French Sergeant and a French Lieutenant who offered us a ride. Now, we should have known better. (Back in Normandy I once saw two French Flight Lieutenants, in a Jeep, actually run an American tank column off the road. Driving without lights, the Sergeant held to a steady 60 MPH. Whenever we met another vehicle he headed for the ditch. After several wild rides down ditches and over culverts, we lied and told the Lieutenant that our turn was the next intersection. The French sergeant screeched to a stop. We unwound from the tiny back seat, thanked our Allies for the ride and walked back to Fontoi, grateful to be still alive.

We talked a little earlier about there not being a lot of sunshine in the ETO area but the sun did make its appearance occasionally. For that reason we kept our Jeep windshields turned down and encased in a Khaki canvas covers. We also kept the Jeep canvas tops down all the time also. Good reasons for both---in the front lines a flash of sunlight off a windshield could bring a quick response from usually alert German gunners. As for the tops — we didn't want anything in the way of a quick panic exit from the Jeeps those times when we were taking incoming small arms or mortars.

The venerable Piper Cub single engine, two seat civilian aircraft went to war as an Artillery Spotter. While the pilot dodged enemy ground fire, the second man spotted targets for the artillery and radioed back the information. One day my Second Platoon was seated on the ground in a field eating donuts that we had gotten from the girls at one of the Red Cross coffee and donut wagons. At that moment a Spotter Piper Cub appeared over our heads. The pilot cut the engine and yelled down to us, "How about throwing up some of them donuts". Then he had to rev his engine back on and leave. We enjoyed their visit.

This is perhaps as good a place as any to announce that Adolf Hitler was a millionaire. Here's how he worked that. His people set up a program whereby all newly-married German couples would receive a presentation copy of his book , "Mein Kampf", (My Struggle). The royalties are what made him a millionaire.

.WHO HAD THE BEST EQUIPMENT, US OR THEM?

During the war there was a perception by the folks back home that the Americans always had much better arms than the Germans. Not so. We had more of it and could always replace combat equipment losses. But often we had to go against the Germans outgunned. Now our Garand rifle, an 8-shot semi-automatic was, by far, the outstanding infantry rifle of the war, superior to the widely-used German Mauser K-98. One new American rifle was the lightweight 15-round semi-automatic, M-1 carbine. It was short on hitting power but was often issued as a replacement to those troops, formerly authorized to carry pistols.. Once I was issued a carbine for a while . It was made by the Consolidated Laundry Company. The name worried me at first but It worked just fine.

Our heavy machine gun was a 1917 model, reliable but slow. The new German MG-42 heavy machine gun had four times its rate of fire. The Thompson Submachine Gun, developed between 1917 and 1919 was improved during the 20's and 30's, reliable but heavy and slow. The Germans had a Smeisser machine pistol that was light and extremely fast. American Rangers in Europe liked Smeissers and would carry captured Smeissers on patrols. We would hear American and German patrols on night patrols both using Smeissers, a most disconcerting sound. The Smeissers were so fast that Americans generally referred to them as "burp" guns. American Tankers also had a lightweight machine pistol known as a "grease gun" because of its appearance. It was slow compared to the Germans' machine pistols.

We also had the 1918 BAR (Browning Automatic Rifle). Infantry GI's liked its killing power at a distance, but it had only a 20 round magazine. Interestingly enough, the favorite rifle of American snipers was the 1903 Springfield Rifle. (The first Marines to go to the South Pacific were initially armed with 03's, then switched to Garands.)

Our artillery was generally the same sizes as the Germans', except for their huge railway gun and their all-around 88mm. The 88 was a fearsome artillery gun, an anti-aircraft gun, an anti-

tank gun. The German tanks were superior to the medium, American Sherman tanks for two main reasons. One - they were more heavily armored and could withstand a direct hit from a Sherman - Two – German tanks could pick off Shermans out of the Sherman's range. The high profile Shermans were more reliable and could be easily repaired but our tankers called Shermans "Ronsons" because they flashed up like the cigarette lighters when 88's hit them. In early 1945 some Shermans were equipped with high velocity 75's and then were replaced by the more effective, better armored, lower profile, M-26 tanks carrying 90mm. high velocity guns. But by then the outcome of the war had been determined. German tanks, however were gas hogs and often had mechanical problems. Allied bombers had also destroyed much of Germany's fuel production facilities. So, many German units depended on horses to pull artillery pieces and supply wagons. Horses helped keep Germany in the war. Like in America's Civil War, providing forage for the horses was a continuing problem.

(Just for the record, the Germans' heavy mortar, at 120mm, was bigger than our 4.2" inch mortar, which measured out at about 107mm, but ours had a rifled barrel and was more accurate than any wartime mortar.)

The German Me-109 was an excellent fighter plane but the Luftwaffe, with its superb pilots, was eventually swept from the skies by the Hurricanes, Spitfires, Mustangs and Thunderbolts). These fighter-bombers, were the scourge of German columns, particularly deadly to transport and armored vehicles. The Germans called them "Jabos" and just the name could generate fear.

A constant complaint of the German soldier was "Where is our Luftwaffe?" However the Germans were continuing to work on their long range bomber. In late 1942 their four-engine Me-264 took its first flight. It was called the "Amerika Bomber and could carry 2 tons of bombs on a roundtrip Europe to New York. But the Germans had many distractions, the war in Russia particularly. Finally, in 1944 the Germans decided to go ahead with a campaign against North America. Now they had sent a six-engine Ju-290 to New York City and came back with photos

of likely targets to prove the flight but the Ju-290 was a transport, not a bomber. Instead the Germans converted their Me-264 to a bomber jet, which flew at 500 MPH, faster than any Allied fighter. However the British had intercepted secret German messages about the Me-264 and told the Americans who promptly sent swarms of bombers to gut the Me-264 plant. But there were a number of Me-264's still flying as the war ended. It was, of course, an example of too little, too late. We saw the German jets occasionally flashing by over the treetops, so fast that we never got a real good look at them. But we noticed how fast they were and the unusual noise they made.

American and British Bombing Chiefs were positive that their 1,000 Bomber raids would "bomb the Germans back into the Stone Age" but as a people, the Germans did not break. We weren't always "the good guys". Probably the most controversial Allied air raid of the war was the fire bombing of Dresden, a defenseless, cultural center of no military importance. The resulting fire storms wiped out the entire historic center city causing thousands of casualties.

On the eve of the D-day landings the OSS (Office of Strategic Services – American) and SOE (Special Operations Executive - British) stepped up their infiltration of agents into occupied Europe. One French agent parachuted into Brittany shortly before the invasion in order the help the Resistance. He came down at night in a field and began to dig a hole in which to bury his parachute (standard procedure). A figure approached so he gave the indicated call sign and received the proper counter-sign. He resumed burying his parachute when suddenly an attractive young woman knelt beside him and began digging up the parachute.. So he said. "What are you doing? My orders are to bury parachutes." Without looking up the woman replied. "Who cares. I haven't seen silk this good since before the war".

DIFFERENT THINGS

There was one procedure that we were involved in occasionally. That was TOT (Time on Target). Actually, this was something that was first developed during World War I. It was complicated to set up, so we didn't do it very often. The main reason was the extensive phone hookup required, all tied into a specific Artillery Fire Direction Center with all units being briefed on what was to happen. (No, we didn't have the capability of doing that by radio.) TOT's purpose was to have all nearby artillery/mortars impact on the same target at the same time.

Here's how it worked. Since there would be many different sizes of guns located at varying distances from the target, every gun commander had to compute his flight time to the target. This would start with the 8" and 240 mm cannons in the rear, then the 155's, next the 105's, then the 75mm cannons. Also included were the 4.2" mortars and the 81mm mortars. We would listen to the countdown on our phone. When it came to our flight time for the 4.2's in the countdown, our gun commander would yell "Fire". If everyone figured correctly, the entire volley from all those guns would hit simultaneously, creating surprise and significant damage.

On another occasion the Infantry Regiment we were supporting asked for our help in eliminating a fortified farm house full of feisty Germans, holding up their advance. I looked up the coordinates and we then fired just one round to check the distance. That one round went down the chimney and exploded inside the house causing the surviving Germans to decamp in a hurry. The Infantry was flabbergasted at that great shot. But then so were we.

The Germans called the 4.2 High Explosive round, "The Grass Cutter" since it exploded just a few inches above the ground. Speaking of names — sometime after the war was over I read that 4.2 Mortarmen were called "Four Deucers" (a cutesy name), probably invented by some reporter). In the 81st, we didn't use that term. If anyone asked, who or what we were, we said, "Mortarmen."

We were still contending with an ailment that had a World War I name, Trench Foot. This was caused by wet feet, resulting from having boots that weren't waterproof. Trench Foot was a painful infection of the foot, so painful that, eventually, you could not walk and would have to be evacuated to a hospital. The Army, though, had "good" advice. Keep checking your feet and try to keep them dry. This is tough when you have only one pair of leaky boots. The other advice had to do with putting on dry socks. Who had an extra pair of dry socks? I checked my feet every day, stayed as wet as everyone else but I never got even the slightest hint of Trench Foot. (Later we were issued rubberized shoe pacs that helped immensely, but before that happened, we were having big problems.)

(The main reason for the large number of Trench Foot cases was that the winter of 1944-1945 was one of the wettest on record in Europe.) We were constantly slip-sliding though almost liquid mud. Then when we relocated our position and dug new foxholes it wasn't unusual for them to start filling up with icy water before we were even finished digging.

On a day when the rain had stopped briefly, I was talking to our Forward Observer from our gun position and he said, "The Krauts are running around in every direction out here and I can't tell what they're trying to do. At that point a heavy German voice cut in on the line. He said, "Vait und you vill zee." OK so we had a German between our gun position and our Forward Observer listening to our conversations. Since he had given himself away, it wouldn't make sense for him to try to set up an ambush but we still needed to be more than a little careful when we sent out a party to see where he had cut into our line.

In most American outfits a boy from Texas was usually known as "Tex". We had a Communications man named Edwin Tyrsklewitz, He was from Brooklyn, New York. Our boys from Mississippi couldn't handle "Tyrsklewitz". So they called him "Tex", You can imagine the looks on the faces of visitors to the gun site when they heard our "Tex" talking with an unmistakable Brooklyn accent.

IT'S NOW MORE OF THE SAME

We liked the Combat Engineers. They had one of the toughest jobs in the army and were also thrown in as Infantry when needed. I was mushing down a muddy road one day when I came across an Engineer with a shovel moving dirt so a flow of water could be directed off the road such as it was. He paused to talk, ruefully describing his job as "Shovel Operator, D-handle".

All too often, as noted above, the Germans, who must have been as miserable as we were, picked those times to throw mortar shells at us, giving us a choice of chancing it above ground or the safer choice of jumping into the Foxholes filling with water. (We, of course, had to choose the cold water where we cussed the Germans and thought about hot baths at home.

Next, January 22nd, C Company was re-attached to the 94th Infantry Division's 302nd Regiment which was holding a narrow bridgehead along the east bank of the Moselle River. This was opposite the Company's position in Klienmacher, Luxembourg. Operations against the Triangle were costly and slow and ended up being mostly a holding action until sufficient new forces could be brought up. Until January 26, the Platoons helped the Infantry beat off several counter-attacks. German shelling of our mortar positions was generally heavy. But the mortars continued to provide screening support and HE (High Explosive} was fired intermittently all during these operations including emergency missions against counter-attacks that were supported by those impressive German tanks. (The troop movements/actions I'm reporting may seem DULL, but this is what we did. "Hurry Up and Wait" was also SOP (Standard Operating Procedure).

Quite often Infantry leaders came by to offer their thanks for 4.2" mortar support. In C Company's sector on February 10th the 10th Armored and the 94th Infantry Division broke the line from the Moselle to Oberdreiken, the latter being taken by the 5th Rangers. By the 20th the Armor had rapidly driven to Saarburg and the northern tip of the Triangle. February 22 found C Company in Dittlingen and Kastel. While on reconnaissance to Saarburg a C

Company party captured sixty-nine prisoners. With the First Platoon on the left and the Second on the right, the advance continued to the Saar River. Our First Platoon, now attached to the Armor, supported a Saar River crossing near Ockfen.

My Second Platoon, meanwhile, coordinated with the 87th Smoke Generator Company to fire a smoke screen south of Saarburg, near Hamm. On February 26th Second Platoon crossed the Saar River and advanced to the east, stopping near the town of Zerf on March 1st where exceptionally heavy resistance was encountered. The First Platoon took a ferry across the river on the way to Trier. My Second Platoon was still in Zerf firing, in support of the 5th Rangers, using the Germans' excellent maps of the entire Trier area. This action was regarded by the 5th Rangers as the most difficult in their storied history.

Our Armor had swung abruptly to the north on the main highway, so the Germans, from good defensive positions, were counter-attacking with SS troops, supported by mortars, rockets and artillery. At one time, the SS troopers had gotten behind us and cut our main supply route, which was hairy for a while until we fought them off.

We had one, single-burner, Coleman stove per squad. We could fry eggs in a mess kit but, since we didn't have dishes handy, the cooked egg was often slid off into a hand that hadn't been washed in a week or more. But we never got sick from that. Usually, though, we would hear "Move Out" before we had a chance to enjoy much of our "cooking." At times, we would be plucking a chicken when "Move Out" came. In the rush, we often didn't get all the pin feathers. Still, we filled up a pot with water and it was the job of the soldier in the front right seat of the Jeep to prop up the Coleman burner and balance the pot on top while driving over some rough or non-existent roads. Sometime along the way, the "boiled chicken" was pronounced DONE, even if it wasn't. For years after the war I was unable to eat chicken because I kept tasting pin feathers that weren't there.

American outfits had all kinds of trades represented, including butchers. On several occasions when we were in a remote area and a cow wandered by, we had steaks for some time, particularly during the winter when it was real cold and the meat didn't spoil. On the official record we reported that a cow had been killed by shellfire in front of the guns.

The 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion had been assigned to XX (20th) Corps of the Third Army which attacked southeast from Trier and made a breakthrough as far as Kaiserlautern. XX Corps made contact with the Armor attacking from the Moselle and thus trapped the fragments of four German divisions. Our 81st C Company was attached and re-attached to several different divisions, whose names I don't recall, and played an important part in this XX Corps operation. It began with the establishment of a bridgehead east of the Saar River near the town of Saarburg. Although close to the Rhine, C Company never did reach it on this drive. On March 24 orders came from our Battalion Headquarters to head for an assembly area near St. Wendel, Germany. This gave us an opportunity to catch up on news with the other Mortar Companies, get a little rest and re-supply. But not for long. The next big obstacle was the Rhine River. Every unit wanted to get across the Rhine.

A personal note – as will be reported later, my C Company crossed the Rhine at Mainz. Now some twelve years after the war I was in Germany on business in the Mainz-Bingen District. When I had some free time I went from Mainz to Bingen am Rhein and boarded the day tour boat which stopped at various points of interest on the Rhine, such as castles and the Mouse Tower in which, allegedly, Hatto, the Bishop of Mainz, was eaten by mice. It was a hot day when I boarded the ship so I checked to see what they had to drink. It seemed that all they had was lemonade. Now I forgot that their lemonade was made using local water. Big mistake! I was not leaving for home, Charlotte, until four days later and during that four days I had the worst case of continuous nausea in my life. A "helpful' German Innkeeper recommended the local beer as a remedy but that didn't work. Otherwise, a great boat trip.

THE RHINE, A LONG TIME GETTING THERE

Enemy resistance west of the Rhine had been utterly destroyed and the entire 81st now prepared for the forthcoming Rhine crossings and the swift campaign to finish off the remnants of the German army, still in retreat east of the Rhine. Then came an unimagined lucky break. The 9th Armored Division came upon the Remagen/Ludendorff Bridge where German engineers were placing explosives to blow it up and captured it almost intact when 9th Armored engineers were able to defuse a number of the German explosives. German captives told the 9th Armored that the bridge was scheduled to be blown at 4:00 PM. The 9th Armored got there at 3:I5 PM.

The 9th Armored Division was in First Army's area and by March 25 their bridgehead over the Rhine had been expanded to some 25 miles. But it took time to do this. (Adolf Hitler was so enraged at the failure to blow the Ludendorff Bridge that he issued orders to execute all five Junior officers who were in charge of the Bridge operations. Four were executed, the fifth, a Captain and the lead officer, was lucky. He had been captured by the Americans. Adolf was also unaware of how fast the American Engineers could build bridges.

(Before the war there had been 22 road bridges and 25 railroad bridges over the Rhine The Germans managed to destroy all of them except for <u>one</u>, the Ludendorff Railroad Bridge at Remagen.) And the Americans needed only that one.

After the First Army had secured its bridgehead over the Rhine River, the Germans expected Patton to also cross the Rhine and start rolling from this point. Instead, Third Army made a quick thrust and captured the junction of the Moselle and the Rhine Rivers. Third Army then continued south into the rear of the German forces facing the American Seventh Army which much earlier, August 1944, had landed in southern France.

Third Army's 5th Division's 150th Combat Engineers had built a pontoon bridge across the Rhine at Mainz on March 23. C Company broke off our brief stay at St. Wendel and hit the road again headed for Mainz. Our 81st's B Company was our first over the Rhine followed a few hours later by C Company. It took us a while to get upriver to Mainz, our Rhine crossing area, so it was dark when we got there. As we were driving over the bridge, the 150th Combat Engineers , warned us to keep a sharp lookout. The Germans, they said, were floating mines down the river in an attempt to wreck the bridge. We stared into the water all the way across but didn't see any mines. On the other side we came to the first, great road we'd seen in Europe, Germany's four lane Autobahn. We drove on it all night passing through the city of Frankfurt on our way, occasionally getting up to 55 MPH for the first time.

After crossing the Rhine we found ourselves heading northeast attached to the fast moving 11th Armored Division (History Note ---we later learned that some sixty bridges had eventually been built across the Rhine by First and Third Army Engineers (No opposing army since Napoleon in 1805 had managed to cross the Rhine and invade Germany. Not just the Americans but now the British, the Canadians, the French, the Poles, all the Allies had also crossed the Rhine.) As we travelled along with the 11th Armored we came to a town where we noticed Germans in uniform looking at us from the second floors of some of the buildings.

I was ordered to check out the building on our left. The first floor was OK. On the second floor I came to a door that was locked so I kicked it open and standing there was this dusty, dark figure pointing a rifle at me. Reaction — I jumped to my right before firing my rifle. I quickly discovered that I had been standing in front of a full length mirror. That dark figure was me, much covered with dust from those mostly unpaved roads in rural Germany. At least I didn't have to undergo the kidding that would have resulted if I had shot my image in a mirror.

This is sort of an old and a new story. I had told the Army Reserve, on enlisting, (back in 1942) that my name was "J. William Quinn" but they didn't buy into that. The Army believed that all soldiers should have a first name, a middle initial and a last name. I became John W. Quinn. I once served under Lt. General J. Lawton Collins when we were attached to his VII

Corps in Normandy. The key word here is General. Now, if my name had been just John Quinn — no middle name, the Army had a fix. I would have been listed as John NMI Quinn (NMI for No Middle Initial). A boy in our Second Platoon from New Mexico was named A.T. Worley. No name, just initials. The Army listed him as A.T. IO Worley. The "IO" stood for "Initials Only". I asked him once if that gave him any problems. He said that, often, other soldiers would ask suspiciously what A.T. stood for. A.T. said they were expecting something weird.. Explaining that his parents, "Bless their hearts", named him A.T. only, was such a big hassle, he often white-lied and told them that "AT" stood for "Andrew Thomas" and they all said "Oh, OK" but went on calling him A.T. Later I got word from C Company that AT had been killed. It was the day after VE Day and C Company was on its way to a Engineer Shower installation. One truck overturned and AT was killed. He was a fine soldier, a good friend. He was missed.

Whenever C Company moved to a new gun location there was a chance that we might get a house to stay in. We always sent three men in a Jeep mounting a .50 caliber machine gun. The two men in front were to look for a good gun location, hopefully with a house. The job of the Gunner in back, was actually "Chicken and Egg Man" His job was to locate chickens that might be penned up, and to find eggs, often stored in buckets of brine. Sometimes there was a smokehouse with hams, always appreciated by C Company.. We didn't forage like this in France but Germany was another matter. We were always tired of K rations and if we didn't get the stuff some other hungry GI's would.

Getting a house, though, was often a con game. In many combat units officers would try to avoid standing out by pinning their bars or oak leaves under their collars. So our people were equipped with officers' rank (provided by our own officers). I got conned out of a nice house one time by a competing group. I lifted my collar to show captain's bars but one of the other soldiers showed a major's oak leaf. Since he outranked me, he got the house we wanted. I met him a couple of days later and he was a Sergeant. OK, so this was impersonating an officer, a serious offense. No complaints though from anybody.

WE FIND EGG NOG BUT GO TO A TERRIBLE PLACE

Occasionally a German plane would fly over and bomb or strafe our moving column. While we didn't see many Luftwaffe planes, we were a little wary of American fighter planes though. We were across the Rhine one time in a column of Jeeps and trucks traveling down a road, being very obvious, when a myopic, P-47 pilot kept strafing us. This was so called "friendly fire". Finally, some kid on a laundry truck, equipped with a .30 caliber machine gun, shot him down but the pilot managed a safe crash landing in an adjacent field. Some of the boys were getting up a posse to go over there and beat some sense into him but cooler officer heads prevailed since he hadn't been able to hit any of us.

Back to 1945, April Fools Day. Starting around April 1, 1945 prisoners were being taken constantly as bypassed Germans were everywhere trying to surrender to the Americans, rather than to the Russians who were looking for revenge. On April 5th, Second Platoon pulled into Eschwege, a large town, southeast of Kassel, where we guarded a hospital and large warehouses filled with military equipment. There was also a number of German convalescents wandering around in Eschwege but we picked them up and gave them a Jeep ride to their Hospital since we really didn't want to have any uniformed Germans, regardless of physical condition, out there behind our backs. When we checked out the warehouses we found that one of them had a huge supply of bottled egg nog. We decided to "liberate" some.

Being German it had a real jolt to it but was also rather sticky sweet so it wasn't something you could gulp down. You had to sip it. But, as things turned out we didn't end up with much of it to sip. Before leaving Eshwege we had loaded up our Jeeps with as many bottles as we could find a place to stash them. Unfortunately we ran into a problem just outside of town. Retreating Germans had blown the highway bridge over a river but left the railroad bridge intact. Driving across on the tracks we were bumping along over the railroad ties and the rough ride broke most of our glass egg nog bottles, creating a big, fat mess in the Jeeps. Bummer.

Toward the end of April we were attached to the 71st Infantry Division mounted on 6X6 trucks. We, in our Jeeps and trailers, and the Infantry in their trucks, were heading southeast when we came to a crossroads in a fairly large, German town. MPs were directing traffic because an Armored Division was also going through that town, at the same time. MP's alternated the Armor with us since the Armor was heading northwest. A large crowd of German civilians was out on the street watching in amazement and dismay at this exhibition of American military might. They had lost and now knew why.

On our way east, C Company stopped at Apolda, near just-liberated Buchenwald, Germany's second most infamous Concentration Camp. We were diverted to Buchenwald. Seeing the gas chambers, stacks of starved, naked bodies outside and the emaciated ghosts in their striped uniforms shuffling aimlessly, holding out their hands to us for cigarettes and chocolate. We were told not to give them chocolate or any of our GI Rations since this rich food could kill them. It was difficult for us there and we had been exposed to a lot of really, rough situations before coming from Normandy to this terrible place. Auschwitz was supposed to be worse than Buchenwald but we'd have trouble trying to imagine any place worse than Buchenwald).

One group of GI's picked up the Burgomeister (Mayor) of the nearest town and gave him a guided tour of Buchenwald and then took him home where he shot himself. All the residents of that town got tours also. They said "Nicht Nazi". Others were Nazis, not them. We didn't believe them.

German scientists were still hard at work trying to produce an Atomic Bomb but were too far behind the US. However, many of Germany's top scientists could see the handwriting on the wall and were making plans to be captured by the Americans, rather than by the Russians. Adolf Hitler, in the meantime, was still trying to raise German spirits, even as Berlin was going up in flames, claiming that Germany had secret weapons that could still win the war. He died (mourned only by committed Nazis) a suicide in the Fuhrerbunker, Berlin on April 30, 1945

After leaving Buchenwald we were told that we were part of a large force that would be leaving to take the important German city of Leipzig Then came word that the Allies had decided to allow the Russians to take Leipzig. Bad decision. We were then ordered to head for Austria. This required reversing course back around Czechoslovakia and then southeast past Regensburg, toward the Danube River. Near Passau on the German border, on May 3, C Company found a hydro-electric dam which served us as a bridge for a night crossing over the Danube River into Austria. (By the way, the Danube wasn't blue but a muddy brown.)

Then, on May 4, 1945, we were attached to a new task force consisting of three, light, recon tanks, several 6X6 trucks loaded with infantry, a 3" anti-tank gun and my Second Platoon Mortars. Such groups usually had a temporary name, such as "Team Murphy". If we had a name I never learned it. We fired a few rounds at some retreating Germans but got a cease-fire when we were advised that we might be destroying a bridge we needed. That turned out to be my last action as the Second Platoon's Instrument Corporal.

About this time we started seeing kids as young as 14 in German Air Force uniforms, along with their grandfathers, (an indication of the desperate measures being taken by the Nazis in the waning days of the war). If any of the kids and their granddads had weapons, we took those away from them and told them to go home. There was no way we were going to send them into a POW camp.

At this time there was all sorts of political maneuvering in process to officially end the war and accept the surrender of Germany. This included lengthy preparation of what was called "The German Document of Surrender", the legal instrument that established the armistice ending World War II in Europe. We. the 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion, didn't know about this and went on with the war, which for us involved continuing with the task force deeper into Austria.

AUSTRIA, USUALLY A GREAT PLACE TO VISIT

It was now May 5 and we were still heading southeast, rolling unopposed on paved two-lane roads through Austria when we came to a hill. In the distance, for the first time, we could see the snow-covered Austrian Alps. There was a rumor that a huge number of Germans would be retreating to a redoubt in those mountains where they would hold out to the last man. NOT SO. Below us we could see a small town, Linz. So we headed downhill. It was 3:00 PM. The sun was shining. It was cool, but a beautiful day in Austria. I was enjoying the scenery, except for those mountains in the distance.]

I was riding in the rear seat of our lead Jeep when a rifle round came in through the dashboard, between the seats, spattering chunks of shrapnel with it.] considerable injuries]. I thought, so I have a gunshot wound, I should get over that quickly.) Now, I knew I had a compound fracture of my lower right leg (tibia), But eight months in a cast disguised my loss of lower right leg muscle, a permanent 1 1/2" gap in my fibula (small leg bone), circulation, tendon and nerve damage, a permanently stiff right foot and ankle. The shrapnel wounds in my right thigh and right arm though, were healing. (All that from one round fired by a military rifle.)

My Platoon Medic bandaged and splinted my leg, (the obvious wound) and gave me a shot of Morphine. The boys gathered around and stuck a lighted cigarette in my mouth. They really didn't know what else to do. I have to admit that when your leg is hurting the way mine was, the last thing in the world you want right then is a cigarette but I smoked it down for them.

Luckily, a Jeep ambulance was travelling with us. This was a Jeep with an angle iron rack fitted to it over the heads of the driver and passengers. It held two litters. I was strapped onto one of the litters; the litter was strapped to the Jeep's overhead rack and off we went, northwest, toward Germany, the Jeep Medics looking for an Aid Station, any Aid Station. Meanwhile, back at the 81st, a new Instrument Corporal had been appointed, the fourth for the Second Platoon, and then the task force headed down the hill to Linz.

The Jeep kept moving and I'm thinking that we must have been way out in front of any American forces because it was dark, after 10:00 PM, when the Medics found someone's Aid Station and my litter was carried inside. I kept passing out but I did ask the Medics at the Aid Station to check my arm since I thought there might be something wrong there. They did and put a bandage on it. They didn't find the thigh wound which I was lying on. The other two places hurt so much I didn't know I had it. The Aid Station had an ambulance, and three other casualties, so all four us were loaded into the ambulance and we headed out still north. I remember only fragments of the ride. About midnight I woke up when the ambulance pulled off the road and stopped. The driver said, "Guys, I hate to tell this but we're in the middle of a German Column." I'm thinking the war is about over and now I'm captured by the Germans.

Then the driver said, "Hey, they're coming in to surrender." So we got back on the road travelling with the Germans until we came to a fork in the road. (By then Germans everywhere were trying to surrender to the Americans rather than to the Russians whom they rightly assumed would looking forward to getting even with the hated Germans. The German column turned left. We turned right and that road, the driver said, would lead to a Hospital near Regensburg, Germany, Travel was slow because, no lights at night was still the rule. At least it wasn't raining. (Some time later I learned that a cease fire had been arranged where I was hit, outside Linz, the cease fire took effect at 6:00 PM. Three hours too late for me.)

We had left the Linz area around 3:15 PM and finally arrived at Regensburg Evacuation Hospital, the next morning, about 6:00 AM, (My guess since I couldn't reach my watch.) A major reason for our long travel time, in addition to driving in the dark, was distance. As the crow flies, and we certainly weren't moving in a straight line, Linz turned out to be more than 96 miles from Regensburg, my closest hospital. Regensburg, a tent hospital on an air strip, was similar to the Korean War MASH, in the Television series but without helicopters.

Digression! A continuing problem with being an independent battalion, was that we were attached and re-attached to relieving Infantry regiments, but none of those outfits claimed us for uniform issues. Therefore, we wore what we could pick up various places. When I was

carried off to the hospital I was wearing Tanker's coveralls. Under that I had on an Army field Jacket, under that a Wehrmacht (German) fur jacket and under that a regular GI wool uniform with Luftwaffe (German) gloves. I had on blue RAF socks and left in the Second Platoon's Weapons Carrier was my British poncho. The past winter I had a GI overcoat briefly but lost it. We also had wool caps, worn under our helmets, and some of us had GI sweaters. It was cold up in those Austrian Alps.

At the busy Regensburg Evacuation Hospital I was checked by the Triage people and the decision was apparently made that I was one who could wait for surgery. So, I and a number of other soldiers, (that I could see), lay on those litters in the field there until dark. I think they must have given me something because I don't remember anything about that stay in the field. When I finally got to an operating room they stripped off my uniform and that's when they found the wound on the back of my right thigh. I had on me a souvenir German Iron Cross which I gave to the surgeon who treated me. He seemed pleased to have it. I have no idea of how long I was in surgery. However, based on the large number of repairs they had to make, it must have been a long time.

I woke up in a tent ward about 3:00 AM (I still had my watch.) needing to go to the bathroom. The lights in the ward were on dim but off in a corner I could see a sign that read "Latrine". So far so good. I was covered with a GI blanket and threw that off, discovering that all I had on was a damp, full cast on my right leg and a bandage on my right arm but I figured, what the hell, since I don't see anybody, I'll just hop over there on one leg. Bad decision. I got up, took one hop, and fell flat on my back on the grass "floor". This didn't make much noise but two Nurses came running. They put me back in the bed with orders to stay there. It was close to a month before I could get out of a bed, or off a litter, by myself, and that was just to get into a wheel chair.

VE DAY AND HEADING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

It was now May 7th, the day when the Germans signed the surrender papers. The following day, May 8th, was designated as VE Day, (Victory in Europe) the official end to the war in Europe. Now the Surrender Document was signed by representatives of the Oberkommando der Wehrmact (OKW) and the Allied Expeditionary Force on May 7 and then on May 8 it was signed by French and Soviet representatives, as witnesses, and by the head of OKW and then by representatives of British, American and Soviet High Commands. The Soviets had to be different. In post-Soviet states, the Victory Day is celebrated on May 9. In Germany, it is known as the Day of Capitulation (Tag de Kapitulation).

The above are the official dates for the end of the war. However, some hold-out German units continued the war on their own. I was in one Army hospital with some boys from the 82th Airborne Division who were playing baseball when a stubborn German group opened up on them from a hillside with an 88mm artillery piece, on May 9. (There were other instances as well.) The Regensburg Evacuation Hospital wasn't all that safe either. Patients going through often gave the Medics souvenir German pistols. Medics were firing them off to celebrate the end of the war and shot a patient in bed — in my ward. He was one annoyed soldier.

I think I stayed two more days at the Regensburg Evacuation Hospital and then was loaded into a C-47 (twin-engine) hospital plane fitted out with racks for litters, with Flight Nurses in attendance. We were flown to Paris, transferred to ambulances and went to the American Hospital of Paris, a pre-war, permanent hospital. It was there that I was able to send a V-mail to my Mother to let her know that I was alright. V-mail was an early FAX system that was much, much, faster than regular mail all the way. You had to use a special V-mail form, though, and be brief. On FAX reception in the States, V-mails were then put into the US mails. By the way, all GI mail was still being censored by officers who hated that duty.

After a two day stay in the Paris hospital my group was loaded back into Ambulances. We went to Orly, the Paris Airport where we transferred to a different C-47 which landed at a military airport in southern England. A Hospital train carried us up to the American 12th Hospital Center in the British Midlands. We arrived on May 14 or 15. The food there wasn't bad if you liked desiccated (dried) - the boys called them desecrated - eggs and vegetables. There, I was able to get out in a wheelchair occasionally in the rare British sunshine.

I thought it would be on the cool side there in the Midlands during July and it was. I remember, though, seeing a small British newspaper (pages were limited during the war years because of newsprint shortages). The headline was HEAT WAVE EXPECTED. TEMPERATURE TO HIT 75 DEGREES.. To the British wearing tweeds, I guess that was hot.

The British were still operating on double daylight saving time so it stayed light well into the evening. However, at the 12th Hospital Center they came around at 9:00 PM when the sun could be shining brightly, pulled the shades, dimmed the lights, told us Good Night, get some rest. You can image how a ward full of men, bed patients or not, reacted to that.

We received a lot of British visitors, One was British Nurse Aylward, who was particularly attentive. It was tough for me then to be good company because my leg hurt all the time and so much and the Army wasn't all that quick with pain killers. That was when I received my Purple Heart. A young GI, pushing a wheeled cart full of Purple Heart boxes, came by on May 25, 1945. He threw one up on my bed where I was lying there with my right leg, in a cast, suspended from an overhead rack .That was my Purple Heart presentation ceremony. Most of us had incredibly, annoying itches under our casts. To solve that we bent clothes hangers to make under-the-cast scratchers, a procedure discouraged by the medical staff since often there were open wounds under those casts.

Sometime in mid-July "They" announced that I was ready to move out. Back into a hospital train to Glasgow in Scotland, a transfer to an ambulance and a 30 mile ride to the Prestwick Air

Base Station Hospital where we were to wait for an available, four-engine, hospital plane and good weather for a flight back to the United States. I don't know who the "Theys" were but They didn't want to do anything about the drainage in my cast there, even though I was beginning to smell pretty bad. One of the Nurses came by and said that her boyfriend had sent her a big bottle of perfume, that she hated, but, maybe, if she poured some of her cheap perfume on my draining cast, it could reduce the odor or change it and make me a more acceptable traveling companion. She was right about one thing, adding the perfume did make a change. The combination of the drainage odor and that awful, cheap perfume made it smell twice as bad. That's when Medics and Nurses passing by would wrinkle up their noses and ask where that terrible smell was coming from. My Nurse didn't say anything.

Finally, we were told that conditions were right for us to take off so we were loaded aboard our four-engine, C-54 transport equipped, as usual, with floor-to-ceiling litter racks where nobody wanted to be close to me. It was July 14, 1945. After a relatively short flight we set down in Iceland. Some people came by with a case of cold milk. Most of us hadn't tasted anything like that in months, so we were drinking it down until one of the Nurses came by and said, "Boys, don't drink that milk, it's sour". I guess we had forgotten what it was supposed to taste like.

The plane was refueled, and we took off. After several hours of flying, the Nurses came by again. This time they told us that the Receiving Facilities for Casualties in Boston were swamped and we would be unable to land there until the jam had been cleared. In the meantime we were going to land in Presque Isle, Maine. That was also bad news for other patients on the plane who were supposed to go on to Temple, Texas.

FINALLY, I'M BACK ON U.S. SOIL

We unloaded at the small air base in Presque Isle and were checked into the station hospital where the local people, thrilled at the idea of having wounded from Europe in their town, came out to visit us. (Presque Isle is in Northern Maine some 8 miles from the New Brunswick, Canada border.) Since we were in the States it was possible for all of us to call home. I called my Mother, who had transferred from the Army's Ordnance Department to the Air Force and was now the Assistant Finance Officer of what was later to become the Strategic Air Command in Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts. I also called my Aunt Sadie, who was superintendent of the Wing Memorial Hospital in Palmer, Mass. and told them both that I was OK (sort of) and that we would soon be flying out to Boston and then on to Ft. Devens' Lovell General Hospital.

After a couple of days in Presque Isle, we were cleared for the short flight to Boston. Those of us who were to stay in the area were loaded into ambulances for a trip to Lovell General Hospital about 30 miles northwest of Boston in Ayer, Massachusetts, my "home" for the next ten months in one of the Orthopedic Wards. There were, of course, a few weekend passes and furloughs to Springfield, 90+ miles away where my Mother, brothers, Jim and Phil, and their collie dog, Timmy, lived. Jim had served as an Air Force Armorer in Italy, later as an Infantry officer in Korea and then in Base Security back in the States as a Military Police Captain. Phil served afterward as an Infantry Lieutenant.

A week later we got word that American B-29 bombers had dropped Atomic Bombs on Japan, Hiroshima on August 6th and Nagasaki on August 9th and that Japanese officials, in shock had accepted the Allies terms of surrender on August 14t. This was over the protests of Japan's powerful Samurai who espoused the Bushido warrior code and who wanted to fight on.

Next, but not until September 2, 1945 came the announcement that the formal Japanese surrender had taken place on board the American Battleship, Missouri, in Tokyo Bay. After six

years, plus one day, World War II, which began on September 1,1939, became not-to-be-forgotten history and the Cold War had its beginnings.

Every patient on that Orthopedic ward at Lovell General had some sort of problem with arms or legs. Some were in butterfly casts on their arms. Others, like me, had full leg casts for injuries to the lower leg; still others, who had injuries to the thigh were in full body casts which were most uncomfortable and limited movement. Those of us with lower leg injuries passed part of the time with wheelchair races which, of course, were frowned on by the medical staff.

It took me about six months more to get rid of my cast since my leg refused to heal up and continued to bend in the middle every time the cast was changed. However, to keep me alert and on my toes, a couple of really strange events happened shortly after my arrival at Lovell General Hospital. First, a delegation arrived at my bedside and announced that they were going to cut off my smelly cast, check the leg and then replace the cast. OK. The team included a physician, a technician with a cast saw and a British Nurse who was in the American Army.

I had always figured the British to be a people with stiff upper lips. Anyway, when the technician cut the cast off, the British Nurse bent over to look at my leg and immediately burst into tears. I want to tell you that I came sitting up fast, real fast, to see what she was looking at. Now it didn't look good to me, but then I didn't really know what I was looking at. They then put a new cast on my RIGHT leg after noting that it was still bending between the ankle and the knee, due to Osteomyelitis, they said. About a week later, another, similar delegation arrived at the foot of my bed and informed me that they had come to arrange for the upcoming amputation of my LEFT leg. Oops, wrong bed, wrong soldier. Sorry about that!

FUN AND GAMES ON THE ORTHOPEDIC WARD

There were some excellent Nurses in the Army Nurse Corps and there were also some that seemed to be there for decoration or games. We had one Nurse on our Ward whom the boys were certainly fond of. She was exceptionally pretty but was basically there for entertainment like playing cards with the boys but that was about all. Her name was Bobbi. Then, there was Nancy. She was a black Nurse, so obviously competent that she was the only one most of the boys would allow to treat them. That included the few boys from the Deep South. I remember Nancy also because of her last name. It was "Leftenant". She was Lieutenant Leftenant and once paid me a surprise visit some years later when we were living in Florence, SC. That time she was Major Leftenant.)

We had a German POW (Prisoner of War) on our ward named Gunther. He was in charge of floor maintenance. Like most Germans, Gunther was thorough, very thorough. Remember, this was an Orthopedic ward and the patients were on canes and crutches or in wheelchairs. Gunther delighted in his electric buffer and kept those floors as slick as a sheet of glass. Somehow, Gunther's efforts escaped the notice of the regular maintenance people so we had to walk very tentatively in there, slipping and sliding, trying to stay on our feet.

Then there were the Lovell General Hospital Ward Boys that I had to contend with. These were boys lately drafted into the Medics and most of what they learned was on the job. Because of my chronic leg infection, I was on Penicillin which was still quite new back in 1945. Apparently the Medical staff figured that if a little Penicillin was good, a lot was better. Therefore, I got a shot of Penicillin every four hours.

Now, since I had a bandage on my right arm and a cast on my right leg and didn't roll over too well, I got all those shots in my poor left arm. Then we learned that there were differences in Penicillin. The Lilly brand burned but there wasn't any way to avoid it. With all those shots I was used to train the new Ward Boys. I can still remember seeing them coming down through

the Ward in white suits, syringes in shaking hands. Their faces were as white as their suits. Walking beside them would be one of the old hands telling them that there was nothing to this. Just do this, just do that. Nothing to fear. However, these boys scared me to death. Sometimes it took them three tries to get that needle in while the old hands provided encouragement… for them. And the worst part was that they'd be back in four hours.

While I was still a Lovell bed patient, a Boston Photographer came by and took my picture. Years later I was asked to give a talk to another Middle School and showed the photo as part of my presentation. I gave what I thought was a pretty good talk. A 13 year old girl came up afterward. I figured she had a question. What she said was, "You were real cute".

When I got to being more mobile, meaning on crutches, I went to a few entertainments over at the Post, catching rides on a hospital bus. After losing the cast, I had started on physical therapy to get my ankle and knee working again. I rode miles on stationary bicycles trying to loosen up my knee and ankle that had been encased in a cast for eight months. But that wasn't the only problem. I had those nerve, tendon and circulation problems, as well, and I soon learned that Physical Therapy could do just so much, that I had to contend with permanent damage. There was no way I was going to get back close to what I was before May 5th, 1945. One problem was "Dropped Foot". My right shoe had an angle iron brace attached with a spring that pulled my right foot up. Otherwise, I could stub my toe and take a tumble. Later, I learned that could get rid of the spring by remembering to lift my right leg slightly with every step. I also had that huge scar on the front of my lower right leg and missing calf muscle. I wasn't concerned about appearance since I wasn't planning to wear shorts all that much. The scar, though, was extremely delicate and I had to watch what I was doing at all times to avoid bumping into something that could cause it to break open. Unfortunately, I wasn't even close to 100% effective in managing that, even with padding on my leg.

I now was an old timer on the Orthopedic Ward and men who had come in after me had been released and gone home while I wasn't regarded as ready to be turned loose and my no-end

situation was beginning to make me somewhat irritable. I was a little late getting back to Lovell General Hospital from a weekend pass to Springfield one Sunday night and got chewed out by a young, regulation-oriented, 2nd Lieutenant (the Officer of the Day). I took offense at what I regarded as making a big deal out of a very small matter and blasted back at him, probably just short of incurring a Summary Court Martial. But he backed off.

At Ft. Devens I noticed that some branches of the Army had more "Pull" than others. That seemed to be particularly so with the "Public Relations" people. One time I saw a Public Relations Sergeant commandeer a General's Jeep to go to a Play in Boston. Now I had been having a problem in obtaining a pair of brown Army oxford shoes from the Quartermasters. So nothing ventured, nothing gained, I called up the Quartermasters and said, "This is Corporal Quinn of Public Relations and I've been having problems with you people coming up with my brown, size 10 1/2 medium oxfords. Can you help me?" The "Public Relations" gimmick worked. He said, "Now don't you fret none, Corporal. Just come right on over here and I'll have them waitin' for you". So I put on a pressed Class A uniform and went over to the Quartermasters, trying not to limp. The shoes were waiting for me but I figured I'd better not try that "Public Relations" scam again.

A little information about Fort Devens, named after a Civil War General, Charles Devens. It was established in 1917 as Camp Devens, a cantonment (temporary quarters) for training soldiers, during World War I and became a permanent installation in 1931. In 1940 a huge building program began in which 1,200 wooden building and an airfield were built. The Ist, 32nd and 45th Divisions trained at Devens during World War II. Devens also housed a prisoner of war camp for over 5,000 German and Italian prisoners from 1944 to 1946.. Fort Devens was officially closed in 1995 after 79 years of service but reopened the next day as the Devens Reserve Forces Training Area. The Fort. today, has a population of 306 enlisted personnel, 2,151 reservists, 348 civilian and 1,399 family members

BY NOW IT'S 1946 AND THE WAR IS LONG OVER

I had read just about every book on the carts run around through the wards by the volunteer Gray Ladies and was really getting bored. Now I had heard that Ft. Devens operated a wired Armed Forces Radio Station, So, equipped with my new, oxford shoes and wearing a blue, hospital, convalescent outfit, I got on a hospital bus and rode over to the Main Post and volunteered as an Announcer. It was a non-paying job but they were desperate for help and I was willing to do just about anything that would take me out of the Orthopedic Ward, even temporarily. I went over there every day for the balance of my Ft. Devens stay and became an Armed Forces Radio Regular.

By early June of 1946, even so, I was really tired of being in the Army, especially as a permanent Corporal. So, when my doctors suggested that I was a candidate for water therapy, I said, "Yes". Then I learned that the water therapy they had in mind was at Brooke General Hospital at Ft. Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas. However, at that point I was willing to go anywhere to get out of Lovell General Hospital. I was issued train tickets, meal tickets and handed orders for Ft. Sam Houston and took off, heading, I thought, for water therapy on my beat-up right leg, my ticket to becoming a civilian.

The Army travel office sent me off on the cheapest possible route. After two train changes, I found myself on a Southern RR car, half passenger and half baggage, pulled by a small, green engine rattling through North Georgia but heading south. As we were coming to a track intersection, the Conductor came by and told me that I was to wait there for a westbound train. When the train stopped, I got off with my duffle bag and looked around. There were two buildings there. One was a dusty, empty depot with flies buzzing around inside and the other was a small General Store. I went over there and was greeted by several of the locals, old, retired codgers wearing overalls and sitting around a pickle barrel. They looked real old to me.. I was 24 then.

The store carried all kinds of stuff, horse collars, bolts of gingham cloth, nails, chicken feed, whatever. Not much to eat there but I did get an RC (Royal Crown Cola) and a Moon Pie. The old timers said I had a forty minute wait for the westbound. When I said I thought I'd kill time by looking around, they said leave your duffle bag in the depot, nobody'd touch it. There were two sandy roads leading away from the depot so I picked one and began walking along slowly. I hadn't gone very far when I heard a train whistle. The westbound was early. So I started hurrying as best I could back to the depot when I came to a fork in the road which I hadn't noticed on my way out. This is where I ran into my one and only "Damn Yankee" confrontation south of the Mason-Dixon Line. An old, unpainted house was over to one side. A woman was sitting in a chair on the porch rocking grimly. Black, rusty dress. Hair in a tight bun. I walked over, took off my cap and said, "M'am I've got to get back to the depot in a hurry. Which one of these forks do I take". She asked, "You a Yankee, ain't you?" I said, "Yes, M'am". She said, "Ain't gonna tell you". With that I just had to laugh. She decided to be insulted by this no good Yankee, tossed her head, stomped off into the house and tried to slam the screen door.

I had to make a quick decision so I followed what, I later learned, was advice by celebrated Baseball Philosopher, Yogi Berra, who said "When you come to a fork in the road, take it". I improved on that by thinking, when in doubt, take the right hand fork. I did and got back to the depot in time to retrieve my duffle bag and to be standing by the track when my train eased to a stop for me to board.

The train then headed out west through Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and finally, into Texas where I was switched to the southbound Missouri Pacific Railroad and sort of bumped along that route through Austin and then another 80 or so miles into San Antonio and Brooke General Hospital, still one of the Army's top Hospitals.

During all of World War II American railroads ran at full capacity, day and night, carrying troops and war materials, in addition to civilian goods, without many of their trained people, who were in the armed services, and without the opportunity for much maintenance. In other words,

American railroads were just about worn out. That's why we had a real bumpy trip on the Missouri Pacific. It sometimes felt as if we were running over the ties instead the rails.

On arrival in San Antonio I took an Army bus out to Ft. Sam Houston and to Brooke General Hospital and checked in. At Brooke I was told. "You're here for water therapy? Didn't they tell you, Corporal? We have a polio epidemic going on right now and all the pools are closed. What's more, gatherings of more than 10 people have been banned."

A miserable development! The first thing I needed to do was to get located so I went over to Hospital Headquarters, and asked to be assigned to a bed. They had lots of beds so that wasn't a problem. I sat down on the side of my bed and tried to figure what my options were now. I couldn't think of any so I looked up the nearest Mess Hall for dinner. After dinner I met some of my "roommates". The man in the next bunk was waiting for a discharge because of a diet problem. It seems that all he would, or could, eat was corn bread and buttermilk. The Army wasn't about to provide that menu and decided to discharge him but apparently was in no hurry. Speaking of food. The Army employed a large number of Mexican cooks there in San Antonio and, as far as I could tell they put hot sauce in everything except the oatmeal.

Three days went by. Nothing happened and since it's real hot in San Antonio in June, I was thinking that maybe I should be looking into getting a discharge. I went up to the Hospital and bluntly asked what they were planning to do with me. Then they said the one thing that made every soldier's blood run cold. "Sorry, Corporal, but we've lost your records. When we find them we'll contact you." So I went back to my hot barracks and grumped about that for a while. The next morning I put on a Class A, suntan uniform and went back over to Brooke General Hospital and mingled with the clerks in their Discharge Section.

Plan - find my records myself. This was a place of great confusion with changing personnel, so no one paid any attention to me. I wasn't sure what I ought to be doing but I picked up a sheaf of papers to look busy, like I belonged there. I wandered around looking in in-boxes, checking

out out-boxes and shuffling through papers when I saw nobody was looking. I ended up going behind desks and staring at stacks of files on the tops of file cabinets. Finally, as the hours passed, I was dog-tired. My leg was aching and I was ready to quit, thinking, "This is really a dumb plan", when I spotted a file, "Quinn, John W." on top of a file cabinet. I also had noticed one Master Sergeant who seemed to be churning out discharge papers so I stood by his desk and, when he turned to speak to someone, I dropped my file into his in-basket and left.

I went back to my hot barracks hoping that I had beaten the system. "Corn Bread and Buttermilk" was still there so I figured that my chances were probably close to slim and none. The next afternoon, Hooray, I got called over to the Discharge Section and after a "heated" argument as to why I was unable to turn in an overcoat on a day when it was 106 in San Antonio, they gave up and issued me my discharge and my "ruptured duck" pin (it was supposed to be an eagle) worn on the uniform indicating that I was discharged. I got a train ticket and meal money and boarded a train the following morning, heading for Springfield, Massachusetts. On arrival in St. Louis I had what you could call "one more miserable development". My wounded right leg had broken open and was bleeding. And I was out of the Hospital! Out of the Army! Nothing to do but to continue on toward home and take care of it there. I had sprung for a Pullman berth so I was travelling in relative comfort for 1946.

There weren't any medical services on the train so I made do by improvising Kleenex bandages. On the way, the train pulled into Jersey City, I happened to be standing near a door where a young Italian boy was waiting. His new shiny Jump badge and boots showed that he had just graduated from Paratroop School at Ft. Benning. On the platform, outside, also waiting, was his huge Italian family. He wanted to make a big time entrance so when the train stopped, instead of using the steps, he decided to make a leap from the top of the stairs. He yelled out the paratroopers' war cry, "Geronimo" but landed wrong and broke his right leg.

I'M HOME

At Springfield my leg was still oozing but I decided, anyway, to go on to Summer Graduate School in English at the University of New Hampshire in Durham, (not realizing that I would later become very familiar with another Durham, Durham, North Carolina). When I got to the University, my leg was really acting up so I checked in first at the University Infirmary where the staff was delighted to see me, a veteran with an oozing gunshot wound. That was so much more exciting than splinters and the sniffles. They gave me a shot of Penicillin. My leg calmed down and I was able to complete the summer session at New Hampshire without further incident. Then I left for New York and the Graduate School of English at Columbia University which I had to talk my way into, due to the fact that I had a Chemistry, not an English major undergraduate degree.

My leg settled down with no more problems UNTIL 1947 while I was working at WKOB Radio in North Adams, Massachusetts. After playing tennis Doubles with some friends I developed severe chills and hot flashes which put me in the North Adams Hospital for about week. My doctor, a former Flight Surgeon, strongly advised me to knock off the tennis since what happened to me was a condition "Secondary to Osteomyelitis". I next had a brief stay in Ithaca, NY as a Farm Editor for the FM Rural Radio Network. (I was considered an expert in Kentucky Wonder Pole Beans.) Then in the spring of 1949 I moved to Rock Hill, SC and went to work at WTYC Radio, where I had friends, while besieging WBT Radio in Charlotte on my days off. To my surprise, I was offered a job at WBTV Television (August 12, 1949) where I met Emma Laura Reese. We were married on May 27, 1950 and then in 1954 moved to Florence, SC to open up a new station, WBTW Television. In 1968 we moved back to Charlotte with our four children and I went to work for Daily News Record, an ABC Television affiliate but a textile trade paper. After several years with DNR in sales I got a job with The Bouligny Company, a Charlotte engineering and manufacturing firm, that designed and installed man-made fiber plants producing polypropylene, nylon, etc. I was Marketing Manager.

Everything went well with the leg until 1973 when my leg broke open again and continued to drain. The VA in Durham, after a number of minor surgeries, put my leg into a cast again.

At The Bouligny Company I was able to keep working and learned how to drive left-footed. I got rid of that cast after about two months. The leg finally healed up but, over the years, kept opening up, over and over, reaching the stage where it stayed open a good twelve months before healing. In 2000 the leg opened up and began draining again but this time was different. It just continued draining. I simply changed dressings every day and went about my normal activities with restrictions, no swimming and no running. (I couldn't run anyway.) I could walk, but at a leisurely pace, with nothing hurting.

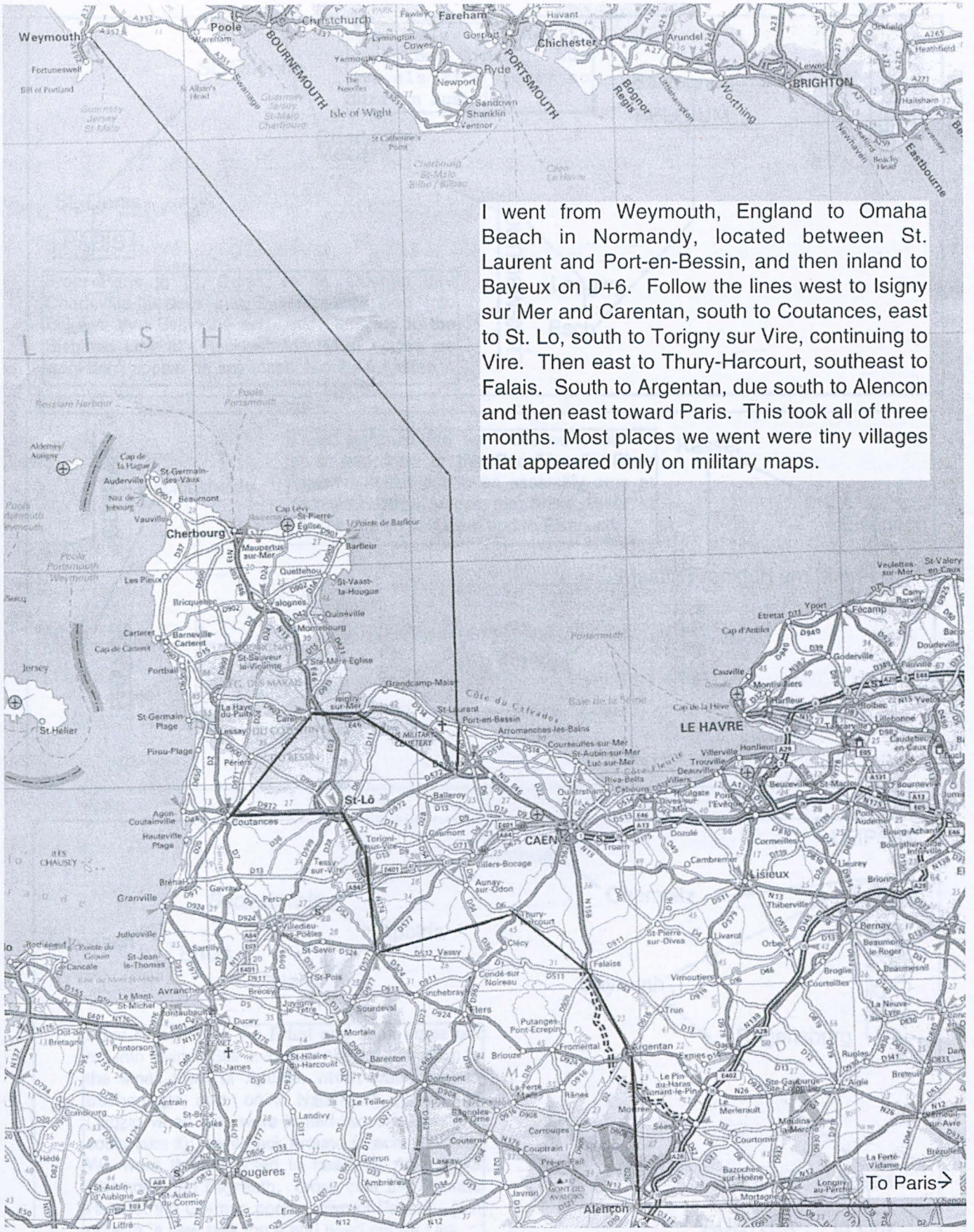
But by 2002 Surgeons in Charlotte and those from Duke Medical Center at the VA hospital in Durham agreed that I needed to go in for a special operation — the leg bone scraped to get rid of Osteomyelitis, a muscle flap to bulk up the leg and a large skin graft to eliminate the delicate scar tissue OR I would probably lose my leg. That got my attention. But the good news, the VA said, was that the operation would keep me in the Hospital for only about a week. To sum up, the February 11, 2002 operation did not go well. In addition, I also quickly developed bed sores on my right ankle and heel which defied all healing efforts. A diagnosis of Type II Diabetes didn't help either. However, after a successful skin graft to get rid of the old scar tissue on the front of my lower right leg, I was discharged, four months later, and sent home in a wheelchair with those open heel and ankle sores and the healing skin graft.

Over the next four years or so I underwent three more hospital stays, skin grafts and innumerable visits to Podiatrists and Plastic Surgeons who carved on my leg in various ways. Three twelve-week Intravenous infusions of an industrial-strength antibiotic called Vancomycin (to rid me of my persistent Osteomyelitis and MRSA) were scheduled, seven, consecutive days a week meaning Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays including Christmas and New Year's Day. Vancomycin treatments seem to have worked. However, I was still seeing the doctors from Duke Medical Center across the street from the VA Hospital in Durham. They said it's

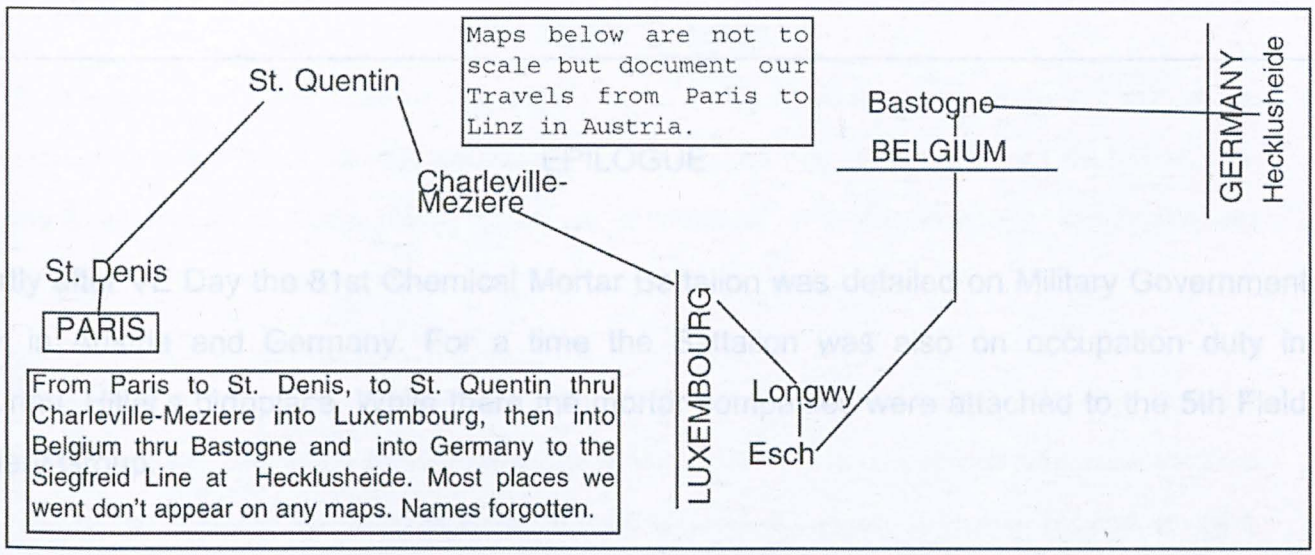
time to quit messing with this ankle and do something more aggressive. I asked like what — and they said another skin graft. I really didn't have much hope that this was going to work but I agreed that we needed to do something, so I said OK. To sum up — I had just a two day stay this time at the VA hospital in early June 2006. At this point I had logged some 20 months in various Army, VA and Civilian Hospitals: had thirteen major surgeries and so many minor surgeries I've lost count. I was beginning to feel that a wartime expression, SNAFU, was summing up my healing progress. SNAFU was an Army abbreviation for "SITUATION NORMAL, ALL FOULED UP". Of course, in the Army we used a different F-word but one that meant the same thing.

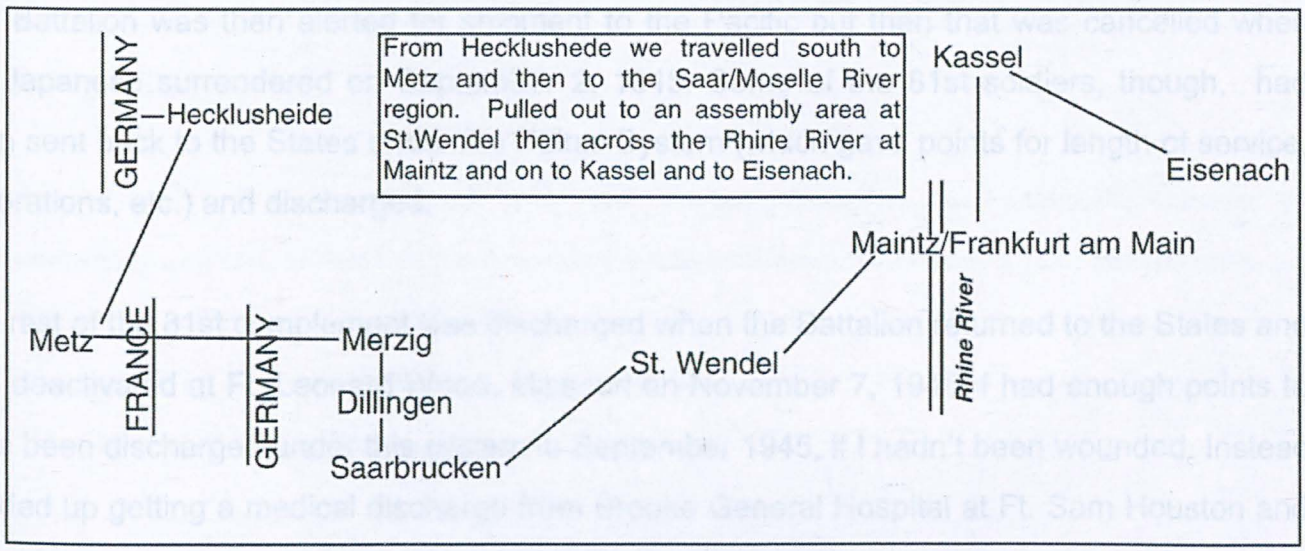
This time the skin graft on my ankle was successful. By August 30 my heel, and my ankle had completely healed also, sort of. It still hurts all the time but nothing that I can't ignore. My right leg is marginally serviceable but the big news is that NOTHING is draining. I can walk, with a cane all the way around the block our house is on. That's 6/10's of a mile which, for me, is a big accomplishment, even though I get passed by perky little old ladies and neighborhood mothers pushing baby carriages and with a dog on a leash. My pace can only be described as a casual, weaving saunter. On that note I'll conclude the narrative portion of "Bill Quinn's War". But there is more to come.

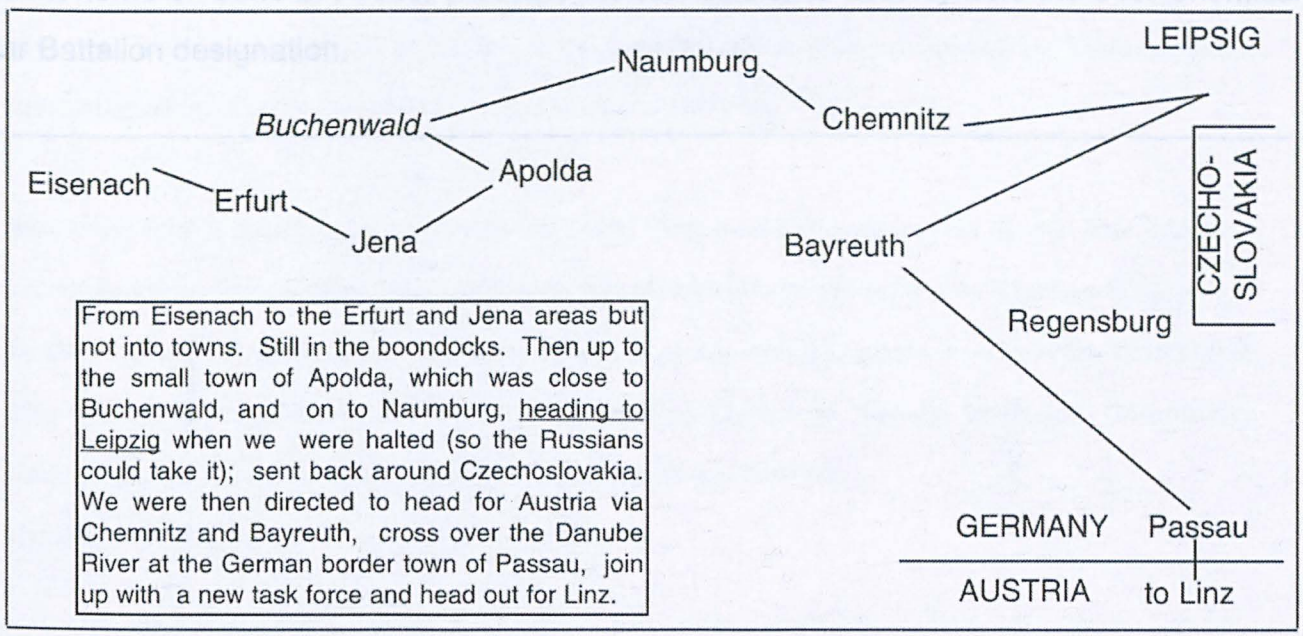
THANK YOU FOR STAYING WITH ME TO THIS POINT. BUT BE SURE TO CHECK OUT PAGES 97 THRU 110. THEY INCLUDE A) MAPS THAT TRACK ME FROM THE PORT OF WEYMOUTH TO AUSTRIA , B) WARTIME PHOTOS AND C) SPECIAL ITEMS THAT I THINK YOU WILL ENJOY.



I went from Weymouth, England to Omaha Beach in Normandy, located between St. Laurent and Port-en-Bessin, and then inland to Bayeux on D+6. Follow the lines west to Isigny sur Mer and Carentan, south to Coutances, east to St. Lo, south to Torigny sur Vire, continuing to Vire. Then east to Thury-Harcourt, southeast to Falais. South to Argentan, due south to Alencon and then east toward Paris. This took all of three months. Most places we went were tiny villages that appeared only on military maps.


Maps below are not to scale but document our Travels from Paris to Linz in Austria.
St. Quentin
Charleville-Meziere
St. Denis
PARIS
From Paris to St. Denis, to St. Quentin thru Charleville-Meziere into Luxembourg, then into Belgium thru Bastogne and into Germany to the Siegfreid Line at Hecklusheide. Most places we went don't appear on any maps. Names forgotten.
LUXEMBOURG
Longwy
Esch
BELGIUM
Bastogne
GERMANY
Hecklusheide


GERMANY
Hecklusheide
From Hecklushede we travelled south to Metz and then to the Saar/Moselle River region. Pulled out to an assembly area at St.Wendel then across the Rhine River at Maintz and on to Kassel and to Eisenach.
Kassel
Eisenach
Maintz/Frankfurt am Main
Rhine River
Metz
FRANCE
GERMANY
Merzig
Dillingen
Saarbrucken
St. Wendel


LEIPSIG
Naumburg
Buchenwald
Apolda
Eisenach
Erfurt
Jena
Chemnitz
CZECHO-SLOVAKIA
Bayreuth
Regensburg
From Eisenach to the Erfurt and Jena areas but not into towns. Still in the boondocks. Then up to the small town of Apolda, which was close to Buchenwald, and on to Naumburg, heading to Leipzig when we were halted (so the Russians could take it); sent back around Czechoslovakia. We were then directed to head for Austria via Chemnitz and Bayreuth, cross over the Danube River at the German border town of Passau, join up with a new task force and head out for Linz.
GERMANY
Passau
AUSTRIA
to Linz

EPILOGUE

Shortly after VE Day the 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion was detailed on Military Government work in Austria and Germany. For a time the Battalion was also on occupation duty in Braunau, Hitler's birthplace. While there the mortar companies were attached to the 5th Field Artillery Group.

The Battalion was then alerted for shipment to the Pacific but then that was cancelled when the Japanese surrendered on September 2, 1945. Some of the 81st soldiers, though, had been sent back to the States under the Points System (which gave points for length of service, decorations, etc.) and discharged.

The rest of the 81st complement was discharged when the Battalion returned to the States and was deactivated at Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri on November 7, 1945. I had enough points to have been discharged under this system in September 1945, if I hadn't been wounded. Instead I ended up getting a medical discharge from Brooke General Hospital at Ft. Sam Houston and was sent home on June 27, 1946, probably the last soldier to actively hold the 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion designation.

VERY SPECIAL NOTICE

This report would not have been possible without the dedicated and loving support of my wonderful wife, Emma Laura Reese Quinn, who during the very difficult times I described, was my loyal caretaker, cook, nurse, chauffeur, proofreader and also took over the house-hold chores I could no longer handle.

During World War II she served as an Examiner for the Charlotte ODT (Office of Defense Transportation) where she ruled on gasoline ration stickers to mostly-disgruntled truckers. That was her day job. She had studied dance, taught "Jitterbug" dancing to teen-agers and, at night, she was a regular at the dances organized for soldiers at Morris Field in Charlotte and Camp Sutton in Monroe, NC.

At 5' 1" and less than 90 pounds she was a little girl, but the soldiers knew an excellent dancer when they saw one, so the only time she ever got to sit down was when the band took a break. There was a dance partner waiting for her for every set. Then, after the elevenish last dance, she and the other weary girls rode an un-air-conditioned (and not always heated either) army school bus back to Charlotte arriving close to midnight.

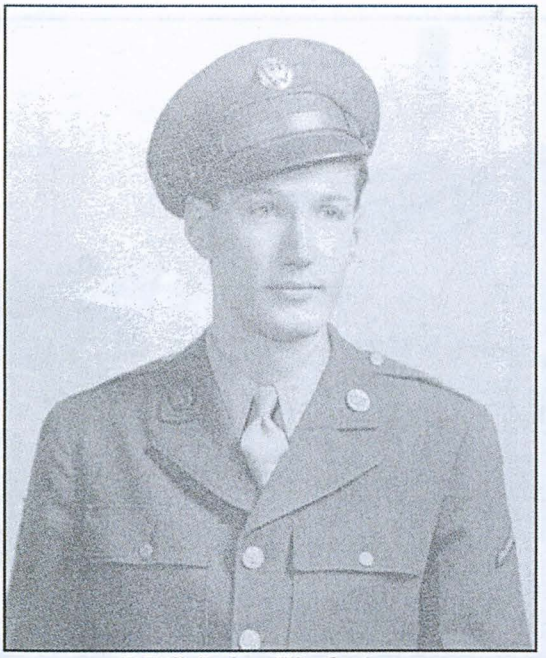
Early the next morning, time to face down more unhappy truckers, some of them three times her size. On weekends, she and her family provided home-cooked dinners for lonely airmen, soldiers, sailors and marines at her home in East Charlotte.

She later had a successful ceramics business but, when the youngest of our four children graduated from high school, she went back to school herself and earned a bachelor's degree in Business/Adult Education, Summa Cum Laude, from Queens University in Charlotte. Years later she retired as the Director of the Small Business Center at Central Piedmont Community College and founded her own company, Quinn Business Services.

I'm very proud of her.

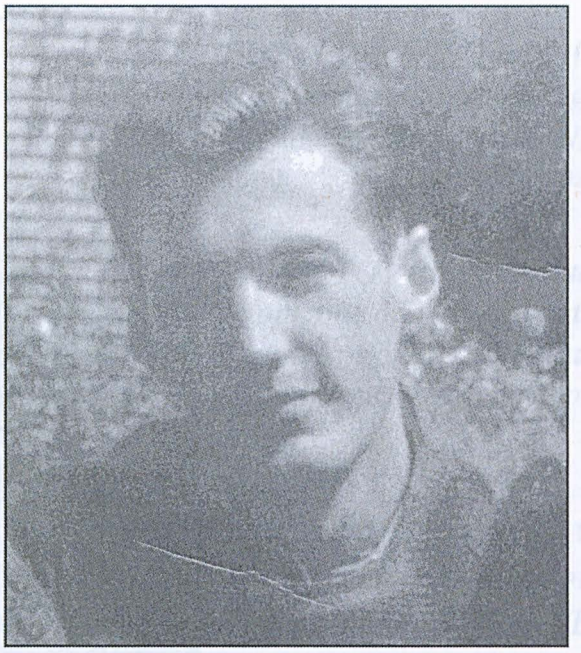
Emma dancing with a Signal Corps Lieutenant at the Officers' Club, Morris Field, Charlotte, NC. Current site of Charlotte-Douglas International Airport. Circa - 1942

Emma with an "out-of-uniform" GI, invited to dinner at her home on Fifth Street, Charlotte, NC 1943



PFC John W. Quinn

Photo taken at Springfield, Massachusetts. On Furlough after Basic Training at Camp Sibert, Attallah, AL, July 1943



Cpl. John W. Quinn

Photo taken at Springfield, Massachusetts, On a brief May 1946 Furlough from Lovell General Hospital, Ft. Devens, Ayer, Mass.

Dance at Lovell General Hospital

Hostesses trying to entertain the non-dancers from the Orthopedic Ward

October 1945

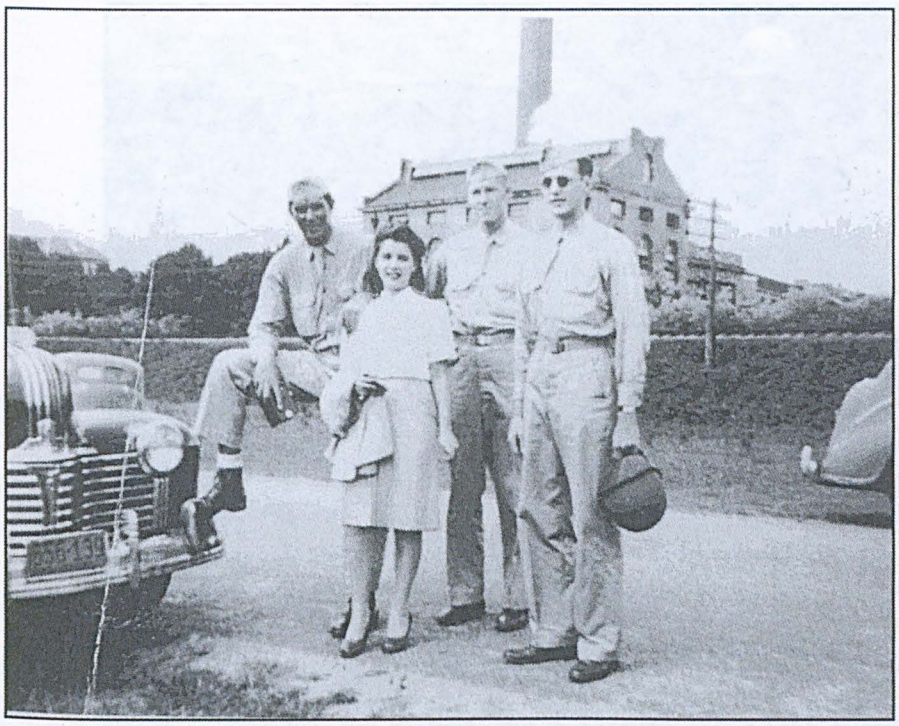
Patients L to R
Pucci
Perrault
Reynolds
Bianco
Druckman
Quinn

PFC John W. Quinn

Photo taken at Raleigh, North Carolina. October 1943. ASTP Program , Syme Hall, North Carolina State College

Cpl. John W. Quinn

Photo in Armed Forces Radio Station at Ft. Devens, Massachusetts 1946. Convalescent Suit & Pajamas per Lovell General Hospital



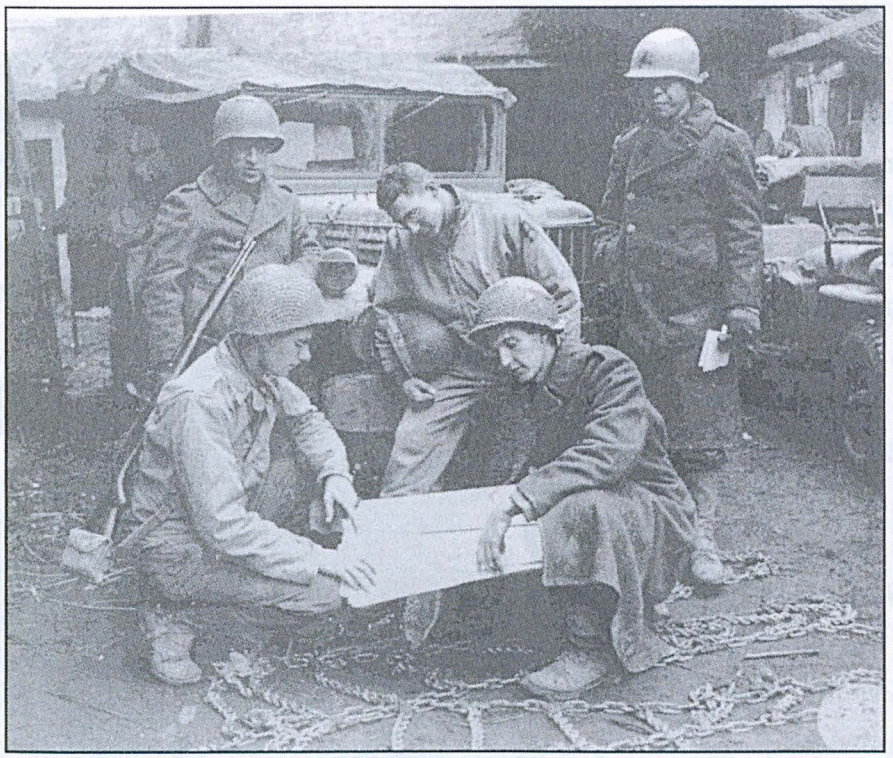
PFC John W. Quinn (R) with friends and friend's girl friend, visiting from New York. Summer of 1943.

LEFT TO RIGHT, Luke Sapin, one of my roommates, Johnny Parks, a mutual friend, me, and in front, Adele.

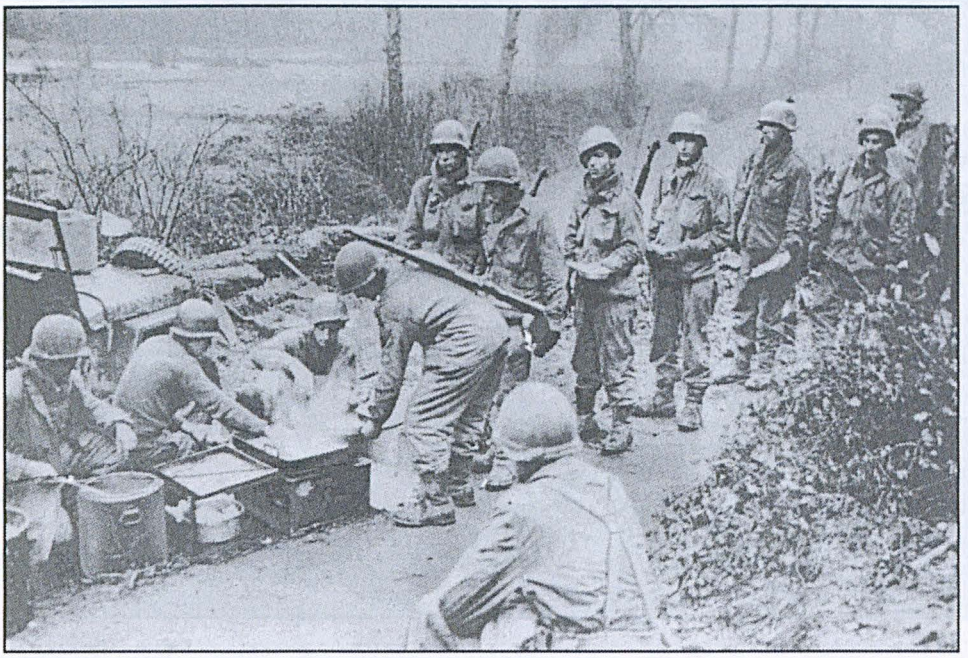
In the background is the power plant for North Carolina State College. The car is a 1940 Pontiac.

These tightly packed bunks are the luxurious accommodations found in the Hold of a typical cargo ship used as an overseas troop carrier.

Here, you see only four of the six high stack. See the dark face peering out at the foot of the top bunk. He's in the next stack, only two feet away. All of us spent as much time as possible on the top deck.



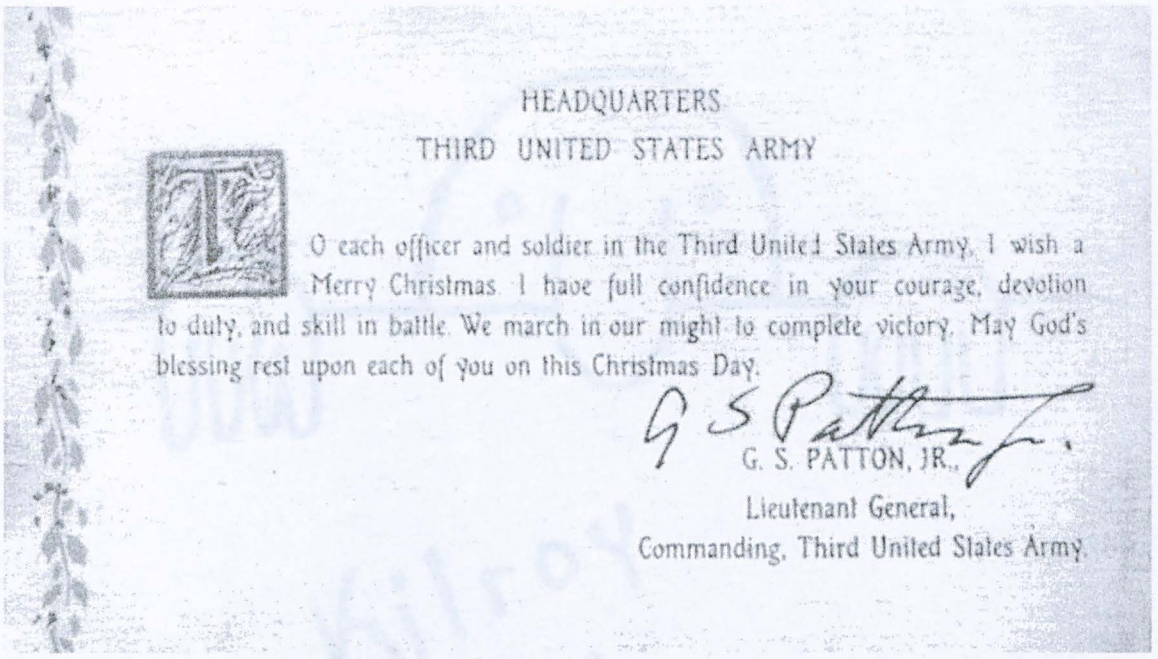
This is Headquarters squad, C Company,81st Chemical Mortar Battalion. It was November 15, 1944. We were getting ready to move with the 10th Armored Division, making its first combat operation, an assault across the Moselle River. We were in the process of putting chains on all of our vehicles because of the mud when a Signal Corps photographer happened by and said he wanted to take our picture. I got out one of my maps and we pretended to be looking at it. FRONT ROW (L) Chet Sims, Instrument Corporal of the First Platoon, and then me, Instrument Corporal, 2nd Platoon. BACK ROW (L) Doc Freida, a Medic, (Center) Capt. Lee Hill Boyer, Company Commander and (R) Joe Bernau, 2nd Platoon Mortarman. Note, we're still wearing those old leggings. Not yet issued combat boots or shoe pacs. Capt. Boyer is wearing a First Army patch. We were Third Army then. That's our Weapons Carrier in the background; a Communications Jeep with a roll of wire is in the right corner.



This is a chow line of the 2nd Platoon, C Company, 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion. It's January 1945 on a cold and misty day. The Moselle River can be seen in the background. We're wearing the usual mix of uniforms but some of us have shoe pacs which did keep out the water.

This is a 4.2 Chemical Mortar belonging to the 2nd Platoon, Third Squad, C Company of the 81st Chemical Mortar. It's cold, late November. The Gunner is sighting in his gun with me. I'm out of the picture, operating an Aiming Circle and have just laid in an azimuth, the direction in which the gun is to fire. The gunner and I are sighting on each other. When he had adjusted his barrel to have the same "alternate internal angle" as me, he would be lined up with me and on target. The Warrant Officer in the background wasn't necessary for this procedure. He just wanted to be in the picture .

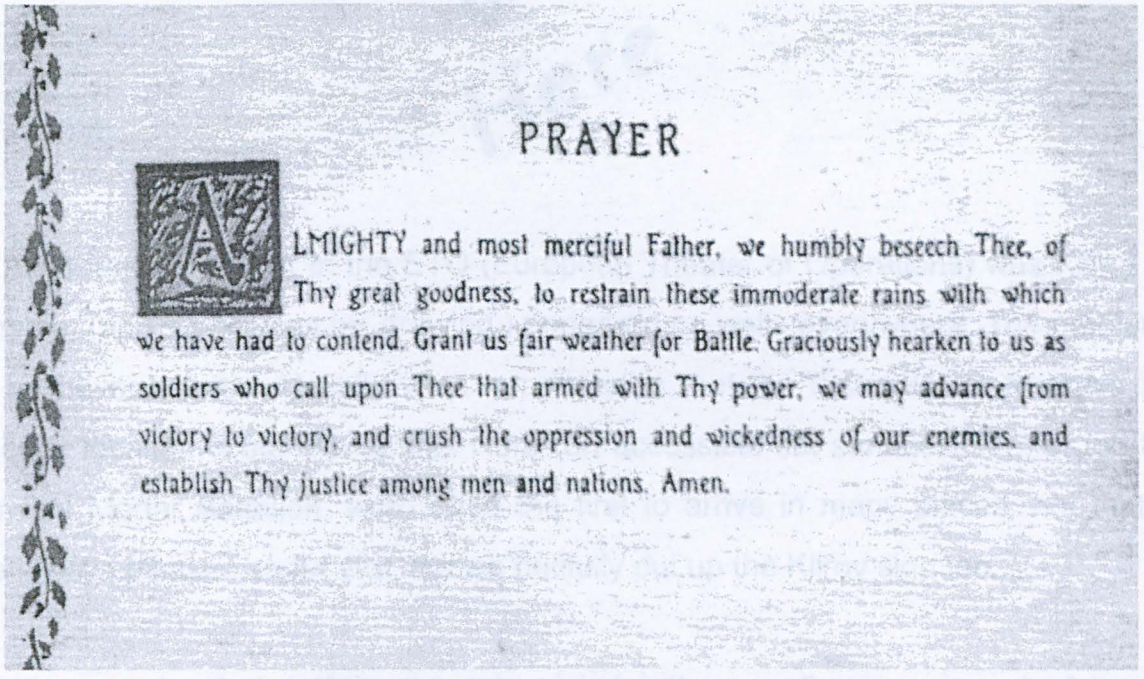
This is a 4.2 mortar squad on a firing mission. Note that the man in front right bending low has just dropped a mortar round down the barrel. He and the man directly behind him are turning away from the gun muzzle. That is necessary to avoid being injured by the muzzle blast. See the Jeep and Trailer in the background.



HEADQUARTERS
THIRD UNITED STATES ARMY

TO each officer and soldier in the Third United States Army, I wish a Merry Christmas. I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty, and skill in battle. We march in our might to complete victory. May God's blessing rest upon each of you on this Christmas Day.

G. S. PATTON, JR.,
Lieutenant General,
Commanding, Third United States Army.



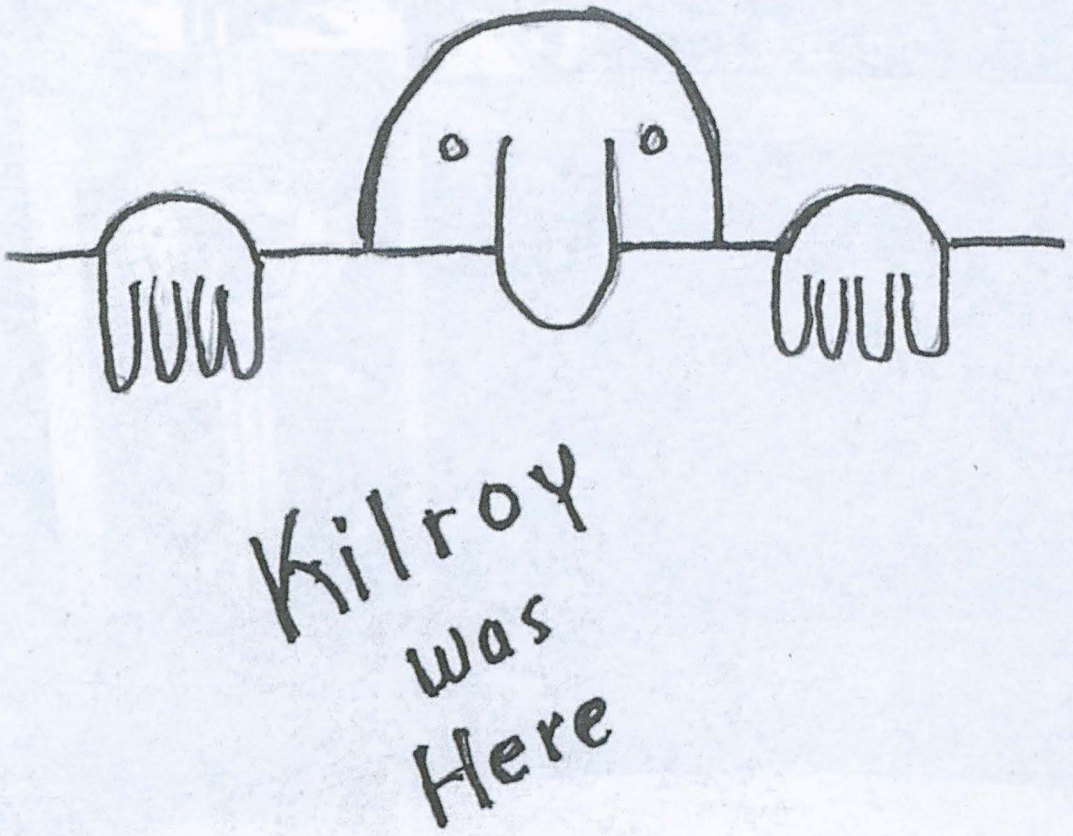
PRAYER

ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father, we humbly beseech Thee, of Thy great goodness, to restrain these immoderate rains with which we have had to contend. Grant us fair weather for Battle. Graciously hearken to us as soldiers who call upon Thee that armed with Thy power, we may advance from victory to victory, and crush the oppression and wickedness of our enemies, and establish Thy justice among men and nations. Amen.

This was the two sided card that was sent out by General George Patton to all troops in the Third Army. The top card was his Christmas greeting.

On the reverse was the lower card, the prayer General Patton <u>ordered</u> the Third Army Chaplain to make which, for the Christmas Season, would seem to be, shall we say, somewhat hard-nosed. But George liked it. This was during the Battle of the Bulge.

By the way, the smears on the cards are actually German mud.



The most famous soldier in the ETO (European Theater of Operations) was Kilroy and his name, (and sometimes his drawing,) appeared on walls everywhere. The problem is that he never existed. Usually what happened is that the first soldiers to arrive at a particular location wrote "Kilroy was Here" on accessible flat surfaces. We, of the 81st Chemical Mortar Battalion, were often the first to arrive in many places, not that we were always pleased about that, but we dutifully put up the Kilroy sign too.

Now there are least nine Kilroy legends, claiming there really was a somebody named Kilroy. The most reasonable explanation says that Kilroy wasn't a soldier but that he was a shipyard inspector who wrote "Kilroy Was Here" to indicate that he had passed the welding work. The question remains - how did that get changed into a message on walls in Europe? For most of the soldiers in the ETO, though, no matter where they went, "Kilroy" had gotten there before them.

81ST CHEMICAL MORTAR BATTALION MONUMENT

FT. LEONARD WOOD, MISSOURI

INSCRIPTION

IN HONOR
OF THOSE WHO SERVED
81ST CHEMICAL MORTAR BATTALION
UNITED STATES ARMY
1942-1945

CAMPAIGNS

NORMANDY NORTHERN FRANCE ARDENNES RHINELAND CENTRAL EUROPE

A SPECIAL MEMOIR FOR HIGH SCHOOL FRIENDS

At Cathedral High School, Class of 1939, in Springfield, Massachusetts there were four friends who hung out together. All four went into the Army. Jack Donlin became an Army Air Forces Pilot. He died when the fighter plane, he was ferrying was hit by lightning over Arizona. The wreckage of his plane was not found until 15 years after the war.

Bob Holland's U.S. unit was attached to the British 8th Army in North Africa. He was wounded. John Gilligan was badly injured in a non-combat Jeep accident in the ETO. And you now know about Bill Quinn, aka John W.

So goes the Luck of the Irish.

THE END...

This account was written at the urging of our children:
Patrick Charles Quinn, Moira Quinn Klein, Cecilia Quinn Tart and William Francis Quinn, who wanted to know what their Dad did during World War II, and is dedicated to them.

THE END…

ARTS COUNCIL
FAYETTEVILLE/CUMBERLAND COUNTY

Certification of Soil Sample
For
North Carolina Veterans Park

I, Darrel Crenshaw, do hereby certify that the soil provided to
(Printed name of county official)

Diane Hughes is an authorized sample from
(Printed name of artist)

[signature] County to be used in the handcasting public art
(Printed name of county) mecklenburg

installations at the North Carolina Veterans Park in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

[signature]
Signature of county official

Date 6/29/11

North Carolina Veterans Park
Wall of Oath and Community Column Participants

County
Mecklenburg

Veteran (bronze casting for Wall of Oath)
John William Quinn

Community Supporters
(hand castings on Community Columns)
Emma Reese Quinn
Mora Quinn
Darrel Crenshaw
Daren Graves