

An old soldier looks back

Reflections on the opportunity I had to serve my country.

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ACTIVITY DURING WWII

SERVED IN THE EUROPEAN THEATER WITH PATTON'S 3RD ARMY, COMPANY C, 44TH ARMORED INFANTRY BATTALION, 6TH ARMORED DIVISION. RECEIVED 3 BATTLE STARS, BRONZE STAR, EUROPEAN-AFRICAN-MIDDLE EASTERN THEATER RIBBON, ARMY OF OCCUPATION RIBBON, GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL, HONORABLE DISCHARGE. SERVICE NUMBER 17092199.

Chapter 1

When I had the good fortune to be able to visit David and Dana this winter David asked me if I would write down some of the war record as I saw and remembered it. We talked some about our trip to Europe in 1969 and he recalled some of his memories about seeing places I had been during the war.

When the United States was thrust into the war on Dec 7, 1941 we were having a dinner at mom's house. A family dinner in those days was a big event. A.L. Scott was there and May Scott, my grandmother and grandfather, and Uncle Andy, and some of the Aichelmans. I was 15.

We got word from the nursing home that Tatty, my mother's mother had died so mom and dad left and went to town to begin some work on arranging Tatty's funeral. That left Frank Aichelman, Uncle Andy and myself to visit and we all expected to wind up in the war. Both Andy and Frank assured me it would all be over before I had to go. Andy would be a dentist in the Army and Frank became a sergeant and was involved in procuring supplies for the army and Frank never left Denver.

The attitude of our people was galvanized into a united decision to work together for unconditional surrender. The way that Japan began hostilities was certainly a strategic error because it did make all of us decide we would win and it was ultimately just that decision on the part of 200 million people united which strengthened our nation into becoming the most powerful nation on earth.

We were certainly not that powerful on Dec 7, 1941. If Japan had continued their invasion of Hawaii anytime in the next few weeks, we would live in a different world today.

Dec 8, Monday 1941 saw the greatest recruiting action of any day in our history, men by the thousands descended on the recruiting offices thru out the land. The draft boards didn't have time to get started for some time and there wouldn't have been time to handle the draftees because at the moment there were plenty of recruits.

Our armed forces had a few regular army officers but the strength of the combined forces was not at all great. Dwight D. Eisenhower who finally became commander in chief was a lieutenant colonel at the time.

I was in high school and most of our seniors began to leave as volunteers. The teachers especially were very supportive and applauded the great power that would be ours. I cannot remember any word or action on the part of anyone except to unite to win.

I guess because I lived thru the Korean conflict and the Vietnam mess and saw the difference in attitude of the people I felt it worth making note of why we won. It was the will of the people and we decided that whatever it took was what we would do.

Our ability to manufacture arms was the reason we won. I remember going to the movies and at that time there was no TV of course, and the Movie-Tone news was a great thing. Today we expect news within the hour but then a Movie-Tone news two weeks old was considered current news. I saw Henry Ford meeting with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to report that he had been to see an assembly plant somewhere and he said that he could build airplanes with an assembly line just like he had been building cars. The willow run plant was the result and the power of the skills of the auto assembly plants in Detroit began to create a war machine that would finally turn the tide.

The initial entry into the war was a disaster for many in the army in the Pacific. We lost battle after battle and our base at Subic Bay in the Philippines fell to the Japs. They conquered us and the death march to Bataan killed many American boys. With every defeat, our resolve grew stronger. We were already supplying England with a lend-lease program. We had some men in potential leadership positions who began to assemble the materials necessary to once again land in Europe.

We first had to try to regain some strategic military positioning. Hitler was in Africa, headed for a fuel supply in the oil rich Libya. General Rommel had effectively conquered anything in his way and had to be defeated there first. If you have seen the movie Patton, you know that George S. Patton was the single reason we won in Africa so completely and decisively. George had all the fuel he needed and plenty of tanks and armor. The Germans were defeated because they ran out of gas. I guess you could put a period there and that would be the end of this story.

Meanwhile, back at Brighton High School we began to get boys back from the war to visit their friends and teachers. Each visit was a great and wonderful chance for those of us who were still

in school to see and hear how it was to be in the service. Mrs. Mabel Guillette and Miss Ahlin were the favorite teachers to come and visit and we had many sessions with the heroes as the teachers called them. It was a time of excitement and anticipation on the part of those of us who were not yet old enough to serve.

I graduated in 1943, and we were beginning to turn the tide of war and it looked like we could win. Of course in my mind as a young man there was never any doubt. The only question was when.

I was only sixteen when I graduated so mom started me in college at Colo. A&M in Fort Collins, where there was a vet school. I enrolled in pre vet. At the time all the vet students who were physically able were drafted into the army and became involved in the college training program. The colleges also were mobilized and many of the scientific programs were producing doctors, dentists, engineers, veterinarians who would be in the armed forces. It was a great program and a good idea. As soon as I could I signed up to be inducted into the ASTP Army Specialized Training Program and fully expected to be in the vet school. I couldn't enlist until I was 17. I had mom's permission because she was delighted to think I would be in the Army in college.

When I reported for duty and was inducted at Fort Logan on the west side of Denver, my orders were changed and I would be in the ASTRP, Army Specialized Training Reserve Program and was sent to the University of Wyoming in the engineering school. I had 24 quarter hours in that winter quarter and never studied so hard or so much before or since.

In the spring of 1944 the tides of war changed and we invaded Europe and the need for the ASTP program looked like it was no longer the priority so all of the engineer students were put into the infantry. We needed foot soldiers instead of scientists.

My basic training was in camp Roberts, California. I would have to say that I enjoyed the rigorous training, I was a crack shot with a rifle and enjoyed the outdoors and the camping and the marches and the drills and the challenge of wanting to be a good soldier. But for some reason I can't explain today I had a great fear of fighting the Japanese. Maybe it was because I had many, many Japanese friends in Colorado and knew them to be clever, dedicated and skilled people. I knew they would be good soldiers and I also heard the horror stories about how the Japs treated their prisoners of war. I knew we could beat the Germans and I guess that motivated me to want to go the war in Europe instead of Japan.

At that time the troops who were graduated from Camp Roberts were headed to Fort Ord California and then to the west. There was one way to avoid that direction. If you volunteered for the paratroops, you would be sent to Ft. Benning, Georgia.

I rode a troop train from Camp Roberts to Fort Benning. It took about 8 days. We went south and at the siding in Los Angeles, the sergeant told us that we would not leave until after dark. That meant we had about 8 hours in Los Angeles. I am sure nobody gave us a leave or a pass, but most of the soldiers left the railroad siding and headed for the big city.

We had a grand time in the city and several of us wound up in a tattoo parlor. The quepie doll on

my left arm reminds me that once I was young and foolish.

Chapter 2

Of all my training in the army I have to say that I liked the paratroop training the best. We were a volunteer outfit. None of us had to be there and there is a special esprit de corps of a group like that which is unique and very powerful. After four weeks of paratroop training we were really soldiers fit for almost any assignment. There were four weeks of very, very intense physical punishment.

The first week was nothing but calisthenics for 8 hours a day. On Saturday morning we had a run which meant we ran for four hours. Friday night I went to the PX, Post Exchange, and had a huge strawberry malted milk shake. Saturday morning I woke up barely able to breathe, my eyes were swollen almost shut and I really had a case of the hives. I guess it was the strawberries but I never knew for sure. I went on sick call, my first time in the army to go on sick call and I sat and waited for the doctor until almost noon. By that time the hives had subsided and it did indeed look like I had gone on sick call just to miss the Saturday morning run.

When I reported back to the company the first sergeant gave me a severe tongue lashing as only a first sergeant can do. I was put on KP immediately and was told to stay with the mess sergeant until Monday morning when I would be transferred to the next incoming company and would get the privilege of taking A stage again. I really didn't mind because I liked the physical training and that Friday night I avoided the strawberry malted milk. There is something about running in formation with a group of physically tough young men that is designed to make you think you are really tough. I know that I have never in my life been in better physical shape than I was on that day. I know I could have run another four hours and had energy left over.

I did not especially want to enter battle as a paratroop however. My goal was to make four jumps and then quit. I knew it would be unpleasant to quit but I have to admit I was trying to not be in the battle as a paratrooper. I would have been in the 82nd Airborne division if I had stayed. I made my four jumps and Thursday after the fourth jump I reported to the first sergeant and informed him I was going to quit. It was legal and acceptable up to five jumps, after that it was a court martial offense to refuse to jump. I got the tongue lashing I expected and he shouted to me that I was going to the front lines, to which I replied that I expected that anyway.

I was then transferred to Ft. Meade, Maryland which was a POE, Port of Exportation. When I got to Fort Meade, the first sergeant asked me if I could type and when I gave him the affirmative answer I got a job until I was to be shipped out.

Because I was in the office and was typing orders I discovered the policy that if possible, soldiers should be 18 to be put into combat. That meant I probably wouldn't be sent overseas until after Jan 1 1944, I would be 18 in January.

I had the privilege of going to visit friends of dad's while I was in Ft. Meade Maryland. Ferdinand and Nina Dixon were working for the government. Ferdinand was dad's best man when he got married. So my weekends were a real treat. Mom sent me a couple of gas ration

stamps so we could buy gas for the Dixon car and I got to see much of the capitol and they enjoyed showing me around.

I also got to New York to see my uncle Sherod and Aunt Louise. Sherod was Glenn Scott's brother. Sherod had been the top sales executive for the Dodge Motor Car company. Dec 7, 1941 eliminated his job. Dodge no longer needed salesmen. Their entire production was transferred to cost plus contract with the army and Dodge made vehicles for the government for the duration.

To illustrate what a great salesman Sherod was, he looked around and decided that the Chemical Companies showed the greatest profit potential. He associated himself with Wyandote Chemical and rose to the top in that company just like cream on milk. He had a very successful career in sales with them.

He had enough prestige and income during the war to be able to live very well, had company car, virtually unlimited expense account and they were also thrilled to have me visit and I was treated like a king.

My orders came thru and I spent Christmas day 1944 in the ship in New York harbor. This was one of the sorriest Christmases of my life.

I cannot remember the name of the old tub we rode across the Atlantic Ocean. It was winter and it was cold on deck. The ship had been used in WW I so it had to have been built prior to 1914. You guessed it, there was poor air exchange and it was cold on deck and the seas were rough, and it was crowded, and it began to smell. When the seas are rough and the odors and sounds of literally hundreds of men retching and vomiting makes for an environment that is conducive to more men having problems with sea sickness.

The slowest ship in our convoy was able to do 11 knots. That meant the entire convoy of over 100 ships travelled at 11 knots. The convoy system was our best defense against the German U boat. If a German U boat could sink a troop ship, it was a more effective way to kill the enemy than with single rifle bullets for each dead soldier. The Germans were methodical and clever with their tactics. The larger and greater capacity troop ships were in the center of the convoy. It was more important to protect the ones with the biggest cargo.

I don't think we lost any ships that trip, or if we did the rest of us didn't ever hear about it. When your job is to deliver fighting men to the front lines, it is important to keep them thinking about how they can win instead of the hazards. My faith in the greatness of the U.S. war machine was very real and I knew we would win so I can honestly say I was properly trained as were thousands and thousands of other GI's. We didn't often get news of defeat.

For some reason, I never got seasick. About the second day I preferred the smell of the sea and the open deck even though it was cold. While I was on deck the smell of baking and cooking attracted my attention and I wandered around until I found the kitchen or the mess hall as it is called. I wandered in and offered to help. The mess sergeant looked surprised, and pleased.

It was very unusual for any soldier boy to volunteer for KP.

We did eat well in the US army. The finest meats and produce were always given top priority. Sometimes even in combat conditions George Patton made sure that his troops got fed well. The chow on the ship was excellent, but it fed more fish than soldiers. I remember one poor little Jewish boy who nearly died from seasickness, When we landed at Cardiff Wales he got off the ship and kissed the ground and vowed he would rather be shot than get back on another ship. I often wonder if he did in fact stay in Europe.

Anyway I enjoyed the trip much more after I got to be a star member of the kitchen crew and I got to eat whatever I wanted and the smell was better where I was. I do have good memories about the trip.

We landed at Cardiff Wales and immediately were herded thru a chow line and then got put on a train of box cars. The train took us to Southampton England where we headed for Le Harve France. The channel crossing was uneventful.

The harbor at LeHarve was a very busy and crowded place and we didn't see much because we were immediately put in box cars again. The box cars said 40 Hommes 8 Chaveaux indicating the capacity of 40 men or 8 horses. The railroad cars had 4 wheels, no springs, no heat no lights, poor ventilation and of course because it was January it was cold when the door was opened. None of us saw much on our way thru France. I want you to realize that there were no fresh water showers on the ship, the salt water wasn't conducive to good bathing and it was cold. There were no bathroom facilities on the trains across England and none at the busy harbor in LeHarve. The French trains were even worse so that by now it has been at least three weeks since we had laundry, baths, or any warm place to rest.

It was soon to get worse.

Chapter 3

The war begins for me.

The winter of 1944-45 was a bitter cold one and the plan of Hitler to make one final desperate push to divide the two armies of England and the US was designed to be a complete surprise. The allies had won the battles of the hedge rows in the western coast of France, captured Paris and were closing in on the border of Germany.

Hitler's plan was to strike toward the west and go thru Luxembourg and Belgium and disrupt the supply lines and surround the invaders. None of the allied command expected an attack with armored divisions in the Ardennes forest. The terrain didn't seem to be fit for such a move. With armor however, if you can attack and get the roads open, divide the enemy and attack from their rear it was a plan that might work. It almost did.

The 106th infantry division was the first one to feel the awful power of the Wehrmacht. The

Germans had been saving for this attack for months and had assembled the very best they had left. German engineers developed powerful weapons. The Tiger tank was better than any we had. It had speed and excellent armor and most of all carried the 88mm cannon. The 88 was a very accurate cannon. It could fire armor piercing shells, anti aircraft shells which exploded in the air and filled it with flying bits of shrapnel and hi explosive shells which could blow up on contact so they had some weapons of war far superior to a American GI with an M1 Rifle.

Couple their superiority and the bad weather which made our air cover unable to help us the first part of their attack went as planned. The 106th division was virtually demolished in the first few hours of the attack. Unfortunately for them, the Germans didn't have enough food for themselves and they were not about to feed prisoners. The Malmedy massacre was an example of man's inhumanity to man. The boys in the 106th were all transferred from the ASTP college programs. They expected that if they surrendered they would be prisoners and would be thru fighting. The Germans herded a group of the boys from the 106 later to be known as the hungry and sick division into a large open field and once they were there they had their own officers call them into formation. Since their own officers were involved the guys lined up neatly and then the Germans opened fire with machine guns and killed everyone. I don't remember the number that were killed that day but it certainly made us be more trigger happy in the future.

The only obstacle to complete victory of the battle of the bulge was a town called Bastogne. It was held by the 82nd Airborne division. When the Germans had surrounded the town they sent a group of messengers to the town carrying big white banners. General McAuliffe was in charge and he allowed them to approach without shooting at them.

The messengers from the Germans asked to talk to the commander, and when they were asked what their demands were they told the men who were talking with them that they were to surrender or the Germans would destroy the town and everyone in it. The story goes that when the message was taken to McAuliffe one of his aids yelled "Nuts". Upon hearing this McAuliffe said that is a good answer so the word NUTS was put on a single sheet of paper and given to the Germans.

By that time the radio message had gotten to George Patton who turned his battle column around and headed for Bastogne. The ensuing battle was one of the fiercest in the entire war. The outcome was the turning back of the Wehrmacht. That battle was just winding down when the train of the replacements carrying yours truly arrived not far from Bastogne.

We were lined up and counted off and as a result of our number in the count there were 19 of us headed for Company C, 44th Armored Infantry battalion 6th armored division. David Scott has my book about the history of the 6th Armored so I won't attempt to recall the specific battles but tell the story thru the eyes of a private.

We were introduced to the first sergeant of Company C. He welcomed us with many words of caution and three K rations boxes and told us that was our food for the next day. Then we counted off again and the number we used for our position in the count off was the number that placed us in the platoon and squad. There were three platoons in Company C and each platoon

had 3 squads. I wound up in Sergeant Haswell's Squad. Sergeant Haswell was a corporal at the time and was acting as sergeant because the sergeant had been wounded and sent to the rear.

There were 12 men in a squad and sometimes we got to ride in a half track. Our instructions came from the Platoon leader who was a 2nd Lieutenant. Lt. Oakes was new also because the last platoon leader had been killed in the drive to capture Bastogne.

To give you some kind of an idea of the terrible cost of this sort of military action let me talk about numbers. When the 6th Armored landed at Le Harve, there were 256 men in company C. When we met the Russians at Rochlitz on the Mulde River which is the border of Czechoslovakia, there were 13 of the original men still in the company. The 19 replacements who came in with me had 6 of us still left. Now they weren't all killed, most were wounded severely enough to be taken out of action.

I had overshoes but two or three of the men who were with me came without overshoes. When they asked Haswell about overshoes, his reply was to take them off a wounded or dead man. The tone of his voice and the enormity of the statement made us realize we had arrived ready for combat.

We were headed on attack just after our arrival. Attack meant going ahead on foot and then digging in. The plan was to be in position in the morning to attack further. Remember, we had had no beds or billets of any kind since we landed in France. We had very few hot meals, we lived on K rations which were a balanced diet but not much bigger than a cracker jack box. We were dog tired and near exhaustion and told to march forward so we did.

When we arrived at the battle line which had predetermined by probably the Battalion commander we were told to dig in. It was well below zero. The ground was frozen.

The trenching tool we had was a shovel that could be locked in either the straight or right angle position. The way it was locked was a threaded knurled knob on the handle. My locking knob was frozen and when I asked the guy next to me what to do about it, his reply was piss on it. That thawed it out enough to be able to turn it into a pick position.

When you are trying to dig a hole in frozen earth, the first few hits will make a hole that is about the size of a teaspoon. When the bullets begin to fly overhead because the Germans knew we were there, the digging got faster. I can tell you that it is possible to dig a hole in frozen ground big enough to get down in.

Once you get thru the frost it digs easier. That hole in the ground was the hotel room for that night. At least by the time you finished digging the hole you were warmed up. The next hazard was freezing to death. When you are tired, scared, exhausted, and asleep in below zero weather you get very very sleepy. I am sure that when you freeze to death you aren't suffering but just sleeping. The thing we did to prevent one of us from freezing to death or being shot in the hole by a German was to have one of us on guard all night. When we counted off the number was the order of our turn on guard and usually 45 minutes was the shift. Somebody would come and

poke you wake you up and tell you it was your turn to stay awake and on guard for the next shift. Once or twice I went to sleep and the guard was not kept the rest of that night. I don't know how often it happened, but if I confess, there were surely others who were as tired and sleepy as I was.

In a few weeks, or sometime in February, we had proven that we had the firepower to push the Germans back. Patton wanted to stop the confrontation, outflank the Wehrmacht and go behind them and cut off their supply. Ike overruled and we were to slug it out and destroy the war machine where we were.

I cannot see how the Germans kept their men fighting, it surely must have looked hopeless to them but the toll to destroy the Attack force of General Rommel was a bloody mess. The first time you see dead soldiers, it is a shock and revolting sight.

It gets worse.

Chapter 4

We smash the Wehrmacht

Ike's goal was to so cripple Hitler's war machine that it would finally have to surrender. Keep in mind that our goal was unconditional surrender and we would do whatever it took to accomplish that end. There was no doubt in our mind that we would win and that is one of the big factors that was missing in both the Korean conflict and the stupid war in Viet Nam. I have to say that when the democrat, Harry Truman fired General MacArthur in Korea because MacArthur wanted to chase the Migs across the Yalu River and was told that the war was to be contained we made a tactical error that has haunted us until a Republican, George Bush, showed us how to win a war.

When an armored division like the Super Sixth decided to attack it was an awesome power. First we would call for air support and the air force would bomb and strafe the area we were going to attack. Until you have been under an air attack you don't know what real terror is. I was one time and it was soon stopped. Unless you have air superiority, there is no way ground troops can really win.

When the air attack is ended timing is critical we must be ready to advance and take the objective, whether it was high ground or a town, as soon as the planes stopped our artillery added some insult to the injury of the target. Then we rode in half tracks if it was tactically feasible, that meant if the resistance was not great we would literally drive thru and shoot anything that moved or if there was an effort to surrender we would accept prisoners, take their weapons and start them to the rear. I'm sure that toward the end it became easier and easier to get prisoners, because they knew it was hopeless and that way they would be thru fighting and they would live to come home again sometime.

When resistance stiffened, we would leave the half tracks and advance on foot or ride on top of the tanks. The tanker needed us to protect them from the Panzerfaustman. The Pnanszerfaust was the German bazooka. It was a weapon that a foot soldier could fire into a tank and if it hit the tracks the tank would be crippled. We had one big advantage with our tanks over the German

Tiger tank. The turret with the cannon on the Sherman tank would spin 360 degrees or it could fire in any direction. When the tiger was crippled with a tank blown off we had him because he could only spin the turret 270 Degrees. That meant you could come up from behind and put a bazooka shell into the rear and usually either blow the motor or maybe penetrate the tank and set it on fire. When a tank burned the ammunition it was carrying would explode and nobody ever lived thru a tank fire.

A battle group of the Armored division had infantry, tank destroyers. (a vehicle that looked like a tank but it had lighter armor, bigger guns and more speed) a tank battalion and artillery, anti aircraft section and of course the medics.

When a battle team decided to take a certain area we usually won. After you had been through several successful attacks and understood the teamwork that wins the power of the unit gets to be an awesome force.

The purpose of the military is to kill people and break things, and we were very good at it. We began to move more rapidly as the weather began to warm up and then as we neared the German border, the resistance stiffened. Hitler still had one ace left. It was called the Siegfried line. It had huge concrete tank barricades and series of concrete bunkers that were designed to protect each other and when the Siegfried line was full of soldiers they had all sorts of weapons to prevent entry across the German border into Germany. Couple that with the faith they had in their fortress it was a formidable task to destroy a section of the line.

They had a huge abundance of 88mm cannons. When they sprayed the approaches to the line with antiaircraft shells and filled the air with flak it was impossible for a foot soldier to get close enough to attack. Of course they had the tactical advantage of high ground, an unobstructed field of fire and they knew where the attacks had to come from so their artillery was already zeroed in on the likely approaches.

The one thing they did not have was air superiority. This meant that our warplanes got a chance to cripple the 88 cannon emplacements which were outside the bunkers. Once that was done the ground troops could approach without the flak. The plan then was a massive attack all along the line. This made sure that already weakened defense force would be strained to the point that there would be some weak spots. Once we breached the line the battle at the Siegfried line was history.

The area our company was assigned to was just across the Our River. This was really rugged country. The hills were too steep for our tanks. We would have a complement of engineers and we would have our heavy machine guns and mortars. I had three mortar shells to carry in addition to everything else. The three shells probably added 75 pounds to my load. We did try first to cross the river by wading, and lost two men. After that we got a pontoon bridge.

Climbing that hill to reach the high ground was a tremendous physical effort. I was near exhaustion when we got almost to the brow of the hill. Our assignment was to get close enough so we could dig in and fire at the gun openings to keep them from shooting while our engineers

crawled up to place dynamite charges called a beehive next to the wall. The beehive would cause an implosion and bore a hole through at least two feet of concrete.

All our plans had to be coordinated up and down the line so when the signal to attack came we would have the Germans under fire for miles and miles up and down the line.

This is to describe one of the closest calls I had during the entire war. There was considerable brush and undergrowth as we neared the brow of the hill. Beyond the edge of the woods the Germans had mowed the brush out of the way so they would have a clear field of fire for anyone who tried to cross the space at the brow of the hill toward the bunkers. I inched forward to get to the edge of the brush, got my pick ready to dig and noticed a wire strung above the ground about a foot above the earth. I was going to dig right under that wire. It turned out to be a trip wire for a booby trap. Had I begun to dig there and hit that wire it was connected to a 500 pound bomb which would have killed most of our squad and certainly crippled the 3rd platoon under the command of Lt. Oakes.

I was able to convince them to send me an engineer to look and he was able to replace the pin in the device which held the wire so that the wire could be cut without blowing up the bomb.

This was one of only the Lord knows how many times I was protected. I left the war absolutely convinced that I had some guardian angels.

This is as good a time as any to inject into this story one of the connections I had with God Almighty. I had a delay enroute to go home just before I was sent overseas. My poor mother knew I was headed for combat in the infantry and she knew enough about war to know I would be in great peril. She bought me a New Testament with a steel cover that fit in my left shirt coat pocket. She made me promise I would wear it there. Then she urged me to read the 91st Psalm, often. I gave her my word I would.

This is the 91st Psalm.

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. 2. I will say to the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress. My God in Him will I trust. 3. Surely he shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler, And from perilous pestilence. 4. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall find refuge. His truth will be your shield and buckler. 5. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night Nor of the arrow that flies by day. 6. Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. 7. A thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand, But it shall not come near you. 8. Only with your eyes shall you look and see the reward of the wicked. 9. Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, Even the Most High, your dwelling place. 10. No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling. 11. For He shall give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. 12. In their hands they will bear you up lest you dash your foot against a stone. 13. You shall tread on the Lion and the Cobra. The young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot. 14. "Because He has set His love upon me, therefore I will deliver him. I will set him on high because he has known My name. 15. He shall call upon me and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble. I will

deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show Him my salvation.

I intended this story to have sets of three pages but this time I guess you will forgive me.

When my dear daughter-in-law, Dana was in med school and headed for the worst place in the world to see patients, the Los Angeles Jail in the Aids ward, I certainly prayed for her. I told her to read this Psalm. She came through this terrible place with no damage and I trust the word of God as much as any thing I know about. I know one more thing; my mother's prayers were answered.

There is a verse in the book of James, Jesus' half brother, where he says the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Never discount the value of prayer. !!

Robbie and Leslie and David and April and Janice and Eddie and Clinton and Alex all owe their lives to the fact that I survived. I included April because I guess most of you know that I cannot tell any difference in the love I have for her compared to my blood offspring.

Next section, the final push to meet the Russians.

Three more close calls.

Chapter 5

I was protected again

We had successfully breached the Seigfried line and were headed on toward the east. Our armor would be on the highway just to the east of the line because we had punched several holes thru the line and for all practical purposes the Germans had lost that one and it only took a few days. We were anxious to meet the armor because we had not had anything to eat since the rations we had carried with us ran out and no vehicle could climb the path we took.

At this point I need to recall a conversation I had with a poor frightened kid from Indiana, I never knew his name. He was in our squad and was a quiet lad. He told me he was terrified because he knew he was going to be killed. I of course told him that was not the correct attitude and tried to get him into a conversation about God and God's protection. He would have none of it.

The next day we were headed east in a single file between the blockhouses we had conquered. I am sure we were visible up and down the line and not all the Germans were accounted for. I was watching him and all of a sudden there was a blinding flash, a huge sound and he literally blew apart. I will never forget the sight of the smoking foot as it flew past me without the boot. How the boot was blown off I'll never know. Two men in front of him were wounded with shrapnel and one behind me. I never got a scratch because he absorbed the full force of the mortar shell and it hit him squarely in the middle. Needless to say we hurried on past that place and fortunately the three wounded could walk.

I know the danger of ignoring God. I know the power of the spoken word. He accurately prophesied his end and I saw it. I don't know how you could have a closer call than that. Even

50 years later the vivid recollection of his death is a reminder to me that God watches over us.

The next day big Sergeant Bill from Maine went back and picked up pieces of him and put them in a mattress cover so the men from graves registration could find him. I wonder how many millions of German and Russian boys were never accounted for and the families of those men never knew anything except that they left for war and never came back.

The next incident was more humorous and actually fun. We came across a couple of Germans who were busily cooking some dead horse meat. Of course we were as hungry as they were so we stopped and helped ourselves also. The Germans still had some horse drawn artillery and the team that pulled this cannon were killed by either our air force or our artillery. It was a welcome meal and horse meat is excellent when you are hungry. The Germans were happy to surrender to us and went with us to where we could turn them over to the prisoner of war group.

Sometimes you can get too self confident. We had had almost smooth sailing for a couple of days and I have no idea of where we were but we were getting low on fuel. We needed a stopping place. We were on a road parallel to a railroad track and at the point where we went under a railroad overpass there was a nice open field so we pulled in to wait for the red ball express to bring us gasoline and PX supplies and food.

We were ambushed. The road we came in on was blown up and we didn't know the way out and the field was suddenly full of flak. The 88mm antiaircraft was shooting shells above our heads which exploded and filled the air with shrapnel. It was a terrifying experience until we found and put the 88 out of action. I got a new job as a result of this incident. Lt Oakes dispatched me to go see if I could find the next platoon. Our radio had been demolished by shrapnel. I became company runner for a while and carried messages from the company commander to different platoon leaders. It was very exciting and I was shot at by our own men quite often. It is amazing how you can survive what seem like an impossible trip. I began to feel like I truly was invisible.

The Bronze Star was given for bravery, but actually it was a foolhardy kid feeling his oats. I did however make some moves that saved lives. I was stopped one time sitting down in a ditch and heard a whistling sound like incoming shrapnel and a chunk of steel about 18 inches long and maybe 3 or 4 inches wide came crashing down in the mud right beside me. I can still see the steam coming up out of the dirt where it hit and it missed me by inches.

One advantage of being the Company runner was the ability to get a few extra K rations. For the first time in weeks I wasn't hungry, and I guess I had become so numb to the danger that I began to feel like I had a front row seat in the most spectacular incident of this century.

One more close call and I will quit because it is not the most pleasant thing to talk about but it is clear evidence that I was supposed to survive. I don't remember where we were. After a while one day runs into another and the whole time becomes sort of a blur. In this case however it made a punctuation point that will be with me for the rest of my days.

We were on foot on the attack again and in single file. This time I hear the shell coming, it was

artillery. Mortars are quiet but artillery has a screaming sound that gets your attention. The shell hit within 6 feet of me, but directly opposite of me and a tree about 5 to 6 inches in diameter was my shield. Two or three men were wounded with that blast but because I was closest to it I never got a scratch. I was deaf for maybe a month after that from the concussion but no other damage.

The farther we penetrated the country the easier it was to take territory and George Patton was headed toward Berlin. I'll never forget the day we crossed the Rhine at Mannheim. I had burned up a 50 caliber machine gun the night before. We had it in the second story window shooting across the river. I didn't have to carry the shells and I was having a great time spraying the opposite shore with bullets. I shot until the gun was so hot it jammed and we just left it.

The next day we were crossing the Rhine and George was directing traffic. He was on the end of the bridge on the eastern side and had a good sized box to stand on. You could see his Chrome plated helmet and his pearl handled six guns for at least a half mile. If there was ever a target he was it.

He had three armored divisions crossing the river that day and he didn't trust anybody to point the way for each battle group. It was important for the proper infantry team to be working with the tank companies they were used to be with. It was very complicated to keep the teams lined up properly and there were many, many MP's with lists of the companies and units which were going to cross and their job was to be sure that the proper team got on the bridge in the right order. Each vehicle had its identification clearly painted on the bumper or the front to the tank. All our half tracks had Co C 44th AIB for Armored infantry battalion. George could see who was coming and he knew where he wanted each team to head. He had three roads to send the troops on and he would point at the unit and then direct it to the proper road.

He was a magnificent showman. He had a word of encouragement for each and every unit that passed him and he told us we were winning and we should go kill more Germans. We knew that he could be shot at any time by a sniper. There was something about the charisma of him standing there thoroughly enjoying himself and wielding the most powerful attack force that man had ever assembled that was inspiration to boys like me. I would have followed him anywhere. You either hated him or loved him and I was one who understood he was the right man in the right place at the right time.

We captured a warehouse in Muhlhausen. It was full of German food supplies and we loaded our half track with as much as we could tie on. One of the bounties of war were several cases of Cognac. We had the drunkest and happiest bunch of soldiers in the army until that supply of Cognac was gone. Haswell was the half track driver and I don't know how he kept the thing on the road. About that time the powers that be decided we would not be allowed to take Berlin so we were sent in a southeasterly direction toward Czechoslovakia. It was some more bungling by the democrats. We won the war and Franklin Delano Roosevelt gave the prizes away at Yalta.

Next time we meet the Russians!!

Chapter 6

The end in Europe

I want to inject someplace what a joy and privilege it has been for me to have a break in my day to day life to do something completely different than I usually do. I haven't made a sales call for a week. I have played with my grandsons and know that my dad was right when he said, "You never get any closer to heaven than you are when you are playing with our grandchildren." As I was writing this final chapter, some of the zip went out of my enthusiasm and I didn't keep my usual habit of saving my work as I went. I had an emergency call to rescue Alex from sort of peril and when I came back I punched some button and it was the wrong button and I simply could not find the chapter I had written.

I was telling Dana that I needed to do the last chapter over because of an error in keeping my records straight and she said it would have upset her to do it. I told her that it had happened before and that I needed to do it again for some reason. When I woke up in the middle of the night, I knew what I had left out and why my writing had ceased to be the pleasure it had been. This is the great key. It can be measured by the wisdom of the hundreds of thousands of prisoners we took in the last few weeks of combat. The word was out. Russia, thru our democrat's bungling at Yalta, was to receive the lion's share of the territory in Eastern Europe. The lines were drawn and those who were already displaced wanted to wind up in the American Sector.

The people of the World know that America is the great power and the great Nation. The reason America was great is because her people were great. Her people were great because of a deep faith in God Almighty. Sadly, today some of the accusations of Islamic people about the US being the great Satan are true. Our ACLU, the liberal democrat judges who have made law by interpreting the constitution according to their whims and the power of the Liberals like Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, and other black leaders who make a business of stirring up problems about how the black child is disadvantaged have certainly weakened our nation.

LBJ and his Great society started pouring money into the poor black communities over a generation ago. We have spent enough money to build a nice 3 bedroom home for every family in America and give it to them free of charge if we had spent it wisely and well. Instead we have built a welfare state which allows generations of families to grow up with no father in the home, no exposure to the wisdom the Holy Bible and lack of respect for all the ten commandments. The thing that made America great and strong in 1946 when the war ended in Europe is not true today and unless we recognize how stupid it is to allow politicians to buy votes by encouraging entitlement and getting power by giving the have-nots some of what the haves have earned we are making sure our families will never have the potential power my children had when they grew up in the 1960's. The lessons of history are so very important. LBJ and his bungling of the Vietnam mess weakened our nation. It took a man like Ronald Reagan to once again strengthen our military, challenge the communists, and bring down the iron curtain and start us on the road to superiority once again.

The liberal view is always made to look so caring and so wonderful. Believe this old man; liberals are robbing our children of freedom. When we don't teach them to pray at meal time,

when we ignore the responsibility of being sure they learn about the ten commandments, when we forsake the traditions that built strong family ties, we are asking for the sort of nation described in the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy beginning at about the 16th verse. If you don't go read it you miss an opportunity look into the mirror and see where we are. I pray that enough of our nation will recognize that the pathway to freedom, happiness, opportunity, prosperity, and abundance is not thru the liberal government but thru the will of an educated and Godly people.

Unless God is in it, the devil is. He comes to kill, steal and destroy and he is doing an excellent job when we can elect a man like Bill Clinton to the most powerful office in the land when none of us trust him enough to want to be his business partner. It isn't just slick Willie, look at the motives, actions, ethics and performance of his partners in fooling the people. Dick Gephardt has a huge home on the eastern shore supposedly represents the poor people in East St. Louis. He has taken money from somewhere and we can point the place and time where he is a grand example of the power that comes to high ranking Democrats. Look at Jim Wright of Fort Worth Texas, Tom Foley of the state of Washington, and Rosty Rostenkowski from Wisconsin if you want to see how absolute power does actually corrupt our men and our leaders. The current fight in the Congress and the very great effort to brand Newt as a bad guy is inspired by jealousy. He became a millionaire by writing a book and none of the books that Foley, or Wright or Al Gore or the other liberal bunch cannot get sold without government subsidy.

I know I have told you all this before but I have, I believe a wider view of the potential damage the liberals have done than any one who ever grew up in the 1960's.

To shorten the sermon, and I guess it did turn into a sermon, I will quote from the real source. Look it up and mark it in your Bible and when you need to know what God wants from you go read it again. If you read it at least ten times, it will finally stand out in neon lights and you will begin to wonder what else is in that wonderful book. I love having the Bible in my computer so I can go and copy a sentence and then transfer it to this paper. I recommend it to anybody who wants to study Micah 6:8 (KJV) He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

I have studied for at least a half century to find the brief description of what God wants and I believe Micah wrote it down over 3000 years ago. One of our great literary critics said brevity is the soul of wit. I apologize for taking so long to get to the point.

Once the decision was made for us to turn southeast and not take Berlin, there was a change in our speed. There was no use to take territory and risk our lives when we knew we would surrender it back to the Russians.

The flood of prisoners grew by huge proportions and literally thousands a day ran to be captured by the Americans.

We stopped at the Mulde River near a town called Rochlitz, Checkoslovakia if you want to look on a map to see where we quit.

It took just a few days for us to turn and head west. There was a new urgency. Anyone who had been in combat only since Jan. 1945, was headed for amphibious training in LeHarve. We were going to be the shock troops headed for the invasion of Japan.

Instead of training at LeHarve, by the time the 40 & 8's who hauled us back to the French coast arrived there was a troop ship waiting for us. We got a good meal and loaded on board an American ship about three times the size of the one I went over on. The trip back took only 5 days and there was nobody shooting at us. It was warm, smooth and wonderful!!!

I didn't have the foggiest notion of what an A-Bomb was, but two of them were announced as important news to us on the way across the Atlantic. We arrived in New York on VJ day. It was a wonderful and spectacular feeling I will never forget. We were treated like heroes. My heart aches for the boys who came home from Vietnam and to sort of welcome they got. I just hope there are enough of us old guys who tell our next generation how we goofed to allow our busy lives and lack of attention to how we vote to let the liberals get the power they have.

Our nation cannot survive when we continue to elect a president with only 24% of the people who live here to be the deciding vote. We must recognize that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance.

God bless you all.
doc Bob

