TO BETH, ROBIN and PATTY.....YOU ASKED FOR IT.

THESE ARE SOME SOMEWHAT HAZY RECOLLECTIONS OF WORLD WAR II IN AFRICA, ITALY AND FRANCE [ALSACE]

BY

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I'm finally going to try and write down some of the things that happened during the war. It could be very boring, because I think the family has heard almost all of this many times. They have been very patient about it. We, as we get older, get more and more nostalgic about those days, and think about them more, which can be a trial to friends and family. I don't know what we'll ever do with this, but here it is.

When the war started, I was in my first year of law school at the University of Chicago. I stayed there long enough after Pearl Harbor to take my first semester exams. (Wound up fourth in my class, by the way). Then I left and enlisted in the service. I had a brief and unsuccessful career in the Naval Air Corps. I made them very nervous, and they suggested I try a different line of work, which I did. I went to the Army and asked them if they could find a spot in the Infantry. They said they could squeeze me in, and they did. So now we begin!

Once upon a time there was a great big war and everybody went; well, almost everybody. I went because I was convinced that it was the right thing to do; that we had to stop the Nazis before they conquered the entire civilized world, which they seemed to be trying to do. We knew that the Jews were being severely persecuted, but we didn't know the whole horrible picture; concentration camps, extermination, etc.

I'm going to start near the end of the war, and later will go back and fill in the earlier chapters. I just wanted to describe a very crucial night in my career before I forget any more of the details. There is so much that I have forgotten; days and weeks that I can't fill in; no recollection of what we were doing or exactly where we were.

On June 14, 1944, I got tangled up with a machine gun bullet near Grosseto, Italy. I still have the bullet. We'll talk about that later, but eventually I wound up in a hospital in Naples. While I was taking life easy there, my division [36th], together with the 45th Division and some other friends, invaded southern France on August 15, 1944. Things went very well by all reports. They moved up the Rhone Valley, taking lots of prisoners and getting a very warm welcome from the French people. Aside from a couple of nasty battles, they moved very fast

until they hit the Vosges mountains. That's when I got back, having missed all of the fun of "liberating". By then it was getting cold and wet and the Germans were digging in and fighting for every bit of ground. Back in the mountains just like Italy. The trip from the hospital to France went like this. First, I went to the replacement depot in Naples, known as the race track. It was a race track Mussolini had supposedly built for the World Fair, which he had planned to host and which never came to pass. I had been there once before on my way up to the front. This time there were a lot of Air Force pilots waiting for a ride home. As I remember, some of these guys had come to Italy, flown their missions and were on their way home while I was in the hospital. It didn't seem exactly fair. We went by small ships to Marseille, where we unloaded and went to another replacement depot. While we were in Marseille, some other troops were unloading on the docks and I spotted Phil Houghkerk, a good friend and high school classmate, with his anti-aircraft unit. He had also found me in Italy, right after I got hit. His was the first face I saw when I woke up from my surgery. While I was in the hospital in Naples, Phil and Chub Shepard had come to visit. Chub was a bomber pilot. We were all good friends and had grown up together. It was great to see people from home!

We went north by train, boxcars known as 40 and 8s, just like they in WWI, supposed to hold forty men or eight horses. It was a very slow trip. I recall the French engineer stopping the train and sitting down on the tracks to eat his lunch; but the scenery was beautiful going up the Rhone Valley. One of the soldiers was sitting in the open door with his feet outside, contrary to orders. He fell and lost a leg under the wheels.

I don't know if I mentioned we were in the Seventh Army in France under General Patch. It seemed to be a much more down-to-earth outfit. But for a while we were assigned to the French Army under a very famous French general; I believe his name was Lattre de Tassigny. It didn't really make any difference in our lives except for a while we could say we were in the French Army. But in France, as towns were liberated, the guys who had been fighting the Germans secretly were known as Maquis or FFI, which was Free French something. Anyway, they would join up with us as we went along and they were more than eager to go out

and kill Germans and were happy to go out on patrols. As long as we gave them guns and ammunition, they were quite blood-thirsty and very anxious to get revenge on the Germans. These were all Frenchmen, of course.

I don't remember exactly where or when I rejoined the Division. However, Zerk Robertson, who had been my Company Commander, the person I most admired in the whole Army, was now Battalion Operations Officer. For some reason, Zerk felt responsible for me getting hit in Italy, so as sort of a payback, he had me appointed Battalion Intelligence Officer; quite a bit safer than a rifle company. I didn't know much about the job except that I had a few men, and we established observation posts, interrogated prisoners, and drew daily position maps for Regimental Headquarters. Two of my men spoke excellent German. One of them was Jewish and he was understandably very nervous about getting captured. Naturally, Zerk and I took a lot of ribbing from the guys in Company L. We were now "rear echelon commandos". It was a lot better life since our staff always was in a house, had hot food, a Jeep to ride in. The Battalion Exec Officer even had a radio and we could listen to BBC and hear how the war was going; we really didn't know.

The terrain kept getting steeper and steeper as we got closer to Germany. There were beautiful forests, hills and mountains with the roads passing through narrow valleys. There was no underbrush in the woods. I think the French people were allowed to take that and burn it. There was always the smell of wood smoke in the air, because the people had wood stoves that they used to heat their houses.

The narrow valleys made it possible for the Germans to fell trees across the roads and form barricades which they would also mine and boobytrap. Our engineers would use tanks and bulldozers to clear the roads. In addition to the anti-tank mines, the Germans used what were known as shoe (shu) mines. These were small wooden boxes with a chunk of explosive inside. If you stepped on one, it generally blew your foot off. They were very hard to detect since they were almost entirely wood. The worst mines were called "Bouncing Betties". They looked like small cans filled with metal balls, with a prong on top of the can. They were buried in the

ground and when they were set off, they came up out of the ground about three feet and exploded, sending chunks of steel about 200 yards in all directions. They could be set off by stepping on the prongs, or they would plant several and connect them with nearly invisible black thread. They buried both kinds of mines along the roads and paths where they expected us to walk. The anti-tank mines were round, flat discs, about a foot across. I lost my intelligence sergeant, a real old timer, who decided to disarm one of these which had just been dug up by the engineers. He didn't have to do it, he was just curious. His last words were "I know all about these things". Very sad.

I guess we were the first army in history to cross the Vosges Mountains in winter. Anyhow, we made it and were coming out into the flatlands that would eventually lead us to the Rhine River and Germany. So, in December of 1944, we captured the town of Ribeauville, which I remember as a quaint little town with a wall around the perimeter. It was getting difficult to know who you could trust. The Alsatians here all spoke German. We felt that the Germans had left radio-equipped spies in civilian clothing in the village. In Ribeauville it did seem that every time you moved, shells would drop in on you. Company L had taken the town and was holding it. My friend, Rich Reuland, had become Company Commander. They had fought off a very heavy counter attack and had killed a lot of Germans. Rich wound up with a chest wound very much like what I had in Italy. Zerk and I rushed down to the aid station to see him. He was lying on a stretcher, tears in his eyes. I said "It's okay, Rich, you'll be okay." He really snapped at me, "I'm not worried about myself...it's the Company!" He was a couple years younger than the rest of us and small (we called him Mouse), but all heart. Since he was of German ancestry, we also called him "Herr Reuland" and questioned his loyalty. Zerk got in touch with Battalion, then told me I was taking over the Company. So in December, 1944, at age 23, I became Commanding Officer of Company L, 143rd Infantry, 36th Division. I'm still proud of that honor. It was a great company, with a distinguished record, and your company becomes like your family. It's a special feeling and you never feel quite at home anywhere else. I don't know how long we were in Ribeauville, but we got order to pull back to the next town. I remember getting a call from the Supply Sergeant of the company which was to relieve us. He wanted us to count our ammunition and leave it there. He would

leave an equal amount of ammunition at our destination, saving us both a lot of work. Since all supply sergeants are necessarily con artists, I was leery of his offer, but I finally agreed and he kept his word. As a result, we were in our new location in no time, much to the surprise of Battalion Headquarters. I don't know how long we stayed in that town, but we did get in some replacements. I went out and made a few welcoming remarks to them. Poor kids didn't have a chance to get acquainted with their new comrades before we were ordered to relieve another company in the town of Mittlewihr. This is a place that will stay in my memory forever. My own worst nightmare. Mittlewihr was a few miles down the road, and we were to move in after dark. As we went down the road we came to a fork where there was supposed to be guides to send us in the right direction. It was a very dark night and when we reached the fork there were no guides. We took the wrong road. When we discovered the error, we had to march back to the split and take the other fork. I blamed myself and was pretty upset. However, it may have been a blessing in disguise, since the Germans shelled the hell out of the road, just about the time we should have been there. This was another suspicious event, making us feel that someone had tipped them off as to our time of departure and our intended destination. After all that, we marched into town. I remember stepping on something soft in the road, but I couldn't see what it was. The next morning I was back in that part of town and saw what it was...a dead German soldier, or what was left of him. From the waist down he was completely gone...nothing! Digression. Later, when I was in the hospital, a tank officer in the next bed and I were talking about Mittlewihr, and he told me about shooting at a German solder with his 75mm cannon. "Cut him right in half." So that's how the poor guy got it. This same tank officer was surprised to see me. He had heard that I was dead (after my second wound).

The company we replaced in Mittlewihr warned us that we were facing SS troops. These were elite troops; very aggressive, trying to infiltrate their positions at night using knives. They were very tough customers!

A lot of the buildings in town were on fire. It looked like something out of Dante's Inferno. Later, we actually tried to keep the buildings burning with shells from our mortars,

so we could see better at night. There was something very ominous and threatening about that place. We felt we were moving into a bad situation.

We took over the positions of the other company. Our lines stretched from the buildings in town out into the vineyards on the left flank. Looking out over the fields you could see for miles across a very flat valley. From time to time you could see columns of German troops moving up. We had an artillery officer with us who tried to direct his artillery on these columns whenever they were in range. There was also a low hill behind us, covered with small trees and bushes. My first platoon on our left flank in the vineyard apparently did not make contact with the friendly units on our left. This created a gap which led to serious problems later. Even though the platoon was in the charge of a veteran sergeant, I blame myself for not following up and making sure our front was intact. Later, that sergeant was wounded, and when he went back to the aid station, things got worse.

The heart of our position was a school building two stories high with a basement. I will try to make a rough sketch of it to include, since that was where the most action took place. There was a street in front of the school with a low wall on our side of the street. The school sat back about twenty feet from the wall. There was a center hall in the school with an open doorway facing the street. On each side of the center hall there was a classroom; each with a large window on the street side. There was also a hall across the back of the building, running parallel with the street. We had two 30-caliber heavy machine guns from M Company. One was set up in each of the front windows. I had my command post and the aid station set up in the basement. There was a courtyard or playground at the rear of the school. About fifty or seventy-five feet to our right were some other buildings with doors and windows facing the school. The one closest to us was on the street, but its rear wall was a common wall with the house behind it. My 60mm mortar crew was in the rear house with their mortars set up in the courtyard behind their house.

It isn't a good idea to have your company command post set up on the front line, but that was the position we took over from the other company, and in the long run it turned out to be

fortunate. I don't know how many days or nights we were in that town, and I can't recall the exact sequence of events. Although we didn't know it at first, we were surrounded much of the time. They apparently came through that gap on the left. At one point we captured a lone German soldier and brought him into the command post for interrogation. As it turned out he was an SS trooper, but Polish, with long, blond hair.

Our artillery officer was also Polish, so he did the interrogating. Cold sweat was pouring off the prisoner and he kept shaking his head, which sent sweat flying in all directions. It kept hitting my exec officer, Pete Messner, which made Pete mad. Anyway, the prisoner explained that he wasn't afraid of us. He said we were surrounded and when we were captured he would be killed, because SS troops were not ever to let themselves be captured.

At one point, on order from Battalion, I sent a squad out to our left flank to fill in the gap. They came back and said they couldn't get there. Since Battalion and I were very anxious to make contact with units on our left, I decided to take the patrol out myself...not a good idea for a company commander. But I left Pete in charge and we went back to the other side of the hill behind us and came up just below the crest. The first five or six of us made it up near the top of the hill when all hell broke loose. It seemed as though both friendly troops at the base of the hill on our left [including tanks] and Germans on the hill started shooting at us. The Americans apparently had been engaged in a fire fight and thought we were new enemy troops coming up over the hill. It was a helluva spot, but there just happened to be a row of shallow slit trenches right where we were. We dived into them. They were just deep enough for us to lie flat below ground level. The bullets were digging up the dirt just above our heads. All we could do was hug the ground until the shooting eased up. I yelled at the guys to make a dash for it back down the hill. They took off and I followed them, the last one down the hill. We all made it without getting hit. When we got back to the spot where we had left the rest of the patrol, we couldn't find them. We yelled and looked, but finally decided they had gone back. Weeks later I found out that they had been ambushed by Germans behind our lines on the hill. I'm not sure, but I think all of our men got away okay. I also can't remember how many times we were shelled by artillery and tanks. They kept trying to knock the school building down and

the whole structure would shake like mad. One day we were on the second floor of the school and spotted German soldiers moving up through the vineyards. Everybody seemed stunned, so I grabbed a rifle and started shooting. They went down, got up and went down again. The distance was too great to be sure about the results, but the first platoon should have been dealing with this, but didn't seem to be.

Since our command post was on the front line, we had a terrible time keeping our telephone lines intact. The artillery kept knocking them out, but our communications sergeant, a kid by the name of Razek (from Cleveland) kept going night and day through terrible shelling, repairing the lines over and over again. I was going to recommend him for a Silver Star, but never got the chance.

I don't know if I ever slept while we were in that town. I was too worried, too anxious about the Company to sit still. Confession...One day I nearly cracked. I started out of the school with another guy to check the company on our right. Just then a heavy barrage came in right around us. My legs moved by themselves, and I found myself back in the building without knowing how I got there. I really had to force myself back outside.

Now for the bad part!! One night, I left the command post in the middle of the night to check our positions. As I got up on the first floor hallway, I heard the sound of hobnail boots....lots of them, in the street in front of the school. I was in the center hall and opened fire with my carbine, firing blindly out towards the street. This produced a lot of German voices shouting. The next thing I knew, they were throwing a grenade down the center hall. I could see it coming by the sparks or something and I ducked back around the corner until it exploded. Then I whipped around the corner and started firing again. I don't know how many clips I emptied, but all the time I was yelling for the machine gunners to open fire. After the first couple grenades, the Germans tried throwing over the top of the building into the courtyard behind me, thinking they could reach me that way. I don't remember being particularly afraid, but I know my heart was pounding when I heard those hobnail boots out in the street. Anyway, I was shooting away into the darkness and yelling at the machine gunners to open up. It seemed

that they had either been asleep or frozen. But they did open up, shooting out into the street, thank God. At this time the Germans took off and ran over into the building on our right. As soon as we discovered where they were, I pulled one of the machine guns out of the window and set it up in a doorway facing the building where the bad guys now were. We peppered the doors and windows of their building so they couldn't get out. Meanwhile, I got my mortar crew on the phone. They were now right next to the Germans. I had them fire phosphorus shells so we could keep track of the enemy and keep them penned up. I think it was the mortar crew's idea, rather than mine, to get hold of the light tank which was parked nearby in support of our Company. He pulled up next to the building where the Germans were, turned his 75mm cannon and fired directly into the building at point blank range. This had to be devastating to them to have a cannon shooting at them from only a few feet away. It did persuade twenty-eight Germans to come out and surrender. I still feel bad about that gap on our left flank, but I also now recognize that if I hadn't made my rounds, started shooting, got the machine guns going and pinned those troops in the building, the whole Company would have been lost.

Eventually, because of the difficulty of keeping our telephone lines intact, Battalion ordered me to move my command post back to the next intersection. At that point, I had decided to reorganize our positions to eliminate some weak spots. Before I left, a medic attached to our Company pressed me for details about the changes. He seemed to be a take-charge guy, although medics are supposedly non-combatants. Afterwards, I heard that he did take charge and got actively involved in the fighting. I'm not exactly sure what he did, but he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

After our command post was moved back to the new location, we got orders to pull the Company back from Mittlewihr. I got in my Jeep with my driver and messenger and drove down to the edge of town to be there when the guys pulled out. It was a terrible picture of what war is all about. The shelling was intense and the whole town seemed to be on fire. Our people were coming out one at a time and they all made it. My driver, who was a nice young kid, just about had hysterics, hopping up and down, foot to foot, so anxious to get out of there. When the men were all out, we went back to headquarters. That day or the next, Zerk came down to

see me. To backtrack a little, one of the other medics with us knocked himself out with alcohol or drugs out of his kit. He was a big guy and he was unconscious, and when the guys pulled out they couldn't wake him or carry him. I never knew what happened to him. One other story...one of our men, a short, roly-poly guy, got separated from his squad and hid for several days in a cellar. He lived on turnips. When I saw him a few weeks later he was a lot thinner....possible diet food? He also told me that at one point he saw some guys in the street and called to them, thinking they were our people. Actually they were Germans, but fortunately they didn't hear or see him.

When Zerk arrived at Company Headquarters, I had my shoes and socks off. He saw that my feet were turning a peculiar color and they hurt like the devil. We had just been issued new boots with felt liners. This was the Army's attempt to find something for cold weather warfare. All they did was make your feet sweat. After days and nights of constant sweat and cold, I guess I never took them off and I never stopped moving. Zerk insisted I go back to the aid station and they sent me back. I was in the hospital for about two or three weeks until my feet straightened out, sort of. they are still very sensitive to cold. While I was in the hospital, my sister, Pat, who was a WAC in General Bradley's Headquarters and had access to all the casualty and hospitalization records, found out where I was and came to see me. While she was there she stayed with the nurses. I believe this visit was over Christmas. We had a lot of catching up to do and had a good visit. However, the hospital was bombed and strafed one night and some people got hurt, but we were okay. Pat had enlisted in the WACS after I was away in the Army. At first, I was quite worried about her, since some of the guys had terrible attitudes towards WACs, but she seemed to have adjusted very well. We had gotten together in Chattanooga for a brief visit when she was at Fort Oglethorpe and I was on maneuvers at Camp Forest, Tenn. She late wound up in Scotland and England and went through the "buzz bomb" or V-2 raids. Mean stuff. She was probably the prettiest WAC in the whole U.S. Army.

When I left the hospital, it was a long, cold trip back to the Division. I seem to remember going through the city of Strasbourg. I thought my feet were going to kill me. They

were very painful when they got cold. When I reached Battalion Headquarters, they told me they had brought a Captain in from England to take over the Company while I was gone. They didn't know exactly what to do with me, but sent me down to the Company to help him out, which I did. I picked up my second Purple Heart that same night, which was probably just as well for my feet hurt like the devil.

The Company was holding a little town called Lemberg near a larger town appropriately named Bitche. The Captain took me around and showed me our positions. It was bitter cold weather and there was a lot of snow on the ground. I remember seeing some familiar faces in the foxholes. Some of the guys were looking kind of spooked. There were reports that the Germans were using flame throwers, which we had not met up with before. After dark, someone reported noise on the right side of our position. The ground dropped off sharply there on that side. We were on the top of the hill. Starting from the edge of the houses it went down into low, wooded ground. Nobody was quite sure whether there were mines out there. We waited while Headquarters tried to find out if there were any. Apparently, they didn't <u>think</u> there were, so we finally decided we would make our night patrol and we started out. I think I had four or five men. I was in front carrying a brand new Tommy gun (that's a Thompson sub-machine gun). We were all walking single file down a path just at the edge of the houses near the top of the hill. Next I saw the flash of an explosion in the dark about ten or fifteen yards ahead of me. I've never been sure whether it was a grenade, mine or a mortar shell, although if it were a mortar shell, you usually heard a last second zip of the shell dropping through the air. It seemed that something exploded in my stomach. I knew I'd been hit hard. The guy immediately behind me had a chunk of his ear taken out, but the others were okay. Instinctively, I told the men who were okay to take up positions in the nearest house in case it had been a grenade and that there were enemy soldiers just below us. I started back with the guy whose ear was missing. It was about seventy-five yards, I think, back to the Company command post and aid station. About half way back, I had lost so much blood that I was getting dizzy and could no longer carry that Tommy gun, so I threw it away. By the time I reached the house where the Company command post was, I was falling down and made a dramatic entrance by falling through the door, landing on the floor. The medics went to work immediately cutting

open my front. I remember hearing an involuntary gasp or groan from the guys standing around when he did this, opening my clothes. It made me wonder what awful sight they had seen. I was wearing several sweaters and the medic cut through all of them to give me a shot of morphine. I wanted him to take them off first since they were all brand new, but he wouldn't. He didn't want to move me that much. After they stopped he bleeding and bandaged me up, they put me on a stretcher on the hood of a Jeep and took me back to the Battalion aid station. It was still bitter cold and a very slow, bumpy ride. I don't remember much pain except from the jolts from the bumps hurt.

At the Battalion aid station, they did some other things. The Chaplain gave me a cup of hot tea. I was familiar with some of the medical procedures from my last wound and I remember the Chaplain commenting that I had obviously been through this before. From there I went by ambulance to the Evac hospital; the same one I had been in in Italy. I recognized one of the two doctors who had operated on me before. They took x-rays to see if it was a stomach would or a leg wound since it was in the groin. I remember the technicians talking to me later and telling me that I was lucky it wasn't a stomach wound. Some fragments had hit and embedded in the stomach area, but had not penetrated the lining. I don't remember much of what happened after that, except that I was in a general hospital for a while, and then went on a hospital train to another general hospital in the south of France in Aix en Provence. The hospital there was in a building which had been an insane asylum. I arrived there in February and stayed there until the war in Europe ended in May. After a couple of cold, wintery weeks, they have mistral winds there, off of the Alps, the weather turned warm and sunny....wonderful climate. Eventually, we could walk into town...a pretty old city. The French people were still without gasoline. They were very ingenious in fixing up some Rube Goldberg contraptions; wood burning devices fastened to their automobiles and trucks which powered them in place of gasoline, I guess by steam. Occasionally we would go to restaurants or movies in town or sort of a dance hall. I remember at the movies they always ended with everybody standing and singing the Marseillaise with great emotion. Aside from that, we hung around the hospital playing ping-pong and censoring mail. Near the end of my stay I got to go to a hotel in town and spend a couple of days sleeping in a real bed in a nice room eating Army food prepared by

a French hotel staff. The Red Cross did offer trips to the Riviera, but I didn't go. Now I wish I'd seen it. They also would buy French perfume for us to send home. I sent Worth perfume to Betty. Some of the guys somehow got Evening in Paris, which you also got in every drugstore in the United States. Some of the guys dated French girls who worked in the hospital kitchen. They had names like Fifi and Mimi and looked exactly like that.

Things I remember: There was a black Army Captain in the hospital with us, a career man. He was from an all-black tank outfit which had a wonderful reputation as a class outfit. It was pretty hard for black outfits to get any credit for anything good in those days. They had to be really good. Anyway, he had taken a bullet in the stomach and had a colostomy. He was a very powerfully built young man, but began wasting away down to skin and bones. Some of our nurses from the south weren't very nice to him. So several of us made a point of spending time with him and trying to make it up to him. I remember one nurse saying, "Did you see that nigger's eyes roll when I gave him a shot?" I told her, "Did you see my eyes roll when you gave me that shot?" They saw what they were looking for.

There were also a lot of Japanese-American wounded from the 442 Regiment, the best outfit in the United States Army. I was so impressed with these guys. Since we had to censor mail (as officers who were in the hospital and not doing anything else) a lot of these guys were writing home to their families in detention camps in the United States. In spite of this, they wrote the most patriotic letters I've ever censored. The 100th Battalion and the 442 Regiment can never get enough credit for their sacrifices. They were really a first-class organization; the most decorated in the U.S. Army.

We had a good doctor on our ward. But when he was away, a real jerk filled in just to change dressings and make the rounds. He would to this sometimes with a cigarette with an ash, big ash on the end hanging out of his mouth and the ash would drop off onto the patient. One day he asked me how I felt and I said, "okay". So he issued orders for me to go back to combat. The next day, I picked up my gear and walked about three quarters of a mile to the area of the hospital where you started back. When I got there, the doctor in charge examined

my wound and said, "Who the hell sent you here? You should be in the ZI." That is the Zone of Interior, which translated means the United States of America.

I went back to the hospital ward and the regular doctor confirmed that I was to go home. I could hardly handle the news. I was desperate to get home to Betty. And, two really bad wounds had convinced me that I had had enough. At last I had some hope of making it and couldn't really believe it. While we were waiting for a ship to take us home, the war in Europe ended. VE Day.

They took us down to Marseilles and loaded us onto a big oceanliner. We were mostly on stretchers or walking wounded, Infantry, artillery and tankers, that sort. After we got on the ship, we turned the wrong direction and went back to Italy near the heel of the boot and picked up an Air Force outfit, I forget what it was. They were obnoxious. We were all hospital patients generally in pajamas or on canes or crutches and these guys, even officers, kept shoving in front of us walking wounded in the chow lines until finally the Captain of the ship or somebody issued an order that we got priority, because we weren't very rugged at that point.

I think it took us about seven days to get back home and we came into Boston Harbor. Since we were the first big troop ship coming back after the war ended in Europe, there was a huge celebration planned. There were boats circling and bands playing and people waving. I will never forget as we stood there on deck, there came over the louder speaker, the ship's system, "This reception is for the 15th Air Force", which again made us poor Infantry people feel like we were lost souls. That's sort of typical. The Air Corps led a charmed life, although they had their problems, too. But we always felt that they got the best of the deal.

After we landed, I was taken out to Camp Edwards, to a hospital there. I don't know how long I stayed there, but eventually I was sent to another hospital in Louisville, Kentucky. This train which took us went right through the City of Painesville in the middle of the night and I almost jumped off. It had been nearly two years since I left my little bride. I could hardly

stand the thought of being that close and not getting home to her. I went down to Louisville, Kentucky and eventually went before a medical board which decided I was permanently disabled.

Working my way back from the end of the war to the start. I'm now going to go back to where I left the United States. We were in a camouflaged camp near Norfolk, Virginia (Camp Patrick Henry), Hampton Roads area. We were quarantined there, nobody was allowed to leave the camp and go into town, although people did and apparently got away with it. They went under or over fences and hitchhiked into Norfolk. I stayed in camp and waited for our orders to come.

Finally, they told us we were shipping out the next day. We lined up, basically groups of 500 enlisted men and a few officers in each group in a long line stretching forever just waiting for their orders to move. After a long time, our little group, which was entirely second lieutenants of Infantry, no enlisted men, moved out. There were only about fifteen or twenty of us and we couldn't figure out why we weren't with any groups of 500 enlisted men. They loaded onto a small boat and took us out to a Liberty ship, which was the standard transport ship for cargo and troops. We were loaded on board and given bunk assignments down below. Again, there were just about fifteen or twenty of us second lieutenants of Infantry. Another small boat came out and unloaded some guys who were under guard. They had been taken out of the Army stockade as prisoners for some minor offenses and brought onto the ship.

A few days out to sea, we found out the reason why there weren't 500 enlisted men on our ship. The Captain of the ship, an old, grizzled Dutchman, a seadog if there ever was one, invited us up to the bridge and we chatted with him and asked him about why there were no troops on board. He laughed and said, "Why we're loaded solid with explosives. If a sub hits us, it will blow itself out of the water." This was another indication to us of where second lieutenants of Infantry rated in the Army scheme of things. We were in a huge convoy of cargo ships. For the first few days out from the mainland there were small blimps circling as anti-submarine protection in addition to the destroyers and destroyer escorts around the outside of

the convoy that kept circling back and forth guarding our flanks. I believe for a while we also had a small aircraft carrier with its planes taking off and landing and watching for subs.

It turned out that the men who were brought on ship under guard were enlisted personnel who were to serve as KPs for our little officers' mess. As a result, we had a pretty good life. We ate well and had nothing to do. It actually took about twenty-one days to cross the ocean and reach our destination, which we'll get into later. Somewhere out on the ocean one day, a very calm, sunny day, our ship's engine had a breakdown and the rest of the convoy sailed off while we fell behind....except I think there were destroyer escorts that were sort of wandering around keeping an eye on us. We sat dead in the water. We were getting a little nervous about this because we felt all alone and very helpless, and we were aware by then of our cargo.

I remember we were all back at the fantail, that's the aft end of the ship, and one of my friends said, "Hey, look over the rail there. You look down and you can see that the ship's screw is not turning. It's just dead in the water...not moving." So I leaned over and sure enough that was true. I was wearing a pair of coveralls and I had my wallet in an upper pocket. My wallet fell out and dropped in the water where it floated behind the ship just tantalizing me. It didn't sink. It just sat there behind the ship. We must have been moving slightly because it gradually fell behind. And the guys said, "Oh jump. It's not that high and you can pick it up." I declined that because I didn't think the Captain was going to come back and rescue one individual under the circumstances that we were in.

Eventually, the engine got fixed and the screw started moving again. We caught up with the convoy and not much of anything happened. I don't remember very much about the weather, so it must have been uneventful. We finally went through the Straits of Gibraltar, and the Rock of Gibraltar didn't look at all like I'd pictured it. It looked like a big concrete slab running up one side of it. We went on through the Straits and into the Mediterranean and eventually wound up at the town of Oran, which is a city on the African coast of Algeria. It was there that the convoy unloaded...except for us. We sat there for a day or so. It was interesting. You kept hearing these explosions. They said that the ships that were anchored

there just periodically dropped dynamite into the water so that in case there were any saboteurs trying to damage the ships, they'd be discouraged or killed. I don't know if this is true. We sat out alone, by ourselves, went down further east to Cape Bon, where we unloaded. This was the first time I got a look at Arabs. There were people standing on the dock, Arabs, in long robes just like pictures out of your storybook. I seem to recall some shoes with toes that curled up just like you've seen in Arabian Nights. We unloaded there and then went by truck back to Oran where there was a replacement camp. That's where we stayed for the next few weeks. We were right on the Mediterranean coast, about 600 feet above water level.

There was a pink casino right on the edge of the cliff looking over the Mediterranean. The story was that this was where the Duke of Windsor and the Duchess that he gave up his throne for had met. I kind of doubt this story. I think I've heard it about four or five other places along the Mediterranean. We lived there in tents and periodically for exercise, they'd make us go up and down that cliff to the Mediterranean. We could go swimming in the Mediterranean, but the weather was turning cold so we didn't do much of that. There were a lot of troops, all of us waiting shipment. Each day they would march us out to the training fields and they would march the enlisted men out and they would parcel them off in groups of about platoon size and say okay, you go teach these groups the following subjects. It was all just kind of make-work and eventually, much to our shame, we began to disappear as they were marching us out to the field. We would dive into tents or behind tents and then eventually work our way back into the town of Oran to go to the Red Cross Club where we could get ice cream and Spam sandwiches - things like that.

I did run into somebody I knew from Hiram College there, and also one day there was Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., who was a naval officer, movie star and the son of the famous movie star of silent pictures. There were also a lot of foreign officers in our club who seemed very hungry and ate everything in sight. They were French, English and whatever was in port. The thing I remember about the harbor was there were some French destroyers and cruisers, and they were just amazingly camouflaged, so when they sailed through the water it was hard to tell

how fast or how slow they were going. We also had a Red Cross Club at the Replacement Depot and we could get ice cream there, play cards, ping-pong - things like that.

I hung around with a big guy, an artillery officer, who had been a heavyweight boxing champion, I think in Minnesota. He was a beautifully built guy, but he could not find his way from one building to another. He sort of had to be led around by the hand. He and I developed a card trick routine and had a lot of fun doing it. We did it as a mind reading act. One night we had two lieutenants staring into each other's eyes for an hour, trying to read each other's minds. You didn't go anywhere in the town of Oran by yourself because they said you'd get mugged and robbed, probably knifed.

At some point or another, they decided that we officers would go to a training camp which was a couple of miles from the main camp. We would march over there every morning and go through the courses that they prescribed for us. This school was run by Infantry officers who had found a good berth and they were hanging onto it. They were as obnoxious as they could be. They were petty, they were arrogant, and we were very resentful. We knew we were heading for Italy and combat and a very risky future, so we resented the way they treated us. Every day as we would march away on our way back to the main camp, we would count cadence. At some point somebody would shout, "forty-eight" and then we would all go "forty-nine, fifty-some shit". They threatened us with court martial and made all kinds of ugly noises but nothing ever happened.

We were to be sent down near the town which is the headquarters of the French Foreign Legion on the edge of the desert (Sidi Bel Abbes). It was a picturesque town, full of stucco-like buildings and sycamore trees. We went through it and went out to another training camp which was run by an English Captain, a Sandhurst graduate...that's the equivalent of our West Point. He was a lean, wiry guy, and we liked him a lot. He knew his stuff. They told us we came down with a very bad reputation for behavior and so forth. We turned out to be the best class they had had there. When we were treated decently, we responded well and we worked hard while we were there. We were getting more realistic about combat training. We were doing

a lot of firing of our own weapons and running through problems where they set off explosives all around us and machine gun fire over our heads. We ran night problems in these wadis (which is an Arab term for an empty ditch, really a ravine). Sometimes if it rains you get water running through them as small rivers and so forth.

When we were down training on the edge of the desert with that English officer, he was like a greyhound. He could run and never get tired. My best friend down there was a kid from Kansas; apple-cheeked, farm boy by the name of Paul Riordan. He and I were probably as athletic as anybody in the group. We would try and beat this English officer running up hills and across plowed grounds. We never could catch him or beat him. He enjoyed the competition and we had a lot of fun. Paul wound up in Italy with the 34th Division. I heard later that he got the Congressional Medal of Honor, posthumously. He was trying to take the town of Cassino by himself and got killed in the process. He was a real good, solid kid.

The weather turned cold and rainy. There was a low mountain over near us, I think it was called Lion Mountain. We did see snow on top of that mountain once. Snow in Africa? The weather wasn't bad, except for the rain and we learned a lot from that course. The one thing I do remember that I first learned there was that when somebody shot a high-velocity rifle shot at you from some distance, the noise you heard first was the crack of the bullet passing through the air over your head, and then you would hear the thump of the actual rifle shot. The British theory was that you heard the crack and then you heard the thump and you counted the time between them and that would tell you how far away the rifleman was because you knew approximately the velocity of the bullet. It was perfectly logical. I don't ever remember doing it, though, in actual combat.

The Arabs around Oran were a pretty sad looking group. Out in the country a lot of them lived in round huts, like overgrown igloos made of skins, sod, sticks, etc. A friend of mine from Ohio, a dairy farmer, said the cattle were so scrawny, he concluded that the breed hadn't been improved since Biblical times. They must have been awfully desperate for food and other necessities. They would hang around the camp and pick up scraps of anything. They

would even dig up latrines looking for something - whatever. In the city of Oran there were all these Arab kids on the streets wanting to shine your shoes. My friend, Paul Riordan, was really taken by a cute little Arab boy who had almost no cloth to work with. Paul went to the Army PX, bought a bath towel, tore it into strips and gave it to the kid to shine shoes with. Had he left it whole, the kid probably could have gotten a fortune for it. I don't think I ever saw an attractive Arab woman, and of course they had no status at all. The standing joke was they walked ahead of the men, in case there were land mines. Bob Hope described them as "lister bags [that's a water bag] with legs". Our English Captain, as much as we admired him, made it clear why the English were never popular in their colonies. One day we were out in the field ready to train with live ammunition. He wanted to clear the area, so he picked up a rifle and started shooting over the heads of the Arabs across the field near their hut. Men, women, children, cows and goats all fled in terror, screaming and crying. The Captain acted like it was the most natural thing in the world.

When we finished training there, we eventually shipped out for Italy. We all went down and loaded onto an old Scot freighter...an awful looking tub...and set sail for Italy. I remember as we were waiting on the dock to load onto the ship, there was a U.S. Navy ship anchored in there with a contingent of Marines. Of course they lived on board. They were drilling on the dock next to us. Their uniforms were all neat and carefully pressed and they looked so sharp and we were so bedraggled, dirty and ugly looking that we felt kind of ashamed of ourselves. But we loaded on this old tub. There were I think American, English and maybe Canadian troops who were jammed into it. We again were officers in a group in the same compartment. They had boat drills from time to time. You would put on your life jacket and rush up to assigned space on deck to your lifeboat stand by. After the first drill, we were told that the ship was overloaded and that our little group of officers didn't have a lifeboat. They had none for us, so we felt again we knew where we stood. So from then on when they had boat drills, we sat and played Casino down below decks and didn't bother going up. The artillery officer who was in charge of our compartment would come down and scream obscenities at us and threaten us with everything. We would just go on playing cards. Nothing happened there. When you're on your way to combat it's kind of hard to threaten you with much of anything.

Actually, we lived like officers and gentlemen on the Scot troop ship. We had an officers' mess and we had our own waiter. He took care of us and served several courses at dinner. It was a pretty nice life. We heard music from the BBC, including a lot of bagpipe music. In the evenings we played cards, Casino, most all of the time, little realizing, Cassino, spelled differently, was where we were eventually headed.

We eventually pulled into the harbor of Naples. Naples sits at sea level and then it runs up the hills to a very nice, beautiful, picturesque area overlooking the harbor from up above. There was a huge ship turned over and half sunk in the middle of the harbor. We unloaded and I guess went by trucks to the racetrack where they had a replacement depot. They were known as "repple-depples". We were there for the next few weeks.

Periodically, we would hitch a ride to Naples and look for something to do. They were selling cameos and they were selling all sorts of junk. The prices went up constantly. There were little kids on the street with little homemade signs saying they would sell you beefsteaks, spaghetti and usually the last item on the card was "signorina". The people were living in poverty and filth and they were having a terrible time. They had really suffered in the City of Naples from the war.

Coming back to the replacement depot at the racetrack, I don't remember if we hitched rides on Army trucks or what, but we would always wind up at the top of the hill and this racetrack was in a deep valley. The highway led down to the camp. These little Italian kids with their overgrown skateboards would offer us rides to get us down this hill. You would lie down flat on this thing with the kid and go down that hill at a fantastic pace. I don't think there was any way that they could steer them. You just prayed that you didn't hit something or somebody didn't hit you because you were going down the highway too. But we did that for excitement.

Eventually, I don't remember how long I was there. We were sent next to another replacement depot up closer to the lines. This was known as the dairy. It had been a former

dairy farm and it had now been turned into another replacement depot, only much smaller than the one in Naples. Basically, we did the same thing at all of these camps. We trained troops periodically and listened for rumors. We were always hearing rumors that the war was about to end or that this development was going to happen, this attack was going to be made or all sorts of rumors, mostly unfounded. It kept us occupied. Also, wherever you go, if you're an officer, you have to censor mail. It's amazing what you'd read in some people's letters. For instance, the racetrack was along way from the front and aside from maybe anti-aircraft fire once in a while at night when they thought a German plane was over, there was no action. I remember censoring a guy's letter writing home to his mother telling her he was under constant machine gun fire and artillery fire and he was just having a hell of a time. It was absolutely pure fiction. There were people in these depots who had been with combat units, been wounded and been in the hospital and then back through these establishments to rejoin their outfits. We began to see some of the first members of the 100th Battalion which was a Japanese-American outfit which was making a wonderful reputation for itself as being a very heroic and determined group. The 100th Battalion was eventually enlarged into the 442 Regiment, all Japanese-American boys, many of whom had parents in detention camps in the United States. I think they were the finest outfit in the whole United States Army.

Going back to the dairy, you were up closer to the front, possibly ten or fifteen miles away. You could hear the artillery at night and the town nearby was strafed by a German plane one day. There was an intersection there that they thought was important, I guess. So they strafed it although I don't think they did any damage and didn't hurt anybody. There were anti-aircraft guns around our camp. I thought surely that day of the air raid that the gunners would open up. I'd had some training in aircraft recognition and it looked like German Fock-Wolfe dive bomber, a single-engine plane. So I went over and asked one of the crews why they hadn't been firing at it. They said we though it was one of our B-25s, which was a twin-engine bomber. So I lost a little faith in their training.

I eventually got my assignment to the 36th Division, which was formerly the Texas National Guard. It was on the lines when I got my orders. This Division had a reputation as

a hard-luck outfit...a good outfit, but unlucky. They jokingly said that when they cut your orders to send you to the Division, they also cut your orders for the Purple Heart, just to save time; which wasn't too much of an exaggeration because I think the Division wound up with the third highest casualty rate in the whole United States Army in any theatre.

Some of the rumors we were getting in back of the lines were partly true. In other words, we were hearing rumors about the invasion at Anzio before it happened. We knew that an Italian Battalion from the Italian Army had attempted to take the town of Cassino and failed along with everybody else. We also knew that the 36th Division had tried to cross the Rapido River and just about got destroyed.

So we were prepared for the worst. We went by truck up towards the Division. As you went closer to the lines, the scenery got more and more dramatic. All the trees were knocked down, splintered. All the buildings were destroyed. There was hardly anything left standing intact. There were telephone lines everywhere. This is one of the things you don't realize beforehand. The communications of an Army are countless telephone lines running everywhere; just hundreds of them. You begin to learn how important communications are. The MPs directing traffic were all in foxholes along the side of the road. Eventually, we got up to the Regimental Command Post which at that point was in the remains of a farm house not too far from the Rapido River in a big valley. I believe the Adjutant spoke to us briefly and asked us about our training. I had trained mostly as a heavy weapons platoon leader, which was the 81mm mortars and the 30-caliber water-cooled heavy machine guns. But apparently they were not losing those people as fast as some others, so instead of going to a heavy weapons company, I was sent to a rifle company....Company L, 143rd Infantry.

I'm glad I did, really. I became weapons platoon leader there, but that was with the 60mm mortars and the light 30-caliber machine guns. They were just smaller versions of the equipment I had trained on so this was no problem. From Regimental Headquarters we went down to the company by Jeep. I'll never forget our escort, Will Kaleuva. Will was a nice, roly-poly Jewish guy from New York City. He had been a radio comedian. He said he'd been

on the air with Fred Allen from time to time, which was big time. But Will couldn't find his way from one tree to another. He was strictly a city boy who got lost if you turned him loose. They just sort of let him ride around in a Jeep carrying passengers. He escorted us down to the company. Everybody loved "Uncle Will". Eventually the Army realized he was not in the right place and they transferred him to 5th Army Radio where he was at home and made a valuable contribution. He said he dedicated numbers to our company but we didn't have a radio, so we never heard him. He came back to visit us once and brought some wonderful salamis, and we were happy to see him. After the war, I did see him on TV occasionally, playing a villain in "Man from U.N.C.L.E." So he really was in show business.

When I got to the company, he took me to a little farm house not far from the banks of the river. It was a pretty sad scene. There were machine guns sitting around with snow piled on top of them. There were only fifteen or eighteen guys in sight. The command post was in the lower level of this small farmhouse and the aid station was right next to it [same building]. On the way in, we passed through Battalion ammunition dump which was pretty close to the house...which leads me to another digression. When I was in officers' training in Fort Benning, I was sitting with Art Oldham in a class once, and they were talking about infantry tactics. We weren't paying attention, we were working on a project of our own. (Art's idea - he was an idea man). The instructor called me to place various units in this infantry attack situation. He asked me where to put the aid station, the company headquarters and the ammunition dump and all of that. I wound up just guessing and putting them somewhere. He said you got them all much too close together. Now to jump back to Italy, that's <u>just</u> how they were when I got there. They were all close together. I felt vindicated. One day, a shell hit the ammunition dump and blew up a lot of ammo.

The first person I met was a brash kid called Charlie Kelly. He was from Pittsburgh and proceeded to tell me all about himself. He had won the Congressional Medal of Honor at the town of Altavilla (killed forty Germans). He had been recommended for another Congressional Medal across the Rapido. I guess he did wind up with a Distinguished Service Cross for that...which is something. He was a brash, likable kid, the first big hero (Infantry) of WWII.

He also told me the Saturday Evening Post had offered him $40,000 for his life story which was going to run in serial fashion in the magazine. Again, this was big time, and $40,000 in those days was a fantastic sum of money. Charlie was still doing his duty and he was a good soldier, but he had to haze me a little because of what had happened at the Rapido River with their officers.

Just to backtrack...the crossing...the attempted crossing of the Rapido River was probably one of the most tragic blunders of the Italian campaign. There were many, but this was the worst. This was a Texas Division, Texas National Guard. The companies were made up of kids mostly from the same town...like our company was out of Hillsboro, Texas...K Company of our Regiment was out of Waco. We lost, in effect, two regiments. Our company had been around 180 people, it was down to eighteen. They weren't all dead, but they were either dead or wounded. This was typical through all of the battalions of those two regiments. It was a tragic thing because when those casualty lists for the companies went back, they hit those individual Texas towns pretty hard. Those Texas people have never forgiven Mark Clark and I haven't either. I think he was the worst general in the United States Army. He was a publicity hound and all he cared about was getting his name and picture in the paper. He had his headquarters in the King's palace and he was concerned with his own reputation, nothing else.

The line troops were entirely demoralized and just sort of hanging on by the skin of their teeth. If the German Army had counterattacked right then, I think they could have gone all the way back to Naples. The first person I really got to know in the company, after Kelly, was Zerk Robertson. Zerk, I guess is my all-time idol. He was a farm boy out of Texas, but he'd had some junior college. He was just a good, solid guy, a born leader. I quickly realized that the guys who were left in the company just idolized him. He was a second lieutenant, and was the only officer left in the company. He was, therefore, the Company Commander. A couple months before, he'd been a sergeant, so this was a unique situation. I actually out-ranked him because of my commission date, and I think Zerk was a little uneasy about that at first. They had not had a very good experience with the company officers at the time. The Captain, who

they also loved, was in the hospital, wounded. But a couple of the others had sort of disappeared off the scene. One decided he had crab lice and had to go back to the aid station and so forth. So they were not real thrilled with officers about that time. So Kelly took me inside where Zerk was on the telephone talking to somebody and he said "Here's a new lieutenant." Zerk just kind of looked up and grunted and looked down again, like, "What the hell have they sent me now?"

The guys were cooking him toast in a mess kit. They had found some slabs of bread and put butter on them and they were frying them in the kit because that's the way Zerk liked them. They were always looking after him. He, meanwhile, had taken it upon himself to organize some action, realizing that the troops would be even more demoralized if they didn't do something! He had Cannon Company on the line and he was organizing the firing of some weapons so that our people would feel they were doing something. It was just instinctively the right thing to do. Zerk just always seemed to know. He was from Texas and he had been in the Texas National Guard for a long time. Company L was his home. After I'd been there just a bit, I told him, "Zerk, now don't worry. Anything you want me to do, I will do. You just tell me what you want." We were good buddies from that point on. Just about like brothers.

We spent I don't know how much time there, but at night we would go down on outpost on the banks of the river and take two hour turns in this little pig sty outpost on the bank of the river and then go in the farmhouse behind it and get warm. There was still an old Italian couple, who must have been through hell, but they stayed in their home and they made hot soup for us out of what little they had to eat. After a few days there on the bank of the river, I heard more and more of the story how this other bank of this not very big river [but deep and icy cold with steep banks], was so heavily defended...just solid with machine guns.

Our patrols had reported this to higher headquarters and they had ignored it...that is General Clark's headquarters. Behind the machine guns were tanks and artillery and riflemen. They had lined the banks of the river with mines and barbed wire. Both side of the river were mined. It was just a deathtrap, and nobody ever should have tried to cross it in the middle of

the winter, at night, with improper equipment. Even if you'd had the equipment, it was a hopeless, murderous thing to do.

The theory was the engineers would bring up footbridges to cross the river. However, the bridges were too few and the wrong kind, and the shelling was too intense to permit them to put the bridges together. Our guys also said some of the engineers just ditched their trucks and equipment and took off because the shelling was so bad. Also, the shells destroyed the white lines, the tapes that the engineers used to mark the paths through the mine fields. This led to people being blown up because they couldn't tell where the mines were and where they had been cleared. They also tried to cross in rubber boats but the machine gun bullets punctured them and they couldn't really control them because the current was so swift. Some people did make it to the other side, but they were pinned flat to the ground. They couldn't move. They just laid there being pounded by artillery, tanks and machine guns. They tried a second crossing the next day or night, but everybody knew it was suicidal. There were a rash of "accidental" shootings in the foot, a number of them obviously self inflicted. They investigated that afterwards because that's a court martial offense. But you could hardly blame anyone. It was a horrible, stupid slaughter, and I'm thankful I missed it.

Later, somebody in Regimental Headquarters decided they were going to pay the troops. Except for the few that were on the bank of the river, most everybody else was in the hospital or the cemetery. Zerk told me to take the Company clerk and a Jeep and start paying the troops. I paid the guys there at the river. I had about $10,000 in Italian Occupation money and so I started to hand it out to those guys. Of course, there wasn't anything they could do with it. Then we started back and made a round of hospital after hospital after hospital, checking for where our people were, because when they were hauled out of there, they were sent to so many different places. We would check and if we could find anybody from our Company, we would pay them, then go on to the next hospital. The main hospitals, the bigger hospitals, were back in Naples, and that's where we ended up. At the end of the first day, we still hadn't found half of them. We had found our First Sergeant, though. We "liberated" him from the hospital and

he went with us because he knew more people, and wanted to get out of the hospital, anyway. He had been knocked cold from a concussion trying to cross the Rapido....never got across.

His name was Manuel (Luke) Jones. He was half Mexican and probably the best curser I ever met in the United States Army. He went with us and that night when we were in Naples I bumped into Walt Smith who was an older brother of a good friend of mine from Painesville. He was a first lieutenant in the Quartermaster Corp. and his job was to run a fancy hotel in Naples for Army Field Officers...that's major through colonel. He had a very nice spot and he offered to put me up for the night. Also staying there was the former heavyweight champion of the world, Jack Sharkey, former famous Yankee pitcher, Lefty Gomez, George Raft the movie star (who was about four feet tall), a couple of other celebrities and some rear echelon officers who looked at me like I was from outer space. Walt put me up in a warm room for the night and gave me some real food. I was very content and I turned the Jeep and the mail clerk, our driver and the first sergeant loose. I asked them to pick me up in the morning. They went off for their own pursuits, and I didn't ask what they were.

It turned out that they parked the Jeep in an Army parking lot in the middle of Naples. It was supposedly guarded and covered by barbed wire. But somebody stole our Jeep. The next morning they showed up. I didn't know how they got there, but they had no Jeep, which was a big problem. Naples at that time was a madhouse because it was full of Army troops, off duty and so forth, looking for trouble or excitement or something. There were English, there were Brazilian, there were Arabs, there were Indian troops. There were Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, Polish, French, French Arabs and of course, Americans. We went the next morning to the Military Police headquarters in Naples and they reported the theft of the Jeep. They acted like 'what else is new?' and sort of implied that we ought to try and steal another one. We went out and looked around, walked around the streets. I'm carrying a bag with the remains of $10,000 Occupation money in my hands and we're looking for a Jeep. None of us really had the nerve to steal one; the first sergeant, the mail clerk, our driver or myself. So eventually we bumped into a Jeep driver from one of our sister companies - Company M from our Battalion. He had apparently gotten drunk and got left behind when his Jeep went back to the company.

He was still half drunk, so we enlisted him. He was drunk enough to steal one when we found one with nobody in sight. We took off and went back to the company. I heard the guys in the motorpool quickly repainted it, and our sins weren't discovered until some months later. Nothing ever came of our theft.

Our Jeeps then, mostly they drove them with the windshields down, and on the front of the Jeep they would put a vertical iron bar which would extend up above the windshield height. The point of this was that at some places the Germans had been stringing the almost invisible steel wire across the road so that if you came along with your windshield down on your Jeep it would cut your head off just about. The wire would catch you just about throat high. So that's why they had these iron bars on the front of the Jeeps.

We got back and I turned in the money and we got the word that Zerk had been a little nervous. I think he thought maybe we were goofing off and taking advantage of our situation to live it up in town. But we told him what happened with the Jeep and we were forgiven. I think that same night we got word we were to move out to new positions and we started after dark. I was traveling with the first sergeant, who developed a terrible case of diarrhea, and he had to drop out every few minutes and then catch up. We marched all night. What made it bad was that the Germans had dynamited the river so that they had changed its course so it ran across the highway about a foot deep. So a good portion of the night we were wading through this icy cold water about a foot deep instead of going down the nice, smooth highway. We marched all night and we were moving over to the north closer to Cassino to take positions on a mountain facing Monte Cassino Abbey. About daybreak, our new Battalion Commander, who was a West Point Major, was leading our column and discovered we had lost part of the column in back of me. We were going single file and we were going through mine fields that they had marked out with white tape where a path had been cleared. He stopped the column just about daybreak and said, "Where are they?" I said, "We lost them." He discovered I was an officer and he told me to go back and find them and bring them back while they waited. So I went back and found the column quite a ways back and they were about to get lost. But I let them through the mine fields and we caught up and eventually reached our positions that day.

We spent the rest of the day resting there. Then we went further up onto a mountain the next day and took up positions really facing the Monte Cassino Abbey and also Mount Cairo, which was a huge, snow-capped mountain that dominated the whole valley. The Germans were up there as well as the Abbey. They were looking down our throats everywhere we went. Terrible positions. The weather was cold, wet and snowy...it was just miserable. They've compared that Italian winter with Valley Forge and I think it might have been quite similar. Everybody was getting trench feet, frozen feet, and you just couldn't keep dry. There was just no way.

We were just below the crest holding the hill. There was scrub growth and rocks. There was hardly any soil. You couldn't really dig a foxhole, you just scooped out what little soil there was and piled rocks around, something that two guys could lie down in. We were supposedly a battalion up on the back side of that hill. Actually, we didn't have enough people to make up one company, but we held our positions there. We took a terrible series of artillery barrages. There was one barrage that lasted over two hours...just constant artillery of all sizes and shapes. You could hear them coming a long ways. The worst of it is, your ear gets pretty sharp after a while. You can tell when they're coming really close and you just tighten up. There isn't really much you can do about it because you know it's going to be your turn, maybe. Some of these shells apparently were fired so they would just come right over the crest of the hill and come rattling down the hillside, if they didn't explode. Some of them were defective and didn't explode and they would just scoot down the hill, clatter, bang. Some of them were huge chunks of metal about a foot long and 8-10 inches across. We'd wake up in the morning and there would be all these shells lying around that hadn't exploded. We just were amazed that nobody in our company, or in our battalion in that area got hit that night in spite of over two hours of intense shelling, most of it landing all around us.

I was sharing a foxhole with my platoon sergeant, Buck Grimmett. We tried to get two guys in each foxhole, such as they were. That night I guess there was one kid that didn't have any partner so Buck and I squeezed him in with us....which was horrible. Our bodies would

be paralyzed. We'd all three have to turn over simultaneously and face the other way. But we managed to get through the night.

We were eating basically K-rations then. They would have a tin of pork and some bouillon sauce. They came in wax paper boxes. We learned you could start a fire with the wax paper, burn the wax paper and it didn't give off any smoke which wouldn't give away your positions. Then Buck, who was a born scrounger, had liberated a little Coleman stove so we could heat things up better than most people. But quite often we just had a little, tiny little fire made of wax paper that would heat up the bouillon or the pork loaf. I usually poured the bouillon over the pork loaf and heated it over the fire and ate it. I also ate an awful lot of concentrated chocolate.

But I think I'd better back up. There were a couple incidents. I don't remember exactly how long it took us to get up on that mountain. I believe we were in a reserve position for a while. I know one day I got orders to make a patrol while we were moving and I took one kid with me. He volunteered to come...big, strong, young kid. We went up and patrolled the area while the move was going on but nothing happened. We didn't see anybody or anything. We moved into our new positions. That night, there was some really heavy shelling. We had to move out of that little ravine where we were dug in. I was moving my men out of there and I could not get this same kid to move. He just sat there and cried, quivered and shook. I threatened him, I cajoled him, but he was just out of control. He was later killed up above Rome and I felt bad because he was a good kid. Most of the time he was able to cope with things. But there were times when everybody reached a breaking point...or almost.

Back up on the mountain, the Germans tried another counterattack and lost an awful lot of men. A truce was called while they came out and removed their dead. All very civilized. It doesn't take long to get hardened to the sight of dead bodies, our and theirs, lying around, unless it was somebody you knew. In the cold weather, the bodies might lie there for days and days. I can remember guys just dumping German bodies out of the shallow foxholes, out on the ground, and taking over the foxholes for themselves.

Buck and I had done a little reconnoitering on our own. Those hills were all terraced up as far as there was any soil. So you'd walk up one level to another. The terraces were about three or four feet high I guess....four feet I suppose. Buck and I were walking up there one day out of curiosity to see what was up at the top of the hill. All of a sudden, we both hit the ground. We did it instinctively before we actually heard anything. Somehow our instincts were so sharp that we heard the last minute zip of a mortar shell coming in. It hit just on the terrace level about us which, had we been standing up, probably would have given us a direct hit. We sat down on the lower level to think things over and to be grateful to be alive. Buck lit a cigarette and offered me one. It seemed like a good idea. It was the only cigarette I smoked in the war.

Aside from the heavy shelling and machine gun fire at night, the Germans had what we called "burp guns". We called them that because they fired so fast it just sounded like one steady noise. At night it seemed sometimes that even though they were far away, they sounded right on top of you. I don't know if there was something they could do to make them sound louder, but they were really much better sub-machine guns that we had. Ours were kind of bulky and clumsy. The Germans also had a better quality powder which didn't give off as much smoke. When our machine guns were firing, there would always be a cloud of smoke hanging over the gun, from the ammunition. The Germans' powder wasn't like that. Also, their machine guns were far superior to ours in that with machine guns, when the barrels got hot you had to change them. They overheated when you were firing rapidly. Ours, particularly our heavy 30s, were very tricky to change and it was a slow process. The German machine guns you could simply grab a handle, pull it to one side and it threw the barrel out into your hand. You had an asbestos glove to hold it. Then you slipped a new one in, closed the handle and you had a new barrel.

We were up on that mountain for I don't know how long. While we were up there two things happened. We could watch the valley below us and we followed a British outfit. I don't know if they were English or New Zealanders, but they were making an attack up this hill below us and we could see the whole thing as they moved forward. They were giving signals with flares and all. It was a very orderly attack and we could watch them advance, stop and draw

back. It was like watching a demonstration movie of combat. We had a ringside seat up above them.

To get our supplies, which wasn't easy, they were using mules...Italian muleskinners, when they could. But quite often the shelling was so heavy that they would just dump the loads and the mules, and the muleskinners would go back down the hill. We had a lot of trouble getting supplies up to where we were, be it ammunition or food or water.

Also, it was still snowing a lot up on the mountain. We learned how to take care of our feet some of the time, although a lot of people had to go back to the aid station with trench feet. They would only take the really bad cases. The others they would send back up because we were so short of men. What I did [and it worked pretty well] when my socks got wet, I took them off and put them inside my shirt, next to my body. I put a dry pair on my feet. Your body heat would dry out the socks sooner or later and then you would have a dry pair for when the others got wet. That worked pretty well.

Another thing is that the Army didn't really know what the climate was going to be in Italy. The regular uniforms that they'd issued turned out to be entirely inadequate. The only thing that really worked was sort of a coverall jacket combination that had been developed for tank crews. They discovered it suited us better than our original uniforms so they began supplying us with these outfits and they were pretty good...much better. The trouble was when our casualties were so heavy, the guys would go back to the aid station, the medics would strip their uniforms off of them and send the guys back to the hospitals and keep the uniforms. It was getting so the medics were getting the uniforms and we were running out of them. So what they started doing just before I got there, was in our own aid station down at the company or battalion level, they'd strip these suits off the guys and hold them there. When I joined the company, Kelly said, "Lieutenant, you want a combat suit?" I said, "Yeah" so they pulled one off the pile they had in the aid station and gave it to me. He also said, "Hey, how'd you like a pair of paratrooper boots?" I said, "Sure." - everybody wanted paratrooper boots. He said,

"Well, there's a dead GI out about thirty yards in that direction and I think his feet are about your size. Go take them." That was just a little bit of hazing, but I didn't go out to get them.

My platoon sergeant, Buck, was always looking for souvenirs. While we were up in the mountains, he would wander around looking for dead Germans. He found this guy and he thought he had a nice ring on his finger. He tried to take it off and the skin peeled with the ring, so he cut the finger off. Buck was kind of a tough character, part Indian. He was a Texan too....good sergeant. I was very fond of him.

Finally, they decided to pull us off the mountain and relieve us with French Arabs. They're a story in themselves. They were called "Goums" and they were supposed to be great knife fighters. They wore over their uniforms, long, brown-striped robes and French helmets, I think...supposedly they were good soldiers. When they traveled from Africa to Italy, the French Army brought their Arab women with them and they set up camp behind the lines. They were a pretty sorry looking lot of women, I must say. But they were there for when the guys got pulled off the lines. When the battalion pulled off the mountain, the colonel, (I guess he was a major then), told me to stay there and be there to show the French troops around...not that I spoke French anymore than I had learned from one year of high school. But they came up onto the mountain and I was there. I wa the only guy left out of our outfit. I tried to communicate with the French officers. They had French officers and non-coms, and Arab troops. they didn't call the Arabs by their names - each Arab had a number. They would call number "One" or number "Twenty-One" and give them orders. They came up that mountain with mules making all kinds of noise and at night they built fires and showed lights and nothing happened. Every time we'd shown any lights up there the artillery crashed in around us. But I stayed there and I did my best to show them the positions and tell them where troops were.

The next morning, we had left one telephone there and Battalion told me to come on down, but before I did that, to go over to an outfit that was still over to our left that was still American, and tell them that we were all out and the French troops were the only ones left. I crawled across the crest of that hill. I crawled past these foxholes where these "Goums" were.

I saw nothing but empty wine bottles and they were all sound asleep. If I made a noise, they'd wake up and smile at me and go back to sleep. Nobody seemed to be on guard or paying any attention to anything. I guess that's the way they ran their army.

After I reached the other unit and told them we were out, I started down the hill. I got down to the base of the hill and started to step over this foxhole. There was a guy asleep in it - one of my fellow officers that I'd been in Kentucky with - a good friend of mine. I had no idea where he had been shipped, but he'd joined the division before me, and had been across the Rapido River and had some horrible experiences to tell. I hadn't seen him since we were both in Kentucky in the States, so we had a little reunion before I went back and joined the company.

Then a little bit later, they pulled us off the line to get replacements and start retraining them. I'll cover that later. I keep forgetting incidents and I don't know how many days or weeks I was up on top of that mountain, but things happened and I can't remember their sequence. While we were up there, the Germans laid down a pretty heavy barrage and started a counterattack. What few there were of us on the front line pretty much pulled back to the next knoll where we could see better, then we decided what to do. One of the officers from another company was there with me and he said, "I'm going back down to report this to Battalion Headquarters." Of course, there was a telephone right beside him. I don't know why he had to go back down to tell them, but that's the last I saw of him.

The next thing I knew, our major, who was the Battalion Commander, came roaring up and he said, "Okay, Lieutenant, you take these six men and we're going to lay down fire here with these rifles and machine guns and then you take these men and move in from the left." Which I did. Fortunately, we didn't encounter anything and we regained our positions without getting hurt. Of course, we didn't know that when we started out. I remember going around sometime during that fire fight, and looking for a lieutenant that had been up there with us. I kept wandering around our positions calling his name. I couldn't figure out what had happened to him. Finally, I found him. He was lying there dead with his head blown all to bits (spooky). After I'd been up there a while, they decided to pull some of us off the hill and send some new

guys up to replace us. They had been down below in a less exposed position. One of the new lieutenants who had come to the company just after I did came up with the troops. He said, "Are you going to stay or do you want me to take your place?" I really wanted him to take my place because I'd been up there a long time, but I said, "Well, let's flip a coin." We flipped the coin and he lost. He went up in my place, which I felt was only fair. But unfortunately, he was killed while he was up there the next day. I always felt peculiar about that. An awful lot of things happened and I've forgotten a good many of them, but maybe they'll come back before this epic is concluded. After the war, I got a letter from the fellow's wife and I wrote back and told her what happened. We never found his body and he never came back down off the hill I guess. I told her all that I could about him. He was only with the company two or three weeks before he was dead.

The main thing that happened while we were up there on that mountain was the bombing of Monte Cassino Abbey. This had been a sore point for some time and political problem, I guess. All us troops, whether we were Protestant or Catholic, felt that the Germans were using it as an observation post and they were looking right down our throats every time we moved. We wanted somebody to take it out. We probably didn't know the history of the place, or how significant it would have been as a historic site, we just wanted it out of there. Eventually, this one morning, flight after flight of bombers came over and dropped bombs. We sat and cheered and yelled and enjoyed the scene. It didn't do any damn good. They didn't coordinate it with a ground attack, which might have captured Cassino. But they didn't do it. The Germans just dug into the rubble then and we were no better off than before the bombing.

When you're on the lines like we were during that horrible winter, you're living in a hole in the ground. You don't have a tent. You don't quit at sundown and go back and sleep somewhere. You just stay in a hole night and day. We tried to stretch our shelter halves; that's half a tent over the holes and pin it down on both sides with rocks just to keep the snow off of us as best we could. You were wet all the time. It's just a miserable life. People tend to neglect their weapons. You'd see machine guns sitting there all piled with six inches of snow on top of them. We got through it, I guess.

When we came off the lines from Cassino, they had to strip off all our clothes and we had to go through a de-lousing shower. They just handed you a complete new set of clothes from the shoes up. This is amazing, how well supplied we were in basic items. The Germans never got over the fact that we had rubber-soled shoes, which were much quieter than their hobnail boots.

When we came off lines from Cassino, I was called down to Battalion Headquarters. The battalion commander asked me if I was the officer who had led the counterattack up on the mountain with the six men. I admitted it and shortly thereafter I was promoted for First Lieutenant. I was also told that military courtesy and custom required that I pay a call on the Regimental Commander upon being promoted. So one day I went to his headquarters and hung around. But he never found time to see me...so much for tradition.

After we were pulled off there, we were sent back some miles distance in the rear. We set up a camp there and they started funneling in new recruits. We started our training programs with our new people. This was a town, I forget what the name of it was, but they had black MPs directing traffic where we were. This created a problem, because we were still basically a Texas Division and the guys would not take orders from black MPs. They eventually moved the black MPs somewhere else and things were peaceful again. I don't think anybody had any fights or anything, it was just that they complained about it. There were still a lot of red-neck Texans, although there were a lot of good guys, too. We were in that camp for quite a while because we had a lot of training to do. While we were there, General Clark flew in a Piper Cub, [which almost crashed when it overshot the field]. We had the whole Division lined up in review and he came in and awarded some medals, including Charlie Kelly's Congressional Medal of Honor.

When you first get off a line, everybody is happy and relieved. The food is hot and you're living in a tent. Things were much better. We were all pretty young, so we started horsing around. Rich Reuland, my friend, was Charlie Kelly's platoon leader and Rich was a skinny little kid. Buck Grimmett was my platoon sergeant and so he and I would take on Rich and Charlie in wrestling matches. We outweighed them each by about twenty pounds so it was

never a question of who was going to win those matches. It was all good fun - horseplay. We did all sorts of training, including some amphibious training and mountain climbing. I got out of climbing this one big mountain problem because they noticed I had a half year of law school. They saw that in my record, and I became an investigating officer. I had to go around and investigate various offenses that had been committed by troops. I also had to go around and talk to some of the Italian farmers where we had damaged their property and determine what sort of claims they had against the U.S. Army. I had an interpreter with me whose name was Tedeschi. Tedeschi is an Italian word for German, apparently. The Italians always laughed when I would call this kid and say, "Tedeschi, come here." They thought that was so funny.

One of the things that I had to investigate happened where there were some English or Canadian troops. So I visited this Canadian Army camp and talked to the captain in charge. It was a very formal, comfortable camp that they had set up. The Canadian and English officers lived a lot better than we did. We lived about on a level as their non-coms. Their poor privates didn't fare nearly as well as our privates. But their officer class was treated with more respect and dignity. I remember the Canadian captain telling me that they had a lot of trouble with the troops from India because supposedly like our American Indians when they got to drinking they were just wild animals. This makes me think of the picture with Sophia Loren, "Two Women", where she and her daughter got raped by Indian troops.

While we were off of the lines, they would send some guys into Caserta where the king's palace was, and where General Clark's headquarters were. There was an army barracks there. They would let the guys stay in the army barracks and walk around town, get extra candy and hot showers and live in a building instead of a tent. They would get three or four days of this then they'd come back to the company. They would send officers occasionally, but they said we had to patrol the streets and make sure that the guys observed military courtesy. So this wasn't much of a vacation for us except that we never bothered combat troops, we just checked the supply troops and people like that...if they didn't salute or were sloppy or drunk...but no infantry or artillery troops did we ever stop.

A couple of us got a Jeep one night and went into Naples. There was a Red Cross Club there for Allied Officers. As I remember it, it was off limits to people like movie stars because the English did not consider movie stars of officer status; they weren't gentlemen. But if you were an officer, you were automatically a gentleman. There was an officers' club and while I was there, the one trip I made into Naples I bumped into a friend of mine who had been in law school with me at the University of Chicago. He was with an anti-aircraft outfit in Naples. They were guarding the city and he took me over to show me their layout. They had a huge map of Italy spread out on the table. They had all the installations marked and their positions of their anti-aircraft guns; Ack Ack guns, we called them. He said "See, there's not a plane within fifty miles of us." [or however many miles he said], so we walked outside right after he showed me that, and all of the Ack Ack guns were firing at something which supposedly wasn't there, according to their maps.

There were three of us that went back together and we hopped in the Jeep to go back to Caserta. Of course, everybody drove without headlights because of the blackout. Somehow along the road we crashed head-on into a 2-1/2 ton truck driven by an Arab. I was sitting in the back seat. The two guys in the front seat were knocked out. I think I had a concussion, because I was dizzy and sick to my stomach. But the other passenger and I were able to get the driver out of the car. Meanwhile, these Arabs were all around us jabbering and pointing at their axle, which was broken, like "what were we going to do about it?" We just shrugged our shoulders and eventually we were able to flag down an American Army truck which took our driver to the hospital. Somehow or another, I don't remember, the other guy and I got back to the company.

While we were off lines, we had a Regimental Officers' party. I don't remember much about that except a lot of people got pretty drunk. By then, we had a new Regimental Commander, a full bird colonel who later became a four-star general after the war. He was a West Pointer from the word go, and a very, very capable, but tough officer. They were having a lot of problems with VD in Italy. He let it be known that any officer in his regiment who got

any form of venereal disease would be broken to private instantly. All I remember about the Regimental party is we were all singing to the old tune of Ta-Ra-Ra-Boom-Te-ay...

If you do not take a "pro",
they will call you Buck-Ass Joe*
Colonel Adams says it's so,
and he's the guy who ought to know.
Ta ra ra boom te ay,
have you had yours today,
I had mine yesterday,
I want some more today, etc.

*Private...aka...Buck Private...aka Buck-Ass Joe....the lowest rank in the Army. The singing went on for hours.

While we were off line, we had an officers' tent where the company officers slept and we had cots. We even had an officers' latrine so we didn't have to share with the enlisted troops. We had this pudgy little guy who we called "Mother Weaver". It turned out after the war that he was homosexual. I think we probably suspected it, but he never bothered anybody so we didn't talk about it or mention it. But he loved to sweep out our tents and make our beds and take care of us. We called him "Mother". He was a runner/messenger and he went along complaining all the time, but he always did his job. He was the one who had a perforated ear drum just like Frank Sinatra. Frank was kept out of the Army because of this. This guy was older than Frank and didn't understand why Frank wasn't there with us, Frank being younger and no worse off than he.

Anyway, I was sitting in this officers' tent one day and Zerk came in and he was heartbroken. He actually started to cry. It turned out that they had just ordered him to take over I-Company as commander. The company commander of I-Company, who was a crazy Irishman, had been wounded and apparently wasn't going to be able to come back, so they

wanted Zerk to take over that company. It was just like forcing him to leave home. He'd been with L-Company all his military life and he just couldn't stand the thought of not being there. He eventually went and took over I-Company, and, typical Zerk, he revitalized the whole thing. He called it the "Lazy I Ranch" and the top sergeant was a "foreman" and the motorpool was a corral, and the motorpool sergeant was whatever you call the person in charge of the corral [wrangler] and the tents were the bunkhouses. He soon restored the morale of the company.

Meanwhile, we got an amiable klutz in to take over our company and we were all unhappy. We were about as sad as Zerk was then he left. This guy was a good-hearted soul, but he was the sort of guy who would trip over his own feet. He didn't inspire any confidence at all. He did one thing which I thought was a mistake. He would have the officers meet with the top sergeant and ask the top sergeant what the men thought of the various officers, including himself, which I thought was putting the top sergeant in a bad position. The top sergeant, that was Luke Jones, would tell him what he thought. I was pleased, because he said that the men thought the world of me. That made me feel good.

We were training, getting ready for combat, to go back we didn't know where. Then came the wonderful news that they brought Zerk back to be our Company Commander. It made all the difference in the world. We were all happy again. Eventually, they loaded us up on trucks, took us to Naples, where we loaded on landing crafts and went up the coast of Italy to Anzio. Actually our training took place in the town of Pozzuoli, which was the hometown of Sophia Loren, who was then supposedly a skinny little teenager. I don't remember seeing Sophia at all. Going back a second, somewhere while we were training further south of Naples, I remember getting to an officers' club in Sorrento once. Sorrento is a beautiful town overlooking the ocean and I can't remember when or how we got there, but it was a pretty place to see. I'd like to go back. While we were there [Pozzuoli], we did go swimming in the Tyrrhenian Sea, although we didn't think a lot of the beach.

We unloaded at Anzio, [this was a scene of another huge blunder in the Italian campaign]. The American forces came ashore and completely surprised the Germans. We and

our allies could have gone right into Rome before the Germans recovered. But, as it was, our leaders were timid. They dug in in the low ground and the Germans quickly recovered and took all the high ground so the American, English and Canadian forces, etc. were all hemmed in on a little flat piece of land next to the seacoast. The Germans were on the high ground again with perfect observation. They had artillery and tanks and they had a huge railroad gun that was known as "Anzio Annie". That thing fired a tremendous shell. You could hear it coming for miles and miles. Going back to Cassino, that's where I first heard the "Screaming Meemies", which were a six-barreled German mortar, rocket fire. It fired six shells, one right after the other. When they wound it up, it was like you had a lion by the tail and were cranking and cranking and then you would hear the six shells let go one after another and they came with a very high-pitched scream. The only good thing about it was that you heard it so long that you could get a pretty good idea where they were coming from...by the way, your ear gets very sharp very fast and you know when a shell is coming close to you. Of course, if you're out in the open and you can tell it's close, it gives you an awful helpless feeling. They have one of these in the museum at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. It's a dinky little contraption. I went over and kicked it.

So we dug in at Anzio and stayed there until the breakout. I don't know how many days that was, but we sat there just waiting for orders. When we finally did break out, we went through the Third Division in a town called Cisterna, which was one of the major battle sites of the Anzio campaign. I believe that's where Darby's Rangers got wiped out. We moved out without too much trouble and we found caves and dugouts where the Germans had been dug in. They had wonderful positions and it's a wonder we ever got out of the beachhead. We moved on and eventually came to a town which was known as Velletri. We were the lead company in the Division, I think, and we came head up against the town of Velletri, which is very close to Rome. It's in the mountains, heavily wooded, and we came to a screaming halt there. We occupied a piece of ground which was just on the edge of the city and were meeting very heavy enemy resistance. We dug in for the night. I was with Company headquarters and actually I set my machine guns up in the house where Company headquarters were.

Just about dusk we set out. Zerk sent me out to show some people from Battalion our lines and orient them to the terrain. Just as we got outside the farmhouse, we began getting machine gun fire from our rear. Fifty-caliber machine gun fire. We just hit the dirt and clawed the dirt until it eased up. Then we scrambled back to the command post. It turned out that somebody back regimental headquarters had the bright idea of moving all the trucks that they could find into a line. These trucks were all mounted with fifty-caliber machine guns and they were firing up in our direction, supposedly to give us support. But they were pinning us down and just about immobilizing us. When I got back to the command post, Zerk was on the telephone screaming at the regimental headquarters and finally they stopped firing. We went back out again and they started up again. Bullets were coming through the command post windows and pinning all of us down so they were doing a big favor for the German Army. Zerk got back on the telephone and got the full colonel, our regimental commander, Paul Adams, on the phone and told him that if the firing didn't quit he was going to turn every gun he had and shoot at the regimental headquarters. We didn't know where that was anyway, and that's not how you talk to a West Point colonel, but eventually it stopped. Colonel Adams, by the way, after the war, became a four-star general; one of the top generals in the whole United States Army. I guess he deserved it, but that fiasco was really a terrible mistake on somebody's part.

Later that night the Germans attacked our position, full force. We had a real lively time for a few hours. We lost one of our officers who had gone out to check his riflemen and their positions. He'd gotten past the lines, and coming back somebody called the password but he didn't hear them. They thought he was a German and they shot and killed him. That's the only incident I ever heard like that, and that was completely unintentional. They were rattling machine gun fire, rifle fire, artillery fire off our positions, but we held them and repulsed the attack. One of my machine gunners was hit in the face; fortunately from the side. It took a chunk of his lip and knocked him backward.

We were upstairs in this house when I heard footsteps racing up the outside stairway. I ran to the top, ready to fire, but it turned out to be Rich Reuland and a couple of guys coming to check on us.

I think it was the next day, our general who had sent patrols out discovered our big gap in the German lines. This is one of the brilliant moves of the Italian campaign...maybe the only one. He took an awful chance. He finally got General Clark's approval to pull us off the lines. He actually pulled two regiments off the lines and we marched all night. Combat engineers took over our positions. In marching out, we had to march past one of our veteran sergeants who was lying there dead beside the path with a bullet hole right square in the middle of his forehead....a very depressing sight. We marched all night and the German airplanes were overhead dropping flares. Every time that happened our columns froze along the sides of the roads so that the Germans hopefully would not pick up what we were doing. As it was, we infiltrated our regiment and one other behind the German lines without their really knowing about it. So we had people on the other side of Velletri the next morning. We were actually sitting up on a mountaintop behind Velletri. From there we attacked off towards Rome while the other troops took care of Velletri behind us. The Germans were completely surprised. Eric Severeid, who was then a war correspondent, wrote this up as a brilliant move by our general. His account is included in our Division history book, and in his autobiography.

When we were making that great maneuver, we really didn't know where we were going or why. We just knew that we had marched all night going up a steep mountain, heavily wooded. Typical of the American Army, they had brought up bulldozers and they were just blasting trees down creating a road up that mountain so that the trucks, supply vehicles, tanks and so forth could follow us. We had loaded at the start, our machine guns and mortars on a Jeep with a trailer. Nobody ever told us to take them off. We didn't realize we were about to go into an immediate attack. We were up at the top of the mountain and it was either the battalion commander or the operations officer who said to me, "Where are your guns?" So I sent my people back down to the Jeeps and wherever they found them they unloaded our guns and ammunition and brought them back up to the top of the mountain. When we finally did

move off our line of departure to make the attack, the same officer was standing there and he said, "Got your guns now?" I hit myself in the head like, oh, God, I'd forgotten them again, but we had them. We moved on down through the woods to the base of that mountain preparing to attack across an open valley. While we were standing there waiting for the word to go, why we heard a tank coming; a very loud, ugly noise. We had to hide. There were just scrub trees around us and nowhere to dig in - no time to dig in. Fortunately, it turned out to be one of ours. How it got there, I don't know. It was a very naked feeling to be standing there in the open with a tank coming.

We moved out and that attack was a model. It went the way they teach you at Fort Benning, which seldom happens in real life.

When we moved off the next morning we were attacking from one hill across an open valley to another wooded hill or mountain on the far side. This went off very smoothly. It looked like a demonstration at Fort Benning, Georgia, where they tell you how you're supposed to do it. Our rifle platoons moved out and I had my machine guns and mortars moving up behind them in support of them. Our artillery was firing over our heads into the woods. It was scrub growth on the far mountain. When those bursts hit the trees, they scattered fragments in all directions. It had to be awfully devastating to the Germans. So we took our objective and went up the hillside on the far mountain and waited there to consolidate our positions. My platoon and the rifle platoon we were supporting were somehow ahead of the group so we stopped along the edge of the woods to wait for the rest of the outfit. Meanwhile, while my men were sitting down, I walked on ahead just to look over our position. I looked up into the edge of the woods and saw two bearded faces looking down at me.

Looking up into to woods into the faces of two bearded German soldiers who could have easily shot me because I was standing there alone. In any event, I whipped my carbine around and pointed it at them. They came out with their hands up. We searched them and I found a little fold-up camera which I confiscated and I still have tucked away somewhere. We were ahead of the rest of our troops so we didn't know exactly what we were going to do with these

prisoners. My platoon sergeant offered to take them back. He was a Texan, one of the original guys in the outfit and he had just lost another sergeant friend of his in another company. He had been killed. I could see a gleam in his eye and I could tell that if he took these guys back, they wouldn't go very far before they were shot. I never did see that happen, but I think it would have then, so I had somebody else take them back to the rear.

Incidental information: In most of the war movies you see the men wearing their helmets with the chin strap unbuckled; the theory being that the concussion from an artillery shell could break your neck. We always kept our straps buckled, believing that if a shell landed that close to you, concussion would be the least of your problems. We also wanted our helmets on securely.

Street scene back in Naples: It looked like something out of Kipling or a Hollywood movie. I saw a British officer, very dapper and neat in his khaki uniform, standing with two huge, bearded, turbaned Sikhs, standing like statues behind him. I never forgot that picture.

General Mark Clark's 5th Army was organized with most of its strength in the rear, so it seemed. There were countless service and supply troops in and around Naples and other cities. They were known collectively as "PBS", Peninsula Base Section, and were the object of scorn and hostility on our part. They lived in buildings, ate hot food, worked at desk jobs or outside jobs, but in complete safety. The German Air Force in Italy was not much of a threat by then. So we hated them for their good life, clean uniforms and uppity ways. Ironically, we combat officers, who were always threatened with being "reclassified" if we screwed up - what that meant was that we'd be taken out of combat and sent to safe jobs in PBS. Not so bad, yet the prospect of that humiliation outweighed any thought of safety.

We all knew that the Italian campaign was a disaster. Military theory called for attacking troops to outnumber defenders three or four to one. This was never true for us. In addition, we spent much of 1943 and 1944 attacking the Gustav line, a solid line of defense positions in the mountains dug into solid rock. I'm going to quote from an article in the "New Yorker"

from May of 1989 by William Murray, who had just gone back and toured around Cassino. He said,

> "The Germans, with the help of conscript and slave labor, constructed the so-called Gustav line. And when the Allied troops arrived, they hurled themselves against it in what amounted to suicidal frontal attacks. The suffering of these fighting troops, mainly the poor, bloody infantry, cannot be overstated."

He compares it to Verdun, Stalingrad, Passchendaele and Iwo Jima.

> "Four major assaults were launched against the fear some defenses that barred the way to Rome. Thousands died in these assaults and in each interval, thousands more endured terrible privations as they shivered in their slit trenches and dugouts awaiting the orders for the next attack. There were a murderous maze of pillboxes, wire and mine fields that had once been some sleepy, mountain village. To compound their difficulties, the Allies were ineptly commanded."
>
> "On the strategic level, no one on the Allied side had apparently bothered to worry much about the fact that throughout history most invaders, beginning with Hannibal, had recognized the foolishness of attempting to conquer Italy by marching up the boot from the south. A mere glance at a topographical map would have deterred any sensible commander. Except for the Po Valley in the north, Italy consists of an almost unbroken chain of mountain ranges, many of which extend to one or both coasts and which entirely dominate the narrow valleys the Allied Armies proposed to advance along."

He goes on to say that 80,000 Allied soldiers were killed or wounded in these battles. The Germans lost 55,000 men. "A casualty total reminiscent of trench warfare in the First World War."

Our 5th Army, as far as the Americans were concerned, included our Division, the 36th, with the 3rd Division, 34th and 45th and the First Armored, which couldn't do much in the

mountains. This was an inadequate force. Yet when a couple of new divisions finally arrived, we looked down at them with scorn. We were the oldtimers who could even sing "Lily Marlene" in Italian. These were upstart newcomers. The Italian people were always friendly to us, maybe they had been to the Germans. A lot of our guys had relatives in Italy. I gave one of my men leave to visit his relatives while we were off the lines. He brought me back a bottle of wine, though I wasn't drinking anything in those days. It was a nice thing for him to do.

Our attack was very successful and we moved on out of the mountains into the approaches to Rome. We were marching down one of the main highways leading to Rome. It was just littered with trucks that had been destroyed, dead horses, dead mules that had all been strafed by our Air Force and were lying there in the sun, stinking to high heaven and bloated. But it was an impressive display of the use of the Air Force which was about the first time we felt they were useful. We kept marching and marching. It was very hot. My feet were killing me. I had a new pair of shoes on and my feet were bleeding, but the medics wouldn't do anything for your feet because they had to save their materials for actual wounds. We stopped for the night in a big field. I think there were about two regiments of infantry and some artillery and a tank company. While we were sitting there in the daylight, somebody heard a shot way over across this field towards this farmhouse. It seemed like everybody in the field turned and started shooting at that house. I think it turned out to be that somebody had accidentally discharged his gun, one of our own men. Just shows you what a mob reaction you can get even among veteran soldiers.

We moved into Rome. At some point they loaded us onto trucks, which wasn't easy because the trucks were already loaded. We hung on wherever we could, on fenders, bumpers, just so we could move faster. We were meeting no opposition. The Germans had pulled out of Rome [Open city]. But as we got into the heart of Rome, the people were cheering and lining the streets and holding out bottles of wine. They were making a big fuss over us. A lot of them spoke English. We inched our way through the city. I saw St. Peter's in the distance and we

went past the Coliseum. Unfortunately, we went right out the other side and on chasing the Germans up the boot.

I don't remember too much about the next few days, except that we kept marching north with not a lot of opposition. We came across some German troops that had entirely supplied, transported on bicycles instead of trucks or wagons or whatever. Their mobility depended on bicycles. We found a lot of them abandoned. We began running into troops that were very Oriental looking. They looked like Japanese people, except they were freckled. I think they were from the southeast part of Russia where you get down close to the Oriental countries. They had been conscripted into the German Army...Polish, Russian, you name it. People who had voluntarily, or maybe without choice, had gotten into the German Army. We finally arrived at a town up north that was called Grosseto. We were attacking in that area. We stopped for the night and set up our position around this Italian farmhouse which was a pretty good size. My people were all dug in, in front or around the farmhouse, and the company headquarters and the aid station were going to be in the farmhouse that night. There was a group of Italians, family or families, gathered in sort of the barn part of the house. I'm sure it's where they stored their carts and wagons and so forth. They were all huddled in the far corner praying in unison because the shells were falling all around. It was pretty scary and they were all - it sounded like the hum of bees - the way they were praying incessantly all together in very low voices. There was a very pretty young Italian girl among them. One of our fellows went over to her and got acquainted a little bit, and he put his arm around her to comfort her; nothing but just being friendly. Just then a shell hit outside the house and a shell fragment came in and hit him in the arm that he had around the girl. That taught him, I guess.

We were going to spend the night there and move out the next morning at daylight. My platoon sergeant, whose name was Vaughn Majors, was a staff sergeant, so you could say he was "Staff Sergeant-Majors". He was a nice guy from Texas. He said, "Lieutenant, I found a bed with the cleanest white sheets you ever saw." So he took me upstairs in the farmhouse and he had found this bed that some Italian housewife had scrubbed those sheets pure white. It was the most inviting thing you'd every seen. But it was upstairs, which was bad when you

had tanks and artillery shooting...particularly tanks. But it was on the back side of the house, away from the Germans. There was another room facing the Germans which meant there were two stone walls about foot thick each between us and the Germans. So we figured we could take advantage of this bed for the night and get a decent night's sleep. We lay down on the bed. I know we had our boots on and maybe our helmets. We hadn't been there long when a German tank fired and the shell came directly through those two, foot-thick stone walls and out the other side. It came right along his side of the bed. Through all his clothes and jacket, it peppered his back with fragments of stone and mortar and what have you. He was in agony. I took him downstairs to the aid station and they carted him off. Then I went back upstairs to get my gear because I wasn't going to spend the night up there. I was convinced that tank could shoot through anything. As I went back, I looked and where the shell had come you could see daylight or the night sky in both directions. It had just missed our bed by about two inches.

Later, when I was in the hospital in Naples, Sergeant Majors came to see me. Apparently, he was recovered but they felt his back had been permanently injured and were sending him home, which he certainly deserved. So he came to say goodbye to me. I was touched. He had tears in his eyes when he said goodbye. That's the last I ever saw of him, but he was a real fine man.

The next morning we started out attacking across a little valley up onto a hill where the Germans were dug in and where they had their tanks. It was sort of a gully with a little stream flowing through it and a lot of weeds, reeds, undergrowth, cattail-like things in the bottom of the little gully. My machine guns and mortars were to be in support of the rifle platoon which was leading the attack so we moved out behind them. German tanks started firing at us. They were firing armor-piercing shells, I guess, or else they were defective shells, because when they hit they didn't explode. They would just tear out huge chunks of sod, maybe six feet across, like a huge divot where they hit. Some of them were obviously defective because you could hear them coming through the air. When a tank was firing good ammunition at you, you can't hear it until it's there. None of us got hit, although the lieutenant in charge of the rifle platoon we were supporting got hit in the leg and was disabled. The attack bogged down in the bottom

of that gully. My men and I were down there waiting because we were supposed to provide support as they moved out ahead of us. Since they were bogged down, we stopped in the gully and were just holding our positions there. Zerk Robertson, who was our Company Commander, sent a messenger up to me to tell me he wanted me to take over both platoons and move them in a certain direction. The messenger was maybe forty or fifty yards behind me in this gully, and he was a nice young kid, but he was scared to come up because the machine guns were firing at us. It was a pretty scary spot. I eventually decided I would go back to him, which is not good military tactics. The messenger should always come forward to the person, instead of the person going back. Since he was bogged down there in the gully, I started back. Well, I was crawling through the weeds and brush. Every time I moved, this machine gun would flail away at me, peppering the weeds over my head. I would wait, then move out again and he would open up again. But eventually I worked my way back to where this kid was waiting to give me the message. We were both lying there, flat on the ground, and he was telling me about it. Then he straightened up to point where I was to take the two platoons and as he straightened up, I instinctively straightened up too to see where he was pointing. That's where I got it; a machine gun slug hit me in the back while I was facing him. It felt like I got hit in the back with a sledge hammer. The next thing I heard was a loud gurgling sound out of my back as the blood poured out. I must say that nothing flashed through my mind. I didn't relive my life or anything. The only thing I wondered was, "You were careless and you got hit for your stupidity. How bad is it going to be...are you going to die?" That's all. My sergeants immediately ran over. I guess I yelled "medic" and my two sergeants came over, turned me over and poured sulfa on the wound, which is a standard procedure. Somebody finally got the medics there. They put me on a stretcher and started to carry me back to the aid station. The Germans kept firing at them even though they had red crosses on their backs and on their helmets. They had to drop me a few times which was painful. In spite of that, we made it back to the aid station and I started my way back through the Evac hospitals and on through the chain. I think I've already dictated how Rich Reuland had been there when I got back to the aid station. He had been wounded once and knew that whatever he put on the tag would be what would be in the telegram sent to Betty. He knew I was recently married and he didn't want Betty to worry, so he put "lightly wounded" on the tag. As they shipped me back from

one place to another, they would look at the tag and say "Okay, pass him on", which nearly killed me before we were through because my chest was filling up with blood and I was having a great deal of difficulty breathing by the time they finally operated on me. I was hit about 8:00 in the morning and was operated on about 8:00 p.m. Apparently the bullet broke a rib which punctured my lung. The official description was a "penetrating wound to the chest."

During the ride in the ambulance back to the Evac hospital I developed a terrible thirst. They did stop and give me a drink of water on the way back. When we did get to the Evac hospital, that's like a MASH unit, I was there I think ten or twelve days. The nurses were very nice, very upbeat, very helpful and very attentive. The only thing I remember about that is that there was a British soldier a bed or two away from me. He had been a motorcycle courier and he'd been in a terrible crash. He expired a couple of days after I got there....actually the first person I'd watched pass on. When I left the Evac hospital, they took us out to an airstrip and put our stretchers out on the ground. I remember it was a very hot day and we waited to be loaded onto C-47 cargo planes. From there they flew us down to Naples and when we got to Naples they started to unload us. We also had some German wounded on the plane. One of the workers said, "Let's unload the Krauts first", and promptly picked me up. I had blond hair and a crew cut, so I guess it was a natural mistake. I protested very loudly and they straightened that out. When we got to the General Hospital, I was there several months. We had excellent medical care again. The doctor came in every day and checked me. When he had a day off, why he always made sure somebody else came in to check how I was feeling. The only thing I remember particularly noteworthy was that they decided to aspirate my chest, which meant bringing a huge needle, [they did give me novocaine] then put this big needle into my chest between the ribs and draw blood out of my lung. They continued to draw it out until I started to cough, and then they'd stop and come back the next day. We did this twelve to fourteen days in a row and I didn't really like it at all. The nurse that was there with me looked like she was an uncomfortable as I. But they said it would speed my recovery. I don't remember when I left, but I think it was in September. The scab on the bullet hole didn't heal very fast and they wouldn't let me go until that had healed. When I left, the nice doctor told me to try and stay off the damp ground because of my lung condition. I had to smile at that.

I think this hospital complex was also part of what had been the Olympic set up for Mussolini's World Olympics that he intended to host. There was an Olympic-size swimming pool and we were able to swim in that although I can't remember if I did ever swim. Also, we could go up on the roof of the hospital and sunbathe if we wanted to. I must say that in those months, that part of Italy was warm and sunny. We were also able to go into Naples. We were actually in Naples, but we could go wander around town if we wanted to. They even had excursions to Vesuvius - Pompeii. I wish now I'd taken the opportunity to go look at the ruins. But I was a little superstitious about doing that and I stayed right there at the hospital until I went back to my outfit.

I omitted two of our heroes...Ernie Pyle and Bill Mauldin. Ernie was a little guy, a journalist who just hung around with the rifle companies and artillery people, ordinary soldiers from privates to captains stayed away from the big shots and the glamour. He just talked to people about their home towns and their life and reported it very matter-of-factly back to the States. We felt he was really the only person who really made an effort to find out what our lives were like and to report it accurately. He truly captured our feelings and our outlook on life. I think his finest piece and probably his most famous one was the one he wrote about Captain Waskow, who was a company commander in our regiment. It was a very simple and very touching piece, which I've read I don't know how many times.

Bill Mauldin was also one of our heroes. He had been a foot soldier in the 45th Division, but he went to drawing cartoons for Stars and Stripes. Again, he just captured the spirit of things, the humor and the irony, of a foot soldier's life. Whenever we could get our hands on a copy of Stars and Stripes, the Army newspaper, why we looked for his cartoons first because he seemed to understand what it was like.

Picking up some odds and ends. Soldiers and foot soldiers. Well, I guess all soldiers in WWII were referred to as GIs or GI Joe. The GI, of course, stood for "government issue" because everything about you, everything you owned or wore was government issue. So you,

yourself, were referred to as government issue. Even diarrhea was referred to as government issue.

The infantry was known as "Queen of Battles" and of course the soldiers had an explanation of this which is too obscene to explain. It had to do with the eternal hard luck which befell the infantry.

Going back to Italy for a little anecdote. When I came out of the hospital and went back to the replacement depot on my way back to the outfit, I discovered there was a new game being played. We had outdoor movies at night, of course, and there was a new game called Ack-Ack, where people blew up condoms and threw them up in the air and then threw lighted cigarettes at them trying to knock them down. The spark of the cigarettes did look like Ack-Ack [anti-aircraft fire] to a degree.

Grampa Joe always complains about the mess sergeant they had in his outfit in WWI. But we had one of the best, Sgt. Jeff Cannamore, who was one of the original Texans. Whenever physically possible, he was going to get hot food up to the troops on the line. The kitchen was always some distance back, out of range; well, not necessarily out of artillery range, but several miles behind us. If somebody told him he couldn't get food up to us, it was a challenge, because he was going to do it or break his neck trying. I think near the end of the war, he felt guilty because most all of his friends were dead or wounded. He asked to be put into one of the rifle platoon where he felt he would be contributing more. He was one real good man.

Thinking back again to our days in Italy, we were quite often next to Canadian, English or New Zealand troops. Most of their line officers carried swagger sticks and did not wear helmets. They usually wore a visored cap. I guess this was to show their indifference to danger. But generally, they were more conservative that we were. They still had much more class distinction in their Army than we had in ours.

More little anecdotes...When we loaded the Navy landing craft to go from Pozzuoli to Anzio, we were assigned bunks. When we got there, I put my walky-talky hand radio down on my cot with the rest of my gear and some sailor promptly stole it. You couldn't trust those sailors for anything. It made me madder than hell though, because each of us platoon leaders had one and it wasn't easy to get another right away.

In our Division history, I've put marks on the pictures for the places that I can recognize that I've been. I really should go through and mark the names of the people who were closest to me. They're all listed by regiments and companies. We were part of the 3rd Battalion, 143rd Infantry. The officers are listed first, then the enlisted men. There were several Painesville people that I heard of who were in our outfit. Joe Torre was in another regiment, but I think basically we were in about the same places at the same time. When I was on the Battalion staff, we used to get reports on casualty lists. I remember hearing that a Painesville guy by the name of Pat Rooney was in the outfit and just about the day after I heard that, I was checking the casualty list and I saw his name as killed in action; so I never got the chance to meet him. There was also a Don Luse from Painesville that I knew who was in our outfit. He survived, although I've never had the chance to talk to him about the war. I don't know where he lives now.

Going back to Commando Kelly for a minute...He got his Congressional Medal of Honor in the little mountain-top village of Altavilla, which I visited later when we were off the lines. It looked like one of those towns out of a storybook. The road wound up and around and around the mountain until you got to the very top and there was the town perched right on top of the mountain. Apparently the outfit was in a terrible fight and they were pulling out. Charlie stayed at the end and held off the Germans so that the other men could get away. He supposedly killed forty Germans. He was credited for throwing mortar shells at the Germans, killing some of them that way. Actually, Zerk wrote him up for the medal. Zerk didn't know that much about mortar ammunition, so I think the story didn't sound right to people who knew about mortar ammunition, because you couldn't just pick up a mortar shell and throw it - it wouldn't explode. When it slides down the tube, it hits a pin which then triggers the mechanism

which will eventually cause it to explode when it lands. Somebody conducted an experiment later and said that by pounding a mortar shell against a rock or something, you could then throw it and it would explode. I don't know if Charlie Kelly knew that much about mortars, but he'd probably just thrown them and nobody stopped to see whether they exploded. It shouldn't take anything away from his medal, because he was a very fine soldier and a very brave kid; kind of rash and crazy. He had a good sense of humor and when we were off the lines, we laughed a lot, to stay sane.

When we were moving north above Rome we did more walking than fighting, but at least the weather was sunny and warm and we felt like we were finally getting somewhere. I remember one day we came to a bridge across the river. It was the only access across the river and the Germans had very professionally blown it up so that it was completely destroyed. I was scouting around for a way across and looked down in the water and saw a concrete railing that had been dropped straight into the water. It went all the way across the river, which was not a big river. It was about six inches under the water, so I walked across the river on that narrow beam of concrete and found it was perfectly steady. I went back and got my platoon and by that time I developed a feeling of confidence. I carried all the weapons across while the guys tip-toed across and we all got from one side to the other without getting anything more than our feet wet.

Going back around Cassino in Italy where the front was pretty stationary, the artillery in support of us used (when the weather was OK0 Piper Cubs as spotter planes to spot targets for the artillery to shoot at. These were just little Piper Cub airplanes and occasionally they got shot down. But we were always happy to see them because is seemed when they were up the enemy artillery would quit shooting so that they wouldn't be spotted and blasted by our artillery. These little Piper Cubs were always a welcome sight to us. In addition, we usually had a forward observer with our rifle company. He became part of our family. They stayed with us for quite a while and didn't go back to their own outfits except when we were off the lines. The standard artillery was 105mm cannon and then we also had a battalion of 155mm cannon which were called "Long Toms" and they shot miles farther than your regular artillery. Artillery

support was a wonderful thing, except like air support, it didn't solve all of our problems; particularly in Italy because Germans were dug in so deeply in bomb-proof shelters artillery or Air Force bombs didn't help us as much as you might expect.

By the way, we called the Piper Cubs "Maytag Messerschmits".

For what it's worth, in World War II the infantry divisions were set up in threes. They were known as triangular divisions, since they basically had three infantry regiments and each regiment had three battalions and the battalions were made up of four companies, three rifle companies and a heavy weapons company. In addition to these units there were supporting units and supply, artillery engineers, medica and a light tank company, and I think an anti-tank company, too. The rifle companies all had three rifle platoons and light weapons platoon and a communications group, kitchen staff, supply headquarters and a motor pool with Jeeps and other vehicles.

The division commander was usually a major general and he had a exec officer who was a brigadier. The regimental commanders were generally full colonels, battalion commanders were lieutenant colonels, with the major as an exec officer. The rifle companies were generally commanded by captains and each platoon had a lieutenant in charge, along with the sergeants and corporals.

Unfortunately, I didn't stay out of the hospital long enough to get my captaincy as company commander, which I would have liked.

It's funny how being a complete civilian at the start that you became so saturated with the military knowledge. I can remember riding home on the train looking at the countryside. Your mind just automatically says, "Well, you would put your machine guns here and mortars there." You just couldn't look at a countryside without thinking militarily.

As far as weapons, most infantry officers carried carbines and the riflemen had M-1s (Garand rifles. Each platoon was supposed to have a bar (Browning automatic rifle) which was bulky like a small machine gun. The Garands or the M-1s were semi-automatic as were the carbines. The carbine was just a smaller version of the rifle, crudely made, but very effective weapons.

Particularly in Italy we all had a couple grenades hanging off our jackets, too. It was a comforting feeling to have a grenade handy, although I personally never used one. We generally had our rank insignia painted on the front of our helmet; like a first lieutenant would have a silver bar, a captain would have two silver bars, a major would have a gold oak leaf and a lieutenant colonel would have a silver oak leaf. A full colonel would have an eagle. You had to do this so that if you were giving commands the soldiers would know that you were somebody in authority if they didn't know you. The sergeants usually had their stripes painted on their helmets. Of course, they always said this made you a more conspicuous target if the Germans could see that far.

We had two kinds of hand grenades: fragmentation, the standard ones which could do a lot of damage. When they exploded they sent fragments in all directions and could kill people. Although in the movies, when you see a grenade explode it usually looks like an artillery shell going off and they always seemed to exaggerate the size of the grenade explosion. We also had concussion grenades which weren't really intended to do much damage to the enemy. They were just to stun them when they exploded. The Germans also had grenades which were pretty much concussion grenades, although the fragments could so some damage. These were called "potato mashers" because they had a wooden handle with a masher-like end, which was the explosive end. They grabbed them by the handle and threw them.

In France we were running into all sorts of troops; from very good ones to people who had obviously been scraped from the bottom of the barrel. They were either old or young, not very good physical specimens. We developed a technique up in Alsace where if we captured some we would interrogate them very thoroughly and quite often they would be willing to tell

us things about their supplies and their routines. They were getting somewhat demoralized by that time. We would find out where their food was brought up and where various units were, and then we would shell those spots very heavily at the times when people were known to be there.

Zerk Robertson was also a great one for the "Chinese attack" where we would just open up with all of our guns and make the Germans feel like something was coming and they would respond by firing their weapons and we would locate their machine guns and other installations where we could try to take them out with artillery.

Back when I was in the hospital in Marseille at the end of the war, there were a lot of Russian soldiers that we had liberated from German prison camps. I was struck by how much a lot of these fellows looked like the Finnish people I had known in Fairport. I guess they're not too distant related in that part of Russia. They all seemed to be friendly and happy and glad to be where they were, naturally.

Back in Italy.....When we were off the lines we had a camp near a town back of the front. The camp was fenced in to try and keep civilians out of the area in case they might get hurt or steal something, but they always found ways of getting in; sometimes little kids begging for food and sometimes some women who were looking for customers as prostitutes. These were the saddest, ugliest looking women you can imagine. These women were trying to set up business and the Protestant chaplain took it upon himself to round them up and haul them away. It was a funny sight, because he was a nice man, but he was sitting in the front of the Jeep driving away with two of these bedraggled, sorry-looking women in the back and he was sitting there looking like the victorious crusader. They would haul them away and reportedly examine them for diseases. A report would come back that they had every disease known to man. They tried very hard to discourage this sort of thing, and with good reason. There was a lot of disease floating around.

The Army kept bringing USO tours over to entertain troops; Hollywood stars and celebrities and sports stars. When we came off lines at Cassino, we saw John Garfield, who did a pretty good job of entertaining troops. They would have other acts with them and we saw Humphrey Bogart and his first wife, whose name was Mayot Methot. She looked like a dishwater blond - just washed out, drab, sleazy looking. I couldn't believe she was the wife of a movie star. Humphrey didn't really have a very good routine and wasn't nearly as entertaining as John Garfield.

The best act I saw was in Naples in an old opera house. They were English music hall entertainers. They were very professional and very entertaining. They put on just a happy, funny show.

The 5th Army in Italy also had a very fine baseball team, made up of service and supply troops from the rear echelons, including, occasionally, ex major-leaguers. I saw part of one game when I was going from hospital to hospital paying the troops. I looked at these big, healthy specimens playing baseball well behind the lines and I wished they could have had something like that in my platoon. I guess it helped morale. It helped somebody's morale, although we never saw games as line troops. We didn't even know they were back there. That's how the 5th Army was run.

Buck Grimmett sold a German pistol called a P38. It was like an imitation luger pistol, to John Garfield for $75.00.

As for our own recreation, I seem to remember that we played volleyball when we were off lines in Italy. That's about all we did in the way of athletics.

Going back to machine guns.....I remember every fifth bullet in the machine gun belt was a tracer bullet, which flies through the air with a red flash so that you can follow the line of your fire and so that you can see where the bullets are hitting. It also shows where you're firing from too, but that's part of the game.

A couple of medical details.....The wound in Italy. The bullet hit and fractured my ribs which in turn punctured a lung and that's what gave me so much problem.

The wound in France principally severed the main vein in my right leg, which gave me problems and led to my retirement from the Army because the circulation in that leg was impaired. One of the officers in my ward in the hospital in France was Lt. Harridge. His father was for many years president of the American League, which was a pretty big deal. His father was William Harridge.

When you were in the hospital, your mail would be forwarded from spot to spot. It sometimes took a long time catching up. Betty had a particular talent for making wonderful care packages in which she sent all sorts of clever things in addition to good things to eat; useful little things that made life a little easier.

After Sgt. Majors was wounded, Steve Gregg became my platoon sergeant and during the invasion of Southern France I was in the hospital. During that time, Steven won himself a congressional medal. I think what happened - what triggered a heroic outburst by Steve, was we had a nice innocent kid by the name of Fabi and he was obviously from a very high-class Italian family. He was just a young kid - just as nice and innocent and naive as could be and everyone was fond of him. Well, I think it was around Montelimar in France that he got killed. Steve thought so much of him that he went on a rampage. He supposedly picked up a machine gun and started firing from the hip, charging German positions. Winning a congressional medal there in France, after he'd been in combat over a year, was really a great tribute to him. He was a nice, quiet fellow from Bayonne, New Jersey.

I have one recollection of Fabi. When we were moving up north of Rome in Italy, we stopped to wait for orders and we were talking to some Italian civilians. Fabi of course spoke Italian. I was listening to him talk to a guy nearby. I could tell they were obviously talking about me. I could pick up the words in Italian. They said, "good man" which made me feel pretty good. You like your troops to like you and respect you both. Steve Gregg was

commissioned to lieutenant after winning his congressional medal. I think he went back home to Bayonne, New Jersey and had a career as a deputy sheriff (I think).

Going back to Italy again.....When we were off lines after Cassino, we trained for quite a few weeks before we got back to Anzio. Our mess sergeant was a pretty resourceful fellow. He would scrounge up the makings of ice cream and periodically would make ice cream for the company, and it was amazing how people would turn up out of thin air when that ice cream was done. The battalion commander and his staff would just suddenly arrive. It just seemed to spread all over the area that we had ice cream and they were there to eat it with us. Somebody had a record player and I think we had only two records and the only ones I remember were The Sons of the Pioneers and Roy Acuff. Naturally, they were hillbilly songs. We had "San Antonio Rose", which was sort of like the National Anthem. I still want to stand up when I hear it. We also had "Wabash Cannonball".

Odds and Ends.....I remember Rich Reuland. When he came back to the company from his first Purple Heart he was talking about how he had lost a good friend of his and he said the guy said, "Stick with me and you'll be all right" (words to that effect). Rich said, "Don't ever say that. Don't ever say those words." I inadvertently started to say them one day and he stopped me with sheer panic in his eyes. He was so superstitious about that phrase. He stopped me in mid-phrase before I could get all the words out. He was so sure something bad would happen if anybody ever said that again.

In the wintertime we wore a little knit wool cap under our helmets and this would pull down to your ears to keep your ears warm. I remember one day I didn't have my cap down and we were riding in a Jeep on a cold, bitter day. The bottom of my ears, the lobes, almost froze. It was very painful. I think that was the day we were riding up the mountains through the woods. All of a sudden we heard this crackling noise. We thought somebody was shooting at us and we all piled out of the Jeep onto the ground and looked for the snipers. It turned out to be that the radio in the Jeep had shorted out and was making all these crackling noises. We felt kind of foolish. We got back into the Jeep and went on our way.

I remember in France when I was on the battalion staff we had an exec officer who was a nice guy; just a blowhard. He didn't do anything except help organize the headquarters and he had a radio which made him very valuable to us because we could listen to the BBC; a little music, a little news. I remember one night they cut some orders for him to lead a light armored column somewhere on a raid. He was petrified, but somehow the plans never materialized and he never did actually get into any actual combat or had to fire a gun or have one fired at him, other than artillery. He apparently stayed in the Army after the war because a year or two after the war we had a mission in Greece and I saw him quoted in the paper as one of the members of our military mission telling the Greeks that they had to get vicious and ferocious in Greece just like we had done in France. It made me laugh because aside from his radio he was probably the most worthless person in the battalion. He was a pleasant enough guy when he wasn't bragging about himself or his feats.

I keep thinking about Buck Grimmett stories.....When we were training in the southern part of Italy. I had a day off and we were in town and I bumped into Buck on the street and he was with the Canadian Army sergeant. They were both drunk as hoot owls and had their arms wrapped around each other - best buddies that ever were. I bumped into Buck a couple hours later and said, "Where's your buddy?" He said, "We had a helluva fight!" I wish I could have seen that.

We spent a lot of time off the lines, censoring mail, and we read some very strange things in letters. I remember one guy in the company who wrote the most loving, passionate letters home to his wife and the other guys said he was the worst chaser in the company. Then when Commander Kelly's articles started appearing in the Saturday Evening Post he included a wild night that he and a buddy had in town in Naples when they were off lines. Unfortunately, the buddy's wife read the story in the magazine and there was hell to pay.

In censoring mail we had to cut out any specific reference to places and events that would give the Germans a clue as to what we were doing. Then in turn, sometimes our mail was censored by higher authorities back in some distance headquarters. Some people had pre-

arranged code words with their families so they could give them clues as to where they were and what they were doing.

At one time we had a communications sergeant who was of Portuguese decent and he talked with a heavy accent and when he wrote letters you could hear the accent right in the letters. He wrote the same way as he talked.

More scenes stuck in memory.....When we were in France and I was with battalion headquarters, we moved into a farm house, somewhere in some small town and just sort of superimposed ourselves on the family living there. I remember the woman of the house paddled around in peasant clothes, barefoot in the kitchen. She was very pleasant about putting up with us. Then on Sunday, I happened to see her on her way to church walking a couple miles, dressed up looking as sharp as could be. I couldn't believe it was the same woman. Another memory in that farm house is when I took my shirt off to wash and shave one night and it got real quiet in the room because everybody was impressed with the ugly scar I had on my back. It was very fresh then and kind of depressed everybody.

Also in France - Alsace Lorraine - we captured a whole bunch of prisoners and I was in charge of them and it was too dark to march them back to regimental headquarters. We were staying at that time at kind of a country inn and my boys found a narrow room that could be guarded with only one door coming out and no windows, so they put them in there but did not realize that it was a kind of store room for all sorts of fancy foods for the restaurant and the Germans, unbeknownst to us, broke in and ate everything in sight, much to the distress of the owners of the property. I felt real bad about that when I heard about it. You couldn't really blame the Germans; like any soldiers, they would eat anything they could get their hands on anytime. They were getting pretty hungry in those days.

Occasionally I did some dumb things.....I can remember once when we were moving up into an attack, and I was the battalion intelligence officer. I started off reconnoitering routes where we could move our vehicles up. We were worried about mines and I went off by myself

without a radio or telephone or any kind of communication. I just wandered a mile or so down these trails and afterwards realized if something happened to me, like getting hit by a mine or something, there was no way anyone would have known about it! I should have had somebody with me or at least the radio. Dumb!

that was the day we were attacking against a well-fortified position - barbed wire and so forth, very professionally installed. The assistant division commander came down to our battalion headquarters to give us advice and see how we were doing. The everyday German troops that we were running into by then were not as good, but they still had noncoms that were tough as nails. You couldn't get anything out of them, while the privates would break down and tell you just about anything.

While we were in Italy, the Army came out with combat infantry badges. The idea was to give recognition to the people who were actually in combat under fire as opposed to the supply and service troops that supported them. The percentage of troops actually in combat compared to the total number of troops was rather small, so we were all very happy to get the recognition because nobody else goes through what combat troops do.

It was a rectangular blue badge with a silver rifle on it. When we first got them and somebody went into Naples, the MPs picked him up for wearing Italian jewelry and needless to say our commanders were outraged. I believe the Army still has that and I don't know if they've put a silver wreath around it to acknowledge the difference between infantry and combat infantry who had actually been there.

Thinking back to my first combat assignment, my weapons platoon. I just suddenly realized that none of my people were ever killed while we were together. We did have some wounded, including myself, but nobody died. Afterwards, when I was with battalion, several of them got killed and I felt really bad. There was a nice, tall, lanky, quiet boy from Tennessee by the name of Freedom Nash. I had made him a sergeant and he was just a real good, reliable kid and I felt so bad when I heard he was killed. Another one whose picture is in the division

yearbook, smiling and carrying mortar shells down a muddy, snowy road, was Dutch Hirneisen. He was one of my best men and he was killed in France.

Did I also mention that when I was in the hospital in Naples, Buck Grimmett was in the same hospital. He had gotten an arm wound. By that time he had gone on to a special semi-commando unit that the battalion organized, and needing more excitement he had joined up and got wounded in the arm. Buck had his whole arm in a big cast that sort of held it out on an angle from his body. While he was in the hospital he got somebody to take his picture with his other arm around an Italian girl who worked at the hospital, and of course he sent the picture home to his wife to tease her a bit. He was one of a kind.

I mentioned that our battalion commander was also in the hospital at the same time. He got wounded shortly after I did. He had the same type of chest wound. He was sent home and I went back to the lines. I don't quite know how that came to pass. I envied him.

Combat soldiers don't see much of generals as a rule, but we all thought a lot of our commanding general, General Walker. He really did a magnificent thing in infiltrating two regiments behind German lines; there at Velletri as I described before. He was from Ohio and he was constantly at odds with the corps commander and General Clark. In his book he told of the conflicts that he had with them because they were trying to do things that just didn't make sense and he kept protesting and getting overruled. Again, we hardly ever saw him but we had a farewell ceremony for him and everybody hated to see him go. He was sent back to the States - not that he really wanted to go.

One of the things that General Clark did to his lesser generals was make sure that their names didn't get into the paper. If any names got into the paper, no matter who had carried out the action, his name was reported. He exerted firm control over publicity coming out of the Italian campaign.

Shaving was kind of painful. We all looked horrible, naturally. But every Italian man who had a razor became a barber and we would go get shaves or haircuts when we had an opportunity to do so.

Going back to the breaking out of Anzio.....Zerk was our company commander and he was called down to battalion headquarters to get the orders for our company. You could always tell when Zerk cam back what he thought of the orders. If he was real worried about our mission he'd be hunched over, his head down. On this one occasion he came back and we were all ready to move out and we discovered that the battalion commander, the operations officer and their driver had been out reconnoitering the land and taken a wrong turn and were captured by Germans. So our battalion was ready to move out without its battalion commander or operations officer. But we got through it all right.

Aside from the fact that they all liked country music, people from Texas also talked funny. Zerk would say if he wanted somebody to move their troops, "Take your people and carry 'em on down to that billygoat hill over there." He also called dress shoes "slippers". There were a lot of funny phrases that Texans used but I can't remember any more at this moment.

Thinking back to my first trip to the hospital in Italy. I was in bed for six weeks before they let me out and that was medical practice at the time. All I can remember was that I was so dizzy by the time I tried to stand up that it was funny. I'm sure under modern medical practice I would have been up much faster than that.

The second time I don't know how long I was in bed, but it wasn't that long. Although I ended up being in the hospital in France and back in this country for about six months.

It was funny in the Army how many of your friends happened to be in the same part of the alphabet because generally when the Army divided you up into groups, it was done alphabetically, so a lot of my friends in the Army had names that started with O, P, R, S and

just by a chance of fate, Art Oldham and some other people like that. There was one guy whose name I can't remember, but in the same part of the alphabet. I guess I was stuck with him. He was an officer. From the time I went overseas from Fort Meade, Camp Patrick Henry and the boat across and then sometime in Africa, he was always in my tent or barracks. He was always drunk and obnoxious. I got so sick of him. He wound up getting killed somewhere, I don't remember where. There was another officer who wound up in our division in our regiment that when we went from Camp Mead to Ft. Patrick Henry to go overseas he was so drunk they had to pick him up and put him on the truck. He couldn't even walk. This was frequently his condition, but I guess he finally turned out to be a decent officer.

We had a first sergeant, too in the company who was just a wonderful first sergeant; steady and reliable, but they said the minute he was off the lines he was drunk again.

I have to confess the extent of my social life while I was overseas. It all happened while I was in the hospital in Naples, Italy. The USO tour was presenting a play "The Barretts of Wimpole Street", with Catherine Cornell, a great lady of the theatre and male lead, also a well-known actor. I think it was Brian Ahern, but I'm not sure. Anyway, this very nice young nurse, (who usually spent a lot of time holding my head while I was getting my chest aspirated) mentioned that and I thought the play had come and gone and I said, "Gee, I would have liked to have seen that." She said, "Oh, it's still here. I have tickets. Would you like to go with me?" So I wound up escorting her to the play and back to nurses' quarters where we had a coke. That was the extent of my social life overseas. I always felt there was no double standard and that I should behave the way I would expect Betty to behave back here...no fooling around on either part.

I thought I had pretty good medical care. I was impressed that a doctor who took a bullet out of my chest in Italy wrote to my home address after the war. He was following up on all of his chest patients. I always thought that was rather remarkable. Medically, he wanted a history, I guess.

Did I mention while I was at that same hospital in Naples Joe Louis, the heavyweight champion, was making appearances. I saw him there at the hospital mixing and talking with the guys and showing up to be seen.