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August 24, 1997

Mr. Luke Martin  
75 Salty Way east  
Shelbyville, DE 19975

Dear Mr. Martin:

I found your message on my answering machine when I came in yesterday evening. I have enclosed three copies of one of my army experiences. I don't know if this experience qualifies for what you want to do with it. It is a true story:

Sincerely,

*Howard*  
Howard R. Pick

Enc.

*Please let me know if you receive this*  
*Thanks*

In March of 1944 I was stationed at Camp Hood (now Fort Hood), Texas at the Tank Destroyer Training Center when I was transferred to the 103rd Infantry Division at Camp Howze, Texas where we underwent infantry training. On September 30th the division moved by train to Camp Shanks, New York. We were fortunate in that we were given passes to go into New York City where we took in shows, night clubs, tours of the city etc. I especially remember the play "One Touch of Venus," with Mary Martin. Art Tatum, the piano player, was holding forth at the Three Dueces, one of the night clubs on 52nd St. Too soon our stay at Shanks came to an end and we boarded ships. The ship that I was on was the converted Italian luxury liner, Conti Grandi, renamed the USS Monticello, a Navy transport. We were not sure of our destination as some ships sailed for Europe and others went through the Panama Canal bound for the Pacific Area. The second day out when we returned from our first meal of the day we found French language books on our bunks. This was good news for me as I felt that I would much rather fight Germans than the Japs. Our convoy went through the Straits of Gibraltar and into the Mediterranean Sea. The big rock that we saw did not have Prudential spelled out on it. We landed at Marseille, France. Marseille was secure at this time having been liberated by Lt. General Alexander Patch and the Seventh Army which we became a part of. We were told that ours was the first convoy to put into Marseille since its liberation. All of the troops were disembarked by

1800 hours. Being a Corporal, I was put in charge of one of the details to put the ship in order. Our job specifically was to sweep the ship and tidy it up in general. We had our task completed in about two hours after which we each found a bunk and went to sleep. We were awakened the next morning, enjoyed a breakfast with the ships crew and boarded a 2-1/2 ton truck that took us to our staging area. The air was brisk and there was no tarp on the truck so we hunkered down in the bed of the truck. There was a port order in effect that there could be no more than two people in a truck cab at one time. A lieutenant hitched a ride to our staging area which was about fifteen miles away and he exercised his RHIP (Rank Has Its' Privileges) and rode in the cab. Our buddies at the staging area described what we had missed out on, marching with a full field pack negotiating a steep hill in the dark, with cold intermittent rain and the officers leading them did not seem to know where they were going. The next day our first sergeant woke me, told me to get on a truck that was parked at the end of the company street and that six of us would be taken to the port where we would unload supplies from ships. As the air was brisk we again hunkered down in the truck bed.

After unloading ships all day a captain asked me if I was from Staging Area Two. I replied that I was whereupon he told me to report to the truck driver in the lead truck of a convoy that was lined up on the street going from the docks. When I reported to him he asked me If I was from

Staging Area Two, I said I was and he said to get in the Cab as I was to guide him to that staging area. I told him that I really did not know where Staging Area Two was. He said, "get in, we will find it." As we were leaving the port area a lieutenant stopped us and asked me if we were going to Staging Area Two. I replied that we were. He then asked if he could ride to the staging area with us. I replied that he could. He stood and looked as though he was waiting for something and then said, "Corporal, officers usually ride in the cab." I climbed down from the cab and said, "that's fine sir, you can guide the convoy there." He replied, "I don't know where that staging area is." I said, "well, it looks as though you will have to ride up on top of the load then." We drove around Marseille for a while when we saw two MPs in a 3/4 ton truck. We thought they could tell us how to get to our destination, but they were drunk and were of little help. After much driving around we finally found the staging area shortly after daybreak. As the lieutenant climbed down he said through chattering teeth, "I thought you said that you knew where this staging area was." I replied, "No sir, I never said that I knew where this staging area was." He was mumbling something as he walked away. I never saw that lieutenant again.