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Early Life

When I was a boy we were living in Houston, Texas and my



Dad was working at an oil refinery. There was some sort of accident and he got gassed and couldn't work anymore. It was during the depression and there wasn't anything like worker's comp or anything like that. So the family packed up and we went to live with my grandfather on a farm near Cushing, Texas in Nacogdoches County. There was a lot of screaming and crying going on at the time but after we found out we could feed ourselves on the farm, and we weren't going to starve then things quieted down.

Living on the farm taught me about hard work and getting up early and doing your job right. At a young age I learned what the word discipline meant. Those lessons I learned on that farm have stayed with me throughout my life.

Enlisting in the Army

I took ROTC courses when I was in high school and got interested in the Army. Everybody was poor and there weren't many job prospects around there during the Depression so some of the boys in the ROTC classes talked about joining the Army. A few of the boys liked the National Guard, so we visited them one day. They told me it was the 36th Tank Company. I liked what I saw. They were clean and orderly. I knew then I wanted to join but I didn't say anything about it. I went back the next Saturday and they asked me if I would like to join. That was on October 18, 1938. I was just 18 years old.

After just three months of the National Guard, I liked it enough that I decided I wanted to join the Regular Army. In December I went to see the recruiting sergeant. He told me there weren't any

vacancies and I would have to wait until there was an opening. There were only 150,000 men in the Army, total, at that time. Finally in January of 1939 I got a letter telling me there was a vacancy. I went down to see the sergeant and he asked me what branch of the Army I wanted to go into. I told him, since I had been in a tank company, I would like to continue in a tank company. He said I couldn't do that because I needed three years of service. I then mentioned that I had grown up on a farm and had been around horses and thought the Cavalry would suit me. He said again, I needed three years of service. I didn't know what to say then so I asked him, "What the hell could I go into?" and he said, "Infantry." I didn't know anything about the infantry but thought it would be all right so I said, "Okay."

9th Infantry Regiment

Finally on the February 3, 1939 the Army called me in. I took the oath and was sent down to San Antonio to join the 9th Infantry Regiment.

Now, I didn't know it at the time, but the 9th Infantry Regiment was the most decorated unit in any of the military services. In fact it still is the most decorated unit. I was trained by soldiers in the 9th who had fought in the Boxer Rebellion and the Philippine Insurrection. My first platoon sergeant served in World War I. I got training from people who knew what combat was. Being young and ignorant they took pity on me and taught me many things they normally would not teach recruits.

At that time when you joined the Army you didn't go to boot camp but went straight to your unit where you were trained. Interestingly, when I joined the 9th I was initially assigned to I Company. A junior corporal was put in charge of the recruits. Even though recruits shared the barracks with 9th Regiment soldiers, they would not speak to us. We were not allowed to speak to any of the soldiers until we had completed our training. The 9th only took recruits twice per year. There would only be five or six recruits per company. The Army was way undermanned then. There were only about 65 men per company when there should have been 120 to 130.

On the rifle range I was the only recruit in the regiment to make expert. At that time the Army paid five dollars a month more if you made expert. Of course, that made me a big shot. We were only getting paid 75 cents per day. We used to say we got "three seventy-five," three meals and seventy-five cents per day.

For three months we could not talk to anyone but each other. But when we finished our basic training, the soldiers came up and congratulated us. There was a lot of camaraderie in the 9th Infantry Regiment. In the chow hall a corporal sat at the head of the table and those assigned as table servers would bring the food to the table where it would be passed around. It was like sitting down at a family dinner. There was tremendous esprit de corps in the 9th. Nobody insulted a 9th Infantry soldier. If a 9th Infantry soldier was downtown and was insulted by a civilian, The entire regiment would head downtown San Antonio to fight for the unit. One time we had a brawl in downtown San Antonio. The city brought out the fire department to put down the fight, but we cut up their hoses. We really stuck together.

December 7, 1941

I heard about Pearl Harbor in the Post Office café in San Antonio. It was six o'clock in the morning after a night of drinking. I think I had tried to get drunk the night before, but I only got \$19 a month, so there wasn't a lot of money to spend on booze. Anyway, I was sitting in the café having my breakfast. The radio reported the order: "Everyone report back to base. We have been attacked!" I thought to myself, "My God it happened." I finished my breakfast and headed back to base. We did not have the money to ride the bus so we had to walk. We walked from the Post Office, right next to the Alamo, back to the base. I was a Corporal at the time.

Airborne Training

While I was with the 9th, one of the more interesting things we were involved in was airborne training. The Army was trying to figure out how to transport troops by air. They trucked us out to Kelly Field where they had these old C-47's. We would practice getting on the planes and taking our

seats. Then the planes would take off and we would practice standing up and moving around in the plane. We went through the airborne training thing forever.

One morning we went out and loaded up on these planes, but this time they didn't let us off. They took off and we landed at Shreveport's air base. There were 400 troops with all their gear and weapons. The Shreveport police department got a little excited because we carried our rifles with us when we headed downtown that night.

The next morning we took off for an airbase in North Carolina. We did not have parachutes. They trained us to jump out the door of the plane as it landed. We would wait for the plane to slow and then jump out and move to our positions.

We returned to Fort Sam Houston. The Army had decided to form an airborne regiment. They didn't need all of us for airborne so they lined us up in two ranks and flipped a coin. I happened to be in the rank that was not selected. The other rank went to the 101st Airborne.

Mission of the Infantry

People forget today, but the basic mission of the infantry is to destroy the enemy. You do this either by making the enemy surrender or killing him. It's as simple as that. To make the enemy surrender you have to drive him into a corner where he can't move. Now the Navy can fire its big guns, and the Air Force can drop all the bombs it wants, but the enemy may hide in a hole somewhere or move a mile down the road. He still owns the ground. All other branches of the service serve one purpose and that is to get the infantryman to the fight. The infantry kills the enemy and occupies his territory. Until a combat infantryman steps on that ground you don't have anything. Period! This simple fact has remained true since the beginning of warfare. A lot of people do not realize that.

Combat Infantrymen

An infantryman has got to be like an animal. You are a hunter of other human beings whose job it is to kill you first. It gets exciting sometimes because you don't know if the guy you are hunting is a better hunter than you. You have to have a sense of survival. You use all your training and

experience to gain an advantage. An infantryman will drive his bayonet into the ground and put his ear against it so he can hear if someone is coming up. You take care of yourself and your buddies. You never let your guard down because one mistake can kill you or your buddy.

You don't have time to stop and think about what you have to do. You just react. Your training kicks in. "Can't" is not part of combat infantryman's vocabulary. You have a mission. Your job is to successfully complete that mission even at the cost of your life. You do things you never thought you would do and can never forget you did them.

In combat, the infantryman fights for himself and those in his squad. He may love his country, but his buddy beside him is more important to him when the going gets tough. The combat infantryman trusts his buddy with his life. Building this trust must begin in training. We had thirty men in a barracks with a common shower. In those days you could throw a ten dollar bill on your bunk and it would still be there a week later. Soldiers did not steal from each other. It was more than a brotherhood. Even now you can see this "brotherhood" lived out in my Company.

Infantry Training

We had to train ourselves to be good observers. They would take a table and put fifty items on it and cover it up. They would remove the cover for one minute and then replace it. The men were expected to name all the items on the table. You trained your mind to evaluate and recall what you saw.

They trained you to shoot "offhand" (standing) at 1000 yards. Today, they would use a scope. We used an ordinary rifle with iron sights to shoot at a 14 inch target. You had to be fairly accurate. Our rifle training was very intensive.

I don't understand why the infantry today shoots at people. The infantry is supposed to kill people. Today they shoot all over the place and don't know whether they kill anything or not. They just waste a bunch of ammunition. When I ask these young soldiers today, "Who carries all that ammunition up to you?" They say, "I don't know. Somebody brings it up." Thirty rounds of

ammunition weighs a pound. If you shoot three or four hundred rounds of ammunition you have shot more rounds than you can carry. What they do now I do not understand. We would lay in a position, maybe for half a day, waiting for some idiot to stick his head up over there. We would shoot him in the head and that took care of that problem.

In the infantry we had what we called a "media line." It is a line that the media and highfaluting people do not go forward of. Everything in front of the infantry is in danger. If there is a person out there, regardless, they better have their hands on their head or you shoot them.

We had to clear the houses in these French villages. Going through a house room to room is dangerous business. Most of the French farmhouses were made of stone or masonry. A lot of units had trouble clearing them. I changed all our ammunition over to armor piercing. We could shoot a couple rounds into those buildings and clean a room out. The rounds would ricochet off those stone walls and take care of anybody hiding in there.

We really didn't have any trouble with civilians. If they were true civilians, they surrendered before we had to shoot. You had to use some judgment.

We trained the men to handle all kinds of explosives TNT, dynamite. The infantrymen were trained in the use of fuses for these explosives. We would use det cord (detonation cord) to blow paths through barbed wire entanglements. When you rig an explosive you have det cord and a fuse line. The det cord burns very fast. The fuse burns very slowly. It might take five minutes to burn down. I took this det cord and ran out about twenty feet of it. Then I would put a pound block of TNT about every two feet on the cord and tie it together in a roll. We would throw it over the wires and set it off and it would open up a nice hole through that mess.

Grenade training was as realistic as we could make it. Your classroom was an area and your desk was a foxhole. The instructor would pull the pin on a grenade and throw it on the ground and yell, "Grenade!" You had better get down in your hole because it was a live grenade and it could kill you.

It was a short time after VE day. The company was billeted in a large building that had been a school for young girls, eighteen to twenty years old. Actually it had been a prostitution center for German officers. It was really a nice facility with a restaurant and lots of rooms for the girls. We had one platoon nearby. The rest of the company was in that building. The building had a mess hall and a chapel. While we were staying at this girl's school, we began collecting all the excess ammunition, and we were storing it in the chapel. We had guys in the chapel straightening up the ammunition, dividing the good from the bad. I was standing in a hallway and there were hallways to my right and left. There was a door at each end of the hallway. One of the company jeep drivers came through the door with a grenade in his hand. The pin had been pulled and the striker was straight up underneath the lever. The driver could hardly talk. He looked at me and pleaded, "Sergeant!" I took the grenade but I was thinking, "What are we going to do here?" There was no place to throw the grenade and I did not want to be honorable. I took out my knife and moved the hammer back down and found a pin to put in the grenade. I told him, "No more of that stuff!" I had enough of that. I still can't remember that driver's name. But disarming a grenade is part of our training.

We went through obstacle training. Some of the obstacles were ditches about three feet deep and four feet wide. They put a foot of water in it. At the edge of the ditch they put a barbed wire fence. The barbed wire strands were strung on triangular supports so that there were two layers of strands rather than one. You had to crawl through the ditches and under the barbed wire. The barbed wire entanglements extended the entire length of the obstacle course. At the end of the course was a machine gun set to fire rounds about thirty inches off the ground. The entire time the men are crawling through this course, the bullets are snapping around them. It trained them to ignore the sound of the bullets going overhead. You learn that if you hear the snap of the bullet it is past you. You don't have to worry about that one. You never hear the one that hits you.

We trained with artillery. The artillery would fire a barrage and we would simulate an attack after a barrage. They would roll a barrage forward and you would have to follow it. You had to be careful of your position. If you got too close the shrapnel could get you.

When we were at Camp Howze, we went up to Lake Murray in Oklahoma for compass training. Each squad was given a compass course to follow. If they followed the compass course correctly, they would locate their rations for the next day. If they missed it, then they went hungry. We did this for about a week moving all around the lake.

These are some of the infantry training requirements. Everybody had to qualify for an Infantryman's Badge. It is like the Combat Infantryman's Badge but it doesn't have a wreath on it, just the bar.

Only about twenty percent of the soldiers, regardless of how well they are trained will shoot to kill a person for the first couple of months in combat. After that, they have gotten accustomed to it and they don't mind it.

I used to tell them the best thing is to shoot a guy in the stomach because that way you know you didn't kill him so you don't have that on your mind. And if he lays there and hollers, maybe his buddies will come over to him and you can shoot them in the stomach as well. Then you have a pile of them who need medical attention.

The infantry chain of command was strictly followed. The orders came down the chain of command and were obeyed. That's the way it worked.

Discipline was also tough. You didn't have to do too much to get into trouble. A standard sentence from a summary court martial was "six and two-thirds" (six months in jail and 2/3 of your pay). If you went to jail, you had to make the time up at the end of your enlistment. It was called "bad time." If you wanted out of your contract before your enlistment was up, you could pay money and buy yourself out. If you did not buy yourself out and you had bad time, the six months was added to your enlistment. The discipline was very strict; stricter than anywhere else.

You were trained for everything. You were trained to support yourself. But sometimes you don't know if the infantryman you are trying to kill might be more trained than you are. During combat this little thought will give your adrenaline a little run.

Training the 85th Infantry Division

When the war started, they took the 9th Infantry Regiment and broke it into three parts. The group I was in went to Camp Shelby, Mississippi as cadre to the 85th Infantry Division where we began training in June of 1942. After we trained them, the Army selected men from the 85th to serve as cadre for the 103rd Division.

Training the 103rd Infantry Division

In January 1943, as a cadre the 103rd Division, we began the basic training for the recruits we were getting. After about thirteen weeks of basic training we gave them small unit training. During the fall of 1943, the 103rd left Camp Claiborne for the Louisiana Maneuvers. The maneuvers ended in November 1943, and they moved us to Camp Howze, Texas.

Becoming First Sergeant

When we left the 85th Division and were sent to the 103rd Division, they asked me if I wanted to go as First Sergeant. I told them it was okay with me. But there was another platoon sergeant named Johnnie J. Metcalfe who thought he ought to be First Sergeant because he was senior to me.

He went to the adjutant and raised hell, so they made him First Sergeant. I didn't matter to me; whatever they wanted to do. When we got to Camp Claiborne, he was the First Sergeant and I was a platoon sergeant. Well Metcalfe didn't know how to do the paper work, you know making out duty rosters and all the other stuff you had to do. Well when I first got into the Army I decided I was going to learn as much about the Army as I could. I really couldn't afford them, but I bought some books to help me learn all about Army reports and paperwork. I started studying all this stuff and I learned how to fill out the forms and reports. So Metcalfe would get me to do the morning report and duty

rosters and other things for him at night. He would go home and I would do all his paperwork after I had finished my work. I was all right with it. The job had to get done so I did it. I didn't have anything else to do. But one day he pissed off this old captain of ours. I don't know what he did. The captain was a little short guy and he wore a scarf that must have been twenty feet long. The joke among the officers was that his wife used to stand him up and spin him around to put that scarf around his neck. Anyway this old captain was mad as hell at Metcalfe about something. We were at morning formation. The cadre reported "all present or accounted for". This old captain said, "Sergeant Walters front and center." I came forward. "Sergeant Walters can you be First Sergeant?" I told him, "Yes sir." The old captain turned to Metcalfe and said, "You are now a platoon sergeant. Walters you are First Sergeant." And he said that in that in front of the whole damn company.

Marseilles, France

We went over to Europe (October 1944) and landed in Marseilles. The port had been pretty badly damaged so our troopship had to anchor away from shore. They threw cargo nets over the side of the ship. We had to crawl down the nets with all our packs and rifles onto this barge. It was dark. They turned a spotlight down on the barge so we could see to get down there. The Germans had an airbase in Italy and they would fly over the area. Outside of Marseilles there was an aircraft gun on a hill. If it was fired that meant the Germans were going to fly over. Just as we were crawling down the nets the gun went off. All the lights in Marseilles went off except the one light shining down on the barge. Everybody was yelling, "Turn that son of a bitch off!" Finally one of the boys shot the light out with his rifle. The ship's captain got pissed off because we took out his light. That was our first experience with the Germans.

We marched up to the Delta Base area located on a plateau above Marseilles. It rained every day for two weeks. The mud was up to our knees and we were sleeping in pup tents. We spent time going into town carrying ammunition off of the ships. At the time Marseilles had only on operational

dock. The Army used it to unload ammunition. Eventually we got out of that mess and moved out of Marseilles toward the front.

On the way out of Marseilles there was a stretch of road where a German column had been trapped. I don't know what division, off hand, but they caught the Germans moving out of Marseilles. They blocked off the road and the Air Corps came in and bombed the whole mess; horses, men, and trucks, everything. The road was jammed up so bad they used bulldozers to clear it. That was a good experience for us; being new and "feeling" death. We went on line at St. Die right after that.

I am amazed by all these people who relate these stories - "General so and so did this and somebody over here did that." I don't know how they know that. Most of the time those of us on the front line, were doing well if we knew where we were and what the hell was in front of us.

Mines and Potato Mashers

A German grenade is referred to as a "potato masher." It has a handle on it and string that goes through that handle that is attached to the pin. There is a ring at the end of the handle. The problem with the potato masher is that they have several different lengths of time on the fuse. One fuse goes off immediately when the pin is pulled and blows your head off. These grenades were left where the Americans would pick them up. You don't try to disarm them or try to figure out how they work.

A mine is the same thing. We got caught several times with what they call Bouncing Betty mines. It is a mine about four inches in diameter and about five inches high. It has a steel plate under it and there is a cable hooked to that plate and hooked to the bottom of the mine. The cable is coiled up and would allow the mine to pop up about four feet in the air. The mine is buried and has three wires sticking up out of the ground. If you are not looking and hit one it will go off. The mine comes up out of the ground, explodes sending pieces of shrapnel and other junk in all directions.

One time a major came up to the front lines. Usually, field grade officers did not come up where we were. They stayed back where it was safe. He wanted me to go over to another company with him. I said I'd go with him. We walked over to the company together. On the way back we were

walking across this field and I looked down and saw those damn little mines all around there. I said, "Stop!" He looked at me kind of wild eyed. I don't know what he was thinking. I said, "We are in the middle of a minefield." I thought he was going to faint and fall on one of the mines. I pointed out the mines and told him, "All we have to do is walk between them and we will get out of here." We slowly picked our way through the mines. That major never came back up to the front anymore.

Sarreguemines, France

We were up around Climbach in December of 1943 when the Germans came through the Ardennes and surrounded the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division in Bastogne. They moved us up to Sarreguemines area to relieve a unit they had sent north to help bail the 101st out of that mess they had gotten into. They loaded us up on trucks and moved us north. It was about 100 miles.

We were in positions up on this high hill near this little town called Bousbach. We looked out over the Saar River valley. Across the river in Germany were a lot of factories and almost every day our bombers would come over to bomb the factories. That's where I saw my first German jet. They had little jets about twenty feet long. We watched them attack the bombers one day. Two of them went through the formation and knocked down two bombers. Then they circled around and came back through and knocked down two more. We captured some of those planes later on in Germany. The fact is that in just about six months Hitler would have whipped our butts over there. He was making rocket fuel and he was making those planes. He could have torn our Air Force apart with them because we had nothing that could compete with them.

Niefern, France January 1944

After the Germans were stopped up north in Belgium, in mid-January sent us back south to Jaegerthal, about twenty kilometers west of Climbach. The mountains there where we were fighting were so steep I told the medics just go to the bottom of the hill because if anybody gets hit they are

just going to roll down to you. When you slept at night you had to put your feet around a tree or tie yourself to a tree or you would roll down the mountain.

Around January 21, we got orders to withdraw. We started pulling back in the middle of the night. It was snowing and sleeting the whole way. The snow and ice coated the front of our coats. It was not an easy march. We marched about ten miles in the cold, snow and sleet. We pulled back to Zutzendorf and set up a resistance line there.

We had 2nd Platoon and the 3rd Platoon out in front of our MLR in this little town called Niefern. Calfee's 4th Platoon had set up their mortars in an orchard on top of the hill above Niefern.

The forward observer for the artillery was in our area. We knew the Germans were planning something but we didn't know when or where. This forward observer had been with us for a day or two and he said he needed to go the rear and check on some things. I asked him before he left if he would fire a couple of concentrations out in front our lines for me so if the Germans did attack we could save some time getting the artillery on track. So he fired the concentrations and we got all that straightened out and he left.

The headquarters platoon was billeted in this house at the north edge of Zutzendorf. I grabbed a room with this big bed. I took out my .45 and laid it beside me and put a coal scuttle against the door to warn me if anybody opened the door. I dropped on that bed and went to sleep.

About two o'clock in the morning, Lawrence Cook, the company runner, busted through the door and knocked that coal scuttle halfway across the room. It sounded like all hell had broken loose. I grabbed my .45 and nearly shot his head off. He said, "Sarge, the Germans are attacking!" I grabbed my gear and headed for the company CP. We could hear the firing and commotion over toward Schillersdorf on our left flank. The platoons in Niefern had reported activity out in front of them. Everybody was on alert. Then around seven in the morning these SS troops came pouring down the hill toward Niefern. Our boys in down in that village opened up on the Germans and slowed them down, but didn't stop them. We ordered the platoons in Niefern to pull back to the prepared

positions on the MLR. Calfee's mortars were firing rounds as fast as they could drop them into the tubes. Things were happening pretty fast. I grabbed the field phone and asked for artillery support. This guy in the rear started giving me some grief about not being able to do it right then. I told him, "Well you better pack your bags, because these German sons of bitches are going to be back there with you in about an hour." We got our artillery fire.

Paulson and his men had taken cover in a line of foxholes and trenches we had dug in the hillside above Niefern. The artillery started falling. We walked it closer and closer to our lines. Paulson called back and said, "Sergeant, you are getting too close, the foxholes are caving in." I said, "Do you want the Germans in there with you? Keep your head down."

We must have had eight inch guns firing concentrations for us that night. But we stopped them from coming through I Company. The Germans broke through K Company on our left flank, but they never broke through I Company lines. These were SS troops, the best trained and best equipped of all German troops. The SS were advertised to be the best in the world. That night they were second best.

When we were rounding up prisoners we found out that some the prisoners had serial numbers tattooed on the underside of their arms. If they had a serial number under their arm we knew they were SS.

We found an SS officer wearing an American uniform. He spoke good English without an accent. He was strolling around behind the lines and everyone thought he was an American officer. Nobody questioned him for a time. Eventually someone asked him a question that any American GI could answer. He didn't answer it right. If we were unsure about a soldier we would ask about sports in the United States. For instance, we would ask how the Yankees were doing. The Germans wouldn't know. Our guys kept up with the Yankees.

Siegfried Line, March 1945

We were sent up to the Siegfried Line to relieve an outfit (Company B 411th). In the front of the line was a narrow valley. The hills on each side were steep, but the valley was fairly level. The Germans had built dams in those valleys every two or three hundred feet apart. They had put barbed wire on those dams and then flooded the valley with water. This one outfit had broken across one of these dams and went across a mess of water.

The Germans had cut all the trees on the surrounding hills and had secured them together so it limited our movement in that area. There was one little open area, about 150 square feet, where we were able to get in and relieve those guys. The company we relieved had lost a lot of men trying to break through this part of the Siegfried Line. They had about 75 men left. We came in with 120 men right at dark.

It didn't look good as we scanned the area trying to figure out what to do. I thought, "God Almighty, what are we getting into now!"

The Siegfried Line bunkers were just above us. But the Siegfried Line was not just one line of bunkers and that was it. This bunker here was supported by another bunker over there. The problem was you couldn't see that other bunker. You didn't know where it was. So if you attacked this one, the second bunker would open up on you. Captain Thompson (Charles Thompson, CO of Company I) and some other officers did some crawling around to find out where the bunkers were in that area. Then Thompson spent most of the night under a raincoat with a flashlight planning the best way to attack the bunkers.

The next morning we started out. That was the good thing about changing to armor piercing ammunition and having riflemen who could shoot. The Germans had hung wet gunny sack material in front of their firing slits. They would fire and you couldn't tell where they were firing from. We tried firing bazookas but the gunny sack material was not solid enough to cause the bazooka round to go off. The Germans had metal sliding doors on their firing apertures. They would fire then close these doors. We would aim at the firing slits. When the armor piercing rounds hit those doors they

would dent the metal so the doors could not be opened. If the door was open then the armor piercing round would enter the bunker and ricochet around inside doing a lot of damage to anyone inside.

We went through the Siegfried Line and lost one man. Romaldo Natt got shot in the back by another unit on our flank.

We also had someone else who shot himself in the foot during that same episode. I brought him down and I told the medic to bandage him up. He thought he was going back to the hospital. I told him to go back on line. He said, "But I shot myself in the foot." I asked, "Do you want me to shoot you in the head? Now, go back on line." Everybody got pissed off about that. But I didn't have anybody else shooting themselves in the foot. I solved that problem.

As we moved through the bunker line, we didn't meet a lot of resistance. We wondered, "Where did all the people go?" In fact, some of the bunkers were unmanned. We followed this road through this wooded area. After about two miles, we stepped out of the woods into a large open field. The road curved up through that field. The scouts didn't spot anything so we moved out into the open. About one hundred yards off to our right across this field there was another wooded area. Thompson and I were at the head of the column, walking along just dumb and happy. We had gotten through the Siegfried Line and only lost one guy so we were feeling pretty good. I saw some movement across the field near the edge of these woods. It was a guy waving a "white flag." We didn't know what the deal was. I said, "He hasn't shot at us yet. Let's just keep acting like we are dumb and see what happens." We walked another 25 or 30 yards and another guy pops up and started waving a white flag. Thompson said he thought we should take a break at that point. Only one platoon had moved out into the open field. The others were out of sight in the woods. The column stopped and two or three more white flags started waving. We motioned for them to come on our way. These were the guys who were supposed to be in those bunkers. They had fired a few rounds and headed for cover. We captured 25 or 30 prisoners there. We didn't know what to do with them. I think it was the first time they guided prisoners to the rear with an airplane. They sent

an observer plane to watch them. We told the German commander what was going to happen. We may have sent a couple of guys back with the Germans. We captured a lot of Germans.

Germany

We were in Germany south of Munich. We ran across this prison farm. The inmates had been forced to work on the farm, but the Germans were not feeding them. These people were starving to death. They were just skin and bone. When the prisoners died the Germans just plowed their bodies into the ground. We called the medics to come do what they could for prisoners that were still alive. The medics gave them food to eat but most of them died anyway.

We went through Munich. I think it was Munich where this official looking German civilian in a suit came up to Captain Thompson and said he wanted to surrender the airport to him. Thompson said, "What in the hell am I going to do with an airport?" He told the man, "Just stand on the corner and someone will help you." We did not have any trouble with people surrendering at that point.

Army, Marriage, and Family

Not long after I got to the 103rd at Camp Claiborne, I met this young woman named Roxie Fry. We got acquainted and we talked about this marriage crap. I told her I wasn't opposed to it but at that time I was not that excited about it. First, I told her, "If you don't like the Army, let's call it off now because if we get married you are going to have to put up with it for the rest of your life." I told her, "You cannot work outside the home; you are going to take care of the kids, if we have any, and the money." That was it. We were married sixty-four years and we never had an argument. Not one argument.

I will give you a good example of what a good wife she was. Right after the war we moved nine times, major moves, in eighteen months. We were living in Washington State, and I came home one afternoon and told her we had to be on the road to Fort Benning, Georgia the next morning. Her response was, "I better start packing."

We had two children, both boys. My first son was born in January 10, 1945 while I was away during WWII. She wanted to get pregnant before I left for Europe so she would have some remembrance of me if something happened. He was nine months old before I saw him. When our second son was born I was in Korea. She brought him over to Japan. She had let his hair grow out long. I thought he was a girl. We went into downtown Tokyo the next morning and got his hair cut. She was crying and saving his hair.

She was very considerate of me. She got the boys through all the diaper changing and early morning routines before I could have any part of it. She was a good woman to do all that! One son, Andy, is a Chief of Police in Woodlands, Texas and has been for years. Our other son, A. R. Junior, is a farm equipment representative in Texas.

When the boys got older, I told them the closest you will ever come to death is when you are disrespectful to your mother.

I had one that was in high school, a football player, who thought he could experiment with this. I traveled an awful lot. I had come home and my wife said one of our sons had given her a little trouble. I looked over at him and told him to come out to the garage. He asked me what I was going to do. I told him I was going to whip him with my belt. He said, "No, you're not going to do that." We got into the garage and he threw his hands up like he wanted to fight. I guess he thought we were going to fight. We went at it and after a while he said, "Dad, please don't do that anymore." That solved that problem. From that time on, all she had to say was, "I'll tell your daddy on you." She didn't have any more problems raising them and she did a beautiful job. They are good kids.

Korea

By the time the Korean War broke out, I had made warrant officer and was training reserve units in the Monterey, California area when I got orders to Korea. I was assigned to the 15th Field Artillery Battalion supporting the 2nd Infantry Division.

Not that what we in the 103rd went through during WWII was not tough. But Korea was a million times worse than Europe ever thought of being. In some of our units there was more than one hundred percent turnover in "killed" alone; a lot of them in twenty or thirty minutes.

The Germans would give up when they thought it was getting close to the end. The Japanese only gave up after the second atomic bomb. Truman probably saved a lot of infantry lives because he ordered them to drop those bombs. You face a different kind of soldier when you are fighting in Asia.

In Korea, we were up on the Yalu River when the Chinese came across. We had tanks dug in supported by infantry. There was a solid column of Chinese marching toward us. We waited until the Chinese saw they were going to be ambushed and then we opened up with all those tanks. The Chinese would send a thousand men at a time to try to break through. I don't know how many we killed.

Later in the war, around February 12, 1951, our battalion was firing in support of two ROK infantry battalions. Well the Chinese attacked through those ROK units and overran them. The ROK units dissolved into the wind. We were ordered to withdraw which was obvious. We were in a convoy proceeding down this road when the convoy came to a halt. Everybody was sitting around trying to figure out what was going on. This major said he would head up to the front of the convoy and see why we had stopped. He went forward toward the head of the convoy, but he didn't come back. After waiting a little while, I decided I would walk up that way to see what was going on. As I came to the head of the convoy, I saw these guys with guns standing on the road; I thought they were ROK troops. This major was spread out on the ground. I walked up to him and got him up and said, "What the hell are you doing lying down there?" I dusted him off. He was looking at me with eyes as big as saucers. He looked like he was in shock. I looked at him and asked, "What the hell is wrong

with you?" Then one of these soldiers walked up and pointed a gun at me. I got the picture. They were Chinese troops. They took my gear. The sons of bitches even took my wedding ring. They pointed me toward a rice paddy where they had gathered all the prisoners. I pointed to the bars on my hat and said no. For some reason they let me stay on the road. After standing there a while they lost interest in me and started messing with something else. Nobody was really watching me so I started edging back down the road. When I was far enough away I turned and ran. I heard them yell. They fired a few shots but they missed.

I got back to the battery. They were just sitting there. I was the only one in the whole battalion who had infantry training. I wasn't about to sit there and wait for the Chinese to walk up and take us all prisoner. I was pissed these people had taken our guys prisoner and on top of that they had taken my wedding ring. A combat infantryman is trained to survive. People do not understand that sometimes in combat you are crazy first and everything comes after that.

We were hemmed in on this road that ran through a narrow valley. We had to do something pretty quick or we wouldn't make it out of there. I asked this sergeant where the Chinese were. He said up on those hills and they were moving our way. The hills were only about two hundred yards away. I asked him if we could move the guns into position to fire on the hills. He said he thought so. So we disconnected them from the trucks and set them up. It was about two o'clock in a cold still morning. You could hear the Chinese buglers at both end of that line blowing "charge!" We opened up. We fired everything we had: white phosphorus, HE, and smoke. The crews were firing as fast as they could. The Chinese were going up in the air. Dirt, trees and Chinese were flying everywhere. It was thrilling. I thought it was a pretty sight. I wanted a picture of it. We supposedly killed about 1800 in about twenty minutes. That stopped the Chinese for long enough for us to hook up the guns and hightail it out of there.

It took us three days and nights to make it back to the American positions in Wonju. We fought every mile of the trip. I witnessed during those three days incredible acts of personal sacrifice and

heroism by the troops around me. These troops did things that in other situations would get them a Medal of Honor. There it was just a normal thing to do.

By the time we got back to Wonju where the Americans had set up a defensive line, the 15th Field Artillery Battalion had basically ceased to exist. I learned later the battalion had lost over two hundred men killed or captured. The commanding officer and most of his staff were captured. All the other batteries lost their guns. We were a mess. Our battery was the only one who made it to Wonju with its artillery pieces.

Company I

I thank God that he gave me the privilege of leading the men of Company I. I trained them, led them into combat through to the end of the war, and brought them home again. Company I faced the best the German Army had to offer and beat their asses at Niefern. We chased the Germans out the Vosges Mountains in the middle of the winter. No other army in history had ever done what we did. They didn't ask us about it, they told us to knock them off the hills and that is what we did.

When "my boys" came home, as far as I know, none of them had to go on relief or beg for help. They were good honest men who went on to get jobs and make a contribution to society. I think it is like a teacher who teaches a class of kids who do well and become good citizens.