

My Experiences of WWII in the infantry

By [Donald Bisker](#)

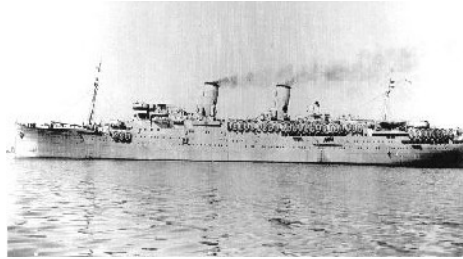


Link to Google Maps to see Donald's movement in Europe:

<http://www.google.com/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&msa=0&msid=114816699629522483545.000482401b0e2da1e28e4&z=6>

MY EXPERIENCE OF WWII IN THE INFANTRY

We left Boston Port of Embarkation, September 5, 1944, on the [U.S.S. Monticello](#), a converted Italian luxury liner, landing at Cherborug, France on September 15th, being the first American troops to go directly from the U.S.A. to France.



Built in 1928 as SS *Conte Grande* purchased by the US Navy and commissioned the USS Monticello, 1942; decommissioned, 1946; returned to Italy in 1947

We moved to Montebourg where hard fighting had been in hedge rows. There were lots of German and American equipment including a few helmets still showing signs of blood on them lying around. We left the rear few days later on box cars for the front (did not get much to eat while we were there as the majority of food was going to the front) We would go into a little town that had a cheese factory and buy green cheese as that is all they had.

We debarked from the train near Luneville, France and went into bivouac. The fighting had been here not long ago and you could smell death prominently. A few days later we moved to the front lines relieving the 79th Division. They had been on the front lines for 70 some days.

While we had been in bivouac we were shelled several times but no damage as the shells were duds, but we got the idea of what was ahead of us. As we started moving forward to relieve the 79th Division I saw my first American dead soldier. The bullet had gone through his neck. It really affected me. The man was not in the same company as me but I had met him a couple of months before in Chicago. His name was Carter and I still see him lying on his back, helmet still on and his name stenciled on the

front of his helmet.

As I was Assistance Squad Leader I had a tank grenade launcher on the end of my rifle and a bag of six grenades and as we were shelled before we arrived at our destination I threw the whole bag of grenades away because I knew if a piece of shrapnel or a bullet hit the grenades it wouldn't be anything left of me to bury.

When we finally arrived at the front one soldier was eating his lunch while sitting on top of a dead German. He was trying to make us sick and he did, but another soldier realizing how we all felt said something that has stayed in my mind as if it were yesterday. He said, "don't feel too bad and stay on the ball if you get to live for 2 weeks you have a good chance of making it through the war." This turned out to be true.

With all our training (which did help) it took the real combat to teach you how to protect yourself such as knowing when incoming shells would be hitting close by, the difference between incoming and outgoing, particularly when both are happening at the same time. And mortar shells which were not as large, but you could not hear them coming in until it exploded.

Finally we were in our positions which turned out that we were in the American trenches of WWI and the Germans were in their old WWI trenches. Being so, we were both in defensive positions. Another fellow and myself were assigned to protect one of our heavy machine gun nests. The first night of combat we started dying. We killed ourselves almost as much as the Germans did.

We were up against a crack German Division, the [17th S.S.Panzer Grenadiers](#). As their trenches and ours were very close together due to the fact we were in a woods they would come over every night and try to find and kill us.

This led to our killing ourselves, after the first night. If one person stood up to relieve himself and made one bit of noise several rifles would go off in the direction of the noise. This happened due to being all green troops in combat and being scared.

Fritz, my partner and I at that time would take turns on guard and stay on guard until our nerves would not allow us to stay any longer. Fritz and I were not in the trenches but just outside because of the machine gun position we were guarding. We were in a foxhole in the shape of a "T", the stem being covered with heavy logs and dirt on top of that for protection. We could, one at a time, crawl in and rest or sleep (if possible) while the other stayed on guard, the soldiers we relieved made this.

The nights seemed like forever and then there were the false dawns which would give little relief from the dark but wouldn't last too long before it was pitch black again. But at least we knew daylight would be coming.

As we were close to the edge of the woods I could see a little light by looking to my left, and I saw this German coming into the woods and although I don't think he knew it, he was heading right to the machine gun nest. I was scared s---less. Although our M-1 rifles were semi-automatic, mine was not because of the grenade launcher on it. Making it a single shot. When I released the safety on it, it sounded like someone stepping on a branch and cracking it. The German stopped and stood there humped over. After waiting maybe 30 to 45 seconds, which seemed forever, I realized that he couldn't see me, I started very slowly raising my rifle toward my shoulder but could not get it all the way up so I sort of shot it half way between my shoulder and hip. The German hit the ground. I found out before the night was over I did not kill him, probably did not hit him. He made no noise backing out nor did I even see any movement, but he left and about an hour later he was about 30 feet in front of me and let go with a burst of burp gun fire. Right across or parallel from me I could tell by the fire from the gun that he didn't know just where I was located, so I didn't fire back. He was trying to get me to fire back so he could locate my position. However, I was too scared to move and I sat there the rest of the night not even getting Fritz to relieve me.

Sometime the next night when I was guarding I thought I heard modern music, regular dance music, it was very, very soft. Finally I decided I was going crazy. When morning came I never said anything to Fritz and no one else said anything to me either. During the daylight hours we could quietly walk around and talk to each other, but had

to be back in the trenches or fox holes before 3:00 P.M. as every day at 3:00 P.M. we would have a battle. As the saying goes you could set your watch by it. The battle usually lasted about 15 minutes. Us and the Germans started shooting at each other even though we could not see one another. I never did find out who started it, it seemed to be a mutual agreement.

Back to the music, the next night I heard it again only this time it was very loud and when it stopped an announcement over a loud speaker. (Germans) telling us to come over the next morning, not tonight because we maybe shot, but in the morning we would be given a hot meal and sent to the rear and the war would be over for us. They went on announcing the names of our general and all our officers down to battalion leaders and saying "we know you are green troops."

We were told the night before we went into combat that we would be up against a tough German S. S. Division, but they thought we were still in the states and didn't know we would be relieving the 79th Division. So much for that tale. However, we survived and fought the [17th S. S. Division](#) most of our 203 days of combat.

One day while sitting guard a feeling came over me that I should dig the hold out deeper and I did, piling the dirt up higher giving me more protection. When the 3 o'clock battle started a [German 88 shell](#) hit the pile of dirt coming down and going underneath me and blowing out the other side of the foxhole. Neither Fritz nor I were hurt. I don't know if I was starting to get combat smart or from praying so hard, maybe both. At times during the war I would pray so hard I'd find I'd be just saying, "please, please, please" and when things would lighten up I'd finish, "God let me live", and of course I'd be alive.

On the 4th or 5th day I was sitting and thinking about all the fellows already killed in our company of a little over 200 men and if I were the last one to be killed I had 11 more days to live. That was the lowest my morale has ever been.

Back to the music again, when I heard it the second night as previously stated, it was loud and I asked Fritz if he heard it, he said, "yes", and I asked him if he had heard it the night before and he said, "yes", but he thought I would think he was crazy and he hadn't told me at that time. I had another good friend that wanted to shoot one of our own men because he had an argument with him before we came overseas and he

believed he was going to kill him we could not convince him otherwise, so the only thing to do was to send him to the rear. He was in the same squad as me. He ended up with the job of picking up the dead both American and German.

The third night of music was like the first night, very faint. They were moving right down the whole division line trying to get people to surrender. No music after this, just hold on to your sanity.

One day the order came out to capture a German, I had to send one man (I was no longer Assistant Squad Leader, but our squad leader being the squad leader had been killed or wounded). It didn't take long to be promoted in combat. Anyway, in our company we had one platoon, a Sergeant Smith, volunteer to lead the men he was one of two men I know that loved the fighting, the other was not with our company at the time. In the end neither of these two men came home alive.

Anyway Sergeant Smith led Merook, the man I sent, and 3 other men crawling on their stomachs to the German trench, 200 to 250 ft., got down in the German trenches, the only Germans that saw them were the two they captured and brought back. They did this without firing a shot and just pointing their weapons and motioning with their finger.

When Merook returned to the squad he tried to light a cigarette but was shaking so badly had to strike the match for never saw anyone shake like that before or since.

I don't remember how long we stayed in those woods, but the days were repetitious including the 3:00 P.M. battles, however we were getting smart and were not dying like the first several days, in fact we were doing as much damage to the Germans as they were doing to us.

One day we were told we were going to be relieved and go back to the Artillery for a two day rest. It turned out to be three days and then we went in an attack. This was a first for us and we had a new experience on learning how to survive if possible. Our Company was to drive the enemy from the hill in front of us. It was not a very high hill, but it was rolling ground.

Ordinarily it would be no trouble to stroll up it, however the Germans were firing down on us and we were running forward a few feet hitting the ground and firing up at

them. When we would land we would look for any kind of a little indent in the ground for whatever little protection we could get. Our Co. Commander, Captain Reilly had received from his wife a large box of razor blades and he made the statement he hoped he lived to use them all. He didn't, for he was killed in this attack. I had my one and only experience of having the man next to me, 5 to 6 feet to my left as we hit the ground I heard the bullet bit his helmet and I knew he was dead. It was all I could do to make myself get up and move forward knowing that if I'd have been where he was and he was in my place I'd be the one not getting up. My Platoon Sergeant, Sergeant Claudie had been a good friend of [Captain Reilly](#) (most likely Sheridan J Reilly), knowing each other in New York where they both lived, could no longer stand the pressure of combat and was sent to the rear. I never found out what happened to him. This is not when I became Platoon Sergeant, that came later. There was plenty of rain and mud during this time.

On the 13th of November, 1944, we started another offensive, the whole division, our 71st Infantry 114th and 324th. It started 7:10 and we ran into stiff resistance almost at once. Co. I. of our Battalion (3rd Battalion) suffered 90 casualties the first three hours, but by the end of the day we had captured several towns including Leintrey. We dug in and waited for morning.

We attacked again at 7:00 A.M. the next morning, gaining little ground, however in the next two days we took several more towns. Meanwhile it had turned very cold.

On the 18th our Company was engaged in taking a hill near the town of Igney, we came under heavy German machine guns, which stopped us for a while.

It was here that I killed a German soldier, it was him or me. Although I may have killed or wounded before, most of the time you were just looking ahead and shooting, never aiming too much because there wouldn't be time and you would be afraid if you took time to aim, someone may kill you but in this case the German and I were too close to each other.

It was not pleasant killing a person and later when you started praying again asking God to let you live and you've just killed someone that may have been a better person than yourself. It was hard.

I should mention here that [Captain Reilly](#) was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross posthumously. During all the 203 days of combat it was only one night that I hated the Germans. We were lost, wandering around, very cold rain and snow mixed and could not find our way out. Finally we did. I felt this way because I knew the German infantry were just men fighting for their country, as we were ours.

Several days later we did capture Sarrebourg. Also sometime between this battle and fighting at the [Maginot Fortress](#) that the French built, my first cousin and only cousin was killed. He was in A" Co. 1st Battalion and I was in "K" Co. 3rd Battalion. I did not find out about [Warren Bisker](#) being killed until I was hit the second time and on a hospital train going back to Nancy, France.

After Sarrebourg, we moved up to the town of Rauwiller, arriving 5:00 A.M. The Germans were not supposed to be near us. HA!

In our platoon there was only two sergeants left, a Sergeant Korth and myself. Although we were both the same rank, Korth was in charge of the platoon. I will mention here that each platoon was supposed to have an officer in charge but we very seldom had one and when we did it seemed they didn't last too long. Anyway, back to the story, Korth had been a Staff Sergeant (one strip under) longer than me.

Our Battalion Headquarters had moved into a house up the street from the house that our platoon took. No civilians seemed to be around, that should have told us something. Anyway, a battalion runner came and said to Sergeant Korth to send a Sergeant up to the headquarters, which meant I'd be the one going up. However, he then said "no I believe he said for you to come up yourself", which he did. A little while later it started getting light and the Germans started firing, we were surrounded by German tanks and infantry. This was the [130th Pansor Lehr Division](#) (German).

They did a lot of damage to us, killing and wounding. We held out though for 5 days, when parts of the [45th Division](#) attacked along with tanks. The 3rd Battalion Headquarters were all killed or captured. During these 5 days we ate sauerkraut that happened to be in the cellar of the house in a 55 gallon wooden barrel. Sergeant Korth was one of the captured and when we returned to the U.S.A. on the Queen Elizabeth, he met us on the docks; he had been home several days earlier. Also there were 3

black men with us (truck drivers) and although they didn't have infantry training, I gave each one a M-1 rifle and placed them at different stations in the house. They did their share. The rifles came from the wounded or dead. This is when I took over as Platoon Sergeant and soon got my rating as such.

When the fighting first started a shell from one of their tanks struck the side of the house about two feet from one of the men. He was with the light machine gun platoon. He had only been in that platoon a few weeks and had transferred out of our platoon. He felt more secure because he wouldn't have to run forward in an attack. He was a very good friend. Anyway, the concussion from the exploding shell killed him. I had just walked around the corner of the building, which saved me. I ran back to him, he was laying on the ground. Most of his clothes were torn off. I bent down and grabbed him by his cartridge belt to pull him around the side of the building, but as I pulled up his stomach split open and his insides came rolling out. I dropped him and left him there for later. Grotesque I know, but true. At this time another new man who had been with us only a couple of days was badly wounded. I dragged and carried him on my back behind the building we were using and the medics took care of him. I never saw him again.

As we were getting close to the German border in Alsace, we came to this town about the size of Vienna, MD. The Germans had left a few hours before we arrived. The Co. Commander decided to stay in this town, as it wouldn't be long before it would be dark. So each of our four platoons took a house.

The house my platoon took was occupied by a man and his wife, no children. Anyway, although they were French they spoke mainly German. This I understand was because when the Germans controlled (before the war) this area they would not, or at least frowned on, any of the people speaking anything but German. The couple wanted to know who was in charge of our platoon, and one of the fellows pointed at me, telling them that it was me. They smiled and thought we were kidding them, and wouldn't believe it until a runner from the company headquarters came and asked for me and gave me a message. An odd expression came on their faces (We didn't wear any stripes when they realized I was in charge. during combat.)

The next morning when we were ready to leave I told the man and his wife we were leaving and thanked him for the use of his house. He handed me a present and said he had made it during the night. It was a nice leather pocket wallet, I was really surprised and used it for several years after I returned home. Now I wish I hadn't used it, and kept it as a reminder of those times.

I failed to mention that during the fighting in Rauwiller the Battalion Commander of the 3rd Battalion was the only one that didn't get captured or killed. He crawled into a cupboard and stayed there for 5 days eating only a couple of D-bars (candy).

One day during this attack we were fighting and pushing the Germans back and capturing quite a few men. About an hour before dark we were in this branch. It was low, soggy and muddy, and I saw this German soldier to my left about 50 feet from me. He was in a position that would allow him to fire on us as we went by. I called to him to come out and surrender. At first he acted like he would, but as more of our men came up he jumped back in his position, which was sort of a foxhole above ground, and wouldn't come out. I was at a position that I could still see his head and upper chest. He was holding us up. I raised my rifle up and pointed at him several times and he knew I could kill if I wanted. I don't know if that was his job to hold us as long as possible, but by now it was really getting dark and I finally had to shoot. It was the second man I'd killed that I know of, because most of the time in a fire fight you don't take time to aim nor did you know if your bullet or someone else's bullet wounded or killed someone. This was a terrible thing for me, because more than ever it was harder to ask God to let me live. I really felt down. Anyway as we started forward, again two of my men and myself started leading the way and didn't get more than 20 feet when we were fired on by burp guns. However, neither of us were hit but really got a shock seeing the fire from the guns within 20 feet from us. We had to stop, and spent a long night sitting in the mud. If the other man had surrendered, the other guys in front of us probably would have given up too.

The weeks after this included the last days of November and the first week of December. The fighting had been heavy and all company's had lost lots of men.

Every so often we would receive new men who of course had not been in combat, but in most cases would make out ok by following the older men's advice. I can only recall of having to send 2 men to the rear because of their nerves. Once we were in combat we were never up to platoon roster of 40 men until after the war ended.

One morning the Co. Commander started giving me my duty for the day, and I told him there were only 8 of us left in my platoon. He said, "ok you can be the rear guard for the company." So as the rest of the company moved forward our platoon found new trenches that the Germans had dug in a zig zag way. So we stopped there and set up positions. One of the men found a bicycle and as we were only about 100 yards from a macadam road, some of us played with the cycle. By now we could hear the fighting going on in front of us. It sounded like maybe ½ to 1 mile away. Nothing was happening to us. We stayed there all morning and about one o'clock a mortar shell landed, wounding one of the men. We didn't have a medic with us; they were up front. So I strapped my rifle across my back and started pedaling to the front. I'd gone about 1000 feet when 3 Germans jumped up out of a small ditch. I fell off the bicycle trying to get my rifle from my back, and by the time I got untangled and able to stand up they were standing in front of me with their arms in the air, wanting to surrender at least one of them spoke English and told me they had been watching us all morning, wanting to surrender but were afraid. One of the Germans happened to be a medic and had all his equipment with him. So the four of us went back and he fixed Rudock up and they carried him to the rear. Rudock returned to us a few weeks later. Nothing else happened to us, so before dark we went forward and rejoined our company. I wondered later if those 3 Germans called the shell on us. I didn't think at the time to check where they were to see if they had a walkie-talkie or other communications. It just seemed odd for a shell to land that far off course. It also seemed odd to me to see all the religious symbols and statues at almost every cross roads no matter how small the road, with all the fighting going on.

Many nights we would go to sleep wondering if this would be our last day on earth.

We lost contact with the Germans and I was sent out with the gung ho,

Sergeant Smith, to relocate them. We went in a diamond formation, which consisted of 16 men, four men in a diamond shape in four different groups, and all four groups forming a diamond. This formation is or was called a combat patrol mission, was not to fight, only locate the Germans, however, our It was a lonely feeling, even though there were 15 other guys. We were spread apart as far as He could, but still see each other. Knowing Smith, I Has afraid he would get us in a fight, but he didn't. When He located the enemy we backed up, turned around, and went to our lines. We had traveled about 2 miles.

We were not bothered very often with airplane attacks. That's more than the Germans can say. I can recall at least 3 times it happened to us, and believe me it wasn't fun, with 50 cal. bullets hitting the ground all around you.

Sometimes after an offensive battle or the commander would be expecting a counter attack, we would have lights from somewhere way in the back shining over our front positions, and we could see in front of us pretty good. However, if there weren't any clouds in the sky to reflect the lights down, it didn't work too good.

After large battles lasting several days, we would go into a defensive position to let supplies and things catch up and to reorganize, also to get new men. One of these times we got the other fearless man, [Donald L. Flatters](#). No training, just boot training. He couldn't wait to get in the fighting. He was not in my platoon, but in our company. One day after capturing a small town, it having a hospital I had to threaten to shoot him because he was shooting at wounded men looking out the windows of the hospital. He acted as if he were drunk or high on something. . He was nuts. I didn't see much of him during the war, he was killed a few days before the end of the war. He was acting as a scout and was way out in front of his platoon. (My cousin was acting as scout when he was killed.)

But wars are not won in defensive positions, so on to attacks.

One time while getting new men one of the older men broke down in front of them and started crying, saying he couldn't go back any more. It was hard on the new men, you could see it in their faces. I took the man back to company headquarters and went back and explained to the 6 or 8 new men that we would be going in a

defense to start with, and it wouldn't be so bad to start. Our colonel told us just before going overseas that the rifle made everybody the same size and the thing to do was to learn to protect yourself, because a dead man was no good to his country. Regular soldier talk.

Sometime during the first part of December we advanced to within 7 to 8 hundred feet of the [French Maginot Forts](#). These were a line of fortresses the French built in the early 1930's to halt the Germans, and at the beginning of WWII they did hold off the Germans. So the Germans just by passed them. That made the French pull back and leave the fortresses. However, when we got to them the Germans were using them to stop us.

These Fortresses were spread out over a thousand yards long. Most of these fortresses had each 6 small turrets and 2 larger ones, consisting of machine guns and much cannons. They were all connected by tunnels and had under ground rooms from 2 stories to 7 stories deep. There was also a train track under ground more than 2000 yards long. The walls of steel and cement were several feet thick. The turrets were 9" thick. Our job was to take the forts.

We were from the first part of December, 6th or 7th to December 20th doing it. There was lots of small arms fire and artillery, and we couldn't do it until our artillery had enough direct hits on the cannon to destroy all their heavy weapons.

It may have been at this time that I was back at the aid station. There were some German soldiers in a nearby house which we drove out, to take over for our platoon use. In the house was a brand new scooter and I did a dumb thing. Thinking it would not start, I kicked down on the pedal and the thing roared into life making an awful noise. We did not want the Germans to know we had taken the house over. The whole platoon hollered at me and what could I say?

It was during these days that I was hit with shrapnel, one little piece in the lower right leg and one little piece in my left wrist. I went to the aid station a hundred feet in the rear. The piece in my leg was very minor, however my wrist was nerve damaged. It curved two of my fingers so I was there for three days, then back fighting.

When we finally drove the Germans out, they just moved about two hundred

feet where they had foxholes already dug and other defensive positions.

My platoon and another platoon were in the fortress, but the other two company platoons were in the ground fight. One of the men was way out in front pinned down, and no one could get to him. At last one of the Germans jumped up with a white flag because they had several wounded lying close to our man.

I was in one of the turrets and yelled for them to stop firing. Two German soldiers came out and started to move their wounded. I noticed that our man was still lying there, so I put my mouth to the aperture and yelled for him to get up and run back, which he did. I can't remember much more of what happened that day. I can't remember just when the fighting stopped but I know it was a few days before Christmas.

Just before Christmas we were relieved by parts of the 100th Division and moved to Sarreguemines sector in a defensive position relieving troops being sent to the Ardennes front.

We had a good hot Christmas dinner, turkey and the works. Things on the front line were reasonably quiet, although there were rumors that at least two German Divisions were in front of us, also two German Tank Divisions.

I'll mention here that the cooks almost all the time were able to give us one good hot meal every day. We would have to go back in small groups to eat, but it was great to get a hot meal.

On December 31st, 1944, we were on the German border with part of our 1st Battalion already into Germany a little way. The 1st and 2nd Battalions were on line and our 3rd was in reserve. It had been snowing quite a bit by now and there was a foot of snow on the ground. We were warned to be on the look out for German paratroops (never say any).

At 10 minutes before midnight the German Thirteenth SS Corp attacked with the 19th Infantry [36th Volks Grenadiers](#) and our old enemy the 17th SS Pansor Grenadier Division. Of course He didn't find out this information until much later. The Germans were dressed in white camouflage clothes and helmets to match the snow. They came at us yelling at the top of their voices, "Happy New Year Yankee

Bastards.” They were either drunk or drugged.

Their plan was to over run us by sheer Height of their forces. Our 3rd Battalion was ordered to the area where the German forces Here the heaviest and counter attack, as the rest of the regiment was getting hit hard and beginning to fall back.

I can't describe everything that was happening but the attack was much larger then what was expected. The Germans were planning on making a complete breakthrough. Our cannon company fired more than 600 rounds of 105mm Howitzer shells. This took place between midnight and 4:00 A.M. on that first day of January 1945, 300 of these rounds were fired in the first hour of 1945.

Before we started our counter attack we waited for three tanks to join us. “I” Company was on the left and our Company. “K”, on the right. We also had a section of heavy machine guns from Company “M” with us. By the time we got to the woods all three tanks were knocked out. So we entered the woods to drive the Germans out, and there were plenty of Germans there. The heavy machine guns were not any good now either because they couldn't set up their guns. The fighting was close and lots of firing on both sides. It had to be man to man firing at anything moving or whatever. No artillery or mortars could be used because the uncertainty of just where we were or the Germans. The same story with the Germans, they couldn't use any heavy weapon either. As far as I know no one lost their nerve, as we didn't have time to consider the danger.

The fighting went on for “I” Company and our “K” Company until dark. It started about 7 o'clock that morning. We did push the Germans back some until they (the Germans) reached higher ground where they had good positions and stopped us. At this point there was only about 150 of us left in the whole battalion. I don't remember how many I had in my platoon, maybe 10 or 12, however, most had been wounded and not many killed. At this time we set up defensive portions. We started getting lots of artillery shelling, but not too much damage.

During the next 2 or 3 days we made several attacks to drive the enemy back off the hill, but always had to come back to our portions we left. Of course we were down to 150 men, when it should have been 1,000 men. A new battalion from another

division with many more men tried to drive through us and drive the Germans off, but they also were immediately repulsed. We then (our battalion) pulled back to reorganize and get more new men.

The 2nd Battalion of the 114th Infantry of our division, which did the most fighting was given a presidential Citation for their action from the 31st of December to the 3rd of January, 1945. One Sergeant, [C.A. MacGillivray](#) received the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest award given for bravery, for the things he did during the first two days of this action. Most people are dead when they get this award, he did loose an arm. We did get reinforcement soon after this battle but never the full amount.

The division then settled down to making a complete defense in case of a German counter attack. This was done by installing concertina wire in front of us and also artillery shells set where I could pull a wire and set off a 155mm shell. I never had to use it, so I never found out if it would work or not.

The winter of 1944-45 was the worst winter of Europe since they had been keeping records of weather. It snowed every other day and night and was extremely cold. At night is when our Co. Commander made us lay the concertina wire. We couldn't do it in daylight because we happened to be in a wide open area that observers could see from miles, so it was night only. Every go morning we four platoon sergeants had to go to the Co. Commander, which at that time was a 1st Lt. Ford bucking hard for his Captain bars. Lt. Ford showed resentment at this time to me and was always on my ass until he disappeared. Don't know what ever happened to him. He's the one man I always said I'd refuse to shake hands with. Now 50 years later I would, but I'd also tell him what a jerk he was.

The other three platoon sergeants would tell him about twice the amount they really laid of concertina wire, and I'd tell him the truth. Of course he'd raise hell with me, but I knew sooner or later he would find out the truth if the weather ever moderated, and he would leave his nice warm house with a nice fire place in it. He would insist that I take my men out and lay more wire, as I was way behind. So this on night we started trying to lay wire and it was really nasty, wind blowing hard, snowing and sleeting. We

stayed for a while until everyone of us was completely covered with ice. I mean we all had a sheet of ice over us. I told the guys to come on follow me and led them to the house and Lt. Ford. He was sitting back with his fire place going and I said, "Lt. Ford, this is what its like outside. You can go out and look if you like." He said, "ok you better stop then", which we were planning on doing, and went back to our foxholes. All the foxholes were covered with logs under the snow so it was not so bad in them. Again, someone else dug them for us and they were good protection.

Being a platoon sergeant I had a larger foxhole that would hold 3 of us, and as I said before, I had a wire hooked up to an artillery shell that I could explode in case of an attack. I also had a telephone, yea a telephone. It's a good thing Anna Ruth wasn't with me because she would be talking to Lt. Ford all the time.

I decided we needed a stove to melt the snow and could make took another to make coffee at times. So I took the inside of an ammunition box and took another to make a chimney to stick out of the little opening, and used the wood from the outside of the ammo box. times during light we could go out one at a time and find some wood. I was afraid the sides would start melting, but it never for the people taking our place.

Back to the cold. One day it finally turned n ice but still cold and Lt. Ford, two other platoon sergeants, and myself started to make a survey of our defenses we had made. My platoon had laid much more then any other ones. Lt. Ford looked at me but never said a word. Earlier I had hung a coat out on top of the stove pipe and had forgotten to take it down, or the pipe. Well one of the N.C.O's noticed it and brought it to Lt. Fords attention. Well I was embarrassed, but before the Lt. could say anything I said "its mine and I don't give a damn." Well they all laughed, and the Lt. chuckled. A couple of nights later the phone rang, it was the Lt., "Sgt. Bisker, where is all the machine gun fire coming from over your way?" I looked out the peep hold and the sparks were just flying. The wind was blowing very hard and the sparks were flying parallel with the ground. That was another shock to me. Anyway, I said to him, "oh that's nowhere near us. It's way over us, probably as much as a mile from here." He said, "well keep your eyes on it." (The Germans use tracer bullets in machine guns.) So we had to put the fire out. It had been real warm in there and not any of us had heavy coats.

There had been very little fighting during these cold weeks, except for my fight with the German machine gunners which I killed with a cup of water. We stayed in defense until about the middle of February when we were relieved and went to the town of Kalhausen, there we were able to take showers, change clothing, and even listened to the 44th Division band play.

Then we got the word to take back the ground that we lost the first of January. Also, it had been nice to get some good sleep in a house instead of a couple of hours in a foxhole.

We went into an attack at 5:45 A.M. in the middle of February without any tanks or artillery. It was a surprise attack, after several weeks of very little action. We found out later that this was a new regiment of the [17th Panzer Gernadier Div.](#), and they had just come up on line the night before. We captured about 700 in the town of Rimling and our operation was a complete success. I remember this town very well because two days later I was to be hit in the left leg.

The next day the enemy counter attacked in the morning. However, the attack came to "I" Company, on our left. They attacked with four tanks and Infantry and pushed "F" Company back, but our 1st Battalion jumped in and regained the ground again. While this was going on we had no trouble holding our ground because the Germans were not making much effort in front of us.

Earlier that morning we could see the Germans digging holes across from us. (The Germans and we were both on hills opposite each other. There was this valley between us. We were about 1000 to 1200 yards apart and out in the open. A few others and myself decided to see if we could drive them back on the other side of their hill. They never seemed to be bothered with the bullets coming close to them. They acted like they didn't know we were shooting at them. We didn't have to dig holes because we took over the ones the enemy was using before we drove them back.

I was very hungry that morning and we had stopped shooting at the Germans, I decided go back over hill and get breakfast, even though the fighting was still going on. About 1500 yards to our left, the four Germans tanks were still there firing into our troops. I had said to myself, I wasn't going to let a little Germans tank keep me from a

hot breakfast. So I jumped out of my hole and started to the rear, but I only got a very short distance before a shell from one of the tanks exploded a short distance in front of me, and I quickly decided I wasn't hungry after all and ran back to my hole.

The tanks finally drew back and so did their Infantry, but in the meantime we had an outpost on the German side of the hill with a walkie-talkie in it, and the Captain had not heard from them for sometime. The post was between where the tanks had been and where the Germans were that we had been taking post shots at them. The Co. Commander made me go out in this no mans land and find the trouble. This was the same area that we were attacked on New Year's Eve night. There were 1200 dead Germans lying in that area and a lot of the bodies were still lying around in their snow suits. The cold and the snow I guess kept them preserved.

I was really scared but I did it. The two men were gone, I guess the Germans captured them. The phone (walkie-talkie) was there, so I brought that back.

That night a patrol was sent out and an American Indian named Warrior was on it. When they returned they misjudged where they were and entered into another Company next to us that didn't know that the patrol was out, firing on them and killing Warrior. The week before a bullet had hit his helmet and penetrated the front an inch above his head, going on out the back of the helmet, not touching him. So there you are. You never get used to seeing your own die, but in a few days or a week, seeing a dead German doesn't affect you at all.

Everyday in combat was a lifetime, never knowing when. You're never ready to die. I saved all the letters that Ann Ruth sent me and kept them folded over and in my breast shirt pockets, long with the bible with the medal plate that my aunt sent me. The pockets got so tight that I looked like a well endowed girl.

Another thing that happened in the town of Rimling was the shooting of another German prisoner. A few guys were getting the prisoner lined up to march to our rear and one prisoner went to get his helmet and started to get out of line to get it laying about 5 or 6 feet away. One of the guards poked him with his rifle to get back in line and his rifle went off, hitting the man in the stomach. I don't know whether he died or not, he was carried to the aid station. The guard said he didn't realize the safety on his

rifle was off. One time when we were being moved by truck one of the fellows didn't have his safety on and somehow he fired it, and it just grazed another man's head, removing his hair in back in a straight line. It also took a little skin with it, so he was really lucky. Now about me getting hit the second time. It was just before dark and things became pretty quiet and suspicious. So I was out of my fox hole walking down toward the valley because things just didn't feel right, when suddenly I saw the enemy coming toward me, and I heard an artillery shell coming in. turned and ran toward my foxhole. As more shells started coming and the Germans started shooting although they were still 2 or 3 hundred yards away. As I neared my hole I gave a leap head first and landed on top of someone that had jumped in my hole because it was closer to him than his was, but that left me with my legs sticking out or the hole and up in the air. So I was hit and the medal went in my thigh, against the thigh bone. The medic was near by and wrapped it and later on I went to the aid station, and from there back to Nancy, France on a hospital train. It was on this train that I learned that my only first cousin, [Warren Bisker](#), had been killed.



Donald's brother Gordon
with Warren

Another wounded man and I were talking and when I told him my name he wanted to know if we were related. He told me that Warren had been hit with a bullet, but before they could get him back a mortar shell landed along side of him and blew most of his hip away. Warren at that time was acting as scout and was out in front of the Company, Company "A", about a hundred yards. I had to tell this to his mother after the

war.

When the doctor started to operate on me they gave me sodium pentothal. The doctor told me to start counting to 10 and I'd be asleep, and I said I don't have to count and I was asleep. This kept me out of combat for about two weeks. We used to tell guys that got hurt bad enough and didn't have to return to the front line that they received "the million dollar wound".

The first day I was back in combat the Germans treated me to an air attack as a coming back present.

While I was gone our 3rd battalion captured Feudenheim, a suburb of Mannheim, without firing a shot. As "K" Company approached, a man came with a big white flag. He turned out to be a U.S. citizen that had been working in Germany, and the war with us started before he could get out. To make a short story fast, I don't know exactly what happened, only what I was told. The man had a plan to have the town surrender, and it worked. There was heavy fighting in the rest of Mannheim and it was several days before they surrendered. After it was over we received new army trucks right off the assembly lines.

After the airplane attack, I'm not sure just when we came to this canal. It was night, but moonlight and no clouds. However, the bridge was blown, but the cables that were used in cement were in tact and the Germans were on the other side, but we couldn't tell if any were guarding the other side of the bridge. I'm thankful I didn't have to be the first to cross. A volunteer crossed first and I was the third. I was just as scared of crossing the cables as I was of Germans being on the other side. Beside our regular backpack, we had to strap our M-1 rifle on our back and get down on the bottom cables holding on the top cable and wiggling across to the other side, which was about 150 feet with water running below about 60 or so feet. We did this separated about 20 or 25 feet apart. There were no Germans near, but we stayed on the sand along the canal, or it may have been a river, but if so a very straight one.

The next morning we started toward this town of about 8,000 or 10,000, we soon ran into the enemy, but they didn't put up much of a fight and we were soon in the town clearing it out. This is the town where I got my Mauser king pistol. I took it off a German

sergeant that surrendered, he had been wounded.



As a Regiment we had been in constant combat at this time for 144 days; longer than any other regiment, as far as I know no other ever stayed that long.

We were given 9 days of relaxation and after that we entered Germany about the 28th or 29th of March 1945. It was like walking into another world where everything was clean and neat. If this seems confusing it's because we went back to France for our rest. This is the time that Marlene Dietrich entertained us, and I think it's the same place where Mickey Rooney did also. I have been listening to lots of the 50th Anniversary D Day, and quite often they would mention that the' Germans had superior weapons, but we also had superior weapons to theirs. For example, our machine guns fired at a rate of 550 rounds a minute, their as much as 1400 rounds per minute; but ours stayed relatively close to the ground where they could do good, and theirs rode high after the first couple of bullets so ours would be more accurate. Their 88 artillery pieces were very good and maybe more accurate than ours, but their larger artillery wasn't any better than ours, and for every piece they had we had ten to fifteen. Also our personal artillery shells were much better and more accurate than theirs because their shells were set to explode in the air by a timing device and they (most of the time) would explode very high in the air and would not have much power to them. Ours exploded by pressure building up as the shell got a certain distance from the ground and would always explode 20 to 25 feet from the ground.

I think it's about a 40/60 in grenades in their favor. About Bazookas, ours were pretty good but I don't know enough about the Germans to make a comment on them. We had so much more artillery than they had that some of the captured Germans wanted to see our automatic artillery pieces.

One thing I forgot to mention that happened in the capture of Mannheim was the killing of a boy about 14 or 15 years old. He was a sniper in a tall building and had shot a soldier, and a sergeant (not in our company) ran up to the room he was in and threw him out the window. There were several young boys doing this, and the sergeant wanted them to know what was going to happen. We rounded up lots of them and they were put with the regular P.O.W. 's, some acted pretty arrogant.

From there on the fighting became easier until the last few days, then we ran into fanatics. But in the meantime there were towns to capture. We walked for about 15 to 18 miles before we fought again. It was at the town of Welzheim where we captured a Lt. General Thurman, who was the commander of a German Corp. There was lots of fighting here but I think it was only because of a General that didn't want to be captured. However, we did capture a lot of soldiers here. At this point the Danube River was only a few miles off. I'm now jumping back to Rauwiller for a minute. This is where we ate sauerkraut. At the time my friend was killed, another man 30 feet from him was hit. He was quite a large guy but I got him on my back and carried him to safety. The day before this happened we received new men and he was one of them. He could have gotten up on his own but being new he sort of froze. I didn't even know his name and he never had to come back (million dollar wound), if you can call getting hit in the groin lucky. Several of the new men had come from KOTC school and for a while felt they were smarter than the rest of us, but as they didn't make officer they ended up in the Infantry, so were they smarter? One of them was a man named Hammond and in 1950 I went to school for a year in Philadelphia, PA where Hammond lived. So I phoned Hammond and we got together and went to see a man who had been wounded also in the groin. He was now married with a child, so I guess things turned out for him, although he had several operations to repair his problem. One time our company received a captain that had fought in Italy, (captain was the regular rank of an

infantry co. commander). He only lasted a week because the colonel gave him an order to check out this wooded area and he refused to send us because it reminded him of a spot in Italy that he was ordered into, and it turned out to be a trap. So a 1st Lt. took over again. This captain was the first one we had since the beginning. Platoons were supposed to have had a 2nd Lt. in charge of them but it seems they were always scarce.

I was offered a Battlefield Commission but wouldn't take it because I felt that I wouldn't be any smarter if I were a 2nd Lt. and made a mistake causing loss of life. I wouldn't have room for an excuse, when by being a Platoon Sergeant I could always say "well I should have had an officer over me". As it was at that time I had the best record in our company for having the least soldiers killed, but at the end of the war and I did have more killed. It happened the last 3 days of combat.

Another thing that happened in Germany; our company just came back from the front no more than an hour when my [brother](#) came up to this town.



So we were together for a couple of hours. We crossed the Danube River riding on tanks and assault boats (little larger than rowboats). The water at this point was no more than 4 to 5 feet deep and not very wide. No Germans seemed to be around and we were making good time. German soldiers would surrender without fighting. Even groups of 15 or 20 would surrender to one American soldier. This

was toward the latter part of April '45.

The last 2 days of April we crossed over into Austria, and we could see the beautiful Alps Mountains that had to be crossed. Beautiful, but a wonderful defense for the Germans, and they did defend - particularly the deeper and higher we went. The first day into the Alps heading for Fern Pass I saw two German soldiers, one with both legs blown off and the other one leg. They were both dead, defending a lost cause.

Fighting up the Pass was something like the first days of combat. We couldn't see them and we were trying to stick with road as much as possible, but sometimes we had to climb the side of the mountains where the enemy was hiding and push them back. These people were fighting as hard as any battle we had except for January 1, 1945.

The second and third day we were pushing through snow up to our waist. On the third day, that night about dark a bullet passed so close to my ear I felt the heat from it. It came from close range too. About 11:00 p.m. we did capture the town of Fern, but not without losing lots of men. A German Bazooka landed in the vicinity of my platoon, killing several men and wounding more. I started wondering if I was to be killed after all. This bazooka took away my record of losing the least number of men. The next morning, which I think was May 4th, we started advancing up in the mountains in the deep snow on both sides of the Fern Pass, making the enemy retreat; my platoon on the left of the pass and another platoon on the right, both of us pushing south toward Italy. It was in this fight that the other fearless man Donald Flatters was killed. Again, he was way out in front of the rest of his platoon.

The next day, May 5th, we were notified that all hostilities would cease as of 1800 hours (6:00 P.M.) that day in our area. It was hard to believe, but that night being up in Fern Pass we could look down in the valley and see lights. The Regiment had a record of 144 days on the front line with constant contact with the enemy, and 203 days of combat.

In the first week of June the Regiment was alerted for shipments to the Pacific Theater by way of the U.S. This was the first homeward movement by truck out of Austria, the bivouac near the city of Ulm on the Danube. Next day to Hardheim, Germany, we stayed for 10 days, then onto Heidelberg, Germany and then Strasboug, Nancy and Metz, France, then to Camp Pittsburgh, where we got a 12 hours pass to Paris. (Ask me about it sometime. HA!) From there we went to [Camp Twenty Grand](#). Twenty Grand, Chesterfield, and Wings are war time cigarettes. There were a lot more names like that but I've forgotten them. Finally to England for 10 days. July 8th, moved to Scotland, boarding the Queen Elizabeth, five days later into New York and home.



Tents at Camp Twenty Grand

For a few years after getting discharged I would often awaken having a dream of being under artillery, or small arms rifle fire but as the years past so did the dreams. When we heard about going to the Pacific, I had the same feeling come over me like the time digging out the foxhole. I knew I could not be lucky enough to live through another war. I was lucky, the atom bomb fell, saved my life and many more I'm not sorry we used it.

Additions I forgot to mention:

1. On leaving for Europe when the train pulled out the band was playing "Over There, Over There". It wasn't a dry eye on the train (very sentimental and patriotic).
2. In the beginning of combat I lost my appetite and didn't eat for over 2 days. On the 3rd day I started eating because I knew my body needed food, although I still didn't feel hungry. Also I had heard if you were shot in the stomach you were better off if you hadn't eaten anything. True or False?
3. We were the first combat troops to go from the U.S. to France, but we did go close enough to England to see the White Cliff of Dover.
4. In the fight of Fern Pass one of my men had just hours before returned from the hospital from being wounded in the face (mouth). He was one of the ones that was killed by the bazooka.
5. Somewhere during these 203 days we liberated a P.O.W. camp that had lots of Americans in it. I talked to one of the American P.O.W. 's and he told me it was not bad at all, except for the food was never enough. But he said they would let him go in town that was right on the edge of their camp, and he even had a girlfriend in town, so he said.
6. I saw one dead German lying on his side, hands folded in prayer. It appeared he had been praying and was killed by airplane strafing. His name was Beshar.
7. One day on the way over, the ocean became flat, not a ripple except what the ship was making. I never knew the ocean did that.
8. One way to stay alive during combat is to always be alert, watching in all

directions for any sign or movement. It saved me from trouble lots of time.

9. After killing the first German I saw the Chaplain as soon as I could, but he didn't have an answer.

10. I also was at the German Siegfried defense line, however, there wasn't any fighting going on at this time.



11. This is a story of a German luger pistol. The luger was the most desired and suppose to have been the best hand gun in the world and everybody wanted one. The only way to get one at this time was to take it from a German officer. One of the guys in my platoon acquired one, but it wasn't long before he was killed and another fellow took the gun, and in a few days or couple of weeks, he was killed. Also, I can't even recall what these two people looked like or remember their names as they were both replacement men and hadn't been with us long. However, the 3rd person that took the pistol was one of the few original men left, and I remember exactly what he looked like and his name, Leslie A. Bastil.



Within a week or so we were in an attack and my platoon was fighting in a graveyard and I heard someone calling me, and I worked my way over to him. It turned out to be number three man. He told me he was dying and I said, "no you'll be okay". He said "no I can feel myself going". I told him I'd go find the medic which I did, but when we returned to him he was dead. I should have stayed with him. The luger was sticking in his ammo belt and I started to take it but lost my nerve, I didn't want to take the chance of being number 4. I don't remember whether the medic took it or not, but medics were not supposed to carry any type of weapon. It sort of an international law.

12. The million dollar wound. When a soldier was shot or Hounded bad enough, even if it meant the loss of an arm or part of a leg, he knew he'd never be back to the front line again and he would get a pension for the rest of his life. It's still better than dying.

13. While stationed in Austria in the Alps, we lived in private homes by having the local people doubling up and moving in with their neighbors. Although they were mostly farmers they lived in villages and would go out to their land to farm. Everything was neat and pretty and when it would rain and then clear away you could look up and see the new snow on the mountain tops. The mountains came

right down to within a couple of hundred feet of the houses. The farm land was farther down in the valley.

14. We made troughs with boards to catch the melting snow to take showers. We would try to see if anyone could stay under the shower for a minute; no one was every able to do it.

15. One time in a fire fight (rifle fire only - no artillery), we were approaching a trench with Germans in it. When we were between 100 to 110 yards from them they started firing at us. No one was hit but bullets were hitting the ground about 30 feet in front of us. We went into an attack, everybody firing and moving forward a few feet at a time, and then hitting the ground and firing again. My platoon B.A.R. Man (Browning Automatic Rifle) said after a few feet he couldn't go any farther. I took Bill's B.A.R. from him and laid down a field of fire trying to just hit the top dirt of their trenches, letting them know that if they stuck their heads up to fire again, they would be hit. We continued the attack while Bill stayed safely behind. When we got to the trenches I was expecting them to surrender, but they had run down their trenches away from us into another sector that was out of our territory. I was expecting Bill to apologize for loosing his nerve, as he had never done it before. Bill was one of the originals, and we had always been friends. He never seemed to resent me becoming a Sergeant, but after this he would never talk to me directly, and also he never was worth a damn anymore as far as being a combat soldier.

After the war was over in Europe and we started training for Japan he would talk to other guys, saying he was not going to be B.A.R. man any more and he was always sure he said it loud enough that I would hear.

When we all returned to camp after our 30 days recuperation period I became Field First Sergeant which was the same rank as I already had. His meant I would be in charge of the complete company. When there was not an officer present. In the meantime Bill was still talking about absolutely not going to be a

B. A. R. man. When it came time to issue rifles and assign new jobs I had everybody line up to assign new squads, etc. I'd call each man's name and have him pick up his rifle. When I got to Bill I said very loud, "Bill – B.A.R." He looked at me for a few seconds, then fell out of line and got his B.A.R.

If the war hadn't stopped before we got overseas again I'd had two enemies. Japs in front and Bill in back, because that's where he would have been.

16. An incident that happened in the hospital. A few days after removing the shrapnel from my leg, my left leg was in sort of a cast and would not allow me to bend my knee so therefore I could not wash my foot. It was really dirty and I asked a nurse if she would get an orderly to wash my left foot. So she left and came back with a pail of warm water and gave me a bath. I was really embarrassed. Another thing that happened, I wrote my brother a letter telling him I'd been wounded and what hospital I was in. He did find me and showed me the letter where it had been censored but not good enough to destroy the address so he came to see me. I told him the date I was hit and he said that he had thought about me that day and felt I was going to be hurt, but didn't know had bad. So strange things do happen.

17. Mail Censoring. One fellow in my platoon was mad about the censoring of letters so he decided to give the censor a hard time. He began to write in the dead center of the page and wrote in a circle until he got to the edge of his page, he wrote three pages like this. When the censor saw it he brought the letter back to him, give him hell and the guy rewrote it.

18. I arrived in the states Friday the 20th and Anna Ruth Banning and I was married Friday the 27th. However, a fellow by the name of Reigh out did me. He was introduced to this girl the day he arrived home and married her three days later.



19. I came home the first time for thirty days. It did not count against furlough as it was called recuperation days so when I returned to Fort Smith, AR, I applied for furlough and came home for thirty more days and during that time the war ended. I had to stay there for a few weeks but was soon on my way home for good.

20. In combat the infantry sometimes fought along with tanks, which was both good and bad, as in an attack you could get behind a tank as you advanced which would be very good protection from rifle fire but tanks most always draw enemy artillery and lots of it. Artillery didn't bother the tanks unless it was a direct hit, but it was hell for the Infantry. From my observation the tanks had many more direct hits happen to them while battling with other tanks because they were shooting directly at each other while artillery shells were being fired from a couple miles away. As to which I'd rather do, fight with tanks or without I don't know. We did most of our battles without tanks.

21. One time we started attacking up a hill and due to losing several men the previous day I decided that I'd use a B.A.R. This would be giving our platoon more firepower with two of us having a B.A.R. However, it didn't turn out that way because the damn B.A.R. jammed so I couldn't go back and get another rifle. I was running along without any weapon but soon a fellow gave me his 45 army pistol which I used. I felt like a

little boy playing games with that 45 making popping sounds and I finished the day out then got my M-1 rifle back and never again used any other weapon.



22. Comparing our M-1 rifle with the German rifle, the M-1 rifle was semi-automatic, which means it would fire faster than the German rifle which was bolt action, also the M-1 held 8 rounds and the bolt action held 5. Bolt action rifles are more dependable but if you kept the M-1 reasonably clean it was a good accurate rifle. The German bolt action rifles were 31 caliber, the M-1, 30 caliber which meant they could use our ammunition but we couldn't use theirs. If you tried to put a 31 cal. in our rifle the breach would not close for firing by about 1/2 inch. We were told in training that the U.S. soldiers were fooling the Germans by firing 5 rounds off and then stopping as if to reload, and then the Germans would stick their heads up or jump up to fire at our soldiers but our soldiers would be waiting and then shoot first. I never saw this happen.

Sometime, during October of 1944, I had the unpleasant task of having to transfer one of my Sergeants to the 45th Division because the 45th had been shot up badly and needed non commission officers. At that time I had just three sergeants plus myself and no one wanted to leave so I had to have them draw straws. Sgt. Lee from Florida lost. He hated to go but we saw him a few weeks later when we were cut off at the town of Rauwiller and his outfit were the ones that drove the Germans off and relieved us. We talked to Sgt. Lee after everything was over and he said he was making out okay with his new outfit.

I'll close by telling you this little story. A few days after the war ended and

we had stopped at a rest area on our way through Europe we were able to take showers. It just so happened that the Regiment of the American Japanese soldiers also were there and I took a shower with them and being naked, I never saw either Japanese that hadn't been shot several times they had wounds all over their bodies. They say the Japanese soldier was the most ferocious of fighters. The American Japanese soldiers were never asked or required to fight against Japan.

23. One last thing about Lt. Ford - after one day of fighting all day long, I've forgotten just where we were, but still in France, the next day we had lost contact with the Germans and were to stop and set up in this town and wait for orders. Lt. Ford told me to take my platoon and set up an out post about 1000 yards in front of the town where there was a hedge row on top of a small hill. We went out there and started digging foxholes. The ground was loaded with rocks and by the first hour we still hadn't made a hole more than 6 or 8 inches deep. In the meantime I had been watching out and thought I could see a man along distance out in front. About one hour later a heavy shell landed about 150 feet from us. I knew it would take about 30 seconds for correcting the distance before the next round would come in so I told the men to pick up all their equipment walk through the hedgerow as if they had fox holes dug there and run down the slope 600 ft. and lay down. We didn't have long to wait before another round landed right on hedgerow and a few seconds after that they really peppered that hedgerow. One of my squad leaders, John Meyers, came to me and said, "I didn't think you knew what you were talking about". Some other fellows came to me and thanked me for saving them. We had to move to a different location after this.