

# WORLD WAR II MEMORIES

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## Chapter 1. A new soldier.

My Grandfather served in the Civil War in the Union Army, 101st Ohio Volunteer Infantry. was a prisoner of war at Andersonville Prison in Georgia, and was wounded twice. My father served in WWI in France in the Army Engineers. I served in WWII in the 102nd Army Infantry Division, Germany campaign.

Being 19 years old in 1942 and rapidly approaching 20, I began to visit the recruiting offices-- Air Corps, Navy, Marines. No luck, my eyesight was too poor. In October 1942 I was drafted. All the draftees lined up for induction on High Street in downtown Warren, Ohio, said goodbye to Mom and Dad and marched to the railroad station. The line was over a block long and 12 to 15 guys wide. We filled the whole train. One unusual member was blind in one eye, which surprised me. He said he had been accepted for "limited service".

On October 14, 1942, we were bussed to Cuyahoga Falls for our physical, prior to induction, an all day schedule. As I recall, it was a 3-story factory-type building. We stripped naked and started through the testing station--they checked everything! When we reached the end, they called out several names, including me, to be checked again. After checking us they seemed puzzled. I asked the doctor if there was something wrong. He said we had fast heart rates when first checked but not at this point. I remembered that there was a delay at the heart checkpoint and they diverted us to an exercise test, then to the heart test. This had caused our heart beat to increase just before testing. They checked again, and we all passed.

My career in the U. S. armed forces began on October 28, 1942, with my induction into the army at Ft. Hayes, Columbus, Ohio. What a surprise.

Lights on at 5:30 a.m. with the P.A. system blaring mostly cuss words.

Some didn't take too kindly to the rude awakening, but they were soon "convinced". Another surprise was the latrines--long rows of toilets on one side and sinks on the other side, and signs

on the wall above some of the toilets were "for venereals only". The beginning of the learning process for the small town boy.

My new uniform was a fairly decent fit including the shoes. After a couple days of receiving uniforms, taking various tests and medical vaccinations,

I was sent by train to Camp Atterbury in Indiana. The selection there was very scientific. I thought I should be in the engineers since I had more than a year of engineering at OSU. And I told them so! They agreed: "Down to the table at the end of this row", they said. When I reached the table, the sign said "D" Company, 331st Infantry". I said there must be some mistake, they said "no, no, you belong here" and they led me to the table and enrolled me in D Company, 83rd Division, 81 mm. mortar platoon.

We got on a truck and were driven to the barracks where I was assigned a bunk. After unpacking I introduced myself to the two guys on either side. Another surprise--both were from Warren, Ohio, Veryl Johnson and James Burns. We were all in the mortar platoon in the "D" Company which also had two 30 caliber machine gun platoons. The 83rd Division was organized in WWI in Ohio and their shoulder patch is the Ohio symbol.

Basic training was mostly exercises, close order drill (another form of exercise), obstacle course, long hikes, training sessions on weapons and various boring lectures--practicing over and over. After about 16 weeks we started training with the 81 mm mortar. In the early spring we received training with weapons--rifle, carbine, then a chance to fire the weapons.

## **Chapter II - Training and Tennessee Maneuver Area, 1943**

Around March 1943 the first leaves (furloughs) started, alphabetically, of course. My turn was toward the last. Right after I returned from furlough, the Sgt. commented that my face was swollen. A trip to sick call revealed it to be mumps. I was quarantined in the base hospital for 21 days. Lucky for me. The Division went on a two-week bivouac the next day and I think it rained every day, really poured! Sometime during early 1943 the United Mine Workers went on strike.

About that same time, the Division packed up and started for West Virginia by convoy. I was sure we would be guarding the coal mines.

After two days we arrived at Grafton, W. Virginia, and pitched our tents in a hay field. About 10:00 pm we were loaded onto trucks and driven into Grafton where we unloaded. Then we marched along a railroad track to a bridge. Some of us were stationed at one end, others across to the other side, and others under the bridge. Our orders were to allow no one other than our troops near the bridge. Our weapons were loaded. Within an 3 hour, a passenger train went through headed east. Shortly thereafter we assembled, returned to the trucks, then the hay field. Next day we started the trek back to Camp Atterbury. Later we learned that FDR was on the train, that he

had received threatening letters and the Army guarded the rails from Warm Springs, Arkansas to Washington, DC.

Some months later in June we moved to the Nashville, Tennessee, maneuver area for simulated battle practice. On our first day of maneuvers we went on a hike in the forest. It was very hot and our canteens of water were soon empty. I asked the Lt. when he came along when we could expect some more water. He said we were supposed to ration the water for the whole day and there would be no more water. I reminded him that we weren't told this when we started. His reply was "tough"! Along the way we stopped for our 10-minute break at a small clearing where there was a house. Two little kids were pumping water from a well. I ran over and asked for some water. They were happy to oblige. When I returned to the road, the others saw me and took off for the well. Shortly, the Lt. arrived, yelling, "Away from there, dump that water." Then he saw me drinking. "Dump that canteen. Don't you know you can get typhoid!" I told him I was just checking the value of the "shots" I'd been getting. He was not pleased.

On a subsequent hike on maneuvers I had trouble with my feet. I am allergic to wool and wore white cotton socks. When we arrived in Tennessee I was ordered to wear the O.D. wool socks and not allowed to wear the cotton underneath. My feet developed a rash, which got worse everyday. The heat and humidity added to the problem. On this hike they were very bad. We stopped on the ten-minute break and I started to remove my shoes. My feet were very sore. When the break ended I had only removed one shoe. The troop left without me. Sometime later as I was sitting beside the road trying to remove my other shoe and the socks which had stuck to my feet, a jeep went by. It stopped and backed up. An officer got out, asked what was wrong. He helped me into the jeep and they drove me to an aid station. After treatment he gave me cotton socks and said not to wear the O.D. socks. I heard a rumor that he really chewed out the lieutenant.

Fortunately for me, one of the tests I had taken earlier qualified me to study engineering at Ohio State University; this was known as the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP). While on maneuvers my travel orders came through for ASTP and I left for OSU the end of June 1943.

The trip to OSU was interesting. I had to go to Camp Forest, Tennessee for travel papers. The trip was via various army trucks, fording rivers, etc., it took 2 days and nights. The first night was spent sleeping on a hillside. In the middle of the night, I woke from the sound of a jeep coming down the hill with only night lights. Then the screaming--seems he ran over a sleeping soldier and broke his leg. After dark on the second day we crossed the Cumberland River in an amphibious jeep. The bridge was technically knocked out. On the return trip the jeep sank. The driver forgot to replace the drain plug. The driver was saved.

ASTP was pleasant even with the long hours of study, but the end came in March 1944 when I was sent to Camp Swift, Texas. The war at this point was causing many casualties--men wounded or killed--and they needed replacements. I had the good fortune to be assigned to the Anti Tank Platoon, 3rd Battalion HQ Company, 405th Regiment of the 102nd Infantry Division. (The 102nd Division had 8,825 casualties, either killed or wounded, which is 62.5% of the

15,000 men; the 83rd had 23,980 casualties or 170%, from "D-Day" to the Elbe River where the European War ended.)

We rode in trucks--no marching as was the case with my old outfit "D" Company, 83rd Division. Further training at Camp Swift, then by train in late July 1944 to Fort Dix in New Jersey. While there I was able to go into New York City. Saw the Rockettes one night, rode busses all over sightseeing, took the ferry to New Jersey, slept on the museum steps and enjoyed the weekend.

An assignment while at Fort Dix was to report for the "battle of Philadelphia", a time when the city bus drivers went on strike. We set up our tents in Fairview Park in Philadelphia and were informed that we were to ride "shotgun" guard on the busses and street cars, given ammunition, and told to protect the drivers. I rode in the back of the bus all day with my gun loaded, and slept in the back seat of the bus when parked in the terminal garage at night. Fortunately, there were no incidents and the passengers were quite pleasant.

### **Chapter III. The Real Thing.**

The day we were expecting came in early September 1944, with the move to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, for a couple of days The red dust which blew all over Camp Kilmer set off my hay fever. I was miserable -- nose running, eyes watering and itching, and sneezing. We boarded the

John Ericson for the "cruise" to Europe, via convoy. On the John Ericson we were bunked on the promenade deck, where there was plenty of fresh air. As soon as we sailed the hay fever ceased. I remember the bunks -- about 12" between layers. If you wanted to roll over, you had to slide out. Since I was on the rail side and the sliding panels were open, I had to be very careful not to fall over the rail into the ocean. Also, it was very dark at night. I saw some fish, porpoise, I thought, and we had a sub scare once. We were required to shower -- a salt water shower is not as good as nothing. I ate the food and fortunately did not get seasick.

After 10 or 11 days the boat docked overnight at Weymouth, England, then sailed to Cherbourg, France the next day. The harbor was jammed with ships unloading, many sunken ships, it was night before we disembarked. Some of us had to climb down the side of the ship on a rope net onto a barge, carrying our barracks bag as well as all of our equipment. Some of the bags didn't make it. The barge took us to the pier and then by truck to some hedge row field where we camped with our pup tents. It rained almost every day and we had to be sure our tents shed water.

For the first week or so our food was K rations and C rations. Bob Wolfe, our French speaking member, would gather up the unused food items from our Company and visit the nearby farms. He always came back with Calvados, bread, fruit and occasionally Cognac. After awhile, our kitchen was set up and eating was much better. Bob Wolfe was born in New Jersey but when he was two years old his mother and dad separated and she returned to her home in Paris, France, a

WWI war bride. At the start of WWII, 1939, she sent Bob and sister to live in the U.S. with their father. Bob spoke fluent French and English with an accent.

While waiting for our equipment to arrive, we exercised, hiked and played sports. During a game of touch football I twisted my knee and the kneecap popped off. I had to get medical treatment and my knee was wrapped in an Ace bandage. Also, I was not allowed to walk.

We moved to the rail area to load into "40 et 8" boxcars for the ride to the front. There was one platoon per car. The barracks bags were piled at one end and we sprawled on the rest of the floor. For latrine service, we leaned out the sliding door. For certain duties your buddies had to hold your arms. Occasionally we stopped and the occasion became a rest stop., Another time the train changed ends (direction) and when the train stopped the barracks bags tumbled down. Some of the guys were hit by the bags, but no serious injuries.

After several days including the rail yards of Paris we arrived in Belgium and switched to trucks on the way to the Front. As we were driving up we passed a number of U. S. Army trucks loaded with German POW's.

They all seemed very happy and many waved.

Our first night in the battle area was spent in the rear area of the Front with the artillery. We dug in--fox holes--but slept on the ground because the holes were wet. When the artillery started firing we did a lot of scrambling because we didn't know what was happening. In the morning we took 2nd Armored Division half-tracks to the Front because our trucks hadn't arrived yet to tow our 57 mm anti-tank gun. As we neared the Front we saw more evidence of battle, wrecked vehicles, dead cows, damaged buildings, mine field signs "Minen". Traveling on one road close to the front, we heard a plane. It was a German plane. There was a low cloud ceiling and suddenly a bomb exploded ahead. Every vehicle stopped and we ran into the field. When the plane left, all was quiet and we loaded back into the half-track. Those ahead moved out but we didn't.

Someone checked and we had no driver. "Here he comes", someone said. And there he came, through the field. He must have run for cover twice as far as we did.

We drove to the town of Waurichen, a small German village in the Siegfried Line. A lot of the buildings were damaged from shell fire. Our squad sought shelter in a small shed close to the road. The shed has been used previously as an aid station. There were guns, cartridge belts, bandoliers, bandages, bloody clothes, helmets, etc. We realized that this was the real thing. Since I had only a "45", I picked up a carbine and several ammo pouches.

There were several dead German soldiers in the area, one lying in the road ditch and one in a nearby building occupied by one of our squads.

He had been a motorcyclist and his cycle was parked outside the building.

We did not touch it for fear of it being booby-trapped.

One night my turn came to go to the platoon HQ, a basement, for rations, mail, water, etc. Another squad member and I hiked to the HQ. We gathered up our stuff and prepared to return to our squad. It was then that I noticed a guy writing a letter. I asked him where he got the stationery. He had gotten it in Herleen, Holland, when on a 1-day leave.

He didn't have any extra paper to give us and I asked what he used for money. Cigarettes. We non-smokers did not have any but at that moment I decided to call myself a smoker and asked for our cigarette ration. We were able to get some cigarettes to trade for stationery, which was non-existent at the Front due to overloaded supply lines. We weren't paid and had no money but cigarettes did quite well.

Most of the duties of the anti tank platoon were not involving tanks. Our weapon was a 57 mm gun, too small for tank warfare so we received all kinds of assignments: patrolling in the battle zone, guard duty for our tanks, hauling ammo and supplies to the rifle companies on the fighting line, rescuing the wounded from the battle field, digging out our dead and removing them from the battle zone, and attacking enemy defensive positions, filling gaps in our lines and patrols to check on the enemy positions.

Because our "57" gun was too small to do harm to the German tanks we would have to let them go by and fire at the rear. Most of the time we were utilized for special duties. These special duties involved patrolling at night in the gaps which occurred in our lines when advancing. One time we spent most of the night guarding several of our tanks which became mired in the mud during an attack.

Late in the afternoon and getting dark, our Platoon leader took Rupert Wendell and me down the street, up a hill, and into a grove of small trees. He instructed us to dig fox holes, that our gun would be placed there. When we had been digging for 10 or 15 minutes we heard a pop, an explosion, and shrapnel flying through the trees overhead. Grenades!

Every time we made noise, the grenades popped and exploded. We figured that our riflemen were throwing them, not knowing what or who we were. We finished digging the foxholes and waited and waited, very quietly! (P.S. I dug both holes except for a small start by Rupert.) After several hours we decided to join the rest of the squad at the shed. On the way up to the area we climbed a 3-foot high stone wall, 3-foot high dirt bank and crossed a deep ditch on a wooden bridge about 6-feet long.

The bridge was about 4' wide and built with 1" thick flimsy boards. We knew there was no way we could get the gun to this site. The gun weighed nearly 4,000 pounds and was 7-feet wide.

About 2:00 a.m. the Platoon Leader came to the shed and decided to move the gun to the position. The squad started pushing it down the street. When we reached the corner and started to turn, one wheel fell into an open catch basin. All 8 or 9 of us were unable to move or lift it from the hole. So we left it until the Lt. got a jeep to pull it out sometime later. He also changed his mind about the location!

After returning to the shed, Wolfe suggested that we should gather up something to cover our fox holes at the next location. So we started looking in the nearby buildings. Doors were just the thing and we piled 10 or 12 alongside the shed. The next day the jeep brought the gun to the shed and that evening the 2nd Armored half-track arrived to move us to a different site. We loaded up the doors, hooked up the gun and climbed aboard for a trip to a beet field where we "dug in". The doors made excellent covers for our trenches. We had suggested to the other squad members in the shed that they should get some doors to cover their foxholes, but they didn't. While Wolfe and I were digging ours we heard our buddies come up to our site. "Are you guys going to use all those doors?" "Of course!" we replied. But we yielded after we used the best ones for our hole. There were enough for everyone.

However, in the morning, the Germans were surprised to see the new mounds in the field and our camouflage net which covered our gun. The result was mortar fire on our location several times that day -- very nerve wracking. The second day was very foggy so we were spared the mortars. No one was hurt.

That was the last time we dug in with the gun emplacement. Instead we parked the gun in a hidden location covering the roads in the German villages and we took cover in nearby buildings. Once we took over a German dugout on the side of a hill. It was necessary to complete the second room to accommodate our squad. The first room had wood shoring but the second room didn't. Those of us in the second room were glad to leave that site. Our next bunk was the basement of a house in the newer section of Waurichen. From this location we made many sojourns, mostly at night.

#### **Chapter IV. Memorable Incidents.**

On November 26, 1944, we were recruited to assist the medics in recovering wounded riflemen stranded in a German dugout somewhere "out there" (no man's land). The medics had been rescuing wounded for several days from the battle zone and were suffering exhaustion, wounds, etc. Our boys had suffered heavy casualties, had to withdraw and were unable to carry out all the wounded.

Following the medic guide, we walked down a hill toward a drainage ditch which we crossed on a narrow wooden bridge. It was a dark and gloomy day, overcast, foggy and occasional drizzle. Carrying stretchers and wearing Red Cross armbands, we followed the medic guide, down a hill, crossed a drainage ditch, walked between it and a wooded area, shielding us from the Germans' view. Unfortunately, the woods ended, the Germans saw us and commenced firing machine guns. The tracers indicated the firing was 10-feet to 12-feet above our heads. I guess the Germans thought the folded stretchers were rifles.

About halfway across the clear area, the explosions of 88's started. We still had about 200 yards to go to another ditch and more woods. When the "88's" burst, we dove into nearby shell holes.

We made it to the second ditch and into the woods where we were not visible to the Germans. The guy next to me in the ditch had slid into the cold water almost to his armpits and was just lying there. I said to him, "Gosh, fellow, you're getting soaked." His only reply was "Uh! Oh, yeah!" He crawled out of the water. (He was sent back).

The medic led us up the hill toward the German lines. After several hundred yards we arrived at the dugout holding the wounded. While the stretchers were loaded I was nominated to stand guard, unarmed, as we left our weapons at Platoon HQ. (During intermittent artillery barrages I felt a sharp pain in my arm and later at HQ discovered a 1"x 1/2" x 2" piece of shrapnel in my sleeve--lots of blood, no severe damage). When the guys came out of the dugout carrying the wounded we started through the woods but had to leave their shelter because the trees were too close together for stretchers to pass through. Moving into the open area we started back down the hill, the way we came. The Germans could see us; from their position we must have looked like a patrol returning to our lines, so we were treated to more "88's". Every time the shells burst we hit the ground, dropping the stretchers. I recall saying to the patient on our stretcher, "I'm sorry, guy, but we just can't help it."

His reply was, "That's okay, I just appreciate you guys coming up here to get me." There was no other way but to go across the open area. We had a job to do. That first set of bearers who started across that open field amid continuous shelling have to be commended. Suddenly the shelling stopped; not another shot was fired. The Germans must have realized that the first four guys, one on each corner of a stretcher, were carrying a wounded comrade and they ceased firing.

We all made it, delivered the wounded to the ambulances then returned to our Platoon HQ, a bombed out house. If the German patrol had not adhered to the rules of the Geneva Convention the result might have been very different. The response by the wounded rifleman on the stretcher as the "88's" were firing made it all worthwhile. I regret that I did not get his name as I often wonder how he is today. (I took a lot of kidding over my "major wound".) That night we made another trip out to the same site to pick up more wounded, but found they had been rescued by another group.

Another night we were on a supply mission to the Front for one of our companies, taking boxes of food rations, 5-gallon cans of water and ammunition. We were walking along on an embankment in single file. It turned out to be our front line. I was carrying a carton of K rations on one shoulder and sharing the load of a 5-gallon water can on the other arm.

As we were moving, German machine guns began firing and the next thing there were tracer bullets crossing in front of us, behind us and overhead. No one in our group was hit. The big worry was that only the seventh round is generally a tracer bullet, all the others are regular bullets. The German machine guns sounded different than ours, so they were easily recognized as the enemy firing at us. We watched the tracers as they moved from right to left about a foot above the ground and moving toward us. Occasionally one would hit a high spot and deflect upwards. Suddenly they were past us. The sound of the gun could still be heard. Without warning, the tracers appeared, this time moving away from us, coming from behind. This happened several times as our column moved along the embankment, but I don't believe they hit



anyone. We delivered our supplies to the troops in the trenches and returned the same way but there was no shooting this time.

After a period of time our regiment was pulled out of action and stationed in a small village where we were entertained by a USO group of musicians in a wine cellar. Also we had a chance to wash our hands and face. Someone said I needed a shave. Up to that time every week or so I had trimmed off a few scraggly hairs with my electric razor. I hadn't used it since Fort Dix and besides there was no electricity. I told them I didn't shave and they handed me a mirror. Surprise--I had quite a stubble, so I heated some water in my helmet and chopped away with a safety razor.

It took over two hours and I did a poor job.

On one clear day one of our P-47 fighter bombers was shot down over our position by German Anti Aircraft fire. I heard the firing, the engines halt, and looked. Already the pilot was floating down in his chute--fast work.

While on patrols in the battle zones at night I had a difficult time if it was raining. MY glasses would cloud over with water and I couldn't see. I would follow the guy in front of me. But when we crossed tank tracks in the mud I fell in, Crash! flat on my face. Mud on my clothes, glasses, hands, gun, everything. U. S. Tanks left a narrow and deep rut; German Tiger tanks left wide but not so deep ruts.

When our turn to go to town (Herleen, Holland) came we were trucked to a coal mine for a shower, then to the hotel in Herleen. Nice bed, good dinner, USO dance, Red Cross donuts, tour of the town looking for stationery. Four of us walked into a store and asked for stationery. A pretty blond girl, about 16, looked scared--4 armed men, dirty clothes, beards, etc., no wonder. She didn't speak English but called an older lady who spoke French. She and Wolfe, our French-speaking buddy, talked a long time. Seems they were somehow related. We got our stationery and gave them all of our cigarettes, 20 or 30 packs. That afternoon we returned to the Front.

## **Chapter V. The End of the War For Me.**

A few days later and at another village we were loaded onto trucks and moved up front. We dug in at the edge of the village of Leifarth which was our front line. The Battle of the Bulge was underway and we were to defend this section. On the way up we passed many tanks, TD's, artillery, etc., going south toward the German breakthrough.

My last days in Germany with the Anti Tank gang were spent in the little town of Leifarth holding that part of our lines during the Battle of the Bulge. Generally speaking, it was rather quiet and dull. One day, wandering around behind the house, I found an 81 mm German mortar in a foxhole. The hole had been hit with shell fire and was partially filled with dirt. Since the area

was shielded from enemy view by houses and a high embankment, I decided to pull the mortar from the hole. It was exactly like the U. S. 81 mm mortar. I believe the sight was different but it was missing on this one. To salvage the mortar, I found some old electric wire, tied it to the parts, retreated around the corner of a nearby building and pulled it out. Same way with the shells. Since it didn't explode (no booby traps) I proceeded to set it up pointed toward the German lines. Then I put a shell in the barrel with a bullet wedged in the barrel to keep it from dropping into the gun. Attached to the bullet was a wire to pull it out. Just as I was set to pull the bullet which would allow the shell to drop and fire I heard, "What are you doing?" a Lieutenant asked. "Firing at the Germans", I replied. He said, "Don't, it will invite return fire. Disarm that mortar immediately." (I had served in the mortar platoon, D Company, 331st Infantry, 83rd Division, prior to

ASTP and was very familiar with mortars.)

A day or so later someone announced that we had a bazooka and we were going to fire at a house just partially visible over a hill on the German side. A sniper was in the vicinity. So we took turns firing at the house with the bazooka.

Jumping out, firing and jumping back. It must have made the German sniper mad because when Lavoy Moore and I jumped out where I could show him the target, the sniper fired, hitting me in the leg. That ended my tour of duty in Germany. The quick work by Moore and others saved me from further harm. When I hollered "I'm hit!" they jumped right out and carried me to safety behind a barn wall. I remember giving my "45" and cartridge belt to someone as I lay on the jeep stretcher. I think it was Giballo.

To reach the jeep I was carried on a stretcher through holes chopped through the walls of the house until they reached a house around a bend and concealed from the enemy. Then they carried me outside to the street and the jeep.

The trip back to Herleen, Holland, via jeep and ambulance involved periods of consciousness and sleep. When awake, I was very thirsty and once talked a medic into a big drink pointing out that my wound was only my leg. My next memory was a cot in a room in an old school building which was a field hospital in Herleen. I had been treated; I knew that because my leg was bandaged and in a metal splint. It hurt when it moved. For the next several days the doctors rolled me over day and night and inserted needles in my spine, 20 or more shots each time. The rolling meant much leg pain. Later the doctors came in to tell me what they were doing. It seems they had to tie off the arteries and veins in my lower leg because the bullet shattered the bone and blew the back of my leg away. The shots were to relax the muscles, etc., so the smaller veins and arteries would enlarge and assume the job of supplying the blood to my leg. They were happy to report success.

While lying in the bed during this process, the nurse would grab my toe when she walked by. This moved my leg and was painful. Finally I asked her "Why?". She said if my foot got cold they would have to cut my leg off. What could I say!

Also during this time, when the pain occurred, I would raise my arms to my face, but only for a moment. I couldn't stand the smell. Seems I fell backwards into a manure puddle and caught myself with my arms. Since I still was wearing all my clothes (they only cut away the leg of my pants)

I stunk! I asked the nurse for a washcloth and wash basin. She said they were very busy with casualties and why did I want a wash basin. I explained, she came closer and smelled my hand. She came back in a short while with a basin and washcloth and a look of sympathy. You wouldn't believe the odor of that manure!

With the success of the shots for my circulation, my leg was placed in a cast and in a day or so I was on the way. First stop was a tent hospital in Liege. This place was under continuous barrage from "buzz bombs". One exploded a short distance away one evening and the concussion shook the tent. The nurses were very upset by this close one; when I opened my eyes there was no one in sight in the tent. Then they came out from under the beds. I couldn't blame them; the bombs were loud.

A day or two later, off again, this time to Paris by train. I remember the ride by ambulance from the train to the hospital, past the Arch de

Triumphe and Eiffel Tower. Not much to see through the small windows of the ambulance. In Paris only a couple of days but long enough to remove the balance of my uniform, have a bath and a change of the cast.

Then the train to the French coast and boat to England. Wound up in a hospital in Malmsbury, Wales, where I stayed until early April for a number of operations. In early April we took a train to a hospital in Glasgow, Scotland.

On the trip across the Channel by ferry a fellow patient asked, "What happened to you?" I told him bullet, broken leg, and he said, "Lucky you, million dollar wound, home to the states!" Serious injuries, broken bones, head injuries, meant a return to the U.S. for treatment (long term).

When I transferred from Malmsbury to Glasgow we arrived late in the evening and went right to sleep. I awoke the next morning to a pleasant surprise. A pretty blond girl about 16 was sitting by my bedside. When I recovered, she explained that she was a volunteer to cheer up the wounded. We had a pleasant three days of conversation. She had been evacuated from Possil Park near London for safety due to bombing.

After a few days we were loaded onto the Queen Elizabeth for the USA.

The trip took about 5 days; zig-zagging to avoid detection by subs and we also had to travel through the outer edge of a hurricane, according to the Captain. During all this time I was not ambulatory, not even crutches. Landing in NYC we were moved to Halloran General Hospital on

Long Island, where they started me on crutches. In a couple of weeks I was transferred to Newton D. Baker Hospital in Martinsburg, WV, for plastic surgery work from May to September. And on September 20, 1945, I left Baker Hospital with a medical discharge.

During my entire hospitalization from the time I reached a field hospital and they cut off my clothes, I did not wear any clothes and was confined to bed. I had a cast on my leg and pajamas would not fit on over the cast and the army did not supply pajama tops. Finally, when I got to Halloran Hospital on Long Island, New York, they cut off the cast, and issued me a pair of pajamas and a pair of crutches, so I could finally move around.

At Baker Hospital one ward treated head injuries. I would see the patients from that ward in the movie line. Big holes or depressions in their skulls with the skin and hair down into the hole. A few weeks later in line again, the same guys would be there with the skin and hair in a normal position; a plate had been installed. In talking to them they said they had lost a lot of memory, etc., and had to learn again. Our ward at Baker was largely skin graft and flesh repair patients.

One day a nurse was asking from bed to bed for a volunteer to spend some time with a badly burned boy who was in a private room. She explained that his face and hands were badly burned and he looked very gruesome. I was in the rear of the ward and was surprised when she got to my bed. No one had volunteered. I said I would.

She took me to his room and introduced me. His face, etc., had been burned when a phosphorous shell hit the shed where his squad was sleeping. He was the only survivor. His head was burned away between his helmet and his collar--no nose, ears, eyebrows, eyelids, etc.-- just holes--red covered skeleton skull. His fingers were all bent way back and wouldn't move.

He was a smoker and first thing he wanted a cigarette. I helped him light up. The smoke came out everywhere--mouth, nose, eyes, face.

He was from Indiana, PA, but was not allowed visitors, not even his mother and father. I spent time with him every day for several months until I was discharged. I wrote letters, read to him, talked, etc. He could talk only with some hoarseness. They had a photo of him in the room to use as a guide for restoration. When I left they had built his ears, eyelids and some of his nose. He had a very positive attitude.

My medical treatment throughout my hospitalization was excellent.

Beginning with the treatment to save the leg at the Field Hospital at Herleen, the care and skin grafting at Malmsbury, Wales, and the final work at Baker was great. I remember at Malmsbury asking why my leg was not in traction when so many others were. Because of my artery and circulation problem my leg couldn't be stretched and is now 2 cm. short.

The doctor at Baker, Dr. Longacre, was tops. Most doctors referred to the charts for patient's names and conditions when making the rounds.

On Longacre's second day he knew every patient's name and ailment.

One day when I was walking to the cafeteria he stopped me to ask how the leg was coming along. I had to pull up my pant leg so he could check. I had an operation a few days prior.

Throughout the entire war the people of the U.S. treated all men in the service like heroes. Parents who had sons in the military put star placards with a blue star in their front window. If their service man was killed, they would replace the blue star with a gold star. The newspapers carried a listing every day of the casualties. The entire nation respected the military in every way possible. There was very little criticism of the government. It was a total national effort.

[Source: In their Own Words [http://carol\\_fus.tripod.com/army\\_hero\\_william\\_sauer.html](http://carol_fus.tripod.com/army_hero_william_sauer.html) Mar 2012 ++]