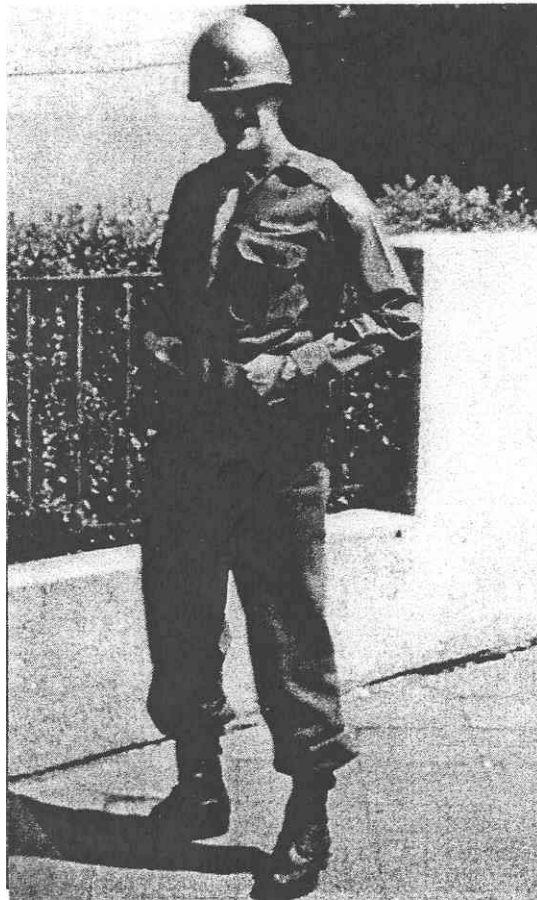


MOS 1542:

Some Reminiscences Of An Infantry Platoon Leader In World War II



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MOS 1542*: SOME REMINISCENCES OF AN INFANTRY PLATOON LEADER IN WORLD WAR II

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* MOS 1542 (Military Occupational Speciality-Infantry Platoon Leader)

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This would not have been possible without the men of Charlie Company and especially some of the officers; Mike Eberle and Dick Sasin. The people mentioned were heavily involved in the story as are others often not named, but are “real” people.

DEDICATION

To all the original “Willies”- especially those in C Company from Joe-
With apologies to Bill Mauldin for having this Joe an officer.



“You’ll get over it, Joe. Once I was gonna write a book exposin’ the Army after th’ war myself.”

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PREFACE

These reminiscences are a series of “true” personal stories of the things that happened to me as an average platoon leader during service in Europe. It includes what I consider relevant background information from civilian life, the Enlisted Reserve Corps (ERC) and as a private in anti-aircraft, a corporal at ATS, and time in OCS at the anti-aircraft school to become a 2nd lieutenant. Then a stint at TIS (The Infantry School, Fort Benning, GA) to become a legitimate infantry platoon leader (MOS 1542) with eventual assignment to Company C, 290th Infantry, U.S. 75 Infantry Division. With the 75th there was training in the States and overseas. This was followed by combat in the Bulge, the Colmar Pocket and the Ruhr. This real work was followed by assignments at a variety of postings with eventual discharge as a civilian on 1 April, 1946—perhaps an appropriate day. I believe these incidents to be true and in about the proper time sequence, however, discussion with Dick Sasin and Mike Eberle at reunions causes me to question the accuracy of some of my “eye-witness” accounts – perhaps much of history is occasionally questionable if it is based on memory.

Unfortunately, this is no literary masterpiece such as Evelyn Waugh’s trilogy, or as comprehensive as “Citizen Soldiers” by Stephen Ambrose. However it may be a good thing for me to recall it now and get out of my system. Hopefully, I will provide some enjoyment and insight to others.

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1. Relevant Background

Certainly most of us do not design a life-style to fit the military. I did not have the foggiest idea that I was to become a “Citizen Soldier” however; I suspect I was a lucky kid as this “title” was ordained by time and events. Even before high school, I was fortunate as I had a .22 single shot rifle and my dad and I did target practice in the basement. Dad set up a large pipe elbow with a sand box below and if I could hit a 6” circle at say, less than 30 feet it was a safe system – at least for that time. I remember being in a school play and bringing the .22 to school, as I was “young Abe Lincoln” – just imagine the concern today! As I recall the NRA taught firearms safety and I never remember a safety problem in the fringe society of rural Maine – e.g. South Portland, (pop 15,000).

One of the important distinct memories I have is that of going hiking in the woods. Dad and I would walk at random through the woods with an acute interest and awareness of nature. At the end of the walk he would ask “which way to the car” – I was expected to make a decision and carry it out – amazingly I seemed to have quite a good sense of direction and we really did find the car. It may be that I was subtly led away from error, but since those times I always tried to keep a local head compass and to analyze terrain. I must say that was a great help at times in combat or I would have blundered into some nasty situations.

My schooling was of some help – not directly of course, but high school French was of a bit of value in situations, not all of which were combat. As a student, I clearly

would classify as a “nerd” – we didn’t have them then, but I recognize myself – studies were important and homework done. My strength was math and science, but I had an interest in the arts (Fig. 1). I may not have had an artistic bent but certainly an appreciation. I thoroughly enjoyed playing in the band and could even keep in step thanks to Sousa marches. I suppose that was a great help in basic training, but suspect it was of less help in combat. My life in Maine on the urban fringe was very sheltered – mostly white Catholics and Protestant kids. There was only one black family in the Portland area and I met one of the kids in track when we competed in a friendly way for 4th place in the broad jump. I suspect that the track experience was also of help as I had stamina on hikes and could retreat as fast as most of the situations demanded. As kids we played cowboys and Indians – with the latter as the desired stereotype. This was played using elastic guns. The ammo was made from recycled car tire inner tubes cut into elastic bands for the wooden guns using wooden clothespins for triggers. This too was good practice for combat I guess except combat had fewer arguments as to who was dead. Our other game of importance was “kick-the-can” – a game of hide and seek – also great for infantry tactics.

Other play did not contribute to any significant military plusses – our baseball was happily disorganized with lots of “local” rules which often meant that the game was more than half a heated discussion as to the fair/foul or strike/ball status. We had special penalties for hitting the ball into the forbidden property where we often lost the ball – rather significant as there was usually only one ball properly wrapped with friction tape. Only once did these arguments result in a fight involving me – a bigger kid (unfortunately) had some beef with me and was starting to settle the discussion through a

real physical victory – I lucked out by pushing him into one of those old canvas beach chairs where he became hopelessly entangled. I then beat a strategic retreat and all the other guys doubled over with laughter, as his fight became a losing one to canvas and sticks of the folding chair. The concept of strategic withdrawal was a good lesson and was used in combat.

I graduated from High School in 1940 and do not remember worrying much about a potential war as the Atlantic seemed a great buffer. I was more worried about a job to help with college expenses and occasionally putting gas at “6 gals for a dollar” into my dad’s Studebaker Dictator 6 – great car name for the 1930’s! One job was as assistant milkman – at \$1 a day – it was great as I enjoyed early morning and was home before noon. The worst day was dropping lots of empty milk bottles down a back stairway awakening the whole apartment.

Later, I had summer jobs as a “heater” for a drop-forging factory – we often had rather good pay at up to \$1 /hour on piece work – however, that rarely lasted as the factory reduced the piece work price if you were really successful. This gave me insight into other people types (both good and bad) and to prove to me that education and engineering were better than manual labor - so on to the University of Maine – class of 1944 in Civil Engineering. However, even at this time I knew that “education” was not a guarantee of intelligence, wisdom, or the ability to do things well.

2. ROTC and ERC at College

Life at the University in the fall of 1940 was very pleasant with a large number of new friends and new experiences. The only relevance (and very little at that) to becoming a platoon leader was Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC). This was a series of courses on military “things” – presumably some history and certainly some drill. I think we all took it as a second-class experience that was required. Certainly my civil engineering courses had priority and were much more interesting and demanding. Civil summer camp 1943 (Fig. 3) was perhaps a help as it approximated a real job. I was in the ROTC Coast Artillery and as I recall we had some “cutting edge lessons” in the use of the three forts and triangulation in harbor protection. In my case, the three triangulation forts in Portland Harbor were Fort Preble, Fort Williams, and Fort Gorges, designed to protect Portland Harbor from ships stupid enough to get in amongst the many (said to be 365) islands of Casco Bay. As a kid we did watch gun practice at Fort Williams using a small gun inside the big disappearing guns – that was interesting, however at the University we had fake guns/ships on the field house floor and did graphical triangulation problems with “splash” markers based on questionable information. As for war, I assumed that the University was a very safe place as it lay way up the Penobscot River and above a dam at Bangor. I note from my records that on 16 May 1942 I enlisted (Fig. 2) as a private in the Enlisted Reserve Corps of the Army for the duration of the war plus six months. This first realization that I was involved came after Pearl Harbor – Dec 7, 1941 – the day I realized that there was to be a shooting war. I remember listening to President Roosevelt’s speech in a fraternity house – around 5:00 p.m. as I recall and

feeling rather sober as to the potential consequences for the country and myself. I also remember that the ROTC Colonel came to class on Monday in full army regalia – including a 45 on his hip. I don't believe most of us thought this was a necessary declaration of imminent war on campus, as Japan seemed a rather long way away from Orono, Maine. As I recall the ROTC classes went on about as usual but after my enlistment (SN 11079113) I had a bit less freedom to complain as a "civilian" might. I did get along in the system, but once I missed a class and the Sergeant insisted that I, Private Colcord, make it up. I told him that I was taking a rather heavy load (21 ½ semester credits) instead of the usual full load of 15 credits, and because of that my schedule only had one hour of one day available – thus if Friday at 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. was okay with him I would be there. He said "Are you sure?" and I showed him my schedule and he then said "Forget it." – I will of course never know the really important things I missed but at least I tried and did pass. As most of my instructors and nearly all of my colleagues were "going to war" the classes became a bit haphazard at the end of my junior year. I reported to active duty in June of 1943 to Camp Devens, Massachusetts to begin my real "military career."

3. Introductions to the Army at Fort Devens, MA (7 June 1943)

In June of 1943 I became a private (ASN 11079113) at Camp Devens, MA which was really quite reasonable as an induction site. One part of the indoctrination at Devens was a complete physical. The process was only a bit traumatic and except for a needed waiver for a deviated septum – why I’ll never understand but perhaps it would have cut my potential Army Air Corp career short. I also recall being a bit annoyed at my horribly slow blood letting—I guess I had “low blood pressure” for to fill the required quota I lost places to at least three guys. The intelligence tests were a snap and I ended out passing with above the minimum required for the officer candidate school – this was serious as we were “guaranteed” a try at OCS and some of my Maine colleagues had a problem and had to retake the exam. As I recall, the cut-off was 135 and my 168 was a good score – these were said to be similar to IQ tests but I do not recall the relative number transformation.

Work at Devens was routine and for some reason I was assigned to “assignments” where the sergeant implied I could greatly influence my career – I did nothing and if his description of oriental girls anatomy was an indication, I suspect he was not a thoroughly reliable source – but who was I to question (or care for) this authority figure and I somehow I kept my mouth shut and did get a weekend pass to Boston. I must say I did not cut a fine figure as a private in a wrinkled summer uniform and my “date” with a Wellesley girl I had briefly met through a fraternity buddy was less than stupendous – of course she was smart and discerning and I believe this enlisted, sweaty lump with a

wicked Maine accent was not in the class of the Newton (any one of them) set. At least I did not get any letters that would have had to be answered.

The Coast Artillery group from Maine was finally sent to Basic Training for Anti-Aircraft (AA) at Fort Eustice in Virginia in late June of 1943.

4. Basic Training at Fort Eustis, VA and ATS at Maine

The entire U of Maine ROTC Coast Artillery group arrival at Fort Eustis for training in (Fig. 4) Recruit Training Center (RTC) 13th Bn. in what a “Yankee” would call wicked hot weather and I swear that the wet bulb was higher than the dry bulb on the thermometer – at least 110% humidity, or so it seemed. I must admit that the basic training was really necessary. I hate to think what an officer I would have been without this non-academic service. At least the days were busy and the usual duties were really not too rigorous—I was somehow spared the “grease trap” on K.P. duty, but did get to pick up cigarette butts in the usual Army “pick-up”; “paint”; or “salute” concept.

My recollection is that nothing memorable happened – just marching, infantry drill regulations, calisthenics, rifle marksmanship using 30 caliber 1903 “Springfield” rifles, and later M 1’s and boring lectures on VD and other horrors that as a nerd from Maine I never knew existed. I now know that we “had” to listen to some war department films on “Why We Fight” but I must have had a really fine nap through most of these. As I recall the General Orders were: 1) “to take charge of this post and all government property in view”, 2) “to walk my post in a military manner keeping always on the alert, and observing everything that takes places within sight or hearing”, 3) “to report all violations of orders I am instructed to enforce”, . . . 5) “to quit my post only when properly relieved”, . . . 10) “to salute all officers and colors on standards not cased”

The rest of the General Orders are not relevant and I do not recall any specific orders except that my guard site was really the most important building on the post – the

PX (Post Exchange). In walking my post very carefully I discovered an intruder – a small black and white animal that my nose and keenly developed country instincts knew was a skunk. Now what—a) quitting my post was sort of advisable in my eyes, but probably not an official Army option, b) certainly saluting was not relevant as technical, black and white are not colors and it was probably not an officer, and c) well walking in military manner could only be achieved in retreat, so . . . with discretion as the better part of valor, I decided to smartly reverse my path and leave in the opposite direction. This worked until I returned to the other end of the outside “wet” portion of the PX where the enemy still lurked. Reversing again, I returned to the original scene of the “crime” and fortunately the intruder was gone—no one killed with my unloaded weapon and no messy report to the sergeant of the guard.

I have no great “other moments”, from the basic training except perhaps the bayonet drill. There we had dummies of Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo . . . all neatly stuffed with straw. These poor “scarecrows” had to fend against horizontal butt strokes to the head and bayonet jabs to the gut. I suspect I was supposed to hate these guys but they were so pathetic that I could see no correlation to the real world. Fortunately I never had to use a bayonet except to open C Rations.

One useful occurrence for my civilian occupation in surveying/civil engineering was the consistent marking of all sidewalks into 2 ½ foot segments, thus pacing (2 steps) in 5 foot increments became natural and this was quite valuable in any distance measuring in or out of the army. Of course there might have been a better way, but I must admit this regular 5-foot pace length did work.

The memorable song of basic training was “I want to buy a paper dolly I can call my own . . .” as the platoon sergeant sang it constantly—fortunately in a rather pleasant voice—and he was a good patient guy—not like many with real authority over young people with absolutely no standing in the “Army” society. The weekend leaves took me to Williamsburg and this, to me, was a great place—much more suitable for me than Norfolk. Both the historic restoration and the College of William and Mary were interesting and allowed a rational respite from soldering. (Fig. 5)

In December 1943 my basic training was completed—a good conduct medal was awarded to everyone as far as I know—and I was posted as a Corporal to Headquarters, Army Training School (ATS) back at the University of Maine. This was really a “holding” session until I joined Officer Candidate School (AAS Class 96) in 1944 at Camp Davis, North Carolina.

5. OCS at Camp Davis, NC and OSB #100 at TIS, Fort Benning, Georgia

I must admit that Officer Candidate School (OCS) was an exercise in frustration, yet perhaps a good way to prepare to become the lowest of the low, a 2nd Lieutenant. Days were full and very organized—clearly no time was devoted to contemplation. The physical training and marching were relatively easy as were the “technical” subjects but the pressure and designed uncertainty were the culprit. Early on we had a long march. I believe a 25 mile hike and the training officers and enlisted sergeants (drill instructors) were very solicitous of us—“are you tired, don’t you want to drop out and rest?” etc. Fortunately, I was in good condition and hiking used to be “fun”, and I was stubborn with some self-pride and a little thought kept me from saying, " OK." I noticed that those who dropped out were gone in a week. I suspect they became potential infantry replacements—at any rate I made the cut.

Much of the frustration was in the precision needed for beds and the arrangement of footlocker and things such as tent pins on the shelf above your bed. The pins were arranged in a nearly unstable stack called a “mouse trap”. Any vibration would cause collapse and a serious demerit. The fact that a quick change of uniform was often “required”—the old clothes hung back up with exactly 2 inch spacing of hangers. The rapid exit from the barracks to fall in with a new uniform often left guys with “mouse traps” near the door in distress—slam, clatter, clatter, clatter . . . and new demerits.

The assessment of demerits was often for non-conformity. As an example, I received one for having water in a raincoat pocket when others did not. Basically, it was by design, a “chicken-shit” operation guaranteed to frustrate.

We had some memorable days of target practice with 40-mm Bofors -the standard AA gun- and 50 caliber machine guns. The tow planes dragged a target sleeve attached to a cable and one could often see tracers moving up the cable. Naturally the tow plane pilots became upset and broke-off the exercise, giving us a welcome rest, as with no targets there was nothing to do. The trick was to succeed at this ploy without getting caught, as that was a major sin with plenty of demerits. We did similar things on the 90-mm gun range when shooting at “tanks” (wooden silhouettes of tanks on a track held up by 2 x 4’s). With the 90 mm gun one could aim and hit the 2 x 4 at up to 1000 yards—hence a broken 2 x 4 resulted in a broken target and time off—again an exhilarating task with danger of major demerits.

Because of my various sins and non-conformity I was lucky and was sent to a Special Basic course for a month—perhaps saving my life due to time delay and certainly giving me more basic instruction that I really did need. I do not remember much about this but it resulted in my joining OCS class 100 (Fig. 6). In one incident, I made a mistake of questioning the accuracy of the stellar alignment of guns. To this day I believe I was technically correct. However, it clearly was unwise to question doctrine and “silence of the lambs” became the real lesson. The rest of OCS was then relatively clear sailing and I soon became discharged from the army as an enlisted man (Fig 7a, 7b) and instantly became a 90-day (plus in my case) wonder with a specialty in guns. I was pleased with this career possibility, as one alternative was the “moonlight cavalry” or searchlights. At any rate I was now 2nd lieutenant (SN 0548228) as of 25 May 1944.

My career in the anti-aircraft area was very short. I believe I had a weeks leave at home where I found everyone was gone into the service, married or moved and except for

a pleasant visit with my parents it was a strange interlude. At any rate my career that I originally envisioned protecting Portland Harbor in Coast Artillery was again shunted from “guns” into OSB (Officers Special Basic), Class 100 at TIS (The Infantry School) in Fort Benning, Georgia. (Fig. 8)

Finally, instruction became more relevant, as the reality of infantry service sank in, albeit reluctantly, as it is hard to imagine a long career in the “Queen of Battles”. I believe some of the finest coordinated instruction I have had took place at Benning. I recall one instance of a spectacular demonstration. We were seated outside and the course was on information gathering. The instructor just commented on reliability of the eyewitness and said, “suppose you were asked to make airplane identifications, what . . .” just then ZOOM—several fighter planes came in low from behind and disappeared behind the trees! It certainly woke several officers up and clearly no one could identify the real type or number of aircraft as we were supposed to do—wonderful timing. Another lecture was on camouflage with the outdoor lecture overlooking a field. Some figures moved and could be spotted. Then a dog was taken out and instantly spotted several “stumps” and prone people that we had not seen in the 30+ minutes of lecture. At the end of instruction, a figure stood up out of the dirt not 10 feet from the front row. None of us had seen him—a great revelation as to tricks of the eye versus camouflage and stillness.

As we were officers, treatment was more civilized than in OCS and I even had a bit of time that I spent in reading “Lee’s Lieutenants”, an excellent treatise on Civil War tactics. Those tactics were still in fashion at the time, as the Civil War was the first “modern” war, in all its brutality.

This training was generally good and relevant—about the only thing that, for me, did not work was the advancing fire technique of fire, hit the ground, roll, stand and advance, etc. I found that many soldiers, after hitting the ground seemed to feel safe and stay there thus becoming subjected to mortar fire. Thus often a crouching walk, shooting from the hip without aim is often better as you keep the enemy down with consistent fire and you are up and advancing. Of course sometimes other ideas are better and advancing under potential fire is just not a good job for long by any technique. I did receive a short leave (Fig. 9) and had a brief visit with my parents and a “reunion with” a High School and University of Maine buddy, who was an officer in the signal corps.

6. With the 75th at Camp Breckenridge (July 1944)

I joined the 75th Infantry Division (activated at Fort. Leonard Wood, Missouri on 13 April 1942) during their training at Camp Breckenridge, Kentucky. In August of 1944, I was assigned as platoon leader in Company C, 290th Infantry. Many in the platoon had completed Division maneuvers and it was more of a family and one had the impression that we (the unit) were in it together. Training was a bit more interesting under these circumstances, however much was still really routine.

One special maneuver training exercise sticks out as being special. This consisted of a “red” force attacking a “blue” one, however it had a lot of “time-outs” as the brass analyzed the situation with a cease fire red flag raised. During one of these do nothing periods a sergeant and I found a whole box of unused color smoke grenades. Without much real analysis and thought we decided to have a personal “fun” attack on our opposing team; took several grenades and snuck around the lines (going outside the official boundaries of the exercise) and then throwing the colored smoke grenades behind the opposing troops. Well, this caused a great amount of confusion as the staff radios tried to discern the meaning of this colorful display. We escaped unseen and returned to our positions with approval from the troops. Fortunately, not a soul ratted on us and the incident became history. On second thoughts, I hate to speculate on the effect to my “career” as one would expect demotion/court martial but where can one go lower than a 2nd Lieutenant?

As I recall we had a Regimental dance one evening. One of the officers was married to a lovely girl, while most of us were single. This was no real problem except he was killed on Christmas Eve in the Bulge and the knowledge of this fine family seemed

to make the loss sadder. For my part, I somehow had a date with a nice southern gal—and as I recall her parents were clearly disturbed that their daughter was going out with a “Damn Yankee”. Little did they know that I was “no Sherman” and she was really safe with me. It did however emphasize to me that the Civil War was still vivid in much of the South, where in Maine we regarded it as passé' and the grand statutes were only for pigeon roosts. I of course had her home safe and sound at the appointed hour as I feared for my Yankee life if I had not done so—proof again that discretion is better than valor.

The rest of my stateside career seemed to go on without memorable incident. The Company became a tighter knit group with the development of leaders within the platoon and company. Unfortunately, some of the “stateside leadership” broke down in combat. This failure was rapidly apparent and really caused no problem as others, regardless of rank, took control when needed—one of the great attributes of the U.S. Infantry soldier.

7. Overseas Journey and Training in Wales (22 Oct–10 Dec 1944)

In October of 1944 we left the pleasant confines of Breckenridge and moved to the Port of Embarkation (POE) in the New York area. As I recall, we did have a short day pass at the time and I looked up a daughter of a friend of my mother's who was in the WAVES at Hunter College in New York City. No information as to leaving was transmitted, as my recollection was that "loose lips sink ships" was applicable—especially if you were about to be one.

We left the States on 22 October 1944 sailing on the US Brazil. I can't believe the relative luxury, as this was still operated by the Moore-McCormack Line and had, for officers, a mess with silverware, linen tablecloths, and excellent waiters from the original crew. We were often given the choice of food almost as in a current cruise. I recall we had six officers to an outside stateroom, but that was much better than the bunking of the troops in hammocks as we had free access to the deck and plenty of room and most important, fresh air. This luxury may have been because this was the flagship for convoy CU 44 of about 48 ships including 13 troopships and we had quite a lot of brass on board. How I lucked out I'll never know. Assignment to the command ship resulted in a fascinating crossing of the Atlantic—probably more interesting than a current ship crossing. As the command ship we appeared to issue strategic commands by whistle (and I presume radio). Our whistle would blow and the convoy would scatter into a random pattern. At other times the convoy would be aligned, port and starboard, as far as the eye could see and at other times the ships would all be in a single line astern. We did occasionally have destroyers racing around us and depth changes were dropped but we

saw no U-boats and no casualties or sinking. The alarms were exciting enough as I clearly was not anxious to be afloat in the middle of the cold North Atlantic. The crossing was not too rough and I did not get seasick, however, it was a help to be able to get out on deck. I am not certain if I could have said this if I had been cooped up with the men who were sick. It certainly appeared that officers in the navy had a better deal as to mess, and quarters and all aspects of life aboard ship. Thinking about this later I can say that it was certainly superior to life in the infantry with the exception of when one was torpedoed or bombed/shelled and sunk.

One of the major questions concerned our destinations—e.g. N. Africa, Mediterranean, or Britain. As I had had astronomy, it was very easy to obtain approximate latitude at night as the pole star (Polaris) was visible and an estimate of the altitude angle was a measure of latitude. Thus it soon became apparent that we were headed for somewhere in Britain.

I did learn one thing in transit; there are many card and dice games on going and this was no problem for a straight-laced Yankee who basically did not smoke, gamble, drink or even really go out with girls. I did however, in discussion mention that the singular form of “dice” was “die”—this was not believed and I made the mistake of allowing the truth to be ascertained by “polling” a group of my peers. Unfortunately, the solution or policy via a poll of unknowledgeable people is not always correct. I, of course, lost and at least learned that democracy is often only best if there is knowledge involved in the majority decision.

At any rate, I was correct in my latitude estimate and we landed in Wales at Swansea on 1 November 1944 and were taken to Porthcawl for billeting and more

training. Much of this training was hikes along the moors in mist, an activity I really enjoyed and an area I returned to after the war. The billeting was in homes for some of us. Some nice houses were split into barracks rooms and cots set up instead of the presumed nice furniture. These homes, while attractive, had no central heating and I expect would have been cold unless near the massive fireplaces however, this was not a hardship for us as we were young and in good condition and it would be remembered as infinitely better than what was to come. In a few cases, warmth was assisted by some young Welsh girls.

Some of the Southern soldiers had a terrible time communicating with local girlfriends—especially on the telephone. In a few cases I had to act as interpreter as I could understand both the British and the Southern accents. This obviously made for a less than romantic conversation, but at least the important information was transferred between parties.

For some reason, I have in my records an original list of men in the 2nd Platoon, Company C, 290th Infantry Regiment, 75th Division. This roster is shown in (Fig. 10). Of the original 42 men, (Fig. 11) shows the casualty summary. I suspect that this casualty distribution was typical of troops fighting in the Bulge and it was a good thing that we were not aware of these statistics during the training time. We left England at Southampton on 11 December 1944 on a small ship to cross the very rough English Channel and arrived off LeHavre, France on the 12 December where we off loaded onto small LCI's (Landing Craft, Infantry) for the remaining short trip to France.

8. LeHavre to Belgium (12 Dec 1944 – 18 Dec 1944)

The arrival at LeHavre was quite thrilling. The waves in the English Channel where we anchored were perhaps 10 feet or more and the small Landing craft (LCI) was along side the ship and was entered by climbing down nets. This was the thrilling part as I was loaded with rifle (carbine), radio, canteen, ammo, and some kind of pack that had what the army considered essential such as mess kit, rain coat, blanket, and heaven knows what else. The climb down the net was made difficult by those above stepping on you hands with feet in your face (see Bill Mauldin cartoons). As the landing craft was going up and down at least 10 feet and also going away from the ship 3 to 4 feet and then crashing into it added to the difficulty. The net result, if you dropped when the landing craft was away, you fell into the sea and were crushed. If you dropped when the craft was down you could easily break a leg. The key was to be careful and drop on the top of the up swing of the landing craft. At any rate, I made the jump drop successfully along with my stuff. When full, the craft left the ship and landed near LeHavre on sort-of a beach.

We then marched a bit, apparently to Yvetot. During this time we thought we were being strafed and I, along with others, dove into a ditch. No casualties occurred, except for my walkie-talkie radio. It had a bent antenna and refused to work and I abandoned it with glee, as it had never worked at a distance of over 100 yards. Now I had one less item to carry. One of the potential demons that didn't bother me was drinking alcoholic beverages. Because of my strict background I was never tempted. At times however, Calvados, a strong apple brandy from Normandy, was readily available. It was often still quite "green" but very potent and because of this I did have to assist some of the company to "bed" if they had been living it up.

We loaded onto the traditional 40&8's (40 Hommes-8 Chevaux) for the 200 mile or so trip to Belgium where the Bulge was rapidly developing. One of the sergeants believes we went by open trailers attached to tractors (18-wheelers) for much of this trip, but I do not recall specifics. Apparently we arrived at an open field near Erezee, Belgium where friendly farmers spread hay to make our pup tents fairly dry in the 34°F temperature and snow. I believe my platoon was in a lightly wooded area and my recollection is of sleeping on raincoats as a snowy ground sheet with a single blanket for warmth. During the night, in addition to "Bed-Check Charlie" (a single German observation plane), there were rampant rumors of German paratroopers in American uniforms. We were constantly awakened by shooting at "puffs of smoke", I guess from some artillery fire. It was, needless to say, a sleepless night. The next day (about 23 December) we were loaded onto half-tracks from the 3rd Division for a ride forward into defensive positions along the Hotten-Soy road. C Company appeared to be detached from much of the regiment and Division. The night was confusing to us as we moved around seemingly at random, but ended up on an approach march during a time of great confusion even for the Army. On the 23 December we arrived at the town of Erezee, Belgium, and dug-in in a defensive position. Sitting in a shallow foxhole and alertly observing forward of your position one could swear fence posts and bushes were moving. At least this fear kept one awake and alert.

9. Introduction to Combat (Christmas Eve 1944)

On 24 December, at approximately 1330 hours, we boarded half-tracks furnished by the 3rd Armored Division¹ and moved toward the town of Manhay. At Manhay the Company came under brief enemy artillery fire and we dismounted to continue on foot south toward Belle Haie. As I left the cab, the driver said “Hey, Lieutenant, you left your wire-cutters”. I didn’t have wire-cutters but being frugal I took them anyway. We marched through fields and woods on the east side on the highway (N-15) for about 3 miles. I recall that it was beautiful—a light snow and evergreens draped with chaff, in effect hundreds of “decorated” Christmas trees. At Belle Haie, task force Brewster had set up a road block consisting of six tanks dug in on each side of N15 from H company 32 AR, 3rd Armored Division and protected by paratroopers from A Company, 509th Parachute Battalion. Our Captain received orders from Brewster who was holed up in a tank and the officers of C Company were called together to get attack orders. I believe this is one of the few times we had specific orders in the whole of the combat experience. The situation was described as a single German tank at a firebreak protected by a squad of infantry on the right side of the road. Our Company’s orders were to attack in the direction of Baraque de Fraiture and for the 1st Platoon and machine gun section of the Weapons Platoon was to attack on the west side of the road, while the 2nd platoon (my platoon) was to circle through a field on the left (east) side and block the tank and squad from retreating out the fire-break. The third platoon was in reserve.

¹ Much of the details on units came from ‘An Introduction to Combat’ by Dick Sasin.

We were to have artillery support by shelling on the believed German position on the right side of the road. The attack was to commence at 1530 hours (one reference says 1500 hours)² after the artillery shelling lifted (Fig. 12 and 13).

The artillery barrage consisted of three rounds—one on the right in front of the 1st Platoon, where all shells were supposed to be fired; one on the left and one near the command post in a farmhouse on the right of the road where I heard that one person was wounded.

The 1st Platoon (Lt. Mike Eberle) made good progress, killing a number of dug-in German Infantry and wiping out several machine gun positions. They continued for perhaps 200 yards until they reached the fire break where the Germans brought in a tank that stopped the attack. My platoon (2nd) advanced across an open field until we came under fire from the woods. We ran into a very stiff, high fence and through the use of the illicit wire cutters were able to cut holes in the bottom of the fence and crawl through and advance to the edge of the woods where fire increased and we were pinned down with several men wounded. I was hit in the face by a concussion grenade, a portion of the rim embedded itself in my right cheek below my eye and as is often the case with head wounds, bled profusely. I tried to get someone to return to company headquarters and report the heavy concentration of fire on this side of the road where no one was supposed to be. The messengers were wounded and I decided that the Captain must be informed so under fire I zigzagged back across the field, dove under the fence and reported the situation to Captain Walsh. As I was bleeding rather profusely, I was not allowed to

² “L’Offensive des Ardennes: Les combats pour les carretours de le Baraque de Fraiture—Manhay et le village de Malempre’.” Eddy Monfort

return and the 3rd platoon was sent to flank my position on the left. They initially met no resistance and advanced a short way into the woods where they were met by intense enemy fire from camouflaged and dug-in positions. Most of the 3rd platoon was either killed (including Lt. Parks), wounded, or captured in this encounter. The 1st platoon was ordered to disengage and return to the command post (CP) area.

I was ordered to evacuate and along with two others, we walked to an ambulance—one wounded in the leg, myself, who by then could not hear or see from the right eye, and another soldier. We got in the last ambulance out and as we sped back up route N-15, I recall several shells on the road dropping behind us as we left.

As it turned out, the “squad” of German infantry as per the briefing, was in fact the 2nd SS Panzer Division who was headed toward Liege. I recall very little until I was in an aid station, as I presume I had been given some morphine.

As to the rest of C Company, I will let Lt. Sasin tell their story:

“I have no idea what Brewster’s orders were, but he ordered us to attack while his tanks and the paratroopers of A Co. 509th Pcht Bn just sat there and watched as we attacked troops of the 2nd SS Panzer Division—one of Hitler’s best. It was about 1600 to 1615 hours when we pulled back from the woods and dug in at the edge of the woods. I estimate the time because it was just starting to get dark. I asked Knobby³ for permission to fire a few mortar rounds at the crossroads, but since he had heard nothing from the third platoon he denied my request.

³ Captain Walsh

By this time it was getting dark. Brewster was in contact by radio with Col. Richardson, his superior. The only order he could get was to remain in place and man the roadblock. We sat in place at Belle Haie for the rest of the evening, in relative quiet with only an occasional German motorcycle rider coming north on N-15 through our lines. Needless to say none made it through. We sat and waited, expecting an attack at any moment. Sometime after midnight, Brewster finally got orders to pull back. About 2100 hours, the Germans had attacked up the Odeigne road to N-15 North of Belle Haie and continued on to Manhay and Malempre. The Germans had a field day in Manhay, where many 3rd and 7th Armored tanks were destroyed. Brewster was told 'try to get out by going North and East, since the place you came from (Manhay) was in enemy hands'. The tanks were started and warmed up on the road. We waited for what seemed to be an eternity, expecting the Krauts to attack at any time, but fortunately they chose not to. Finally we moved out with A Co. 509th and the tanks in the van and with C Co. as the rear guard. I was at the very rear of the column. Since C Co. had no maps we had to put our trust in Brewster. The column proceeded for about 30 minutes to an hour—I had no concept of time—when suddenly we heard shots from the front of the column. We scattered off the road and hit the dirt ready to fire. The firing stopped and all was quiet for some time. Finally Knobby called Mike and me and told us that the column had run into a small village that was occupied by the enemy. Later I learned that this village was Malempre. Apparently the first and last tanks had been disabled by panzerfausts and according to Brewster, the remaining tanks and all (the men) would move out on

foot. The tankers of H Co., A Co. 509th and C Co. 290th then took off in separate directions. I estimate that the time was now about 0300 hours. C Co. took off through the woods over ground covered by snow, heading toward the flashes of our artillery. As dawn began to break we came to a clearing which sloped upward to a road on which we noticed a truck moving along. Knobby asked for a volunteer to check if we had reached friendly troops. Sgt. Spremulli volunteered and soon returned with news that we had met with troops of the 82nd Airborne, 504th PIR just west of Bra. The rest of the day, 25 December 1944, is mostly a blur to me. I believe that we tried to scrounge for food because we left Erezee the previous day without our packs and thus with no rations. We were told to leave everything at Erezee except our arms and ammunition. I'm sure that we also were very tired and tried to get a little rest. Knobby tried to get transportation to take us back to Erezee, but was unsuccessful until late in the afternoon. Sometime about 1600 hours we boarded trucks, furnished I guess by the 82nd AB. The 75th and 3rd Armored had been assigned to 7th Corps (Gen. Collins) whose eastern boundary on N-15 tied in with the XVIIIth Airborne Corps (Gen. Ridgeway). The trucks were to take us only to the 7th Armored Division boundary. Shortly after dark we arrived in Werbomont where we were ordered off the trucks. We spent the night in Werbomont because Knobby was unable to get transportation to Erezee until the next morning. It is also to be noted that the most direct route to Erezee lay through Manhay and Grandmenil, both of which were in German hands at that time. We arrived in Erezee at about 1000 hours 26 December in trucks presumably furnished by the 7th Armored division.

EPILOGUE

In retrospect many questions and comments may be in order to try to understand what happened before, during and after our attack. The 1st BN 290th Infantry had been attached to the 3rd Armored Division. All orders and directives came directly from that source. I have no idea what Brewster's orders were. Was he ordered to maintain a roadblock at Belle Haie? If so why didn't he place C Co in defensive position to reinforce the roadblock and help to protect his tanks? Were his orders to attack when C Co. reinforced him? If so why did he use only a portion of his troops to attack? If his orders were to attack, he should have had C Co. attack on one side of N-15 and A Co. 509th attack on the other, both being supported by tanks. Unfortunately C Co. attacked alone with no support from either the tanks or A Co.

Both the 3rd Armored and the 75th Divisions were attached to the 7th corps, but most of the time of 24 December, we were in the XVIIIth Airborne Corps area. In addition, General Montgomery had taken command of all troops in the northern sector of the Bulge and in order to "tidy up the lines" he had ordered all troops to withdraw to an area north of Manhay. This withdrawal was to take place on 24 December and in fact units of the 82nd AB had left Malempre to new positions on the line north of Manhay through Bra over to Trois Ponts. Why then were we sent to reinforce Brewster when everyone was pulling back? Apparently the 3rd Armored or specifically Col. Richardson never got the orders to withdraw. Our orders to withdraw came after midnight and after Manhay had been captured.

It seems that someone goofed rather badly and it left us three miles behind German lines.”

As Sergeant Avery of the 1st platoon said to a buddy in the Weapon’s Platoon, “Merry Christmas!”—Certainly an anti-Christmas memory that is unforgettable.⁴

⁴ “Battle of the Bulge”. , Martin F Avery, Jr, Military, Nov 1989.

10. Hospital Tour and Return to 75th Division (26 Dec '44 – 9 Jan '45)

With morphine there is only a hazy memory of the ambulance ride and aid stations. Somewhere, I had boots removed and was carried in a stretcher until someone found out I could walk if I had the boots. At a more advanced aid station I had the grenade shrapnel removed and do remember it was given to me as a souvenir—it was the crimp rim of the concussion grenade and was about 2 inches long—sort of like a fish hook. I proceeded to lose it somewhere and was sent to Liege for a short recuperation.

While in the hospital, and feeling sorry for myself, I had a visit from the Chaplain but when he learned I was a Protestant “P” from my dog tag, he left me rather abruptly, as his flock was more important. At the time it hurt, but I survived this minor slight. While in the hospital at Liege, we experienced buzz bombs (V-1 rockets). It was a bit frightening, as you would hear brrrr. . . and then silence as the pulse jet shut off. There was a wait and then “boom”. Some of the patients were deathly afraid and hid under their beds. It was in a way fascinating as the buzz, silence, boom sequence was obvious but it was really fate as there was nothing one could do about it. As mine was not a major wound (I did receive 10% disability for a while as I cannot “wink” with the right eye—no real problem and after I was married, the Army in its infinite wisdom reduced it to 0%). I was sent to a replacement depot in Belgium. One good thing happened while I was in this rear echelon space—I actually went to see a USO show—it was Lily Pons, a great opera singer who did a superb job and I think was really appreciated by mostly non-opera fans. I believe I became a lover of Opera because of her.

I must admit, I tried to get assigned to the Engineers as I really was trained for that with 3 years of college. However, it was obvious that Infantry officers were in short

supply and I was returned to the 75th Division where I rejoined C Company on 9 Jan 1945 as 3rd platoon leader along with a whole series of new men and a few of the old ones.

The company had occupied a defensive position on a wooded ridge South of Amonines on 27 December. They were shelled and learned that tree bursts were deadly in an uncovered foxhole. There was an attack on 29 December that was repulsed with heavy casualties on the Germans. The weather was bitter cold and snow fell most days. In this action C Company had 3 killed, 17 wounded and 20 non-battle casualties mainly frostbite. On 3 January the 290th Infantry was attached to the 84th Division and attacked and occupied Magoster. Again on 6 January, Beffe was attacked and occupied and then C Company went into Battalion reserve. I returned on 9 January when the company attacked and occupied Marcourt.

11. Cleaning up in the Ardennes (10 Jan 1945 to 31 Jan)

I was with the 3rd platoon now and my recollections are a bit fuzzy. I did keep a very brief set of cryptic notes on a 1945 pocket calendar, as a diary was verboten, I believe it was here that we spent a bit of time sleeping in bombed houses and barns and as there were still chickens around we shot a few and used our steel helmets as pots to cook them. I recall they tasted real good but almost all of us got the GI's from this escapade. We were also reprimanded from on high because of the firing—causing the brass to assume an attack. It was still bitterly cold and continued to snow. We left Marcourt on 11 January by truck and arrived at the “Belgium Barracks” which was situated on a hill overlooking the Salm River and the town of Vielsalm. On leaving, we had learned that one of the best “state-side” sergeants was close to useless in battle as he had “an old football knee injury” that always acted up when it was time to attack. While it may have been shameful, the platoon, to a man, left him behind without a word, as the last person one wants next to him in battle is an untrustworthy one. I noted he officially became a non-battle casualty and that he did not return. There we were in Division reserve and again had time for sleep and time to check weapons. The barracks provided a roof and that was good but the “cots” had iron gratings instead of springs and without mattresses they were less than comfortable—most of us used the floor. We had 2 KIA (Killed In Action), 13 wounded and 21 NBC's (Non-Battle Casualties—typically frozen feet) during this period.

One incident at the Belgium Barracks sticks in my mind as an interesting display of statistics. As indicated, most of us had the GI's and as such needed to make rush trips “toward” the latrine. For some unknown reason the latrines were separated from the

barracks by an approximately 100-foot path. My recollection is of an amusing distribution of brown spots along the path where soldiers needed to “go” even if unsuccessful in reaching the final goal of the real latrine. I still visualize this as a variable density plot along a line (path) with statistically varied concentrations at about 2/3 position. I cannot remember my own statistical contributions but I believe in this case that I made it to the theoretically correct place.

On about the 17th of January we crossed the Salm River and entered Vielsalm without encountering the enemy as they had withdrawn. We spent the night in Petite Thier after a furious house-to-house battle. I recall that I sensed incoming artillery and ran to the other side of a house. Another soldier ran to where I had been and took a direct hit—I was lucky, as I of course did not know where the shells would land. A bit of confusion reigned in the evening and I acquired a new folding stock carbine designed for paratroopers. This had “Col. Drain” carved into the wooden portion of the grip and I “traded” my regular carbine figuring I could run faster without the long stock. I carried this carbine for the rest of the war, being very careful to hide the “Col. Drain” carving as I suspect the real Col. Drain would have been very upset and probably would have disciplined me with who-knows-what. However, my belief is that one does not abandon his weapon in combat—if one does it becomes fair game for all, as this was one of the ways we were supplied. At any rate I acquired my favorite carbine and used it from then on.

On the next morning we were to attack across a valley into woods. My platoon was to lead the attack and I sent out two scouts who had just joined the platoon as replacements. In retrospect, perhaps I should have sent more experienced troops, as this

attack became a disaster for them. I was the third person and all of a sudden, heavy fire was received from the woods in front. All of us hit the ground or at least dove into the snow, as it was about 2 – 3 feet deep. The two scouts were both wounded and I concluded that the only way to save them was to attack, which I did—apparently startling the German positions and causing them to retreat with their machine gun. The “Official “ version is given in the Silver Star Citation (Fig. 14) as well as that for the British Military Cross. This version required some creative writing by Lt. Mike Eberle and we further had to use a typewriter to have it accepted. Of course we had no typewriter but later found an “all capital” English portable in a house, which did the job. The “official” version really needs clarification, thus the true story perhaps less spectacular, is as follows.

On this particular day I tried a new arrangement for my blanket. We were the lead platoon and I did send two scouts ahead as is standard procedure. These two men had just joined the platoon as replacements and I still remember their names (Stern and Stenstrom), as they were alphabetically assigned. We left the road and proceeded down a slight hill to the base of the valley some one hundred or so yards toward a small woods on the other side. As we approached the woods a German machine gun opened up, wounding both scouts and causing us all to hit the ground. In my case, the “ground” was in a small stream covered with snow. As I did this prudent thing, my blanket moved to hold my head down and in pushing to get up, my hands sunk further into the snow effectively trapping me in this position for a bit. When I finally extracted myself from this awkward mess, I noticed the platoon had wisely withdrawn to relative safety of the road ditches—not on my command as I could have only talked to snow. Looking around and still under fire, I decided that now withdrawal was not prudent so the only hope was

to fire on the German positions and advance toward the scouts. This I did and for some reason, the Germans stopped firing and were either killed or retreated. I did reach the wounded scouts and helped them back to relative safety behind a small concrete electric substation. We treated their wounds as best we could and left them for the medics. (I later learned that Private Gunnar Stenstrom died but that Private Allen Stern lived—Gunnar’s total time in combat was perhaps 10 minutes).

We then changed tactics and continued down the road under sporadic fire to a house. We officers were grouped together in discussion of the situation behind the house and a mortar round landed right in the middle of the group. I felt a heavy hit on my left shoulder as if I was hit by a baseball bat and my field jacket was torn under my arm. As I could still wiggle my fingers I figured I was lucky with a wound that would mean a warm bed. I went into the house that was serving as an aid station and started removing clothes—field jacket, two sweaters, wool shirt, and underwear—no blood, just a bruise. Apparently the main mortar shrapnel went under my arm cutting everything but me. I reluctantly retrieved all my clothes and “Col. Drain” and returned to lead a strategic attack to the rear as the Captain was really wounded along with several others. We could not go along the road and I figured the ridge might be a target so our “retreat” was infiltrating along the slope in woods. This turned out to be a wise choice as the ridge and road were heavily shelled but the Company retreated successfully and had no more wounded.

I have no memory of where we slept but on 20 January we attacked south towards St. Vith in the face of some German resistance. Much of this attack was through snow-covered woods and along firebreaks. We later learned that many of these trails were

mined but as luck would have it the anti-personnel mines were frozen and did not work—one good thing to say about the weather. (Fig.15)

In this attack several things stood out in my memory. In one spot we were in a small cow shed and hut that were about 10 feet apart. Every time we went between these buildings an “88” (we often called all German artillery 88’s) armor piercing round would be fired at the man personally. I do not know why they did not shoot at the buildings but they didn’t—at any rate it was a “personal” challenge by the enemy. I sent my messenger on a mission and as he had a large heavy pack that he always carried, filled with his stuff, most of which was not army issue, he asked me to bring the pack up to him when I came. I agreed and he left. When it came time to go I tried to lift it and decided that I was not about to stagger between buildings with that monster, so in spite of a promise, I left it and ran the gauntlet between buildings drawing 88 fire as usual. I apologized to Stanley when I met him and somehow the next day he had a pack—same size filled with “stuff”. He was a superb messenger but did several weird things. He wore a yellow polka-dot woman’s scarf over his head including helmet and could walk across a ridge without being fired on—I believe the Germans did not know what “it” was. He also had a bad habit of yelling “Hey, Lieutenant” when he came up to my position. I would say “Damn it Stanley, I’m Joe” as I was not anxious to advertise my exalted rank. In fact I do not recall ever having a stripe on my helmet such as was shown in the movie “Private Ryan” and even used small “ensign” bars on a well-hidden shirt. I have no idea where I got them but they seemed prudent. Rank was of little importance in the intimacy of a platoon or even a company as we had, in effect, only two officers and often the sergeants were only “acting” as official correspondence was not prompt. I must say that finally Stanley

learned to call me “Joe” but that was after the real war and other officers outside our close knit unit didn’t understand. I even had to remind him “Damn it Stanley, I’m, Lieutenant now.” In addition, Stanley walked to his own beat—long step slow walk that never had the tempo of even Sousa marches.

We continued to attack and I recall having a hot meal brought up and mail delivered just before we resumed an attack through the uniformly planted woods into an open area. As we arrived at the edge of the woods, Mike Eberle as acting C.O. was near a cow when mortar fire came in. Mike dove beside⁵ the dead cow and the round landed on the other side, saving his life. I was instructed to contact troops on our right and set out on this mission. We were soon under machine gun fire and the bullets were pruning the bushes about head high so the others and I sat down on the snow to let the machine gun fire abate. At mail call that morning my sergeant (Sgt. Lamarre of Brunswick, Maine) had received two personal boxes of chocolates from home—he gave me one to carry, as we had to carry them in front of our jackets. As the bullets flew over my head in what I perceived as a possible German attack I concluded, “No Damn Kraut was going to get my chocolates” and proceeded to eat them happily. When I saw the sergeant again I apologized. He laughed and said he did exactly the same thing with his pound. Eventually, the firing ceased and with no attack I proceeded to contact the troops on the right flank.

On 24 January we were relieved by elements of the 291st Infantry. That evening, C. Company had a total of 21 men left from the 200 or so original troops plus replacements. Our Bulge action was over as we went on reserve but this final action had

⁵ Mike swears he dove under a living cow and the round landed on top.

8 killed, 28 wounded and due to snow and cold 23 non-battle casualties in the company. We left for reserve on 6 x 6 trucks and it took only one to transport C Company. As I recall, we then received actual hot meals, a shower and clean clothes. I suspect these were needed, as many had been in the same uniform from before Christmas except for the “replacements” underwear we borrowed from our replacement infantry. The Company now had 2 officers. I understand there was one assigned to us at HQ who kept asking “How are the officers in C Company?” He eventually was promoted (both Mike Eberle and I were still 2nd lieutenants) and went to a better assignment, as we never saw him.

Food was generally C and K rations along with D rations. The D was an emergency ration consisting of a hard bitter chocolate bar that I loved and ate whenever possible. K-rations came in three types: breakfast, lunch and dinner. As I recall the breakfast had a coffee drink, 3 cigarettes, crackers and a small ham and egg-like can, the lunch had orange drink, crackers, and a canned cheese, while the dinner had bouillon, crackers, and a Spam like can. We usually traded things as we had favorites in spite of the Army’s theoretical balanced diets. I generally did not smoke—only occasionally to warm my hands—and thus I invariably got the “desired cigarettes (Camels or Lucky Strike) while others got Chesterfield and other less desirable brands. All this required water and I carried 2 canteens of water and my sergeant carried 1 of water and one of gasoline for the little gas stove we had. I recall he was deathly afraid of tracers which he envisioned striking him in the gasoline canteen, thus burning his rear-end. The C-rations were not as desirable in these circumstances as they were frozen and thus one had about 3 layers upon heating them—burned on the bottom, reasonable in the middle, still frozen on top.

We also borrowed 10 – in – 1 rations from the tankers. We would converse with them at the front of the tank while stealing rations strapped to the rear. I suspect they knew what was going on but as they often liked infantry support they let us do it. When we got these, there was a strong “pecking order” as we ate what we wanted first. One item that seemed especially desirable was cooked canned bacon. It seemed almost gourmet even unheated, but I know I wouldn’t eat it now. I guess bodies need certain foods and the “fat” was “delicious”. We then proceeded to go through the 10 – in – 1 goodies by individual preference eating as fast as possible as we usually moved out before finishing the food. On a few occasions I recall following tanks and picking up crackers that were discarded, as we didn’t always get food supplies on time, and we were hungry.

At any rate, my platoon consisting of 5 men left the Bulge with no regrets. As I recall we got five replacements—thus doubling the strength of the platoon, but far short of the 42 we should have. It was just as well as I cannot imagine controlling 40 or so men. Even the 10 we had seemed to be a large group. With the 5 men left, my platoon utilized 2 BAR’s (Browning Automatic Rifle) and each BAR man carried his own ammo. Many felt they jammed too easily, but my BAR men liked them and kept them clean. It was nice to have more firepower, to sort of equal that of the German burp gun.

12. Colmar Pocket (1 Feb – 20 Feb)

Somewhere around 27 January, we left Belgium after getting replacements giving us ten men in the platoon. We arrived in France about the 28th and were involved in the Colmar Pocket to remove Germans from the Alsace Region and back across the Rhine. We were in reserve much of the time and as such the real combat time was limited. Special instances of remembrance still are in my head. This was almost “spring” and the weather was much warmer. On the trip down from Belgium our train consisting of 40 and 8 box cars (Fig. 16) frequently stopped. This was not uncommon and allowed one to relieve himself at ease versus hanging out the door while moving. Once we stopped opposite a supply train and amazingly some of the really good C-rations disappeared as we “borrowed” boxes of them. Some MP’s came along asking if we noted any theft and we, sitting on the boxes of loot, said no, we had no idea what happened. I fully suspect that they knew, but we did have loaded guns and were quite a scruffy group.

Some of the reserve activities involved digging in and since the Bulge showed us that it was a prudent thing to do we did a good job. For some reason I was fortunate as my foxhole was the only one that didn’t fill with water as the snowmelt continued. I would like to think it was good soil reconnaissance from my Civil Engineering background but I suspect it was dumb-luck. Little did we know that these holes were important, as this became one of the most dangerous spots in the whole war. This danger was from the random firing of M1’s at small red deer that ran indiscriminately through the defensive position. We also had lots of rations—we were being sent rations for a full platoon of 40 plus people for our ten men resulting in a make-up of food from our previous near starvation diet of picked-up crackers.

Here I had a major confrontation with an unknown General—a rare thing to see, but this shows how far we were from the real front. My messenger, Stanley, had to take a crap and was happily involved across the road when the general drove down the road and spotted him. Stanley, of course said “Joe” when asked who his officer was, and that did not sit well by itself. I was found and asked, “What is your man doing, taking a crap in B Company area?” I replied, “Well Sir, it is much better than in C Company and it is really out of the way of everyone.” I suspect this did not enhance my promotion but at least I was not court-martialed for insubordination. At that time, line officers were required to have green bands over their epaulets on the field jacket. Our bands were obtained by cutting up a pool table top. This was to indicate that we did not have to take combat orders from rear echelon officers even those of higher rank. I suspect this was not a combat situation but I was still happy with Stanley who, while different, did his messenger work superbly.

Also at this time we experimented with making ice cream or sorbet. We found that by scraping away “dirty snow” (there were German dead lying around) that we could mix it with cocoa from K-rations for “chocolate” and mixing snow with the orange we could have orange sorbet. I now wonder how we lived through the potential sickness, as the snow was not that clean. I would probably die now with some germ but then it was thought of as a delicacy.

One of the less proud moments in platoon life was the rumor that one or two soldiers were liberating gold from the teeth of German dead. This is, of course, reprehensible and I never did see it done. I admit that the poor dead souls were no longer “human” and the rumor was that they “certainly did not mutilate dead GI’s.” I think this

practice stopped through peer pressure or perhaps there were fewer corpses so the temptation was not available.

We finally were involved in an attack on Neuf-Brisach, a walled city in the Alsace plain. As we approached over fields we were fired on, but the firing was way over our heads at about 45 degrees. The Major of the 1st Battalion had a bad cold and came running down the road hoarsely croaking “Fifi, Fifi . . .” The password was “Fifi—Telegraph”, the only one I remember to this day. This password was chosen because we were working with the Free-French forces. We soon learned that the Free-French had just taken the walled city and firing stopped when they learned we were friendly.

As usual, I did not know where I was, but for a while we stayed in a small town, with actual animals and farm houses mostly intact. I recall wearing sabots (wooden shoes- good for barnyard and easy to remove thus keeping the place tidy) around the farm and found them very comfortable. The church in town was in partial ruin as it had been an observation point and was thus shelled. We went to our first church service in this shell of a building where the alter still stood intact. It was rather impressive to see the ruins around yet a complete sparing of the most sacred place. The service was non-denominational but, to me, rather moving. It was not to be that we got to sleep in a village forever but we were still getting rations for 40 or so men.

We had very little resistance as most of the Germans had pulled back over the Rhine. There were some pockets and one instance I recall; we were assigned a defensive position that was huge, even for a full platoon (remember we are about ten men now). The small woods that we were defending stretched perhaps 500 yards each side of our defensive positions. We had four good foxholes dug and protected from overhead bursts

as we did have enemy artillery fire periodically. We had a fifth, central foxhole dug and used it as a latrine. We had two men to a hole and I recall each of us sitting on number 10 cans of grapefruit juice, sort of like hens on eggs. We did this as it had come through partially frozen so we were trying to warm it a bit before drinking. Each person had a whole can and all of us needed Vitamin-C, so I for one considered it ambrosia. On one rare occasion we had a visit from the battalion major—Major “Sheep-shit” as we affectionately called him. Just as he came up to our position we had a sudden shelling and he, not knowing the lay of the land, logically dove for what looked like a foxhole. I hate to admit it, but we all thought this was hilarious and all of us were bent over double laughing happily while being shelled. I visualize this incident now as a bunch of cartoon balloons labeled with “heh-heh-heh” coming out of the ground. Major S left quietly when the shelling stopped and I again felt my promotions going out the window—at least he never came forward again.

This place had one other instance where we witnessed a wild Free-French attack through our lines on the right flank. Tanks and men were riding through without helmets, firing at anything. This did draw return artillery and I got hit in the right shoulder by a nearly spent piece of shrapnel while sitting in my foxhole watching the goings on. This too did nothing to me except cut another hole in my poor old field jacket—rather stupid of me but a grand show nevertheless. The Free-French were apparently successful and we were pulled out of the Colmar Pocket on about 20 February.

I did like the area and the Division was awarded the “Arms of the City of Colmar”. The only disconcerting thing about the whole interlude was if you asked a civilian “Parle vous Francais” they invariably answered “Ja, Ja”—whoa that is not what I

expected for an answer, but of course that area changed hands many times over the years so German and French were mixed and the good news is that they were still friendly to us. Now Alsace is a great place to visit with the best cuisine—French flair and Germanic substance!

13. On the Maas River at Venlo, in Holland and a sweep to the Rhine

With the Colmar Pocket secured, the Division returned north to Venlo, Holland arriving 19 February on the Maas River. At Venlo we were on the left flank of the American troops, with our Company on the left, next to the British. This was again a holding semi-reserve position with only some shelling by the Germans and reconnaissance probes by us out in front of the dikes. Here we learned that the British fought a relatively civilized war, with no shelling at “tea-time”. Naturally, the Americans ruined this sort of short truce by shelling the Germans during this wonderful peaceful time and they retaliated, as one would expect. At Venlo my platoon lived in an old Brick Factory. We had found German carbide lamps that give good light but left us looking very black with soot, sort of like negative raccoons especially for these with glasses. Living in the ovens gave us, finally, a relatively safe, quiet place to relax. We even had time for discussion and the most philosophical one I recall concerned the problem of incontinence that we all seemed to have due to the cold weather and time consumed by several layers of underwear and pants. We wondered how we would handle this on the dance floor at some college prom. We also had debates on the value of spoon versus fork as the only utensil to carry. Of course, we all had knives of a wide variety of types but not your usual food cutlery. I was an advocate for a fork. I had a great little aluminum German one that I “loved”. I argued that I could drink spoon food and thus a fork was best. I believe I was quite alone with this philosophy but no one carried much excess cutlery. The mess kit was also, for me, not real GI Issue. I had a flattish aluminum plate that easily fit into the front of my combat jacket without bulk. About the only problem with the war at Venlo was the occasional shelling. We did have a small problem with the

officer's latrine that was spiffed up with a ladder that we used to sit on for relative comfort. You see this was a former British set-up and thus separate facilities for the various classes of people. At any rate, once too many "gentlemen" were on the ladder causing it to break and tumble into the trench. I noted the "separate but unequal" facilities were then abandoned and we all used the common latrine. During one of the patrols, I found a pair of German binoculars on an officer's body and since he didn't complain, I borrowed them. They were ex-Afrika Corp, desert brown, but of quite good Zeiss manufacture. They had mil-scales for artillery spotting and have served me quite well up to recently when I took up birding on retirement and found these essentially only focused at infinity. I guess this is logical as troops less than 50 yards or so are not usually peered at through binoculars. I also liberated a German motorcycle that 'ran". I had never ridden a motorcycle before and we got this going but it seemed to want to go home and I had a heck of a time turning it around in the silt river deposit to retreat toward our lines. At least it scared me enough to put that desire out of my head thus saving me from possible death in civilian life. This relative honeymoon came to an end on about the 4th of March when we left Venlo to cross into German territory. As I recall, we were to be involved in a major attack across the Rhine. Fortunately, the Bridge at Remagen was found to be intact and other troops crossed the Rhine thus I presume altering the battle plans. At any rate our activity lessened with only some shelling by our big guns. It must have been Hell to be on the receiving end as the concussion on our side was so great that it would lift the tile roofs up and then they would fall back with a clatter of falling tiles that did not reconnect. The Dutch housewives would be out each day cleaning and washing the front steps trying to keep a neat home in all the chaos.

Across the Maas there were canals and drainage in the flat land. We had minor skirmishes and I picked up a glider pilot who had been hiding for a time in the area. He was really glad to see American troops and gave me his Colt .45 pistol that I carried for a while. Eventually I decided it was too heavy and close to worthless unless I was in real trouble so I gave it to one of the men who wished it for a souvenir.

This was a time when the brass conceived of a grand attack plan to cross the small rivers/canals by a technique called Fighter-Searchlight Teams. This consisted of a regular tank (Fighter) alternated with a modified tank that had a searchlight mounted on top. The idea was to parallel a body of water then turn on searchlights to illuminate the attack path for infantry. Presumably the enemy would be blinded by the bright lights while we could see clearly if advancing. As we rode on tanks I was not impressed as small arms fire was deadly to us while the tankers inside were oblivious to that piddling danger. At any rate a planned attack was stopped when the lead tank in an advancing column broke through a bridge causing the whole column to stop. It was quite a spectacle with tanks and high ranking observing officers milling around. We promptly took advantage of the lull and went to sleep in a nearby barn. The Sergeant and I were in a bit of hay below the ground barn foundation when an armor piercing shell burst through the brick above our heads showering us with brick dust. I remember the shell rotating slowly on slippery hay as we left for the rear side of the barn. The shelling was only sporadic and we were lucky that again the ammunitions was only AP (Armour Piercing) however, the tankers did not like this and the whole operation disbanded much to our relief, as it drew too much fire. I, as an infantry man, was not a believer in the concept of attacking under fully lighted conditions and was happy not to test the theory.

Later on we found a large two-story farmhouse that had a real bedroom and what appeared to me communal bathrooms on each floor. As did others, I had a mild case of the GI's, my Sergeant and I located a soft bed right next to the bathroom for rapid accessibility and lay down with boots on. I stayed in bed until the carefully calculated last moment, and then dashed for the head. To my shock and dismay, the toilets were all coin operated and locked—why, why, why? A dash downstairs was a bit late much to the pleasure of the troops. I was most embarrassed by the failure of careful calculation but then war is Hell.

The battle lines finally straightened out and the “Fighter/Searchlight” attack abandoned and we went back to being infantry much to the relative relief of most of us.

14. Crossing of the Rhine and Rhineland Campaign in the Ruhr Pocket

(24 March – 12 April)

On the 24th of March we crossed the Rhine in small boats operated by the Navy without incident and this put us in combat against the vaunted Siegfried Line. It, like most fixed defenses from Hadrian's Wall on, was rendered obsolete by flanking movement and for us only pockets of resistance were encountered and very little of the actual fighting sticks in my memory. Since it is in vogue to tell stories of questionable procedures, our platoon may have participated in incidents unbecoming to a U.S. soldier. At this time in the war there were many Germans surrendering. (Fig. 17), some with "Safe Conduct Passes." They always said, "Nix SS" and were demoralized. Much of the time we just suggested that they keep going to the rear. Occasionally it seemed logical to escort them to the rear and with a shortage of men the least valuable man was chosen for the task. I fear that was a mistake as our choice often returned in a rather short order and to this day I wonder if he did not shoot the defenseless prisoner as it was the lazy thing to do. I shall never know but do have regrets that I sent him but I must say in his case it was a relief to have him out of our way as he was untrustworthy from the platoon's point of view.

While we were moving from the Ruhr to the Rhine a very worried rear-echelon officer appeared. He wanted to see Private B who had returned after being a non-battle casualty. I thought he had probably committed some insignificant indiscretion, so reluctantly found him. He was one of our best BAR-men and as usual carried the BAR and ammo—a load that the Army assigned to two men. I had noted that he limped but who didn't after all the abuse our bodies had taken. At any rate they examined him and one leg had nearly no muscle as he had been caught in a mowing machine accident while

a kid on the farm. He disappeared post-haste for a trip home (he should not have ever been drafted and I cannot conceive of a doctor missing that obvious disfigurement). At least he had an excellent reason for limping but he never complained to me or others and none of us knew the extent of his injury. I believe this type of person is a real hero!

We captured several small un-named cities in the Ruhr Pocket and my only horrible recollection is in the liberation of a displaced person's camp. Some poor souls were wandering weakly around in near death as the German guards had wisely left. Some were lying in stacked beds too weak to walk and all were in effect skeletons. They almost seemed non-human. I suspect this was a work camp like that of "Schindler's List" depiction except the actors in the movie were far too fat by comparison. I cannot recall the name of the place but the inhumanity of this treatment lingers on in my mind. Fortunately, as Infantry, we moved on.

I somehow found a sniper's rifle and as we had a view over the Ruhr with Germans on the other side of the river we used this to harass the enemy from a great distance—a bit cruel in itself. The procedure was to elevate the rifle and fire onto the opposite flood plain where German soldiers were gathered. We could see a puff of dirt and they would run. I do not believe any were hurt by this "game" and we soon tired of the effort, left the rifle and moved on. The fighting was nearly over by this time and we had super allies in the form of the Army Air Force. We had an air force person assigned to the company who had radio contact with P47 Thunderbolt pilots in the air. When we came to a small town usually we may have had a small firefight or the "mayor" or some responsible citizen would appear with a white flag. We pointed to the circling P47 and they usually gave up. This was a much more civilized way to fight and certainly the role

of infantry is easier against a vanquished foe. In this way we took the towns of Witten and Wetter.

The main activity was looting—one still had to be careful as a few items were booby-trapped but we behaved as soldiers have for eons and borrowed items from civilians and their homes. I coveted a Leica camera but did not find one even though many did. I confiscated a baby Zeiss-Ikon box camera and later through the PX was able to get 127 film. Thus I was able to record doings from then on.

It was my good fortune to obtain a real 72 hour leave in Paris from 6 April at 1700 hours through the 10th (Fig. 18). I actually left on the 5th and returned on the 12 as I was allowed two days to reach Paris. I saw most of the sites as I have small, very poor photos taken with my “new” camera of the Ecole’ Militaire, Pont d’Iena, Napoleon’s Tomb, a Statue of Joan d’Arc, Arc de Triumphe, Eiffel Tower, Palais Chaillot and Notre Dame. I also recall that I purchased a gift of perfume for my mom and I recall buying a watch for myself—a Universal Geneve—for \$10 at the PX. It still works but has now been replaced for the electronic kind at considerably more money. However, for a forgetful college professor, remembering to wind a watch is a problem. I do not recall any drinking, as I am not into that pastime. It was however, a good relaxing time. I could not even get picked up in the Pigalle section of Paris, as I do not seem to attract or at least be aware of potential “Ladies of the Night” and was really not interested. On the 12th of April I rejoined the Company all refreshed as we continued in light clean-up action.

In this capacity, we had a strange task that I have brooded about for years. There were many Displaced Persons (DP’s) that apparently, by treaty, were to be shipped home by the easiest rail line. I, of course, would have given my eyeteeth to be sent home and

was thus very perplexed as many of these people did not want to go “east”. In fact, we had to nail the doors shut in the 40-8’s to keep them on board at least until they left the marshalling yard. I now realize that for many there was no “home” and that this act that I considered a good deal was often really a potential death sentence. I can still see the sad faces as they were boxed up to go “home”. On the 14th of April we went into occupation duty at Iserlohn, Germany.

15. Occupation Duty in Iserlohn, Germany

As we settled down in Iserlohn, a relatively small town southeast of Dortmund in the Ruhr, the platoon was again at full strength. The official roster is shown in (Fig. 19), and containing a few of the old 2nd platoon men. The officers in C Company were photographed (Fig. 20) as was my platoon (Fig. 21) as we went off to inspection. The 2nd squad was also photographed at a shell hole (Fig. 22).

The platoon was billeted in various places around Iserlohn. In my case we were in a nice home that had a beautiful bird's-eye maple grand piano. The owners were really worried about it and I think we all recognized that this was a prized possession and kept it spotless. We had a phonograph with a single record that we played endlessly. I do not remember the name of the song, but it went “Well, well, you rang the bell. You did all right by your little Nell . . .” We had a few ammo dumps to guard and a collection of optical equipment, especially a collection of optical 1m range-finders. I really wanted one but could not figure out how to get it home easily so they were left as junk or for more enterprising troops. We resurrected a neat captured German amphibious “jeep” that held four in a boat-like body. We did get it running but no one dared to try it out in an amphibious mode. On VE day (8 May 1945), (Fig. 23) Sergeants New and Finke and I took it to a nearby tower overlooking the countryside (Fig. 24a, b). VE Day was a quiet celebration as it meant we were not going to the east to join the final battle in Europe to link-up with the Russians on the Elbe. Some of the real “hawks” said we should continue east to take on Russia but I did not hear of much support for this idea from my men.

There was a policy of “no fraternization” and this was quite well obeyed, as far as I know, but I suspect some of the men may have strayed; at least discretely so I did not

get into trouble on this score. There was a bit of a row as some company commanders got very nasty reprimands of troops under their command who were caught on leave without proper uniforms, such as without ties or hats.

I spent quite a bit of time training my battlefield promoted Sergeants to become Sergeants in the eyes of the Army. Some had no knowledge of marching orders such as left/right face, etc. This is logical as who needed that parade ground stuff in a shooting war. They tried and I hope as they transferred out to other units that they were not broken to private due to lack of perceived military spit and polish. We were relieved by the British and left Iserlohn on June 4, 1945 for one of the redeployments camps in France (ours was Camp Cleveland near Rheims).

16. At Camp Cleveland near Rheims, France (until 15 Sept)

Portions of the Division ran Camp Cleveland and in this operation I, in effect, ceased to be a platoon leader as all of us were assigned a variety of jobs. For several weeks I had an interesting assignment, certainly not official and probably illegal. A driver and I scoured the countryside in the daytime noting where one could obtain “needed” items such as generators, paving, gravel, wire and all sorts of amenities to make our portion of the camp more livable. In the evening, “unknown to me” people would return to the area of the promising sightings and lo and behold, there would be a generator, etc. in camp in the morning. It was not long before we had a livable place. The walks all came from the end of airfield runways as the metal strips used for landing made a great solution to mud.

Several occasions are memorable. Once we were out in a nearby field and a whole series of lines of soldiers was noted. These lines were due to a very enterprising and extremely efficient prostitute, utilizing all possible solutions to a sex-starved GI’s problems. Four lines in all, using hands, mouth and the usual simultaneously, but this was France.

A more military duty occurred when I was put in charge of the POW’s that we had to do routine clean-up duties. The POW’s were Hungarians and we had Polish guards. The Hungarians professed not to understand any language but their own and, of course, no one could speak Magyar. This means that any instructions were by rudimentary sign language. I may add that our Polish was not much better. At any rate, it was announced that Camp Cleveland was to be visited by an important Congressional Delegation who were to ride through on a designated route. Since I was in charge of the

POW's and their clean-up duties, I was assigned a 50-yard clean up on either side of the route. Every bit of paper, cigarette butts, anything, was to be picked up and then hauled to the official dump. Well somehow we got the guards and the POW's into a line 100 yards long and they dutifully picked up everything, sending it towards the center where it was put in a 6 x 6 truck. Then, the driver took off with a great burst of speed and all the paper came flying out, concentrating it in a strip right along the inspector's route. I thought this was hilarious, but the officers in charge couldn't see the humor. I vowed that if I ever became an "inspecting official" that I would never announce a route nor let others do this for me. Of course this was an empty promise, as I could not be elected dogcatcher. At any rate, I do not think my performance as Sanitary Engineer enhanced my promotion chances.

On the same day as the "garbage fiasco" we were all of a sudden integrated as black troops appeared in a variety of service positions. After the inspection by the high officials, the black troops disappeared just as rapidly—a very questionable "theoretical deception" that did, I suspect, fool the inspection team but by certainly very questionable ethics all around.

One of the more interesting items of July 1945 was that I had a real pass (Fig. 25) to Scotland. This was a good time and I was able to visit several things around the Glasgow/Edinburgh area. The most impressive was the Forth Bridge. In this case I took a date on the ferry across the Forth nearly under the bridge to the north shore (North Queens Ferry). That shore was quiet with some fine gardens and the Forth Bridge loomed above as we returned. This date was with a nice Scottish lass named Mabel Rennie. There

were several dances for troops and it was a pleasant interlude using real beds and being served meals in hotels.

During the “cigarette camp” duty we had access to real American movies and went as a platoon, all sitting together. This practice was stopped rather quickly as the top brass found officers sitting with their men to be un-military. As officers we were then required to sit up front, in reality poorer seats, so we could be uncontaminated by those men we liked and with whom had shared foxholes. Again, we were now back in the so-called real Army. At least we were able to “go” to the movies as a close-knit group.

On the 14th of August, we learned of V. J. Day and the dropping of the Atomic Bomb that accelerated this process. This was a night of wild celebration and perhaps the most dangerous of the war as the tents were not as good as foxhole with the random shooting. There was great relief as we felt our Divisions would have been involved in the invasion of Japan—not a good thing if you are Infantry. Thus, very selfishly, I still feel that the ending of the War by quick atomic means saved many lives, both Japanese and American and most importantly my own.

On the 15th of September I received orders to leave the Division and report to the Delta Base Section in Marseilles. This special assignment came to me as I had volunteered—yes volunteered—to go to Norway to help remove the Germans from that country. As I did this during the Colmar Pocket, I figured it was as good as any infantry operation. Much to the surprise of all, the Army only selected Norwegian speakers to be a part of this operation in Norway, and the other “volunteers” were marked for volunteer duty for other things.

This turned out to be a rather great series of assignments, and while it may have delayed my homecoming, it was all in all a good deal. Thus as of the 15th of September, my MOS changed from Infantry Platoon Leader to Unassigned with the Delta Base Section (DBS) in Marseilles with “hazardous” duty on the French Riviera.

17. On the Riviera (USRRA-DBS) (until 18 Dec 1945)

Much to my surprise I became a Billet Officer (MOS 4950) with the United States Riviera Recreational Area (USRRA), assigned to oversee five medium-sized hotels and restaurants in Nice, France. This was very different duty as I had nominal charge of up to 60 employees (French) and tried to supervise the real management and service personnel to ensure the enlisted troops had good meals and adequate beds on their leave. As the French were well accustomed to service in Nice and often spoke five languages (French, Italian, Spanish, German and English) there was little to really do. My typical day was to walk to headquarters and check my mail at about 10 A.M. and plan what to do in the free afternoon. The evening was usually spent at the Officers Club (Fig. 26) in Cannes and we, as officers, had jeep transportation to Cannes as Nice was strictly an enlisted town except for the few officers who “ran” things.

As I ran several hotels in Nice, I got to pick my room. For some reason I chose the Prior Hotel and a room with a small view of a quiet street. Beside the bed, washbasin and the ever-present bidet, the room had a huge armoire for clothes. This was very dangerous as the heavy door, if opened wide, caused the whole thing to tip over, potentially squashing the occupant. This was not a three-star Michelin hotel but the concierge was pleasant and I learned to play chess and to improve my French until I could understand (or at least get the gist of) general street conversations. At any rate it was a step beyond two years of high school French. While the hotel was not first class, it was much better than the accommodations that the men were used to having in the field.

One of the major concerns of the brass was loss of blankets. I had to prepare a monthly report on the methods used to control these losses. My first report was factual

and set out in a logical engineering report fashion with the items tabulated. The real reason for loss of blankets was “barter for favors” and anyone could see the blankets walking down the street the next day after being fashioned into amazingly good-looking skirts. Thus the problem was obvious. The officers in charge did not believe that this could be an official reason as it reflected on the troops, thus I had to re-write the “reasons” in some obscure way that had nothing to do with the truth. I did worry about this series of official “lies” and to this day I have my release papers showing all items under my care as officially accounted for. I must say that those in charge were not in my opinion officers who I would wish to follow in battle and I suspect, without proof, that they were often real “dogs” who were in no way “gentlemen”. I did survive this but with low efficiency ratings, which I supposed, were warranted as I complied only reluctantly with the so-called “rules”.

One of the officers, Ed Olson, a paratrooper, became a great friend and we spent quite a bit of time exploring the area of Nice and the Alps-Maritime (Fig. 27a, b). We had interest in hiking and outdoor recreation more than in drinking. One most interesting place was a hike to the Observatory of the University of Paris. This was located about 5 km north of Nice toward Menton. This gave a great view of Nice and toward the French Alps. One trip here on 21 November 1945 resulted in some photos. This observatory is special as the oil supported dome was designed by Gustave Eiffel.

This was a good place for dating with nice girls and we, as officers, were allowed to take out some who were generally kept under rather close leash by parents. It was often a strange situation as when they had parties for daughters these were held in “off-limits” hotels. They would kick the “clientele” out for an evening and hold a supervised

party with food and dancing in the same hotel for invited persons both French and American military officers. The next day, the hotel would go back to being “off limits”—at least theoretically. Many of the prostitutes strolled the streets in the daytime and had coffee with us as “real” people. They often were country girls who worked to obtain money for a dowry to get properly married in their small town. In the evening, those same girls would not “recognize” us as they knew we were assigned to Nice (they concentrated on the guests—e.g. visiting US enlisted men).

Typically we took dates to Les Palmiers where we had dancing and drinks. Some of the dates can still be recalled; Madeleine was quite special as she had two boxers that went most places with her (one understood English and the other, French). I was never certain which was which and I’m not convinced they liked me. Annie was part Italian and certainly enjoyed movies from the back row. She was one of those whose parents ran some “houses” and we had parties in “off limits” areas where there was rather strict supervision. Marie Antoinette was a classy girl from Grasse and she played piano well. Denise was perhaps my favorite (Fig. 28), a rather petite girl but she wore her hair in a beehive and thus seemed relatively tall. I think my mother was worried about Denise but she really had no reason to be, although, I did briefly correspond with her after my discharge. She was soon overshadowed by American girls who weren’t married and by classmates on my return to University of Maine under the GI bill.

The drinks were a problem for me as a non-drinker so I usually ordered Benedictine that could be sipped and last all evening. Occasionally, funny things happened and I do recall the expressions of surprise (Oh-la-la) that the girls gave as they sat down on the cold outside metal furniture. They never sat on dresses as that would

wrinkle them and thus they were flipped up and out of the way leaving a lightly protected derriere in contact with metal.

We ate very well in Nice—better than the visiting enlisted men—as we had the possibility of steaks left over from the mess and the French cooks loved to do their thing with these extras. We also had a few grand official occasions such as a Thanksgiving Gala in Cannes (Fig. 29), which I missed as I was on duty, and Christmas Dinner at the Prisunic Restaurant (Fig. 30).

There was one other memorable occasion when I learned of my promotion to 1st Lieutenant. I was, I believe, the ranking 2nd lieutenant in the whole European Theater of Operations (ETO). On 27 November I was presented with a letter (Fig. 23) that sold me a bottle of Courvossier Cognac. They of course knew I didn't drink –there was no special friendly price and the “French stuff” was shared however, as I recall I at least tasted it. The official Army notification was dated 17 November but I believe the announcement by the union of French gangsters was more appreciated.

The Christmas dinner previously alluded to came before the 25th and actually was available for a week or so before, to accommodate the troops on leave, as I officially left the cushy job as billet officer in Nice on 18 December to be assigned to Battery C of the 896th AAA AN Battalion—finally back in AAA but in name only.

18. AMFOGE at Naples, Italy (11 Jan to 16 Feb)

I had a last glimpse of Nice riding down the promenade des Anglais from the back of a 6 x 6 on my way to Marseilles. Marseilles was no Nice and nothing of importance happened while I was there, as the AAA unit had no real duties. For some reason, I was chosen to become a part of the Allied Mission For Observing Greek Elections (AMFOGE) and reported on 11 Jan 1946. This really was a special outfit of about 100 officers and 100 enlisted men acting as drivers. The officers were about equally divided between Britain, France, Russia and the United States. On 11 January the American contingent was shipped to Italy. We were billeted outside Naples in the section of town called Bagnoli (Fig. 32).

This was a strange assignment as the “training” consisted mostly of stripping weapons and nothing on politics. The officers were from all branches of the service but I as an Infantry officer was very familiar with weapons and several of us were thus excused from much of the training and given day or weekend leave. This was great as it allowed travel to Sorrento, the Isle of Capri, Vesuvius, Pompeii, the Amalfi Coast and Salerno. Basically it was a paid vacation if that is possible coming from duty in the Riviera. We spent little time in Naples proper as it was a bit rough and I did not see Sophia Loren who must have been there as a little kid at the time.

One of my favorite photos shows me in Sorrento with the Isle of Capri in the background (Fig 33). I have revisited Sorrento and tried to duplicate the photo with a slightly plumper me but could not locate the spot.

One of the US Army Officers Rest Camps was in the Hotel Vittoria, Sorrento (Fig. 34) in a room with a great view. (Fig. 35) From there we took the boat to Isle of Capri and rode the funicular (Fig. 36) to the upper town. This opened up lots of great walks and views. I also was fortunate to be able to go inside the Blue Grotto as the tides were just right and the color refracted from the outside light really made it blue.

The trip up Vesuvius was interesting as one could drive part way, then have an easy hike to the top. The crater was spectacular and the terrain still warm at the lip. In fact, one could light a cigarette (Fig. 37). The trip back was easy as you could run down hill as on a big sand pile.

Another officer with Infantry credentials and I drove to Salerno. One look and it was obvious that this was not a pleasant invasion. There were still bits of war debris scattered along the shore (Fig. 38). The looming hills with the potential of an excellent view of the landing beaches made me glad to have missed that battle.

On a more pleasant note, was a trip to Pompeii. The view of Vesuvius from the temple of Apollo (Fig. 39) was classic and close to, I believe, pictures in my high school Latin text. The “tour”, as it was for soldiers, stressed the pornographic images and the gruesome casts of poor souls at their last moments in 79 AD. The idea of a completely buried city and citizenry impressed me, even though I had seen cities in complete rubble. This was a demonstration of the power of nature and the inability of man to stem that kind of catastrophe.

One trip another officer and I took was to the Naval facility in Naples. We wandered around and were invited aboard the USS Providence (Fig. 40). I never made such an impressive entrance to any facility as, much to our shock, we were piped aboard

and given a short tour. It was embarrassing as neither of us had any idea how to react to the pomp of the navy. I've told this story many times, always using the USS Indianapolis as the "cruiser". My Navy friends found this impossible as it was sunk in the Pacific by this time. I use this as one of the "lies" that get implanted in a mind, even in no stress situation and perhaps it is a good reason to doubt some of these reminiscences.

The time of "truth" in AMFOGE finally came and I was assigned to sites near the Albanian border where I knew fighting was still sporadic. My interest in this "democratic operation" suddenly waned and I told the powers to be that I was supposed to be home. The 68 points that I had accumulated were quite high by that time and they conceded the point. I suspect I would not have suggested this with a more pleasant assignment such as the Greek Isles. At any rate I was issued orders to return to Marseilles. The only available ship from Naples was going to LeHavre and I was assigned to that. There were five officers on this freighter voyage (four Italian-Americans and myself). The ethnic Italian US Officers were not approved by Greece as fit to monitor elections as there were still a bit of hard feelings toward Italians from recent war experiences. The ship left on 16 February 1946, ending my vacation in Italy. The ride to LeHavre was rather uneventful. Going through the Straits of Gibraltar was interesting and all I accomplished was to learn how to play bridge, as one of the Italian-American Officers refused to play, thus there was an opening for a 4th player. Fortunately for me, this was a non-gambling game and it did pass a bit of time.

19. Back in France: Riviera to LeHavre

I arrived in LeHavre in February 1946 and to my surprise found my unit (Battery C, 896th AAA Bn) there. I told them that I had orders for Marseilles and they agreed so I left some of my excess belongings with them and left for the south of France and Marseilles. Arriving there I reported to the Delta Base Section and asked for the whereabouts of Battery C 896th AAA Bn. They said they had no idea and why didn't I come back in a week or so. This seemed to me to be a potentially good deal, so I kept my mouth shut and got on the train to Nice. I had officer friends in Nice and was assigned to the Hotel Napoleon (Fig. 41).

I thus was in Nice for a week or so, more or less officially but I suppose technically AWOL. I naturally looked up some of my old girl friends and Denise and I continued the dancing and movie bit. I was a bit worried and on the 5th of March returned to Marseilles. There I reported, again to Delta Base and they still did not know where the AAA Battalion was. I suggested they check LeHavre as "I had heard a rumor that they might be in LeHavre." That was OK with them and they cut orders for my travel to LeHavre. I arrived at the Marseilles Railroad Station in the evening with my travel orders signed by DBS officials and by me. The French conductor took a look and said "Ah, Lieut. Col. Cord, come with me", and he went down the aisle of the wagon-lits (a sleeping car) and woke up a Major, who groggily obeyed as he was being bumped by a "higher" rank. I really was innocent in all this and dutifully slept all the way to LeHavre, however did get up rather early as I was not interested in meeting an angry Major who clearly out-ranked me. I suspect the conductor knew exactly what he was doing and that the major had been a pain in the butt. The rank to Lt. Col. Cord was a quick and welcome

promotion for a night. At any rate, I made it to LeHavre and of course to my assigned unit. I was listed to return to the United States on 16 March and assigned to a ship.

20. Slow Boat to the Statue of Liberty and Home (8 Mar – 1 Apr 1945)

This was a really slow boat—actually a pair of partial ships. One had propulsion problems and was slow; the other had no radio contact, so this little convoy slowly steamed across a benign Atlantic. It was very uneventful. This was quite a contrast to the USS Brazil on my trip easterly. The food was questionable and we existed on ketchup sandwiches. I don't remember complaining, as that was better than food I had had and the big thing was we were headed to New York. The arrival in New York Harbor on 27 March 1946 was one of my great days and the Statue of Liberty was truly a lovely lady (Fig. 42). It was all very emotional and joyous. There was also a reception by some harbor boats and much whistle blowing. Actually, you really felt that the people appreciated you and it gave one a warm feeling that made much of the internal hate, fear, and sorrow disappear.

Somehow I got to Fort Devens, Massachusetts and was officially separated (Fig. 43a and b) from the active service and given my “ruptured duck” lapel pin. On 1 April 1946, I arrived home and was met by Dad (prophetic date) who I was really happy to see. I had left much of my collected war souvenirs behind, including “Col. Drain” in a barracks bag at Devens but they were not missed. I guess I was officially in the Army until 15 May, but I had plans to be a civilian and to take a month off from doing anything. On arriving home, I called buddies—all working or still in the army. I called ex-girlfriends—all married or moved away. So, on Friday I went into Portland and applied for a job and on Monday I became a surveyor for the Central Maine Power Company—good healthy civilians work. With that and Mom's cooking, I went from 140

pounds to 185 in three months and even my uniforms with “gas flaps” barely fit. That was the real end of me as citizen soldiers although, I did some reserve training for no pay much to the disgust of the reserve unit leaders. I still kept in true form though, as we had to have AAA gun drills without any guns. To solve this I requisitioned some rubber blow-up guns but the brass was horrified and, Thank God, they never arrived and the “training” proceeded on without training aids to the perfect satisfaction of the Army.

Since that memorable three years, I have been a true citizen. I suspect these memories helped my career, as I believe because of them I tried to listen to the trades and to students thus becoming a better engineer and educator. There must be a better way to accomplish this, but this was mine.



Fig. 1 The author in Hi-Y Jacket from High School (ca 1940)

Identification Card—Enlisted Reserve Corps

This is to Certify, That Josiah Edward Jr. Colcord
 was enlisted as* Private
 Enlisted Reserve Corps of the Army of the United States, on the 16th
 day of May, one thousand nine hundred and forty-two,
 for the period of Duration of War Plus Six (6) Months year. When enlisted he was 19 years of age, and by
 occupation a Student He had Blue eyes, Brown hair,
Medium complexion, and was 5 feet 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches in height.

Given at Headquarters University of Maine, Orono, Me., this
16th day of May, one thousand nine hundred and forty-two

FOR THE COMMANDING GENERAL: F R Fuller
Colonel, Inf., PMS&T. Adjutant General

* Insert grade, and organization or section, e. g., "Corporal, Company A, 301st Infantry," "Sergeant, Quartermaster Corps."

W. D., A. G. O. Form No. 166—August 1, 1932. 3-8330 U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1932

Fig. 2 E.R.C. Identification Card (16 May 1942)



Fig. 3 Civil Engineering Summer Camp, University of Maine (1943)



Fig. 4 ROTC 13th Bn. C. Fort Eustis, VA (1943)



Fig. 5 Admission to the Capital, Williamsburg, VA



Fig. 6 OCS, Class #100, Anti-Aircraft, Camp Davis NC (1944)



Honorable Discharge

This is to certify that

JOSIAH E. COLCORD, JR.

11,079,113, CORPORAL, ANTI-AIRCRAFT ARTILLERY SCHOOL, CAMP DAVIS, NORTH CAROLINA

Army of the United States

*is hereby Honorably Discharged from the military service of the
United States of America.*

*This certificate is awarded as a testimonial of Honest and Faithful
Service to his country.*

Given at ANTI-AIRCRAFT ARTILLERY SCHOOL
CAMP DAVIS, NORTH CAROLINA

Date 24 MAY 1944.

FOR THE COMMANDANT:

James P. Maloney

JAMES P. MALONEY
LT. COL., G. A. C.
PERSONNEL OFFICER

W. D., A. G. O. Form No. 55
January 22, 1943

Fig. 7a Honorable Discharge from Enlisted ranks(24 May 1944)

ENLISTED RECORD OF

Colcord, Josiah E. Jr., 11,079,113, Corporal
 (Last name) (First name) (Middle initial) (Army serial number) (Grade)

Born in Portland, in the State of Maine
 Enlisted ~~March 16~~ May 16, 1942, at Orono, Maine
 When enlisted ~~because~~ he was 19-11/12 years of age and by occupation a Student
 He had Blue eyes, Brown hair, Ruddy complexion, and was 5 feet 8 1/2 inches in height.
 Completed 2 years, 0 months, 9 days service for longevity pay.
 Prior service: None

Noncommissioned officer Corporal, 12-20-43, SO # 81 ASF, Hq Army Tng Sch Univ of Maine
 Military qualifications: M-1 Rifle, Marksman 3-4-44
 Army specialty Soldier
 Attendance at Officer Candidate Course, AAA3-1944 C. P. O. Camp Davis, N. C. MAY 25, 1944
(Name of noncommissioned officers' or special service school) Final Statement Paid

Battles, engagements, skirmishes, expeditions None

Decorations, service medals, citations Good Conduct Medal P. 24.55
 Wounds received in service None W. H. GUTHRIE, JR. Lt. F. D.

Date and result of smallpox vaccination: 7-3-43 Vaccinia
 Date of completion of all typhoid-paratyphoid vaccinations: 7-3-43 Completed
 Date and result of diphtheria immunity test (Schick): No record
 Date of other vaccinations (specify vaccine used): Tetanus 8-13-43
 Physical condition when discharged Good Married or single Single
 Honorably discharged by reason of: CO2, Sec X, AR 615-360 to accept apmt as 2nd Lt. ORG.
 Character Excellent Periods of active duty: June 7, 1943 - May 24, 1944
 Remarks: No time lost under AW 107.
Soldier not entitled to travel pay.
Trfd to ERC May 16, 1942. Reported for active duty June 7, 1943.



Signature of soldier Josiah E. Colcord, Jr.

Wm. H. Guthrie
 WM. H. GUTHRIE
 WOJG, U S A.,
 Commanding ASST. PERS. OFFICER

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ENLISTED RECORD

- 1 Enter date of induction only in case of trainee inducted under Selective Training and Service Act of 1940 (Bull. 25, W. D., 1940); in all other cases enter date of enlistment. Eliminate word not applicable.
- 2 For each enlistment give company, regiment, or arm or service with inclusive dates of service, grade, cause of discharge, number of days lost under AW 107 (if none, so state), and number of days retained and cause of retention in service for convenience of the Government, if any.
- 3 Enter qualifications in army, seamanship, etc. Show the qualification, date thereof and number, date, and source of order announcing same.
- 4 See paragraph 12, AR 60-210.
- 5 If discharged prior to expiration of service, give number, date, and source of order or full description of authority therefor.
- 6 Enter periods of active duty of enlisted men of the Regular Army Reserve and the Enlisted Reserve Corps and dates of induction into Federal Service in the case of members of the National Guard.
- 7 In all cases of men who are entitled to receive Certificates of Service under AR 305-600, enter here appropriate DE, GRADE, ARM, and all other items of special proficiency or merit in the chart shown above.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CERTIFICATE OF DISCHARGE

Insert name, as "John J. Doe," in center of form.
 Insert Army serial number, grade, company, regiment, or arm or service, as "104222, Corporal, Company X, 1st Infantry, 28th Infantry Division."
 The name and grade of the officer signing the certificate will be typewritten or printed on the form and need not be typed.

Fig. 7b Reverse Side



Fig. 8 The Infantry School, OSB, Fort Benning GA (1944)

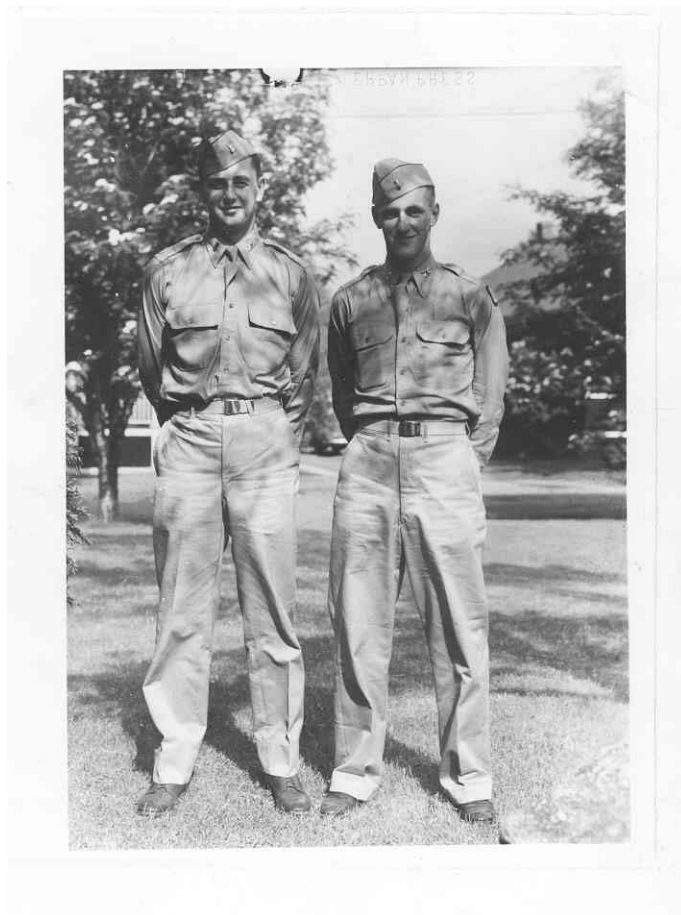


Fig. 9 On leave in South Portland, ME (Bob Cushman on left)

as of start of training in Porthcawl, Wales	2nd PLATOON COMPANY "C"	
	Colcord	2nd Lt.
	Aldaco	Plat. Sgt.
	Taylor	Guide
	Foutz	Messenger
	Anschau	Messenger
	Bentley	Medic
1. Drenning	Lamarre	Loy
2. Moran	Johnson	Mundt
3. Cadle	Jordan	Lewis
4. Breuggemann	Lytle	Hite
5. Jones	Miller	Lemansk
6. Taylor	Pope	Duhon
7. Goldych	Long	Tust
8. Morley	Lutovsky	Gillie
9. Keye	McHenry	Passenando
10. Dean	Baxter	Janes
11. Pietryznski	Conterno	Smith
12. Levy	Jagodzinski	Spremulli

Fig. 10 Roster 2nd Platoon, Company C, 290th Infantry at start of training in Porthcawl, Wales

Non-battle (NBC)	16
Wounded in action (LWA/SWA)	16
Killed in action (KIA)	2
Missing in action (MIA)	1
Unknown	7

Fig. 11 Casualty Summary for the original 42 men in the Platoon

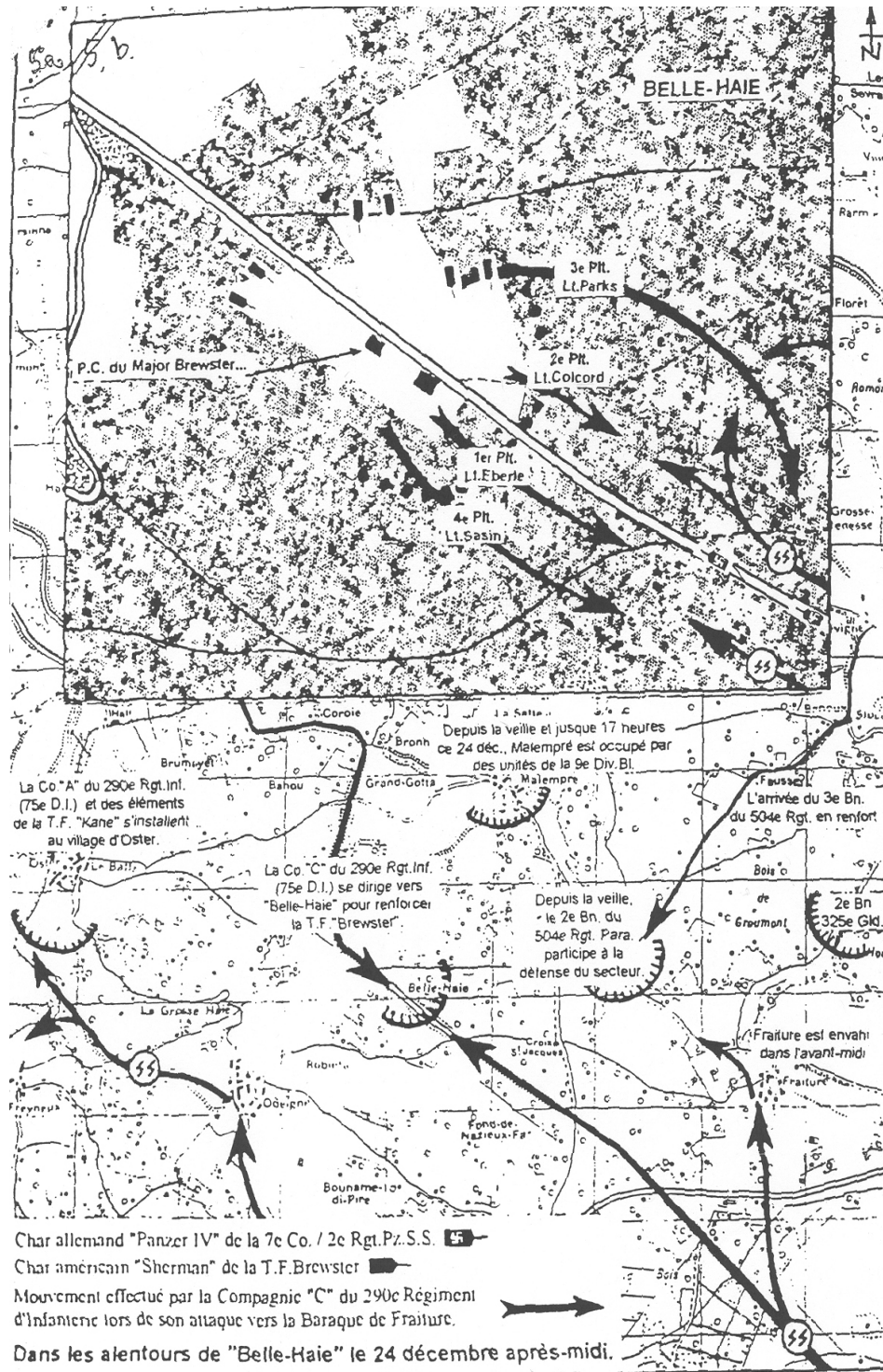


Fig. 12 Maps "Dans les alentours de 'Belle-Haie' le 24 Decembre apres-midi" (after Monfort)

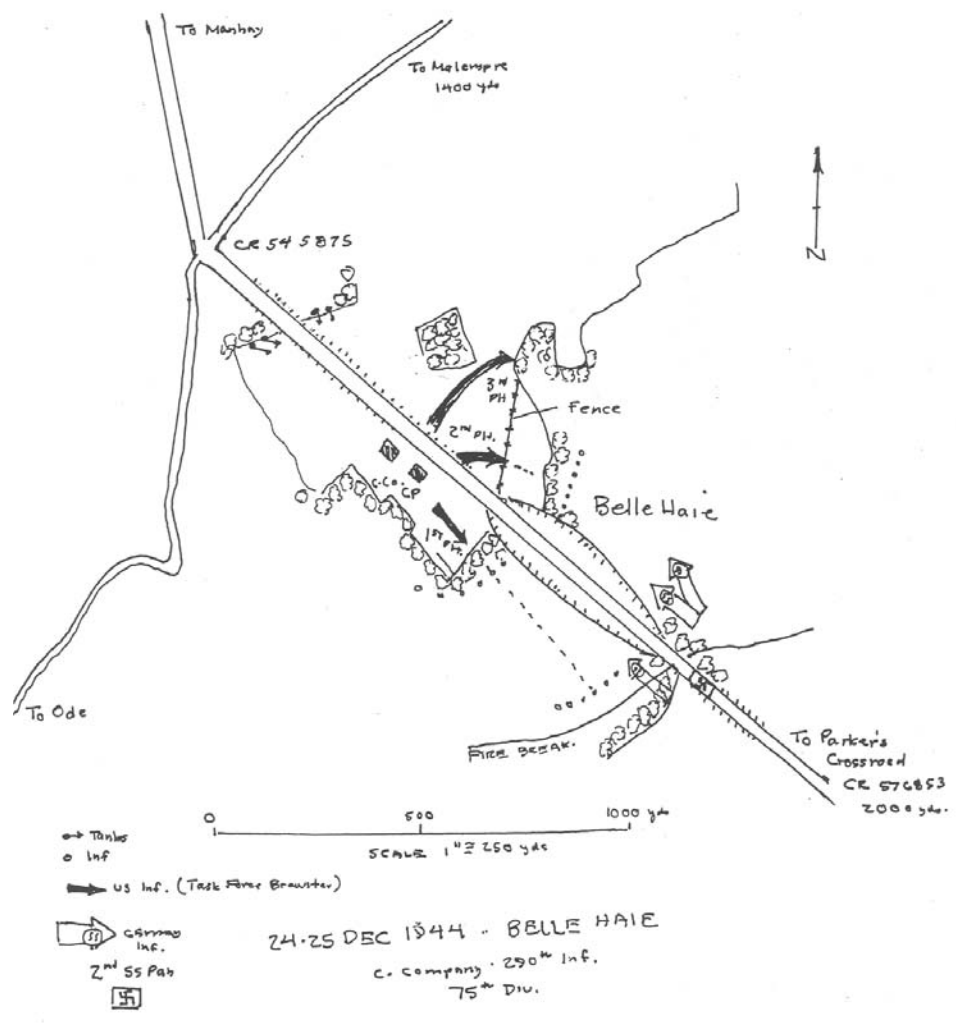


Fig. 13 Map Bell Haie Fighting (after Sasin/ Colcord)

HEADQUARTERS 75TH INFANTRY DIVISION
APO 451, c/o Postmaster
New York, N. Y.

GENERAL ORDERS)
NUMBER.....67)

22 March 1945

E X T R A C T

Section

AWARD OF SILVER STAR.....II

SECTION II. AWARD OF SILVER STAR.

Under the provisions of AR 600-45, 22 September 1943, as amended, the Silver Star is awarded to the following:

Second Lieutenant JOSIAH E. COLCORD, JR., O 548 228, Company C, 290th Infantry, for gallantry in action in connection with military operations against the enemy on 18 January 1945, in Belgium. Company C was moving along the road to Petit Their preparatory to launching the attack upon the town. The lead Platoon, commanded by Lieutenant COLCORD received instructions to contact another company on their flank. The scouts went ahead until they were suddenly attacked by machine gun fire and other guns soon joined in and the platoon and the rest of the company was pinned down. Both scouts were wounded, one seriously and it was then that Lieutenant COLCORD ordered his Platoon Sergeant to withdraw the platoon and then started to crawl toward his wounded scouts. He reached one scout and then exposed himself and opened fire on the enemy, eliminating two gun crews and in so doing allowed the other scout to crawl to cover. Then, under his company's covering fire, Lieutenant COLCORD brought the two wounded men back through 250 yards of hip deep snow. Entered military service from South Portland, Maine.

By command of Major General PORTER:

EARL M. MINER
Colonel, General Staff Corps
Chief of Staff

OFFICIAL:

s/Robert T. Engle
t/ROBERT T. ENGLE
Lieutenant Colonel, A.G.D.
Adjutant General

Fig. 14 Silver Star Award Citation



Fig. 15 Similar to trail broken by C Company over frozen mines

[Signal Corp. Photo #43-8]



Fig. 16 Part of 3rd Platoon in 40 and 8 on the way to the Colmar Pocket



Fig. 17 Safe Conduct Pass—picked up in Germany from an airdrop

HEADQUARTERS 290TH INFANTRY
APO #451, U.S. Army

JOSIAH (First)	L. (Middle)	COLCORD (Name)	0518228 (ASN)	2d Lt (Rank, xxxx)
-------------------	----------------	-------------------	------------------	-----------------------------------

A member of Company "C", is authorized a 72-hour leave, ~~xxxx~~
effective 1600 hours, 7 April 1945 in Paris, France
(Date)

He will report to the American Express (Central Booking) Office
Express Bldg, Rue Scribe, Paris, before the date 1900 hours
(Date)

1700 Hours (Arrived ARD Camp) date 1900 hours (Departure)

Carl F. Duffenau
(Signature Commanding Officer)

PARIS, FRANCE
OFFICE OF THE
CENTRAL SECTION
BUREAU
(Army Headquarters)

Fig. 18 Paris Leave Document

as of start of occupation duty in Iserlohn, Ger.	COMPANY "C"	
	Colcord	2nd Lt.
	Avery	Platoon Sgt.
	New	Guide
	Dorado	Messenger
	Roth	Messenger
	Turay	Medic
1. Conterno	Nelson	Baker
2. Standley	Gaudio	Mayberry
3. O'Reilly	Berry	Learman
4. Kiser	Rumble	Joe
5. Edwards	Eades	Teasley
6. Hahl	Kiefner	Purse
7. Rodriguez	Ogea	Reed
8. Pedorka	Moyer	Montana
9. Jones	Neidich	Gibson
10. Harris	Wieand	Adamaik
11. D'Andrea	Lampe	Davidson
12. Provenchir	Nichols	Finke

Fig. 19 3rd Platoon Company C Roster (May 1945)



Fig. 20 C Company Officers



Fig. 21 3rd Platoon off to Inspection



Fig. 22 2nd Squad , at Shell Hole



Fig. 23 Headline , “The Stars and Stripes”, May 8 1945



Fig. 24a Photos near Iserlohn



Fig. 24b Amphibious German "jeep"



Fig. 25 UK Pass for leave to Scotland (July 1945)

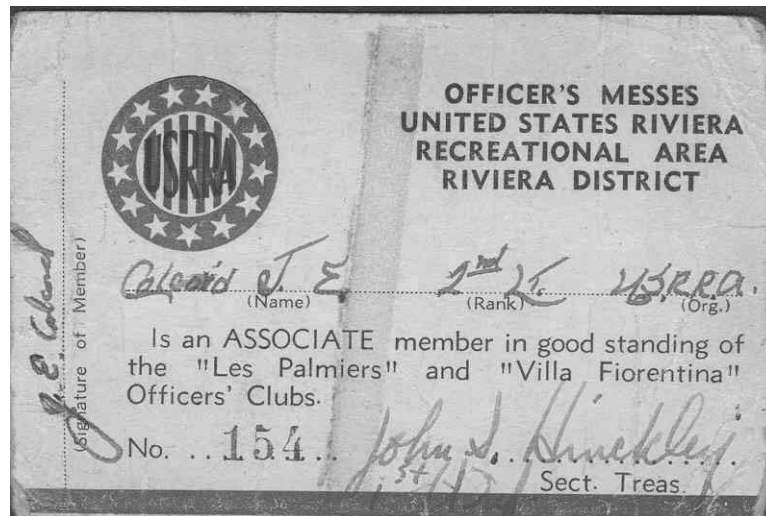


Fig. 26 Membership Card for "Les Palmiers Officers "Club", Cannes, France



Fig. 27a Observatory in Nice, France

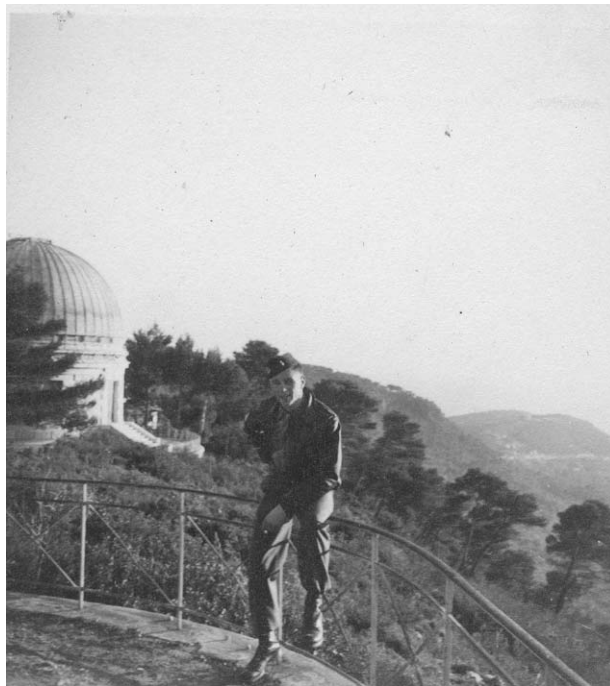


Fig. 27b Overlooking the Alpes-Maritime region



Fig. 28 Denise in Nice, France

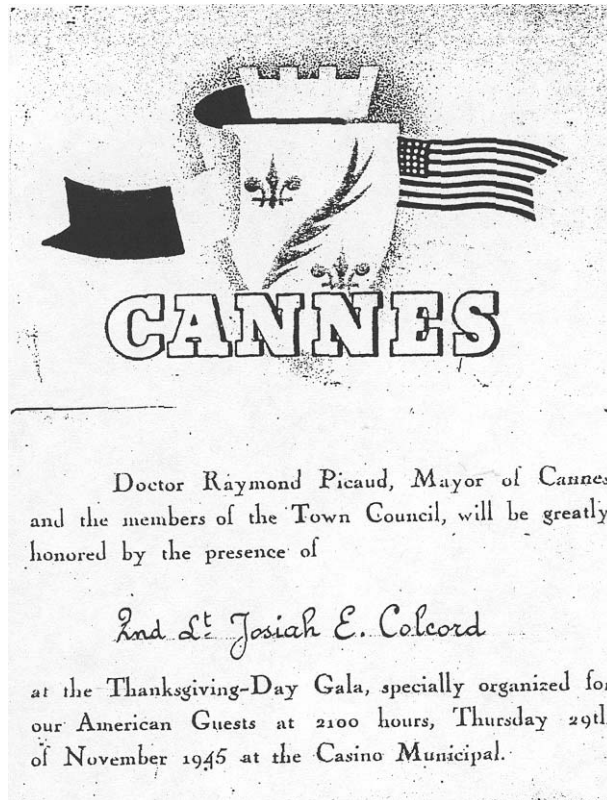


Fig. 29 Thanksgiving Day Gala Invitation

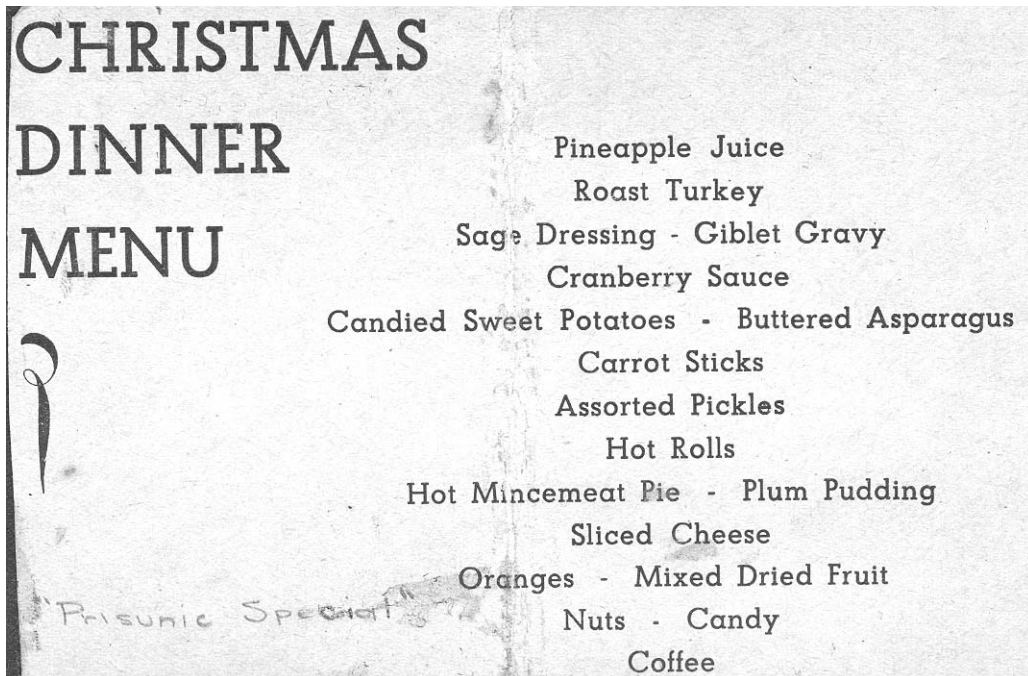


Fig. 30 Christmas Dinner menu, Prisunic Restaurant, Nice

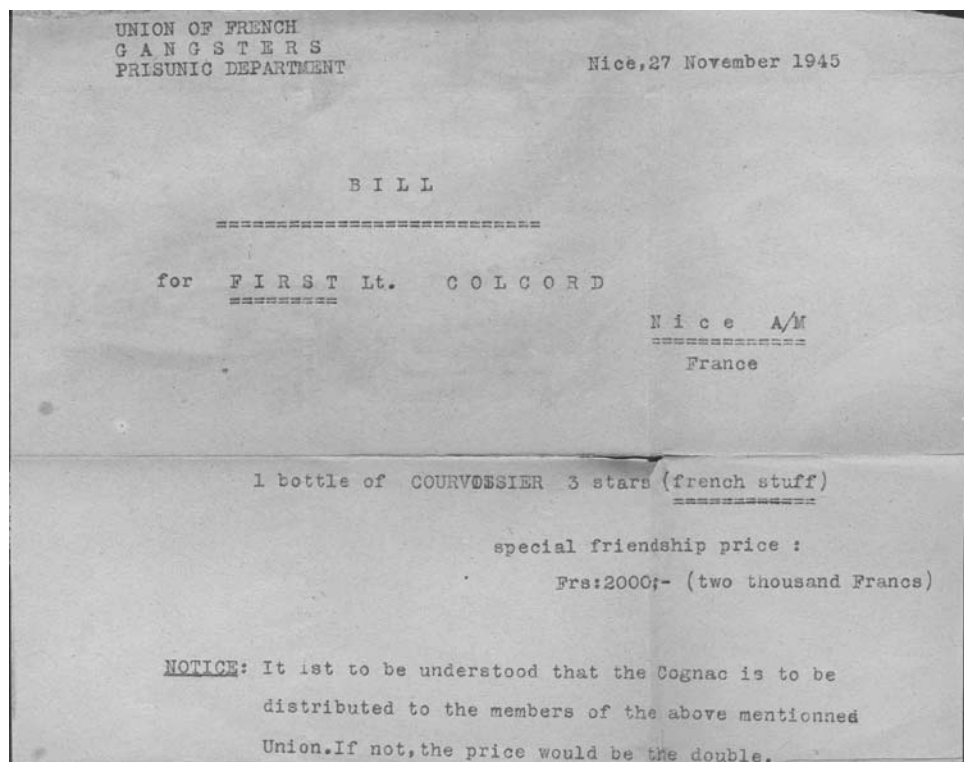


Fig. 31 Unofficial Notification of Promotion to 1st Lieutenant



Fig. 32 Downtown Bagnoli (near Naples) , Italy



Fig. 33 Sorrento with Isle of Capri in the background

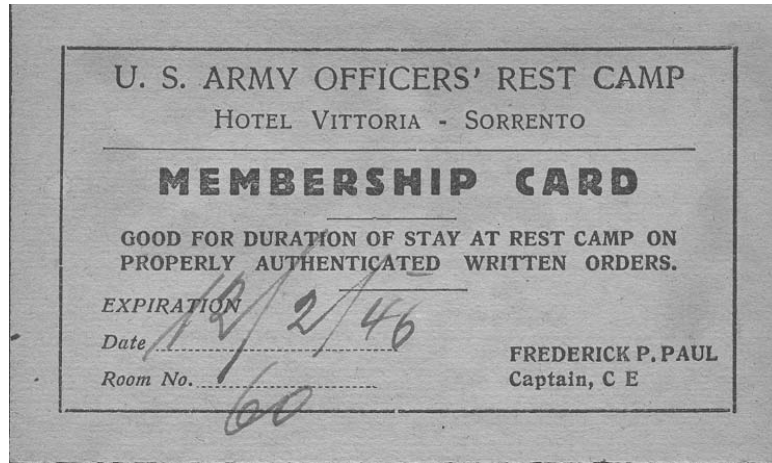


Fig. 34 Hotel Vittoria Membership Card



Fig. 35 Photo from room at Hotel Vittoria, Sorrento



Fig. 36 Funnicular Ticket, Isle of Capri



Fig. 37 Lighting cigarette at rim of Vesuvius crater



Fig. 38 Relics of War, Salerno, Italy



Fig. 39 Temple of Apollo, Pompeii—Vesuvius in Background



Fig. 40 USS Providence in Naples Harbor

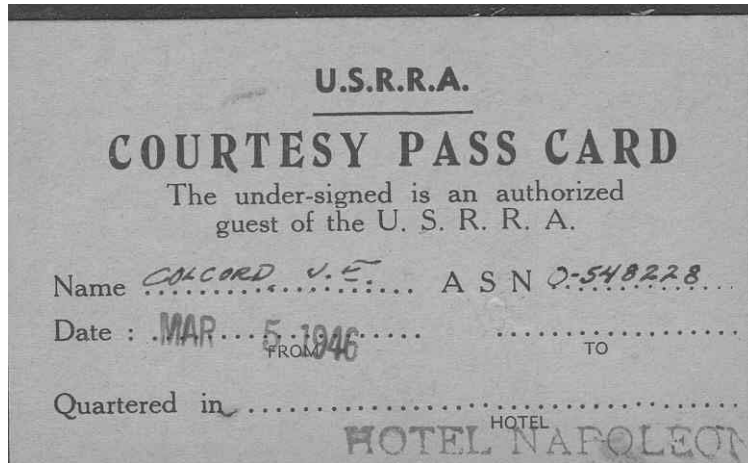


Fig. 41 Courtesy Pass to Riveria while de-facto AWOL



Fig. 42 The Statue of Liberty on 27 March 1946



Army of the United States
CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

This is to certify that

JOSIAH E COLCORD JR O 548 228 FIRST LIEUTENANT

COMPANY C 290TH INFANTRY REGIMENT 75TH DIVISION

honorably served in active Federal Service

in the Army of the United States from

25 MAY 1944 to 15 MAY 1946

Given at SEPARATION CENTER FORT DEVENS MASS

on the 15TH *day of* MAY 1946



George D Webb
GEORGE D WEBB
MAJOR INFANTRY

Fig. 43a Certificate of Service as an Officer (25 May 1944-25 May 1946)

**MILITARY RECORD AND REPORT OF SEPARATION
CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL COLCORD JOSIAH E JR		2. ARMY SERIAL NUMBER 0 548 228	3. AUS. GRADE 1ST LT CAC (INF)	4. ARM OR SERVICE ORC	5. COMPONENT
6. ORGANIZATION COMPANY C 290TH INFANTRY REGIMENT 75TH DIVISION		7. DATE OF RELIEF FROM ACTIVE DUTY 15 MAY 46	8. PLACE OF SEPARATION SEPARATION CENTER FORT DEVENS MASS		
9. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES 70 VINCENT ST SOUTH PORTLAND MAINE		10. DATE OF BIRTH 15 JUNE 22	11. PLACE OF BIRTH PORTLAND MAINE		
12. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE SOUGHT SEE #9		13. COLOR EYES BLUE	14. COLOR HAIR BROWN	15. HEIGHT 5'8 1/2"	16. WEIGHT 165 LBS.
18. RACE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WHITE <input type="checkbox"/> NEGRO <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (specify)		19. MARITAL STATUS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SINGLE <input type="checkbox"/> MARRIED <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (specify)		20. U.S. CITIZEN <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
21. CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND NO. STUDENT					


MILITARY HISTORY

22. REGISTERED YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	23. LOCAL S. S. BOARD NUMBER	24. COUNTY AND STATE	25. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY ON ACTIVE DUTY SEE #9		
26. DATE OF ENTRY ON ACTIVE DUTY 25 MAY 44		27. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY AND NO. INFANTRY UNIT COMMANDER 1542			
28. BATTLES AND CAMPAIGNS ARDENNES RHINELAND CENTRAL EUROPE GO 105 WD 45					
29. DECORATIONS AND CITATIONS EUROPEAN AFRICAN MIDDLE EASTERN SERVICE MEDAL AMERICAN WORLD WAR II VICTORY MEDAL SILVER STAR MEDAL GO 67 75 DIV MAR 45 BRITISH MILITARY CROSS 12TH ARMY GP JULY 45 PURPLE HEART *					
30. WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION 24 DEC 44 ARDENNES					
31. SERVICE SCHOOLS ATTENDED FT BENNING OS SP BASIC AUG 44			32. SERVICE OUTSIDE CONTINENTAL U. S. AND RETURN		
			DATE OF DEPARTURE 22 OCT 44	DESTINATION EUROPEAN TH	DATE OF ARRIVAL 3 NOV 44
33. REASON AND AUTHORITY FOR SEPARATION DEMOBILIZATION RR 1-1			16 MAR 46	US	27 MAR 46
34. CURRENT TOUR OF ACTIVE DUTY					
CONTINENTAL SERVICE			FOREIGN SERVICE		
YEARS	MONTHS	DAYS	YEARS	MONTHS	DAYS
0	6	15	1	5	6
35. EDUCATION (years)					
GRAMMAR SCHOOL		HIGH SCHOOL		COLLEGE	
8		4		3	

INSURANCE NOTICE

IMPORTANT IF PREMIUM IS NOT PAID WHEN DUE OR WITHIN THIRTY-ONE DAYS THEREAFTER, INSURANCE WILL Lapse. MAKE CHECKS OR MONEY ORDERS PAYABLE TO THE TREASURER OF THE U. S. AND FORWARD TO COLLECTIONS SUBDIVISION, VETERANS ADMINISTRATION, WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

36. KIND OF INSURANCE U.S. Govt. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/>	37. HOW PAID Allotment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Direct to V. A. <input type="checkbox"/>	38. Effective Date of Allotment Discontinuance 31 MAY 46	39. Date of Next Premium Due (one month after 38) 30 JUN 46	40. PREMIUM DUE EACH MONTH 6.50	41. INTENTION OF VETERAN TO Continue <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Continue Only <input type="checkbox"/> Inconclusive <input type="checkbox"/>
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42.  RIGHT THUMB PRINT	43. REMARKS (This space for completion of above items or entry of other items specified in W. D. Directives) * GO 73 75 DIV MAR 45 LAPEL BUTTON ISSUED COMBAT INFANTRYMAN ASR SCORE (2 SEPT 45) 68
	44. SIGNATURE OF OFFICER BEING SEPARATED <i>Josiah E. Colcord, Jr.</i>
45. PERSONNEL OFFICER (Type name, grade and organization - signature) B A HUGHES 2D LT WAC <i>B. A. Hughes</i>	

WD AGO FORM 53 - 98
1 November 1944

This form supersedes all previous editions of WD AGO Forms 53 and 280 for officers entitled to a Certificate of Service, which will not be used after receipt of this revision.

Fig. 43b Reverse Side



University of Washington Photo

About the Author:

Joe Colcord is a Professor Emeritus in Civil Engineering at the University of Washington. He and his wife Hazel have lived in Seattle for over 50 Years.