

WAYNE KUNKEL'S MILITARY HISTORY

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PRE MILITARY HISTORY

Prior to being drafted into the Army I was living at 8029 Kilbourne Ave. in Skokie, IL in a upper apartment of a two flat with my Dad, my brother Bill and our housekeeper Mabel. I graduated from Niles Township High School in June of 1942. Normally I would have been drafted into the Army at this point; however I applied for and received a student postponement because I had received a one year scholarship at the Illinois Institute of Technology on the south side of Chicago. I was enrolled in a four year chemical engineering course. At the completion of the first year I enrolled in a Quantitive chemistry course for the summer so they would not draft me before the second year started.

My Dad started having second thoughts about my continuing in college since my financial assistance had ended. Actually my grades were excellent and as long as my grades held up that would have been good enough to qualify for continued deferment. My experience in the chemistry course was giving me second thoughts about continuing at Illinois Tech. The location on the south side was terrible and the facilities and equipment were so bad I didn't want to continue. We had spent three weeks calibrating the weights we used in the chemistry course which was a total waste of time. As a result I agreed with my dad not to continue in school and my draft deferment was cancelled.

INDUCTION PROCESS

It didn't take very long for the draft board to reclassify me 1-A once I stopped going to school. The chemistry course was done the end of July and I was inducted into the Army on Saturday, August 21st. The induction center was in the Chicago Loop in a building on Wabash Ave. It started with a big meeting where they explained what was going to happen and we filled out a whole lot of papers about your personal history and qualifications. Then there was a comprehensive physical exam where you were processed through a series of stations where you were examined to see if you were fit for military service. When it was finished I was classified as limited service on two counts; my eyesight without glasses was worse than 20/200 even though with my glasses it was 20/20. Secondly, my weight of 142 lbs. and my height of 5' 11" made me a tall thin bean pole. In spite of these limitations they accepted me into the Army. Apparently they did not consider me as infantry material because I ended up assigned to a headquarters company in the Anti Tank platoon in the 63rd Infantry Division. The day of my induction into the Army I had the option of joining the Navy Seabees instead of the Army, but I chose the Army. After the physical we were sworn into the service and advised how and when we would report for duty.

CAMP VAN DORN BASIC TRAINING 63rd INFANTRY DIVISION

I reported for duty on Saturday, September 11th at the Great Lakes Naval Station where we were sent by train to Camp Grant in Rockford, Illinois. I think this is where we were outfitted prior to being sent to our basic training camp. The Quartermaster outfitted us with uniforms combat shoes, duffel bag and various items of clothing. I also think this is where we completed IQ and aptitude test which became part of our permanent record.

We were then moved by train to southern Mississippi near Centerville to Camp Van Dorn to join the 63rd Infantry Division for basic training.

The division's arm patch was a red oval with a yellow flame which represented the division's motto "Blood and Fire". We began training right after we arrived and had a daily routine of calisthenics, marching, close order drill and attending various lectures about being a soldier. In our spare time they had us walking around picking up cigarette butts. We quickly learned some of the army slang such as SNAFU (situation normal all fouled up) or FUBAR (Fouled up beyond all recognition).

My army serial number was 36686408 and this number is so deeply embedded in my brain I will never forget it. My rifle number was also to be remembered but that one I managed to forget. My initial assignment was in the 255th Infantry Regiment, Headquarters Company, Third Battalion, Third platoon which was the antitank platoon for the battalion. Initial training was the same for everyone including KP or latrine duty.

My most difficult exercise was push-ups and chin ups as my upper arm strength was my weakest link. As the weeks passed by we gradually became fit as we had calisthenics every day except Sunday. The day and night marches increased in speed, duration, loads and faster pace until we could handle 10 miles or longer with a full combat back pack. Two mile double time marches with full field equipment were a common occurrence and almost daily we would run an obstacle course. I remember crawling under barb wire with machine gun fire right above our heads. We also practiced with live hand grenades and that was particularly dangerous since occasionally a recruit would drop one behind the barrier as he was attempting to throw it. The instructor was able to move fast enough to get it on the other side of the barrier before it exploded. He had a tough job; there was only three or four seconds to react. Hand to hand bayonet fighting, physical fitness drills interspersed with judo style combat were also a part of our overall training.

Each day we attended lectures on a great variety of subjects. Army manuals were the basis of this instruction covering a great variety of subjects including map reading, first aid, personal hygiene, M1 rifle operation and so on. The next step was firing the different weapons handled by the infantry. This covered the M1 rifle, Carbine, BAR rifle, portable machine gun and the 45 caliber hand gun. Our next step was a concentrated training on the M-1. We learned how to disassemble clean and assemble our rifle until we could do it blindfolded.

Target shooting was the next order of business. Whenever we missed the target completely the soldier in the pit would wave a red flag which was known as Maggie's drawers. After much training we were ready for our weapon qualification test. The distance and position used and number of shots varied with the weapon being fired. My memory is a little fuzzy but I believe the M1 test involved 20 shots at 300 yards in 20 minutes in the prone position. Then 15 shots in the sitting position at 200 yards in 5 minutes, and finally 10 shots in a standing position at 100 yards within one minute. I qualified expert with a score of 302. When I fired the carbine I qualified as marksman. I had never fired a rifle before so the training really worked.

An interesting sidelight to my Army career was that I never drank coffee. It was made big wash tubs and flooded with milk or cream and it tasted so bad I couldn't drink it. When I was in the USA milk was available especially in the morning so I could table hop and drink my fill. When cocoa was served I was in my glory! Overseas it was a different story, water was my only alternative.

I really missed a hot drink after a late night hike. I finally started drinking coffee when I was about 35. I was going to so many seminars where they only served coffee that I became desperate. My wife, Evie, was coffee fiend and she suggested I would like it if I drank it black. After a while I actually began to like it.

The weather in Mississippi in the winter is terrible. It was a damp cold and it seemed like you could never warm up and it rained a lot so we never felt dry and comfortable. Most of us were from the north and liked cold rather than damp climate. This coupled with our low morale because we felt we were in an outfit with poor leadership. It was typical GI griping. I remember one entertainment event for the troops when Dinah Shore came to the camp to sing. The brass was all around her so the enlisted troops never could get close. Attending these shows was not voluntary so that provided another thing for us to gripe about. I was usually in the middle of things and quick to voice my opinion so I was never very popular with the noncoms. I always wanted to understand something they were explaining so I was always asking questions. This did not make me the most popular recruit.

I can only remember receiving one pass while at Camp Van Dorn during the four or five months we were in Mississippi. It was a visit to the Capital of Mississippi, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. This is where Huey Long was assassinated. There was a statue of him on the capital grounds in front of the capital building. Sitting in front the monument was an old southern gentleman who would recite an ode to Huey Long that never seemed to end. Don't ask me why I remembered this. It just stuck in my brain. I don't even remember visiting Centerville, the closest town to the base.

I was smoking at least a pack a day at this time. Whenever we finished a cigarette we would strip the butt which consisted of removing the paper and rolling the paper into a small ball and shredding the tobacco so it would not be visible on the ground. You seldom saw a butt lying on the ground. I remember always having a yellow stain on my fingers from the nicotine and smoking too much.

I was assigned to an Anti-Tank Platoon, part of our training involved learning about using the weapon we were responsible for firing. I don't remember too much about this training for some reason.

Sometime in January 1944 we were advised that the 83rd division was accepting volunteers to bring the unit up to full strength. Our division was classified as POR (preparation for overseas replacement). The 83rd Division was classified POM (preparation for overseas movement) which meant it was in the final stage of preparation before being sent overseas. A lot of us were fed up with 63rd Division and wanted to get into outfit that scheduled to go to Europe. They were looking principally looking for riflemen MOS 745. This presented a problem to me since I was an anti-tank gunner and they wanted volunteers whose eyesight was 20/50 uncorrected, 20/20 corrected. I passed the eye exam by memorizing lines in between the lines 20/50 and 20/200. We packed up and were shipped out almost immediately by train to Camp Breckenridge in Kentucky. I believe this was around February 7th of 1944.

CAMP BRECKENRIDGE

We had completed our basic training in southern Mississippi. Once we arrived at Camp Breckenridge I was assigned as a rifleman (MOS 745) in the 331st Infantry Regiment, 3rd Battalion, Company L, 3rd platoon, 3rd squad. We began advanced training which included advancing under live rolling artillery fire. We continued our physical training with extended marches with full field packs at ever increasing distances and speed. Our weapon training continued live round firing at targets at varying distances and positions. It was a time to sharpen all our skills we would need in combat. Night maneuvers strengthen our squad's ability to operate as a team. We also tested our gas masks using tear gas to make sure they were put on properly and did not leak.

I had one chance for a higher level assignment. My resume included the fact that I had completed one year in college as a chemical engineer. I was called to Division headquarters to interview for a position in the chemical warfare unit. If I was accepted it would have meant a sergeant rank but the job included some report typing which I was not qualified to do so I was not accepted.

During the time I was at Breckenridge I did not receive a pass so I never got off the base. We were too busy getting ready to go overseas. In mid-March we received orders that we were going to Europe. Just a short while before this the rumor mill had us going to the Pacific. At this time I believe I received a short pass to go home before being sent overseas. Upon our return the Division was classified as POE (port of embarkation) and the division was transferred by train to Camp Shanks prior to going overseas to Europe. This settled the question of where we were going and based on scuttlebutt we felt we were going to be in the D-Day invasion in France. I did not really consider the impact of being a part of the D-Day invasion. You just took it one day at a time and didn't worry about the future.

TRANSFER TO ENGLAND

One of the preparations was a special inspection that was quite unique. We were ordered to completely undress and fall in outside in the rain in our raincoats and carrying a large spoon. Soon an officer came by and ordered you to open your raincoat and hand him the spoon so he could examine your privates for any sign of venereal disease. I think the officer was as embarrassed as we were.

We then packed up all our gear including our duffle bag and were loaded on the George Washington which was just under a 1000 ft in length. The only longer ship was the Queen Mary. We left USA on the 6th of April, 1944. This ship could carry 15,000 troops so it carried almost our entire division. This same ship was the largest ship used in World War I for bringing American troops to Europe.

We were placed in a hold with tiers of bunks 5 high. I think my bunk was at the fourth level. Shortly after we left port I became ill with the flu so I spent the first few days on board in the ship's hospital. Our ship was part of a large convoy which slowly zigzagged while being escorted by Destroyers. Due to its size, our ship was probability the prime target for the German U-Boats. It took us almost three weeks to dock at Liverpool. While on the way we ran into a winter storm on the Atlantic. The waves were immense, over 100ft high. When we were in a trough the waves towered over the boat. The poor Destroyers really had a rough time.

I don't remember getting seasick but there were a lot of soldiers that did get seasick. Because of the size of the convoy it was one of the slowest convoys of the spring and I think we were lucky to get through without incident. Every once in a while we would hear the sirens on the Destroyers blasting as they raced around protecting us from the U-Boats. Apparently we were very lucky or the convoy had great protection and I don't remember any of the ships in the convoy being hit by a torpedo.

TRAINING IN ENGLAND

We arrived in Liverpool around the 19th of April. We debarked with all our gear and loaded on trucks for our first encampment near Adderly Hall. After a few days we moved near Tarporley, England south of Liverpool. I remember visiting Chester on a week end pass where I had my first exposure to the women of England. It seemed like they were all smokers but they never held the cigarette in their hand. They let the cigarette dangle from their mouth. We met a lot of gals who were part of the Auxiliary Transportation Service (ATS) which we quickly nicknamed "Any Time Soldier." Their accent was very distinctive and they were very friendly.

We continued our training with marches over the adjoining countryside. In the early part of May we were moved to Northern Wales where we were bivouacked in a small valley while we trained in live fire exercises against a small mountain. On the mountain were sheep roaming on the ledges which provided a moving target for the soldiers. Our goal was to scare them but I know some were hit.

The Welsh names are very odd since words were grouped without spaces so the names were very long and descriptive. If I remember correctly the longest word in the Welsh language was approximately 60 letters. We were located next to a small creek which was pleasant until one night when it rained hard enough for a flash flood to cover the valley floor. Our tents were flooded so we had to relocate to higher ground but not before everything was soaking wet. After we completed the training exercise we returned to Tarporley for more marches. By this time it was the end of May or early June. D-Day was close but we did not know how close and the waiting was difficult knowing what was ahead of us.

My Dad was a glass is half full optimist. When I was drafted he said that I would not be placed in the infantry. After I ended up in the infantry he said I would not go overseas. When I was shipped overseas he said I would not go in combat. I never received the letter saying I would not be killed or wounded. Thank goodness he stopped making predictions.

We next moved to the assembly area near Southampton to wait for D-Day. We didn't know it the time but we had been reclassified as backup to the D-Day invasion instead of being assigned to land on D day. Some of our equipment had not arrived so our division was reassigned at the last minute to a back-up position. This was lucky for us since we didn't have to face the D day fire. The divisions assigned to land on D-Day were loaded on the landing craft and escorted across the channel to begin the invasion. While the initial fighting was starting in France we were sitting on our butts in England waiting our turn instead of being part of the D day invasion.

FIGHTING IN FRANCE

Shortly after D-Day we were loaded into a British transport which was manned by Hindu sailors. When we left Southampton we expected to be part of the second wave of troops in the invasion. A sudden storm arose which made landing impossible and as a result we cruised around the channel for several days. This made it worst since we just had to wait it out. We were fed fish morning noon and night until we could not take it any more so we resorted to eating our combat rations. I am not sure when we finally reached France, but it was after June 20th. We downloaded into LCI (Landing Craft, Infantry) with all our equipment and moved to the portable docks (Mulberrys) which lined the beach harbor area. These docks were somewhat askew due to the storm but we climbed up to the dock and marched ashore without getting our feet wet. We landed at Omaha beachhead and proceeded up the draw on the right side of Omaha Beach. The beach was still cluttered with imbedded barricades and wrecked army equipment that had not been removed. It was an eerie scene and I was happy we had missed the D-day invasion.

This history is a combination of my memories and research about the 83rd Division route through Normandy. During most of the time we were given very little information about where we were and the stressful situation made it impossible to remember exactly what was happening. The days after July 4th were a big blur to me. Part of this history is based on Eric's (my son) great research into the route the 83rd division followed in Normandy.

We landed in France on June 21st or 22nd and marched to a forward assembly area near Trevieres. We heard some artillery fire at the beach area which got louder as we went further inland. I don't remember coming under any direct fire until we reached our position on the front lines on the other side of Carentan. We were moved from Trevieres via trucks to Carentan. On the night of June 24th or 25th we marched into position to the left of Meautis and successfully replaced segments of the 502nd Parachute Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division. Our platoon was placed on the forward observation Post (FOP) where we stayed until the July 4th battle. The rest of company L was positioned at the main line of resistance (MLR) about 200 yards to our rear. We were stationed behind a hedge row with a large field to our front. There was a slight rise leading to a farm house that was about 300 yards ahead. The German forces were dug in around the farm area. Our artillery observers were stationed along side of us in the hedgerows.

Our position was exposed to sniper fire so we had to keep our heads down. Periodically the Germans would fire their 88mm field gun which we learned to respect. It had a flat trajectory which you wouldn't hear unless it was going past you. You would hear the shell explode and then the sound of the gun and it was very frightening. Mortars were just as bad, particularly if they exploded in the trees spreading shrapnel everywhere. You stayed in your fox hole as much as possible. Our two man fox holes were approx 5ft deep and undermined so we had overhead protection. They were as close to the hedgerow as possible. The hedge rows were 4 or 5 ft high and 10 ft wide with trees and bushes on top for cover. You generally could see through the hedge row but you had to be careful not to be seen by a sniper. The German fire was intermittent so you were not pinned down all the time. At night we alternated watch duty.

I don't remember any thing significant happening during this time except for the constant threat of German mortars and 88 gun fires. Rifle fire was not as great a problem as long as you kept your head down.

You became very superstitious along the front line. I remember when a first aid man who was ordered to go back to company headquarters delayed because he didn't want to go and while he waited a mortar round landed near his fox hole and he was wounded. Then and there I decided not to refuse any order since I didn't want that to happen to me. That is not very logical but your thinking process is geared toward safety. I am not normally a religious person but when you are under constant danger you say a prayer once in a while. The constant danger was difficult to bear but you just had to stay in your fox hole and wait it out. It was almost a relief once we knew our attack against the Germans was imminent.

We were not asked to go on patrols apparently because we were constantly in danger where we were positioned. We went back to the company headquarters once in a while taking care to stay alongside the hedgerows. There was an orchard behind us and a dirt road in front of a farm house with a courtyard where the company headquarters was located. Because of our exposed position we never seem to be bothered by German patrols.

Life in a fox hole was difficult. You didn't wash or shave very often. I can't remember being bored, although I am sure time passed slowly. We didn't receive any hot meals that I remember. Our primary meals were either K or C rations. C rations included different kinds of can food which could be heated if you had the means. We liked the K ration better because it had a better variety and included candy gum and cigarettes. There were crackers and cheese or meat spreads. Each ration came with some kind of powered beverage and I would trade off the coffee for cocoa or lemonade.

Your helmet was a multi-purpose device. It was useful as a wash basin and a potty when necessary and to provide head protection the rest of the time.

MEDICAL HISTORY

I have written a separate write-up of my Army medical history based on the records I had obtained from the VA. It covers my entire Army medical history from induction to post war. In particular it covers my treatment that I received when I was injured in combat. This has filled in a lot of the missing gaps in my memory about exactly what happened when was injured. It was quite a revelation.

JULY 4TH BATTLE

On July 3rd we were advised that a major battle was planned for the fourth of July. The jumping off point was right in front of our hedge row. At daylight the artillery fire started and after about one half hour it was lifted and we started moving into the field in front of us. We advanced about 75 yards and were pinned down by heavy machine gun and rifle fire. It was suicide to continue moving toward the Germans without any cover and I looked to my right where my buddy Robert Strang was lying and could see he was slumped flat on the ground. When I looked closer I could see a bullet hole in his forehead under his helmet and that he was dead. We laid there for a while and the bullets flew

over our head. There was no one in charge so after a while we crawled back behind the hedge row and found our assistant squad leader, Sgt Muma shot in the behind moaning in pain. I don't know where the squad leader was and I think our platoon leader was wounded so we were without any one in charge. The rest of the day was kind of a blur. The soldiers that were left were assigned to another company but I have no knowledge of where we went. To the best of my knowledge there were only 40 of our company fit for duty at the end of that first day of battle.

When we back to the battlefield sixty-five years later and saw the open field with no cover, I realized what a terrible situation we had been in. The combination of the early morning ground fog and smoke from all the weapons being fired made it impossible to see any targets to shoot at, so you were shooting blind.

I remember walking down a sunken road between two hedge rows with some soldiers but I don't know where we were going. In the afternoon of the first day I went to the first aid station for small shrapnel wound in my thigh. According to information I received from the Surgeon General, I also had lacerated hand injury which I don't remember at all. I also didn't realize I had been injured a second time and was knocked unconscious by a mortar or German 88 shell which helps explain why my memory of what happened after July 4th is so poor.

I do remember that I was put to sleep for a couple of days with pills they called blue 88's. After some rest I remember being interviewed by a doctor and I vaguely remember telling him about the Technicolor dreams I was having. I remember being very sensitive to loud sounds like gunfire and mortars for several weeks while I recovered back in England. Any loud noise and I would seek cover. The net result was that I was classified not fit to return to combat as I must have been suffering from combat fatigue as well as blast concussion at this point in time.

RECLASSIFICATION IN ENGLAND

We were loaded onto a landing craft so we could get aboard a LST and be returned to England. I have a recollection that one of the soldiers on that landing craft was Charlie Barnett the band leader. I wonder if this is really a true memory. We were moved out to a LST for transport to England. On the boat I picked up a sailor hat that I traded for something. I wrote a bunch of comments on the hat that were interesting such as LST 510, my Army Division, etc. The hat is on the cover to the book about our Normandy trip. I was transferred to Cheltenham in the middle of England to a hospital for recovery. After a while I was moved to a rehabilitation center and assigned to clerk-typist training. We were given three weeks training to learn how to use a typewriter. At the end of our training we were given a speed test to see how fast we could type. I set my margins wrong so I made too many errors and ended up owing the government words. As a result I was classified as a general clerk MOS-055 instead of a clerk typist rating. Sometime in September or October 1944 I was returned to France to a replacement depot as a non-combatant clerk in a message center.

16th REPLACEMENT DEPOT

We were assigned as cadre for the 16th Replacement Depot at Compiègne, France. This outfit was located about 40 Km north of Paris. I was assigned duty as a clerk in the message center and our job was to log in all mail received at the Depot. The Replacement Depot received unassigned troops and reassigned them to the various outfits that needed their skills. We were billeted in a large home that the army had taken over from the French. I remember processing numerous letters being sent by girls in England trying to track down soldiers that left them pregnant. It was a sad commentary about the GI's failing to be responsible for their behavior. It was not a very demanding job.

One of my friends at this base was Anthony Martini. He is one of the soldiers in the picture of the porch under the 16th Replacement Depot sign. He lived in Kenosha; his father had a bar there. After his war I went to visit him. I was not very good at remembering and trying to track down people in the Army that I knew.

Nearby Compiègne was the railroad car where the 1918 Armistice was signed with the Germans which is located nearby in the forest of Compiègne. This area was nicely landscaped and well kept up. This is where the Germans accepted the French surrender in the early stages of the war at the demand of Hitler. He was at the top of his power at that point in the war. This area also has a famous chateau used by Napoleon and Louis XV. We had the opportunity to visit both of these places in our time off duty.

The battle of the Bulge was approximately 40 miles from the depot. When the wind was right we could hear the artillery fire from the battle. Fortunately the Germans never broke through our lines so we stayed out of trouble. The Battle of the Bulge was the turning point for the allies. Once we crossed the Rhine it took about three months for Germany to surrender. After VE Day on May 12 we switched from sending troops to outfits in Europe to sending troops to the Far East. Once the atomic bombs were dropped and the Japanese surrendered on August 14, 1945 VJ Day, our concerns switched to when are we going to be sent back home.

The Army issued each soldier a currency book which kept track of your currency transactions. Any money you sent home was deducted from your pay record. This prevented you from sending home more than your pay. This would have worked except there were officers who for a price would send home a postal money order to whom ever you named.

Nothing moves fast with the army. After a while a point system was established. The Magic number was approximately 90 points which entitled you to scheduled for return to the United States for discharge. You received one point for every month of service and one point for every month overseas. In addition you received five points for every medal received such as the Purple Heart and Bronze Star. I was approaching my second anniversary in the Army and my point total was 47 so I had several months to wait.

We had one week end pass that I remember while we were stationed in Compiègne. Four of us headed up to Brussels in a jeep we signed out from the motor pool. On the way up we had an accident with the jeep. The roads were slick from rain and we skidded off the road. I was riding in the back and the jeep tipped over as it left the road and I was thrown out as we rolled over. Fortunately none of us were hurt. The canvas top was crushed so we rode the rest of the trip without weather protection. We had a good time in Brussels visiting the USO and the sights of the area. The town center was filled with old buildings that looked very historic. We stopped by a statue of a small boy peeing. The family that had lost the boy promised to put up a statue of what ever he was doing when he was found. This was really a unique memorial.

During this time I had the opportunity to visit the Marseilles area on a one week leave. This gave us the chance to visit Nice, Cannes and Monaco. The beach area was disappointing since there was no real sand and it looked pretty drab. The casinos were very elaborate and it was nice to see how the upper class lived. The Monte Carlo casino was unbelievable. We didn't gamble since our funds were on the low side but we went on a tour of bistros in Marseilles. This turned out to be a mistake since we were drinking home brewed cognac Nick named Buzz Bomb Juice. By the time we got back to camp we were really drunk. I got the dry heaves and spent the rest of the night just walking around. It was the worse night of my life and Cognac was no longer my friend.

STARS AND STRIPES

When the Replacement Depot activity slowed down we were offered reassignment to another army outfit. I don't remember that I had any choice but a few of us were reassigned to the Stars and Stripes in Paris. The Stars and Stripes office was located at 123 Champs des Elysees. It was located one-half block from the Arc De Triomphe. The building we were using was also an apartment hotel that was used by the Stars and Stripes. I was assigned a bunk on the fifth floor with three or four other soldiers. There was restaurant on the second floor. My job was to write receipts for the Stars and Stripes subscription for the various units receiving the paper. It was great duty.

The Stars and Stripes was a unique outfit. We were able to touch base with the correspondents and staff. In particular I enjoyed my contact with Bill Maudlin who was famous for his "Willie and Joe" cartoons. He was a Pulitzer Prize winner. One of my favorites was a picture of Willie and Joe strolling down a street in a French village with a soldier with red hair and glasses who was telling them about his father being in this very village during WW I. Almost everyone on the street had red hair and glasses!

The black market was very active part of the Stars and Stripes. Some of the GI's were really involved. One GI had a duffel bag full of currency he made on the black market. I was once offered a big commission if I could sell a complete radio station. A couple of GI from the Stars and stripes were arrested when they drove a semi-truck into Germany full of cigarettes, nylons, food and candy. My only contribution to the black market was to sell some cigarettes occasionally.

SIGHTSEEING IN PARIS

We traveled all over Paris using the subway system and it was very easy to get around Paris. I don't think we had to pay any fare. The GI's were given free access and you could go anywhere you wanted. We visited most of the historic sites. I remember one evening when we had just got onto the last car and as the train pulled out of the station, the lights went out and there was a scream. We sat in the dark for quite some time and after a while the train continued on its way with everyone wondering if someone had fallen on the third rail.

At the base of the Champs des Elysees is the Place de la Concorde with its large Egyptian Obelisk at its center. We went to the Louvre art museum on the right to see the masterpieces that were on display. Due to the wartime not everything was on display and the works of art stolen by the Nazis were not yet back on display. I am not sure what we were able to see at the museum.

The Arc de Triomphe was very close to our hotel. It was always a mad dash to cross the many lanes of traffic to get the Unknown Soldier's grave site. There are many tunnels leading to the center now so it is much easier to cross.

The Eiffel Tower was a favorite spot to visit except the upper level was not open for ordinary visitors. It was quite spectacular. Just across the Seine River was the Palais du Trocadero which contained some museums and a beautiful garden with reflecting pools that were an optical illusion since it looked like the water was running uphill.

The Notre Dame Cathedral is located on an island in the Seine River and is quite overwhelming. The left bank of Seine is known as the Montmartre District where most of the artists hang out. The center of this district was the Sacre Coeur Church. It stood upon a high hill and was quite visible with its white marble dome. The base of the hill was Place Pigalle or "Pig Alley" as it was known by the GI's. This area contained sex shops, prostitutes and cabarets where fancy sex shows with nude women were always available. We saw the show at the Moulin Rouge one night and women with bare breasts stood still as a statue and didn't move at all during the show.

The Rainbow USO Club in Paris was a favorite spot to visit. They had all sort of activities that included dancing, entertainment, dining and sleeping arrangements for soldiers on leave. My only gay experience in the army occurred outside the Rainbow Club in Paris. I was walking away from the club when a GI stopped me and made a sexual remark. I noticed immediately that the GI's collar and shoulder area had small holes where bars normally are mounted. I realized I was being propositioned so I made a quick exit.

My collection of over ten caricatures on my office wall started with one that was made at the Rainbow Club in Paris in 1945. It was a picture of me as a soldier in the war.

The French people were very friendly to all GI's. A mother and daughter (who were very popular with the soldiers) worked as housekeepers for the Stars and Stripes. They invited me to a very special dinner which included wine and multiple courses, the whole nine yards. It was quite a treat!

One of my last memories of Paris was going to see a movie “Kiss and Tell” with a teen aged Shirley Temple as the star. I was laughing and rolling in the aisle. The movie really tickled my funny bone. It just had to be a release from the tensions from the war for me to have such an emotional reaction.

One of my more foolish projects was when we contacted Bill Mauldin and asked him to draw a cartoon showing Rodin’s statue of “The Thinker” with Stars and Stripes newspapers scattered around the ground with the heading “Broken Promises”. Somewhere amongst my paper is a copy of that cartoon we were planning to use in a notice to organize simultaneous demonstrations in London Paris and Rome. A newspaper executive from the Paris Herald Tribune wisely advised us it was a bad idea because we would be responsible for any damages that occur. We had the cartoon finished but decided to trash the idea.

TRANSFER TO GERMAN OCCUPATION DUTY

Somewhere near the end of 1945 the Stars and Stripes were transferred to Germany near Frankfurt. We lost our great location in Paris and moved to much more mundane facilities in Germany. We set up our sleeping quarters and went back to writing receipts for the Stars and Stripes subscriptions. When we were in Germany we used Displaced Person’s (DP’s) to assist us in our operation. They were gaunt looking and still recovering from life in the concentration camps. I never had a chance to visit any of the concentration camps and I regret not to have taken the time to go while I was there.

My point total was getting closer to being scheduled to go home, but I decided to postpone going home until I took a trip to southern Germany and Switzerland. I figured I would never get a better chance to see these areas so I signed up for a 10 day trip. This delayed my return home but I figured it was well worth it. We took off for Munich and Bavaria where we enjoyed good German food and great steins of beer. The accordion music and dancing made the visit worth while.

Our next stop was Switzerland where we stopped at St. Moritz. The scenery was unbelievable and we traveled via electric trains thru the mountains to the ski resort. We were taken to our chalet by a horse drawn sleigh. The next few days we were introduced to alpine skiing. It was great fun; I remember traversing across the slopes instead of going straight down. We did not become very proficient but we really enjoyed ourselves. That experience was the trigger which later started me skiing. They had an ice skating rink at the main hotel. I seem to remember it in an old Sonja Hanja movie

The last part of the trip explored more of the Alps. The mountain scenery was unbelievable. We ended up in Zurich where I did some shopping. I tried to buy a cuckoo clock but I did not have enough money. I ended up paying for half and taking a receipt which I later planned to redeem. Unfortunately when I got back I never completed the transaction. I had misplaced the receipt and didn’t find it until several years later so I just wrote it off.

THE TRIP BACK

When I got back to Germany it was only a short time before I shipped back to the States. I don't remember what port we left to go back to the States but I know we left on April 15th for USA. I remember getting on a Liberty ship which was a lot faster than the trip over. Several of us banded together on the way back and we made a bet that the first one who got sea sick would buy dinner in NYC. We went around the ship smoking cigars trying to make the others seasick. It turned out to be a pleasant trip and none of us got sick. We arrived in the USA around April 24th at New York City. It didn't matter since we never got leave in NYC. We boarded a train for the Midwest where we were routed to our separation centers.

In Chicago I was routed to Camp McCoy near Tomah, Wisconsin and after a short while I was discharged on April 29, 1946. My army career was over and I never looked back. I wanted no part of the Reserves, I just wanted to get on with my life. I was looking forward to finishing my college education. I was loaded aboard with my duffel bag to a Chicago, Milwaukee & St Paul train to Chicago where I transferred to a North Shore train to Dempster St. in Skokie. My Dad and Aunt Mildred & Uncle Lloyd met me at the station. I remember telling my Dad when I got back that I no longer wanted to be called Junior, since my Dad used Wayne; I said "Red" was okay.

POSTWAR

My brother Bill was still in the Seabees in the Philippines when I returned. I didn't realize it at the time, but my brother was harboring a grudge against me at this time. When I left for the service my brother was three years younger and was smaller and lighter than me. Apparently during the last three years he shot up to 6'2" and weighed over 200lbs. His goal was to get even for past issues and he wanted to take me out in back of the drug store and beat me up. Since he outweighed me by thirty pounds I was not interested in trying to find out who would win. We ended up discussing the matter and shaking hands and burying the hatchet.

I contacted the Military to find out what medals I had earned during the war. There were a few surprises that I didn't know about. I knew about receiving the PURPLE HEART MEDAL and GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL. I also had received a COMBAT INFANTRY BADGE 1ST AWARD along with a EUROPEAN-AFRICAN-MIDDLE EASTERN CAMPAIGN MEDAL with 1 bronze service star. Additional awards that I was unaware of include BRONZE STAR MEDAL, WORLD WAR II VICTORY MEDAL, HONORABLE SERVICE LAPEL BUTTON WWII, EXPERT BADGE with a Rifle Bar, and MARKSMAN BADGE with a Carbine Bar.

The BRONZE STAR METAL was awarded to any soldier awarded the Combat Infantry Badge during the war. I also earned four Overseas Bars Uniform Insignia (two years overseas).

I have requested an Army of Occupation medal which I found out I earned while I was in Germany.

My dad paid for my membership in the local chapter of the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars when I returned home. I went to one meeting each and decided it was not for me so I never went back.

GI BILL

Shortly after I returned home I applied for admission at Northwestern University. I had my grades from Illinois Institute of Technology transferred along with my application to enter the fall quarter at Tech for my sophomore year in Mechanical Engineering. After my interview I was admitted as a second year student. Since I was now twenty-two years old, I wanted to get through as soon as possible. I had lost three years because of the war and did not want to spend any more time in getting my degree. Most of the students were a lot younger so I felt a little out of place as did most of the GI's.

I signed up four quarters a year so I would finish up in less than two and a quarter years. The GI bill would pay for my tuition and books and even give me extra money for gas and living expenses. I stayed home in Skokie, so my Dad had a free ride except for eating at home. I don't remember how much per month was provided but I know I worked odd jobs to earn extra money.

When I was at Illinois Tech I leaned to play bridge. During lunch and free periods we would play quite a bit. I enjoyed these sessions a lot. Bridge and pinnacle were my favorite card games.

In my third year Bob Gerhardt (high school and college buddy) and I went on a trip out west. It started out as a camping trip to Rocky Mountain National Park. We got snowed out so we decided to see how far we west we could go before we had to return to school. We headed out to Salt Lake City and then south to Bryce and Zion National Parks. Since we still had time we went to the south side of the Grand Canyon. We finished off by stopping off at the Hoover Dam and going into Las Vegas. That was a flying trip and we just made it back in time for school.

Life at TECH was tough. I had to keep my nose to the grindstone. I was admitted to two honor societies, Pi Tau Sigma (Mech Engr) and Tau Beta Pi (Gen Engr) and my grades were pretty good. In fact in my last quarter in school Evie and I got married, much to my Dad's dismay. He thought my grades would go to hell. It turned out just the opposite. I ended up with straight A's.

I interviewed with IBM, Goodyear and Ansul. Since my mother had been born in Marinette I decided to take the job in Marinette since I was already familiar with the area. They offered to have me participate in a management training course. This program was dropped a short time after I joined Ansul.

I still had enough GI Bill credit after I finished school that I decided to obtain a pilot's license. I ended up about half way to a commercial pilot license before I ran out of credit. Since I couldn't pass the eye exam for a commercial license, I only received a Private Pilot license. Flying is a very expensive hobby that I could not afford so I stopped flying.

This ends my military history until Eric started his crusade about the 83rd Division. He has been my inspiration to try and write this history. I hope it meets his expectations. I never talked about my war experience to my children. I never lasted very long in combat so I was not very proud of my efforts during the war. I have, thru Eric's efforts, begun to understand what really happened to me during the War. Our trip to Normandy with my two sons, I will never forget. The book that chronicles my history in Normandy says it all. For whatever it is worth, I dedicate this effort to all my children who have more than I ever believed possible made me a proud father. I only wish that their mother had lived to experience the joy I feel.

Eric, please accept my thanks for your persistence in pursuing the 83rd Division history and your gentle prodding me to tell you about my Army experiences. Without you this story would never seen the light of day.