

SHARING STORIES

***World War II Veterans
Personal Recollections of Service***

***As Told To The
Cupertino Veterans Memorial
November 11, 2010***



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From The Forum at Rancho San Antonio

Ben Frana, Cec Werner, Bill Snow, Harry McCrea, John Grant	01
Lee Hoadley	03
George Knapp	05
Larry Ryan	06
Vince Reilly	08
Wilbur Mattison	09
Fred Mielke	10
Charles J. Merdinger	13

From Villa Siena

Alvin H. Storch, Jr.	16
William G. DeMers	17

From Chateau Cupertino

Walter Andonian	24
Kenneth Sanders	25
Spencer J. Gregory	25
Doug Ewing	25
Angelo A. diFalco	26
Gloria K. Sherman	26

From Sunny View Manor

Richard Kuhlmann	30
Ruth Caroline Hanson	31
Ray Bunt	32
Stanley Nowicki	32
Viola Dydbal Feyling	33

DEDICATION

"Humility must always be the portion of any man who receives acclaim earned in blood of his followers and sacrifices of his friends."

~ General Dwight D. Eisenhower

"Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle hardened. He will fight savagely"

~ General Dwight Eisenhower - 6th June 1944

"United in this determination and with unshakable faith in the cause for which we fight, we will, with God's help, go forward to our greatest victory."

~ General Dwight D. Eisenhower (1944)

We have included the insignia from the appropriate branch of service represented in each story. We dedicate this to all those who have served under these insignia.

PREFACE

Young men and women marching, hiking, flying, parachuting, jumping, wading, hiding, fleeing, chasing, waiting The stories shared in this booklet vividly depict military life at home, in transit, and in war zones during World War II. From the briefest to the most elaborate, they come from the heart and memories of local veterans. We thank them for this collective gift honoring all who served in WW II.

This is my fourth year coordinating participation of WW II veterans for the Cupertino Veterans Memorial annual Veterans Day ceremony. Many told me about their experiences, leading to the concept of paying tribute to these dignified, patriotic, humble individuals at this year's event. As we transcend oral history and memory by writing about our experiences, we invite our community to reflect on the values, principles, and histories that unite and define us.

I see patriotism, sacrifice, altruism, honor, duty, and an amazing ability to do what they thought impossible in the faces and words of these courageous soldiers. Some did their duty stateside, while others ventured to far reaches of the world. Not one expressed doubt or regret. Notice how clearly they describe details of what took place 65 years ago! I am honored to share these stories with you, and ask you to thank them – and all military personnel – for their service.

Kathleen Elliott
Cupertino Veterans Memorial
World War II Tribute Designer and Editor

THE NORMANDY INVASION
~ Ben Frana, Cel Werner, Bill Snow,
Harry McCrea, John Grant



It is fitting that we recount the experiences of Forum residents who participated in this catastrophic event.

On June 6th the *Baldwin* arrived at her shore bombardment station off Omaha Beach, opposite Port en Bessin, which marked the division between the British and U.S. landing beaches. She started firing her five-inch guns at 5:37 a.m. and stopped firing at 6:30a.m. as the landing boats filled with troops headed for the beach. The *Baldwin* was hit by two German shells at 8:21a.m. causing minor structural damage but no personnel casualties. Gunfire from the *Baldwin* silenced the German battery.

Later, during the forenoon, German gun and mortar fire stalled Army troops on the beach below the 100-foot cliffs fronting the beach. Access from the beach to high ground was via the banks of four ravines. The situation was grim. The *Baldwin* moved to within one-half mile of the beach searching for German gun and mortar positions. Finding them behind bushes and trees, she fired her guns over the Army troops, silencing most of the German positions by late afternoon and allowing the troops to move from the beach to high ground. Radio contact was maintained between the troops and the ships at all times.

A landing craft sent a flashing light message to the *Baldwin* during the afternoon of the 6th, asking if she would take wounded soldiers. Four seriously wounded soldiers were taken aboard. German planes attacked the invasion force during the evening of the 6th, but they were not very effective. Not counting the pre-landing bombardment, the *Baldwin* carried out 18 firing missions on June 6th, five of which were between sunset and midnight. After midnight eleven more firing missions were carried out on June 7th. The crew had gone to battle stations at 3:30 a.m. on June 6th and stayed at their battle stations until the late afternoon of June 7th, existing on K rations, taking turns at their posts and catching naps. During the night of the 7th German torpedo boats approached the warship screening line, and the *Baldwin* fired on them, destroying one. The boats then withdrew.

Except for a brief return to Plymouth for refueling on June 10th the *Baldwin* remained on the Normandy Beachhead screening line from June 9th to the 21st. A heavy storm disrupted the landing of three million more men and their supplies from June 15th to 17th. Then for 55 days the two sides bashed away at each other in the hedgerows of Normandy. The *Baldwin* sailed in July with other ships to the Mediterranean to train for the invasion of southern France scheduled for August.

Another Forum resident who participated in the Invasion is "**Cec**" **Werner** (now in the Healthcare Center). He was in the radar support group of the 9th Air Force, stationed in England. Harold's unit embarked in a landing craft on D-Day. It was scheduled to land on the beach on D+ 1, but the landing was delayed until D+3 because the proposed site on Omaha Beach was not secure from enemy attack until that day. Harold's radar unit then provided service to the 9th Air force as it supported the U.S. 1st Army drive through France into Germany, eventually participating in the Battle of the Bulge during late December 1944.

Two other Forum residents who participated in the Invasion have since passed away, but their widows are still with us.

Bill Snow (Ethel Snow's husband) was serving as Assistant Group Operations Officer of the 457th (B-17) Bomb group with the 8th Air force, stationed in England. He had flown a mission on June 3rd and was not scheduled to fly on D-Day, but he was very busy beginning the evening of June 5th, preparing flight orders for the group's missions (planes, crews, bomb loads, fuel loads, routes, check points, formations, weather reports, etc.) It has been estimated that about 11,000 Allied planes were in the air over southern England during the morning of June 6. As Bill recalled, "It was indeed a day in which the sky was filled with aircraft." As the Allied planes crossed the English Channel on their way to France they were met by German fighter planes.

Harry McCrea (first husband of Elayne McCabe) was in one of the Army units that waded ashore from a landing craft at Omaha Beach. Harry later recalled that German guns were firing down on the beach from above on a high cliff. His group eventually reached high ground by moving inland on the banks of a ravine. His company served in the forward movement through France and into Germany, where it participated in the Battle of the Bulge in late 1944.

Most early Forum residents will remember Doris and **John Grant**. He was the Executive Officer and Navigator of the *USS Carmick*. His ship was one of fourteen destroyers assigned to assist in the landing of U.S. army troops on Omaha Beach. The *Carmick*, in company with the other destroyers, approached Omaha Beach ahead of the Allied invasion force and

started firing with its five-inch guns at first light -about 5:30. They stopped firing about an hour later as landing boats headed for the beach. The troops met heavy enemy resistance camouflaged German positions had not been destroyed by the Allied aircraft, and to compound matters, a rough sea had caused many Allied landing craft carrying tanks to swamp. The destroyers moved closer to the beach and their five-inch guns provided the artillery support that the troops needed. The *Carmick* pounded German positions beyond the beach, expending 1500 rounds of five-inch ammunition. John said it was gratifying to watch thousands of foot soldiers land safely on the beach.

JUMP!
~ *Lee Hoadley*



On June 26 1944 U.S. Army Air Force planes of the 485th Bombardment Group were just completing a successful attack on the crucial (to the desperate Axis powers) Florisdorf Oil Refinery near Vienna. Despite adverse weather conditions, heavy anti-aircraft fire, and attacks by 40 enemy fighters, only one plane was lost and another missing in action. The lost plane was hit by a shell that cut an overhead fuel line. Knowing that their plane would catch fire and eventually explode, the crew of 10 bailed out at 21,000 feet, the pilot going last. One member of that crew was Flight Engineer Lee Hoadley, who had been wounded by shrapnel. He and two others had to jump from the nose gunner's hatch.

As they floated down, a column of German troops raced to capture them. Fortunately, their abandoned aircraft crashed in front of the enemy soldiers, delaying them before they could reach the parachuting crew. Lee remembers that as he hit the ground a pair of strong arms grasped him, helped him out of his harness, and got him safely away from the pursuers. It was a member of the Austrian anti-Nazi underground who, along with a companion, managed to rescue all of the crew. Thus began the final and most astonishing adventure in Lee's saga of air combat experiences in the European Theater of World War Two.

18 year old Lee Hoadley enlisted for service from upstate New York in 1942 and was training as a flight engineer at an air base in North Carolina when the first of his string of mis-adventures occurred. He and four others were working on the engines of a bomber on the ground when lightning struck and killed the airmen, apparently including Lee. He was taken with the others to the morgue, but the attending Dr. from New York was not sure he was deceased. He held up a small mirror to Lee's face and, finding a sign of life, called for an ambulance to transfer him to an Army hospital. Lee revived 6 days later to find his father at his bedside. He had no recollection of what happened or the six days that passed before he "came to". But he does recall with amusement learning that a local newspaper headline had reported that: "Three mules and five soldiers from the air base were killed by lightning".

After recovering he continued training in Nebraska where he met his future wife Margaret. Then, after more training in Idaho the newly formed 485th bombardment Group and its 82 B-24 bombers were flown overseas to a base in Tunisia (by way of Brazil and Senegal). Among their many missions was the bombing of the Ploesti Oil Fields in Romania from treetop level. This early air combat experience shook Lee up considerably because 50 American planes coming in low after his group were blown up by these explosions. On the way back from Romania Lee's plane came down in a vineyard on a Yugoslavian island. A small British patrol vessel picked them up and returned them to their base in Tunisia.

After moving up to a base in Italy their new missions included bombing bridges in Vichy, France. Another wild adventure! Returning toward their base, the pilots decided to detour to have a look at the Italian port of Leghorn (Livorno). Vichy French fighter planes intercepted them, forcing them down over Corsica. The plane crashed and split in two in a deep ravine, from which Lee and 2 others had to pull out their crewmates from the rear section of the aircraft.

The 485th also took part in the big push to bomb Berlin into submission. On 3 of their missions, because fuel was insufficient to assure return to Italy, the bombers flew on to the Soviet Union where they were quickly refueled and supplies with new (American-made) incendiary bombs. On all three occasions they returned to bomb Berlin again before returning to their Italian air base.

Finally, after the crash in Austria in late June 1944 the American bomber crew and their two Austrian rescuers began a 2-month ordeal of walking from Austria through Yugoslavia almost to the border of Albania, assisted at times by partisan groups such as Draja Mihailovic's Chetniks. German patrols were constantly hunting for them, often coming perilously close as they made their way southward. They only had their flight clothing to wear on that long trek, and often had to

drink from and wash themselves and their clothing in muddy puddles, letting their clothes dry on themselves as they moved painfully along.

Except when their resourceful rescuers could scrounge bits of food at farms, they subsisted by picking wild berries and chewing on birch bark. They even ate insects and lice found in barns and haystacks where they hid. More protein, says Lee! With more than 30 bits of shrapnel in his legs, Lee somehow managed to care for his own wounds and to survive the ordeal. He dropped from 180 to 115 pounds before a British patrol bomber picked him and the others up for return to Italy.

Lee was hospitalized and sent back to the States for treatment at Plattsburg, New York. He and Marge were married in January 1945, and later that year he received his Purple Heart and Distinguished Flying Cross upon discharge.

SPEAKING ITALIAN

~ George Knapp



My young pleasant years had to end prematurely for WWII was on. At the end of my junior year I enlisted with promise of an opportunity to attend officer candidate school. That didn't happen for I was soon sent to language school concentrating on Italian. That was followed by duty placing me in charge of Italian prisoners. Yes, that definitely improved my Italian, but the only use I have found for it is ordering in Italian restaurants and talking to my neighbor, Tony Pizzurro.

Finally I was sent to Officer Candidate School, receiving my commission in 1945. Altogether I had three years of active duty and then joined the National Guard and Reserves with which I served for twenty years. In those years I became a company commander and Battalion Staff Officer of the New York National Guard 107th Infantry Regiment.

MARINES OCS 1944 ~ Larry Ryan



On September 30, 2009 I met five fellow ex-Marines in San Francisco to celebrate the 65th anniversary of our commissioning as second lieutenants in The War. We were members of a unique class organized in 1944, not at the usual officer candidate school in Quantico, Virginia, but rather on the Marine Base at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

The decision to establish this hurry-up Special Officer Candidate School (SOCS) for 400 Marines came about because of the great casualty rate among junior officers in the recent campaigns at Peleliu and the Marianas Islands, as well as the expected high casualties in the anticipated invasions of Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and the Japanese homeland. All of the OCS 400 came from the Marine Corps V-12 Program organized in 1943 at a number of universities throughout the country to begin preparing college students for commissioning. Several hundred completed boot camp at Parris Island, South Carolina in May 1944. The older ones were sent to the OCS at Quantico, while the 400 youngest were assigned to the infantry training regiment at Camp Lejeune until was available for them at Quantico.

After 2 months, however, the need for junior combat officers in the Pacific Theater became so urgent that a Special OCS was quickly organized to commission, not the usual "90-day wonders" as reserve officers, but rather "77-day wonders". Their no-frills training concentrated on preparation to lead assault troops in the Fleet Marine Force Divisions operating in the Pacific. Of the 400 candidates, 370 were commissioned on September 30, 1944.

My five friends and I who met this September all served in the final Marine Corps invasions of the war, as did all but a few members who graduated from the SOCS. Half of them joined combat regiments on Iwo Jima, and half on Okinawa, mostly as Marine infantry platoon leaders. I was assigned to the 3rd Marine Division on Guam, and on Iwo Jima I replaced a wounded infantry platoon leader in the 21st Regiment several days into the campaign. Casualties from the fierce Japanese resistance on the island had been so heavy that my platoon, which landed 45 men strong, had been reduced to about a dozen, supported by a machine-gun section that had lost half of its number either killed or wounded.

Almost immediately I was wounded (superficially) by a fragment from a mortar shell, but I stayed with the platoon. Six days later, while my company was slowly advancing up a hill toward the last ridge still being held by the Japanese, I was shot through the left shoulder and chest. After several hours, Navy hospital corpsmen were able to reach me and carry me back to the beach, from which I was put onto a hospital ship headed back to Guam. After two weeks in the naval hospital there (where one of my wounded roommates was the son of Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes). I was shipped back to San Francisco and then to the Naval Hospital at Great Lakes, Illinois. I remained at Great lakes until discharged to the inactive reserves in April 1946.

I had served in the Pacific Theater less than six months and was one of nearly 200 casualties among my SOCS classmates (a rate of over 50 percent) who were on Iwo Jima or Okinawa. The Commandant of the Marine Corps considered that the SOCS had sustained the highest casualty rate among the second lieutenants for a single graduating class in any of the Pacific battles of World War II. At Camp Lejeune a bronze plaque commemorates by name our 48 classmates who were killed in those two campaigns.

Almost unbelievably, one of the six who were reunited in San Francisco in September, Dick Burress, had survived the entire month-long campaign on Iwo Jima unwounded, even though his unit, the 4th Marine Division, had fought over the most difficult terrain of the island. The other four friends had also been either on Iwo Jima with the 4th Division or on Okinawa with the 2nd Division. Although with the years the number of survivors of the SOCS "400" is dwindling rapidly, we six survivors are hoping to reunite in early 2010, on the 65th anniversary of our "adventures" in those two 1945 campaigns of the Second World War.

THE ALMOST FORGOTTEN BLUE-STAR MEMORIAL HIGHWAYS ~ Vince Reilly



In 1945 when World War II had ended, a nationwide movement was started to pay tribute to the nation's armed forces by designating various State and national routes as "Blue Star Memorial Highways." The National Council of State Garden Clubs, Inc. approved the program, and donated funding for distinctive markers by some of the highways. There are three sizes of plaques, the largest having an erected height of almost eight feet. With a blue center star, the plaques bear the words "Blue Star Memorial Highway, a tribute to the Armed Forces that have defended the United States of America" with the name of the sponsoring garden club in gold-leaf letter faces on a copper-toned background shading to deep green on the edges. These plaques may not show an individual's name, but a small plaque with a name may be attached to the mounting.

In 1947 California Garden Clubs entered the program with the dedication of Highways 40 and 99 (now 1-80 and IS), placing marker plaques at many rest areas, parks, and gardens along the designated highways. A nearby example may be seen from west-bound El Monte Avenue on the southbound on-ramp to 1-280. It is in memory of Stephen Edward Morgan, a Vietnam casualty.

THE CITADEL ~ *Wilbur Mattison*



Summers days were stifling hot, with high humidity and no air conditioning. The family would retreat into the nearby North Carolina mountains where it was cooler and offered opportunities for fishing, hiking, swimming - and eating. Yes, there was a lot of that last. The women produced three full meals a day - southern cooking with plenty of fried chicken, gravy, com, okra, bacon, ham, pies, and thousands of calories and lots of cholesterol. (Wilbur marvels now at how they survived that diet.)

One event from his childhood left a vivid memory for Wilbur. He went to Washington, D.C. for the famous Boy Scout Jamboree, and his special memory of that trip was an All Star game he attended with Joe DiMaggio playing in his first All Star game. Sports were important in his life, and when Bobby Jones planned a golf course nearby Anderson, golf was added to his interests.

College and War p

He had attended a boy's high school (girls had a separate high school), and when it was time for college he chose The Citadel in Charleston. It was a military school where students wore uniforms and received military training as well as a good education. He considered a military career and even managed an appointment to Annapolis. WWII was on by then, and Wilbur saw a better opportunity by finishing his four years at The Citadel and then going to Officer Candidate School. This was 1943, and after receiving his commission in the Infantry he was sent to France.

By January 1945 he was a platoon leader in command of a rifle company. He was severely wounded and sent home to a hospital in Georgia. Two years spent recovering there served one good purpose: a decision to become a doctor. That decision meant going back to The Citadel for a year and a half of pre-med classes. When it was time to apply for medical school Wilbur went to interview his family physician, and thus came the first of the events that he describes as serendipity. The doctor told him he should go to Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and immediately made a magic phone call that eventually led to Wilbur's acceptance there.

LADY LUCK ~ *Fred Mielke*



In May 1944, fresh out of training duty at the Navy Supply Corps School at Harvard with the rank of ensign, I was ordered to report for duty as supply and disbursing officer of *USS Whitehurst*, DE-634, a destroyer escort in the Pacific. After many weeks of island hopping across the South Pacific to reach my ship, with periodic long waits for available Navy transportation, I reached Manus Island - the largest island in the Admiralty Islands north of New Guinea, just below the equator. As usual, I checked into the receiving station, found that *Whitehurst* was not in port, and began waiting again. Unlike other places I'd been in my island hopping, Manus was being developed as a major Advance Naval Base in the push toward Japan. It had a large, deep anchorage (Seeadler Harbor), fifteen miles long, four wide, and protected by a surrounding coral reef.

After 25 days of waiting in a transportation status quartered at the receiving station on Manus, I received a message at about 0700 on November 10 that *Whitehurst* was in port, would be leaving right away, and I had just 30 minutes to pack my gear, get a jeep ride to the dock, and board *Whitehurst's* motor whaleboat where its coxswain was waiting to take me to *Whitehurst* at anchor in the harbor. Needless to say I scurried, anxious to finally get aboard and do what I was trained to do.

On the same day about an hour later, at 0803 as officially recorded, a navy ammunition ship *Mount Hood* AE-11, while at anchor in the same anchorage area as *Whitehurst*, exploded. The explosion was not widely reported, if at all, in the U.S., but soon became widely known by service men in the Pacific. The explosion completely obliterated *Mount Hood*. Only an oil slick remained where she had been anchored. Below that anchorage, divers later found a huge crater 1,000 feet long, 200 feet wide, 85 feet deep. All 299 aboard her were killed, part of a total of 1,000 killed or wounded from the explosion. For example, the *USS Mindanao*, ARH-3, a "Liberty" ship converted to a navy repair and supply ship, anchored 350 yards from *Mount Hood*, was rained upon with debris and ammunition, killing all of her crew topside and riddling her hull with holes from stem to stern. Of her 180 casualties, 80 were killed or died of wounds received. Ironically, one of the 80 was *Mount Hood's* supply officer, who had come aboard on business minutes earlier. Only one other officer and thirteen enlisted personnel were away from *Mount Hood* on duties scheduled in port.

The cause of the explosion was never determined. A Navy Board of Investigation was convened immediately. After a month of hearings and deliberations it ruled out the possibility of an enemy submarine attack or other hostile action and reported that the explosion resulted from unknown accidental causes. As for me on that fateful morning, I got to the dock in the time required, tossed my gear into the whaleboat, and the coxswain took us at top speed (not very fast in a 21 foot whaleboat) toward *Whitehurst* at anchor. As we proceeded, we saw that *Whitehurst* had already weighed anchor and was underway at slow speed, heading toward the harbor opening. We caught up to her and moved alongside, allowing me to climb onto a ladder dropped down from the quarterdeck. The coxswain took the whaleboat forward, my gear included, to be hauled aboard to the boat deck by davits. I climbed the ladder, requested permission to come aboard following Navy protocol, and carried out my orders, reporting to the ship's captain, Lieutenant Horton, captain of the ship on the flying bridge, in control as the ship headed toward the harbor channel and open sea. The captain welcomed me aboard, apologized for crowded conditions that would necessitate my being bunked in the unoccupied ship's brig, introduced me to one or more nearby officers, and had one of them, Lieutenant Nance, arrange to get me settled. This episode took but a few moments. Nance and I departed the bridge and went to the wardroom where he showed me the officers' quarters. He left me as I put some water in the basin and prepared to shave. This second episode, similarly, took only a few minutes. We were still in calm water inside the harbor.

Just as I was about to start shaving, there was a sharp, scrunching sound as though the ship had run aground on coral. I was startled and thought that we must have missed the channel leading out from the harbor and scraped onto coral. I could imagine nothing else, although the ship did not seem to shudder or lurch. Racing out on deck, I immediately saw a huge roiling, mushroom-shaped cloud rising rapidly into the sky. It looked awesome. It was a monstrous force moving swiftly and powerfully, rising high into the sky. As it moved upward, it displaced and shoved aside a great mass of clouds. The whole sky was turmoil of movement.

There was no question that it was an explosion. Others aboard knew immediately that it was the explosion of the ammunition ship *Mount Hood* that had been at anchor in the same part of the harbor as *Whitehurst* had been and that *Whitehurst* moments ago had passed by on its way to the channel leading out of the harbor. Lew Cowden, a machinist mate aboard *Whitehurst* remembers the event as follows: "We were taking on supplies and got word to hurry, the convoy was waiting on us. We started to head out while still unloading the last of the supplies. The 'all hands' work party had been secured, and we headed toward the open sea where the convoy was forming, when it exploded. They tell me we were much closer when taking on supplies and went right past her on our way out. I had just started up the ladder to the fantail when the blast pushed me back. I ran to the forward ladder and came up on deck amidships and saw the sight ... I was told that we were far enough away to avoid damage from the blast and near enough that major debris blew over us."

Another description of the event appears in an unofficial log of *Whitehurst* kept by George Baskin, a metal-smith. His log for that day reads: "Arrived at Manus Island at 0600. Left at 0730. On leaving, we went right past the ammunition ship *Mount Hood* that blew up. If it had happened 3 minutes earlier, everyone topside on the *Whitehurst* would have been killed. We were about 5,000 yards from it when she exploded. I thought my ear drums were busted. Guess God is with us."

All of us aboard *Whitehurst* have speculated what would have been our fate if our departure from Manus that day had been delayed and *Whitehurst* had been broadside to *Mount Hood* at 0803, the time of the explosion. As it was, I reported aboard perhaps ten or fifteen minutes before the explosion, at a time when the ship was moving slowly enough to allow me to climb aboard and for the motor whaleboat to be hoisted to the boat deck. After that, the ship probably would have proceeded faster. If at that point she began making 10 knots - a not unusual speed if she were headed for open sea and a waiting convoy - and continued at that speed for the next fifteen minutes, she would have added 2.88 miles of distance from the spot where I boarded her.

This is remarkably close to the 5,000-yard figure in Baskin's log as the distance from the explosion. It is not hard to imagine, therefore, that *Whitehurst* was indeed just about passing *Mount Hood* when I came aboard. What if I had been five or ten minutes late in reporting and delayed the ship from picking up speed to get out of the harbor? Suffice it to say that Lady Luck (or God, as Baskin put it) was with us that day.

BELOW DECKS IN PEARL HARBOR ~ Charles J. Merdinger



0755 December 7, 1941. Ten months to the day after my graduation from the Naval Academy at Annapolis, I was asleep in my bunk aboard the battleship USS Nevada moored in Pearl Harbor when it started-World War II, that is.

I was awakened by the clanging of the general alarm bell and assumed that it was just another drill. While I was hurriedly putting on my socks, a sailor ran by my room shouting, "It's the real thing, it's the Japs!" Almost simultaneously, I heard a tremendous explosion, the rattling of machine guns, the bugler sounding General Quarters, and the boatswain mate's whistle followed by his call, "General Quarters, General Quarters, All Hands, Man your battle stations. This is no drill." I stepped through my socks and quickly put on my dungarees, slippers and officer's hat and rushed to my battle station – the main battery plotting room - a few decks below the water line. Normally, our job was to do the computing for firing the big fourteen inch guns, but there was no firing of our main battery that day. Our function changed almost immediately. Because we were connected by sound power phones to various vital stations throughout the ship, our role as a communication center increased as other sources, such as the loud speaker system, were shut down. Initially, there were about 15 of us, all with head phones in main battery plot-a room filled with electrical boards and range keeper machines. My two senior officers were not on board, so, as the only officer left, I, a junior Ensign, ended up in charge. A constant stream of information, questions and orders filled our phone lines. In the first few minutes I received word that my roommate, Ensign Joe Taussig, had been wounded. On another line I called for a corpsman to help him. Although Joe lost a leg, he ultimately became an Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

My first major decision came about an hour and a half later when I was directed to send half of my men topside to replace those who had been killed or wounded on the five-inch anti-aircraft guns. I did not call for volunteers but simply designated those to go based on my perception of the relative importance of the phone lines they were manning. No discussion, all went quietly-they saluted and left. It was a Hobson's choice. Those who departed might be shot to death, but those who remained might be drowned. No murmurs by anyone, we just carried on. Ours was the only battleship to get underway. We left our moorings about a half an hour after the attack had started despite the fact that we had already taken a torpedo on our port side forward. As the Nevada tried to head out of the harbor, the Japanese airmen turned their

full attention to us. At least five bombs hit us in vital spots setting off separate explosions. The result was that we were on fire in various parts of the ship and sinking. That we might block the harbor was almost inevitable. We were directed to get out of the middle of the channel and beach the ship. This we did in two stages, first touching Hospital Point and then pushed by a tug to the opposite shore. Sometime after 10:30 we slowly sank to the bottom, and the water line rose almost to our main deck. Basically, we had settled in the mud next to a sugar cane field, and the water was beginning to flood the lower decks.

Below decks, my station was receiving a running account of the battle from our spotter in the tops of the main mast. "The Arizona has blown up! The Oklahoma has capsized! We have taken a bomb forward and fires are raging!" and on and on. Late in the morning when the main power failed in our compartment we shifted to auxiliary power, which left us in an eerie green light with no fresh air. We were sweating profusely. It reminded me of some of those movies I had seen where sailors were trapped in a disabled submarine. When the water started dripping on our heads through the overhead, we realized that we were now in an air bubble. Around three o'clock in the afternoon--some seven hours after we had manned our battle stations--the gaskets on the door by which we had entered began to give way, and the water started to come in around our ankles. We had done the most we could to maintain communications and obviously could not continue. I called the Executive Officer, telling him we could hold about five more minutes before we were flooded out, and requested permission to leave our station. Upon his OK, I passed the word to the men to "Secure." All hands took off their phones, wrapped them up and hung them on the bulkhead just as we had done after every drill. This, while the water was rushing in around our feet! Fortunately, there was a second door at the other end of our compartment, a door that I had never been through. We opened it, and all filed out. I was the last one and dogged the door behind me as the rising water lapped against it. We had entered "central station"--a smoke filled compartment that was still dry. Initially, I was unaware of its existence, but we found a vertical tube that carried communication wires all the way up several decks to the conning tower that was well above the water line. Rungs used by maintenance personnel allowed us to climb to safety. I was the last in line, and when about two-thirds of the way up, I smelled fresh air for the first time in several hours. What a moment!

When I emerged on deck my first reaction was to thank the Lord that I had made it, and the second was to note that the Japanese had done such a professional job. I was not angry, just awed. The world was on fire--the buildings, ships, and even the water, which was covered with burning oil. Billowing clouds of smoke covered the ships and the surrounding area, and our crews were fighting fires just below me. My dungarees were soaking wet. I hung them up to dry, and someone walked off with them. My slippers rotted off me. All I had left was the hat that identified me as an officer. My room was under water. (When we dewatered and raised the ship several weeks later, I looked for my room, but it was gone--blasted away by a bomb. I thought I had lost everything, but I found my sword that had been blown 35 feet from

where my room had been. Lucky that I hadn't slept in that morning!) I did manage to get some clothes that day. The Marines had a "Small Stores" which had not been touched so I was able to get shoes and new uniform in the midst of all the commotion. The Captain decided that I was the best dressed officer on the ship so he directed me to go ashore the next day to assure the wives of our shipmates that despite our many casualties, their husbands had survived.

By April 1942 we had re-floated the ship and sailed back to the mainland for a major overhaul. I then joined the battleship USS Alabama that in the winter went on the Murmansk Run in the North Atlantic and then back to the South Pacific for more combat missions. I was officer of the deck on an open bridge. At the end of WWII I transferred to the Navy Civil Engineer Corps, and during the Korean War headed the Seabees at Adak in the Aleutian Islands. During the Vietnam War, again heading a Seabee outfit supporting the Marines, I ended up in another surprise attack-the Tet Offensive-at Danang and Hue. I've been asked many times whether I prefer war aboard ship or ashore. Answer - none of the above. When I retired from the Navy my first civilian job was in academia -- President of a liberal arts college founded in the 18th century. That was my fourth and final war.

ALTRUISM
~ *Alvin H. Storch, Jr.*



I interrupted my college education to serve in the Army Air Corps from 1942 to 1946 as a Captain specializing in aircraft maintenance. As Group Adjutant and Training Officer, I was also Base Squadron Commanding Officer at times. We maintained aircraft rotating in and out of battle and trained replacement troops to keep the war effort moving. Though sorry I never made it overseas, I know my service and that of others stateside was necessary and useful.

One common trait I found in everyone involved in the war effort was Altruism. We left behind everything we knew – family, friends, communities, schools, places of worship, jobs, careers, possessions – to do whatever it took to protect and defend liberty and justice. One of my small acts of altruism came when a fellow officer accidentally shot himself in the stomach while handling his gun. He nearly died instantly of massive blood loss. I volunteered to be a blood donor. It was just the right thing to do.

I served with some colorful characters, including a pilot named Captain Hane whose mother accompanied him from base to base, a Senior Pilot from WW I, and a Senior Balloon Pilot who flew observation balloons in WW I.

My nine assignments took me all over the country:

Chanute Field in Rantoul IL, Yale University in New Haven CT, Santa Maria CA Army Air Base, Pendleton Army Air Base in OR, Tinker Field in Oklahoma City OK, Great Bend KA Army Air Base (B17 and B29 transition field), AAB Salt Lake City UT commercial airport (as replacement officer for assignment overseas), more time in Great Bend KA, and finally Lowry Field in Denver CO for separation.

MY ARMY LIFE
~ William G. (Bill) De Mers



As a Private or Private First Class

On September 11, 1933, I enlisted in the National Guard. My unit was Co. D of the 128th Infantry of the 32nd Division. The first thing we were required to learn was our unit and its history. As a part of a larger unit two infantry units were given the title of "Les Miserables." The Division logo became the Red Arrow. The 32nd Brigade of Wisconsin still wears it.

Besides marching we were trained how to use our weapons: the 30-caliber water-cooled machine guns, the Springfield rifle and the Colt 45 pistol. We had to qualify in all these weapons in order to advance. As a private we were given many details, the two worst ones were K.P. and latrine duty. The best part of K.P. was that the kitchen crew ate first. The bad part of my K.P. duty was that the cook didn't like square potatoes.

The scariest event that happened while I was a Private was the Kohler Strike. Two men had been killed, so the First Battalion was awakened at two o'clock AM to prepare to move out. We were at summer camp so we were assembled easily. We were drilled in riot duty, while we waited to go. Our train finally came and we were soon loaded and on our way. It was dark when we reached Milwaukee, and from there we traveled blackout. We arrived in Kohler at about 2 am. My buddy and I soon had our tent pitched. Before we even got to sleep, we were sent on a detail to Sheboygan for rations. We rode in a World War I chain-driven truck. Next morning was police detail, then we were posted with our machine guns, one squad at each end of town. (No Ammo.) It was Sunday and there were many lookers, but they couldn't go into town. After a couple days the strike ended and we returned to camp. We all had a story to tell when we got home.

As a Corporal

By 1936 I had become a Corporal with the responsibility to teach and train my squad and the chance to become a leader. The Corporal is in charge of 8 to 12 men who come to him for help, and all the ranks above him see how he does. He

answers to both sides. The U.S. Army was organized into four armies (later into more). Because of the turmoil in Europe, the Army decided each army would have maneuvers every four years. 1936 was our turn as part of the Second Army; we were to go to Michigan for our maneuver. The maneuvers are War Games. The regular Army was to be the enemy. Other officers were detailed as umpires who determined which of us did the correct thing.

As a Sergeant

By the fall of 1936 I finally reached the rank of Sergeant. There are several kinds of sergeant in the Army. The three-striper is the lowest and is called a Buck Sergeant. The Buck Sergeant helps the Lieutenant as Platoon Sergeant. The Staff Sergeant in our company was the supply sergeant. The First Sergeant is in charge of the Company under the Captain. The Master Sergeant and Sergeant Major are usually with the higher staff of the Division.

The heavy Weapons Company had three platoons: two machine gun platoons and, for a while, an anti-tank platoon. When we got the 81MM mortars, the anti-tank unit was assigned to battalion headquarters. I was Platoon Sergeant of the mortar platoon. My company commander suggested to me that I take the extended course the Army offered. If one completed the course and was then also reviewed by a military board, he would become a 2nd Lieutenant in the National Guard Reserves. This I did and got my Reserves commission. They would call me up when needed. By this time I was now the First Sergeant of the Company.

Now that I recall our later field training, I think it was just assumed we would be fighting in Europe. When Hitler rose to power his actions almost proved that we would be spending time in that area. By 1939 the work became more strenuous and we became more knowledgeable of the Continent.

In January of 1940 we went to cold and snowy Camp McCoy for 2 weeks. Now we knew we were headed for Europe. As First Sergeant I didn't have to do the field training. We were housed in some World War I tar paper shacks heated by a couple of stoves.

As a Second Lieutenant

Company D grew as we completed our winter and summer maneuvers, and then one afternoon I was asked to report to regimental headquarters. A sergeant from "B" Company, one from "E" Company and I from "D" Company were sworn in as Second Lieutenants. We three were now officers!

We heard rumors about the draft and National Guard Units 1-year call-ups. Our company commander didn't think the married men should be away from home for a year, so he offered them Honorable Discharges. All but one accepted. As we prepared for federal service October 15th I became Mess Officer responsible for feeding the men for the 10 days before our departure. (All on \$0.75 per man per day.) We headed south for our duty -- Camp Beauregard, LA. We trained and took increasingly long marches.

By spring of 1941 the anxious boys were counting the days until October 14th. Home Sweet Home! Now came the big test: maneuvers. We were going to Texas for about 6 weeks. As part of the 3rd Army under General Krueger we were to fight the 2nd Army under General Lear. Armored units under Patton were against us. However, the big and sad news back in LA was that our year had been extended six months. Being the junior officer and single, I had many details. One I enjoyed was the weekend recreation trips to New Orleans. I don't remember the date, but around this time I got my silver bar. I was now a First Lieutenant.

As a First Lieutenant

I was starting to feel better because I was no longer the junior officer. Just my luck, though, the Army wanted to try something new. They wanted a new combat team smaller than a Division. It was called a Regimental Combat Team. To test this concept each Regiment would provide a fully staffed Battalion. Our Regiment used the First Battalion as the nucleus. I was one of the Platoon leaders. Then, in October, these combat teams were sent for two weeks for maneuvers in North Carolina. All went well and we were back in Louisiana by November. Orders were waiting for me. I was to report to the Infantry School in Fort Benning, Georgia for an advanced infantry course on December 8th. I thought it would be nice to get away for three months. I left on December 7th for Georgia with my car radio playing the Glenn Miller Band. "Elmer's Tune" was on the air when the news broke about Pearl Harbor!

What happens now? Should I return to my unit or go on? I chose to go on. It seemed all the officers took everything seriously. We were the first wartime class.

In March I was sent to Fort Devins, Massachusetts, and my first task was to take a detail of men down to Boston Harbor to load Army cots for our camp in England. It took us all day, and we knew then that we must be going to England to fight in Europe. Then came a big surprise. We were loaded onto a train speeding westward! Water -- some Wisconsinites thought it was the ocean, but we were going along the East Bay shore. We saw Hanger 1 at Moffett Field before arriving at Fort Ord, where our units were brought up to full strength. We left camp one night and traveled blackout to a lighted

area where we backed into what looked like a shed. As we got off the train we walked through an open door and onto a ship! It was the "Monterey" at Pier 39. The 126th and 127th Regiments boarded the "Mariposa" and "Matsonia." The 125th had been separated from the Division in December; they were on guard along the West Coast. By nightfall we left the Bay and San Francisco. As we sailed south other ships joined us. The entire Division was in one convoy consisting of 11 ships. At that time it was the largest convoy to leave the U.S.

On Mother's Day 1942 we arrived at our port -- Adelaide, South Australia. Our Regiment was assigned to Camp Woodside, an Aussie Army camp. Now we had new things to learn, one being how to survive in the Outback. It was possible we might have to fight there. The Japanese had been bombing Darwin, and no one knew if they would invade or not. On July 4th we marched in parade in Adelaide, then went to watch an American football game, the 127th against the 128th. While at Woodside a camp was being built for our Division near Brisbane. We moved there in August, and we knew we were getting closer to battle. I was promoted to Captain and put in command of Company "D": 184 men and officers.

As a Captain

Fortunately I was put in command of the former Company I knew so well. We all worked well together. We trained with our various weapons: mortar, machine gun, pistol, rifle and Browning automatic rifle. Ready to use any of these weapons if necessary, the men were getting bored; they wanted to get the war over. Their wish was soon to come true. One day in late August the Division was massed for a sort of pep rally. I never heard a word as a messenger came to me: I was to take my unit back to our Company area to prepare to move out. I noticed our entire Battalion had been alerted to move.

We loaded onto trucks and went to an airport. There were not enough cargo planes, so my unit was loaded on B17s with the men laid in the nose like cordwood. We were soon in flight, to an unknown destination. We landed at Rockhampton for refueling, and had been in Australia long enough to know we were going north. We hit a bird as we ascended, and it came through the nose splattering blood and feathers on the men. They were tense enough to assume we had been fired on. One of the plane's crew assured the men that no one was hurt.

We landed in the morning and were told to move up the Goldie River trail where other parts of the Battalion that had moved up earlier and made camp. We secured the area. We had arrived at Port Moresby, New Guinea, and the rest of the Division was moving to New Guinea by plane and ship. The 126th Regiment was securing the Kappa Kappa trail, and their 2nd Battalion was soon to hike up and over the mountain.

A short time later we flew over the mountain in a cargo plane -- and as we came to a landing we were told to jump because we were over a field of tall grass and marsh where the plane could not land. Half way between Buna and Milne Bay, we followed orders to hike toward Buna. Our load was heavy with equipment, personal things, and weapons. Those not carrying their squad guns carried ammunition. Hiking through the jungle was not like Texas or Louisiana, and being near the Equator was HOT. We soon learned there were things we did not need. Some even tried to ditch the extra ammo. The only people behind us were a few medics, so my staff and I picked up the ammunition and brought it to the men without any. We had no kitchen, so those personnel were now carriers.

The 126th Regiment was headed toward the left side and the 128th on the right, with the enemy in between. Our worst enemy was the jungle and its diseases. About the 15th of November, 1942, we made contact with the Japanese. We were told that our campaign would be short as intelligence said there were only about 300 men at Buna. We secured ourselves for the night. Fishing boats were used to bring supplies, only moving at night and hiding during the day. On November 15th someone on the ship decided there wasn't much to worry about, so they moved up near our camp to unload. Suddenly a group of Zeros came over, bombed and strafed the ship and anyone swimming to shore. The sight of the ammunition going off was a great fireworks show. I don't know the casualty count, but the General's Aide had both arms and legs damaged. Now we were glad we had carried our ammo.

Our supplies all went down with the boat; leaving us with what we had carried. We tried our first assault the next morning. We soon learned that all the maneuvers we had experienced were not even close to jungle warfare. The Japanese had built log bunkers of logs, making them hard to see. They also placed snipers in the coconut trees. Although we could not get rid of the snipers by rifle fire, we used a machine gun to cut the top off the tree. No more palms to hide in. A machine gun right along the trail stopped everything. I suggested to the Colonel that we use the 81mm mortar. We only had 25 rounds of mortar shells, but he gave me the OK saying, "don't waste any." After getting the distance, we fired one round to use as a base for bracketing. We were either lucky or had trained well: the round landed right on the machine gun. No need for more.

Meanwhile things were happening elsewhere. The 126th had cleared or secured an area for planes to land and take off. A medical unit had been set up nearby. The 127th Regiment had moved up and was in reserve. The 41st Division was near and ready.

One day, while we were attacking, two Sergeants of "C" Company came to me saying they had no officers, asking for help. I told the First Sergeant to take command and I would go to Battalion for help. Before he could move, a red dot

appeared on his forehead and the back of his head was gone. The Second Sergeant took over, but he too got a sniper shot. I was OK and went for help.

We were not killing the 300 Japanese fast enough for General MacArthur so he removed all officers from Battalion Commanding Officer on up. We got a whole staff of new officers, some direct from the U.S. They planned a major attack. Some General Grant Tanks had been brought up on small ships moving only at night. Our men had to cut a trail through the jungle so they could move up. The Aussies like to ride the tank with the turret open, making it easy to drop a grenade in the tank, making it useless. On December 5th the Air Force bombed and the Artillery fired on the enemy. Then we started advancing. Suddenly artillery shells were landing in our area. I told my Recon Sergeant not to be too close to me so that one shell would not get us both. He moved away, and the next shell got me. The medics quickly picked me up and took me to the Regimental Aid Station. Here I had my first surgery and was given pain relief. The Fuzzy Wuzzys would not be back until morning. Eight men carried me, four at a time, along the ten-mile hike to the Hospital complex at Dobudurah. We made it by evening.

The next morning the plane came to bring us to Port Moresby. I had priority as I was the most seriously wounded patient. As soon as we were loaded we took off over the mountain to Port Moresby. During our flight the plane captain told us the Japanese were bombing that very hospital. Upon landing we were taken to the 10th Evacuation Hospital. We were taken directly to surgery, before admitting us. The surgery was in a church basement; they had electric lights there. The doctors wanted to clean out the wounds and get rid of any foreign matter. From surgery we were taken to a big tent which served as a ward, 20 to a tent. We had canvas cots with a mattress and bedding. It felt good to be bathed and put between sheets for a good rest.

As patients got better and were able to walk, they were either returned to their units or flown to Australia for more treatment. One day my temperature rose to 108°F; they told me I was supposed to die at 106°F. Bathing me with alcohol brought it down, and my doctor asked me if I would mind going to surgery again. He was right, for a piece of shrapnel had been missed. It was a large piece and had caused the infection and temp. He thought now it was all out. In 1961 another piece worked out of my abdomen, and in 2004 another came out my back.

I awoke 3 days later to find a doctor and nurse standing by my bed. The doctor asked if I would like anything. I told him a beer or ice cream would be good. I heard him say: "This man is not going to die. Let's help him." He went to the airport and got oxygen from a bomber and an inner tube from a tail wheel to prevent bed sores. I felt better despite the fact that I had been in a coma, and they were waiting for me to die.

I could not fly, so I waited for the hospital ship that came on New Year's Eve. From the Port of Brisbane we were taken by ambulance to the 42nd General Hospital, 4 to a room: The General's Aide strafed last November; another Lieutenant from Massachusetts, and an Air Force Lieutenant Colonel were my roommates. It was the middle of March before I could eat solid food and go to the Dining Room, where we really ATE. We wondered about our future until the "Clip Fontaine" arrived to ferry us to San Francisco's Letterman General Hospital on Mothers' Day 1943.

Letterman had room for incoming Army and Air Force casualties. We were taken to Hamilton General Hospital in Modesto, California for treatment. In June I was taken to Schick General Hospital in Clinton, Iowa. After getting treated I asked for sick leave and got thirty days. I went home. On July 25, 1943 I took a date to a night club, and there was a Lieutenant with a cute little nurse. We became a foursome after introductions. My date and the Lieutenant wanted to drink rather than dance, so I danced with the nurse I had just met. After some small talk and bios, I told her SHE was the girl I was going to marry. She called me a cocky Captain. We ended the evening with the ones we came with. The rest of my time at Schick I saw Madeleine the nurse whenever she was free.

My convalescence was accompanied by regular treatment. Life was good, but I was soon declared fit for duty and had orders for Fort McClellan, Alabama. I was quickly granted leave and decided to go back to Iowa by train. I was in love. Madeleine was waiting at the station. I got a room at the hotel and rented a car. We were happy, at least I was. One day I walked past a jewelry store, then I walked back and in. It was a good place to buy a ring. On the 25th of September I proposed. She accepted. Not knowing our future, I didn't want any problems, so I told her if she ever met someone better she could throw the ring away. I had one stipulation: If we ever got near each other in our duties, and if it could be arranged, we would wed.

My leave expired much too soon, and I returned to Fort McClellan. My new assignment was inspector of training of all heavy Weapons Companies. I was also to inspect the Kitchens every morning. I called Iowa every day. Finally I really got good news. Madeleine and others were to report to Camp Rucker, Alabama. To me, any place in Alabama was next door. Camp Rucker was only 200 miles away. It didn't take long for us to buy wedding rings. She would make arrangements when she got established, and I was able to visit her every weekend.

I volunteered to take an advanced class at Fort Benning (100 miles closer). I shared my experiences with a newly formed Medical Unit heading overseas and we set a wedding date: Thanksgiving Day, November 25, 1943. For a long time I didn't know why everyone was so nice and good to me. Then I found out -- I was a survivor. Having been in combat, wounded and getting around, I was the first such person everywhere I went.

The Commanding Officer of Madeleine's unit did not take her overseas, where some of the nurses were killed in Anzio. My class at Fort Benning ended, and I returned to the hospital at Fort McClellan. The medics thought my work at school was too much and sent me to Lowry General Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia. I was treated and finally given new orders to report to Camp Beale, California for light duty in the U.S. Camp Beale was now a replacement depot. I was assigned a Company. Each Company occupied a Battalion area and had about 300 men. We had to keep them physically prepared and spirits up

Madeleine was transferred to Charleston, South Carolina. From our remote spots we were able to get a ten-day leave together in August of 1944. By October the doctors thought Madeleine was pregnant. At that time if you were pregnant you could be discharged. So in October Madeleine joined me in California. We found a small place to rent and enjoyed our life together. I was getting my medical care at the station hospital and the Army hospital in Auburn.

The atomic bombs suddenly changed things. I became Adjutant of the Separation Center, which classified me as essential. However, the war was over, I was on limited service, and now with over three years as Captain I knew my Army life was about over. I checked in at the station hospital and they sent me to the Oakland Regional Hospital. I was treated, examined, appeared before a Board and was retired from the Army on January 13, 1946.

Many things happened wherever I was, but not enough to be mentioned. From December 5, 1942 until now I have been in 16 hospitals and have had sixteen major operations, and I'm still here. Our marriage lasted 50 years plus 8 months. The body count of Japanese dead at Buna was about 5,000.

BOMBED EVERY NIGHT
~ *Walter Andonian*



A sergeant in the U. S. Army Air Corp, I served as an Aircraft Armorer. I spent one year in England during the war, where we were bombed or buzz bombed every night most of the time! I also taught armament on aircraft – guns and bomb racks.

CAMARADERIE
~ *Kenneth Sanders*



I was an Electronic Tech 3rd Class in the Navy from September 1944 to April 1946. Most of that time I was in Service Schools, and feel lucky to have not been in the fighting. It was an interesting experience and I admire those who had to go into battle. Most of all I remember the camaraderie among the troops.

ALL OVER THE WORLD
~ *Spencer J. Gregory*



An E-6 in the U.S. Army, I was in Panama for 26 months, Europe for one year during the War, and then the Philippines over 2 years. I also participated in the Korean War for 18 months and spent an additional 14 months there later in my service.

B17 PILOT
~ *Doug Ewing*



A Lieutenant in the Army Air Force, I flew 35 missions over Germany as a B17 pilot stationed in England.

PILOT INSTRUCTOR ~ *Angelo A. diFalco*



I was a 1st Lieutenant in the Army Air Corps – a Pilot-Instructor at Randolph Field from 1942 to 1945. As part of the Lend-Lease program, I certified pilots from the RAF in England and Chinese Air Corps as fully accredited to fly B25, B26, and A20 airplanes. I was medically discharged in September of 1945.

THE WOMEN'S ARMY CORPS ~ *Gloria K. Sherman*



In December 1943 I was unhappy with my job as Assistant to the Coordinator of Selective Service for the 11th Naval District in Los Angeles. The young Army Captain with whom I enjoyed working was transferred before Christmas. Among my other duties I would sometimes accompany recruits to the Induction Station, so I had a good idea of what was required of a man to be inducted into the military but nothing about the procedure for a woman. One day while feeling low I received a letter from a friend who was in the WACs and she urged me to enlist. I thought about it and the next time I went there I asked what the procedure was to join. I was told that the best way to sign up for a day of tests at the end of which I would be told of the results and how I could join the Army. When the day was over I was asked whether two officers could come to my home to tell me the results. They came. They told me that they felt I could be of service in view of the testing results and the information of my knowledge of the Croatian language. They showed me pictures of the "Country Club of the East" where I would be sent to do Top Secret work. They added that since I wasn't a college graduate, I would have the rank of Technician 3 (Tech 3), but that I could get an Officer ranking if I was successful in my work and was selected for Officer Training School. I received clearance and discussed the decision with my family before enlisting.

On the 2nd of June 1944 I was on a Northern Pacific Railroad Train to Des Moines, Iowa and 6 weeks of Basic Training. I had traveled on trains before, but never across the northern part of the US alone with little idea of what was in store for me. I met some other women and men who were going to military assignments and some in uniform. With some I exchanged information knowing that no two experiences would be the same. The stark and beautiful scenery interested me, and following the Platte River was exciting. Reaching the town of North Platte, we got off the train to enjoy coffee and homemade doughnuts set out by a committee of women. I was near my destination.

I was assigned to a barracks building, a bed, a footlocker, and a clothing rod. After stowing my own possessions, I went to be fitted for a uniform, cool dress, khaki underwear, bathroom kit, fine leather oxfords, bedding and a mattress -- all of which had to be carried to my assigned space. At the medical unit I started a series of inoculations against a number of potential threats. It wasn't long before I was one of a group of fifty women from all walks of life and all over the U.S., and in a few days seven of us bonded. We called ourselves the Sloppy Josies. For 6 weeks we laughed and cried together and became good friends. At the end of six weeks of the hardest physical work I had ever done in my life, I discovered that I had enjoyed every bit of it. Never having had the experience of living with others in camps, schools or colleges, it was especially appreciated.

We marched in the hot Iowa sun everyday, and everyday girls fainted on the track. More injections followed almost immediately, leaving us with aching arms to clean for Colonel's inspection. I still liked the life, because it was the first time in my life where I felt an important part of a group (25 beds on each of two floors and the beds a yard apart.) It was the first time I recognized the leadership ability in myself. I was called on to make the presentation of a birthday gift to our Lieutenant, and then again, when one of the officers was promoted and posted to a higher rank, I presided over the little ceremony.

Being born the middle child, I competed with both siblings. They each had status. Eugene being the first child and a male in a European family, Mira for having survived birth to a mother ill with Spanish Influenza and for being a beautiful, endearing, funny, active child. I was then and into adulthood the difficult child bent on competing. At age 5 I recall singing in the courtyard of our 10-story apartment building to be heard by everyone above. I was delighted with my success as measured in applause and having pennies wrapped in paper thrown down to me! I did it often. (I started school at age 6 knowing little English. At age 9 we moved to the suburbs. I made friends in school, and still remember some of them by name.) I digress! Back to Des Moines!

Basic Training had many aspects: We were assigned K.P. (Kitchen Police) about twice a week to work in the mess hall after dinner and into the late night. It was dirty and physically difficult, especially cleaning the bottom of huge cauldrons into which your head and shoulders disappeared. It was marching to the colors with music every day, cleaning the latrines, doing your own laundry, and keeping your shoes shined and generally looking good. I was twice named WAC of the WEEK, for which I received three-day passes I used to take the bus to Chicago where I had relatives who wined and dined me. We were required to see training films, but rarely saw movies for pleasure. Because of our demanding work schedule I usually just hit the sack. We very rarely had a chance to be with the men.

We were given our travel orders at the ceremony marking the completion of training. I took a train to Washington, D.C. and was transported to Arlington Hall, Arlington, Virginia.

ARLINGTON HALL: "The Country Club of the East"

Entering through the gates we saw our barracks -- over ten for men and for women. Then came three large buildings named A, B and C, and an old lovely building housing the Administration.

We were given our barracks and bed numbers; lined up to receive our mattress, bedding, footlocker key, and a sheaf of information and instructions; and finally taken to our assigned barracks. We stashed our belongings and returned to the supply area to get supplies and more instructions. My bed on the second floor was midway down the aisle, and I quickly got acquainted with the women who would be living near me. We learned that each of us was assigned to one of the three buildings. Over and over we were told that nothing we did nor our work site could ever be discussed. Never, to my knowledge did anyone ever talk.

The next day I learned that I would be a "Cryptanalyst and Translator", and I met my immediate supervisor (a young Greek/American WAC Lieutenant), her direct superior (Dr. Rutledge, a Classics professor from Kansas City), and the top man Dr. Ferdinand Coudert (a gifted linguist). They explained my duties and assured me that they would always be there for me. At my workstation I met my two colleagues (a Slovene/American WAC and a Serbian civilian) who would join me, a Croatian/ American, to comprise The Yugoslav Division. We started working together the next day. I was now a soldier in the U.S. Army Second Signal Service Battalion and the Signal Intelligence Service.

Each morning we were given stacks of original messages (which had been processed by machines in some other part of the Post) giving us a rundown of the number of times a single letter was used in the correspondence and other

information! From then on we used our language abilities to decide first if they were in the foreign language we knew and then to try to decipher the messages. This was painstaking work and immensely frustrating. We also directly translated messages received in the foreign language. Every day we kept notes on what we had learned that day and what we still didn't know.

Arlington Hall was originally a Prep School for girls, so it had tennis courts, a swimming pool, riding stable, and dining hall. In the 17 months I was there, I swam three times, played tennis two or three times, and never rode. There was not enough time or energy left from the work. I used my free time on weekends to go into Washington, D.C. to attend the many free activities provided for service people. I went to the Library of Congress Chamber Music Concerts, to the Lincoln Memorial (which I love), attended National Symphony Concerts, went to the movies, and to the Library to check out books. I received \$50 a month pay, \$25 of which went to my mother as an allotment. The only important extra for me was to go to a restaurant for breakfast every Sunday and to read the Sunday paper in peace and quiet. Since we were provided clothing, food, and housing I was always able to save enough for personal needs and even to go to New York when I got three-day passes. I visited friends and family 3 times, and a few times joined other WACS at Ft. Mead for a night of dancing with the men stationed there. It was fun because their numbers so far exceeded ours that we danced all night to live music and met many soldiers.

In April 1945 I received a surprise phone call from the man I had been writing for the past seven years. I never received his replies after he was sent overseas in 1941. He was a Hungarian/American whom I met and dated before leaving for California in December of 1938. He was serving as the head of the OSS in the Balkan Theatre, and was in Washington, D.C. on R&R! We resumed our friendship, which had developed in absentia to a "loveship" on both parts. We married in July 1945, and he returned to Venice in August. Through channels he asked for me to be transferred to Venice but it was denied because they deemed my work at Arlington to be more important. Though now approved, it was also too late for me to attend OCS. The war was over. In November 1945 it was announced that any married WAC could be discharged upon request. I applied and was given my discharge on December 10, 1945.

AIR FORCE NAVIGATOR
~ *Richard Kuhlmann*



Mr. Richard Kuhlmann was born on June 29, 1922 in St. Louis, Missouri. He served 56 missions in Italy from 1943-1946 as a navigator in the Air Force. He was responsible for navigating the journeys to their destination and being aware of the aircraft's surrounding. It was vital to his life as well as the lives of the other soldiers to be observant and quick-thinking to anticipate any dangers. One of the things he loved most about being in the Air Force was the excitement. He recalls a normal routine flight when German enemies did a surprise attack and shot down his plane. They had fallen 50 feet down on the side of the hill where his plane continued to slide. Fortunately, his plane had not blown up or burst into flames. Pure luck. "The good Lord was with me", he said. As he reflects back to his days of service he comments, "At the time, the war seemed necessary. It was not something you despised doing. You knew you had to stop Hitler, so anything you did during the war seemed worthwhile." Mr.

Richard Kuhlmann enjoyed the excitement of his missions and is grateful to have contributed to the success of the war as a First Lieutenant in the Air Force for 3 years.

ARMY NURSE CORPS ~ Ruth Caroline Hanson



I went to North Western Hospital for 3 years and graduated as a Registered Nurse. Three-fourths of my class went into the service to do our part for the war.

My best friend and I signed up to join the Army Nurse Corp. We were sent to Camp Carson in Colorado for Basic Training. My whole Army Nurses Corp volunteered to go overseas. We left from New York City on the Liberty ships. These three ships sailed a zig-zag pattern as they crossed the Atlantic so that the enemy submarines would not be able to find us.

We landed in England and were sent to the town of Tidworth. Our assignment was to start the 103rd General Hospital in an old barracks. We worked hard to clean up the barracks. One half of the barracks was used as a hospital. The corps men and women were housed on opposite ends of the hospital. Our patients were the wounded soldiers fighting on the front lines in Germany and France.

My key responsibility was to give the best possible nursing care to the patients. We all tried our best and worked very hard. We took care of all kinds of injuries. I was discharged in Spring 1945 as a First Lieutenant, Army Nurse Corps.

Most vivid memories: We were super busy with too many injuries of all types. There was a lot of sadness. I had to come to terms with the fact the soldiers coming were already seriously injured. I stayed focused on how to “fix it”.

War’s horrific futility becomes a reality with its personal effects on everyone involved. These “wounds” are profound – they are life changing – and no one should have to go to war!

SUBMARINE WARFARE

~ Ray Bunt



I served as a Chief Torpedo Man in the Pacific, including the invasion of the Philippines, from 1942 to 1946. We torpedoed one of the largest aircraft carriers of the Japanese Navy. We received a Presidential Citation and a Letter of Commendation. We got 6 presentations from the invasion of the Philippines Islands. The longest patrol was 120 days, unless we would run out of ammunition. I was the youngest chief torpedo man in the Navy.

6 GERMAN TANKS SURRENDERED

~ Stanley Nowicki



As a First Class Private in the 88th Division Combat Infantry from 1942 to 43, Stanley was wounded several times. A lead scout in often harm's way, he credits the Good Lord for surviving. He has a good story of how 6 German Tanks surrendered to him!

A SPARS RECRUITER ~ *Viola Dybdal Feyling*



SPARS was the United States Coast Guard Women's Reserve created 23 November 1942. The name is a contraction of the Coast Guard motto "Semper Paratus" and its English translation Always Ready.

I enlisted in the Coast Guard February 1, 1943 and was discharged in San Francisco on December 15, 1945 as a Chief Yeoman. I attended five weeks of Basic (Boot Camp) Training at Hunter College in the Bronx, New York. Our barracks were a couple of blocks away in a seven- story apartment house. We mustered outside several times a day for meals and classes.

My first active duty assignment was to the New Orleans, LA Headquarters for the 8th Naval District. The five of us were the first SPARS assigned there as Recruiters We lived in the St. Charles Hotel for the first few weeks. We attended many publicity events and visited the Coast Guard Base. Made a few short trips into Louisiana, highlighted by several days in Baton Rouge. Next we made two trips into Mississippi and covered three cities on each trip and the surrounding areas, speaking at Service Clubs, on the radio, and "setting up shop" in drug stores or department stores. The second trip we had Mobile Recruiting Units, which acted as offices, and publicity. In July of '43 the unit was split, and several more SPARS added and I was sent to Birmingham, AL with four SPARS, a male Yeoman, a driver, and a SPAR officer. We followed the same procedures, and the four of us shared an apartment. No CG barracks were available. During that time I was sent on Temporary Duty for a couple of weeks in Mobile, AL.

Just before Christmas I transferred to Abilene, TX to take charge of the Recruiting Office there, and the male Yeoman was sent overseas. I had a room in a private home along with one of the SPARS in the office. We had a SPAR driver for our trips to outlying towns. After D Day recruiting slowed down, and I was transferred to El Paso, TX where two SPARS were running the office in the Custom House. I lived in a private home. Late in '44 we closed the El Paso Office and returned to New Orleans. I was stationed in the Operations Office, earned the rate of Chief Yeoman in Jan. '45 and worked with the Beach Patrol Officer, then Operations Officer. I lived in an apartment with three of the SPARS who were part of the original five. I finally transferred to San Francisco on October 1, 1945.