

"MY WAR"

A personal account of my life during my military service in WW-2

By

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F O R E W O R D

I have recently finished reading books: "BATTLE - The Story of the Bulge" by John Toland, copyrighted in 1959; "A TIME FOR TRUMPETS, The Untold Story of the Battle of the Bulge" by Charles B. MacDonald, copyrighted 1985; and "St. Vith: Lion In The Way" by Col. R. Ernest Dupuy, copyrighted in 1949.

These authors spent several years, traveling, interviewing, researching, and collecting the material for their books and were able to use only a small portion of the material they collected. Even so, they have given very detailed accounts of the events, personnel, and localities of this battle.

However, there was nothing to suggest that they had any information concerning my own little corner of this battle --I was a non-commissioned officer in charge of a small Military Police unit and a group of German prisoners during the four brief days of our part of this battle.

I think it likely there is no one else who could or would record these events, so it seems worthwhile, 44 years after, to write my memories of this time.

Since these memories will probably be of interest mostly to my own family, I have decided to write about my entire military career: four years, ten months, and sixteen days, from March 5, 1941 to January 20, 1946.

Some of my memories may be a bit hazy and some forgotten, but most of them are sharp and clear. My sources of information for this account are:

- a. A personal letter-type diary I kept for the first few days after my release from prison camp.
- b. Letters written to my wife, Martha, and the memorabilia collected in her scrapbook.
- c. Martha's memories of certain events.
- d. Information collected from other participants, and my own memories of the things I saw.

I deplore the repeated use of the pronouns "I", "we", "us", and "me" or "mine", but since this is my own personal account, I see no other way to express myself.

"M Y W A R"

By Clifford H. Broadwater

Early in 1941 I received a form letter which began "From the President of the United States, GREETINGS" and was issued by the local Selective Service Board in Washington, D. C. where I was registered for possible military service.

This letter notified me that I had been selected for induction into the Army of the United States and began the preliminary steps of physical exams. The "Army of the United States" was distinct from the "United States Army" which was termed "Regular Army."

I had no real desire to join the Army and had no plans to enlist voluntarily, but I think I would have felt "left out" had I not been called.

After being weighed, examined, poked, and prodded, I was pronounced "physically qualified for induction." I guess I was disgustingly healthy. Official notice of this directed me to report for service on March 5, 1941.

next steps were notification to my employer, Retirement Division, U. S. Civil Service Commission, Washington, D. C., and to my landlady, "Aunt Ellen" Smith, who kept a few roomers at 1223 Crittenden Street, N. W., Washington D. C. Living at Aunt Ellen's were her daughter, Ellen, Ellen's husband, George L. Russell, and their daughter, Roberta, who was born on December 25th. I think Roberta was about a year old at that time.

George worked at the Post Office and Ellen worked for the National League of Women Voters. Most days George drove to work and, since he went close to where Ellen worked and not too far from where I worked, I was usually able to ride downtown with them. In the evenings, I usually took a but or street car home but a couple of times I walked - about four miles.

Since I had bought a new 1939 Plymouth four-door sedan and had completed payments, I went to a Plymouth dealership in D. C. to see what kind of a deal they would make. At that time military plans were for one year of active military service, then some sort of Reserve. I asked the dealer what they would give me on a "letter of credit" and I would take delivery on a new car when I came out of the Army. They didn't seem very interested - I think they thought I had to get rid of it some way - so I just walked out on them. It was mine and I didn't have to sell it.

I worked with a friend named Earl Edward Ott who was a few years older than I. He lived with his elderly mother. They were from Kansas. His father was living when they moved to D. C. but died some time later. I visited with them quite often and, with the car, took them grocery shopping or just riding. Edward was quite good on the piano and organ. He had a piano in his apartment. Occasionally we would go to the Funeral Home that took care of his father. If there were no visitors, he would play their Hammond Organ. One number I particularly liked was the Twelfth Street Rag. He would really make the Funeral Home ring. So when I left, I asked him to drive the car and keep up the insurance on it.

Some of the people I worked with threw a "going away" party for one other young fellow who was also leaving and me - don't remember much about it. Probably some of the older folks drank some but I was not a drinking person so I didn't drink anything. We had a poker game for a while, low stakes, - must have broken about even.

So, on March 5th, I reported to the proper place with a lot more young men. We went by chartered bus to Baltimore to the old Fifth Regiment Armory, just a few blocks from 218 East Biddle Street where I roomed when I first went to Baltimore. There we had physical exams again -- and waited. While waiting, I telephoned my former landlady, Miss Adeline Hasson, and told her where I was and what was happening. She came and visited

with me for a while. Miss Hasson lived at 218 East Biddle Street, just three doors from the former residence of Wallis Warfield Simpson who married the King of England. He abdicated his kingship so he could marry her. There was some sort of museum there but I never went through it.

After a while the medical officers decided I was still disgustingly healthy so, with several hundred others, I was sworn in. We were loaded into transportation (I don't remember what) and taken to Camp Lee, VA. There we were issued clothing, uniforms, and some equipment. We were at Camp Lee for a couple of days, attending some training lectures and receiving a little instruction in close order drill. Some of the fellows had a card game going to pass the time. I wasn't in it, just watching. A sergeant, one of the permanent staff, came by and watched them for a little while. Then he told the players (and the others too) to just be sort of careful; that there were soldiers in the Army who made a business of gambling and made as much money there as they would in regular employment outside the Army.

Next, we were loaded on a troop train, Pullman cars with upper and lower berths for sleeping at night, and negro porters to ~~make~~ make the beds for us. Soldiers had to sleep double in the lower berths and single in the upper berths. I don't know when we learned we were going to Fort Bliss, Texas; it might have been after we got there; but we traveled about three days. Stopped for a couple hours at a little town named Sweetwater, Texas and were allowed to get out and walk around some.

We arrived in El Paso in the wee hours of the morning, just before daylight and unloaded to the sounds of martial music. The Regimental Band was there to greet us. Loaded into trucks and rode to an area we later found to ~~be~~ be the Anti-Aircraft Artillery Recruitment Training Center (AAATC), unloaded and marched up hill to a tented area, carrying our duffle bags with our extra clothing as well as the

personal clothing and things we had when we entered the Army. Walked alongside of Dale Simmons, whom I had known in school in Miami, Okla. and had visited once in Washington, D. C. when I found out he was there. We were never real friends and I don't know what happened to him after that.

I was assigned to Headquarters Battery, 260th Coast Artillery Battalion (Anti-Aircraft). We had tents sixteen feet square, six to a tent. Had cots, mattresses, pillows, blankets, and probably sheets. Then our training began. First it was physical training. I think the desert had just been bulldozed level, streets planned, and tents and a mess hall erected. The ground was covered with small stones, the size of our fists or smaller. We soldiers removed all the stones from the area and from the parade ground also. A couple of days of this and I was pretty stiff and sore. Also had calisthenics and close order drill.

We were divided into small squads, probably about a dozen men each, for training in close order drill and marching. Had a NCO (non-commissioned officer), probably a corporal, in charge of each squad. I think I had two left feet and kept getting them mixed up on the "column left, MARCH," "column right, MARCH", and "to the rear, MARCH." Finally the corporal had the squad fall out and took me to one side and, together, we went through the moves and soon I was all right. Then back to the squad, marching drill, calisthenics, training movies, and training lectures.

The Training Officer developed quite a program:

fall out first thing in the morning for Reveille, roll call, and inspection - in uniform

fall out for wash-up, shave, and dress for breakfast (I don't remember whether we wore uniforms or fatigues for meals)

fall out for calisthenics - always fatigues

dress in uniform for a lecture or movie

dress in fatigues for the next physical activity

dress in uniforms for close order drill

(I don't know how many times we changed uniforms each day but it was always several.)

The 260th was a National Guard outfit which had been stationed in the District of Columbia. They were called to active duty about November, 1940, and traveled by truck convoy to Fort Bliss with equipment (and guns I believe). Somebody said they took sixteen days. I heard that the War Department asked the Commanding Officer how many selectees (that is what we were called) he could take for training. The Commanding Officer said 1500 if they were all taken from the District of Columbia. So the Draft boards had attempted to call in 1500, all at that one time. By the time the rejects were excluded, they had some 1100 men who were sent to Fort Bliss on three troop trains.

We selectees began at the munificent salary of \$21.00 a month for the first four months; then went to \$30.00 a month. Of course, our clothing, equipment, and food were provided. We had to pay for the laundry we sent to the Quartermaster Laundry but that was not very much. Basic training was supposed to be for 13 weeks but I think ours was shortened to nine weeks.

My training activities memories are somewhat hazy. Occasionally, there would be close order marching drill on the drill field for all the recruits with those of each battery marching together, maybe 30 or 40 men. The Regimental Band would be there and play marching music which helped a great deal with the rhythm and relieved the monotony of just marching. There would be all these batteries scattered over the field; each one going through the manouvers selected by the Sergeant or Lieutenant. One time, we were marching down the field in a column of twos when the Sergeant commanded "to the rear, MARCH." Six of us men at the front of the column didn't hear the command and kept right on going. Finally the Sergeant noticed he had men missing and chased after us to bring us back. We had one fellow in our outfit who was pretty small, short legs, and he could never keep in step with the rest of us. Finally, one day as we were marching back to the Battery area from a morning of marching on the parade ground, the Sergeant put this fellow at the front of the column of twos on the

right side in the Right Guide position. All the others were supposed to keep in step with the Right Guide. So the Sergeant told him that now he would be in step. The Sergeant then went to the rear of the column as most Sergeants often did. Here we had no music for our marching and some of the men just behind this soldier started whispering to him to go slower, that he was marching too fast. Poor fellow, he had no sense of rhythm or timing and started going slower. The other fellows kept whispering to him to go more slowly and he kept getting slower and slower. Finally, the Sergeant came chasing up to the front of the column to see what the hold-up was. Of course, that stopped that.

Although I was in the Headquarters Battery, I drilled some with the gun crews. The Gun Batteries had 75-mm guns (about 3-inch) which were pretty big. They were mounted on a platform with wheels to make them mobile. The crew could take the wheels off and set the platform flat on the ground and level it. It had four long legs called outriggers spread out to support it in firing position. These outriggers were constructed in sections so they would fold up and stick up in the air like grasshopper legs for traveling.

The guns had a separate range finder section off a ways from the guns but connected to the guns by electrical cables. These range finder sections would determine the location, distance, altitude, and speed of the target and feed the information to two dials on the gun. These two dials would turn according to the information fed them. The gunner had two dials to be controlled by the hand cranks and it was up to him to keep his two dials matched with the dials from the range finder section. One dial and hand crank controlled the elevation of the gun muzzle and the other controlled the azimuth or direction of the gun muzzle. When the gun was fired with these dials "meshed", theoretically the projectile would explode close enough to the target to destroy it. I was never present when these guns were fired. Biggs Field at El Paso

Letter from Sam E. Davis, Jr., Capt., Commanding Officer, Headquarters Company, 423rd Infantry Division, 106th Infantry Division, dated 5-23-89.

Dear Clifford:

After all these years your memory is excellent. I am Capt. Sam E. Davis, Jr., Hdq. Co. Comdr., 423rd Infantry and you were assigned to my Company either Friday, 15 Dec. or Sat. 16th Dec., 1944. The Lieutenant assigned with you as Platoon Leader was Lt. Murphy from New York City. We were located at Buchet Germany. At that time Bleialf was about 2 blocks to the right.

We did not know it at the time but we were surrounded from Saturday noon on.

On Sunday night we moved over behind 1st Battalion and formed a perimeter. Monday morning 1st Battalion with Col. Craig led off the attack on Schoenberg. 3rd Battalion (Col. Kline) was on his right. The plan was for Hdq. Co. to follow close behind attacking troop and we did. I remained with Col. Cavender as well as my 1st Sgt. Spencer.

Sunday night we stopped in a red brick house, I think it was called Hadscheid.

The next morning, Monday, we once again followed the attacking Battalions. We spent Monday night in a bowl shaped configuration and we abandoned our vehicles. We dug in Monday night. At dawn on Tuesday, December 19th, my Company moved out behind attacking troops (across a stream). As we started up the hill, were hit with a heavy artillery barrage. Col. Craig and many others were killed Tuesday morning.

As I recalled, you and your group kept our prisoners about 200 yard behind me and I was in touch with Col. Cavender and Col. Fred Nagle all the time.

About 3 P. M. the word came from Cavender that they were going to surrender and anyone was now on his own to move out.

I asked Col. Cavender what I should do with these prisoners and he could not tell me. It is my opinion that our people were decent to those we had captured. We had issued blankets and food as we had it.

Your Company Commander, Capt. Charlie B. Reid, and I had been friends since our days at Clemson College. He survived prison life, but took it real bad emotionally. We were both at Bad Orb, 9B, and later sent to 13A, Hammellberg in Jan., 1945. Capt. Reid remained in poor health and died in the early 1960's.

I am enclosing a copy of Order #51, 106th Inf. Div. that awarded the Combat Infantry Badge to our men.

Sect. #I show those who were killed
Sect. #II show those still missing on July 31, 1945
Sect. #III shows P. O. W. now back in U. S. hands
Sect. #IV present organization unknown.

