We were flying at about 2000 feet when we saw the column. Jerry Byrd tilted the wings and in a few minutes we were right over them - it was a Russian gun outfit although the only distinguishable vehicles in the long line were the self-propelled guns.
As Larry pointed to a flat field near the road and began to descend for a landing, I thought about how far these soldiers had come to now be this close to the Elbe River.

My own trip to the Elbe River started on 1 June, 1943 with graduation day at West Point. Graduation from West Point is totally unlike graduation from any other college (except another academy)- it's almost I suspect like getting out of prison or at least it was for me. In fact, some cadets referred to the place as "Sing Sing on the Hudson". Strange, since I had grown up living with the great hope of being a West Point Cadet.

The first stirrings that I had about West Point were in 1935 while Dad was stationed at Fort Sam Houston in Texas. It was very Army from the quarters we lived in to the impressives parades held ever so often on the open plain near our house. I read some wonderful fictional stories about West Point cadets and their adventures and became really interested in Army football. Later that year we moved to Fort DA Russell, just outside Marfa, Texas and there on occasion I would go on field trips with Dad when the regiment went out to shoot its artillery pieces. We returned to the east coast in the summer of '37 by ship from San Francisco and upon arriving at New York City we visited my Uncle Larry Guyer who was an instructor at West Point and I got to see first hand the fabulous place I had been dreaming of. All of these dreams culminated in the great triumph of my winning an appointment to West Point from the District of Columbia in '39 to enter on 1 June,1940. Those wonderful romantic books about West Point I had read made Beast Barracks and Plebe Year into an heroic event. The reality of Beast Barracks and Plebe Year as a whole was far from heroic. By the end of the first day you are in a state of shock and the endless hazing and unending physical demands continued on except for sleeptime throughout the summer months. For one year you never appear inside or outside your room without your full uniform and in a complete brace(chin in, shoulders back, and never looking anywhere but straight ahead) and never talked unless spoken to.For a youngster who has never been away from home the impact can be pretty severe - in fact abou15% of the new cadets drop out in the first year - most in Beast Barracks. Even with elevation to upper class status starting the second year, the atmosphere was still pretty stifling; those who had been to college before coming to the Academy seemed to adjust to and enjoy the place better than those of us who came out of high school. Subtracting even further from the possibility of enjoying the West Point experience, we

essentially lost our "cow"(third) and "first class"(fourth) years in that they were combined into our third year - we were the first three year wartime class to graduate. We were seniors for only four months and that is supposed to be the "fun year".
Understandably then, it was with great exuberance that on 1 June,1943 we became 2nd Lieutenants. There was no nostalgia as I got ready to leave West Point, just a burning desire to get on my way. Mom came up from Garden City, Long Island for the ceremony and brought an old family friend - she and my father had been divorced since the late 30's. No sight of my Dad or Grandad; not particularly unusual since I hadn't heard from either while I was in school. Here I was, a third generation graduate (Grandad was in the Class of 1882 and Dad the Class of 1914) and yet neither seemed interested. I have to be frank that I never thought about it until many years later; my Dad and I had never been very close and I don't think I had ever seen Grandad Burr. The Class of 1914 distributed gifts to the sons of that class who graduated from the Point; I received mine in the form of a watch in the middle of combat a year or so later from General Somervell, Class of 1914.

One of the great thrills of my life was donning the uniform of a second lieutenant and drawing those first great breaths of freedom - there just is no way to make someone fully understand what that sensation is like. Anyway, I headed for Garden City and a month of relaxation before making a mandatory appearance at Fort Sill in Oklahoma for artillery training. Garden City is a suburban town located about twenty minutes from NYC on Long Island if you take the Long Island Railroad. We had moved there in 1930 and at that time lived in Franklin Court which was just on the boundary between Garden City and Hempstead. Dad had received an assignment to the National Guard in Jamaica,Long Island and was to keep that assignment until 1934. The Court consisted of a ring of townhouses in an area between the "V" of two converging railroad tracks and was ideal for kids; my best grammar school friend, Dud Whitney, lived across the circle from me. Shortly after I left Washington for West Point, Mom moved back to Garden City to be with the many friends she had made there. Soon after my arrival in Garden City from West Point, Dud, who was home at that time, and I made contact and began some doubledating. I was able to add a dimension to our operations because I had gas coupons which had been issued to us before we left West Point. They were a precious commodity in view of the limited number availablle those days. Dud introduced me to the girl who lived in the house next to his; she was home from college and so with my supplying the gas and someone else the car we doubledated on trips to the beach. His date was the same Nikki Nicholas whom I had met at Christmastime in 1942, when Dud and I had also double dated on an evening adventure into New York City .

Around the middle of June, I took an overnight train to Chicago and thence to South Bend, Indiana to be the best man at the marriage of my brother to the lovely Irma Garrigan. The trip on the train gave me my first close encounter with the war camaraderie prevailing all across the United States. The train was filled with people all connected in some way to the war - businessmen, servicemen, women, families all on the move. Some of us stayed up most of the night trading stories on where we had been and where we were going. Everyone seemed excited - the mood was really upbeat. I think it was that way in America where it was all a great adventure - the realities of being in a war zone were never realized (fortunately) in this country and thus the impact of the killing and damage was limited to reading about it in the papers and to those isolated areas where someone was notified that their husband, son, or daughter was dead. There was Bleaker Seaman, son of the Seamans who lived in Franklin Court, the apple of their eyes and of the eyes of anyone who knew him - killed in action as a Navy flyer. Hartley LeRoy, son of Nellie LeRoy, brother of Haydon who was a best friend to Nikki in Douglaston, Long Island - killed as a Marine landing on the island of Tarawa. And there was Al Bridges, married to Nikki's sister June; they were high school sweethearts wonderfully in love and married with a new baby boy,Al - killed aboard the USS Wasp in the Pacific. Tragedies that were swallowed up in the enormity of the events occurring around them. But it was the war brought home and the Seamans, Nellie, and June never fully recovered from their great loss.

Dad was at my brother's wedding and seemed oblivious of my presence; I didn't see him again until 1951 when I was in Washington DC just before I left for Korea. He had retired from the Army at the outbreak of the war having made a mess of his career. In a way, he typified the disarray of the Army during the 20's and 30's when there was little interest in the military and no money. Dedicated officers like Eisenhower survived but many of the others with no direct challenges dissipated in golf, parties, and drinking. I have an interesting vignette on another form of the results of this dead period for the Army when I get to my returning to the front after being in the hospital in England.

I left Garden City for Fort Sill at the end of June, again by train. My Mom arranged a small party in her apartment before I left and among the invitees were Dud Whitney and Nikki Nicholas. My mother and Nikki hit it off immediately and unbeknownst to me Mom asked Nikki to write me while I was at Fort Sill. Years later Nikki would remember my Mother saying to her, "You and

my son should get married; think of the Christmas cards you could send out signed Nikki and Ned".

Fort Sill was one of the western forts used during the great Indian Wars in the late 80's and in fact there is an active Indian Reservation nearby. It has been the center of artillery training for all of the 20th Century just as Fort Benning and Fort Knox are the training centers for Infantry and Armored personnel. Sill is located near Lawton, Oklahoma about 90 miles south of Oklahoma City. It is part of the southwest section of our country and you can't be there without experiencing the feel of what was once the frontier of America. The old post is a circle of permanent brick buildings with the old post chapel nearby; significant to me because that's where my mother and father were married in 1916

We didn't live in any of the permanent buildings what with thousands of trainees on post at the time. Our quarters were tar shacks big enough to sleep four. One of my classmate bunkmates was Bob Plett; our families became very close after the war and Bob and I shipped to Korea together. The three months spent at Fort Sill had no frills; we trained all day and studied in the evenings. The purpose of this training was to teach us about the use of artillery. We had had an introduction while at the Academy but lacked an in depth understanding of the field. The basic course at Sill was essentially used as an Officer Candidate School whereby qualified enlisted men were made into commissioned officers in the artillery branch. We went through the same course, only as second lieutenants. Firing artllery is a reasonable complex science since what you are trying to do is to put a round of ammunition on a target which the gunners can't see; you do this by using an observor who can see the target but can't see the guns. Once you put one round on the target you can follow it up with the rounds from all the other guns thereby generally wreaking havoc in the target area. I took to adjusting fire on a target like a duck takes to water. There were a lot of other subjects studied as well; our first real detailed learning about the use of arms. All of this done with the backdrop that real shooting was going on all over the world and we were going to get into it.

When it ended in early October, I headed back to the East Coast for a short break before joining my assigned unit in Kentucky. This time I had decided to fly and had made reservations way in advance of my trip. The only portion of the flight to New York that I made was from Lawton (Ft. Sill) to Oklahoma City Airport; my very first time in an airplane which I and a couple of other guys had chartered - small four seater so you flew at a low altitude and got a good look at the ground. Once on the ground at OK City airport, I checked in at the desk to see if the flight was

on time and then with time on my hands I went into the city. When I came back and went to pay for my tickets, I was told that I had been bumped. Live and learn! Practically nobody, I found, got on a plane those days without a defense priority and there were apparently enough of those around to fill up all the planes that were flying. So, back into the city to catch the train. I had no money; the airline had told me that they would accept a check and thus I left Sill with very little cash. Banks wouldn't accept one on an out of state bank and so I wandered around the streets until I came upon a small store where the owner agreed to cash my check - he did so when I told him that I was a West Point graduate and showed him my class ring. The West Point ring is made out of gold and is quite large; it marks an officer in the army as a West Point graduate and in the old army you checked out other officers by looking for their ring which is always worn on the third finger on the left hand. Non-graduates referred to graduates as "ring knockers" signifying that the graduates were considered as a privileged class of officers - hardly the case in the WWII army where most of the officers had been commissioned from officer candidate schools and saw West Pointers as just another officer. During your third year at the academy, a ceremony is held at which time you get your ring; at ours the speaker said that over time the words "Duty, Honor, Country" are rubbed away on the side of the ring and that after death those same words are found to be inscribed upon the owner's heart. A bit hokey but it signifies what the Academy was trying to teach and I have to believe for the most part did so quite successfully.

A two day ride on the rails and I was back on Long Island staying in Garden City with my Mother. Dud Whitney had gone off to the war so I had a couple of dates with Nikki. She had indeed as my mother had requested written me a letter while I was at Sill and the subsequent correspondence opened the door for our getting together. Douglaston where she lived was on the north shore of Long Island and whereas there is good public transportation east and west on Long Island, there is practically none north and south. So I would meet her in New York at Columbia University where she was studying or I would take the train into Jamaica and transfer to one going back to Douglaston. She came to visit a friend in Garden City the night before I was to leave for Kentucky but I was unable to see her leaving me feeling desolate. I was really smitten by her which might be considered suspect since she was the first girl friend I had had as an adult. For whatever reasons, I didn't date at West Point and thus my skills as a suitor were extremely limited. In fact, as I read my early letters to her, they sound very school-boyish. Fortunately for me, she was a lovely warm person who liked people and who older than I by years(actually she was 19 and I was 21).

Suddenly, I was back on a train; this time headed for Camp Breckinridge, Kentucky - a bit west of Louisville. I took a detour and went to South Bend to stay with my brother and Irma. I wrote

Nikki about the trip to Chicago and an excerpt from that letter of 2 October, 1943 gives one some sense of the times. "I had an excellent trip to South Bend except maybe a slight bit sleepless. I met the skipper of one of Pan America's Clipper Planes (Lisbon,England,Africa, and Ireland) and we exchanged stories of our lives, his being the most exciting because of his Clipper trips, through suppertime.After supper, we sat at a table with two young people - one a very attractive looking girl and the other a young second lieuy- a ferry pilot over the Pacific area. The girl was going to Chicago after leaving her husband and was drinking rye and ginger ale like a fish.We had a very enjoyable evening, enjoying most the singing and facial expressions of the girl....." After my visit with John and Irma, I went back to Chicago and caught a train to Louisville. Since I was going to be in Louisville, I stopped overnight with my Grandfather, George Guyer, West Point Class of 1891. Grandmother Guyer whom Grandad adored had died a few years before my arrival and I guess Grandad had pretty well given up. At any rate he had retired to one room of the house which was in some disrepair; the entire atmosphere was rather gloomy and my visit empty because of his lack of responsiveness. I therefore greeted the fresh air upon my departure with some relief. I never forgot however how gracious he and Grandmother Guyer had been when we visited them with my mother and how it was Grandad who came up with the $300 I had to have upon entering West Point. After I left him, I caught a bus in Louisville which took me to Breckinridge which was just west of Louisville. If I had gone south I would have ended up in Fort Knox, Kentucky, where I was born.

Camp Breckinridge was typical of the bases which were established during WWII in that it was large and sprawling filled with hundreds of temporary buildings of a standard design and grouped in such a way as to accommodate battalion size units. This generally meant a headquarters building adjacent to a group of two story barrack buildings and a messhall building. Nearby would be a smaller group of these same two story buildings for the officers along with a messhall for them. In some cases, the officers ate in an officers section of the battalion mess. Within the battalion complex there would be a motor park and the supporting garage buildings for maintenance. Of course there were many other buildings scattered around the camp which were used for base functions and for the general support groups. Breckinridge got its name from a famous Confederate General who had once been the Vice President of the United States. Today the old Camp is very much in use for various purposes all of which can be read about in Web Sites.

The 83rd Division which was basically an Ohio Reserve Division had been formed at Camp Atterbury in Indiana in August, 1942 and after being a part of the Tennessee manuevers of July, 1943 it relocated to Camp Breckinridge. An infantry division at that time was around 16,000 men

strong; it had three infantry regiments each with about 3000 men, four artillery battalions each with about 400 men, and assorted other combat and support elements. Being an artilleryman, I was assigned to the Division Artillery and within that organization to the 324th Battalion. Arriving there I was taken into the commanding officer's office to be greeted by him. I nearly dropped my teeth for sitting behind the desk was Lt. Colonel William Daniels. The last time I had seen him was in 1937 at Ft. D.A. Russell, Marfa, Texas. He was a first lieutenant in the 77th Field and I was a fifteen year old, son of the regiment's executive officer. He now had me at his mercy inasmuch as I think Dad was pretty harsh with the junior officers at times. He was very hospitable though and after an exchange on where everybody was, I was sent on down to "B" Battery where I was to remain until after I was promoted to 1st Lieutenant in December of that year and moved to "A" Battery where I was to remain until July, 1944. There was another case of my past coming back to haunt me when while firing some missions from an observation post during a battalion test, I was called back to meet one of the inspecting Generals who on finding out that I was "Johnny Burr's son" wanted to know all about my parents. (After the war while assigned to Ft. Benning I met a Colonel Rox Donaldson who was a Captain at D.A. Russell and whose daughter I knew and liked; upon introducing myself he began an instant tirade about my father and was still yelling at me as I beat a hasty retreat-so meeting old Army acquaintances was not always a warm feeling).

We trained rigorously which put another way meant that we spent an inordinate amount of time in the field. We spent most of the time in the field sleeping in pup tents if we got any sleep at all. Most of us agreed after we had been in Europe for a while that the training regime at Breckinridge placed much more physical stress on us than anything we ever ran into during our combat time. The one aspect of our training for combat which was lacking was that of doing our jobs while under fire. There is no way in which you can duplicate those conditions and as we were to find out the chaos of the battlefield creates an entirely different scenario every minute and creates situations as a result for which you can't train. It is impossible in a sense to have a training environment of total confusion and the fear of being killed which is what you find in the middle of a battle.

Funny, some of the things you remember from such a busy time. Like needing to go to the bathroom (no. 2) while you are out in the field on a particularly bitter cold night. It was a hysterical moment because of the way you are dressed. The first item on top of your underwear was a one piece army coverall - one piece mind you. Then you put all this other clothing on top of it, tons of it. Now there is no way to get your bottom bare except to take everything off so that

you can remove the one piece coverall. So now you are naked in 15 degree wind chill trying to do your thing. I can begin to shiver just thinking about it. Or coming into the camp area at 2 in the morning after trying to fix broken communication lines and desperately needing a cup of coffee. What you get is coffee which has been boiling in a big pot since dinner time - total, unequivocal lye, so whatever, you have to have it. When the war was over, I never drank another cup of coffee unless it was loaded with cream and sugar. Or those damned pup tents. Climbing out of your sack after a freezing rain night, breaking through the ice covered front flap, and dashing madly in your bvd's to the warmth of the mess tent. We were in the field over a number of weekends and usually I stayed there covering for the battery officers who were allowed to go home to their wives. On one of these weekends, it rained cats and dogs the entire time and I remember the pitter patter of the rain on the tent, curled up in my sack, with a lit candle for warmth trying to read and sleep. By the way, a candle does a pretty good job at warming the inside of a snugged pup tent. Some incidental items on the learning curve were as follows:

Steel Pots - Everyone has seen at one time or another, pictures of soldiers wearing steel helmets. Well, we wore them every time we went into the field at Breckinridge and, of course, all the time in combat. Steel pots, we called them and what may not be generally known is that they had great utilitarian value. Primarily, for washing and shaving. What you did was to remove the liner inside the helmet and then fill the steel portion with hot water usually obtained from the kitchen. Voila! You could now first wash your hands and face and then use the water to shave. You could also mount candles on top of them and use them to sit upon.

Blackouts and Driving at Night - Total darkness at night was the environment we worked in. Not even the embers from a cigarette were acceptable, much less the light from the match used to get it going. The appearance of any light even for a second in a totally dark situation can draw attention for quite some distance and one left on for a while can get you shot. I spent almost an entire year in Europe without seeing a light outside of a tent or building (and added another year under the same conditions in Korea). No wonder that I can find my way even today in the dark with some dexterity. That is not to say that walking around in the dark isn't fraught with danger and some frustration. It was particularly difficult trying to repair broken wirelines at night. Wire was the primary means of communication for artillery operations. We laid miles of it at a time from reels mounted on the back end of a wire truck across all kinds of terrain and of course had to fix it when it broke. Trying to find the break in the dark was bad enough but then trying to splice it without being able to see what you were doing was equally a tough job(sneaking a peek with a flashlight occurred more than once). Driving vehicles under blackout conditions across open fields and even on roads presented another form of night hazards - and presented an ample

opportunity for the use of cusswords. To make it easier to see where you were going, vehicles were equipped with tiny headlights called "cat eyes" and you could also could lower the windshield so that it was flat on the engine hood. Actually,the windshields were kept down all the time and covered with canvas so that they wouldn't reflect light. Aircraft were known to have been attracted to targets by the reflection of sunlight off of glass on vehicles. As you can imagine driving around in severe weather conditions(rain, cold wind) without a windshield can be downright uncomfortable. Also the Germans on occasion would string piano wire across the road against which without a windshield you were unprotected; we countered this by welding an upright bar on to the bumper which would cut the wire.

Aircraft - Talking about aircraft, the division artillery had its own air force. One aspect of my training was that as an aerial observor. The division artillery was equipped with a number of what we called "cub" planes. They were slow-flying two seaters, a pilot and behind him, an observor with the observor through radio contact adjusting artillery fire on enemy targets. The planes flew behind friendly lines. Well there nothing more welcome to the daily routine of the cub pilot than a new observor. At 4000 feet he would announce that an enemy fighter had just been sighted and put the nose straight down and then on the deck would weave in and out of the hills and valleys. My first pilot got the desired results from me; I was scared out of my wits - too scared to even get sick.

Barracks - We all lived in barracks which were essentially long two story building with rooms off the corridors and a central bathroom (The first home Nikki and I had was in a converted barracks - converted into four apartments). I mean "all" because even the men who were married with wives living near the camp had to sleep in the barracks unless they had time off to go home. In one of my letters, I refer to a conversation I had with Lt. Col.Daniels while we were showering in barracks; his wife lived in a house near the Camp.

Money - There weren't many if any opportunities to spend money; at least for the bachelors.It was just as well since the ordinary soldier only earned 21 dollars a month and a second lieutenant's pay was 125 a month. That's not a lot especially when you think of the work we are in and what jolly well could happen to us doing it. The opportunity to use money would diminish significantly over the next year and a half. During my first year in Europe (combat) I only drew five dollars a month and at the end of the year I had thirty dollars left!

I was very unsure of myself when I started out in the battery. For one thing, the officer - enlisted relationship is an awkward one when you live in this country because in the civilian world everyone is equal (well, not entirely, but you know what I mean). Not only was I younger

than many of the enlisted men but I looked even younger than that. So you start off sort of slowly or at least I did - I suspect that the more mature guys in my class were able to begin leading right away. Typical of my first adventure into the real world as a second lieutenant was that I viewed even first lieutenants as seniors and addressed them as "Sir". When I did that to First Lieutenant Larry Bradford, the battery executive (in charge of the guns) he nearly regurgitated and told me to come off it - many years later when I ran into him again, he still remembered the shock of being addressed as "Sir" by another lieutenant. Gradually you realize that the system calls for officers and enlisted men and the enlisted men understand that perfectly. Now you begin to order people around and in so doing you learn quickly to tell the noncommissioned officers what you want done and let them order the enlisted men around. Officers do enjoy privileges though (examples being a separate mess or better quarters) and I have to admit that I was never comfortable with that situation especially when the application of those privileges took place in a place and way that made it obvious to the enlisted man. I think there has always been a bit of the proletariat in me - maybe why I like to drive a truck today.

I was automatically promoted to 1st Lieutenant in early December,1943 I say "automatically" because my promotion was directed by the Department of the Army provided that my commanding officer certified that my performance was acceptable. Normally all promotions done during the war were done at the grass roots level , initiated by your commanding officer and sent through the local channels. Because we were graduates from the United States Military Academy and had had three years(in our case) of military training before being commissioned, the Army made an exception and "automatically" promoted us all to first lieutenant after six months. This caused some stir among the other officers in the battalion who had to do it the hard way, but the ill-feeling never manifested itself in any direct fashion. This army, by the way, was a civilian army. Oh yes, the senior positions were held in general by regular army types but in all of the division artillery's 120 officers maybe seven or eight were regulars. All the rest were new to the business (as were some of the regulars such as myself) having arrived here from all walks of civilian life - most of the officers were college grads. And they were all going back to those lives after this was all over. It most likely was the finest army ever seen on the face of the earth in that the people in it represented the entire cross section of people in this country. And they were free people, caught up, yes, in the discipline of the army, but I don't think they ever forgot they were civilians. Because of that independence of thought they were able to act on their own when that became necessary and able to apply their ingenuity - you can't beat an Army where the soldiers are smart and proud of who they are. Hell, of course there were the dumbbells, the screw-ups, the

incompetents and constant bitching, but overall we were good and we knew it. The army and war matured people quickly so it is no wonder that when they became civilians again they put this nation on a course of prosperity and strength, leading it to where it is today.

Of course there was some recreation, some time off. For one thing as I mentioned above, quite a few officers were married and needed time with their wives. And we'd get drunk on occasion. This was done by visiting the officers' club or once in a while I get invited to be a guest at one of the battery officer's home. The favorite liquor was bourbon which probably makes sense inasmuch as we were in Kentucky. Drinking booze was new to me. You couldn't do it at West Point and while away from there the most I'd ever done was a cuba libre. Plus, unfortunately, Mom was heavily into the stuff and I didn't like what I saw there. But, my camraderie with the guys took care of my inhibitions and so I learned (the hardway, I might add) how to get intoxicated. Drinking for entertainment sounds rather boring I admit. However, I don't recall any movie theatre and dating was out of the question since Breckinridge was really in the boonies and, of course, there were no families living on post. When you got right down to it, we didn't have that much time off anyway. It was a rare occasion when we got a weekend evening free and when we did get any evening off we were too tired to do anything but go to bed. I relaxed by listening to the radio and writing letters. So, I guess it was fairly logical that when a bunch of us got together at the club or someone's home we'd get to having a few drinks and yakking about work.

Back to Mom; she visited me at Breckinridge in March of '44. She was a WAC; a private first class in the Women's Army Corps. She must have lied about her age or you could still join so long as it was before your 46th birthday.This was a woman who grew up in the officers' world, married an officer, and had an officer as her son and yet she enlisted in the Army. That may sound a bit snooty, particularly when you consider that the enlisted soldier <u>is</u> the Army but it's just that there are two different worlds especially when you live on a post as my mother did much of her life. Quite a remarkable step on her part. She had never recovered from my Dad's deserting her in 1937 and so the move must have been very therapeutic for her. After her arrival at Breckinridge, we did have a bit of problem finding a place where we could meet since she wasn't allowed in the officers club and it wasn't easy fitting me into the enlisted areas. I'm sure part of her reason for the visit to Kentucky was to see her Dad in Louisville before he died. The WAC detachment took good care of her and we had a fine visit. She was a remarkable woman and could easily be the subject of a book; when she died many years later, because of her service

as a WAC she was buried at Arlington Cemetary with full military honors(any Army wife married or divorced should be buried with full military honors).

Many of the details included in this document have been extracted from letters I wrote to Patricia Nicholas(Nikki). In all there are in my possession today about 160 of these letters covering a span of two and a half years. A few quotes will give the reader a feel for the kind of information about my life contained in some of the letters; unfortunately from an historical point of view most of the content was devoted to telling Nikki about my love for her. With respect to the work schedule, almost every letter talks about going into the field - overnight, over a few days, and over a week or two. Here's a quote from a 1 January, 1944 letter ".....while Monday was a day of relaxation, I had to run a survey. Monday night we went out and finally Tuesday night, I got to bed the first time. Wednesday, we made another twenty-five mile hike, and bed certainly felt good after that. Thursday, Thursday night, and Friday found work going on steadily." It was cold also; in one letter written around Christmas, I wrote "The weather is no help to one spending time out in the field now as it is very cold. I told you in the last letter how long it took to get thawed out."
And as I read back over the letters, I find that when we did get away from work, there were some parties and drinking: "I frankly admit of having partaken of a healthy(?) drinking party Saturday night. It was almost a stag affair what with four singles and two doubles. The party lasted until five and we got to sleep on the floor." And on 8 January, I wrote: "I'm afraid the parties around here are strictly drinking affairs with everyone getting thoroughly plastered. In that respect, I got my fill about one month ago and have now returned to a very few beers ever once in a while." On 15 March,1944, Mom visited Breckinridge as I mentioned above coming over from Louisville where she had been with her father, Grandad Guyer. Here are some excerpts from the letter discussing her visit. "Actually, I guess I only had about five hours with her.....She's really quite a wonderful person.....The situation was awkward as the Army differentiates between officers and enlisted personnel to a high degree. We spent some time over at the WAC detachment and they really treated her swell."

In January of '44, the pace of training picked up (if that was possible) and we began to take unit tests starting with the battery. These tests were judged by the 83rd Division's command headquarters and their results used to determine the division's fitness for combat; i.e. shipment overseas. The test I remember best was the one I screwed up. Because of my engineering background and demonstrated proficiency in surveying I was picked to head the battalion survey

team for the big survey test. Basically, the requirement was to start from a point of known geographical coordinates and locate the three batteries coordinate positions accurately. With only two hours in which to do the job I had the team start out madly traversing to each of the batteries - traversing being a method whereby you measure angles and tape distances on the ground. Never made it - ran out of time. If I had done a check of the situation before I started I would have found that there was a hill from which all three batteries could be seen and I could have located them all by simple triangulation from the hill well within the time limit. Fortunately for me the evaluators were looking for more than the bottom line so our rating turned out to be OK. Firing batteries were tested primarily to get a look a their proficiency in the handling of their guns; for example, the battery would be put on the road and then suddenly be given a fire mission and at which time they would be measured as to how quickly and how well they were able to deploy the guns in a nearby field and be ready to fire. All in all, the tests were very thorough and if the unit passed them it meant that you were ready for combat. The 83rd Division passed them with flying colors.

There was a constant winnowing process going on within the division since it was always overstaffed. Even as people left, more arrived as the division performed a replacement training role as well of that as that of training for combat as a division. Also as new units were formed elsewhere, people were taken from the more experienced units to cadre the new ones. A major reduction in force took place on 7 March when a number of officers and 52 enlisted men were shipped to other organizations and we were now at our fighting strength; I felt a great sense of relief when the transfers were done and I was still there. My letters to Nikki dealt with the coming and going of junior officers and with my concern about staying with the division. Remember when I arrived, I was a second lieutenant of which there were many more than authorized in the division. On 21 November,1943, I wrote: "Everything seems to keep shifting around here as officers keep coming and going and jobs are changing hands. I've found out though, that I'll stay with the battalion rather than be shifted overseas as a replacemen....." And then on February 27,1944, I wrote:...."I
found that while I was away(on leave to Long Island) the battery commanders had to vote a first lieutenant out of the battalion because of overstrength and I'm still here...." So my fate was sealed - I was going overseas with the 83rd Division.
Bringing the division to its operational strength in February and the fact that we were being issued new equipment, both personally and organizationally, gave us all clear indications that we were about to leave Breckinridge. Among the new equipment we received were new guns and prime movers (pullers of the guns). Believe it or not, the 6 inch howitzers we had been using were

WW I vintage; the same kind that my Dad's outfit was using at D.A. Russell in 1936. The M1 155 mm howitzers that were issued were modern weapons and the high speed tracked vehicles which were used to tow them were gorgeous. Of most interest to us all though was the directive to turn in all of our summer weight clothing which made it clear that we were going to Europe rather than the Pacific. Another indicator of impending move was that liberal leaves were being given to everyone during late February and early March. I got my leave in mid-February and headed back to Long Island. Since Mom had enlisted in the WAC's, I had no base to use and therefore had prevailed on Nikki to see if I could stay in the home of the Bartletts where she was staying; she was 19 and on her own since her mother and father were separated. I must have tried to fly again because I recently found a telegram message sent to Pat Nicholas(Nikki) on 12 February from Indianapolis saying that I had missed the plane connection and wouldn't arrive until the next day. She was doing war work at Sperry Gyroscope so I didn't see much of her during the day and she had dates for some of the nights so our encounters were not many. I did take her to dinner the first night at a restaurant with wonderful ambience in Great Neck; when it came time to pay the bill, I realized I had left my wallet back at the house - she came to the rescue with what she called her "mad money", for use normally when the date turned obnoxious; apparently, I had passed that test.

Upon my return to Breckinridge, although it was now clear that we were getting ready to leave, the training and schooling continued unabated. During the last week of March, we began the process of closing down which consisted of packing and cleaning up. On 30 March, late in the afternoon, we formed a column of twos outside the barracks and
began the march to the trains which were being brought into the Camp. At the railroad siding we waited for the train and shivered from the cold wind and from our excitement. As the train slowly backed in, we took a quick look around at this place of great memories and then made a grand rush for the Pullman cars; as it turned out the troop sleepers were roomier and more comfortable. As night came upon us, the train slowly puffed its way across northern Kentucky, across lower Ohio and east to Cincinnati; north to Cleveland and then took the New York Central route to Albany and down the west shore of the Hudson passing by the West Point station and then early in the morning came to a stop at Camp Shanks, N.Y. Camp Shanks was the assembly area where last minute adjustments to equipment and personnel records were made prior to your loading aboard ship. If you arrived as one of the first units of your organization, there was time for a pass off the Camp; unfortunately we were among the last to arrive and the camp was now closed. Needless to say, I was distraught knowing that I was only an hour from Douglaston; some guys

jumped the fence but that was not my style so I suffered in silence. We were in Shanks five days during which time the pace was frantic as we went about our final preparations before leaving the States. We did all of this to the sound of the best tunes of the day being played over loudspeakers throughout the Camp. The sentimental songs of that period really stimulated my romantic thoughts as I'm sure they did for the other men (While in summer camp at West Point, I had been corralled by a senior to come to his tent and standing at attention I played "I'll Never Smile Again" on his record player for the best part of an hour- he had some girl somewhere he was thinking about). At Fort Sill it had been "People Will Say We're In Love" from "Oklahoma" and at Shanks it was "I Dream of You" , "Dream", "Long Ago and Far Away" ; I can whistle any of these tunes today from just hearing the title. All of that romantic music simply heightened my distress over being oh so close and yet so far away from Nikki.

On 5 April, we moved by train to Weehawken, New Jersey and then by ferry to New York Harbor where we came face to face with His Majesty's Ship, HMS Orion. We were to be aboard her until 16 April. Somewhere in Europe during the fighting we learned through mouth to mouth information that Orion had been sunk and upon hearing this the single most heard word was "Great". First of all, of course, it was a British ship used originally to transport British troops. In the British military services, the line between officer and enlisted was much more well defined than it was in the American army. This was no better demonstrated than on His Majesty's troopships. The officers were quartered on topside (albeit many more per cabin than in peacetime) and ate two meals a day in the first class dining room attended to by waiters. The men lived in open spaces below decks sleeping in hammocks strung one above the other and ate food dished out of what can only be termed "large garbage cans". No wonder that officers were detailed throughout the crossing to sleep and eat below decks with their men - mutiny was well within reach given these circumstances. Second, it was an extremely slow crossing of the Atlantic. We were in a very large convoy (ships as far as the eye could see) and travel was no faster than the slowest ship; our route to keep us from air attack was to take us west of Ireland and then down the Irish Sea from the north to Liverpool.with the trip across the "pond" taking eleven days (I talked to someone the other day who went over on the Queen Elizabeth which made the trip unescorted in about 5 days). Not many men had ever been on the ocean before and here we were crossing the North Atlantic in early April. So sea sickness prevailed for many; we had some who upon awakening the first morning were feeling wobbly until they found that we were still at the dock. It wasn't long after we left port that we began to find other ships around us; as I mentioned before it was a large convoy and we must have been near the center for again as

mentiond there were ships in every direction. Another reason to believe that we were near the center was that immediately on our port side was the battleship USS Texas being escorted to England to be a part of the naval force bombarding the Normandy beaches (as we learned later). I don't think that anyone on our ship ever saw anyone on that ship. When you think about it, there really isn't any need you can think of that would put sailors outside; especially when the ship is just along for the ride. On our ship everyone was outside as much as possible because being inside was dreadful. Finally there was land sighted and we headed down the North Channel into the Irish Sea and as we did so we got our first glimpse of war - a number of Spitfires roared over us dipping their wings as they did so. It had to be a testimonial to the Navy's fine work that the convoy arrived in Liverpool on 16 April unscathed.

When we debarked from the ship we were met by Red Cross units offering coffee and donuts - delicious beyond belief but what was more delicious were the American women serving this treat. "There is nothing like a dame" and to all of us at that point, there was nothing like an American dame. That last statement probably sounds corny, especially when you consider that these guys had been with American girls just a couple of weeks ago, but underneath everybody's exterior there was a lot of trauma involved in venturing into the unknown and very few if any had ever been away from the bosom of their own country. Seeing those American women made everything at that moment less unknown. Probably, the ones who planned that reception figured what we needed was coffee and donuts, never giving a thought to what we really needed was the warm, friendly contact with an American Red Cross worker.The officer in charge of our reception was a Lt. Colonel James Polk; one of those coincidences of people-meetings of life. He had been my company's tactical officer at West Point my last year - TAC officer as we knew them and since he did all the barracks inspections we got to know him well. (During the fight in Europe he became one of Patton's favorites and many years later I ran into again when he was a Lt General.) He saw that we were quickly herded onto trains which proceeded in an hour or so to get us to Wales; Bryn-y-pys, Flintshire to be exact.

Spring in the green parts of the world is a beautiful season. Spring in Wales - England - is breathtaking; all of a sudden you realize where New England got its name - from an Englishman who arrived there in the spring. The two places give to their visitors the same level of Spring joy. We had to wait about two weeks before our gear caught up with us and to help kill the time, besides daily training courses, we went walking; five miles a day. For the first time in my short military career, the orders to fall out for a march were not received with a lot of bitching on the

part of the men. Part of their ready acceptance came from being bored, part came from the fact that it was a "walk" and not a "march", but most of it came from the sheer delight of being in the English countryside. One of the other benefits of the "walk" was that of getting out of the compound. Our encampment was fenced in and for the first week, we were restricted to this area - no passes. There were a number of Italian prisoners of war working in the vicinity of our area who were consumed with curiosity about the Americans and especially so since we seemed to be the ones imprisoned. When we were finally allowed out on pass, we quickly became indoctrinated in the customs of the country - quaint English pubs with warm beer; friendly young English women, many of whom seemed to be too young to be out at night; bathroom facilities which were an offense to the nose; and the ever present "fish and chips"(which I still order today when out to lunch).

On 2 May, now with all our equipment, we made a short move that took us out of Wales and over to a spot near Oswestry, Shropshire, England. Actually we were billeted on a golf course which we shared with a herd of sheep. We had no feeling whatsoever about events transpiring at that time having to do with the invasion of Europe. To tell the truth we were training all the time on what we would do in battle but I don't think it crossed the minds of most of us or even any of us that we would actually go into combat - that there might come the day when we'd be faced with the real thing; it was all a game thing, a manuever. For my part, I began daily training as an observor and the emphasis I placed in the training was to ensure that my observor team of four people all knew their jobs. In particular, I worked with a young corporal who was quite bright to teach him the things I did so that he would be able to step up in my place and place fire on targets. More about him later! On 16 May, the battalion went to a desolate training area where live ammunition could be fired near Ystradfelte, Wales. Our location was up in the high hills north of Bristol Bay where there was little, if any, vegetation and the weather was wet, windy, and cold. On one of the exercises I ended up being put in an outpost some distance in front of our assumed front lines where I spent the next three days and nights in a foxhole occasionally adjusting fire on designated targets. Since there was no going to the mess for meals, I existed on army field rations, primarily "C" and "D". "C" came in a box within which there was a variety of mainly canned items - meat, vegetable, soup - plus crackers and , of course, cigarettes. There was also a tiny but very efficient hand operated can opener (I kept one around for years). I had no use for the cigarettes since I didn't smoke. I didn't smoke because Dad had promised me a hundred dollars if I wouldn't until I was 21. When I got to be 21, he was long gone and so I figured I'd make the money by not smoking - so, what happens, free cigarettes! The "D" ration was a

chocolate bar two bites of which and you had enough enriched food to last a week; any more than two bites and you were sick. It was an emergency ration to be used when out of everything else, but we tried to use it as dessert. For communication we ran a wire down to the position so I could use the telephone. Doing this cut off the learning curve in that we didn't run vehicles and tanks around the area and watch the wire disintegrate and therefore we didn't use the radio and find out under what circumstances it might be less than faithful. Normandy was not the place to learn how unreliable our radios could be under difficult working conditions. We spent eleven days in this bleak and forbidding part of Wales before returning to our golf course home. On the drive back I decided to ride in one of the prime movers(basically a high speed tractor). These vehicles ran on tracks the same as a tank and were large and open so that the crew which manned the gun could ride in the back; I rode in a seat next to the driver. Behind the vehicle was towed a gun - in this case, a large 6 inch howitzer. We traveled through many small towns where the streets were narrow and the turns in some cases rather sharp and difficult for the driver to maneuver. As we came through one of these

villages and turned sharp left at an intersection, my vehicle was immediately confronted by a bridge crossing a small river. Tracked vehicles turn by the driver braking one tread while the other is still going; if you think about it, it is like turning on a dime - with one tread stopped and the other still going the vehicle turns in a circle. When you have turned the vehicle far enough you release the stopped tread and now are back going straight. Well, having made the sharp turn to the left to put us up on the bridge the driver found to his dismay that his left tread now having been released would not grip the cobblestones on the bridge so instead of straightening out we proceeded to continue to the left heading for the wall of the bridge. There was no stopping so up and over the wall we went and down into the river below. All I could think of was the gun following us and upon its going over the wallfolding over and coming down on top of the vehicle. So, as the front of the tractor hit thewater, I kept going into the water and trying to get as far away as I could. When I looked back, I saw much to my relief that the tube of the gun had hung up on the bridge. I was probably safe anyway but the crew were still hanging on in the back and it would have been disastrous had that gun come over the top. Driving in England was always a challenge, especially for vehicles out on their own (being in a convoy was the safest place) because American drivers inevitably at some point in the drive forgot to stay on the left instead of the right side of the road. Fortunately, there was a gas shortage in England so the number of civilians who found themselves on the road with an American vehicle bearing down on them were few. But the number of military vehicles running into one another was quite large- at least in our battalion.

It was 27 May when we got back to Aston Park near Oswestry. It had been 2 May when we first arrived there and only 18 April since we arrived in our first camp in the British Isles. With all that had gone on it seemed like forever. Unbeknownst to us, of course, at the time of our return it was just 10 days before D-Day and yet I can't recall anyone talking about when the war would start for us. In some respects, we were still having fun. Every evening, a lot of the men would be trucked into Shrewsbury (it was the most popular of the nearby towns - probably had the most bars and prettiest girls); whether we wanted to go or not, the officers went. Every 2 and 1/2 ton truck that carried men into town had to have an officer in the cab. I had absolutely no savoir faire and so the chances of my picking up some young English woman was absolutely nill. As a result I spent most of the evenings in a bar drinking the warm beer. I was somewhat taken back when I encountered a fellow American officer whom I knew was married with a girl hanging on his arm. We had to be back in camp by 10:30 each evening but with British double daylight saving time, our trip home was made in daylight. Breakfast the next day or for that fact any day was the best meal of the day - why, well mainly because of an English syrup called "Golden Syrup". I recall having ten or more pancakes at a time and all because this syrup was so delicious. To this day you can find this syrup in specialty grocery stores locally and to this day I'm still crazy about it but I'm down to two or three pancakes. I never got over being camped on a golf course; I had spent a lot of time as a youngster playing golf and had been brought up to believe that golf courses and everything that went on on them was sacred - I mean, SACRED! I went back to the location many years laterand found the golfers out on the course, oblivious to the rape that had been visited upon their sacred ground in 1944.

On 6 June we awakened to the fact of D-Day - the invasion of the European was on and suddenly there was a universal awareness in our outfit that we might be headed for France before too long. This awareness was heightened when we began to get instructions and training on how to waterproof our equipment. Mainly this involved sealing engine components and extending the exhaust pipe so that the end of it was higher(in the case of trucks) than the cab of the vehicle. On 16 June we received orders to move to an embarkation port in southern England and at 2:35 on the morning of 17 June we left, in a sense, for our rendezvous with a warrior's destiny.

Ned's War Story Part 4

The trip from Oswestry (our golf course) to Camp Winterbourne just north of the port of Weymouth is about 200 miles depending on what roads you take. It took us about 13 and a half hours to make the trip which was done without stopping except for breaks here and there. That averages out to be close to 15 miles per hour which is pretty darn slow considering that our vehicles on a good highway easily manage 45 or 50 miles per hour. Convoys rarely ever go over 25 or 30 even under good conditions simply because they are convoys with all the attendant strange things that happen between the first vehicle(which has a free view ahead) and the last which has nothing of the sort. And, of course, in this case conditions were not all that good. To begin with, the first part of the trip was made in the dark(we did use headlights) and the entire trip was made over narrow British roads going through medieval British towns. One of the interesting sights during the the daylight hours of the trip were the occasions when we would go down a stretch of road off of which were stored military supplies- I mean you could travel several miles and never get past the rows and rows of trucks, tanks , general supplies which extended out across the field as far as the eye could see. Someone made the comment after the war that it is a wonder that the island didn't sink from the war materiel which had been shipped from the United States to Britain. The field rations given us for the trip were supplemented during the daylight hours with food proffered to us whenever we stopped near the Britains who lined the roads. I have never in my life seen such a universal outpouring of emotion by so many human beings as was shown by the British along our route to the debarkation port. Years of patience and hope had resulted in the build-up of emotions which with the announcement of D-Day had suddenly been released - they stood on the side of the road in almost continuous line that day cheering and waving flags (as I write this the image of those wonderful people who gave so much up for this war brings tears to my eyes). I don't know about the rest of the guys but I had those same heroic feelings that I had experienced when as a boy I rode home on my bike having just seen a western and was filled with the sense of a cowboy on his horse riding to the rescue. What a sendoff!

We arrived at Camp Winterbourne (near Abbas, Dorchester) late on the afternoon of 18 June, 1944 and were delighted with what we found. The camp was laid out in a well-treed area and had all the characteristics of a permanent camp; i.e. good , well established messes located in buildings, excellent shower and toilet facilities, buckets of supplies, and comfor-table places to lay your head down. When we pulled in I'm sure that we all saw this place as ours for a while to

come. After all if we were going to ship to France from here we still needed to waterproof our equipment and that would take a bit of time. A bad assumption! Unbeknownst to us, the time-table for the addition of more divisions into Normandy had been shortened and we were to go now. So there was no breath taken when we pulled in but orders to immediately pickup ammunition, life preservers, seasickness pills, and anything else that we should have but didn't. I managed to squeeze in a shower along with everyone else little knowing that it would be a couple of months before we would be able to get another. There was a sigh of relief when we were informed that there would be no opportunity to water-proof equipment; as it turned out we were the one outfit that should have been water- proofed.By late that evening we were on the road to the port facilities of Weymouth, only three miles from the camp. Docking facilities were mostly hardstands similar to those you see at places where a person can back his truck or car down the slope and ease the attached boat into the water. Only these were really big boats with yawning fronts - huge doors which were hinged on either side of the bow and opened the way into the interior. They were LCT's and LST's; Landing Craft Tank and Landing Ship Tank. There were three LCT's and one LST assigned to transport the battalion to France. LCT's measured 115 by 32 feet whereas the LST was much bigger at 328 by 50 feet. I ended up on the LST along with most of the wheeled vehicles and most of the people. The three LCT's each carried the howitzers and tracked prime movers and, of course, the gun crews. Upon arrival at our assigned ships, we immediately began to load the vehicles into the vessel; it was like loading onto a ferry except there was a distinct designation on the order in which the vehicles were loaded and we backed them in so that when the ship beached and the doors were opened we could drive them out. As soon as we were all aboard the ships backed away from the hardstand and stood out to sea although we anchored initially nearby waiting for darkness which I would remind you came around 10:30. On an LST you either were in the ship's well where all the equipment was located or you were up on the bridge - there were no walkways available for people to observe what was going on outside of the ship. After darkness we up-anchored and set sail to join the convoy on its way to France. What we found ourselves in was the worst British Channel storm in 80 years. Not being able to see anything in the darkness and not having much, if any, information we simply hunkered down trying to keep from throwing up. Some actions were required as equipments became loose from their moorings due to the violent motions of the sea. There was no way to keep dry under these circumstances(the hold of the ship was open to the sky) and so very quickly everyone was sopping wet from the sea spray. We were underway all day fighting the storm every inch of the way; the skipper informed us that some of the ships had had to turn back but our four were hanging in. In the afternoon, the officers were invited to the bridge and quarters of the

ship's Captain. Once there we had a chance to see firsthand the ugly nature of the waters and the degree with which the ships close to us were rolling, pitching, and yawing - just watching them could make you sick. Many of the ships were carrying barrage balloons which were swaying like mad above them.Also, for the first time we could get a feel for the enormity of the air activity. There was a steady stream of fighters and light bombers enroute to the continent; what was really fascinating about all of them was their markings. In an effort to keep them safe from friendly ack-ack they all had white striping around their wings and fuselages. Man, this was something big we were getting into! Before returning to the bowels of the ship, the skipper offered us a libation which obviously was a standard drink on board ship - gin and grapefruit juice. It tasted pretty good but it didn't do a great deal toward countering the motion of the ship; somehow I managed through sheer will to avoid throwing up. It helped to stay away from people who were already doing that.

We arrived just off Omaha Beach, France just at dusk on the evening of June 19th and anchored; given the lateness of the day, it was difficult to see much outside the ship. Given that we had been on the go without sleep since we left Oswestry the night of the 17th it should have been easy to nod off as soon as it became dark. Such was not the case.In the first place, the adrenalin rush at this stage was affecting everyone; second, the ship was aching loudly at the buffeting being given it by the wind and the waves making all very nervous; and third, there was an air attack. Using the darkness to hide from the omnipresent Allied aircraft, the Germans sent in bombers to hit the huge concentration of ships at Omaha Beach. It did not appear to be a large number of German aircraft but the response from the ships was awesome - probably every antiaircraft weapon that could be fired was, including the ones on our LST. The sky was lit up with the thousands of tracer bullets being fired and to add to this illumination the fighter planes which preceded the bombers had dropped parachute flares to aid in the bombers identifying targets. There were explosions all around us but none of the bombs came close to our ship. Finally, it was over and for a while I got some sleep.

As dawn approached, it became quite clear that we were getting ready to land. Taking advantage of a small window of opportunity before the work began on preparing the vehicles, I went topside to look around; it would be impossible to describe in any detail the scene. Ships of every size and description were bouncing around in rough seas everywhere the eye could see. Silver barrages balloons by the hundreds danced in the sky. Nearby, a large floating dock seemed severely damaged and close to the shore were a number of tanks sunken in water up to their

turrets. Slowly we made our way into shore coming in at or near high tide and proceeding until we felt the ship's bow grinding into the sandy beach. At that time the bow doors were opened; all vehicle engines were running and in an orderly fashion the smaller vehicles(jeeps and 3/4 tons) were sent down the ramp making it through water to the dry beach. As we began to unload the 2 and 1/2 ton cargo trucks we ran into a problem. The wind and waves were coming into the beach at such an angel such as to push the stern of the ship so that as vehicles came down the ramp, waves were washing over the engine compartments. With no waterproofing the engines stalled and we were in a fix. I had been in the water by the ramp from the very beginning of our unloading effort and was now feeling the impact of the waves now washing over my head making it difficult for me to keep my balance. At that point some engineer bulldozers working on the beach saw our predicament and came to our rescue. They were waterproofed so that they could come out in the water near us and once there we grabbed their winch lines and attached them to the bumper of the truck. One by one we moved the larger trucks out of the wave action and onto the dry land by first winching and then pulling them ashore. Once on the beach, I looked to see how the LCT's with our guns had fared and saw to my dismay that "A" Battery's LCT had sunk just offshore - in shallow water so that the ship was not flooded but bad enough so that there was no way to drop the ramp and unload the weapons. At that point the beach needed to be cleared so we loaded all men who were available and proceeded to drive up the nearest draw and into the land behind
the beach. As we did so we could hear the sounds of artillery fire in the distance indicating that fighting was going on not too far away. Actually, by the 20th the front lines south of Omaha Beach were about 9 miles distant. (Lots of soldiers landed at Omaha Beach; the ones who really "landed" at Omaha were the first three waves of doughboys who cleared the beach and who suffered terribly in doing so - especially the first wave which was almost obliterated. Anyone landing in late afternoon of the 6th of June and thereafter did so in relative safety since direct fire on the beach by the Germans was no longer possible(Of course you still didn't have to go very far to be killed). There was a lot of danger around the beach in the form of mines; we heard that one of our infantry soldiers walking in column up a trail off the beach wandered off to one side(probably to pee) and touched off an S-Mine(bouncing betty) and the resultant explosion killed him and a number of his comrades.

Pulling off the beach was a fairly sizeable job since it was the entire battalion on the move in the midst of a large amount of vehicular activity that was going on around us. We were

over a 100 jeeps and trucks and thus made up a fairly long convoy snaking through the draw up from the beach and then rather quickly through a very damaged town, Coleville-sur-mer.

Just to the east of the draw we used to exit the beach is the United States Cemetery in which are buried 7000 of the men who were killed during the landing and in subsequent actions in Normandy. The cemetery is located on the bluff overlooking the beach and is of breathtaking beauty. When I returned to Normandy for the 55th anniversary of the landings I visited the cemetery and wept while looking out across the burial ground at those hundreds and hundreds of white crosses. Whether for all those young men whose lives stopped in Normandy or whether for the days when I was young, I don't really know but without question it was a very powerful moment for me. Also emotional for me were the encounters I had with boomer generation couples who had come to honor their fathers or other family members who had been in the war in Europe; upon responding to their question about my having been involved in Normandy, they would say "Thank you for what you did". That remark inevitably dissolved me and all I could do was mutter that they would have done the same had they been there which is the case even though they didn't agree with me.

I was riding in a jeep and so got a first hand view of the battered terrain. Our route took us through the town of Trevieres to an area near Bricqueville some 6 miles inland. Trevieres was absolutely flattened; during the infantry attack on the town, naval gunfire had been called in and was given in the form of the 14 inch guns of the battleship Texas. The shell from one of those weapons weighs around 2500 pounds and fire can be put down quite accurately - in contrast to bombs which land all over the place- and so this lovely old French town was totally destroyed. (Years later when I and Nikki visited the town we stopped at an antique shop on the outskirts and met an older woman who explained that her house had been lost in that attack - upon learning that I had been wounded near Carentan, she took my face in her hands and while kissing me said over and over again, "Merci Messieur Merci".) Once we went into bivouac, I immediately began the task of cleaning my 45 pistol which had been soaked in salt water during the landing. I also rid myself of the impregnated clothing we had donned before leaving England to protect us in the event of a gas attack - it was stiff and greasy to the touch and after getting wet, smelled. I retained the gas mask for the duration but didn't put that clothing back on; I don't think anyone else did either. We ate field rations for dinner and then stretched out under the trees to sleep. That sleep was interrupted again by another German air raid on the coast but with a lot of air activity over us and with the attendant ack-ack fire. Long after the firing had ceased and quiet had

descended we could hear the fluttering sounds of shell fragments falling to earth around us, hitting the tree leaves and ground rather gently I thought; we were pretty well protected by the trees.

The next morning it was back to the beach to try and retrieve our guns.The sea was calm but the scene was chaotic. What absolutely absorbed your view was the carnage of wrecked ships along the water's edge as well as the number of damaged ships out
in the water. There was little to be seen of the Mulberry docks except piled up debris - these were the docks which had been towed from England with the idea of unloading personnel and supplies in deep water rather than by beaching ships on the shore. While Captain Slocum, my battery commander, was in the process of working out a way to get his guns off the sunken LCT, I took the opportunity to walk down the beach and climb aboard some of the now deserted inoperable boats. On one of them, in the pantry, I found some British canned food among which were a couple of cans of plum pudding which I confiscated. I love plum pudding and even without hard sauce I found that the British product was delicious. On returning to the scene of the sunken LCT with our guns I found that Slocum and Bradford (battery exec) had finagled a deal with the engineers to use a mobile derrick to literally lift the howitzers and prime movers off of the open hold area of the LCT and drop them in shallow water. What Slocum had done to get a priority on this job(you can imagine that everyone who had gear on the wrecked landing craft was hollering for this kind of help) was to give the engineer battalion commander a jeep and 1/4 ton trailer. Accountability for issued equipment in the military is a very serious business and when you lose things you pay for it. Of course, it was pretty clear that Slocum would report the jeep and trailer as combat losses and in that way he could write them off. Anyway it worked and we were assured that the guns would be rescued with the low tide the next day.
I met up with Larry Bradford some 50 years later and he told me that Lt. Col. Irvine, the battalion commander, was livid over what Slocum had done and threatened to court-martial him and make him pay for the vehicles but never followed up on his threat. Irvine,by the way, had replaced Daniel in Breckinridge because General Montague wanted Daniel to head up one of the light or 105 battalions. Irvine was too young and inexperienced for the responsibility and never got over being uptight all the time and worse yet he had no sense of humor - the last thing in the world you need in combat is a boss with no sense of humor. He was hated universally within the outfit. Oh, I should mention that I met him after the war in 1963 when I commanded a battalion and he was a staff officer in the Corps Artillery headquarters - he was still a Lt Col.)

Before we left the beach we watched for a while the phenomenon of the Ducks(DUKW). The "Ducks" in this case were large amphibious vehicles shaped like a boat 20 feet long and 8 feet wide which were being used as supply transports. With the docks ruined and the beach jammed with wrecked ships, these amphibs became the life line for moving supplies from ship to shore - they would motor out to the off-shore supply ships, load, motor back to the beach and then drive on their wheels to the appropriate depot and unload. There were hundreds of them in operation and the water was frothing from their busy activity. Upon returning to the assembly area near Bricqueville, the next couple of days were occupied with recovering our guns and cleaning up equipment. On the night of the 24th or 25th we moved west to just this side of Carentan and about a mile north near the Taute River. The move was a bit traumatic in that the Colonel had gone on to reconnoiter our new position leaving the battalion executive officer (Major) to lead the march that night and our leader was drunk. We were headed south when the other senior headquarters officer got control and put the column on the right road. South was where the front lines were; as we learned in Luxembourg if you want to drive through the front lines, especially at night when the infantry are buttoned up there most likely is no one to stop you. By the 26th our guns were in position and ready to fire. On the 27th, the Division relieved the 101st Airborne Division taking over frontline positions along a line 3000 meters south of the town of Carentan. The 101st Division was one of two airborne divisions which dropped by parachute into Normandy early in the morning of D-Day and had proceeded over the next two weeks to take Carentan and the land just south of it. They were ready to be relieved! At 2114(9:14 pm) "B" battery fired our first combat mission; it was aimed at a German gun which was firing on the bridge into Carentan from the east. That firing was joined by the other battery howitzers that night and into the next morning. The location of the enemy gun was determined by an artillery organization which specialized in using equipment which triangulated in on the weapon using sound and flash sensors. After a while it was a bit amusing (but not for the poor devils who were being fired upon) in that we could hear it fire, then our twelve big guns would respond with two or three volleys - silence, and then "bang" it would fire again. This cycle was repeated over and over again. The morning of the 28th, I ceased being a bystander in that I was called up to the battalion fire direction center(where all the firing orders were issued) and told that I was to leave immediately for the front lines to be a forward observor working directly with the frontline infantry. Surprised? Well a bit. There was one light (105) outfit for each of the three infantry regiments giving what was called "direct support"; each of the batteries in those battalions had a reconnaisance officer whose primary mission in combat was to be a forward observor and they trained with the infantry to be up front with them and call in artillery fire when needed. My

battalion was to provide artillery support across the entire division front and our reconnaisance officers had been trained to occupy observation posts to the rear of the front lines. Obviously, the infantry had discovered that there were not enough forward observors (FO's) to go around and so we were called into service (this problem was fixed after the war so that when I ran the fire direction in Korea, I had nine not three observors). So I gathered my team together and headed for the south of Carentan.

To get there we first had to cross the bridge over the Taute River (which blended with the Vire Canal); the original bridge had been destroyed and the engineers had built a new one. This bridge was vital to the allied effort because the road over it was the one connecting the Cherbourg Peninsula to Omaha Beach and the British sector. But it was not really a good place to spend your time since the gun we had been firing at was upriver from the bridge and had it in its sights. The gun was a German 88, probably the best artillery piece produced in the war. It was a rifle which although its shell was about 4 inches in diameter fired that shell with a muzzle velocity of around 2500 feet per second (our howitzer shells moved at about 6 to 800 feet per second). The shell travels just under a mile in two seconds and this gun was located only three miles from the bridge so that given the speed of sound and the speed of the shell you heard the explosion of the shell at almost the same time you heard the damn thing fire. It had been pretty effective shooting at the bridge having killed the engineer battalion commander and a number of the engineers working to keep the bridge in operation. In crossing it the main thing was not to dawdle; we went across it as though shot out of the 88's barrel. Once across we moved through the remains of the town of Carentan and then through some country lanes to get to the infantry battalion command post which was located a few hundred yards from the front. Whenever possible, out of sight of the enemy, the infantry command centers ended up in farmhouses even though there might not be a lot left of them, and so it was with this group. I was met almost immediately by the light battalion liaison officer(I forgot to mention that each 105 organization had a Captain who stayed with the infantry battalion headquarters - there weren't enough of these people to go around). He was very cordial and introduced me around the room. He was also very cool for being where he had never been before and knowing what was coming. After a very short visit he took a jeep and led me down the road apiece to a point where he stopped and indicated for me to follow him on foot. As we walked down the road he pointed to a dead body lying just off the road saying " a German sniper killed by the 101st". The man had a gray color and looked like a rag doll. I didn't have time to react as the Captain continued down the road with me trailing along. He entered a farm field through a gate and proceeded to walk across the field to the

hedgerow fence which went along one side of the yard.(The hedgerow fences of Normandy became notorious during WWII because they were formidable obstacles to any cross country movement - they were large dirt mounds, in some cases 6 or 7 feet high topped with thick hedges which had been there for years and these fences surrounded the farmer's field of an acre or so usually with just one gate. When we reached the fence he pointed at the hedgerow across the next field and said that that was where my observation post would be. I went back to the jeep to get my corporal assistant and the radio. We climbed the hedgerow and started across the field - at this point, I noticed two things, one was that the field was covered with shell craters, probably mortar, and second that the men who were at the fence were all dug in (foxholes). Arriving at the hedgerow, I turned to my assistant - there was no one there, he was nowhere in sight. As I retraced my steps I came upon the radio which had been carefully placed on the ground. As it developed, he had taken one look at the shell holes and the setup, turned, and walked back to the battalion(probably got a lift) - no way he was going into that mess. After all that training; I was stunned and was insistent when I returned to the battalion that he be court-martialed - the colonel simply reassigned him to another job. So much for courageous Americans-we hadn't even been fired at yet. When I looked over the hedgerow I could see a clear area in front that went a couple hundred yards before the hedgerow on the other side. The area was swampy and not farmed which explained its openness. Behind that hedgerow the Germans were dug in just as we were. Here I was, at the farthest point of progress the American army had made in retaking Europe but that thought never entered my mind; I had now arrived where I was supposed to be and turned my thoughts to registering the battalion. I made radio contact with the fire direction center and put them on hold while I picked out a suitable aiming point on the German side. The soldiers near me cautioned me about sticking my head up too far because there were snipers. The area was quiet except for the sound of our artillery shells landing here and there on the other side. The Germans were not responding and our infantry were hunkered down minding their own business. Using my 1 to 25000 scale map I identified a structure in the hamlet Raffoville in the German area which I knew Major Kirkland in the fire direction center (FDC) could find on his map. The 1 to 25000 maps were an example of some of the exquisite planning that went in to the invasion of France. On this map one inch was 694 yards(on a state road map one inch equals 12 miles) and the results of having such a blown-up view of the terrain were very important to the artillery. Instead of having to run a survey to geographically locate the weapons you normally could come within 50 yards or so (good enough for government work) by picking out the spot on the map - Kirkland always wanted the survey done but this way you could still start shooting. The houses and the fences were drawn in quite accurately. That's why Kirkland was able to establish the

coordinates of the building I was firing at. Once we had completed the registration Kirk had me fire some other missions on targets across the swamp from me which targets were landmarks I could identify like a large tree just to see how I could adjust fire from the registration point(the building I had used). There were no actual targets since the Germans were nowhere to be seen. I dug a foxhole and slept in place along with my radioman(who replaced the my reluctant corporal). The night was relatively quiet and I got a good sleep. I awoke at sunup and immediately peered over the hedgerow using my field glasses(binoculars) and what did I behold but a German soldier moving laterally across my vision - he seemed to be crossing a fence perpendicular to the fence line which is what brought him into my vision. He was followed in about 10 seconds by another and then another. I kept waiting for one of the infantryman to fire as there must havebeen 12 of them all popping up as silhouettes at a regular interval. I was curious as to why not and so asked a sergeant nearby. His explanation was simple: if we fire at them, they will fire back with mortars. This is the rationale of soldiers who have not yet been in a fight and who probably keep hoping that it all may go away, knowing, of course, that it won't(at the time it seemed like a pretty good philosophy). That day and the next(29 and 30 June) I spent getting adjusted to the surroundings, visiting the battalion command post and the liaison officer, and doing scattered firings, mostly at the request of Kirk(you better believe that I never called him that in those days). There was still nothing to be seen of the enemy. On 1 July, my battalion crossed the river(they must have driven that 88 out of range by then) and moved to positions south of Carentan along the main road and about three miles driving from my post. I went back to check in that afternoon. During the course of my visit, Kirk told me that the division would attack the German lines early on the 4th of July. He also told me that he had a call from the 105 outfit supporting my sector that they had been experiencing great difficulty in registering and would I look up their observor when I returned. Finally, we decided to try and connect my post with the FDC by wire before the jumpoff. On returning to the front, I proceeded to try and find the observor; the location I had been given indicated that he was in road close to my field which road ran perpendicular to the front lines. When I got to the road it became clear that if you went to the point where it stopped you were in a position to observe the German lines. I didn't find him there so I started up the road to the rear of the front; he was dug in about 50 yards farther back than the road's end. No wonder he couldn't register his battalion; for him looking down the road was like looking through a long tube since the road had high hedgerows on either side. In order to see a shell landing it would have had to be in perfect alignment with the extension of the road. Therefore no matter where they put a shell he would report "lost"; no wonder the battalion was frustrated. It was clear that that was about as close to the front as he was going to get. I reported

the situation back to Kirk and then registered the 105 guns using our FDC as a communication relay.

The next two days were used to lay the wire from where I was, back to the fire direction center(FDC). We did the best we could to either get wire up into trees or to bury it (for short distances). It was clear with all the tank activity going on in the area through which we had to go and the amount of truck traffic in those same areas that the wire wouldn't stay in unless we did everything we could to protect it. By the third of July we were able to talk to Kirk over landline. By the evening of the third as the intensity of the buildup for the next morning increased, the wire went out. There was no time to repair it and even had we tried I suspect that we would have found more breaks than we could handle. There was no time because just when the line went dead, I was called over to the command post of company to which I had been assigned and the company which was to be the lead company in the attack. The company commander told me that he wanted me by his side at the time of the attack. I was also told that our first day's objective was the little town of Sainteny about 5000 yards from us and that he wanted me to remain at the command post that night. This command post was in an old French farmhouse, lit by candles; what with the smoke from cigarettes, the comings and goings of people, the atmosphere charged with tension, it was a perfect replica of the WWI movie situations in similar centers. There was no sleep to be had no matter how hard you might have tried. At 4 in the morning we were alerted to take our attack positions and as we went out the door we were issued hand grenades; two, which I hung from the shoulder straps of my jacket. My company was to proceed down a sunken road (high hedgerows on either side) and until the road ended and then cross the open area to attack enemy positions on the other side. As we moved down the road to get in position, I became nervous about the hand grenades and so I took them off and carefully laid them on the bank at the side of the road. At 5 an enormous barrage of artillery fire began to fall on the Germans; it continued until 5:30 with such a deafening roar that it was difficult to talk even to the person next to you. At 5:30 when the firing stopped as suddenly as it had began, the Captain started forward with me close at his heels along with his soldiers. Almost immediately shells began to fall all around us and the sound of rifle and machine gun fire was heard. Although those previous day had shown no indication of Germans, it now became painfully clear that there were plenty of them and their digging in had protected them pretty well from our barrage. After 10 or 15 minutes of the incoming fire, the company commander told me to contact the FDC and request a renewal of the barrage. We were well protected by the road unless a stray shell ventured in and so I had the radio operator set up the radio and call Kirk. Nothing, not a damn peep- for

God's sake they were only a couple of miles away as the crow flies or as radio signals go , but not a peep. So I figured that being down in the road masked the signals and so we climbed up the embankment to the side of the road facing the enemy lines and proceeded to set up the radio; it was very foggy and thus we were not visually exposed to enemy lines. Still nothing and at that point I looked up to check the antenna and saw that it was touching a tree limb. I reached up with my left arm to free it and the next thing I knew I was back down in the road with my left arm stuck rather grotesquely in the air. What had happened is that a small shell (either a small mortar round - 60 mm- or a rifle grenade) had landed near us and exploded. It was close enough so that most of the fragments from it went over our heads. We were hit by a couple of pieces which flew at a lower trajectory; my radio operator was wounded in the arm and the one that hit me entered under the left armpit and exited below the left shoulder blade - fortunately it was rising when it entered or it would have gone through the main part of my chest. The explosion along with the impact of the fragment blew me off the side of the road and the subsequent fall cracked some ribs. My arm was stuck in the same position it had been in when I reached up to free the antenna. Since I now had two holes in me, I must have been bleeding profusely. Regaining my feet I managed to get back on top of the embankment to see my operator stretched out on the ground with a blood coming from his arm or his side. I had no idea of what was wrong with me but suddenly I knew I was in trouble and began to make my way along the embankment to the rear - to this day I can hear the sound of leaves being cut above my head by what had to be rifle or machine gun fire. In a few moments the embankment sloped down and I was in the midst of my two wireman who had been left behind. Grabbing me on either side they carried me back to the aid station where I passed out; before that happened I managed to tell them about the radio operator. The fact that I was able to make my way up the embankment and then back some distance to the road is a pure testimonial to adrenaline. (A few years ago in our area, a Doctor upon returning home in the evening found a burglar in his house who shot him. Although shot he left the house, got in his car to go to the hospital, saw the burglar in the road and ran him down, arrived at the hospital a few miles away, walked into the building and died - adrenaline). When I came to I was in an ambulance stretcher along with three other guys; movement was very painful and I had a hard time not letting that pain be known - I apologized to the others for making sounds; the pain undoubtedly came from the cracked ribs. I lost consciousness again and when I came to the next time I was on a stretcher being carried the men said to X-Ray; the swaying motion of the stretcher made me sick and I started to gag before I once more was out of it. I'm sure from the time I hit the aid station I was heavily into morphine which would explain to some degree why I wasn't around very much. When I came back to life the next time I was in a hospital

bed right next to the nurse's station and heavily bandaged on the front and back of my left shoulder. I had been very,very lucky! For one thing, I was hit early in the attack so that I got immediate attention at the aid station; I didn't have to wait for an ambulance; and there was no triage situation at the evacuation hospital. Having lost a lot of blood(in a letter to Nikki on July 15, I mentioned that I had to have 2000 cc's of blood which equates to about 2 quarts or one third of the total amount) receiving care right away probably saved me from bleeding to death. Also as part of my luck, the hand grenade hanging from my left shoulder strap before I removed it lay in the path of the metal as it went through me; the contact wouldn't have ruptured the skin of the grenade but it quite possibly would have dislodged the safety clasp and allowed the damn thing to go off and blow me to kingdom come.

After a couple of days, Captain Slocum popped in to see me and I learned that my radio operator had survived although with nerve injury to his arm (I was to learn later that that kind of wound usually got you sent back to the States). I was pretty groggy so he didn't stay too long. I had a major setback after he left which postponed my shipment back to England.I awoke in the middle of the night complaining to the nurse that my bed was wet and I felt quite cold. She turned me over to check the bed and found that I was in a puddle of blood; the sutures on the backside of the shoulder had loosened and I was bleeding again. Fixing the sutures was done immediately but I needed another series of whole blood tranfusions and time to regain some strength before they took me down to the beach for the trip back to England. It must be clear to everyone at this point that most of the blood in my body belongs to someone else. One of memories I have of my stay in the hospital (it was an evacuation hospital and as such was equipped with a surgical capability and a capacity for a large number of patients who were bedded in large hospital tents; mine was located in the vicinity of Utah Beach.) was of the doctor who as I recall was a lung specialist from Chicago. He made rounds late in the evening and I know that on at least one occasion on finishing up at the end of the tent he found an empty bed and fell into it. There seemed to be only one nurse for the tent so I'm sure the patients were pretty well sedated. Before I was moved, I stopped receiving morphine and that night I was awake all night long.

It was probably the 10^{th} or 11^{th} when I was taken to the beach for loading on to a landing craft which would in turn take me and the others out to a hospital ship. There must have been a hundred of us all on litters laid out in rows on the sand waiting for the tide to reach the right point so that we could be put aboard. My one strong recollection of that time was that I had to urinate;

there were no personnel around to provide a vessel for this purpose so I just held it - except as a last resort was I going to wet my britches. Finally, we were loaded and taken out to the ship; before I was even in a bed I told them of my plight and they brought what was then referred to as a "duck" (I think). I just kept going and going and they had to bring a second one. I slept so soundly that I never heard us get underway and, in fact, didn't awaken until we reached the port in England. We stayed overnight in a holding hospital and were put on a hospital train the next morning for a general hospital located outside of Cheltenham, a city northeast of Bristol. It is interesting to note that had the fragment killed me instead of wounding me, it would have been a very peaceful death. This sounds morbid but in a way what happened to me happened to a lot of guys only it did kill them. I never felt a thing -not a thing. One moment I was reaching up to clear the antenna and the next moment I was coming to down in the road. One moment I was here and the next I wasn't and had it been the end it would have been the same. Another aspect of what happened to me is that I saw very little of frontline combat; all that training and conditioning gone down the drain in a split second. So many soldiers were taken out of action before they ever had a chance to fire a weapon or throw a hand grenade and yet they had trained for months, for years just to get to that point. Look at the "Saving Private Ryan" beach landing scenes (which depicted the events of that landing pretty accurately) and watch man after man being lost without even shouldering his weapon. In my division, in as fierce a fire fight in the hedgerows as any outfit could ask for, the failure to apply the lessons taught in training resulted in many men being lost before they got off a round. For example, I had no business being in the open up on the side of the sunken road - I mean I had been taught that a main avenue of approach into enemy lines as that road was would be heavily targeted by the Germans. But in the excitement of the moment I, and others, dealt with the problem the same way we would have back on the training range. It took more time than many of us got, to realize that you could get killed doing what we were doing and to act accordingly. And my last comment on this 4th of July comes from being asked about what I saw going on around me - men being hit, incoming shells, German soldiers- with the answer being that I saw very little. At a time like that, your total attention is directed at your immediate area and unless some event takes place right in that area, you are not going to see it. This was not a spectator sport!

`By the time I arrived at the General Hospital near the town of Cheltenham, I was on the mend. I had had one interesting development while enroute from France and that was that I became inflated. Probably because of the nature of the wound; i.e. in the chest, my upper body suddenly was filled with air so that when you touched me you got a spongy reaction. It only lasted a few days but it absolutely fascinated me. Once in the big hospital I wasn't up and bouncing around right away but I didn't require anymore medical attention other than that the nurses could provide. I wrote Nikki a letter dated 15 July in which I said the following: " No permanent damage was done and now I'll have to bear with the monotony for a while until my wound heals. I imagine it'll require about a month to mend and then I'll be on my merry way again." My letter didn't arrive in Douglaston until late in the month (unless you sent a V-Mail which was microfilmed and sent by air, regular letters went by ship and probably took at least two weeks to get home) and by that time she had heard from my mother that I was in the hospital. Notification of my situation went to my brother by War Department telegram on the 27th of July (I had designated John as my emergency contact so as to avoid Mom getting any kind of telegram); he called Mom and she in turn called Nikki.

At this point I think I should explain my relationship with Miss Nicholas, particularly since given the volume and romantic nature of my letters to her it could be construed that we were a pair which we were not. We had had only 6 or 7 dates before I left the country; an entirely inadequate number for a young woman of 20 to use as a basis for picking her mate. During the two years that I was gone, she dated a number of other men and indeed had serious relationships with two of them, one of which was ongoing when I returned in the spring of '46. My writing to her was a "war kind of thing". Probably because we were so young and not far removed from our family life, we needed an anchor back home.This need was reflected in almost all the letters I censored (all the letters of the enlisted men were censored by the officers in their command - ours were censored by the next senior officer) in that the writers were showing their homesickness in what they wrote to their wives, girl friends, or family members. Nikki was my anchor whether she wanted to be or not - fortunately for me she wrote often and with empathy if not romantically. Why her? Because, she was a lovely young woman who was charming. I did not date either in high school or college and so she was also my first serious relationship with a woman. Needless to say, I was pretty damned lucky to have found her..

When I became ambulatory, the wounds of my fellow patients very naturally drew my

attention. One man had stitches up and down and across his entire forehead - he was a glider pilot and the last thing he remembered before coming to in a hospital was seeing the coast of France in front of him. Obviously, his glider crashed and he went head first in to the instrument panel. Another officer had been hit several times in the body with machine gun fire, one of which injured his spine paralyzing him for life. Several had been hit in the arm, the round severing a nerve and although repaired it would take many months before they would regain the use of the arm (so they went back to the States). And there was the man who had been hit in the face and as a result lost one eye and only had partial vision in the other. He was outfitted with glasses which gave him the ability to see for the first time since he had been wounded making him very happy. My most unusual contact
was with a West Point classmate who was in the Engineer Corps and had landed at "H" hour only to be hit coming off the landing craft - the bullet hit him in the shoulder but because he was bent over traversed some distance in his body before coming out the back. He was recovering well but for some reason we never had any contacts other than the first one and when I saw him on a number of occasions later in life, he didn't recall that we had been in the hospital together. Not surprising , I guess, since I think a lot of engineer officers (the engineer corps doesn't consider itself a part of the Army any more than the Navy considers itself a part of the Defense Department) view themselves as living in an entirely separate world.

As my mobility got better, I began to leave the ward on occasion either to go to the officers club which I did a number of times or to take walks in the open fields which surrounded the hospital. I may not have mentioned it but the hospital was a huge tent city put out in the countryside near Cheltenham. The place abounded in nurses and though there were a lot of jocular exchanges between patients and nurses, that is about as far as it went. For one thing given the casualty flow from Normandy, they were busy and tired most of the time and added to that, the patients were either very sick or being moved out. If they got entangled with the opposite sex, it was probably within the staff. We had entertainment provided from time to time. One of the most unforgettable shows put on for us was done by Glenn Miller and his band. For those who were still in beds or limited in their mobility he had a combo from the orchestra come and put on concerts around the hospital. The full band played for a large crowd in an outdoor setting near the city of Oxford and we were bused to it from the hospital. Imagine going to a Glenn Miller concert in the war zone. By August, I was getting bored with hospital life and ready for action. Since it had become quite clear that I would be going back to France in view of the nature of my wound and the way it was closing up, I was anxious to move on. I had become wary of going back into action as a forward

observor; from being entirely naive as to the cold facts of being in close contact with the enemy as I was on the morning of the 4th of July, I now, in thinking about being in that same situation, could feel some anxiety. I had steeled myself into accepting the fact that it might happen and mentally prepared for that eventuality.

Sometime in early August, I began experiencing some pain in my left arm extending from the shoulder down the length of the arm. At first it occurred when I was up and moving but then it subsided and would only pop up when I was under any kind of tension and very much so when I got hot in the sun. In the beginning it was very painful when it struck but the severity of the pain diminished as time passed. It was several years before I could be startled or be in a hot sun and not have a flash of pain down that arm. The doctors were interested and checked it out but were convinced that it was a residual from the wound and would eventuality go away. At any rate, it certainly didn't deter them from releasing me from the hospital and returning me to action. On 25 August, '44, the hospital kicked me out and I started the trip back to France to what fate I did not know. There was no assurance whatsoever that I would even join my old division. My journey involved going from the hospital to a replacement depot in England, and then from there to a port on the south coast where I would pick up a boat to France. I went to the 8th Replacement Depot in central England where I was processed and equipped; this took about three days. It was while I was there that I encountered a situation to which I had referred earlier in my writing when I mentioned the debilitating nature of work in the Army between WWI and WWII. The first morning after I had arrived at the repodepo(hard e) when I went to breakfast I noticed an area of the messhall occupied by as many as 15 or 20 full colonels. I turned to some guy near me and commented on the large number of full colonels being shipped as replacements. His response was that they were not going to France; they had been there and were being sent back to the States - they had been relieved of their commands. I have no idea as to the background of these individuals but it stands to reason that if they were that senior in rank they had been in the Army for quite some time; when faced with the pressures of combat command their lack of peacetime preparedness caught up with them. Command failures at the regiment and below happened fairly often in Normandy. In the 331st Regiment of the 83rd, there were 7 regimental commanders before they finished the fighting there with three of them being relieved. The last one, who commanded them the rest of the war, was a Colonel Robert York who had been a Captain with

the 1st Division in Africa and came to the 83rd as a Lieutenant Colonel in Normandy. There were good older ones though; Colonel Craybill who commanded the 329th Regiment (either that or the 330th) was in his forties and there weren't any better regimental commanders than he. (forties when looked at from the 20's is old and it is getting pretty old for combat.)

From the repodepo, I went to a port of embarkation in southern England by train and from there by boat to Cherbourg. The most memorable part of the trip was on the boat, memorable because of the conversations I either had or heard. The primary topic was the final destination of everyone upon debarking in France. Almost to a man, the infantrymen knew that they would be back in a front line infantry organization and they dreaded the thought. Most of these men had been wounded in Normandy serving at with such divisions as the 29th, 4th, 9th, 1st and there some who had seen combat in Africa or Italy; they all dreamed of getting a rear echelon job - anything but being shot at again. Now that I think about it, our repodepo's replacements were all returnees and thus too the shipload which would make very good sense since the last thing you want is to expose combat rookies to war stories and anxieties all calculated to scare the pants off of them. Upon arriving back in France we were trucked to a field replacement depot and it was there after an overnight stay that I learned I was to be returned to the 83rd Division.

And what had happened to the 83rd during the time I was in the hospital. Well, they had taken the town of Sainteny; you may recall that it was our first days objective when we jumped off on the 4th of July. They got there on the 9th of July; by the 29th of July they had reached a point approximately 12 miles south of the line they had been on when I was wounded - that's just about one-half a mile per day. The famous carpet bombing by 1500 heavy bombers which opened a huge hole in the German lines permitting the breakout from Normandy took place in front of the division on the 25th of July. During the battle of Normandy, my artillery battalion of 12 guns fired 13,695 rounds of 6 inch shells which comes to 513 tons. The progress that was made against well-trained and veteren German troops who were dug in the earthen fortifications known as hedgerows was accomplished in large part by the sheer brute force of bullets and millions of steel fragments from exploding shells and more importantly, by soldiers - many of whom were lost. Of the 59
divisions which saw combat in northern Europe, the 83rd was the 10th division to enter

combat, saw 244 days of combat, and suffered 15,248 combat casualties. A high percentage of these casualties came in Normandy; very few of the infantry soldiers who trained at Breckinridge were still with the division on July 29th. After being in reserve for five days the 83rd was made part of the force commanded by Patton which was to proceed up the Brest peninsula and take the port of Brest. The first mission of the division was to take the towns of St. Malo and Dinard which was done by 20 August; by then Patton had been redirected to command the breakout force which was encircling the Germans trying to escape Normandy and the 83rd was moved to the Loire River to defensive positions to guard against attacks from southern France. By 3 September my old outfit was located at Chateaubriant (south of Rennes) in training and that is the date when I rejoined it.

I was warmly greeted by my fellow officers and found that instead of rejoining my battery, I was being assigned to battalion headquarters. I also found that the two officers from "B" and "C" Batteries who as I had been sent forward at Carentan to forward observors had become battery commanders and were now Captains(I was still a first lieutenant). It turns out that during the break on 29 July, the troops got into Calvados, a highly potent apple liquor produced in Normandy and there were some drunken affairs two of which resulted in fistfights involving the then battery commanders of "B" and "C" and enlisted men. The two captains were of course relieved and court-martialed resulting in the promotion of my two friends who had performed with great courage as FO's. But the disparity of our rank made my new assignment even more important to me. I was to be Major Kirkland's assistant in the fire direction center, a captain's job and if I did well I would be promoted. Wartime promotions were unique in that they could be obtained quite quickly as compared to peacetime. Generally in peacetime promotions are a function of time; i.e. you have to be a first lieutenant for so many years before you are elgible to be promoted to Captain. In combat, promotions are a function of position; i.e. if as a first lieutenant you are put in a job calling for a captain you can get promoted even though you may have been a first lieutenant for a month. And the promotion is authorized by the field command, not in Washington. Maybe, I dwell over-long on this matter, but it is important to understand that rank is really what it is all about in the Army; it is prestige and money that we are talking about. There was one caveat that came with the new position - apparently Kirk had argued for me over the selection of the battalion survey officer, Lt Runk, who ranked me (there it is - rank) and so Col Irvine(Lt Col) told me that I was getting the job on a trial basis, a fact which I quickly forgot.

Very soon after I returned, I had a driver take me to Cherbourg to pick up my belongings

which had been packed up and shipped to a depot for safekeeping after I was wounded. Because I was in a jeep I had an excellent opportunity to see the Normandy battlefield still undisturbed by an cleanup effort. The condition of the towns such as St. Lo was the most striking of the scenes since they had been reduced almost in toto to rubble. Next in order of interest were the battlefields, the demarcation line drawn by the zone of bomb craters and associated wrecked equipment caused by the carpet bombing. On one stretch of road were the remains of two German 88's with the results of their efforts down the road apiece in the form of a number of burnt-out American tanks and vehicles. The place smelled of war. It was this way almost the entire way up to Cherbourg where upon my arrival I had a really pleasant surprise. I found my trunk locker with little difficulty (a testimonial to the care given the belongings of dead and wounded men) and when I opened it what was on top of my clothing but some 500 francs that I had obtained in England before shipping across the channel. There must have been many opportunities during the packing and movement of that locker for someone to have stolen that cash so the fact that it was still there spoke volumes about the integrity of people in the Army and their respect for the property of a fallen comrade.

On 12 September, we moved into an assembly area near Vendome France which is just west of Orleans and from there on the 20th we moved again to Montargis which is south and east of Paris. On 24 September we began a major move out of France and into Luxembourg. As we moved through France, the exuberance of the citizens of France was very evident; particularly in every town we went through. We were showered with flowers, offers of wine, embraces by all the women and some of the men. It made our journey very pleasant. Geographically, Luxembourg along its eastern border is separated from Germany by the Moselle River which runs almost due south. Near the town of Berbourg the Moselle turns to the east where after about 20 miles it is joined by the Saar River which in turn has come up from almost due south. The 83rd Division was given the job of chasing the Germans across the Moselle which it did fairly quickly; the Germans still being on the run and falling back to the Siegfried Line, defenses built to defend against attack before the outbreak of WWII. As part of this operation my battalion was firing in support of the infantry and we had several field positions before settling into the town of Berbourg. Field living was a great deal more enjoyable now than before since I was ensconsed in a big tent as opposed to being in a pup tent. The fire direction tent was 16 feet long, 10 feet across, and 8 feet high. At night Kirk and I slept in it albeit amongst boxes and tables - it was also heated by a pot-bellied stove which when really hot turns red. Operations within this tent were those necessary to tell the

12 guns of the three batteries where to shoot. Basically, you did this using a map on which the guns
were plotted as well as the targets so that you could determine both direction and distance to the target. Kirk was a Princeton grad from '36, smart and mature, and had the fire direction business down to a "T'. Unfortunately for me, he controlled the show completely leaving me with sort of caddy functions and he wasn't a very good teacher so even during slack times I didn't learn a great deal (when I had the same job as his in Korea, I kept total control but I did a better job of training my backup). When he went back to higher headquarters on business and left me in charge I was very insecure and didn't do a very good job.

The target of most interest once we were in Berbourg were the trains which came through Karts Kunthaus, a town located at the intersection of the Saar and Moselle Rivers. The town was the focus of a major railhead and trains could easily be seen moving in and through this railhead by our observors on the hills overlooking the river just east of Berbourg. It was at near maximum range for our artillery pieces but reach it we could so when the word came from the observation post that train smoke could be seen we started to fire. This enjoyable practice continued uninhibited for some time until the Germans started waiting for nightfall to move the trains and until they moved some railroad guns into position along the north bank of the Moselle. Keeping them close to tunnels they could fire on us with some impunity since if we returned the fire or asked for air strikes they would easily move the gun into a tunnel. The first casualty resulting from this enemy weapon was a farmer who was hit by a shell while walking his two horses outside of town - all three were killed. This was on 12 October and a week later one of the incoming rounds landed between the trails of a "B" battery 155, killing the section chief two cannoners. "B'" battery had also been the subject of a similar hit in Normandy when again the chief of section and two cannoneers were killed. The firing batteries were moved but no sooner had they relocated then incoming rounds landed around their new positions. At that point it was concluded that someone in town using a clandestine radio was advising the Germans of our locations and on the basis of that conclusion, all the townspeople were moved out of town and out of the area. After that move was made and with another move of the batteries the fire from the enemy gun lost its accuracy. We also had concerns given us from above. One evening we heard an enormous roar in the sky and rushing outside we were able to catch sight of V-1 rocket passing over us at very low altitude, maybe 3 or 4 hundred feet. The Germans were very active early on in launching V-1's and sending them in the general direction of London. With their defeat in France and the lowland countries. they lost their launching sites which could reach England. The weapon

had an unusual and creepy characteristic - when it had reached its programmed distance, the engine would cut off and the warhead would simply fall to the ground where it detonated. So you heard the deafening roar of the jet engine followed by complete silence and if that happened above you , you were in trouble. The one over us was heading south and at such a low altitude that we figured it must have been an errant launch. It was the only one we heard until the Battle of the Bulge.

We moved into houses when we arrived at Berbourg. It was a farm town and like so many in Europe the farmyards are on the periphery of the town while the farm animals are housed inside the town. It didn't take me long to feel that I had been thoroughly indoctrinated in the sounds of farm animals. Our fire direction center was on the second floor of a house which was up a hill west of the center of town. Cows, chickens, pigs, geese, and horses continually and noisily passed under our window with the resultant chaos of their movements sometimes interfering with our conduct of fire missions. This problem of course went away when the townspeople were evacuated. Our messhall was set up in a restaurant in the center of town. When we moved in to Berbourg we simply took over any buildings we needed and the people living in them or using them simply moved out. But it was near the center of town on the outskirts that the enemy shellfire was being concentrated so that going down for a meal, particularly lunch, became somewhat thrilling. For me it was a matter of pride that I would go down regardless of the shelling going on but there was no way that Kirk would go near the place. He never left the building where the fire direction center was housed so it was up to me to get his lunch and bring it back to him. I could feel scared while I was down in the center of town but I guess I was really surprised to find how scared some people could get. You just never know what's going on behind closed doors.

My promotional bubble was burst early in November when the Colonel called me in told me that I was to be replaced by Lt Runk reminding me that he had said at the beginning of my assignment to the fire direction center that it was a trial. Kirk told me that he had argued with Irvine to be given the right to pick his assistant but Irvine overrode him. I suspect that what happened is that Runk stayed on Irvine's case about being senior until Irvine capitualated. At any rate I now became the battalion survey officer, the job that Runk had held. I took the change with a mimimum of grousing; to quote my letter to Nikki on the subject I said, ".....He (Irvine) may have a point in giving us both a crack at it (the fire direction job) but he should have put Runk in first as I was new at both jobs and I could have worked into the survey during our break (while

we were on the Loire). However it goes, it was rude shock to me for I thought my efficiency rating was good("he" said that it was excellent) but it's hard to explain the reason you've been demoted to someone else- especially the men under you. Oh well, what the heck - life can't always be pleasant". As the battalion survey officer, I went back to field duty and into work with which I was very familar and very good at. As has been pointed out the ability to accurately plot the exact geographical coordinates of each battery's guns is fundamental to placing accurate fire on an enemy target. Although the maps issued in Europe were detailed enough to get within a 100 yards of where the guns were located, Kirk insisted quite properly so that they be surveyed in. There were exact survey coordinates on identifiable places all through Europe (mainly church steeples) from which the survey team
start and work their way to each battery. What we did when on a survey mission was to locate a church steeple that could be identified on the map(usually one per town) and that had known coordinates as shown in the listings given us. At that point we would set up a drafting table oriented by compass; establish a known distance base (either by taping or by using stadia rods); and measure angles from the end of this base to the steeple. Using trig functions and having two angles and one side of the triangle we could determine the coordinates of the ends of our base. From there we could carry the survey to the battery positions. When the battalion was on the move, we were hard-pressed to keep up and so as you might suspect after a long stay in one position in Berbourg, as soon as I took over as survey officer the battalion began a series of moves. The initial shift was to southern Luxembourg to give covering fire to an attack being made by Patton's forces up from France on the east side of the Moselle and in such a way that fire from our weapons on the west side of the river could cover his forces. Upon arrival at the first of these southern locations, I immediately went out to locate and begin surveying from a known coordinate point. When my team returned to the battalion area late in the day imagine our surprise to find no one there - they had received new orders and had quickly gone on their way, leaving us a note as to where to find them. We were on our own much of the time and had to stay constantly alert because we were working in areas totally deserted as far as American troops were concerned. I think it was fairly dangerous business.

It was at one of the southern locations that tragedy struck us. In general artillery locations are sufficiently far enough back of the front lines to make for a reasonably safe environment - a light 105 outfit will usually be back about 1 to 2 thousand yards and the medium (mine) back around 2 to 4 thousand yards. The endangered species in the artillery are the observors, normally the forward observors. But as the case of the heights at Berbourg we do put people in good

observation posts when we can find them in a fairly static situation. Such was the case of the support we were rendering across the Moselle and because of that Irvine decided or was told to put an observor on the heights overlooking the river and the forces opposing our advance on the other side. Irvine picked Len Leonard from "A" battery for the job; Len had replaced me in the battery. They made their way to where they had to leave their vehicle and proceed on foot. To get that point they passed through the town where the infantry were billeted but did not stop to check on the situation in front of them. Coming to an unmanned infantry checkpoint they proceeded on past it until they came to the edge of a clearing from which they could see the top of the hill. Striking out across the field they soon noticed some figures at the top waving them to proceed. About 100 yards from the top they became suspicious of the uniforms of the men encouraging them on and turned to go back. It was too late, a machine gun opened up and Leonard went down shot to death. Why Leonard and not Irivine? Well, Irvine had taken to wearing a GI raincoat while poor Leonard was wearing an officer's raincoat and the German patrol not being able to capture them killed the officer and then fled back across the river. Telling this story is important if for no other reason than to make it clear that in combat it never paid to let your guard down when you were near the frontlines. Of course, Irvine's lack of experience of ever having been that close to them before resulted in a unnecessary loss.

I will diverge at this point to reflect on the presidential election of 1944 when President Roosevelt was elected to his fourth term in office. In reflecting on this truly historical period, the extent to which our democratic processes carried into the combat zone is quite remarkable. We voted in the middle of this war and thousand of miles away from home - I mean that is really awesome. I know I did because I wrote Nikki the following:

" I did vote for Messr. Dewey, but it didn't help things much. I really feel that he was the better man because I believe he's good and because he's young and it's going to take a young man to keep on the ball after the war is over and a satisfactory peace is made and kept. I do not believe President Roosevelt will last the term out and Vice President Truman is certainly not the man Dewey is. All in all the American people have made a satisfactory choice if Roosevelt lives but if he dies or age and work impair his facilities the American people will have to stew in their own juice. I'm not biased as to party for I will vote for the man anytime no matter what party he belongs to. It was a shock to me to read of Mr. Wilkie's death for in him I saw the best of all three - unfortunately he had no party - and truly the country suffered a great loss for he was a statesman something the country does not have and needs

very badly. As for Dewey's failure, I think if had refrained from his campaign speeches he would have had a better chance - as it was he might as well stood in bed" Here we were fighting for democracy and for good reason - it really did mean something to us!

We were in ten different positions while in Luxembourg, the last being in the town of Canach, but on 1 December there was an indication of a major change. The division was to move to the Hurtgen Forest to replace the 4th Division. The Hurtgen Forest was located just south of Aachen in Germany; it was part of the Siegfried Line, a defensive zone built before the start of WWII along Germany's border. A reconnaissance party was sent on 3 December to where our new position would be in the forest. There were five of us in the Colonel's command car. I can't recall a time in my life when I felt as desolate as I did driving through Hurtgen. It was a foul day for weather with low scudding clouds and intermittent showers and Irvine insisted on keeping the top down even though it was obvious that no aircraft would be flying in that kind of weather. So we were wet, stiff, and cold when we arrived at the edge of the forest. The road into it went through a shallow valley with deep forest on either side - the place smelled of death and there had been a lot of that in the 4th Division as they fought through the trees. Being a part of the Siegfried it was heavily mined, lots and lots anti-personnel mines (shu mines calculated to blow your foot off) plus for the infantry incoming artillery shells would explode on contact with the upper branches of the trees sending showers of fragments down below. While we were on the road we came across a group of engineers who were yelling to a soldier on the open hillside next to the road. The man was proceeding up the hill when halted by the engineers screaming at him that he was in an anti-personnel minefield that had not yet been cleared. When we last saw him, he was frozen in place afraid, I'm sure, to take another step. It was on this reconnaissance that we saw an enemy fighter plane; we first heard the sound of an approaching plane and then whoosh he came over the hill to our left, down on the deck and just as quickly he disappeared. One of the stunning aspects of our war was that we so rarely saw German aircraft and so this visit came as a complete surprise. All in all, after the refuge in Luxembourg, we had the realities of war and the feelings of impending danger brought back to us rather sharply by being in that dark, foreboding place.

We completed the work we had to do - meeting with the 4th Div Arty people, looking at gun positions, getting survey data, and arranging the time of turnover - and headed back to join our outfit that evening. It was very quiet in the command car on the trip home; we didn't arrive there until around midnight to find that move orders had been issued so that we had to be up in about three hours. Having frozen stiff on the return trip, I used those three hours just to get warm.

Riding in the jeep in the early hours of the next morning revived all the cold bones. Jeeps by now were equipped with an iron bar which had been affixed to the front bumper of the vehicle, a bar which projected upward above the height of the driver and passenger. It turns out that one of the latest of German defensive measures was to have patrols string piano wire across roads at the appropriate height so that jeeps (which usually were the lead vehicles of a convoy) would hit them. With the windshields down, the men in the front seats were extremely vulnerable and could easily lose their lives when their bodies traveling at some speed hit those taut thin wires. The bar mounted to the bumper, of course, severed the wire. We never experienced such an encounter. The trip to Hurtgen was made without incident helped by the fact that the weather was foul and no aircraft were around. Since the batteries slipped into positions vacated by the 20th Battalion of the 4th Division, I had little survey work to do initially and could devote my attentions to making myself comfortable. The roads, particularly the ones leading off of the main road, were muddy; they were more than muddy, they were a pea soup of mud. A jeep sank into it so that the mud came up and touched to side of the vehicle; if you stepped out in it, it came up almost to your knee. Kirk used me for odd missions and very late one night I was called to the Fire Direction Center and given instructions to deliver a message to one of the batteries down the road. The Germans on occasion would penetrate fairly deep into our areas with special patrols so driving down a muddy road at night in total blackness is a nervous kind of thing - especially when the sound of the engine lets anyone know you're coming and at the same time drowns out your ability to detect any sounds that might be important to you. Sounds really carry at night. After a week in this first location, the infantry had made sufficient progress that we had to move and in so doing got out of the dark depths of the forest and into a reasonably cleared area.

The 4th Division had cleared about 2/3's of the forest when they were relieved by the 83rd. The objective of the 83rd was to finish clearing the forest and then move to take the town of Duren which was located on the Roer River. The Roer was a fairly large river more or so depending on the time of the year although its flow was reasonably controlled by a dam upstream from where we were. Once across the river, you would be in the Cologne Plain with about 30 miles to go before reaching the Rhine River. On the 16th of December, the Germans began the Ardennes offensive or the Battle of the Bulge penetrating American lines south of us and just north from where we had been in Luxemboury (and where the poor, battered 4th was trying to get a rest after Hurtgen). The long dormant Luftwaffe came to life as part of that offensive and on 18 December a German fighter strafed our "B" Battery, wounding

4 men and damaging 4 vehicles. We were not affected by the battle being waged south of us initially and continued our efforts to take Duren. An artillery tactic which was used quite frequently was to attempt to mass the fire of as many guns as you could on a target; this was called a TOT or time on target. Once a target was selected its coordinates were made available to a number of fire direction centers who would figure the time of flight of the shells from each of their batteries and then everyone would fire so that all the shells arrived on the target at the same moment. Some of the TOT's being fired into Duren involved 16 or 18 battlions of artillery ranging from 4 inch to 8 inch cannon - that's 200 shells all landing in a space of a couple of side by side football fields at the same moment in time. There was a rolling roar of guns firing starting with the big jobs to the rear and coming up over us when one of these TOT's took place. You can imagine the effect on German soldiers. Of course, since I was no longer in the FDC of our battlion, I, along with others only knew about them when we heard them. Actually, once survey of the new

positions was completed I and my team were free for other duties. One such duty in this latest position was to scour the area around us for dead Germans who had been left where they died as our infantry advanced. It sounds ghoulish but you quickly establish a discon-ect in dealing with them. A far more pleasant activity was that involved in making a home. With a week to go in before Christmas, Captain Stewart (my battery commander), Bob Gruber (a lieutenant compatriot), and I started to build a shelter. Our hut was erected in a a small quarry by digging down a bit and then building the sides with logs as well as constructing a log roof - the cracks in the roof were filled with mud. Inside we built three bunks , floor, and a table and added a stove and a radio so that with light supplied by the generator we were warmly ensconsed by Christmas eve. My preoccupation with the construction work got me into serious trouble with Kirk. He called me in one morning and said that I was to take some material over to an artillery battalion of the division next to the 83rd. It didn't take me long to realize that this would be an all day job since I had to go back to the rear in order to cross over and then go forward to this outfit. Well I was really anxious to get the dugout finished in time for Christmas so I said exactly what I thought of the order - S..., I said. The next moment, I was outside of the FDC with Kirk (the Major talking to the Lieutenant) divesting me of my dignity. True to the maturity of my age , I didn't speak to him for a month unless on official business - I did deliver the materials as I had been instructed and still was able to help in completing the work on the interior of our hut.

I was called out on another detail during this time and it was to accompany the Colonel on a recconnaisssance to the vicinity of the town of Duren, the west side of which was now in our hands (the town was split in half by the Roer River which passed through it). so that we could move our guns forward and provide fires across the Roer and covering fire when the effort was made to cross the river. The town was absolutely leveled both by artillery and by the infantry in the process of clearing the town. It still smelled of the battle fought over it and was still filled with dead men - the Germans were in a pile and the Americans were laid out with the Grave Registration people working on them. Death had come in so many different forms but the scene had no realism to it; it was in a way a display of wax figures, a scene too familar to the infantrymen nearby and probably too incomprehensible to us.

I will quote from a letter I wrote on Christmas to describe the events of that day at my outfit. "And today is Christmas. Due to the fact that we were up at five this morning, the pleasantness around here could be held in your hands. However, I feel pleasant and refuse to join in the many fracas' going on.Heck, everyone would give so much to be home, that toes are very tender and anyone coming close to them - Wow! It's a peculiar Xmas for every so often above all the seemingly normal appearances of a peaceful life, the thuds of the guns make themselves heard - almost continually, you might say. Everybody, interestedly watched me early this morning open some presents Mom sent me. We got some chuckles out of the Yo-Yo, but it was the shaving cream that got the biggest laugh- the reason being that my growth of beard is rather slow so that I merely use a wash cloth and razor to do the job(everyone insinuates that I just wash my face and get rid of them - that's not true). Our Xmas meal was held at three this afternoon and was the best I've tasted for a very long time - what with hot rolls,delishous turkey, and two kinds of cake for dessert. I'm quite a good eater when the food is good so I polished this meal off to a fare thee well."
As everyone who has been in combat has commented at one point or another, war is total boredom one moment and total chaos the next. Our Christmas day of good food and nostalgic thoughts of home came to a crashing end with the word that we were to move out early the next morning for the Ardennes. The 250,000 strong German force had made considerable headway through the American lines destroying the 106th Division in the process and by December 25th had reached the town of Celles in Belgium just a few miles short of the Meuse River. Upon crossing that river they would then be some forty miles from Brussels. On that same day however the 2nd Armored Division met the German adv-

ance headon and brought them to a halt. The 83rd Division was ordered out of Hurtgen to join with the 3rd Armored as the general effort on the part of all American forces was to begin to now force the enemy out of the Bulge- (a dear friend and classmate was captured when the 106th was overrun and his story of being a prisoner of war is truly fascinating).

The night of 26 December after being on the move all day, I found myself at one o'clock in the morning in a tavern somewhere in Belgium. It just happened that the column was halted for a while and my vehicle was in the vicinity of this Belgium inn so I and others went inside. The weather had been bitter cold that day so the opportunity to get into a warm place was most welcome - there was bright moon shining but with my face buried as far down in my clothing to avoid the cold I didn't see much of it. In one corner of the restaurant was a Christmas tree complete with ornaments. In his broken English, the proprietor told us that an American Captain had brought the tree back from a German position on the Siegfried line and sure enough on one of the tree's ornaments was inscribed "Froliche Weinachten" or Merry Christmas in German. We were fortunate to still have a good portion of the "Care" package sent to me by Nikki for Christmas so we had something to eat. Heavy snows had begun to fall on 21 December so that when the 83rd went into action on 27 December we were into real winter weather. Initially the division attacked out near the very tip of the German advance into Belgium taking the town of Rochefort but then it was relieved by another division and shifted to the east to join with the 3rd Armored and make a drive southeast across the salient (the bulge) to maintain pressure on the Germans as they withdrew. The move was made at night and under frigid snowy conditions so as a result we encountered many delays and saw a number of cases where trucks or tanks had slid off the road; some of the tanks had rolled over leaving some question in your mind when you saw them like that as to how they ever got them upright again. To further complicate matters, the Germans were busy firing V-1 rockets into the general area; you could hear them clearly with their large jet engines and so could you hear clearly when there was the dead silence when the engine cut off and a few moments later the thunderous explosions as the weapon hit the ground. Fortunately for us none of them came into our immediate area but they sure got your attention no matter where they were if you could hear them. What we faced when we got to our new positions and joined the 3rd Armored Division were some of the best of the remaining German troops and they were very disciplined in their withdrawal preventing any opportunity for the Americans to cut them off before they could get back to their original lines. Nevertheless, drive them back we did; the 83rd covered about 15 miles in 18 days, from 2 January to 20 January. The impact on me

starting with the first positions occupied by our guns on the 27th of December was a lot of survey work. With the infantry in such high gear we also were constantly on the move being sure that we could always give close artillery support and , of course , each time we moved I and my seven men were in the field determining the exact coordinate location of the three batteries. The importance of our work was more significant than sometimes in the past since with the snow masking landmarks the practice of locating the batteries by studying the 1/25000 maps wasn't working so well (I remind everyone at this point that having the geographical location of the guns was absolutely essential for putting accurate artllery fire on your targets and also essential to avoiding putting fire on your own people). We worked day and night during this operation and usually arrived back at our bivouac frozen stiff and pooped. Other than being disappointed at the loss of a chance of being promoted, I really liked the survey work - it was important, it was something I did well, and , most important, it gave me a high degree of independence since I was out in the field on my own most of the time. There presumably was to be an evaluation of the switch made in Luxembourg between Runk and myself by year's end; when it was made I was informed by the Colonel that the switch was now permanent. I rationalized it all by realizing that in the fire direction center, with the iron grip over every move by Kirk, the assistant S-3 job was more of a glorified telephone operator than anything else.

By the end of January (the Battle of the Bulge campaign was considered as having ended on 28 January with the original front lines having been reestablished) my survey team was enjoying a respite and I was comfortably ensconsed in a pyramidal tent (as opposed to a pup tent). We were we thought on safe ground and had not dug in (foxholes) plus the ground was frozen stiff and we were lazy. Suddenly after night fall and with about four officers gathered in the tent incoming artillery fire began, some distance away to begin with, but as we noticed getting closer. We became increasingly aware that the line of approach of the rounds being fired was directly at us. Suddenly one round landed close enough that we could feel the concussion. There wasn't much we could do except flatten out on the floor and sweat (cold or no cold). We were under some trees and knew that if the Germans put one into those we were in serious trouble since the trees would detonate the shell(s) and we would receive a rain of fragments. Fortunately for us that close one was the last one fired into our area. Whew! It was in that same tent, that we decided to have a party with some of the booze being recovered from German caches and brought around in 2 and 1/2 trucks. We invited the officers from the Ack Ack outfit just above us in the forest and proceeded to drink. Our supply was limited and soon was gone leaving nothing in the tent but a bottle of Benedictine that I had in my possession. It was a thoroughly well-aged bottle,

probably worth a fortune, and here we were swigging it out of the bottle getting sicker by the minute. To this day I recall hearing those Ack Ack guys as they were going back through the woods throwing up that magnificent Benedictine. What a waste!

On 6 February, 1945, the battalion was relieved of its Ardennes assignment and began its move north back into Germany. One way to sum up its involvement in the "Battle of the Bulge" and to give another perspective to the world I lived in at that time is to insert a part of the battalion's history - this history was written by an unknown writer probably done as the war progressed and covers the battalion's activities from its beginning at Camp Atterbury in Indiana to the the end of the war. Here's a part of what he had to say about the Ardennes fighting: (In some places he sounds more like a reporter than a historian)

....."The German fought cleverly while he was winning and utterly without quarter. When the tide of battle turned he clung stubbornly to each inhabited place crowding into the buildings for warmth. He defended every house, every barn, every meager shelter with a desperation born of the knowledge that to withdraw meant fighting in the frigid open fields. In the numbing cold of these same fields, the battalion brushed aside waist deep snow, dug in the howitzers, fired and serviced them without complaint. For these were the kinds of targets they had been waiting for so long. The snow was a sea of white and friendless space. Winds screamed down the valley filling gun pits and covering ammunition with drifting snow. But the 155's roared on through the short days and the long winter nights, smashing attacks, halting tanks, toppling the sturdy little houses down upon their occupants and driving the survivors back up the road which they had rolled so triumphantly a few weeks earlier. New Years Day, 1945, was just another day except for the turkey dinner. Jan 1st was spent at Biron, Belgium firing on tanks, troop convoys, installations, and an enemy assembly area. From Biron we moved on Jan 2nd to assemble at Lentroul and then to a firing position at Harre on the 4th, where harassing fire was laid on enemy troops. German prisoners, their arrogance gone, came down the road staring fearfully at the 155's as they plodded dejectedly to the rear. Tanks put in an appearance on the 5th, and a barrage broke up the column. On Jan 6th one gun section moved up to Vaux-Chavanne for registration. Next day the entire battalion crept forward over icy roads to Hierlot and from a position near Liemeux, placed heavy fire on houses and cross roads in the vicinity. The cooridor was narrowing now, and the enemy was slowly pulling out his men and equipment.From Hierlot, the batteries moved Jan 12th to positions near the towns of Verleument, Hebronvel, and Joubieval, Belgium. Four Battery "B" men were injured

when their truck hit a mine in the latter position. Targets here were towns, enemy columns, and road junctions. The battalion fired its 40,000th round.

January 16th, the battalion moved to Petite-Langlir, Belgium, the last firing position in the Ardennes, and about 4000 yards closer to the enemy than the light battalions. Batteries "B" and "C" were subjected to a heavy concentration of German artillery fire but suffered no damage. Service battery trucks on the way up with ammunition were pinned down by the intense shell fire on the road. Some harassing fire bracketed the CP(Command Post), seriously damaging an ambulance. A strong German counter-attack was launched on the 17th. The 155's smashed leading tanks, destroyed an entire company of enemy infantry, and completely smothered the attack. The 83rd then struck back quickly after a thorough

artillery barrage. Our infantry, riding 3rd Armored tanks, crashed through the forests cut the road from Houffalize to St. Vith, knocked the last props out from under the defense of Bevigny, and rolled into the city. The Ardennes Bulge was now squeezed off and the enemy withdrew northeast leaving a trail of burnt-out armor and dead Panzergrenadiers."

The writer leaves the impression in some of his reporting that it was on the scene reporting which, of course, was not the case. The results of the battalion's firing efforts were usually sent back to us by our observors or by the infantry. His report on the harassing fire the battalion received around the 16th of January lends credence to my story about the rounds which were landing nearby us while we were in the tent.

A picture of how involved the 324th Field Artillery Battalion was in actual combat is shown by the number of shells fired. There were 13,694 in Normandy, 4,460 at St. Malo and Dinard, 3,092 at the Isle of Cezembre, 6,141 in Luxembourg, 7,368 in Hurtgen, and 5,245 in the Ardennes. That amount to over 3,000 rounds per gun since we landed in Normandy.

On 6 February, 1945, we began the move back to the general area which we had been in when we were ordered to the Ardennes. Only upon our return we were in an assembly area which was north of the Hurtgen Forest and north of Duren. On 9 February, the Germans blew up the Schwammanuel Dam thus flooding the Roer River plain; we had to cross that river in order to advance to the Rhine River some 40 or 50 miles away and the last major barrier to sweeping across Germany. The next two weeks were spent in various ways while the American troops in 9th Army waited for the river to return to its normal size.

One of the blessed events during this time was shower taking. From the end of December and probably before that, there might have been one opportunity to take a shower and this was at a tented facility operated by an army shower unit. As it turned out when we came back to the area we were now in, the location was near the town of Julich which although almost totally destroyed, had a mining operations going before the Americans arrived. I've never been to a mine in the United States but what they apparently all have are great tiled showers with a good hot water making capability. The one in Julich was no exception and the shower facility was still in operating condition. The first shower taken there was one of the most luxurious moments in our lives - period. As often as we could we found a way to get to those showers while we waited for the river to go down. Fortunately, as the support units of the army caught up with us and had a chance to settle in, among them was a laundry unit so that clean clothes were available. We all knew that once we took off again it might be as it had been in the past a long time before we were clean again.

There was desultory artillery fire going on day and night but we were in reserve and far enough behind the front lines that it could be ignored as a threat to our safety. If there is any problem it was the firing of some of the big guns nearby; the plaster on our roof was shaken down and window panes were broken. The Luftwaffe was still active and we had periodic night attacks throughout the area; the flights were referred to as "Bed Check Charlies". The heaviest attack came on the night of 21 February but none of the bombings came near us. After you are in this business for a while you develop a sixth sense which allows you to filter the battle sounds so that you react only when really necessary.

One of our recreational activities was drinking booze. It reached a peak one night when four of us got together for a real binge. Quoting from one of my letters is probably the best way to tell what happened.

"---- Your honorable Edward Burr II got himself slightly plastered last night. It's the second time for and I've regretted it both times. They happened almost one year apart to the day. We lit into six bottles of champagne - and then, knowing better, but not doing it, we had some scotch. We didn't have much, but the two don't mix and that's all there is to it. I have felt the effects all day and really suffered (serves me right). It was an agreeable evening just the same and the entire party had fun. Four of us, Stew,Bob, Major K. and myself, got pretty far gone, but the nice thing is that none of us has a nasty disposition so it was what might be termed a pleasant drunk. ----"

As I recall it, I was sick as a horse all night after the party ended and it took a friend or two the next morning walking me around to finally sober me up.

For whatever reason, it had been decided to keep the identity of the 83rd Division secret when we moved up from the Ardennes. The night we arrived even though it was late and a cold rain was falling we were instructed to dig in all vehicles and use camouflage all equipment before going to sleep. Other measures were put into effect such as removing all addresses from incoming mail (APO number) and changing telephone codes. I don't think I've mentioned this before but each unit was assigned a call name; e.g. the 324th Battalion was "Blank". Then numbers were added to identify a particular position within the organization; e.g. if you wanted to talk to the battalion commander you would ask for "Blank 6". This same coding was used over radios as well. When you worked with other outfits over time you would become familar with their code name and so, if you wanted to disguise an organization the first thing you did was to change their code name. As a result of all this secrecy it pretty well reduced or eliminated our ability to do very much in the way of unit training or activities during the two week period. So we were pretty bored by the time we got back into the war.

That happened on the 23rd of February when the 29th Division jumped off by crossing the Roer River which by now had nearly returned to its normal flow. The 324th was assigned temporarily to that division in order that all the artillery support in the area would be in action and firing for the 29th. When it became time for us to cross the river, the 83rd infantry had already gone over and we were back in our normal support function of them. The crossing was mainly interesting because the engineers had built the bridge we were on in a desolate area of the region so that we were on sort of a mud flat before and after leaving you with a sense of really being in "no man's land". After we left the river heading northeast toward the Rhine, we were able to resume travel on the road network, two lane rural roads. The German retreat had turned into a rout at this point

with only pockets of resistance. It was to take us just three days to cover the ground between the Roer and Rhine rivers. On the second day of this journey, we had an encounter with an American P-47 fighter pilot. About mid-afternoon, I was back at the battalion having completed some survey work in the field when we heard the loud sound of a low-flying fighter coming from in front of our position. As we looked, we could see a P-47 plane coming directly into our area flying very low and obviously in trouble. Just before reaching us a body left the plane and a parachute opened up and the pilot landed safely about a 100 yards in front of us. We were so concentrated on that event that no one paid any attention as to where the plane ended up. The next actions were humorous in a way although I'm not sure that the pilot thought so because the first men reaching him went right by him to the parachute. It was obvious they were after the silk chute. I imagine we were forgiven since to the relief of the pilot he had made it back to friendly faces. The fighter aircraft were very much in demand during this rush across the plains since there were pockets of resistence and those pockets often contained the remnants of German panzer (tank) units. Our fighters, particularly the P-47, were excellent tank killers with their rockets and catching tanks in the open made their day. I and my crew were able to watch one of these attacks from a distance; it was fascinating to see those planes diving, firing, rising, wheeling, and then diving again. At another time when I was doing an individual reconn and near a swampy grove of trees, I heard aircraft low to the ground and looking up was able to watch several German fighters coming down through the almost fog-like clouds above me closely pursued by a larger number of American fighters. One of the Germans was hit after they passed over me and I saw the German pilot parachuting from his burning airplane. Shortly after that, I heard a tremendous whoosing sound and a large object hit the swamp area behind me. I have no idea what it was, only guessing that it was a rocket fired from a plane; later I thought that I was pretty lucky to have had it land in a swampy area for there was no explosion. It was another example of how important it was for your luck to have you in the right place at the right time; so many men were killed because they were unlucky enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

On March 3, the 324th took up positions around the town of Neuss which was just across the Rhine River from Duesseldorf, one of the Ruhr Valley industrial cities. The 83rd had arrived at the Rhine before the Germans had blown the last bridge across the river to Duesseldorf but as they ventured out on the span hoping against hope to capture it intact, the Germans set off explosives which brought it down. So we like all the other units up and down the river (except for the Remagen bridge which was quite far south of us) ended up staring at a large expanse of water filled with bridge debris. Having taken up our gun positions we now settled down for another

protacted delay. I had been very busy on the three days before although much of my team's efforts were of no avail. By the time we got a survey of the gun positions underway or completed the guns had moved on to the next advanced position and Kirk was forced to use map coordinates given to him by the battery commanders to locate the weapons on his firing charts. There was certainly nothing for us to do once we had surveyed in the Neuss positions.

For the first time after crossing the Roer river we began to see German citizens out and about in the town. They were very discreet and kept to themselves; we were under orders not to fraternize with any of them so we also avoided contact. In coming across the forty or fifty miles from the Roer the contrast to our reception by citizens to that we received when crossing France was very noticeable. Whereas in France there were throngs of cheering people, in Germany we hardly ever saw anyone; admittedly, we were among the first Americans through their area and they had quite a fear of what we might do them One of the diversions used by the battalion in Neuss was to fire captured German weapons across the river. Duesseldorf being a major target for Allied bombers up to this point was defended by German antiaircraft guns which were located in numerous dug-in pods of four guns each all around Neuss. The guns were the famous 88, that high velocity rifle that was equally good at knocking off tanks as it was at shooting high into the sky at bombers. All were still operational and there was plenty of ammunition at each site. So we put our gun crews to work and started indiscriminately to fire them across the river. Such is the wanton nature of warfare. During the day and at night we could watch our bomber forces attacking targets some distance across the river - hundreds of airplanes. It was most spectacular at night because the sight of a downed aircraft was very clear especially if it caught fire as it was hit. I guess I didn't really envy the people flying those damned things.

I was engaged in extracuricular activities at this point. I was responsible for putting on the movies which were shown both morning and afternoon and among other things I was given the job of picking up the Red Cross women; their visits were occurring on a regular basis and I note that it would have been nice if we had the same ones each time so that I might have struck up a good acquaintance with one of them. I also was getting reading material (we had been all along) with the one I had at Neuss being a book written be Nevil Shute entitled "Pastoral". I wrote Nikki the following about the novel:

".....he has w;ritten of the plain simple romance of a British bomber pilot and a girl-officer at his base. Having seen English countryside in all of its loveliness it's easy to experience the moving qualities in his descriptive passages of this same land- to appreciate the simplicity yet powerfulness of his story romance with its background of peace and yet with all his phrases to

follow easily his plot and to believe in it. Those are my thoughts he expressed- those of walking through the country while it is in full bloom, those of fishing by a stream that is dignity in spite of its rushing, those of the "knights-in-arms" age only for the modern substitutions of various articles for those of the knights age. When I no longer can have those thoughts then I know I'm becoming old in the head. ....."

On or about 15 March '45, I was transferred from the 324th Battalion to the 83rd Division Artillery Headquarters(83rd Div Arty). The Div Arty was the command headquarters for the four artillery battalions in the division, of which the 324th was one. In other words I was moving to a higher headquarters. The reason for the transfer was to make me the Div Arty Survey Officer. Instead of doing survey work which involved the accurate locating of artillery guns, I would now be responsible for providing data to the four battalion survey officers (of which I just had been one) so that they could have a starting point from which to do their surveys. Why I got the job was never made overtly clear to me but I learned over time that Colonel Pepper Clay, the Div Arty Executive, had a hand in it. The new job called for a Captain, a promotion finally for me, and Pepper had become worried that the war could soon be over and I being a regular officer should be taken care of - the other officers would (and did) go home after the war and return to civilian life. I'm sure that I got a hearty endorsement from Kirk so it wasn't all politics. The opening occurred because the incumbent, also a first lieutenant, had badly tied up a mission he had been given and in so doing incurred Pepper's wrath resulting in his dismissal. The change was significant for me, both in the nature of the job and in my life. In the latter case, I went from the bosom of a family of people to being pretty much an outsider. I had been with the 324th for 18 months at the battery level and at the battalion headquarters and in training and in combat, making many friends along the way - we were drinking buddies. Coming into Div Arty, I encountered already established cliques (probably too severe a term - groups of close friends is most likely more accurate) which had been together longer than I had been in the battalion. Added to this was that the guy I replaced, although displeasing his superiors, was a nice person and well liked by his contemporarys. So, I was going to be on my own for a while until it was clear to the others that I would fit in. Small towns are everywhere! The job was much broader than the one I had had before in that as I mentioned earlier being in some respects more administrative since I worked with a lot with maps and arranging for their distribution to the battalions. I had a survey team with 9 or 10 men in it so I would still be in the field quite often. This new team constituted a challenge for me as well since they had to learn that I knew the score

and was competent enough to lead them. It was nothing that anybody going into a new job doesn't face but then I was still learning - I was now 23; had been since November of last year.

My immediate boss was a Lt Col Bob Smith; I knew of him from when I was in the fire direction center of the 324th and I knew that Kirk thought very highly of him. Bob was a graduate of Louisiana State University and as I was to learn later on was only about a year and a half older than I. But he seemed ten years older and he was (and still is) quite brilliant. General Montague who ran the Div Arty (and was pretty damn smart himself) had seen Bob's potential when he was first assigned to Div Arty (I think at Breckinridge, but it might have gone as far back as Atterbury) and made him the Div Arty S-3 (Operations Chief) which was a Lt Colonel's position and so Bob went right up the ladder. My job called for me to be in the field so for the first month I saw very little of the people in the headquarters.

As it turned out, I only had two weeks before we crossed the Rhine River. On 24 March, 1945, a major airborne assault was carried out east of Wesel on the Rhine and at the same time boat crossings were made, all to establish a protected zone so that bridges could be built allowing for the rest of the Army to cross. On 29 March, the 83rd Div Arty went across one of those bridges and we were on our way to the Elbe River, just short of Berlin. Knowing the route that we would follow once across the river, my principle task as Div Arty Survey Officer was to gather and disseminate survey maps covering the zone of our attack as far east as I could get them. The dissemination of the maps caused me to travel to each of the four battalions and visit with their survey officers. Once across the river, then I and my crew spent our time in the field going where needed to survey and establish map coordinates. It was a pretty hairy operation because of the fluidity of the battle lines and being out on our own. On one of my trips, I jolly well came close to being killed again, only this time by a vehicle. My driver and I were coming down a long stretch of road and could see a convoy of trucks in a field to our right some distance up ahead; they were on the move and entering the road we were on only heading in our direction. As we got close to their point of entry the last of the vehicles was leaving the field; as in the case of a column of trucks moving out, the tail end of the column gets going faster and faster and such was the case with this bunch. As the last truck entered the road right in front of us, he lost control and went into the ditch on the other side from us. The driver naturally put his front wheels hard left in order to climb out of the ditch and all of a sudden he was successful - only as he came out of the ditch he now shot across the road at us. This was the case of a 2 1/2 ton truck hitting a 1/4 ton jeep right smack on the side which resulted in our jeep being lifted cleanly and deposited in the ditch on our

side of the road. Fortunately for us he hit us exactly in the center of gravity so instead of the jeep being knocked over it was moved enmass and the only damage we suffered was the driver's carbine which had been straddling the open side of his seat - the barrel of the carbine was bent like a pretzel. In the case of the truck, the impact with us allowed the driver to straighten his course and when we got over our shock we saw him tearing down the road. All we could do was wave our arms and cuss at him.

"Battle lines" really didn't exist since the German Army was in full flight or literally disintegrating at this time. There were pockets of resistance to be found, manned in some cases by the regulars and in others by local Volksturmers. We found ourselves in a mad dash across Germany in an area which was north of the Ruhr Valley. Having crossed the Rhine on the 29th of March, we arrived at the town of Calbe, just short of the Elbe River on 13 April - it took us 15 days to over about 220 miles. What a far cry from Normandy when a day's movement was measured in yards, and damn few of them at that. If you ever care to trace our steps, they are as follows:

Wesel to Ludinghausen, 3/29 - 3/31 (40 miles)
Ludinghausen to W. Ahlen, 3/31 - 3/31 (18 miles)
W. Ahlen to Beckum, 3/31 - 4/1 (6 miles)
Beckum to Delbruck, 4/1 - 4/3 (22 miles)
Delbruck to Bad Lippspringe, 4/3 - 4/4 (10 miles)
Bad Lippspringe to Steinheim, 4/4 - 4/5 (14 miles)
Steinheim to Rischenau, 4/5 - 4/7 (8 miles)
Rischenau to Eschershausen, 4/7 - 4/8 (12miles)
Eschershausen to Freden, 4/8 - 4/10 (12 miles)
Freden to Langelsheim, 4/10 - 4/10 (19 miles)
Langelsheim to Heuderber, 4/10 - 4/11 (22 miles)
Heuderber to Cochstadt, 4/11 -4/12 (24 miles)
Cochstadt to Calbe, 4/12 -4/13 (16 miles)

All this movement was north of the Ruhr Valley and north of the Hartz Mountains. Pockets of German troops were located in the Hartz Mountains which we simply bypassed leaving to other forces the responsibility for cleaning up those groups. It did make for chills and thrills if you were involved in the supply effort since the Germans could and did venture out of the mountain areas to prey on small convoys of trucks passing on roads parallel to where they were located. We had the unusual situation of having Americans as prisoners of war behind our own lines. As for

myself I must have been very busy along with everyone else in the outfit. One way I know this is that after writing a letter to Nikki on 17 March (two weeks before we crossed the Rhine) I didn't write another until 8 April when we were halfway to the Elbe River. In the letter of 8 April, I indicated that I was working 12 to 14 hours a day which would be a good reason for not writing. There were some sharp images coming out of this journey through the heartland of Germany. One was the desolate nature of the land and the people; we saw little of the German civilians for just as it had been crossing the area between the Roer and the Rhine, the Germans stayed under cover while we were passing by. In many cases, I was only a few hours behind the advancing infantry or even less than that so in effect I was among the first American forces to come upon them and you can bet they were terrified of what was going to happen to them. We no longer had to sleep on the ground or in tents for whenever we stopped for the night we simply took over whatever houses were in the vicinity; the occupants had long since fled. On one night we were in the countryside and had come upon an estate - a very fancy farm house. It was unusual because as I was later to discover, most farms in Germany were farmed from the village with the farm animals and equipment being kept in the village houses and stables. In the case of this one farm house, it was similar to American farms where the house is surrounded by the farm fields. Only the house and the stable were one unit. The interior of the house was very elaborately decorated with luxurious furnishings and bookcases filled with obviously expensive books (all in German, of course) and also with very comfortable beds. The minute you stepped out the door of the house your nose was filled with the scents of manure fertilizer and you found yourself walking in stable residue - all a far cry from the sophisticated interior of the house. Strange!

The Germans were destroying as much as they had time for during their race to the rear so fires did light up the night landscape. The people we did see during daylight hours were of two groups; German soldiers giving themselves up, waving anything white and liberated slave workers streaming down roads. In this respect I did pass a couple of camps which had been used apparently to house the workers but had no time to stop and investigate. One area I did look at extensively was a German airfield which had been used as a fighter base; the field was surrounded by revetments (parking areas for the planes which had earth mounds in a U-shaped form around them), many with the fighters in various states of disrepair in the reveted area. It was fascinating to be among these German aircraft thinking of the times we had seen pictures of them taking off from fields like this one and pictures of them in the air. It was also nice to think that they would fly no more on their deadly missions. I also went through factory locations and , briefly, into some of the factories where the equipment was still intact; one of them had been

involved in the production of vision materiel; sighting devices for artillery use, binoculars, survey equipment. I picked up a pair of binoculars which unfortunately I misplaced before I came home.

By now much of our discussions when we had time were devoted to our move to the Pacific theatre. I don't think that our families at home had given much thought to the end of the war in Europe except that we would be coming home. Not so with us; in fact going back to the crossing of the Roer there had been a realization that this war was about to be concluded and what next. We weren't ignorant of what was happening in the Pacific and the need to invade Japan in order to bring that war to an end so it was only logical to reason that the additional troops needed to do that job would be us. What we were wondering about now is whether we would be shipped directly or would we go through the States. Obviously, our fervent wish was to go home first - I don't think that was the plan. (I can insert at this point, that my own view is that the use of the "bomb" saved hundreds of thousands of American lives - possibly my own).

My next letter to Nikki was on 20 April and we had been in Calbe on the Elbe River for a week. On the day we arrived in Calbe the 83rd Division crossed the river and became poised to advance on Berlin which now was only 55 miles away; probably less than two days travel with very little German resistance in the way. We were the only outfit across the river in the northern area what with the 2nd Armored Division having been repulsed at Maddeburg. But it was not to be since General Eisenhower had decided some time ago not to compete with the Russians in taking of Berlin. Given the enormous casualties of the Russian forces taken in the conquest of Berlin it was just as well that we stayed away.

On 28 April, with no German army in front of the division, the 83rd was ordered to withdraw and I ended up in Helmstedt where the Div Arty assumed military government functions. But before that, since I had been in Calbe my survey officer functions had basically ceased and Bob Smith had pulled me into the fire direction center. He also wanted me to do some aerial observation so I had begun to fly daily with Jerry Byrd the head of the air operations. As our awareness of the lack enemy resistance in front of the division grew we became bolder in our flights over the front. Finally, we just took off and in so doing came across a column of what had to be Russians troops coming down a road toward the Elbe river. Jerry flew over them and as he circled pointed down to a field next to the road and we made our descent for a landing. No sooner had we climbed out of our little Piper Cub than we were surrounded by Russian soldiers cheering and embracing us. Never in my life had I smelled so much garlic in the air as that moment. Our visit was short; for

one thing we couldn't talk to each other, just smile and use our own terms for greetings. They offered us vodka which we accepted cautiously and then making motions to the air they cleared away and we took off for home. THE WAR IN EUROPE WAS OVER!!!!!!

EPILOGUE

With the end of the war in Europe on 9 May, 1945, 83rd Division Artillery forces began assisting in military government activities. The headquarters of which I was still a member moved to Helmstedt, Germany and spent about a month there; Helmstedt ended up in the Russian zone of Germany once the peace agreements settled in. While there and early in June I took a C-47 and flew along with a lot of other men to the Riviera in France.

Location of 83rd Division Artillery in ETO From landing in ETO 16 ~~June~~ APRIL 194~~4~~ (morning reports discontinued) prepared by Wm. O. "Bill" Shuman Greencastle, Pa.

Dates	Location
4-16-	Arrive Liverpool, England
4-19-44	Camp Bryn-Y-Pys, Flintshire, Wales
5-2-44	Camp Aston, Shropshire, Eng.
5-6-44	Aston Park, Shropshire, Eng.
5-14-44	Ystradefellte Bivouac Area, Brecknockshire, Wales
5-19-44	Pentreback Bivouac Area, Brecknockshire, Wales
5-20-44	Sennybridge Range Brecknockshire, Wales
5-27-44	Camp Aston, Shropshire, Eng.
5-28-44	Aston Park, Shropshire, Eng.
6-7-44	Queens Head, Shropshire, Eng.
6-16-44	Stonehenge, England
6-17-44	Long Bredy, Dorset, Eng.
6-18-44	Portland Harbor, Eng. (WEYMOUTH)
6-19-44	Aboard LST#7 English Channel
6-23-44	Vic. Bricqueville, France
6-24-44	1/4 Mi. E. " "
6-26-44	3/4 Mi. N. Catz, France
6-27-44	1/2 Mi. N. Carentan, France
7-5-44	2 Mi. SW Carentan, France
7-9-44	3 Mi. SW Carentan, France
7-13-44	1 Mi. SW Hotot, France
7-28-44	3/4 Mi. S Marchieux, France
7-29-44	3/4 Mi. SE Feugeres, France
8-3-44	Vic Pontorson, France
8-4-44	Chateau Surcouf, 2½ Mi. NW Lanhelin, France
8-5-44	1½ Mi. SE Chateauneuf.
8-10-44	2½ Mi. N Dinan, Fr. at Chateau de Carheil
8-20-44	4 Mi. E. Rennes, France
8-29-44	Hotel deLaMar Dinard, Fr.
9-4-44	Chateaubriant, France
9-13-44	3 Mi. N of Vendome, France
9-14-44	Chateau De Monce " "
9-22-44	4 Mi. E Montargis, France
9-24-44	3 Mi. S Luxembourg, Lux.
9-25-44	¼ Mi. NE Hesparange, Lux.
9-29-44	Biwer, Luxembourg
10-5-44	¼ Mi. NE Hesperange, Lux
11-8-44	Mondorff, Luxembourg
11-14-44	¼Mi. NE Hesperange, Lux.
11-18-44	Fetchenhof Convent, ¼ Mi. E Neudorf, Lux.
12-4-44	Gressenich, Germany
12-26-44	½ Mi. W Nettinne, Belgium
12-28-44	¼ Mi. E Jannee, Belgium
12-31-44	Barvaux, Belgium
1-2-45	Ixier, Belgium
1-4-45	¼ Mi. NW Chene-AlPierre, Bel.
1-7-45	Jevigne, Belgium
1-15-45	Ottre, Belgium
1-22-45	Fanzel, Belgium
2-16-45	Schaufenberg, Germany
2-28-45	Hasselweiler, Germany
3-1-45	Aldenhoven, Germany
3-1-45	Grefrath, Germany
3-3-45	Neuss, Germany
3-21-45	Echt, Hollard
3-28-45	Niederheide, Germany
3-29-45	1 Mi. SW Buchholt, Germany
3-30-45	Sythen, Germany
3-31-45	Ludinghausen, Germany
3-31-45	3 Mi. W Ahlen, Germany
4-1-45	Beckum, Germany
3-3-45	Delbruck, Germany
4-4-45	Bad Lippspringe, Germany
4-5-45	Steinheim, Germany
4-7-45	Rischenau, Germany (Dick Alex to 2nd Lt.)
4-8-45	Eschershausen, Germany
4-10-45	Fredeb, Germany
4-10-45	Langelsheim, Germany
4-11-45	Heuderber, Germany
4-12-45	Cochstadt, Germany
4-13-45	Calbe, Germany
5-6-45	Schoningen, Germany
5-28-45	Helmstedt, Germany
6-8-45	Bayreuth, Germany
6-9-45	Passau, Germany

December 1958

Fellows:

You know the story from there on-your old outfit broke up- thence to the Cigarette Camps, and home in October 1945.

Just one old request to make of you fellows - keep in touch with one another. I have tried to do my part in keeping you in addresses and information which might be of value to you and your family.

I'll never forget the good times together and the experience we went through.

May God bless you and a Merry Christmas 1958 to you and a Happy New Year.

Yours forever

Sgt. "Bill" Shuman
S-1 & S-4
Div. Arty

HEAD QUARTERS 83rd DIVISION ARTILLERY
APO 83 US Army

1 March 1946

SUBJECT: Report of Operations.

TO : Commanding General, 83rd Infantry Division, APO 83, US Army.
(Attn: Division Historian, G-3)

This report for the month of February is the final one covering the operations of the 83rd Division Artillery as an occupational unit. Before all of February had passed, the Artillery left for the port of embarkation. In the previous period, three of the four battalions had cadryed and consolidated the batteries which had no occupational duties. This was a result of large redeployment of personnel. As these units were now to act as "carriers" for high point men being shipped to the Zone of the Interior, there was another shift of the above-mentioned batteries on February. In the 322 FA Battalion, "B" Battery moved to Timelkan (V 35) and "C" Battery moved to Frankenmarkt (V 24) on February 11, 1946. "B" Battery of the 323 FA Battalion returned to Mattighofen (V 05) on the same day. The 324 FA Battalion sent "A" Battery down to Bad Ischl (V 41). No batteries made any further displacements before they departed from the area. Relieving units from the 42nd Division Artillery arrived on the thirteenth and fourteenth of February. Because of billet conditions, only detachments of two battalions were sent along with one complete battalion. In Gmunden Bezirk, "A" and "C" Batteries of the 392 FA Battalion assumed responsibility for the PW Lager, the USDIC Camp, the British Border roadblock, and one DP Camp. The 542 FA Battalion detachment had the river patrol and one DP Camp in Braunau Bezirk; and the one complete unit, the 232 FA Battalion operated one DP Camp and guarded an ammunition dump in Vocklabruck Bezirk. Men of the 232 were also guarding the SS Hospital in Gmunden (All locations of installations are accurately shown on overlay marked Annex #1). Relief was accomplished at 1800, 13 February, 1946. 83rd Division Artillery was still responsible for the entire zone and had the 232 and 392 FA Battalions attached

to it for operations, but the 322, 323, 324, and 908 FA Battalions were now free of occupational work. These conditions existed until 1200, 26 February, when the 83rd Division was relieved of responsibility for Upper Austria by the 42nd Division. This date was also designated, first as the "Readiness Day" for 83rd Division Artillery's movement from this zone, and later as "Movement Day." With four trains, units of the Artillery began departing at 1200, and completed the movement by 1600 the same day. Attached for purposes of the movement were the 783rd Ordnance, 308th Medical, 308th Engineer Battalions and 83rd Reconnaissance Troop.

The short part of the month spent in operation by all battalions saw a maximum employment of all troops. With the Artillery at half strength, personnel were used almost completely on "overhead" duties and in guarding or administrating the few remaining installations-the same as denoted on Annex #1. After the thirteenth of February, organic units were busily engaged in preparing to receive, receiving, and finally, processing of the 2380 officers and men being redeployed. The attached 42nd Division units had no more men in the area than were absolutely necessary to do the work; except the 232 FA Battalion, they being under orders to clear their previous billets entirely.

Supervision of disarmed enemy forces practically ceased when on the seventh of February, 2500 SS prisoners were shipped to Haid and Wegscheid Lagers, vicinity Linz, Austria. Labor requirements in that area as well as the fact that there was little activity in their present location were instrumental in bringing about this transfer. Only two hundred men were retained; these to service an expected three hundred SS hospital patients, who were being shipped into the camp in the near future. Problems concerning DEF's were therefore non-existant.

Administrative work was highlighted throughout the period; the problems of redeployment as a unit were many and complex. The total strength of the Division Artillery was to be 2380, 2320 men and 60 officers. Point scores of

forty-eight for men and sixty-eight for officers were used in determining who was to accompany the Artillery. Coupled with the problem of receiving and processing these men was the problem of transferring out all men not qualified for redeployment. As mentioned above, there was a general readjustment of unit dispositions within the area to enable battalions to billet 561 men as well as to permit relieving units of the 42nd Division to have housing facilities. The bulk of the men, all from within USFA, were received the sixteenth of February when approximately one thousand arrived. Because of battery locations being on rail lines, breakdown of men, when possible, was made by train. Processing commenced at once, and befor e Division Artillery left, shipment rosters, separation center rosters, supplementary payrolls, and the equipment showdown inspections were all finished. Heated trains were arranged and each battalion had forty cars at its disposal. Headquarters Battery accompanied the 324 FA Battalion, and the 783 Ordnance was with the 322 FA Battalion. The morale of all men was very naturally, high.

The Division Artillery relinquished control of a large number of DP Camps during the period as is noted in the following report of the DP Officer: "During the period a complete new re-registration of all displaced persons in camps was conducted. A total of 5484 persons were registered. The original registration conducted in November, 1945, was incomplete and inaccurate hence the necessity for a new registration. The same type forms, DP-1, DP-2, and DP-3 were used in this registration, but they were printed on different colored paper, thus completely voiding the original registration.

Per Frag Order #43, Headquarters 83rd Infantry Division, dated, 12 February, 1946, the following settlements were turned over to full Austrian control: 501, 510, 515, 526, 534, 536, 537, and 402. This turnover became effective 131700 February, 1946, and all military personnel was withdrawn from these settlements by 141200 February, 1946. Effective 140800 February, 1946, UNRRA Team #313 assumed full administrative and operational control over

Camp #406 (Golden Cross) and Wurtemburg Castle. These camps are now considered as part of settlement 400. This leaves only three settlements in the Division Artillery area under the control of military personnel: settlement #608, Braunau, containing Polish RAMP's; settlement #527, Frankenmarkt, containing Polish civilians; and settlement #417, Bad Ischl, an ex-enemy orphanage. The settlement #417 will eventually be turned over to Austrian control.

No organized repatriation movements were conducted during the period."

Security problems were the least prevalent of any throughout the month. Reports of previous periods indicated a constant pressure put on various sites in the zone of responsibility as well as employment of active police means, all for the purpose of eliminating serious crimes. This period, the provisional military police force of Division Artillery was disbanded on the eighth of February, and yet this caused no change in the quiet conditions reported in all three Bezirks. The only items to mar an otherwise "clean slate" were first, the destruction of an ammunition dump, and second, a meeting held by the Burgermeister of Vocklabruck. On the evening of the fifth of February, a Bomb Disposal Ammunition Dump at Schwanenstadt (V45) caught fire and was destroyed. CIC could locate no evidence of organized sabotage, but were quite certain that the fire was not an accident. In the second case, the Burgermeister was investigated and removed for "apologizing" to a group of former National Socialist members for his treatment of them, blaming it on Military Government Decrees. Both these incidents are supported by written reports located in files of CIC, Detachment 430, Vocklabruck. With the three agencies, CIC, WCIT, and USDIC, all in this area, matters pertaining to war criminals and civilian internees were handled by them. Routine matters such as CIC's processing of fragebotens will not be covered. Relations between troops and civilians caused no difficulties, and if any resentment is felt towards fraternization, it is well hidden at this date-no outward manifestations such as the hair-cutting program appeared.

Supply facilities were extremely busy, being engaged mainly in the

work of turning in equipment. From the start of the period to its close, turning in of materiel and equipment was being carried on. Only minimum essential equipment was retained, and the initial list of these items was cut down before the battalions left for the port. No attempt at giving a detailed description of the above program is made as the orders concerning it were too numerous, varied, and often changed to conform with the changes in the operational situation. All billets were cleared, inspected and closed, both physically and administratively. This left the Division Artillery with no responsibility and allowed units of the 42nd Division to begin with no entanglements of overlapping billet records.

The above discussion on security included the majority of the items falling under law and order section. However, one factor instrumental in the preservation of peace, not dwelt on before, was the civilian police force. Armed and now fairly large, this unit had operated effectively through two complete periods. The business of controlling civilian crimes was given completely to them, and their confidence in performing their work has risen. Undoubtedly, the weather has offered a large helping hand, and it remains to be seen whether they can cope with the increase of depredations as spring approaches.

Departure of Division Artillery brought to an end the operation of the VD Hospital in Ebensee. Established in January, this clinic was reserved women VD patients, who were kept until completely cured. Patients present at the time of its closing were sent to another Venereal Ward in a Linz Hospital. One other health problem arose when some cases of malnutrition were reported in some Vocklabruck Bezirk DP camps. This was investigated and found partially true by the medical officer who uncovered twenty cases. The diet for all persons affected was immediately increased.

All miscellaneous items, the I and E program, special service activities, officers' and men's clubs were busily engaged in closing shop. In most cases, this was the business of making final entries in accounting records, having them audited, and finally cleared by the Inspector General's office at Division

Headquarters.

The report for the month of February may appear brief and lacking in factual information. This was foreseen at the commencement of its writing. Foreseen because occupational duties did not provide much in the way of work during February. Resulting from this is the opinion that in the near future occupetional troops in this sector (Division Artillery zone of responsibility) could be reduced to the bare essentials necessary for guard details. Relations with civil affairs and displaced persons, the two major items throughout, were meager at the most. And yet because of the disposition of troops and the fact of their forthcoming redeployment, training was made too difficult to derive a satisfactory result. With CIC agents still present along with military government units and HCIT, a finger would be maintained on the civilian pulse. In that way troops could be consolidated and used as a constabulary force, receiving rigorous training in methods of operation. Morale would be higher with the men actually doing full time work, and yet not given something to do with only the purpose of keeping them busy.

Concerning the above paragraph, USDIC could have the men necessary for its guard duties put under its control, operationally and administratively. The two remaining DP camps and the SS Hospital could be consolidated with large installations of the same nature. Permanent guard systems would allow the suggested elimination of tactical units from this area.

FOR THE COMMANDING GENERAL:

E. BURR II
Capt, FA
S-2