SECTION #3

LENIEL EDWARD MCDONALD
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Col. Leniel E. McDonald

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MCDONALD FAMILY HISTORY
LENIEL EDWARD MCDONALD

1910 to 1929
GROWING UP IN MISSISSIPPI

Leniel Edward McDonald was born in a log house January 20, 1910 in Lee County, Mississippi to William Allen and Maudie Lola Simpson McDonald. He was the oldest of seven children, four boys and three girls.

His parents came from materially poor families and they owned no land until later in their lives. They were sharecroppers and kept searching for more productive farm land in poor hill country but were never happy with what was available. They sharecropped several different small farms during their early years which required moving their possessions almost every year.

However, in 1924 when Leniel was 14 years old, the family made a permanent move to the small community of Plantersville, Mississippi. His dad had found much more desirable land. During the next few years the family enjoyed good productivity from the new farm. Their primary cash crop was cotton and since the prices were favorable the family prospered.

Leniel spent his teenage years helping with farm chores and going to Plantersville Elementary School and Tupelo High School, some five miles away. He and his younger sister, Inez, finished their high school work there, he in 1929 and she in 1931. Over the years the whole family became an integral part of their community and made many friends throughout Lee County.

His parents had a limited formal education but they always encouraged their children to finish high school and get as much college education as possible. However, by 1929 the country was in the midst of the Great Depression and there were no family funds available for him to attend college. Nevertheless, he had a discussion with his dad about his desire for a higher education. His dad's comment to him was typical of his attitude toward all of his children. He said, "Son, I will support you in any decision you make but do not expect any money from me." This didn't discourage Leniel. He found a way to enroll at Mississippi A & M College and became a role model for his younger brothers.

1930 to 1939
EARLY ADULT YEARS

Leniel worked his way through college by milking cows and performing other farm duties at Mississippi A & M College. It was later named Mississippi State College and still later, Mississippi State University. All students were required to enroll in the ROTC program which basically solved his wardrobe problem. He was furnished military uniforms and was paid a small stipend. He graduated from the School of Agriculture with a BS degree and was commissioned 2nd Lt. in 1934. He was required to join the Active Reserves.

Following his graduation from college he taught school and did some coaching. The Federal Government had enacted several projects in the early 1930s designed to relieve the poor economic conditions which prevailed throughout the country. One of these projects was the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) Program. It was designed to put young unemployed men to work at government expense doing conservation work including land reclamation, sanitation projects and building State Parks. The program called for a military style organization which was administered by Reserve Military personnel.

Since Leniel was a Reserve Officer he was required to serve several active duty tours in the 1930s, some as a CCC Commander and others on active military duty. His active military duty included 3 months Infantry School at Ft. Benning Georgia and maneuvers in Mississippi and Louisiana. His CCC assignments were at Menden, Louisiana, near Ruston and at Pollard, near Alexandria, Louisiana.

One of his early loves in his adult life was automobiles. As soon as he could he bought a new 1935 Ford when they came on the market. He was working in Louisiana on his first CCC assignment. An uncle Harley, his dad's brother, was living in Taylor, Texas. Leniel had a few days off and planned a trip to Texas to see his Uncle Harley McDonald. He invited his dad to go with him. The car was equipped with a radio. The main complaint his dad had afterwards was that "danged radio". Radio stations were relatively new in the country and were very popular, especially with young people. However, his dad wanted to carry on a conversation with his son which was most difficult to do with a car radio blaring.

Later Leniel and his younger brother, Preston, were in a very serious accident in this same car. Preston had enrolled at Mississippi State College and was to start his freshman year in the fall of 1934. Leniel had some free time to take him to Mississippi State but on their way they were hit broadside by another car at an intersection near Wren, Mississippi. The other car ran a stop sign at very high speed and hit Leniel's car just behind the left front door. The door window was rolled up and as a result Leniel's head went through the door window cutting his head severely. Preston, too, was hurt pretty badly but they both recovered completely.

As a result of this accident Leniel got another car, a 1936 Ford. As time went by he traded cars regularly. One of the fanciest cars he ever owned was a 1939 four-door Ford. It was white with wide white side-wall tires. It was one of the more "streamlined" cars of its day.

His first school teaching job was in Weir, Mississippi and later at Wren, Mississippi. He met his future wife there, Miss Frances McMullen, who was also a teacher. They were married on August 30, 1936. They both tell of the problems of the teachers' pay during the Great Depression. Schools were closing early because of lack of State funds and they were often paid in state "scrip" instead of US dollars. The "scrip" could be exchanged for a limited number of items.

Col. Birdsong was Commissioner of Public Safety of the State of Mississippi in the late 1930s. He was also Regimental Commander of the 155th Infantry Regiment of the Mississippi National Guard (Confederate President Jefferson Davis' regiment). At Col. Birdsong's suggestion Leniel applied for a position with the Mississippi Highway Patrol and was accepted. He was assigned to the Cleveland, Mississippi area and became one of the first Highway Patrol Officers in the state of Mississippi.

Leniel joined the Mississippi National Guard as Commander of the Cleveland unit under the command of Col. Birdsong. The unit was part of the 155th Infantry Regiment, 31st Infantry Division, the "Dixie Division". The assignment promoted him to Captain.

It was about this same time that his sister, Inez, who was two years younger, decided to join the US Army Nurse Corps. On April 14, 1937 she was commissioned 2nd Lt. and was assigned to the Army-Navy hospital in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

1940-1945
THE WAR YEARS

Leniel's National Guard unit, of which he was commander, had winter maneuvers in 1939-40 and it was called into active duty in anticipation of trouble with the Axis Powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan) in September 1940. The unit reported daily to the local Cleveland, MS armory and in December 1940 was ordered to report to Fort Blanding, Florida. Theirs was among the first units to arrive at Blanding.

The wives were allowed to move with the officers to their base area. Frances remembers that the Company streets were knee deep in mud when they arrived. She tells of the arrangements in nearby Green Cove Springs, Florida where they rented a two bedroom furnished house that they shared with Leniel's assistant and his wife. The furnishings included not only the necessary furniture but also the linens and dishes. This house became the first of many to be rented in the coming years.

Military life in Blanding was quite comfortable and enjoyable for them because they were able to visit many of the Florida attractions on weekends and days off. It was here that they visited and learned much about St. Augustine, their eventual retirement home. As was true throughout World War ll, military personnel enjoyed price discounts at many of the attractions. They were able to enjoy dinner and entertainment at the plush Ponce de Leon Hotel and visit the Fountain of Youth as well as other attractions in the area.

While Leniel and Frances were stationed in Florida Inez was stationed at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. She was able to enjoy a couple visits with them during the Spring of 1941 before she was required to go overseas. Her enlistment in the Army Nurse Corp required a period of overseas duty. She had selected an Army post in the Philippine Islands for this adventure and her departure orders had come early in the year. She was single and was looking forward to an exciting adventure out of the country. She arrived in Manila by boat in July 1941.

The next assignment for Leniel and Frances was Fort Benning, Georgia where Leniel attended Advanced Infantry School for several months in 1941. During this period Frances visited her sick parents for a while before joining Leniel at Benning. She tells the story of the clothing that he and two of her friends had to dispose of before the move to Benning was made. The rule was that if the piece of clothing had not been worn in the last year it was to be given to the Salvation Army. She does not reveal how much of her wardrobe was lost by the process.

PEARL HARBOR , DECEMBER 7, 1941

The young couple, Leniel, 27 and Frances, 26, was still stationed at Fort Benning on Sunday, December 7, 1941. War did not seem imminent on that fateful weekend so they decided to visit Preston and Wilma, a younger brother and his wife, who lived in Anniston, Alabama. This would be a pleasant day trip for them. However, as they were driving back listening to pleasant Sunday afternoon music on the car radio the program was interrupted with the announcement that Pearl Harbor had been attacked by the

Japanese. All military leaves were canceled and military personnel were ordered back on base immediately.

The next day President Roosevelt and congress declared war on the Axis Powers. The general feeling throughout the country was that the Japanese had made a terrible mistake in attacking the US. They would be defeated in just a few weeks or at the most, in a few months. However, the country was quite unprepared to fight a major global war. The next 45 months would see tremendous changes throughout the world before an "Unconditional Surrender" was obtained from Germany, Italy, and Japan.

At this point Leniel completed his Advanced Infantry School courses and returned to Camp Blanding. By the time he returned to Blanding his company had been ordered to The Florida Keys for guard duty. He immediately joined them at Pigeon Key under the 7 mile bridge. Their company assignment was to guard the highway all the way from Key West to Homestead, Florida, something in the neighborhood of 200 miles. The Bridge Commission had reserved three leased cottages for quarters. One of the cottages was assigned to the Bridge Commission, another to the Highway Patrol and the third to Leniel, his assistant, and their wives. We know little of the military activity but living conditions left something to be desired. Frances remembers that fresh drinking water had to be brought in and they had to catch rain water for shampooing. Their showers were taken in brackish water.

After a few weeks their Company was relieved by other troops and ordered back to Camp Blanding. The entire 31st Division was then ordered to Camp Bowie, Texas near Brownwood. On their way to Camp Bowie the troops stopped overnight in Natchez, Mississippi. The citizens of Natchez showed their appreciation to them by opening one of their antebellum homes and had a dance for men of the 155th Infantry Regiment. They had chosen a great way to recognize a segment of their "Dixie Division".

One purpose of the training in Texas was to give troops training in a great variety of conditions including hot and dry weather. Much of the fighting was being done at the time in North Africa and American troops were being sent there. After some weeks, the Division was ordered to Camp Shelby, Mississippi, near Hattiesburg. Camp Shelby was not only an infantry training center but also an artillery training center. It was necessary for the artillery and infantry troops to be coordinated in combat. Other coordination was required between various functioning elements such as communications, supplies and transportation. All of these assignments were designed to prepare drafted farm boys and city boys, inexperienced warriors, to do a job that none of them had ever considered before. It all had to be done as quickly and efficiently as possible for things were not going very well for the Allies. In addition to being a training center, Camp Shelby was also a reception center for processing new recruits and draftees.

83RD INFANTRY DIVISION, THE THUNDERBOLT DIVISION

After a few months in Camp Shelby Leniel was transferred out of the 31st Division to the 83rd Infantry Division, the Thunderbolt Division. It was stationed at Camp Breckenridge, Kentucky. This transfer occurred sometime in 1943. According to the accounts found in their regimental history, *We Saw It Through*, the 83rd was reactivated

on August 15, 1942 at Camp Atterbury, Indiana. It had originally been activated on August 13, 1917 during WW I.

In November 1942 a vigorous training program began in the 83rd Division to convert civilian personnel into fighting men. By July 1943 good progress had been made and the Division was ordered to participate in maneuvers in Tennessee which lasted into September. It was during or prior to these maneuvers that Leniel was assigned to the 331st Combat Team, a regiment of the 83rd. Even though the 83rd was the youngest Division participating in the maneuvers they won the commendation of higher headquarters.

The U. S. involvement in the war had been going on for a year and a half. Allied victories in the South Pacific and in North Africa had been very limited but the US had now mobilized its industry and its civilian population in an all-out effort to defeat the Axis Powers. Preparations for the invasion of the Normandy coast in France began in 1943. US President Roosevelt and English Prime Minister Churchill had selected General Dwight D. Eisenhower as supreme commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force. The invasion plan received the code name of Operation Overlord.

Inez had been captured in the Philippines by the "Japs" but her family had received few messages concerning her whereabouts or her condition. Also, Leniel's and Inez's brother, Leroy Quinlan, younger by a decade or more, had completed high school and was drafted into military service on June 10, 1943. He was drafted out of Shelby County, Tennessee because he had to register for the draft the summer before while he was working in Memphis. His father allowed him to work in Memphis after the crops were laid-by so he could have a little money for his senior year in high school. After being inducted into the service at Fort Oglethorp, Georgia near Chattanooga, Tennessee, he was immediately sent to Camp Haan, California and assigned to the 568th Anti-Aircraft Automatic Weapons Battalion.

ENGLAND

Following the Tennessee maneuvers the 83rd Infantry Division was given advanced training at Camp Breckinridge for about five months before moving to Camp Shanks, NY. It was from Camp Shanks that the Division embarked for England on April 6, 1944 on the SS George Washington. It docked at Liverpool and the 331st Combat Team moved by train to Adderly Hall. Three days later the entire regiment was billeted in one area at Tarporley, England. Leniel had been sent to Wales earlier as part of the advanced party to make arrangements for the arrival of the whole Division.

During the ensuing weeks a thorough intensive training and reconditioning program grew and by D-Day, June 6, 1944, the troops spirits and morale had soared to new heights. They were now ready for Operation Overlord, the planned invasion of occupied Europe, and they knew it was time to put their training and knowledge to work. It was time for the real thing. After D-Day and prior to June 16,1944, the Division was sealed in marshaling areas in England and the briefing of their leaders and troops of their upcoming mission commenced.

OMAHA BEACH, FRANCE

On June 17th and 18th, D-Day plus 12, the 331st Combat Team and its equipment pulled away from Southampton, England in Liberty Ships for the Nazi-held shores of Normandy, France. The shores were bristling with enemy machine guns, pill-boxes and almost every type of anti-invasion fortification. The initial beachhead had been established but it was now up to these green combat troops to punch through the Nazi's inner lines of defenses into France.

However, the weather had turned very rough and the Channel waters tossed their ships around for five days, washing away makeshift docks making it impossible to land immediately. Anti-aircraft guns and artillery pieces broke loose from their decks and were lost overboard. Finally, on June 23rd LSTs (Landing Ships Tanks) and LCIs (Landing Craft Infantry) sided up to their troop ships and the troops transferred to them. They stumbled out of their LCIs onto the shores of Normandy at Omaha Beach and piled on their vehicles which came pouring out of the LSTs. By night fall they were in their assembly area in the vicinity of Treviers, France.

On June 26th, they had their first taste of battle fire when the 331st Combat Team relieved the 502nd Parachute Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division southwest of Careton at Auvers, France. For a week they dodged enemy artillery, mortar fire, and exchanged small arms fire in minor skirmishes among the hedgerows. They held their positions while preparing for a major offensive. This was the first of five campaigns that they would experience, beginning at Omaha Beach and ending at the Elbe River, deep in the heart of Germany, almost a year later in May 1945.

THE BATTLE FOR NORMANDY

By July 3rd their leaders had been thoroughly briefed on their missions in the general offensive to be launched July 4th. It was dawn on this day that they experienced their real baptism of fire. They attacked south in an attempt to cut the vital St. Lo-Periers highway. Their immediate objective was Sainteny and the high ground to the east in the vicinity of Peries.

After a terrific artillery bombardment beginning at 0400 (4 AM) which lasted about 30 minutes, the 2nd Battalion, under the leadership of Lt. Col. Leniel E. McDonald and the 3rd Battalion, under the leadership of Lt. Col. Frederick J. Bailey, jumped off at 0445 from the vicinity of Meautis. A part of the 2nd Battalion, Col. McDonalds battalion, advanced a few hundred yards across a swamp but were forced to withdraw as enemy artillery, mortar fire and counter attacks from tanks and infantry cut their ranks to pieces. The 3rd Battalion was also stopped cold.

We Saw It Through states:

> So vicious and bloody was the fighting that no gain had been made on the entire regimental front by late afternoon. Casualties among officers were especially heavy. Less than two hours after the regiment crossed the line of departure (LD) our regimental commander, Col. Martin D. Barndollar, was killed at the forward Observation Post by a German sniper.

At 1900 the 1st Battalion supported by artillery and tanks launched a coordinated attack, with its flank resting on the Carentan-Peries highway. As the battalion moved into position near the "sunken road" occupied by the 3rd Battalion 330th Infantry which had also been stymied, it came under an intense enemy artillery barrage. When they finally reached the line of departure, the "Sunken Road", they encountered anti-personnel mines. Despite the artillery, the mines and everything the enemy could throw, the battalion crossed the LD and advanced steadily as darkness fell. The advance continued until the village of Les Vermesnil was reached at 2330. Here they were met with a veritable wall of Jerry fire including mortars, machine guns, machine pistols and bazookas. They had made a gain of 600 yards, so they buttoned up for the night.

It was during the battle of St. Lo that Leniel was wounded. Although he would talk very little about it, it appears that he was hit in the back region by artillery shrapnel. He was patched up and returned to battle. Also during one of his early encounters he and one of his enlisted men became separated from their outfit after dark and had to hole up in a shell hole for the night. Obviously, the territory they were in was in dispute because a German tank kept moving in their direction firing 88mm shells over their heads. Because 88s fired shells with a distinguishing orange tracer they knew it was an enemy tank. Since it was dark the tank driver could not see the occupied shell hole. He kept inching closer and closer. For some unknown reason, as the tank tracks reached the edge of the shell hole, the driver decided to retreat. Fate stepped in and saved the two soldiers from being crushed under the tracks of that German tank.

The following article appeared in the Tupelo Daily Journal sometime shortly after the St. Lo action:

Former Tupelo Student Leads Victory Charge

Cool, calm and efficient. These were the attributes which enabled Leniel E. McDonald to command a battalion at St. Lo ---command and lead them to a great victory.

Not that this efficiency was something brought about on the spur of the moment. Far from that for he had proven this ability as a member of the Mississippi safety Patrol, as a student and graduate of Mississippi State College and even as a student at Tupelo High School. But that same canny leadership he had displayed in civilian life were major factors in more than one action on the battlefields of France.

It was before St. Lo that battalion commander Major McDonald and his one-man army, Perry Johnson, a tobacco-chewing will-o'-the-wisp from the State of Georgia won recognition, or, according to McDonald "Johnson did it, along with the rest of the boys."

Re-telling the story Major McDonald said:

"A German machine-gun emplacement, located on a knoll which commanded our approach to the city, had been giving us a great deal of trouble. We had been held up for hours. To take it we must storm an open slope for several hundred yards, toss hand grenades and engage in hand-to-hand fighting all the while.

"But we decided to do it, or rather they (Capt. Robert A. Mitchell, of Bristol, Conn., and several of the command) took off."

Despite the fact that McDonald deletes any mention of himself other members of the battalion lose no time in saying that "he led us." But then it happened, continued McDonald.

"Waving his .45, Mitchell led the charge, with young Johnson at his side. They engaged in a lot of stiff, bloody hand-to-hand fighting, but they unloaded enough TNT, grenades, rifle fire and pistol and bangalore torpedoes on those Germans that they emerged swearing and damning Hitler to the hilt.

Only one of the attacking group was killed. Twenty-nine of the Jerries --- by actual count---fell victim to our bayonet charge--- and there were several that were missed in the count. Some sixty came from underground hideouts and surrendered without a fight.

"Johnson, gun slung across his arm in the same manner he would carry a shotgun or a squirrel rifle in his native Georgia hills, drawled, "Hell, I didn't get but 15 prisoners. You keep on saying 20. Just count them."

To McDonald this was all in a day's work. His "kids had done the job." The glory was theirs. But they will tell you a different story. The leadership and planning was McDonald's.

Maj. McDonald was stationed at Cleveland, Miss. where was employed by the State Safety Patrol when he joined the Army in 1940.

After his graduation from Tupelo Hi he attended Mississippi State College. He married Miss Frances McMullan of Jackson, and therefore is listed as being from Jackson. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. W. A. McDonald, of Plantersville.

His sister, Miss Inez McDonald, was serving as a nurse with the United States Medical Corps at the time Corregidor was captured. Displaying the same courage and sense of duty as her brother showed before St. Lo "she stuck to the end."

She is now a prisoner of war in a Jap POW camp in Manila.

July 5th was another day of hell for the 331st Infantry Regiment. At 0700 the Germans opened a counterattack. It was repulsed but with heavy losses. Nevertheless the 1st and 3rd Battalions continued their offensive.

Hedgerow fighting was extremely difficult. The troops encountered heavy foliage and earthen walls which typified each hedgerow. The enemy had for many months prepared for an invasion by digging in machine gun and mortar positions and had zeroed in the hedgerows for their artillery barrages. Entrenchments and connecting trenches, serving as escape routes, had been prepared and open areas were cleared for machine gun crossfire. In addition, new troops fresh from farms, schools, offices and factories were facing Germany's best SS and Panzer Grenadier Divisions with their numerous tank-infantry teams that functioned like mobile pill-boxes. They were positioned along ideally situated sunken roads and behind fields planted with mines and booby traps.

According to *We Saw It Through*:

This gave us our first bitter pill of battle. And it was hard to swallow. We had never imagined battle like this. We never expected to be walled-in with the enemy in constant deadlock struggles which lasted through the days and the nights, as we moved from one slit trench to another, through one hedgerow to another. We were never sure where the enemy was--to the left of us, to the right or even behind us. We never knew where the next 88 was coming from or when. They hit us with everything they had--artillery, tanks and infantry.

Our nerves were strained. Our task seemed endless. On the map, we held a mere spot of France. Before us lay thousands of miles through which we must move to reach the heart of the enemy. And we were forced to fight, and fight hard, for every yard of advance. We had little maneuver ground for we were canalized by the Taute River and unaffordable swamplands. Our losses were heavy, but the enemy's were heavier.

Bitter fighting continued with heavy losses on each side for the next 20 days with slow progress being made to clear the enemy from Normandy. Attacks and counter attacks were made by both sides with each failing from time to time.

Again quoting from *We Saw It Through:*

> July 25th is the day we remember vividly. This was the day we felt, at long last, we could burst from our geographical bonds and get going. We heard the roar of planes and looked up at the skies to see them covered with bombers--all American. Approximately 2500 heavy and medium bombers supported by several hundred fighters saturated enemy lines with their bombs in an area five miles wide and two miles deep. The bomb targets were all south of the St. Lo-Periers highway. A tremendous roaring filled the air as 350 fighter-bombers opened the attack, and the earth trembled with the shock of tons of bombs dropped by 1800 heavy and 400 medium bombers while 500 more fighter planes gave protection from possible German air attack. A great cloud of dust and smoke rose over the area obscuring the road. Several planes dropped bombs short of the target area, among our own troops waiting to attack. Confusion at this unexpected turn of events partially disorganized some of our units that were hit, but adjustments were quickly made and the entire Corps immediately launched a coordinated attack as planned.

The 331st crossed the Taute River on the night of the 27th and though slowed again by hostile tank activity, numerous mines and booby traps, fought through three German-held villages to reach high ground north and east of Le Comprends on the 28th of July. This advance aided materially in the big infantry breakthrough and sent tank columns rolling for Brittany. At Le Comprends, our Regiment was squeezed out of line by elements of the Corps and we went into an assembly area for the first rest we had after 23 days of continuous fighting.

THE BATTLE FOR BRITTANY

Normandy had now been secured and it was time to get on with the major job of liberating the whole of France. Tanks columns were allowed to fan out into the interior of the country in every direction. They bypassed strong pockets of resistance which had to be dealt with by other units. Two of these pockets were at St. Malo and Dinard to the west along the bay on the Brittany Peninsular.

On August 2nd the Division entrucked for Brittany and a two-week campaign aimed at the capture of the enemy garrisons at St. Malo and Dinard. By August 5th the 331st was ready for their attack against St. Malo. After crossing two canals to reach the outskirts of St. Malo they encountered the enemy's main lines of defense which consisted of a series of concrete pill-boxes. reinforced steel tunnels and trenches. All points were heavily fortified and protected by mine fields and barbed wire. In addition the area was well covered with all types of arms, high velocity and automatic weapons.

One company made a 400 yard assault through railroad steel-spiked anti-tank obstacles and a double apron barbed wire to knock out an enemy blockhouse. The rest of

the regiment then charged into a suburb of St. Malo and with the help of the artillery, blasted and cleared the town of enemy strongpoints.

By August 9th St. Malo had been sufficiently secured to allow much of the Division forces to swing west 56 miles for its push on Dinard. However, The Citadel at St. Malo which extended into the Bay had not yet been captured. This job was left to the 2nd Battalion under the command of Lt. Col. McDonald and other attached units.

Over the 56 mile drive to the outskirts of Dinard, the Division again faced the familiar hedgerow terrain and fought through strong enemy rearguard action defending the approaches to Dinard and the strategic Hill 48 on the coast.

We Saw it Through states:

> A ring of fortifications, consisting of heavy concrete pillboxes and bunkers all mutually supporting and protected by steel anti-tank obstacles and ditches, barbed wire and mine fields had to be pierced before assault on the town was possible. The enemy had expected the possibility of an attack from this direction and was well prepared.
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> Other battalions from other divisions had been assigned to the 83rd for the assault on Dinard and one of them, a battalion of the 121st Regiment of the 8th Infantry Division, had forced a small breach in the fortifications only to have it closed behind them. They were completely cut off for several days totally surrounded and unable to move either forward or get out of the trap. Only a trickle of medical supplies could reach them by cub plane. Their only means of communication was by radio. It was only through the efforts of the 1st and 3rd Battalion of the 331st Regiment that a hole was punched through the fortifications and quickly exploited that relief came to the beleaguered troops. They were able then to evacuate their heavy casualties . They had done a heroic job beating off German counterattacks and holding their gains.
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> The outer ring of these defenses had been cracked and now it was time to move rapidly against strong points consisting of more pillboxes, bunkers and self-propelled guns. The 2nd Battalion under Lt. Col. McDonald had not yet rejoined the main body but did rejoin them the next night.

The next day St. Lunaire was cleared of enemy troops by the 1st Battalion by 1800 hours but was under heavy fire from Hill 48 and the Island of Cezembre in the bay. Also, during the night the 2nd Battalion under Col. McDonald pushed into St. Brieuc against light opposition. The next morning they moved to outflank Fortress Paula on Hill 48 from the west while the 1st Battalion surrounded it on the east.

A description of Hill 48 according to *We saw It Through* was:

> Hill 48 was an isolated hill that dominated all of the terrain around it. Approaches to it were absolutely bare, with no cover. It was ringed in typical German style with pillboxes, all mutually supporting, and mine fields. The hill itself was tunneled under from end to end and was four stories high. Machine guns and 105 mm. guns guarded all entrances. This fortress contained a Command Headquarters, with inter-communications, living quarters with bunks, an electric plant, air conditioning, huge stores of ammunition, food, water and equipment of all kinds. The hill was studded with steel pillboxes, multiple machine guns that could be fired through periscopic sights from safe positions underneath the ground. Flame-throwing booby traps were in position along all possible avenues of approach. Screaming meemies were suspended on wires to be cut loose from inside, to fall on troops that might reach the bottom of the hill. Some 800 fanatical Germans were inside this veritable fort. All were determined and prepared

> to hold out until the last round of ammunition was fired. These fanatics were volunteers, for the Colonel in command had given his men in the fort the opportunity to leave if they wanted to. A few left under a white flag, but over 800 chose to fight to the finish. This fortress seemed almost impregnable and the Germans thought only a long siege could rout them out. We felt sure this battle would again be costly in lives against a determined enemy such as we were up against.

Fortunately, the 331st was able to capture one of the pillboxes on the outer ring. They wired it up to the Nazi Command post deep in the center of Hill 48. A phone was connected and they spoke to the Adjutant. An immediate surrender was demanded in order to save the lives of both German and American troops. Thirty minutes was allowed for an answer. The answer came from the German Commander, "No! German soldiers never surrender".

Things looked bad for the 83rd but the position had to be taken.

Supporting tanks began their serenade by firing point blank into the hill. Lady luck was on their side, one shell smashed into the entrance of one of the tunnels, the electricity went off and it became a hopeless situation for the Germans. The shell had set off an explosion of stored ammunition and set fires throughout the fortress. German troops came steaming out of their tunnels and a white flag was hoisted up on top of the hill. Many were killed in the panic that followed and many others were found suffocated with their gas masks on in the parts of the tunnels that American troops could get to. For many days afterwards, the hill rumbled with explosions of burning ammunition.

Beside those killed in the battles for St. Malo and Dinard, the 331st Regiment took over 4000 prisoners. The Germans had failed in their attempt to tie-up a large force of Allied troops and delay the American offensive as long as possible. On August 20th the 331st was ordered south to the vicinity of Nantes at the Loire River.

THE LOIRE VALLEY

The US Third Army's armored units were driving east and north into the heart of France and their right (south) flank was occupied by enemy forces trying to join their retreating comrades who were fleeing to the Reich. Cavalry units had swept past pockets of forces trying to break out. For about three weeks the 331st held these pockets at bay and broke up several attempts by the enemy to squeeze out. At the same time, they constantly patrolled the River Loire from Angers to Nantes, a distance of 93 miles, then northwest to Bihain and Redon.

On August 27th, a German battalion and three tanks of self-propelled guns attacked a unit of Lt. Col. McDonald's 2nd Battalion at Blain. The attack was repulsed with heavy losses inflicted on the enemy. Again on September 2nd, a strong patrol of approximately 40 Nazis attempted to enter Fay de Bretagne but was dispersed after a short fight. Other than active patrolling, this constituted the only enemy action during this period.

During this approximately one month period some 20,000 German soldiers surrendered to the American forces including Brigadier General Botho Elster. He surrendered all vehicles, arms and other equipment belonging to the March Group which Elster commanded. Formal surrender ceremonies were held at Beaugency Bridge on

September 17th. General Elster turned his pistol over to General Macon, commander of the 83rd Infantry Division, and then his 20,000 men marched to a prisoner of war enclosure. This was the largest mass surrender of the war.

The 331st also was active with the FFI (Free French Interior) in restoring living conditions to normal for the French population such a restoring electricity, obtaining food, water and fuel while they did their patrolling duties along the Loire. This was a rather dormant period and several replacements came and were trained in small unit tactics and tank-infantry teams to prepare for their next mission. The troops had time to clean up and were issued new clothing.

Soon they were to transfer to the small Duchy of Luxembourg now assigned to the Ninth Army.

LUXEMBOURG

Other American military units such as armored units, dive bombers and infantry had hammered the Nazi forces as they fled eastward from Normandy toward the Reich. Pockets of bypassed Nazis were left behind and it became the 331st's mission to deliver the knockout blows to a number of these units.

Their first mission was in the Duchy of Luxembourg. On September 18, 1944, the 331st was relieved at Nantes by another infantry outfit. After 245 miles and five days travel by truck to the northeast they arrived in an area just south of the City of Luxembourg. Then on September 25th they moved west prepared to clear the Duchy of all Germans west of the Moselle River and occupy an area from Ahn south to Bosse-Kontz.

A few of the towns were easy to clear for these hard fighting dough boys but several of the towns situated deep in the valley of the river banks and surrounded with high ground proved to be natural fortresses, heavily defended. It required the infantry and a coordinated attack by bombers, tanks and artillery to force a disorganized retreat by the Germans in two specific towns, Wormeldange and Oberwormeldange.

A statement made in *We Saw It Through*:

> The perfect timing of each action, the direct hits of all targets by the bombers and artillery, and the close support of the tanks which paved the way for a company of infantry to take and hold the town, made this spectacular attack one of modern warfare's typical examples of several fighting arms combining their firepower to reach their objectives with minimum losses.
>
> By October 7th the coordinated efforts were too much for the Nazis and all of the River towns were occupied entirely by the American forces. There were German counterattacks following but none were successful. The 2nd Battalion under Lt. Col. McDonald was active in most of the operations. As the occupied territory became more stable and free from attack the Americans were able to send patrols across the Moselle River into Germany to access enemy defenses.
>
> Again replacements arrived and were trained for what they thought would be the final knockout blow to the Nazis. Much of this training took place along the dilapidated Maginot Line just south of the Luxembourg border. It was here that they learned, among the derelict pillboxes, how to smash similar fortifications that might confront them on their drive into Germany.

Following the securing of Luxembourg there was another period of regrouping and some R & R. The Luxembourg citizens showed their appreciation by entertaining the troops in various ways. The Germans had kept tight control over the civilian population by imposing many entertainment restrictions. When the GIs arrived large scale entertainment programs were set up including movies, USO shows and Red Cross doughnut wagons. When the 83rd Division took over the capital city, GI dance bands provided music in some of the night spots and many lasting acquaintances were built up between the liberated and the liberators.

This period of enjoyment was short lived however; it was time to turn over the Moselle Valley to the 22nd Infantry Regiment of the 4th Division and move into Germany east of Aachen to relieve the battered men of the 12th Infantry Regiment. Again they were faced with another fighting condition, a cold, wet and muddy forest, the Hurtgen Forest of Germany.

THE HURTGEN FOREST

On December 6th the 331st moved by truck to the Hurtgen Forest to relieve the battered troops who had been fighting there for days. They were not only greeted by a depressing forest but also by Nazi propaganda leaflets which stated:

> You have been given a damnable Christmas present by being transferred to the famous Aachen sector where fighting is harder than anywhere else. It's woods here. They are cold, slippery and dangerous. Death awaits you behind every tree. Fighting in woods is hellish.

Their spirits were not dampened by those silly notes but they were "serenaded" nightly by heavy artillery and devastating tree bursts as well as strafing by the luftwaffe. It was plenty tough, about the toughest since Normandy. Generally they had to live in holes covered with logs, ate K rations with only one hot meal a day if they were lucky. Their feet got numb from the wet and cold.

A statement from *We Saw It Through:*

> Trenchfoot was our biggest nemesis. At every opportunity we removed our shoes and dried and massaged our feet, changing to dry socks. One man massaged the feet of another. Drying tents were set up near the battalion aid stations. As our companies came off the line, we visited the tents in rotation where our chilled bodies were warmed and our clothes, shoes and socks dried. But the constant exercise of one's feet was the only real safeguard against trench foot, and this was done right in the foxholes wiggling one's toes as often as possible while sweating out artillery, mortar barrages and German counterattacks.
>
> After slugging it out with the Germans for four days in the forest, they hurled their might against the German town of Gey on December 10th. They then crushed one of the most formidable Nazi strongholds on the outskirts of the Hurtgen Forest and drove the stubborn enemy to the banks of the Roer River just south of Duren. Fighting was fierce and success was not easy.
>
> Gey was a strategic strongpoint in the defenses protecting the vital approaches to Duren. It is situated in the edge of the Hurtgen Forest and lies in a valley through

> which all roads leading into the forest cross. The enemy was determined to hold the town which they had built into a fortress. Every house was an arsenal. The basements had been reinforced with double walls of cement and steel. Each was equivalent to a pillbox because at each window they had stacked large supplies of ammunition. The Nazis poured in reinforcements for three days as the struggle went on from house-to-house until they were forced from cellars and corners.

Each and every company of the 331st felt the sting of enemy forces as they had a crack at this heavily defended position. All types of enemy weapons were used in its defense, artillery, mortar, machine guns and small arms.

A quote from *We Saw It Through*:

> As each house was taken, we held it against the most violent enemy counterattacks. Supporting tanks were knocked out on both sides of the town by mines in the streets, bazookas and artillery fire. Supplies could only trickle through. It was impossible for jeeps or any vehicle to get near the town for the Jerries continuously pounded the town's approaches with artillery fire. Basements of the houses became aid stations where only medical aid men of our companies cared for the wounded. There were no battle lines. Each house was either an American or German sector. For two days and a night our attacking companies were without water, many of our men without food.
>
> And then from one point of high ground to another, with support of our tanks, artillery and engineers, we stabbed relentlessly forward through enemy anti-personnel mine fields in rain, ankle deep mud and snow, and pushed the Germans back while beating off a series of successive counterattacks. Capturing the towns of Horn, Berzbuir and Lendersdorff, we held a firm grip on the west bank of the Roer River just south of Duren, five days after our initial attack from the Hurtgen was launched.

Units of the 83rd Division entered Duren after they took the village of Gurzenich directly opposite the city. This represented the deepest penetration of German soil made by any American force during 1944. They were unaware of Hitler's offensive plan 6 days later to retake Antwerp. The Battle of the Bulge would be one of the fiercest battles of the war.

The 331st defended the area along the Roer River until they were needed in Belgium around Christmas 1944.

THE ARDENNES AND THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

Winter in Europe and England in 1944-1945 was one of the most severe in recent years. Heavy snows came early and blanketed a wide area including Belgium eastward into Holland and Germany. German Field Marshal Walter Model, ground commander under Marshal Von Rundstedt chose December 16, during extremely bad weather, to launch one last desperate attempt to split the American and British forces. Their objective was to cut off the Allies supply route by rushing across Belgium and capturing Antwerp. Allied air support was grounded due to weather. Antwerp was a major terminal for supplying the Allied forces with much of their material. It could also be used to continue launching German buzz-bombs and their V-2s toward England. Model's first objective was to cross the Meuse River.

By Late December Model, his finest soldiers, the Panzer Grenadier tank units and SS troops, attacked across a 50 mile front at the Luxembourg-Belgium border and had almost reached the Meuse River in Belgium. This penetration became known as the "Bulge".

As Model's army drove the Allies westward toward the Meuse River, they surrounded Bastogne in the southern sector of the Ardennes. The 101st Airborne Division was caught in a trap. When asked to surrender, Brig. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe gave his reply. "Nuts!", He said. They remained surrounded until the Third Army armored units finally pierced the German lines and relieved Bastogne around Christmas Day. .

The 331st Infantry Regiment extremely weary from their Hurtgen Forest encounters, packed up on December 23rd and traveled day and night west into Holland by way of Maastricht and down through Liege, Belgium and took up defensive positions on the northern flank of the German penetration. They remained in a defensive position west of Rochefort preparing to attack the bulge at Ottre, Belgium.

On January 9th they smashed into the northern flank of the Nazi salient while the 3rd Army troops pushed into the southern flank. Fighting continued relentlessly for the next 10 days in cold knee-deep snow and in extremely foggy conditions. No air support was forthcoming.

We Saw It Through describes conditions as follows:

> Not only faced with Germany's reputed finest soldiers, the Panzer Grenadier and SS troops, we were forced to fight the weather as well. Through heavy snows we pushed forward as the cold, bitter wind cut our faces and tore through our clothes. In the snow-covered forests we found no shelter. Battle lulls permitted us some rest in our steady advance but fires could not be built and hastily dug foxholes in frozen earth were of no aid against the cold. For 10 consecutive days and nights with little sleep, cold rations--our guns kept from freezing only by their continual operation--we dug the enemy from their defenses capturing over 400 prisoners and a Nazi dump, knocking out Mark Vs and trucks, and left the Ardennes strewn with bodies of Nazi supermen.
>
> And we learned about winter the hard way. We used branches of trees as matting for our foxholes. Logs and more branches were used as roofs to protect us from tree bursts and two or three of us slept in each hole close enough to pool our blankets--when we had them. Our blankets and clothing got wet with snow and froze. The more frigid nights we abandoned all hope of sleep, walking around and exercising all night to keep from freezing.
>
> When we waded through streams, our trousers got wet up to our knees and our legs became numb. We couldn't take our shoes off for they would freeze stiff by morning. Our communications men had trouble with their radios. Their breath vapors wet the inside of the mouth pieces and froze. Severe cold caused morphine syrettes and blood plasma to freeze. Our medics put them under their armpits thawing with body heat or under the hoods of running jeeps. Our wounded were carried back on litters 3000 yards because our jeeps couldn't get through snowdrifts.

The 2nd Battalion under Lt. Col. McDonald along with the 3rd Battalion under Col. Bailey were first to deliver a blow into the counteroffensive. The 2nd Battalion helped repulse a vicious German counterattack southwest of Bihain, Belgium and made a flank attack from the vicinity of Bihain, west of Ottre. All three battalions of the 331st were involved in pushing the Nazis to the southern edges of the forest by wiping out

strong enemy machine gun nests and tanks. The 1st Battalion launched a night attack over a mile of open ground on the town of Langlir and entered it through heavy enemy artillery and direct tank fire. They then fought in hand-to-hand combat with bayonets and trench knives before Langlir was secured at 1300 (1 PM) on the 11th of January.

At the same time the 3rd Battalion, clad in white and assisted by artillery, rushed across slopes and ridges smashing strongpoints of dug-in tanks and machine guns. They reached an open plain that lay between the southern edge of the woods and Petite-Langlir. A swift night attack on this Nazi-held town brought another strong vital objective in American hands.

Armored units then advanced through the 331st sector and cut off another vital highway. The infantry units then turned east in a raging snow storm to stab through dense woods to flush out determined enemy troops left in the St. Pierre-Hez Forest. Then Lt. Col. McDonald and Lt. Col. Bailey led their troops across the Houffalize-Courtil road and cut off the last escape route to Courtil from Halconreux.

As described by *We Saw It Through*:

> But accomplishing this important mission is incidental to the story of 10 days and nights without rest, fighting with determination through a raging snowstorm to secure these vital objectives. Our 1st and 2nd Battalions had pushed to a road leading to Halconreux and there dug into the frozen earth waiting for retreating Germans, as water seeped into foxholes until it was knee deep. One Machine gunner sat on his ammo box in his hole and in a few minutes water covered the box. He placed his helmet on top of the box and perched on it and it too filled with water.
>
> That night a snowstorm raged. All night they stuck to their posts in freezing wet clothing. Two men died of exposure. A cold K ration was their only supper. Supplies could not get through because of the density of the woods. Previous artillery barrages in the area had clipped many of the trees and strong winds blew the weakened tree tops on them.
>
> But vigilance was rewarded for in the late hours of the night a German convoy streamed up the road. In spite of the snow, the blizzard and the shell from Nazi tanks, all guns blazed to cripple the convoy. The mission had been accomplished.

Although the 83rd was not the only infantry division caught up in the Ardennes, they were a major contributor to the headlong retreat of the German forces. The Commanding general of the VII Corp gave them high praise for their major contribution in driving the Nazis out of the Ardennes.

War has always been brutal and fighting the SS troops was no exception. However one of the most brutal incidents occurred in the town of Malmedy, Belgium. Two assault squads made a dawn attack into the forest and had gone 100 yards when they were pinned down by heavy machine gun crossfire. The slope was raked continuously for several minutes. The men hugged the ground. When the fire lifted the platoon sergeant raised his head and looked around. Many of his men were dead, most of the others were wounded. He saw two Jerries coming down the slope from the ridge and he dropped his head and watched from the corner of his eye. They began searching the clothing of the dead soldiers. A man groaned and a rifle shot rang out. Blood trickled from the man's temple. Another groan was heard followed by more shots. Everyone of the wounded was riddled

and their clothes searched. The platoon sergeant was the only man to escape. He had played dead.

The tide had turned against the German Nazis and now it was only a matter of time before the fanatics would be defeated. On February 6th the 331st would assemble in Berneau, Belgium to regroup and start a training period to acclimate their numerous reinforcements. Lt. Col. McDonald had some relief from combat duty.

On February 8th,1945 Corporal Leroy Q. McDonald, younger brother of Lt. Col. McDonald, and his 40mm anti-aircraft gun section moved into their first defensive combat position in Tamines, Belgium, some 100 km (60 miles) west of Berneau. The area was relatively safe from the Luftwaffe. Their mission was to guard a gasoline dump in the small village. Corp. McDonald was approaching his 21st birthday on March 2nd.

Lt. Col. McDonald was able to learn the whereabouts of his younger brother and decided to see if he could find and visit him. He had access to a German Mercedes, probably confiscated, which had been painted an O. D. color and the normal white star painted on the front doors. It was easy to identify it as an American vehicle occupied by an American officer and driver. After checking with the CP. of C Battery, 568th AAA Btn. in Tamines he was given directions to the gun position where Corp. McDonald was standing air guard duty, searching the skies for enemy aircraft.

The driver parked the Mercedes on a road some 300 yards down a hill from the gun position. Lt. Col. McDonald got out of the car and made his way up the hill where the gun had been dug into a pile of shale, tailings from an abandoned coal mining shaft. Corp. McDonald's first thoughts was that a high ranking officer was making the rounds to inspect his gun position. He thought such an activity was ridiculous and unnecessary under combat conditions. However, as the Colonel got closer Corp. McDonald saw something familiar in his walk. It was then that he recognized his older brother whom he had not seen in almost three years. He immediately abandoned his air guard duty and ran to meet his brother half way down the hill. It was only later that members of his gun section understood why a corporal would give a colonel a big bear hug!

Rank has its privileges and the corporal was ordered to join the colonel at a small tavern in the village and the two talked for a couple of hours while drinking a bottle of wine. They reminisced about the rest of the family. Christmas 1944 had come and gone and they wondered how their parents had coped with it. Three siblings were overseas. Inez was a Japanese prisoner, the Colonel was leading his battalion in a vicious fight in Belgium and Leroy had arrived in England destined for the European front. The youngest brother of all, Raymond Virgil, had enlisted in the navy and was in boot camp in Michigan. Preston and Wilma were living in Northern Alabama with their two children, Katherine was working in an ordnance plant in Prairie, Mississippi and Jimmie Lou was in training as a cadet nurse in Memphis. The mother and father had been left alone at Christmastime with their thoughts about when and if they would ever see all of their children at home again.

Of all of his experiences in the one and a half years the corporal spent overseas, this one was the most memorable. The corporal observed that the colonel seemed very tired and had grown much older since he last saw him. It was obvious that he had been through hell. However, much was yet to be done by all of the thousands of GIs on the

continent before the two would see each other again. Both wondered when this hellish war would be over.

THE RHINELAND

The month of February 1945 was spent in preparation for another assault on the German homeland. By February 28th the 331st Regiment was ready with its replacements trained and its equipment serviced. They crossed the Roer River at Julich and struck out for the Rhine River toward Dusseldorf. The resistance they encountered was not light but they took it in stride. It was no mad race. They had learned from past experiences how to take the German counterattacks and reduce their resistance. They were assisted by not only the Second Armored Division but by air support. As one company cleared a town another would forge ahead to capture another. Their stiffest resistance came from German self-propelled 88mm guns which sent huge geysers of dirt flying into their faces.

German soldiers surrendered in large numbers and many pieces of artillery were captured. However, on two successive days, March 1st and March 2nd, they encountered vicious counterattacks by German tanks and infantry. With the aid of the Air Force the attacks were smashed.

Quoted in *We Saw it Through*:

> When the last of the battle's dust and smoke drifted across the Rhine by March 3rd and the last resistance was wiped out, we were holding the southern and northern sectors of Neuss in a firm grip. The 329th and 330th Combat Teams, jumping off from a line generally around Buttgen to Grffrath on Thursday afternoon, had secured the central sectors of this Dusseldorf suburb. Driving into the city from three directions the three combat teams press to the river in the face of 20mm ackack and artillery from across the Rhine in an attempt to gain at least one of the three bridges spanning the river. In early morning March 3rd, just as our 1st Battalion reached the northern bridge, a tower of smoke and debris shot skyward. An estimated three tons of enemy-planted dynamite blasted all three bridges in our face.

The 2nd Battalion under Col. McDonald was active as usual in the drive for the Rhine.

One example was mentioned in *We Saw It Through*:

> The 1st Battalion mounted tanks at Hemmerden and started the trek northward with the 2nd Armored. Meanwhile our 2nd Battalion swung east from Hammerden in the face of enemy fire from direct high velocity weapons, pushed steadily forward and were the first at the Rhine River. In bitter battles through Loveling, Holzheim and Nixhutt to the southern tip of Neuss and the banks of the Rhine, they overran 13 88mm guns. And it wasn't long before Nazis east of the Rhine felt the devastating effect of our 105 mm shells from our own artillery battalion--the first light artillery outfit to pound the enemy across the Rhine.

A close friend of the family, Mrs. Louise Borden Ferrill, who had grown up in Plantersville, Miss. and now lived in Hampstead, NY in 1945 sent Col. McDonald's parents a newspaper clipping from the New York Sun dated March 7, 1945. It describes in

some detail the drive for the Rhine by the 331st Regiment. Most of the article is quoted below:

New Yorkers Among First at Rhine

Foe Raised Pair of Drawers on Bayonet and Yanks Rushed to River's Edge

By GAULT MacGOWAN

Staff Correspondent of The New York Sun

With the 83rd Division on the Rhine, March 6 (Delayed).

I am now able to tell the first full story of how the first Yanks reached the Rhine last Friday. A pair of white drawers stuck up from a trench on the river side of the levee was the first sign of that hard-marching Ohio Division had outsmashed all opposition and the Rhine goal was theirs.

At least twenty New Yorkers were among the Ohioans, and, as previously stated, a New Yorker was the first officer there, Capt. Francis Oliver of 1578 Third Avenue. With the Ohio men on the last attack were Pfc. Sidney Josilet of Manhattan, Pfc. George Steller, Jr. of Woodside, Queens; Corporal Joseph Borowski and Technical Sergt. James Archimbault of Manhattan.

They say that Lieut. Charles Welch of Columbus, Ohio was the first platoon leader to reach the Rhine. Company E and Company G of the 331st Infantry had a place of honor in the attack, with Major Lawrence Laliberte of North Adams, Miss., commanding the battalion in the temporary absence of Lieut.-Col McDonald.

(editor's note: It was about this time that Lieut. Col. McDonald was visiting his younger brother, Corp. Leroy Q. McDonald, in Tamines, Belgium where his anti-aircraft gun section was deployed).

Advanced by Night

Col Robert H. York of Hartselle, Ala., whose wife lives at 85-04 90th street, Woodhaven, Queens, commanded the regiment. I last met him under a blanket shelter outside of Bizerte, then commanding the battalion of Brooklyn's famous Eighteenth Infantry. From his command post in an abandoned factory he forwarded me to Battalion C, then to the company, where I talked to the remnant of men who first hit the Rhine. Although those last few miles sound easy on paper, on the ground it was hell, with men dying and being wounded and being taken prisoners.

The attack was in the night. Before the Germans put up those drawers, they had captured some of our leading men and carried them off across the Rhine to Duesseldorf. The Yanks didn't get to the side of the Rhine without their trail of dead heroes.

Lieut. Conrad Van Kirk, commanding the Second Platoon, told me the story of those last few miles.

"All the way up the Erft Canal our battalion had been fired on by German tanks across the water. On Thursday night we approached the Rhine near Neuse and jumped off at 4 A.M. on Friday to reach it where the Erft joins the river. The obstacles were heavy barbed wire, dug-in trenches, machine guns, and two factories camouflaging the guns.

"It was moonlight as we marched. The bridge over the Rhine was plainly visible in the moonlight, but I couldn't see the Rhine for the high levee."

First Sergt. Louis Cherol of Youngstown, Ohio, interjected: 'If it hadn't been for that moon we'd have taken them by surprise'

"As it was," Lieut. Van Kirk resumed, "the Jerries opened up fire and pinned us down. Then we saw Capt. Oliver go forward with the first platoon under Lieut. Charles Welch and Sergt. Archimbault. Capt. Oliver ordered a marching fire and the men in line shot from the hips, making the Germans duck for cover.

" The first platoon suffered casualties. We saw bodies hung on the wire. But Capt. Oliver went on right to the side of the Rhine. Then we lost sight of them in the darkness.

"Company G marched off into the teeth of the Krauts' guns from the factories, which were raising hell all around, but Capt. John Macaluso of New Orleans overcame the opposition, supported by heavy weapons under Capt. John Caddle, from Boston. They took 500 prisoners and the German officers were howling like hell because they were losing the war."

Lieut. Van Kirk was the first to see the flag go up.

"Going forward again, we faced several machine guns dug in the levee wall, which we outflanked, calling down a mortar fire on the front," he said. "Then we saw a bayonet come up, waving the white drawers. Someone shouted, 'Handy ho, come see here!' That's doughboy for 'Hands up, come here' 'Handed hoh, komen zee hir.'

"Then they started coming, all ages, 15,17, and right up. We went forward and smashed their weapons," Lieut. Van Kirk added.

They're Smart Kids

Today I saw the battalion Commander, Lieut.-Col. Leniel McDonald of Tupelo, Miss., shake his hand and heard him say: "Congratulations. You did a fine job."

"I didn't see the Rhine proper until this afternoon," said Lieut. Van Kirk. "when I went forward on reconnaissance. I saw the bridge blow up and the Heinies guarding the other shore preventing our crossing. We traded mortar fire and gunfire across the Rhine."

Sergt. John Frederick of Detroit, a re-enforcement, who rose from private to sergeant, was one of the platoon survivors officially credited with being the first to reach the Rhine, but he hasn't seen it yet.

"I didn't lift my head high enough," he said.

Sergt. William Fowler of Lockhaven, Pa., also isn't sure he has yet seen the Rhine. It's hard to believe they haven't--they're so near, yet so far, and I wouldn't believe it if they hadn't told me so themselves. They have a typical infantryman's worm's-eye view of things. Smart kids.

Company E of the 2nd Battalion, 331st Infantry Regiment under LT. Col. McDonald had been the first American troops to reach the Rhine River on March 3, 1945. Dusseldorf and the west side of the Rhine River was promptly controlled by American forces. There had been good coordination between all of the ground forces and the Air Force. The Rhine dash had been hailed as a brilliant tactical maneuver and letters of commendation to the Regiment came from Divisional Headquarters, Army and Corps. They were now deployed at outposts in a defensive position and started screening civilians in corporation with the CIC. This activity continued until the official Military Government was established.

On March 21st the regiment left the Rhine and moved to Sustern, Holland to conduct training in river crossings and attacks over open terrain. They would be called upon to spearhead the entire Division operation for the all-out massive offensive across the Rhine and perhaps to Berlin.

HEART OF GERMANY

Before the end of March there would be an all-out effort by all Allied forces to cross the Rhine from north to south and envelope the industrial might of the enemy. This all-out effort included the huge air armada assembled by Montgomery that was launched

on March, 24, 1945. This air drop included more planes, gliders and troops than was involved in D-Day. The unprecedented offensive enabled the Ninth and First Armies to meet in a giant pincer movement in the town of Lippstadt and seal the Rohr pocket. It cost Germany well over 300,000 prisoners and a great war production belt without which the Nazi Armies could not stay in the field.

In the 13 days following March 28th the 331st Regiment swept 215 miles through the heart of Germany and establish with the 329 CT the only permanent bridgehead across the Elbe River. They were only 65 miles southwest of the German capital. On April 2nd they were met by determined Nazi resistance in the town of Hamm.

According to *We Saw it Through*:

> It was April 2nd. Our 3rd Battalion cleared out the north sector of town and pushed across the Dortmund-Ems Canal and the Lipp River east of Hamm and occupied Dolberg. The 2nd Battalion cut the railroad tracks and secured the high ground northeast of Hamm.
>
> Establishing the bridgehead at Hamm on the Dortmund-Ems Canal was one of the toughest knots of resistance to untie during our sweep to the Elbe. But our 3rd Battalion undertook the job, punched a way into the north side of the city, dealt a severe blow across the canal, and held the bridgehead for two days until the 95th Division relieved them the night of April 3rd.
>
> After being relieved in Hamm, we moved to an assembly area in Paderborn. From this city on April 4th, the 1st and 2nd Battalions made an attack and secured the towns of Altenbeken and Schwany. Advancing quickly, our 1st Battalion on the morning of the 5th, captured the towns of Hemmingshausen, Oyenhsusen and Bergheim. They continued to the east directly toward the Weser River and after much fighting took the town of Falkenhagen. Then on April 6th, they fought the most difficult battle since crossing the Rhine River, capturing Polle, an important stronghold on the Weser River.
>
> During the same period, our 2nd Battalion had been attached to the 113th Cavalry. On the way to the Weser River, they captured Horn which opened a pass to the foothills of the mountains leading to the Weser. Their drive continued at an accelerated pace as they headed straight for the river, taking town after town, among them Neiheim, Bredenborn and Bordein. Within sight of the river, they bypassed stiffened resistance. Taking advantage of a bridge secured by the 2nd Armored Division, our 2nd Battalion crossed the Weser at Grohnde. Continuing the attack, they moved south and re-entered the Division sector to secure a crossing of Leine River at Kl. Freden.

On April 6th the Regiment regrouped in Alfeld, Germany in XIX Corps reserve. It was the first rest that they had for six days and nights. They had lived on K rations and an occasional cup of hot coffee.

After one night's rest they were ordered to rejoin their Division as it continued its relentless drive for the Elbe. They were on the right flank of the 2nd Armored Division.

Hear what *We Saw It Through* states:

> We moved up to the towns of Derenburg and Langenstein near Halberstadt. From here our 2nd Battalion spearheaded the fresh drive. With unprecedented speed, they cleared 15 places including strongpoints at Neinberg, Ditfurt, Gatersleben and Hekendorf while covering more than 50 miles of enemy territory flattening centers of

resistance. They liberated thousands of Allied POWs and captured over a thousand German prisoners.

The 2nd Battalion of the 331st Regiment, 83rd Infantry Division under the command of Lt. Col. Leniel E. McDonald was the first to reach the Elbe River on April 13, 1945. Still, the war was not yet over, not by a long shot!

THE ELBE BRIDGEHEAD

The last chapter of *We Saw It Through* is quoted in its entirety especially for the benefit of all relatives of Lt. Col. Leniel E. McDonald. You can be very proud to be associated with such fine military leadership.

Our only bridgehead was held against repeated counterattacks.

By the 13th, our 2nd Battalion had cleared three more objectives. The 329th Combat Team reported the town of Barby clear and our 2nd Battalion, with a company of our 1st Battalion attached, shot across the Elbe in assault boats on the 329th's right flank.

The river maneuver was simple against little resistance and they pushed on to the east side of Walternieburg and made defensive positions for the night. It was during the night that the enemy hit their positions with a strong counterattack of tanks and infantry. The 2nd Battalion held against the strong attack and the next morning moved south to clear the woods and take the city of Tockheim. Still the same day they continued east to Badetz.

The remaining part of the 1st Battalion crossed the Elbe on the 14th and moved into an assembly area to the southeast of Walterneinburg. They cleared the wooded area against strong enemy resistance and counterattacks; and then moved to Badetz to relieve elements of the 2nd Battalion and begin clearing the Steckby Forest.

The bridgehead expanded but with plenty of pressure against it. Nazi OCS fanatics, with the ink hardly dry on their diplomas, fought a battle to the finish. Our 2nd Battalion met them in Kameritz in a 12 hour grueling fight and our 1st Battalion engaged the same type of Jerry in a fierce 12 hour German counterattack in the Steckby Forest.

To take Kameritz, an enemy stronghold northeast of Badetz, meant overcoming fanatical German Officer Candidates. Artillery salvos had no appreciable effect as the enemy clung stubbornly to the well-fortified town. A company of the 1st Battalion, sending platoons out to the edge of town, were met with withering small-arms fire and tanks, and were a constant target for an unceasing blasting of panzerfausts. Our 2nd Battalion advanced across open fields fronting Kameritz and employed marching fire as the only possible means of gaining a foothold on the town under the stress of heavy casualties. After hours of nerve wracking and courageous action the shattered town was secured, and the 2nd Battalion push on to Hohenlepte.

Self-propelled guns fired from the town of Neiderlepte, aroused the men of our 2nd Battalion in the early hours of April 16th with the advance salvo of counterattack. Deadly fire from artillery and our tank destroyers was laid on the town, and the attack was stopped. Five enemy tanks and self-propelled guns were destroyed. All along the open plain over which the attack was launched, lay enemy dead and wounded. The Nazi had suffered heavily. Very few of their number were captured.

Steckby Forest, the deciding factor in holding the vital Elbe Bridgehead, was the location for some of our fiercest fighting since the Normandy Hedgerows. Here our companies of the 1st Battalion dug-in to be met in early hours before dawn of April 18th by over a battalion of fanatical German Officer Candidates who had but one

purpose-to fight to the last man. The enemy's mission was to push our forces back and destroy the pontoon bridge, wiping out the Elbe Bridgehead. Against this constant onslaught, their concentrated tank fire and blazing panzerfausts, our exposed flank and their superiority in numbers, we held firmly to our positions. Though some units were at times forced to withdraw in the face of the withering firepower of the enemy, they soon regained their ground with the support of planes and artillery.

The woods became a blazing inferno and smoke made it difficult to see for more than a few yards. The charred bodies of over 115 supermen were found after the enemy had been forced back--not to mention the wounded and prisoners. It was their last dying effort to remove the western threat from a drive on Berlin.

During all of these counterattacks, the enemy tried to blast the Franklin Roosevelt and Truman pontoon bridges with floating mines. They even tried to send suicide swimmers against the bridges in hope of dynamiting them and every evening just before dark, the waning German Luftwaffe made desperate attempts to bomb the Bridges but without success. The vigilance of our doughboys and engineers, saved the bridges as numerous mines were exploded with rifles and machine gun fire, and every attempt to destroy the bridges was foiled.

V-E DAY

The 331st Combat Team was ordered to hold firmly to the Elbe Bridgehead for another week and wait for the Russians to relieve them. They were denied the privilege of racing further into Naziland. Then on April 30, 1945 Maj. Gen. Robert C. Macon, 83rd Division Commander met the Russian Commander at Wittenberg and they shook hands. Two days before V-E Day which came officially on May 8,1945, the Russians relieved the 331st of the bridgehead for which they had fought so courageously. The unit was then ordered to Bavaria and took up duties as occupation forces.

Lt. Col. Leniel E. McDonald was awarded several medals including:

1. The French Croix de Guerre (avec etoile d'argent) [with silver star]
2. Silver Star
3. Bronze Star
4. Purple Heart

HOME FOR RECUPERATION

Shortly after V-E Day Leniel was sent back to the United States for a most needed rest and recuperation. He was sent to a hospital at Camp Shelby, Mississippi where he was joined by his wife, Frances. During his stay in the hospital he debated whether or not to change careers or remain in the military as a Regular Army Officer. He came down on the side of a military career and applied. He was accepted.

His sister, Inez, had been liberated from the Japanese internment camp in Manila, PI in February 1945 and had made her way back home in Mississippi to a hero's welcome.

They both had decided to continue their careers in the military. She was able to visit him while he was recuperating.

Fairly soon after his acceptance in the regular army he was again assigned to the European Theater with Constabulary duty in Regensburg, Germany.

In June 1945 his younger brother, Leroy, and his 568th AAA Battalion had also been assigned to occupation duty as security for Airfield Y-96 outside the city limits of Kassel, Germany. The Air Force had established a daily courier run of a C-47 transport plane around the West German occupied territory. By July or August 1945 young Leroy had learned from home correspondence that his big brother was back in Germany. He learned that with a little political pull he could hitch a ride on the courier plane and maybe visit big brother. He also learned that the closest he could get to Regensburg would be the airfield in Nurnburg, some 40 miles away. Having faith that he could hitch a ride by surface to Regensburg, he requested permission to fly on the courier. Permission was granted and in a day or so arrangements were made for the trip; it was his first flying experience.

There were several stops from Kassel to Nurnburg but soon he was on the ground in Nurnburg. Right away he found a jeep that was going to Regensburg and before dark he had found his brother. Being only a non-com Corporal he felt considerably out of place with all those high ranking officers yet his big brother made him feel accepted. The next day he caught the same courier back to Kassel very happy to have word about his folks back home in Mississippi and to have seen his older brother in much better condition than when he last saw him back in February right after the Battle of the Bulge.

1946-1962
THE POST WAR YEARS

OCCUPIED GERMANY

Soon Frances was to join Leniel in Heidelberg, Germany as he remained on Constabulary duty in occupied Germany. Occupation forces were provided with requisitioned housing, usually well appointed with plenty of household help. Their

particular quarters were on the mountain overlooking a Heidelberg castle that had never been restored after the war. They also had a beautiful view overlooking the Neckar River.

The German population had been devastated by almost total destruction of many of their facilities and food was very scarce. US Military personnel were not allowed to buy food locally and they had to live on what was provided by the military. It was a new experience for Frances to make breakfast and cook with powered eggs and powdered milk. The household help were permitted to live and eat with their landlord. They were very happy to have a warm place to stay and food to eat.

Leniel was able to perform his duties during the week but was free to travel around the area on weekends and holidays. They made trips to Strassburg, France where they were able to buy fresh fruits and vegetables. They also made trips to Switzerland and one trip to Czechoslovakia before the border was closed to US troops by the Russians. The Cold War had begun.

They had an excellent opportunity, while in Europe, to do some great shopping for miscellaneous items. The post exchange was a fine place to get bargains because the normal prices were discounted and there was no duty on items that would have been exported to the US However the post exchanges were limited in the number of luxury items they could carry during the German occupation and later when the Marshal Plan was being implemented. Many luxury items were in great demand by military personnel and when they were stocked in limited quantities it was necessary to have a lottery among the people who wanted a particular item. Luckily, Leniel won the right to purchase some fine Rosenthal china. They were very pleasantly surprised to learn that their purchase also included eight fine crystal colored wine goblets.

They started collecting Hummel figurines before they left Germany in 1949 by purchasing some of them in local German stores with local currency. However, before they left Germany, Leniel visited the Hummel factory in Bavaria and placed a C.O.D. order for several items to be sent home. They were actually surprised when it arrived because there was no assurance that the order would be honored.

A memorable trip was one through the Brenner Pass to Cortina, Italy in January when normally it would be impassable because of the ice and snow. Fortunately, the weather had turned warm enough for the Pass to be open.

Another memorable experience was a visit to England during the London Equestrian Olympics. Leniel had an Air Force pilot friend who was assigned to fly the Berlin Airlift when the Russians blockaded Berlin from June 24, 1948 until September 1949. Prior to the assignment he had purchased tickets to the Olympics for his family and himself but it was necessary to send his family back to the States because he was on duty almost full time. Leniel and Frances went to England and used his tickets, his hotel reservations and had dinner with some of his friends. While they were in England they visited Chester where Leniel and his regiment were stationed before D-Day.

One motor trip took them to various rural parts of France, to Paris, to the Riviera, to the town of Limoges and to Monaco. They visited the castle but were only able to see the guards and then went to the casino. They were not able to try their luck at the gaming tables because Leniel was in uniform.

Leniel could not resist taking Frances over much of the area covered by his 2nd Battalion during his combat days. They went to Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany. One

cemetery was visited where Leniel took some pictures of one soldier's grave. He sent the pictures to the soldier's family which he had known in Cleveland, Mississippi.

Their first addition to the family came while they were in Heidelberg. Edward L. McDonald was born on October 23, 1947. The family remained in Heidelberg into 1949 when Leniel's unit was transferred to Stuttgart, Germany. It was then that he received orders to report to the Command and Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas to study Intelligence. Since he had been involved in so much combat earlier there was little chance that he would face line duty ever again.

FORT LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS

Frances had become pregnant with their second child. The Army disapproved of her traveling in the later stages of pregnancy so they were permitted to leave Germany earlier than his orders required. They made the trip back to the US and enjoyed a 30 day vacation. He then reported to Fort Leavenworth early.

This time their quarters were not quite as comfortable. They were housed in converted barracks. Their second child, Linda Grace McDonald, was born at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas on October 10, 1949.

SAN FRANCISCO

Sometime in 1950 Leniel completed his Intelligence Schooling in Fort Leavenworth and was immediately assigned to duty in San Francisco, California with the Six Army Headquarters at the Presidio. The assignment turned out to be very pleasant for the whole family. Leniel had to travel extensively because his territory covered several Western states. As a result he was provided with an automobile and a driver. This allowed Frances to have access to their personal car much of the time. Although the assignment lasted only about one year they were able to take advantage of the opportunity to enjoy many of the sights and places in and around San Francisco.

Eddie became four years old while they were there and Linda had her second birthday before they left. Frances was able to take them to the zoo and to the wharf. They had fun riding the cable cars and other activities while Leniel was at work. Their quarters provided a beautiful view from the far side of Twin Peaks after the fog lifted, usually between 11:00 A.M. and 1:00 P.M.

Several years previously, Leniel had applied with the army for a chance to work on a masters degree. Although he had reached his 41st birthday he was happy to get the opportunity to go back to school at a major university. He was to enter Tulane University in September 1951 where he would work on a masters degree in Psychology and International Relations.

NEW ORLEANS & TULANE UNIVERSITY

The family transferred from San Francisco to New Orleans over the Labor Day holiday and arrived in an area infested with mosquitoes and houseflies which had been unknown in San Francisco. Needless to say, it was not very pleasant. They rented a rather large raised cottage within walking distance of the University campus. The cottage provided some extra room for guests and for the first time they were able to invite family members to visit them. By this time younger brother Leroy had been married to Rose Holley for more than a year. The two of them and younger sister Jimmie and her two year old daughter, Debra, accepted an invitation to visit their New Orleans relatives for a few days in the summer of 1952. Leniel and Frances also had many other guests during their stay in New Orleans.

New Orleans was a very memorable experience for them. The city was constantly having activities which drew visitors from all over and most of the time the entire hotel facilities throughout the city were taken long before festivities started. There was the Sugar Bowl in early January and then there was Mardi Gras in the Springtime along with many other attractions throughout the year. Leniel and Frances had visitors for several of these activities and in some cases cots had to be used for their guests. The town is noted for its social balls and on several occasions the military personnel were invited to attend; Leniel and Frances attended some of them. They also had the pleasure of attending a Sugar Bowl game. Frances' brother-in-law was able to get tickets for them in his home town of Greenwood, Mississippi.

Leniel was very busy in his studies most of the time but Frances was able to involve the children in lots of activities while he studied. Audubon Park in New Orleans was one of the outstanding places for her to take the children. They rode the street cars and she took them on their first train ride to visit her family in Hammond, Louisiana while they were there.

Frances had always admired china cabinets with curved glass doors. She thought New Orleans would be a good place to find one. Shortly after they arrived she visited an antiques dealer and asked him to find one for her. He found one but it had to be refinished. Luckily, it was refinished and delivered to her just before Leniel graduated.

FORT KNOX, KENTUCKY

As soon as Leniel had his Masters Degree in hand in 1953 he was assigned to an Armored School in Fort Knox, Kentucky, his first permanent army post, . He was the only military officer assigned to a Human Research unit, one of only three in the nation. He and several enlisted men made up the entire military contingent. The rest of the school was made up of 25 civilian PHDs. During this assignment the school had some two hundred foreign officers attend. They each were able to bring their families with them while they attended school. It was a good experience for the McDonalds to get acquainted with these foreign families.

Their three year plus stay in Fort Knox was very similar to civilian life in that they lived in brick duplex quarters that included a garage for their car. They also had a yard in

which the children could play. The children were beginning to grow up and attend school and the parents had to become involved in many local community activities. Leniel started coaching Little League and Frances did hospital work as a Gray Lady. One of Leniel's pastime activities during the war years when he had some free time was to play bridge with his fellow officers. It was in Fort Knox that he and Frances started to play a little more demanding form of the game, duplicate bridge. Since bridge is wholly a mental activity they were able to enjoy the game for many, many years and became Life Masters.

As the children grew older they became active in the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and of course attended school full time. However, they missed 30 days of schooling because they had to leave Fort Knox early on Leniel's next assignment.

TOKYO, JAPAN

Some time in 1956 Leniel received orders to immediately fly to Tokyo, Japan to work with Japanese officers. The war with Japan had been over for about ten years and Japan had recovered very well from its effects. Although a truce agreement had been signed between North Korea and the UN in July 1953, there was still a need for a strong military presence in Japan. The Cold War between the US and Russia was continuing.

Only in December 1956 did Japan and Russia sign a separate peace treaty. Leniel and his family went to Japan with the understanding that they would be furnished housing for the first 30 days. During that 30 day period they would be required to find and rent their own housing. Fortunately they were able to do so but the property had open gutters and they had to boil their drinking water. They remained in these quarters for a few months until they had a chance to buy a house which was built with Japanese funds but under US control as to who the occupants were and its selling price. The house was located in an area adjoining Grant Heights where many of the US Government Quarters were located. Eventually Leniel's turn came to occupy government quarters in Grant Heights and this was where they lived for the remainder of their stay in Japan.

They became friends with several families of Japanese officers with which Leniel worked. Working with natives in foreign countries usually is a much more enjoyable experience than simply being a visiting tourist. They were able to enjoy some of the more interesting attractions in and around Japan and do shopping with the aid and assistance of their local friends. Duplicate bridge continued to be a good pastime for them and they found it quite interesting to play in tournaments with Japanese players. One of their favorite places to play was at the Downtown Tokyo Press Club.

They visited Mt. Fuji and stayed in Japanese hotels while they were on various excursions throughout the country. The children were going to school full-time now and were doing well. All in all their stay in Japan was fulfilling but it was cut short when Leniel's father became quite ill back in Mississippi.

By 1955 "Daddy Mac" had started to have symptoms of a serious illness. In 1957 Leniel requested and received an emergency leave to come back to visit his father. During this visit he came to the conclusion that his father would not live too much longer and felt it important to be fairly near should he pass on. Besides, he had been in the active service since 1940 and it was now time to consider retirement from the military, he was in his late fifties himself. His dad was seventy years old with rapidly deteriorating health.

LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS

He returned to Japan and immediately requested a return assignment to the States. By 1958 he had been assigned to duty in Little Rock, Arkansas, about 140 miles from Memphis, Tennessee where his dad was spending his hospital confinement. They returned to the US by ship and enjoyed a leisurely cross-country trip across the Northwestern States by car to Little Rock.

From the beginning of their school lives Eddie and Linda had been going to school in vastly different parts of the world. By the time they settled in Little Rock they had reached the elementary level and it was necessary for the school officials to evaluate their level of education. They were tested and placed at their proper levels in the Little Rock system.

It was after a few years stay in Little Rock Leniel decided that he wanted to retire from the military. After a family discussion about where they wanted to spend their retirement years it was unanimous; they all wanted to live in St Augustine, Florida. By 1962 property had been selected and purchased in St Augustine. They immediately left Little Rock, Arkansas.

1962-1989
ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA & YEARS OF RETIREMENT

Both Leniel and Frances became employees of the of St. Johns County school system. Leniel had for many years had back problems and it became necessary for him to have an operation on his back. In near-by Jacksonville there were good military hospitals and with his military record he was able to get the necessary medical attention at the Naval Air Station.

The family was also able to take advantage of the military commissaries in the vicinity as well. They found living in that part of Florida very pleasant. The children attended excellent public schools and were able to attend the Florida schools of higher learning.

As the years went by Leniel enjoyed coaching local Little League base ball , being active fishing in both fresh and salt waters, working on his property, playing golf and other physical activities. However he began to have difficulty with one of his hips and had to have a mechanical hip replacement. It served him well for a while but started giving him difficulty and had to have it replaced a second time. He also started having some trouble with his heart and became diabetic. He some difficulty with a torn retina in his eyes.

Eddie and Linda grew up, got married and provided their parents with grand children which the grandparents enjoyed very much. Both Frances and Leniel had always enjoyed playing duplicate bridge and St. Augustine provided them with many friends who also enjoyed the same past-time. They both became Life Master bridge players and were very active in local as well as out-of-town bridge tournaments. The club eventually built their own club house. Leniel was designated as the Club Director of their local bridge activities and tournaments.

After a rather full and eventful life he had a heart attack on March 9, 1989 at his home and the medics who rushed to his side were never able to revive him. He was 79 years old. He was honored with a full military ceremony and laid to rest in a cemetery there in St. Augustine. Frances remains at their same address and her son, Eddie, who lives in the area keeps in touch with her.