

# A new life

By  
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Probably by now, with the exception of my grandchildren, you all have learned more about my WW II service than you wanted to but I set out to recount it and it ends with this article.

When I left you I was on my way to Ft. Benning, Ga. for Officers Training School. It was designed to make an officer of us in ninety days. Nothing was mentioned about becoming a gentlemen as was the case in the movie.

The time was spent in hard physical training and basic education in the duties of an officer. We graduates were referred to as shave tails, or ninety day wonders. The darlings of the officer class were the West Point graduates which I guess was deserved because they spent four hard years earning their officer's bars.

We entered a whole new world where we were saluted instead of saluting, with our own quarters, dining facilities, special officers club, and many more privileges. I was still a green country boy who was suddenly elevated way above his raising.

As soon as I finished the Infantry School I was assigned to the Intelligence School. Why it was called this I don't know, because you didn't have to be that smart to get in as evidenced by my acceptance to the thing.

I was trained to be a Communications Officer, and since radios were not in use back then, we had to learn how to climb a telephone pole with those spike things on your legs learning the Morse Code, stringing telephone lines, and other things that I never had to do later because I had people who did all that.

When I completed this course, I was assigned to the 13<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division stationed at Southern Pines, North Carolina, where I became a Communication Officer in the 326<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry. We were trained to fly in one of those cloth-like kites with wings, which was a perfect target to shoot at on the way down, and usually wrecked itself when it landed.

Later on I completed jump school where against all laws of nature men jumped from high places, trusting in a piece of cloth to open and ease them to the ground. Looking back its hard for me to believe that I did all this because I never was completely at ease in an airplane; being like the old farmer who was talked into taking his first plane ride and when asked if he was scared said: "not really but I never did put all my weight down on it."

While there we did routine training while waiting to go into combat. I was in a couple of serious

wrecks that marked my face up some. Also I was in a special unit sent to Ft. Polk, La. where we experimented in a glider pick up exercise where by a plane with a hook on it snared a rope on the glider and jerked, and I mean jerked, us into the air. One thing stands out in my memory was when I was in the hospital on Xmas eve in 1944, a group of carolers came by my room and left me a gift. I have never received a more appreciated gift.

We were finally sent to Europe to relieve the troops trapped at Bastogne. We spent seven days crowded on a troop ship with the men sleeping on hammocks in the hole of the ship, foul air, sea sick, and with the plumbing stopped up. It was just about as bad as the slave ships that we have read about except there was no one with whips.

We landed at La Harve, France where we boarded cattle cars for Sens, France. We arrived at night where I was directed to the house that I was to stay in. Because of the black out and the fact that I did not know a word of French I thought I would never find it. It was my luck to be assigned a house with a German collaborator living there who not only had her hair cut off but had a swastika painted on it. I soon moved to the hotel.

The stay there was real pleasant with the exception that my job was to censor my boys letters sent back home. It was to keep the Germans from learning where we were. They knew where we were before we got off the ship. It was another of the many stupid things the brass caused us to have to do.

Since Bastogne was secure we were scheduled to jump across the Rhine River and take the Remagen Bridge. Patton beat us to it and so we were loaded on ships on our way to Japan which surrendered after the bombs were dropped. I have always thought that President Truman saved my life by having the guts to drop the bombs. If a situation like that arose today, and Congress had to make the decision, the bombs would never have been used regardless of the lives it might have saved.

When we reached the States I went to El Paso to have my face reworked, went to Mexico with my uncle, saw the bull fights, had lunch in a small Mexican town with a U.S. soldier who was in the last stages of alcoholism, spent a final three day fling in the Adolphus Hotel in Dallas, and on to Crockett.

In my advanced age I am a firm believer in fate. It had to be fate that guided me from a small East Texas town, all across the U.S. into foreign countries, kept me out of harms way, and let me end up less than a hundred miles from where I was born, to meet the person that I wanted to spend the rest of my life with.