PREFACE

This second volume of *Wake Forest University Faculty in WW II, Volume II*, unlike the first book*, provides personal experiences whereas the latter is a record of the veteran’s military assignments.

We’ve made efforts to get reports from all persons yet living and in a few cases reports from the kin of the deceased, but failed with a number of veterans. A list of others who served appears at the end of the book. Some one or more may be omitted; if so, we regret it.

The experiences are varied, some long, others short, but interesting. We feel they should be a significant contribution to posterity of the greatest war that man possibly has faced on this planet.

Several of the experiences herein may be found on the Web (Internet) as official U.S. Government writings or by interested writers.

The original information has been compiled into an album which is deposited with the Wake Forest University library. An album copy also is deposited in the archives of the Birthplace of Wake Forest College, Wake Forest, North Carolina. Both printings were sent to the public library in Winston-Salem.

*Wake Forest University Faculty in WW II.*

Compiled by
Herman J. Preseren,
Ltc., USAF Ret.
November, 11, 2003
1. In the spring of 1944 I was Group Photo Officer of the Tenth Photo Reconnaissance Group, stationed at Chalgrove base near Oxford, England. It was here that I had the opportunity of working with Dr. Harold Edgerton, inventor of strobe photo flash unit. He was assigned as technical adviser to our group to adapt his flash units for night aerial photography. The unit he had prepared for aerial use was huge - over three feet in diameter as I remember. We devised a mount for the bomb bay of the A-20 interconnections and firing circuits for our cameras. The unit produced about 200 million candle power in very short bursts. It produced effective photographs at 2000 feet and usable ones at 3000 feet. We already had flash bomb units which were used at 8000 feet, but these units were limited in effectiveness because few bombs could be carried, while the flash unit could produce up to 180 shots per mission.

We actually did very little night photography until the Battle of the Bulge, when it became critical. We were operating from Belgium then, and the Germans began moving most troops and supplies at night. There was heavy, low cloud cover which made flash bomb missions impossible. However, we ran a great many missions with the strobe flash unit in the Ardennes, and were able to pinpoint troop and supply movements and direct attacks on these German units.

2. While stationed in England the Tenth Photo Group routinely covered harbors, railroads and highways, marshalling yards and bridges. A major chore was to provide bomb damage assessment (BDA). We also routinely covered the beaches and our interpreters evaluated the German reinforcements. Our photographs were vertical shots from 10-20 thousand feet.

In the Spring of 1944 we were asked to devise means of making low level - on the deck - coverage of the beaches. We took a P-38 and cut ports in the nose for oblique mounted cameras. I spent two days at Farnborough, the British equivalent of our Wright Field, examining sheet after sheet of plate glass trying to find some without optical flaws which would distort the images. I found enough for our modified planes and a series of low level
photo sorties of the Normandy beaches was run one month before D-Day. Actually missions were flown from Holland all the way down to the Spanish border, so that the Germans would not note any emphasis on the Normandy beaches, but only the missions over the Normandy beaches were the cameras loaded with film. The pictures revealed the mined pilings, Belgian matting, steel barricades and gun emplacements, and were used for mock-ups used in maneuvers by the invading forces.

3. The Tenth Photo Group moved across France and later Germany in a series of hops. We continued to cover harbors, marshalling yards, etc. and to provide bomb damage assessment, but now one of our major tasks was to provide aerial reconnaissance for the Third Army. On a number of occasions I had to brief General Patton. I had great respect for his ability to use aerial reconnaissance to good advantage. When we were stationed at St. Dizier we were running short of supplies because we were out-running the supply activities. Patton was screaming for more cover which we were having to curtail. When he asked what could be done regarding supplies, I told him of a supply officer at the main supply depot near Liverpool who was a notorious lush. Patton was told that if we had a cargo plane and some liquor we could go out of channels and get our supplies. He immediately assigned us a DC-3 which he had for paratroop operations, and a truck load of cognac and other liquors his troops had captured. I made two trips to Liverpool and came back with two plane loads of supplies and needed equipment without signing for any of it. I went back for a third load but received orders diverting the plane for a paratroop operation. I was stranded in Liverpool, with instructions to proceed to London and get on a London-Paris shuttle as soon as possible. I checked in each morning to see if a flight were available, and, if not, I was free until the next morning. It was only after three days that I was able to get to Paris where my outfit was to pick me up. Heavy weather set in and it was another two days before I got back to my outfit. So thanks to General Patton we got our critical supplies, and I got three days free leave in London and two in Paris.
Eugene Pendleton Banks, Cdr., U. S. Navy, Ret.
The Voyage of LCT 765

LCT 765 sailed from Dartmouth on the south coast of England during the evening of June 3, 1944. We carried a crew of 15, housed in comfortable, if crowded, bunks. We were proud of having our own galley, which served up hot meals and gallons of coffee at all hours. We had our own diesel generators and plenty of electric lights in all interior spaces, which were windowless. Of course every time an outside door opened, the lights went out. We got used to it.

Soon after we cleared the river mouth we watched a British ML, a fast torpedo boat, burn and sink. No one knew whether the fire was started by enemy action, but the sight made our lookouts very alert as the sun set.

Our cargo included 17 jeeps, trailers and personnel carriers, and 57 officers and enlisted men of the 42nd Field Artillery Battalion. The commanding officer, an experienced and scholarly looking lieutenant colonel, shared our officers' quarters and spent hours at my desk poring over aerial photos of Utah Beach, where he was scheduled to land on D-Day. I had told him that we would try to make his men as comfortable as we could, but that we would run short of water if they all took showers. He gently reminded me that it would be a long time before they had a chance to shower again, while we surely would be able to replenish our fresh water supply. I had to agree.

We were in a convoy, or rather an endless series of convoys, that stretched from horizon to horizon as some 5000 ships converged on an area in the middle of the English Channel known by the code name "Piccadilly Circus," from which channels would lead to the five invasion beaches -- Gold, Juno, Sword, Omaha and Utah. We were scheduled to land our artillerymen about four hours after the first wave of infantry and DD tanks--tanks equipped with canvas shrouds that were supposed to keep them afloat for several hundred yards between ship and beach--landed on the beach. All of this was supposed to happen the morning of June 5, which had been
chosen as the date for D-Day.

We knew all this because a few days earlier all the LCT skippers had been assembled along with the COs of many other ships in a vast auditorium at the Royal Naval College in Dartmouth and briefed on Operation Neptune, the naval part of Operation Overlord. When I saw the chart on the stage with all the channels clearly leading to the coast of France I felt a thrill of fear mixed with excitement; it was the only time in my life when I literally felt my knees shaking. Our reward for attending this momentous gathering was to be confined to our ships until we sailed to Normandy. We spent long hours studying the operation order, which covered every detail of the gigantic operation, down to the fact that "traffic on the Continent will drive to the right." I could imagine the pleasure with which that line was written by some American staff officer who had spent a year in England driving to the left.

It was tedious work "keeping station"—holding position—in the convoy in the darkness; the only lights showing were dim "tail lights" on each ship that cast a dim, phosphorescent glow on the ship's wake. I stayed on the conning tower all night, calling directions to the helmsman in the wheelhouse below through a shiny copper voice tube. I could see the gun crews wrapped in blankets, napping in the tubs that held our entire armament: two 20mm anti-aircraft guns.

At 8 a.m., with the prominent lighthouse on Portland Bill broad on the port beam, I surrendered the conn to Ensign Herbert Benton, my executive officer, and went below to eat breakfast and take a nap.

"What's going on?" I asked.
"D-Day has been postponed," said Benton. "We got a radio message."

Soon after that, we turned 180 degrees again, and passed Portland bill for the third time that day. We anchored with many other ships in the bay just outside the entrance to Portland-Weymouth harbor, and when we got underway again about 4 a.m. there was a lot of confusion. We followed a strange ship that seemed to be headed in the right direction until a fast little control craft found us and ushered us to the correct location in the convoy.

The night of June 5/6 found us creeping along a channel marked by buoys bearing very dim lights. I soon realized to my
horror that both lines of buoys were slipping by to starboard; we were outside the channel and therefore probably in a mine field. A strong current was pushing us off to the left, so after we regained the channel we had to stop steering for the ship ahead and establish our own heading. It gave us something to think about, rather than worrying about the German planes and E-boats we expected to encounter any minute.

Suddenly it was daylight and we had anchored in the transport area, some 14 miles offshore. Big swells lifted and lowered our ship in a regular rhythm and we were aware that some of the soldiers were suffering from seasickness. We could hear—even feel in the vibrating air—the deep thunder of the bombardment of shore targets being carried out by American and British battleships, cruisers and destroyers. I knew that as commander of a “wave” of five LCTs it was up to me to get the other ships under way at the right time. It would be necessary to leave the anchorage area at least two hours before we were scheduled to hit the beach. I was pessimistic about my ability to persuade the other skippers to get moving in time.

When the time came, a control craft came around and led us toward the beach. It was cloudy and hazy and we could not see the shore for a long time, so we steered a compass course. As it turned out, by the time we arrived within sight of the beach the operation had lagged behind schedule—we learned later that some of the DD tanks had problems with their flotation equipment and sank almost as soon as launched from LCTs. One of the key control ships had been sunk also and had to be replaced by a tiny control craft. Further, the first wave was swept off course by a current and Utah Beach ended up a mile south of its proper location. That was a stroke of luck, since a heavily fortified strong point occupied the intended location, but it meant that we couldn’t recognize any of the landmarks we had carefully memorized from the intelligence photos that had come with the operation order.

When we got the signal to proceed to the beach I sent a signal to my wave: “Follow me.” I was annoyed to see that the other ships took the message literally and were steaming along in single file astern. Another signal persuaded them to form a proper line abreast and we all reached the beach at the same time.

Utah Beach had a very shallow gradient, which meant that we ran aground while still a couple of hundred feet from dry land. We had been through the drill many times: we would lower the bow ramp part way and the boatswain, an 18 year old from Pennsylvania
named Sporer, would run out and take a couple of soundings with a black and white measuring pole. If the water was not too deep for the vehicles—all of which had been ingeniously waterproofed and supplied with plastic tube extensions for the air intakes and exhaust pipes, so that theoretically a jeep could drive with everything but the driver’s head under water—the ramp would be lowered all the way and I would give the signal to the soldiers to disembark.

It went according to the book. Sporer waved to me and I waved to the lieutenant colonel and gave him a heartfelt salute. The vehicles began to leave the ship. About that time I became aware that we were under artillery fire. Every few minutes a salvo of five or six shells would fall precisely along the line where our ships were—we learned later that the Germans had range tables calibrated by the tide tables, so that they knew exactly where landing craft would be at a given time. Fortunately the shells were falling neatly between the ships, erupting in gray plumes of smoke, sand and water. I suddenly felt exposed and vulnerable, protected on the conning tower only by a layer of painted canvas. I saw one of the artillery officers sprawled on the hood of a jeep; he had lost his helmet and his head was bloody. The jeep drove on through the shallow water.

Time stood still. As I awaited for the 17 vehicles to disembark I could see everything that was happening on the ship—the gun crews manning their guns, the boatswain and his bow detail waiting to raise the ramp, the anchor detail standing by to retract the stern anchor that would help pull us off the beach. I even had time to be annoyed to see that the cook, who was supposed to stay in the galley, ready to treat any casualties, was standing on deck, craning his neck to see the action.

As soon as we pulled off the beach, I went below to get a cup of coffee and chew out the cook for leaving his station. He didn’t say a word but just pointed to a row of holes in the side of the galley. Shrapnel had gone through the 3/8 inch mild steel plating with ease. I observed that an electric fan had been destroyed, and we fished shell fragments out of our supply of flour and sugar for several days. I made the best of it and congratulated him on his good judgment in disobeying my orders. We counted heads and learned that no one had been hit, although Sporer’s life jacket had been torn by shell fragments while he was standing on the ramp.

Ensign George Kress, one of the other skippers, was slow to
get off the beach. We stood off and offered to help but he declined. It turned out that shrapnel had cut the fuel line on his anchor engine. Someone thought fast, bent the soft copper tubing at an angle, plunged the broken end in a can of gasoline and cranked up the engine. I had thought about what to do in such a contingency and had made up my mind that the best thing would be to cut the anchor cable and abandon the anchor. We kept an axe standing by just in case, and all of the ships carried a spare anchor.

I remember nothing about the return trip to the anchorage area, nor do I remember what cargo we carried on our second run of the day. I had a folding chair passed up to the conning tower and sat in it, suddenly feeling very tired. On the way to the beach in the late afternoon we saw the bow half of LCT 777 floating upside down in the shallow water. Later we learned that the 777 had hit a mine and broken in two; the skipper, my friend and roommate at midshipman’s school, Ensign Winfield Nelms Kyle of Richmond, Virginia, was blown off the conning tower and died of his injuries afterward.

Ironically, our respected flotilla commander, Lieutenant Commander Vernon R. Y. Lynn, a New York lawyer and yachtsman, had selected the 777 as his flagship because of its lucky number. Fortunately on D-Day he was riding on a control craft, but he lost all of his personal belongings on the 777.

As soon as I learned of the death of Nelms Kyle I remembered with stunning clarity the day he and I arrived at the Amphibious Training Base at Solomons, Maryland, and were waiting for the interview that would determine our assignments. We fell into conversation with the yeoman at the desk. He said ten officers would be interviewed and that the first eight would become supply officers on LSTs and the last two would be assigned as LCT skippers. Nelms and I quickly made up our minds that being an LCT skipper sounded a lot more interesting than the alternative. We asked the yeoman to put our file cards at the bottom of the stack. We got the LCT assignments.

I think about that incident every time someone revives the old debate about free will versus determination. Did we in fact freely choose our destiny, or was it inevitable that we would choose the more exciting assignment? What chain of causality determined that the 777 and not the 765 would hit the mine? Was it all a matter of pure chance? The questions still haunt me.

(To be continued)
Ensign Pen Banks at the left and his fourteen man crew

The LCT 765 had her keel laid on 12 November 1943 and was delivered to the U.S. Navy on 8 January, 1944. She participated under the skipper, Ensign Pendeton Banks in Flotilla No. 17 with 45 other LCTs at Utah Beach, D-Day, June 1944 under the command of Cdr, R. Carey Fabian.

A profile of an LCT, landing craft
Harold M. Barrow, Spec. A, 1/c (T), U. S. Navy

My experience in World War II was unique. As a civilian, I had been a high school teacher and coach in my hometown of Fulton, Missouri. As this saga begins, I had, perhaps, the best high school basketball team in the state and was looking forward to post-season games and a possible state title. At this point in the late winter of 1943, I wanted to finish the basketball season but was working on my vita to present to the Naval Commission in St. Louis and volunteer for officer training. Despite being married and the father of one child, I was drafted before I could carry out these plans and received my assignment in St. Louis to NTS Farragut, Idaho, up in a great forest on a lake.

What happened to me when I arrived at the huge naval station may have been unusual. On arrival I requested to see the commander of the naval station in order to present my vita which I had prepared in hopes of receiving officer training. He looked over my vita, congratulated me on my past educational and civilian record and, on the spot, designed a role for me which included all the "musts" as he described such duties as marching in parades, etc. but excluded my participation in other aspects of duty during the training period. The commander encouraged me to pretty much choose how I spent my time. I chose to use the library a great deal as well as the gymnasium and swimming pool and found this regimen a productive way to spend my time.

When the platoon had finished its training, I had a different assignment from the group. After the usual furlow of 15 days, my orders were tp proceed to Bainbridge, Maryland where high school and college coaches were being trained for duty in the various naval units around the country. I felt that I was where I belonged. When I finished my training at Bainbridge, I was ordered to report to Navy Dry Dock, Hunters Point, in the San Francisco, CA area. I was in San Francisco for one year after which I was sent to the Navy’s Rehabilitation School for four weeks. From there I was sent to the U. S. Navy hospital, Seattle, Washington, where I remained until the end of the war when I reported to the Naval Personnel Separation Center, Bremerton, for honorable discharge.
Merrill G. Berthrong, Captain, Army Air Corps

Favorite Stories from my Dad
Peter Berthrong

For many years my Dad, Merrill Berthrong, never discussed the war. As a boy I can remember going into the attic and finding a leather flight jacket, full dress uniform and a box with an Air Medal. But he just shrugged off my findings in that era (1950s).

After he retired from Wake Forest University in 1989 and as we spent time together in his retirement heaven in Prospect Harbor, Maine, the stories started to be told. In time we were able to attend a reunion of the 44th Bomb Group in Norfolk, Virginia. In about 1998 after he saw my interest in his stories and the shared memberships we had in the associations of the Bomb Group, the 2nd Air Division and the 8th Air Force, he presented to me a box that was a gold mine; my Grandmother had saved all the letters he wrote home from the time he left for air cadet training until his return from Europe in 1945.

Merrill passed away this past January on the 14th. As we started to go through the various boxes of paper my niece, Dawn Berthrong, noticed a curious coincidence. The date of his death was exactly 60 years, to the day, that he received his wings and commission in the U.S. Army Air Corps! Also I found a bundle of letters from him to my great-aunt sent during the war. So the stories will keep on coming for some time yet.

Enlistment

Think of the great social changes that happened during WWII. Dad enlisted at about the same time that he graduated from Tufts College in 1942. He was told to stand by for orders on when to report for transport for his basic training. He took a job as an usher in a movie theater just to relieve the boredom; he couldn't get a "real" job because of his pending departure. Later he found the true reason for the delay, which lasted from May to August. As a future "officer and gentleman" he had to be transported by sleeper car and not just in coach. As there was a shortage of sleeper cars due to wartime needs, this group of potential cadets in the Boston area had
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Training

After all the training phases in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Arkansas he received his wings. That entitled him to go to Langley Field near Norfolk, VA to learn the vagaries of the B-24 bomber. After this training he and his pilot (Dad was a co-pilot at this time) were assigned to submarine patrol off the Northeast Coast flying out of Fort Dix, New Jersey. At first it was hard to get assignments and they often flew whatever they could find just to get the required hours for their flight pay. His pilot, James (Oggie) Bolin, was checking Dad out for the B-25, a two engined bomber (the one that Doolittle used to attack Tokyo). As they were doing the repetitious take-offs and landings, Dad
lined up for take-off and the nose wheel collapsed. Years later he tells me that Oggie said, "Get out and head for the woods; they'll never find us!", but I think he was pulling my leg on that one!

Imagine the thrill of flying anti-sub patrol in near proximity to your parents' house (well, within 30 miles). So Dad and Oggie took a little unauthorized excursion over Boston and Dad gets to do a buzz over the house in Somerville. Well, Oggie was pretty disappointed. "You call that a buzz job, let me show you how a buzz is really done!" According to family legend there were stories in the Boston papers the next day about the antics of a 4-engine bomber flying low over civilian areas. The sad part was that my grandparents were both at work and missed the spectacle.

The Trip Over

As was the custom the crew and plane went together flying either a northern route over Maine, Canada, Labrador, Greenland, Ireland to Scotland or a very long and difficult southern route through Puerto Rico, Brazil, West Africa and into Southern England. My Dad and crew had the northern route. They got as far as Goose Bay, Labrador before being weathered in. Now the Air Corps took care of filling the plane with essentials needed in England so they already had a full complement of extra, new engines, cases of toilet paper and many other items as cargo. And every day on the ground at Goose Bay meant that each of the crew of 10 would get a six-pack or so of Coke bottles and cigarette rations from the Red Cross. So every day the weight of the plane was creeping up. Finally, Oggie told Dad he was going to ask permission to take-off and not fly along
with the group of B-17s they were assigned to. They received permission. The take-off run was the thrill of a young man's life! Two or three times they tried to get the lumbering "flying boxcar" off the runway and it would slowly lift the nose-wheel and then settle back down. As the trees approached at the end of the field Oggie said "Bert, we will pull together and get this thing off; One, two, up!" They staggered 50 feet into the air and over the trees. Dad said it was at least three hours before they managed to get any decent altitude.

The Rookies

Assigned to somebody's Coastal Command, the Bolin crew flew anti-submarine patrols over the Bay of Biscay. Leaving from the Southampton area in Southern England they would fly off the coast of France maintaining strict radio silence. They would then go as far as the coast of Spain before turning back to England. This amounted to hours and hours of boring flying with very little to see or do.

For entertainment they would deliberately approach the coast of Spain. Supposedly the Spanish anti-aircraft gunners were quite inept, so the sport for the US airmen was to taunt them into firing and then circle away for the return. One day on the return trip they saw a fishing boat out in the Bay of Biscay; apparently a very unusual sight because of wartime conditions. All ten of the crew were looking at the boat instead of maintaining their normal combat vigilance. So they never saw the JU-88 sweep out of the clouds above them and make a pass. Two engines on one side were hit. The JU-88 came
back for another pass but chose not to close in as the gunners were now at their stations. Unfortunately, the radioman forgot his training and broadcast an uncoded Mayday with position information.

Some would maintain (like the B-17 pilots) that a B-24 does not fly well on four engines but all would agree it does not want to fly well at all with two out on the same wing. In fact, it likes to fly in a big circle. So Oggie and Bert had to both stand on the rudder pedals to keep the plane pointed to England. They had to apply so much pressure, literally standing on the rudder, that after 30-40 minutes they would have to take a break and massage their leg muscles while the plane flew a circle. So back to England they crept.

In England the RAF had picked up the Mayday call. They knew that the Germans had heard the same message. So the RAF scrambled a group of fighters to intercept the expected German attackers. Apparently there was an air battle that raged somewhere between the crippled plane and the French coast, but the crew of the plane did not know this. They finally made it back to England where something hit the fan as they say. Oggie, Bert and crew received quite a dressing down for that incident but I can't find any evidence that it was recorded on their "permanent" record.

**Shipdham**

Sometime around October of 1943 the Navy took over the anti-submarine patrols. The remaining aircraft and crews were assigned to other units. Oggie, Bert and crew went to the 8th Air Force, 44th Heavy Bomb Group based in Shipdham, East Anglia, near Norwich. (In fact,
in 1991 Dad and I made a trip to visit this still-existing airfield.) This was one of the famous early groups in the war. The commander, Leon Johnson, received the Medal of Honor for his leadership in the August, 1943 raid on Ploesti, Rumania. By the time Oggie, Bert and crew received their additional training, etc. and were put into rotation it was November 16, 1943. They flew 2 missions as a crew in the 44th but had received 5 mission credits for their anti-submarine patrols.

**Tragedy**

In February of 1944 tragedy befell the Bolin crew. Oggie was due for promotion to Captain but there were no positions available in the 66th squadron where the crew was assigned. So, as bureaucracies everywhere function, the powers that be told Bolin that he should transfer to the 506th squadron, fly a few missions, get his promotion and then transfer back to the 66th. On one of these missions, one that was supposed to be a "milk-run" to Watten, the plane crashed on return killing the entire crew. Sadly enough, Dad was among the attendees as Lieutenant James (Oggie) Bolin was laid to rest in the American at Brookwood. In 1948 Bolin was re-interred at the American Military Cemetery at Maddingly near Cambridge. In 1991 we visited this hallowed ground and I was profoundly influenced by my Dad's reactions that day. I started to realize what great friends they had become in their brief year together.

**Generals**

After losing Oggie the crew pretty much was dispersed to
other crews and assignments. Dad flew a number of missions with different crews. One day he thought he was getting the day off. A General bumped him from the co-pilot seat to lead the formation from this aircraft. But then Dad was told that the tail gunner would stay at home while Dad would assume that position. He was told the reason: "The General wants to speak to an officer on the intercom, not an enlisted man. The General will be asking important questions about how the formation looks behind us and so forth." So Dad flew as a tail-gunner. I think he was more relieved that he did not shoot any of our own planes down than he was when the mission proved to be fairly quiet. He told me many times that he had no idea of what to do with that gun.

Coming Home

After a number of missions Dad was sort of grounded. He had become close to the commander of the 66th squadron, Spencer Hunn, later General Hunn. Spencer told Dad that he was too valuable to be flying routine missions and he wanted him to be the Operations Officer for the squadron. It was quite a deal since it kept him out of the combat zone and got him a promotion to Captain. But it was not the end of boring flying because one of his duties was slow flying planes that had maintenance performed on the engines. Since he was not increasing his mission count he was not eligible to return to the States until after VE day. After the European war ended he was flown back to Bradley Field in Connecticut, given a 30-day leave and told to report to his new station in the midwest after his leave. He was to receive transition training for the B-29. He used his 30 days wisely, marrying his fiancée, Geraldine Brock and then the two of them left for the midwest. They lived in
Great Bend, Kansas until September of 1945 when he was sent home pending discharge.

Citizen Soldier

My hero was and is my Dad. He was such a man of peace that it always was amazing to me that he played such a role during the war. But I have met a great number of other men just like him and in hearing or reading their stories I realize that he is simply another member of what Tom Brokaw calls "The Greatest Generation". It is a great honor for me to participate in this project and to keep his memory alive. Thank you all for your service.

1 For a full telling of this tale see Ruthless and Far From Home by Kevin Watson published in 2000, for which my Dad provided many interviews.
Charles. S. Black, Colonel, U, S, Air Force

Colonel Black was born in 1895 and at the age of 22 enlisted into the U. S. Army as a private during World War I. He was shipped to France with the American Expeditionary Force as a medical corpsman. As a private in France, Black remembered that he was slow getting back from overseas. He was working in a hospital and "it seemed we were to take care of everybody until the expeditionary force returned to the United States." He became inactive in July, 1919.

He was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in February 1928 at the time he was a professor of chemistry at Wake Forest College and due a PhD degree from the University of Wisconsin the same year. He served on active duty during intermittent summers until called to duty prior to World War II as a Captain. His knowledge of chemistry kept, now Major Black, at the Edgewood Arsenal in Maryland and Ft. Benning, Georgia. He returned to civilian life as a Major, but continued serving in the Reserves in the Army and later in the Air Force. He retired as a Colonel November 1955. At Wake Forest College he coordinated the ROTC program with academic affairs. His total military service approximately amounted to twenty-eight years.
I was accepted as an aviation cadet, December 4, 1942. After graduation from flight training, I primarily flew B-17 and B-29 aircraft. Our crew had combat training at Pratt AFB (KS) in the 346th Bomb Group. The group flew to Okinawa in early August, 1945, but the use of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki saved us from having to drop conventional bombs on Japan. However, our Squadron and my crew did participate in the largest B-29 force ever to fly over Tokyo, a massive show of force during the signing of the peace treaty on the USS Missouri, September 2, 1945. I remained on Okinawa and other places in the Pacific until August, 1946, flying B-29s and C-46 cargo aircraft and instructing heavy-aircraft pilots in light L-5 type aircraft to ease their transition to civilian life and commercial aviation.

Some of the highlights of the Okinawan experience included seeing and hearing General Jimmie Doolittle speak when he came to the air base, and on a visit to Tokyo seeing General McArthur and General Eisenhower together as they passed in a staff car. During the L-5 instructing, I occasionally landed on the small, by then deserted, island of Io Shima where the journalist Ernie Pyle was killed.

I was discharged from active duty and the Army Air Corps, September, 1946. I rejoined the newly organized Air Force as a reservist and was recalled to active duty during the Korean War, 1951-1955. I flew mostly cargo aircraft and trainers, but had some exposure to single-engine jets. My principal post-war duty was as an instructor in the AFROTC program (Assistant Professor of Air Science, North Texas State College, 1951-1953; University of Miami, 1953-1955). I remained in the Air Force Reserve until 1968.

A Pacific Typhoon

One of the most memorable experiences of my service in the Pacific Theater in WW II occurred during a typhoon in the fall of 1945. I had gone to the island of Tinian in the Marianas as part of a crew taking a B-29 which was going back to the states. While waiting for a ride back to Okinawa, I was assigned to help
Operations as the typhoon approached and spent most of the day outside in the wind and rain.

When the weather finally got better, I caught a flight back to Kadena, Okinawa, where my squadron was based, and arrived just in time to go through the whole thing again! This time was better, however, since I was with my crew and other friends, although some of the details may be worth mentioning.

At the time this storm reached us, the entire squadron, both officers and enlisted men were living in tents. We did not yet have Quonset Huts or other permanent buildings and this particular storm was one of the most violent on record. The mimeographed history of the unit states that all of the enlisted men's tents except one were blown away, while only five survived in the officers' area. This coincides with my memory since I recall when daylight came seeing only four or five still standing and ours was one of these. I also remember that we spent the entire day and night pretty wet since loose-fitting raincoats didn't help much in the strong winds. We hardly noticed, however, since we spent most of our time driving in tent stakes and replacing broken ropes. Many people lost a good deal of clothing, and everything that was saved was thoroughly soaked. Still, no one was hurt, so we counted ourselves lucky.

Mr. Samuel Hynes, later a professor of English at Princeton, was a Marine pilot on Okinawa at the same time, but stationed a little further down below Kadena at Awase. He described the storm in the following way: (Note that his unit had Quonset huts.) The selection is from Flights of Passage: Reflections of a World War II Aviator, (N.Y. 1988).
We woke one morning in late September to the sound of wind, the tent flapping, guy wires whistling. It was the typhoon season in the China Sea, and a storm was moving up from Formosa. Aerology said it would reach us in the early afternoon, but it never did, quite, though the edge of the storm that we got was violent, howling, and wet. It broke up some of our planes and beached some small boats; but we rode it out all right, our tent survived intact, and the squadron planes were repaired in a couple of days. Once the sky had cleared and we had dried out, we felt rather proud of ourselves, coming through a typhoon so easily—we were seasoned, Old China hands.

Three weeks later the real storm hit us. It began in the night, with a long, drenching rain; and then the wind began, driving the rain horizontally, with the force of buckshot. We closed and tied down the tent flaps and walked down to breakfast, leaning into the hard, punishing wind, hunched down in our foul-weather clothes. Afterward we sat in the tent, trying to think of what we could do, to be ready. This one was going to be a fierce one, and Aerology predicted that the eye of the storm would pass directly over the island. Already rain was driving in around the tent flaps. We went out into the gale and nailed the flaps to the frame. But still the rain came in, until the wooden floor was slick with mud and drops of water covered the blankets of our bunks like a fine dew. In the bookcase the books warped and swelled. The electric light flickered, brightened, and went out. Somebody stopped at the door to tell us that the anemometer on the control tower was registering a hundred knots when it blew away. The wind was strong enough by then to peel sheets of corrugated tin off the Quonset hut roofs and hurl them through the air like whirling machetes. It could snatch up a tent and whip it off into the storm, and then tear away the plywood flooring and send it spinning after.

Visibility was down to a few yards—our world was our own tent and the Executive Officer’s tent next door. Then his world opened in the air like a parachute and disappearing downwind. The Exec grabbed what he could save and started toward us, and as we watched his progress through the storm the entire plywood floor lifted behind him and struck him to the ground. The giant Ed plunged out into the wind, lifted flooring, and carried the Exec into our tent. He lay for an hour on a bunk, unconscious, while the wind howled and the rain came in. There was no way of getting him to a doctor, or a doctor to him.

The force of the wind had separated the threads of the canvas in the tent roof without tearing it, and you could stand inside the tent and look up and see a dim light from the sky. Rain soaked in, everything was wet—our beds, our clothing, all the books—the very air inside the tent was a mist of rain. But the tent still stood. We would not have been much worse off without it, but it seemed important that we should win against the storm. The guy wires twanged, and the tent shifted on its pilings; but it stood. It was still a tent and not a scrap of blown canvas; it was the place we had made for ourselves.

When the weather cleared, ours was the only tent in sight. Where the others had stood there were only the pilings of floors and a few tent pegs. The Quonset hut where we had built our bar had slid down the hill twenty or thirty feet, and lay there at an angle, like a ship aground. The squadron buildings—supply tents, repair facilities, ready room, Operations—were all gone. Of our twenty-four planes, only six were flyable, and some of the others were beyond repair. The airstrip was littered with wrecked planes and rubble. Along the edge of the bay, naval vessels and flying boats were beached, some of them wrecked. All communication lines were down; the east coast of the island could not reach the west coast, and we couldn’t even speak to our flight line. The island was once more like a battlefield, the scene of battle fought against wind and rain. But there was an odd exhilaration in the experience; officers and men had mot together into the mess hall and were sleeping there on the table and on the floor, and there was only food enough for two meals a day, but nobody complained. The violence of nature was some how amiable compared to the violence of war, even though ten men had died in the storm. To survive a war, and then typhoons—there was a kind of immortality in that.
Julian C. Burroughs, Jr.  Staff-Sergeant, U, S, Army

There is no one or two experiences that stand out above others. In my case - an 18-year-old just out of high school - the whole tour in Korea was interesting. As I look back, we were the original "peace-keepers." Our mission was to keep the peace between North and South Korea and to help South Korea get back on its feet in the period immediately after the end of World War II. We were the "forgotten soldiers" during the years before the "forgotten war", the Korean War. Korea was at the end of the supply line for American troops, and we were short of men and supplies. At one point our company was down to about 80 men. No doubt it was the knowledge that United States forces were so inadequately prepared that prompted North Korea to invade the South in 1950.

Also, as the United States soldiers would find out during the Korean War, Korea was very cold. I remember standing for hours in the snow, waiting to be shipped to our camp, and spending the night in a silk factory with icicles hanging over our bunks. When we arrived at our base in January of 1947, it was several days before we had heat because our stove pipes hadn’t been installed in the Quonset huts. Unlike in Europe, the overseas destination everyone preferred, we could not go into town and eat at local restaurants because the food was unsuitable for our digestive systems. Of course, our deprivation was nothing compared to the sacrifices made by American servicemen once the Korean conflict started. At least we weren’t getting shot at. And once we got used to our situation, we actually got along pretty well. I wouldn’t take anything for the experience.

We were "The Boys of Korea" in in the United States Occupation (1945-1950), and some anonymous poet pretty well summed up how we felt about ourselves and our situation.
THE BOYS OF KOREA

We are the boys of Korea,
Earning our meagre pay.
Guarding millions for others,
At a dollar-sixty a day.

Way out on the wind-swept mountains
Korea is the spot,
Fighting honey cart odors
In the land that God forgot.

Way out on the wind-swept mountains
Here is where boys get blue;
Out with lice and lizards,
Ten thousand miles from you.

All night the wind keeps howlin--
It's more than we can stand;
Dear folks we aren't conceited,
We're defenders of our land.

For many years we must stay
And for many years we'll miss;
So don't let a draft board get you.
And for goodness sakes don't enlist.

We spend all our leisure time
Writing to our folks and gals;
And hope that they won't marry,
Especially to our pals.

We have washed a million dishes,
We have peeled as many spuds,
Our hands are sore and blistered,
From all our dirty duds.

When this life of ours is over
And we will slave no more,
We will do our final parade
On that bright and golden shore.

There Saint Peter will greet us
And suddenly he will yell:
"Come in Boys of Korea
You've spent you time in hell."
Wallace Carroll, U.S. Office of War Information

Although not a military man, Wallace Carroll, nevertheless, played an important part during World War II as a member of the United States Office of War Information in London and an adviser to General Dwight Eisenhower on psychological warfare. Later, during the Vietnam conflict he was instrumental, with a newspaper editorial, in moving President Lyndon Johnson toward ending the war. After his retirement from the Winston-Salem Journal-Sentinel, Carroll taught in Wake Forest University’s Department of Politics.

His famous editorial on the Vietnam War made an indelible impact on President Lyndon Johnson and his most important administrators. Wallace once told me that after the editorial he received a phone call from his good friend, Dean Acheson, a former Secretary of State, asking in a friendly tone, “What do you in Winston-Salem know that we in Washington do not?”

On the following two pages we copy a story by a Winston-Salem Journal editor in his introduction to, and reprinting of Wallace Carroll’s famous March 17, 1968 editorial.
"We can make our way back to our true role in the world"

It's not often that a newspaper editorial changes the mind of a president. It's even rarer if the newspaper is a small regional daily, such as the Winston-Salem Journal. On March 17, 1968, the Journal ran a long editorial written by Wallace Carroll, its editor and publisher, that questioned the country's continued involvement in Vietnam. Its clarity, unqualified logic and powerful prose helped persuade President Lyndon Johnson to seek peace negotiations and to bow out of the presidential election.

Dean Acheson, a former secretary of state and the chief architect of the country's Cold War policy, handed the editorial to Johnson and watched him read it. He also was a hawk, as was Wallace Carroll, his friend.

"Dean certainly gave me the impression that it had an effect on the president," Carroll said. "The important thing is that here was a small provincial newspaper which had an effect on a major position. Of course, we didn't get out of the war, but we had an effect on the president which started him to move in that direction."

McGeorge Bundy, another of the president's men, was as impressed as his boss. "I do think I can say, looking back, that this editorial stands as an eloquent summary of the kind of thinking which came to the president from a lot of the people he consulted in that month," he wrote to a reporter, who was writing a profile of Carroll in 1973. "All-out critics of the war might say that the editorial came late, and its all-out defenders might say that it should not have come at all. But I am one of those who think that it came at the right time, said most of the right things and said them in the right way. In that sense it was a remarkable editorial — but only par for Wallace Carroll."

Here, then, is the most famous editorial to ever run in the Journal, Vietnam Quo Vadis.

What will best serve the national interest of the United States? That is the guts of the problem in Vietnam. Will we advance our national interest by prolonging and enlarging the war? Or will we simply advance the interest of the Soviet Union and Communist China? If we now make a cool appraisal and find that the war is actually making the world safe for Communism, we will have to open our minds to hard, new decisions.

1. How did we get bogged down like this in Vietnam? Did we go in as part of a considered strategic plan? No, there was no long-range plan. No responsible American ever suggested in advance that we would tie down our first team in an unending war against the Communist fourth team in their kind of fighting, in a place where we can do no real harm to the main forces of Communism. We slipped into a war that grew bigger than we ever expected. And we floundered deeper and deeper in the jungle as we talked emotionally about the containment of Communism. We slipped into a war that grew bigger than we ever expected. And we floundered deeper and deeper in the jungle as we talked emotionally about the containment of Communism.

2. The dominoes are falling all right while we remain hypnotized by Vietnam. Look at the Middle East. Iraq, with its precious oil fields . . . has come under Soviet influence. So have Syria and Egypt . . . Algeria . . . Cyprus . . . While we keep our minds and energies concentrated on Vietnam, Soviet power is flowing silently, relentlessly into the Middle East and the Mediterranean.

3. Soviet power is also flowing into the Red Sea and all the way down to the Indian Ocean . . . Make no mistake about it: These moves are aimed at us . . .

4. Now look at Europe. The Grand Alliance of NATO is falling apart . . . The Soviet and West German governments are beginning to feel each other out. If they make a deal . . . the whole game of dominoes will be over. If that happens, we Americans can come home and play solitaire.

5. Next consider the agony of the dollar under the pressures of the Vietnam war. Remember, the dollar is more than money — it is a powerful weapon in the arsenal of the free world against the forces of disorder. If the dollar should collapse, trade would contract, factories slow down, jobs disappear, people go hungry.

6. At home, the war poisons our national life and our personal lives and keeps us from dealing boldly with the dying needs of our society . . . The racial revolution . . . gathering pace in the inexorable way of all revolutions . . . It has moved from the courts and the legislatures to the streets from the paths of legality and persuasion to the ways of violence. This nation still has the wealth and the wisdom, the compassion and the character to hold this revolution within bounds. But will it do so? The answer is doubtful as long as we pour $3 billion a year and so much of our national energy in the bottomless pit of Vietnam.

7. Most of our young people are deeply, honestly troubled. They do not understand this war . . . Can we afford to have their idealism turn to scorn, their faith in American democracy turn to cynicism.

8. The revulsion against the war by these young people, and other decent American is opening another danger. For the first time since Stalin's heyday, the Communists are slipping into peace groups, stude
organizations, and other legitimate associations.

9. The war has also divided the President and the Congress.

10. Truth, we are told, is the first casualty of war. This war has played havoc with our credibility — our credibility to ourselves and to the world. Seldom has there been such a crisis of confidence at home. Seldom have we inspired less confidence abroad.

11. By this time, it must be clear that Vietnam is not our kind of war. True, our men have never fought with greater valor. True, no nation has ever performed such prodigies of logistics across vast distances. But our military leaders have been unable to convert all this valor, all this ingenuity, all this outpouring of blood and treasure into security for even a single province.

12. Of course, we can continue to escalate. We can throw in more men, step up the bombing. But we have been putting in more men for 10 years, and we cannot even protect the capital and our military headquarters from mortar attack. Well, then, we can spread the war. But how many hundreds of thousands of men would that take?

Of course, there are always nuclear weapons, and we might reach a point of desperation where we would have to use them. Virtually every government in the world, under pressure of its public opinion, would have to condemn us. A great gulf of fear and hate would open between Americans and much of humanity. What a fate for a people who began their national life on July 4, 1776, with a declaration of a "decent respect to the opinions of mankind!"

13. So what useful purpose do we serve by prolonging and enlarging the war? We are told that we must show the Communists that their "wars of liberation" do not pay well, after what this war has brought to North and South Vietnam, no one is going to be in a hurry to get the same treatment. We are told that our national honor is at stake: but what nation has been a more honorable ally that the United States has been to South Vietnam?

14. The war has made us — all of us — lose sight of our national purposes. We need to get our priorities right.

15. We come back then to the question: What will best advance the national interest of the United States? The evidence is overwhelming that this open-ended war in Vietnam is harmful to our national interest. The evidence is equally overwhelming that the war serves the interest of the Soviet Union and world communism. The options, then, are fairly clear. We can have a domestic policy and a foreign policy — or we can go deeper into Vietnam. We can regroup our forces and redirect our energies against the main forces of communism — or we can continue to pit the best we have against the Reds' fourth team. We can rebuild our cities and raise our people — or we can squander our young manhood and our treasure in the jungle. We can recover our role of leadership among the free people — or we can let them slip into the Communist embrace. The choices are as clear as that.

So let us take counsel of each other in all humility, for we have hard decisions to reach. There is no short and easy road out of Vietnam — we cannot scuttle and run. But we must see that we cannot allow Vietnam to become the be-all and end-all of our national policies. Starting with that realization we can make our way back to our true role in the world — not as destroyers but as builders, not as sowers of fear but as bringers of hope.
Leon P. Cook, Jr., Lieutenant, U. S. Army Air Corps.

I was stationed in Cerignola, Italy, as a bombardier on a B-24 (the Liberator). I was twenty-one years old and, by August of 1944, I’d been on nine missions -- to the oil fields in Rumania, a flight to Vienna, and a couple of trips to Southern France. On those missions, we always wanted to have the Tuskegee airmen flying cover. It was a beautiful sight to look out there and see that red tail fin nearby. They were good and they stayed with you over the target. By the time I got there, they’d established their reputation and everyone asked for them.

My tenth mission was on August 22, 1944; we were to bomb a synthetic oil refinery in southwestern Poland. There was Wendell Garrett, the pilot; Leo Waterman, copilot; Dick Rossignol, navigator; and six enlisted men as crew. Our gas load for this particular mission was marginal at best because we were going farther than we had before. If we didn’t have perfect engines and awful good luck, then you knew you wouldn’t have enough fuel to get back home. We lost seven out of ten planes from our squadron to AA over the target -- including ours.

Enemy flack took out three of four engines. We managed to fly forty more minutes toward our home base but then had to bail out over Kisber, just a few miles west of Budapest, Hungary. If we bailed out, I was supposed to put several bullets into the bomb sight, to keep the enemy from being able to use it. However, it turned out that I couldn’t shoot it because there was fuel everywhere and the plane would have exploded. So I threw the sight out of the bomb bay; I don’t imagine there was much left of it after it hit.
As I came down under my parachute I got tangled in electrical wires and was knocked unconscious. I don’t know how long I was out; I don’t remember seeing the electrical wires. I certainly didn’t know if the other fellows from my plane had made it to the ground.

I woke up; I’d been captured and was in the Luftwaffe hospital in Budapest. I was treated very well by the German doctors -- they saved my right leg -- but I lost the sight in my left eye. The electricity melted the buttons of my jacket into my chest and melted my throat mike into my neck. I still have three or four scars from those buttons.

There were three other prisoners in the hospital room with me. One was a Russian colonel, one was a member of that Russian’s flight crew, and the other was an American pilot from Raleigh, North Carolina. His name was Brothers. I didn’t play chess at the time, but Brothers did so he and the Russian colonel played a lot.

After I was well enough to move, I was taken by hospital train to Stalag Luft (“Air Prison”) III in Sagan, Poland -- this was an officers’ prison and the one from which “the Great Escape” had just happened a few months earlier. We found out pretty quick about the escape from the British officers. They were wearing black diamonds on their sleeves to commemorate the fifty escapees who had been recaptured then killed in retaliation for the breakout.

Apparently, the other three officers from my plane were taken to Stalag Luft III also, but the only one I ever saw was Leo Waterman, the copilot. He recognized my serial number when it was posted on the lists of those who had been brought to the camp hospital, and he came to see me. Whenever we flew missions, we had to enter our serial numbers on the manifest, and he said he thought my number looked familiar.

It was in this camp hospital that I learned to walk again. I remember walking from the hospital to the South Compound, where I was housed. The ground was frozen and walking was very difficult. My leg got worse again, so they sent me back to the hospital.

Stalag III had to be evacuated because the Russians were coming. To be honest we Americans preferred to be in German hands rather than Russian. The Russians didn’t like us. We didn’t trust them and they didn’t trust us.
That evacuation was very hard. Most of the prisoners were forced to walk in deep snow in zero-degree weather with poor clothing. Those of us who were unable to walk were herded together to wait for a train. When it came we were put into a small boxcar; fifty of us were crowded into only a half boxcar. The other half was reserved for our three guards. We had to sit so close on the floor that we couldn’t stretch out. One man sat with his back against the wall and spread his legs, another sat between his legs, and so on, all the way across the car. The crowding at least kept us warm.

We were taken to Stalag 13D in Nuremburg, another officers’ prison. There were thousands of prisoners there, I’d guess maybe 25,000. The British were held together, the Americans were held together, and so on. There were four of us that hung around together and played bridge sitting on the floor. My buddy, Leo Waterman, was one of the four, and he was my bridge partner. We won several thousand points off the other two.

Stalag 13D was a real hellhole. There was only one water faucet outdoors and no heat. Many of us were sleeping on bare floors, and we got only a half cup of clear soup a day.

In late March or early April of 1945, Stalag 13D had to be evacuated because our troops were getting close. We prisoners had to walk to Moosburg, just northeast of Munich. It was maybe 90 kilometers. On the way, my bridge-playing friends and I got free. We scrounged for food in a potato field for something to eat when I heard about President Roosevelt’s death. I don’t think we even knew who the vice-president was really, but now he was president—President Truman.

Our freedom didn’t last long. It was too dangerous for us to try to make our way through the lines so we had to go back and go on to the Moosburg camp.

We got to Stalag 7A in Moosburg and things really got worse. We didn’t even have a building to live in there, just a huge tent. We slept so close together on the ground that you couldn’t walk between us. Fortunately, we weren’t there very long before General Patton’s 3rd Army liberated the camp.

We were flown to Le Havre, to a repatriation camp called Camp Lucky Strike. I weighed 165 pounds when commissioned in April 1944, but now I was down to 105 pounds. At Lucky Strike, we were
fed small amounts of rice four or five times a day to build our strength slowly. I was there for four or five days.

I finally got on a ship (Charles Brantly Aycock) and set out for home. It took us 21 days to get across the Atlantic, and I gained 20 pounds in those 21 days.

The ship sailed to New York and I was glad to be back in America. As we sailed past the Statue of Liberty, I told her she would have to turn around to see me again -- I sure wasn’t planning on leaving any time soon.
Capt. Albert B. Powell, Jr.

We Drove the Germans Nuts

Foreign Service, Oct. 1947

The camp looked impregnable. A high wire fence surrounded the buildings and tough looking armed guards were everywhere. A few feet inside the fence was a low strand of wire - the warning wire. Under the local ground rules, the guards were permitted to shoot any American who crossed the wire in an attempt for extra bases.

It seemed incredible that a man could get out of that camp alive. Yet many Americans did get beyond those walls and the methods they used deserve a high place under the general heading of American ingenuity.

One afternoon, shortly after I arrived at Sagan, I was standing out near the warning wire... As I glanced around me, I saw a German workman come walking from between two buildings. Over his shoulder was slung a ladder. Suddenly, I began to feel giddy, but not from a lack of food. The "workman" was really a disguised American flier... and when he reached the warning wire, he paused and nodded briefly to a bored German guard nearby.

It was an effort to keep my eyes averted; every American in that area went about his business, as if nothing out of the ordinary were happening. When I finally took another peek, the lieutenant had reached the outer fence.

Quickly, he propped the ladder against the fence, then began to climb toward the top. From the guard towers, the Germans watched curiously through the sights of their machine guns... With a pair of pliers, he began to test each strand as if searching for a break in the wire. At last he reached the top... then deliberately turned and waved to one of the guards. Casually, the American lifted the ladder, then placed it outside the fence. On the way down... he paused to examine the wire. You'd have thought he was tuning a concert piano for Oscar Levant, the way he'd tap a wire, then bend down to listen. Reaching the ground, he put the ladder over his shoulder, then sauntered down the street. Not a gun was fired in his direction; unfortunately the escape was short lived when the lieutenant was recognized and brought back into camp.

The Germans were furious. They stormed into the area and the guards swarmed through the barracks... wrecking beds... stealing cigarettes and Red Cross canned goods... (trying to find) where the ladder and work uniform had come from.

For them, the escape, brief though it was, meant humiliation. But for the Americans, it was a great moral victory... At Sagan, men were united by a single emotion: Good old rip-roaring anger. The Germans had their arrogant guards, their guns, and their high fences. Yet in the face of these odds, the Americans refused to be cowed into submission.

Your body could be conquered, but why allow the Germans to conquer your soul? ...you could fight back matching German intimidation with American ingenuity... It gave you something to talk about while you hoarded food and made plans. If you failed, rack one up for the Germans. But if you succeeded, you had the knowledge that hundreds of Americans would grow drunk on your success. You had to think of American Morale.
Judson D. DeRamus, Colonel, US Army, Retired

Colonel DeRamus began his military career after being graduated from the University of Alabama in 1917 the year that the United States became actively involved in World War I. He was accepted into the Officer Candidate School in May and became a Second Lieutenant in August. Upon completion he was assigned to Company H325 Infantry, 82nd Division, sent overseas with the American Expeditionary Force to France. There he participated in St. Mihiel and Meuse Argonne operations. He received his first promotion in February, 1918, and upon the war's end continued his military career in the Army Reserve.

He continued reserve duty until he was recalled to active duty during World War II. In the meantime he had been promoted to Captain in 1924 and to Major in 1930. His civilian occupation during the year from 1923 to 1942 was in various positions with the Veteran's Administration in North Carolina. His World War II duty began on the 27 October 1942 as commanding officer of the 388th Anti Aircraft battalion. In August, 1943 he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel returning to reserve duty at that rank.

After World War II, because of his earlier study of law at the Pell Law School in Raleigh and his admission to the North Carolina Bar Association, he was assigned as the Legal Officer to the Secretary of War's Disability Review Board in 1945. He was promoted to Colonel in March, 1946 and released from active duty during the same month. General Omar Bradley, Director of the national VA, then appointed him to be Manager of the VA Regional Office in Winston-Salem, NC. In 1958 The local office was selected as the best regional office by the national Department of Veterans Benefits and was featured in an article of the Veterans Administration's newsletter, entitled, "Why They Win In Winston-Salem."

Colonel DeRamus, after his retirement from the Veterans Administration, became associated with Wake Forest University in planning and conducting management development seminars. His lifetime record includes numerous honors both military and civilian and many memberships in both.
Mr. & Mrs. DeRamus in earlier days

I want to share with you the following

Written by General Douglas MacArthur

Nobody grows old merely by living a number of years. People grow old only by deserting their ideals. Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up interest wrinkles the soul.

Worry, doubt, self-distrust, fear and despair - these are the long, long years that bow the head and turn the growing spirit back to dust. Whatever your years, there is in every being's heart the love of wonder, the undaunted challenge of events, the unfailing childlike appetite for "what next," and the joy and game of life.

You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubt; as young as your self-confidence, as old as your fear; as young as your hope, as old as your despair.

In the central places of your heart, there is a recording chamber; so long as it receives messages of beauty, hope, cheer and courage you are young. When the wires are all down, and your heart is covered with the snow of pessimism and the ice of cynicism then, and only then---are you grown old.

These are wonderful words to remember and live by.
I volunteered for the U.S. Navy when I was 17 years old. Previously I had tried to enter the Air Force and made a trip to Seymour Johnson air base in Goldsboro to do so, but was turned down because their quota was full.

I remember going to Raleigh and New Bern to enlist in the middle of winter and to boot camp by train to the Bainbridge Naval Station in Maryland. I was homesick and exposed to the usual rigors of naval recruits, marching and doing boat drills on the Susquehanna River in frigid winter weather. We had a tough inhuman "old salt" who did everything possible to make life miserable for us. He was replaced by a fine young officer whom we really appreciated.

After completing basic training I was sent to Balboa Park in San Diego for training to be a hospital corpsman. Balboa Park, one of the world’s largest zoos, was converted into temporary barracks, which housed us. As part of my experience I did crash boat duty on a regular basis on the Pacific Ocean to stand by at night on an emergency basis while navy pilots did flight training above.

After completing hospital corpsman school I was transferred back across the country to the Norfolk Naval Station Hospital at which I cared for returning sailors who had been wounded in battles of the Pacific.

When the Japs and the Germans heard about my being a part of the American armed forces they soon surrendered! During the war, the hospital corpsman were said to have the highest mortality rate of any specialty because many were attached to the fleet marines and went ashore with the first wave of those who landed on the beaches of the Pacific to tend to the wounded.

Soon I was transferred to the Corpus Christi Naval Air Station and went there by train, arriving just after a hurricane hit the coast. I survived that close call and was assigned to the hospital where I worked much as a physician assistant does today. While I was stationed there, Bob Hope and his troupe came to entertain us and lifted our spirits. Also, a young Frank Sinatra
visited us alone with a solo performance when the rest of his troupe cancelled out. He gave a rousing concert. Everyone on the base gathered when we had a special outdoor service on the occasion of the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, a memorable event.

Luckily, the bomb ended things and spared me from ever being sent in harms way. My experience as a Hospital Corpsman led me to aspire to be a physician but when I was discharged my father was ill for several years and I gave up that option because for several years I worked to support my family. But thinking back on the experience I believe that it helped me develop the interpersonal skills that are essential to counseling. Overall my navy experience was relatively uneventful because I served "behind the lines" with the great host of support personnel who never saw action. As John Milton would say, "They also serve who only stand and wait."
Marvin Francis, TSgt. US Army Air Corps

For my five years of active duty in the Armed Forces of the United States, 41 months during World War II and 19 months during the Korean Conflict, I spent the entire time stateside, serving in the Training Command of the Army Air Force. Most of the time was spent in the classroom, some in the air, teaching aerial gunnery. Considerable time also was spent attending training courses at various bases around the country.

After being turned down for appointment as an Aviation Cadet in June of 1942 while at Wake Forest, I later volunteered and was inducted on September 9, 1942. I went from Camp Croft, SC to Fort Jackson, SC and on to Florida where I spent time in a Miami Beach hotel, a Tampa hotel and a hotel at Clearwater Beach. It was then to Lowry Army Air Base at Denver, Colo., for an armament course and from there to Laredo Army Air Field, Texas, where I remained most of the time until being discharged on February 19, 1946.

After I completed the aerial gunnery course at Laredo on February 27, 1943, I was retained as an instructor. My man course of instruction was the tail turret on the B-24. I flew on practically all aircraft in operation at the time -- the AT-6 and AT-20, B-17, B-24, B-25, B-26, B-34, and later the B-29.

When the Laredo base was closed in early 1946, I was sent to Randolph Field at San Antonio, Texas, and on to Fort Bragg for discharge.

While the Korean conflict was not a part of WW II, I was recalled to active duty on January 20, 1951 at Maxwell AFB, Alabama, and sent to Lowry AFB, Denver, where I was classified as a Gunnery Instructor Supervisor in the B-29 program. When I arrived at Lowry I found a lot of my old instructor buddies from WW II. At Lowry, I found we had three airplanes, seven students and 39 instructors. That situation changed, however, after they built a new classroom building. I was discharged on August 29, 1952.
I served in the Army from November 1942 to April 1946. My enforced travels and duties took me to France, Germany and Austria. A good part of my training involved intensive courses in German: the language, history, religion, economics and geography. This training was carried out at the University of Missouri (Columbia) and prepared me for later occupation as an interpreter who dealt with prisoners taken in combat.

Ironically, in the immediate postwar period I served as interpreter and assistant manager in a GI nightclub in Vienna, where I also was involved in working with civilian groups that undertook such activities as arranging and carrying out a Christmas party and program for Vienna’s inner children.

The most memorable experience for me was surviving the sinking of the Belgian troopship, “Leopoldville” in the English Channel on Christmas Eve, 1944. Over 800 men were lost due to bungling and mismanagement that ignored safety measures for the troops. My division, the 66th “Black Panthers,” was untried in combat, rumor had it that we were destined to be sent to Belgian (Battle of the Bulge), but the sinking of the Leopoldville necessitated shipping those who survived to Brittany.

I was one of seven soldiers who chose to take our chances with an apparently half-derelict lifeboat, the last one on our deck. We urged other soldiers standing nearby to join us, but they refused, preferring to take their chances with the obviously slowly-sinking troopship. I never saw any of those people again.

Incidentally, Lee Potter is a survivor of the same disaster; we learned of our mutual experience when we met by chance one day in the bookstore at Wake Forest University. Our two stories were combined in a Winston-Salem Journal article* at Christmas, 1994.

*Copy enclosed
On Christmas eve 50 years ago (1944), Pfc. Ralph S. Fraser and Lee H. Potter found themselves crossing the English Channel along with 2,200 other soldiers on a luxury liner that had been converted to a troop carrier.

"We were all grumpy about it because it was Christmas Eve," Fraser said. "Nobody wanted to walk into what was ahead. It was gray and gloomy and dull, and everyone was out of sorts."

The two men -- who didn't know each other at the time -- were especially uneasy because rumor had it that they were being sent to join the Battle of the Bulge.

"There was a bit of nerves about that," Potter said.

The troop carrier Leopoldville was bound for Cherbourg in France. On board was about half of the 66th Division -- the Black Panthers. "We were a green division -- hadn't yet been in any combat," Fraser said. "Cannon fodder, I guess."

The Leopoldville would never make it to port. A torpedo from a German submarine would see to that.

Some men were killed in the explosion. Others need not have died, though, because the ship, which was only a few miles from France, didn't sink for three hours and nearby ships could have safely transported everyone.

But the situation was badly handled. A nearby destroyer picked up about 1,200 men, and small boats picked up more. But no other ships came. In the end, 804 men died.

The holiday may have contributed to the tragedy.

"Everyone was having a party on shore," Fraser said. "It was dereliction of duty on the part of the authorities. "Jacques Sanders, a soldier on another ship who witnessed much of the event, was later moved to write a book, A Night Before Christmas, The Sinking of the Troopship Leopoldville. When he began investigating, he said, the governments and other organizations involved tried to cover it up.

Clive Cussler, the author of Raise the Titanic, found the sunken ship in 1984. He called the event, "one of the most tragic and senseless blunders of World War II.

Fraser and Potter were among the lucky ones. They both made it safely off the ship and unscathed through the rest of the war. Both happened to go on to become professors at Wake Forest University.

Fraser, 72, the chairman of the German department from 1969 to 1977, retired in 1988. Potter, 70, an English professor, officially retired in 1989 but continues to teach part time. He works with students from Japan who are participating in the exchange program with Tokai University.

They didn't meet until after they came to Wake Forest and discovered that they had the tragedy in common. In 1967, Potter was escorting Fraser's son, Geoff, to a poetry conference when the subject came up.

"What a curious and interesting sort of coincidence," Potter said. "he's the only person I've met since the war who was in my division."

The two men became friends. They have since talked a few times about that day, they said, but, mostly, their friendship has been about other things. With the 50th anniversary coming up, they met to reminisce.

Before Potter joined the Army, he was a student at Davidson College. When
Fraser was drafted, he was working in a small bank in Ipswich, Mass. He learned to speak German to serve as an interpreter.

Their experiences on that day were quite different, and time has garbled a few of the details. So, occasionally, they had to pause and sort out what was the most likely to be the most accurate version of the events.

Potter was asleep when the torpedo hit. The impact threw him out of his hammock, and his glasses, which he had put on his chest, went flying. He can’t see the big E on the eye chart without them, he said, so the first thing he did when the lights went out was to grope about for his glasses. Seeing this, a friend thought he had become hysterical and grabbed him to try to calm him down.

Once Potter had his glasses, he headed toward the station he had been assigned during the emergency drill. Along the way, a lieutenant redirected him elsewhere. That probably saved his life, he said.

“It was because I went to this place that I got off on the destroyer.” Potter aid. Some men died jumping over to the destroyer. Its deck was significantly below the liner’s. Some fell between the ships and drowned; others were crushed as the ships bumped against each other.

When the torpedo hit, Fraser was below deck listening to someone trying to generate a little holiday spirit by playing the accordion. Where they were, he said, no one had any idea that men had died in the explosion, and there was no panic.

“Eventually, all of us went upstairs to the top deck.” he said, “We were pretty blase about the whole thing for quite a while.”

Fraser watched the destroyer pick up one group of men. He and others thought that it or another ship would return for them, but, when time passed and none did, several of them decided that it might be a good idea to take one of the lifeboats. They invited others to join them. But the sea was choppy and cold, and others said they would wait for a ship to come.

“That was the last I ever saw them.” Fraser said.

Eventually a PT boat picked up the men in the lifeboat and took them to shore. It was a day or two before the men began to understand the extent of the disaster. For Fraser, it began to sink in when he saw a long row of bodies laid out with combat boots sticking out from the material that covered them and when roll call was called. “There were 40 men in my platoon, and 26 died.”

The next few days were disorganized, partly because everyone had lost most of their equipment. Because the division was so thoroughly depleted by the event, it was not up to fighting strength. The men were assigned to a backwater of the war in France, containing German troops that had been cut off as the Allies swept across Europe. “The Germans had no desire to come out and we had no desire to go in,” Potter said.

The Germans were so close, Potter said, that at night he could hear the horse-drawn hearse that they had pressed into service to deliver their food. “You could hear this vehicle crunching along the road.” He said

After the war, Fraser used the German he had learned as a soldier as the basis of his career.

Kim Underwood, Ties Across Time, Winston-Salem Journal..
Ivey C. Gentry, Lt., U. S. Army Air Corps

Ivey Gentry enlisted into the Army Air Corps in June 1942 and during his tour of duty decided to marry Nell. He asked permission from Nell's father to do so. Here is how Judy Gentry Eustace explained it: My mom and dad got married in May, 1943. I have a beautiful letter (written April 1943) from dad to my mother's dad in which he asks for my grandfather's blessing and prayer. He also hopes "this terrible thing will be over before long. We can only hope and pray."

And from my grandfather (April 19, 1943): "The best advice we can offer is the Golden Rule - 'do unto others as you wish to be done by.' And then "continue to serve the Lord in the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, and if you both serve, honor and obey the best you can, you will succeed and be happy here and saved in the end."
William H. Gulley, Lt(sg), U. S. Navy

I enlisted into the United States Navy June 21, 1937, and after completing boot camp attended radio school at the NOB, Norfolk, Virginia.

My first assignment at sea was on the USS Tillman, DO-641. On it we were headed for Guantanamo Bay. Off the coast at Hatteras, North Carolina, we ran into a hurricane. The sea was moving southwest, as a result we had to sail northeast to keep from capsizing because the waves were 35 feet in height; the Tillman set low in the sea and because the ballast on one side was filled with cement. Furthermore, the Tillman was an old four stacker from World War I. We ended up three days later at Bermuda. That became my first shore leave.

In June of 1941 I was sent to teach code at the radio school, Naval Armory, Los Angeles, California, and was stationed there when Pearl Harbor was hit. From Los Angeles I was transferred to Goat Island, then sent to San Francisco on December 8th for shipping to sea. I ended up on the USS President Johnson, a transport later used by the services during World War II.

We made several trips to various islands in the Pacific. On one of these trips I apprehended an active “communist.” As a rule civilian radio operators were not allowed in the radio room. On this one occasion I caught a civilian sending radio messages to a Japanese submarine. I put the man under arrest and later was commended for my action.

The President Johnson was selected as part of a convoy to deliver backup forces at Guadalcanal. At the time, on the Johnson, I was a senior petty officer, commended for my service as head of communications and recommended for officer training.
My units in the Air Transport Command received six battle stars, but I didn’t see any of the battles and, incidentally, didn’t miss being overlooked.

I kept being transferred from unit to unit and my mail was delayed seriously. I didn’t receive any mail at all from August of 1944 till April of 1945 and then, when I was in Casablanca, I received more than a hundred letters on the same day. I also received a Christmas package from my family. It had candy, cookies, cheeses, and meat spreads in it, as I remember, but it also had a little Christmas tree, neatly folded up. So in April of 1945 we celebrated Christmas in our barracks in Casablanca. In spite of everything, it seemed Christmassy. We usually shared our food packages with one another, and we did that time.
Robert M. Helm, Jr., Lt. Col. US Army

In the spring of 1945 the tides of war had taken me with General George Patton's third army into the heartland of Germany.

As the army's experts on tables of organization had neglected to provide a company in each division to collect, house, and feed replacement troops arriving from the United States, as well as delivering them to the front-line combat units, all those duties fell on the division classification and assignment officer, or at least that was the case in the Eighty-nine Infantry Division. I was that officer.

The flood of replacements was constant, and my staff was limited, consisting usually of a few non-commissioned officers who were classification specialists. That meant that I had to make whatever arrangements I could with anyone who would cooperate with me in looking after an uncertain number of soldiers during the assignment progress. Then there was the matter of assigning the recently arrived soldiers and getting them to the front-line units for which they had been assigned.

The term "front-line units" is something of a misnomer, for in that last part of the war, after the Rhine Crossing, there were no lines, in the traditional sense of the word. Patton's style of warfare, as well as that of the German Army units, was highly mobile and flexible based on the combat situation of the day. Units of armed forces were scattered over a wide area almost like a crazy quilt.

Because of the situation in order to deliver the fledgling combatants, it was necessary for me to track down their new organization, and transport the replacements to the units over vast stretches of uncertain countryside.

As I had no subordinate to whom I could delegate this responsibility I did it myself, riding in a jeep driven by a Brooklynite named Fidgeon, who served me as well as any officer could be served. We tried to keep in convoys as much as possible in roads that seemed likely to be under Allied control.
One memorable morning, after travelling all night on a delivery and returning to my headquarters suffering from sleep deprivation, I was given a message that a new consignment was waiting for me at a designated point. Fidgeon and I had no option but to set out to get them, traveling on an autobahn that was supposed to be reasonably secure.

Before long, lulled by the motion of the jeep, I fell asleep; sitting bolt upright one learns to do that. Fidgeon too was drowsy, and obviously must have taken a wrong turn onto an intersecting highway, for when I woke, I found that we were on a two-lane road in completely unfamiliar country. "Where are we, Fidgeon?" I asked. "Sir, I haven't got the slightest idea," he replied.

Noting a road sign on my right, I pulled out a map and studied it. My worst fears were confirmed. "Fidgeon", I said, "we have wandered deep into untaken territory." Fidgeon, as usual, was unperturbed. "What shall I do, Captain?" He asked.

I studied my map. "Turn right at the next crossroad", I said. "Then right at the first opportunity. If we are lucky enough not to get spotted, we should be able to get back to the autobahn." We turned, and after traveling about a mile, saw a picturesque village stretched along both sides of the road ahead. Many such hamlets had been fiercely defended by German soldiers and destroyed in the process.

"Step on the gas and the horn," I told Fidgeon. "Try to look as if you are the advance guard of an invading army." We charged into the village, which fortunately was unguarded. It was obvious, however, that we were the first enemies the local residents had seen. Men and women stared at us with wide eyes, children fled screaming. Chickens, ducks, and geese scattered out of our path as we swept through at top speed, with horn blasting and presenting as terrifying a spectacle as it is possible for two tired men in a dusty jeep to achieve.

Through the town we found the next turn, and within an hour, we were back on the relatively secure autobahn, having encountered no opposition to our two-man invasion. On my second incursion into untaken territory, you better believe that I had more company.
I was commissioned an Ensign after attending Officer Training School at the University of Chicago.

After World War II, 1948, I was assigned to Admiral Connelly's staff. The Admiral was Cincnelm stationed in London, England. There I was promoted toLtjg. I spent one and one-half years teaching and working on the formation of NATO, travelling through Europe, Africa and the Middle East as my assignment.

During the Korean conflict, 1951, I was sent to Guam assigned as the officer in charge of the manual radio station. There, I received my next promotion toLtsg, served almost another two years and returned to inactive duty, honorably retired from naval service in 1980.
Delmer Paul Hylton, Corporal, U.S. Army

Memories of a Liberator

This month, September 1994, the American Paul Hylton and his wife Helem will be visiting Gronsveld. They will be guests of the Daemen-Mingels family. Paul Hylton is now a retired professor at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina: in years 1944 and 1945 he was an American soldier and liberator. In January he and his regiment stayed a few weeks in Gronsveld. On the Fourth of July, 1944, the American day of Independence, Paul Hylton’s regiment landed in Normandy. The large, improvised cemeteries atop the coast where his countrymen rest, who fell in the first landings in June, left a deep impression behind Paul. In St. Lo he gets his baptism of fire. During heavy fighting, many of his comrades lose their lives. From there the American troops march across France in a north-eastern direction. Paris is liberated in August. In December 1944, Paul Hylton is stationed in Arlon, in the Belgian province of Luxembourg. There he is confronted with the Ardennes offensive, which he insists calling “the battle of the bulge.” (bulge means protrusion, or bulge). His unit advances, fighting in the direction of Bastogne. The battle is unusually heavy. Paul runs into Germans, dressed in American uniforms, a situation which is contrary to anything considered acceptable in a state of war. The losses in human lives is gigantic. His regiment was sent, after the end of the Ardennes offensive, with great speed to the Saar. The American leadership was expecting some kind of attack like in the Ardennes. When an offensive of that scope did not materialize, Paul and his unit were put on a train in the direction of Liege. A few days later, in the second half of January, 1945, he arrived in Gronsveld.

In Gronsveld and Rijckholt, the scene on the street is dominated by American soldiers and vehicles. Since the liberation of the 13th of September 1944, there were many months thereafter, until the Spring of 1945, American soldiers stationed in our villages. Many of these were housed with families. Mostly, they stay a couple of weeks. After their departure, new levies.

Thus at the end of January 1945, the soldiers of Paul’s unit, the 134th infantry regiment, a part of the 35th infantry
division, is quartered in homes in Grosveld. Paul Hylton is, together with another 6 Americans, a guest with the family Mingels on (what is today) the Rijksveg 18. In 1989 he remembered the family very well: a widow (Anna Mingels-Mingels) with five children and “grandfather” (Ber Mingels, the father of Anna). When we, in 1989, returned with Paul to the house on the Rijksveg 18, he points without hesitation to the room where he lodged in 1045. Paul also still knows exactly the place where grandpa (then almost 87 years old) always sat in his chair with a cigar or pipe. Grandpa had clearly made an impression on the Americans. Then again, Ber himself was especially fond of the American liberators, and let those know as such. On top of that, many American soldiers carried rosary, the which pleased him very much.

Paul Hylton stayed in 1945 about two weeks in Gronsveld, “a time to reorganize our regiment and to lay in new supplies.” A time also to recover from the heavy efforts of the Ardennes. Regularly the soldiers go to drill at the Beuk. They eat in the field kitchen that stands in the church square. The rest of day is passed with the family where they are guests.

Running a household with five children and a grandpa, where also practically continuously there are American soldiers quartered was for the widow Anna Mingels, absolutely not an easy task. But joy and gratitude for the liberation made up for the lot. Besides, the soldiers contributed to the good atmosphere of the house. They brought chocolate with them, and cocoa, and the evening hours were lightened by song and music. Thus they brought people to hear country and western, which was a musical phenomenon until that moment unknown in our village. This lured the following remark out of grandpa, “They look like good boys, but the music which they make don’t sound like nuttin!"

When the Americans after a couple of weeks had to depart, it was always difficult. However short they stayed, many times bonds had grown. There was enough reason not to let contact be lost. From out of the house of Mingels they corresponded with a number of the liberators. The exchange of letters with Paul Hylton ended at the beginning of the 50’s but again was taken up at Paul’s initiative in the 80’s. The contact led finally to a visit of the Hyltons to Gronsveld in 1989, but not before Piet and Micky Mingels and Corry and Sef Daemen had paid a visit to North Carolina.

Paul Hylton went to a large number of cities and villages in 44-45. Still, Gronsveld left a special impression on him. He
In September, 1994 while visiting Normandy and the Netherlands Paul was pleasantly surprised. A medal was presented to him from the Province of Limburgh (Netherlands) in appreciation for his small part in World War II. The Province was commemorating its 50 years of liberation.

When he visited Gronsveld in 1989, after a tour of Gronsveld, a trip to the American cemetery in Margratan, could not be omitted from the program. Paul is clearly very much moved. Sunk in thought he wanders between the rows of white crosses. For us a reason to let him alone for a moment with his memories.

At the end we visit the chapel under the monument to the war's dead. On leaving the chapel, Paul steps to attention and salutes, his last greeting to his fallen comrades.

Note: The above was written in the Dutch language by Piet Daemen and his uncle, Piet Mingels who reside in Gronsveld, Netherlands. The article was published in a booklet in September 1994 commemorating the 50th year of liberation from the Nazis. Paul is especially grateful to a friend of Janice and Tony Chaitkin who translated the article into the English language.

In September, 1994 while visiting Normandy and the Netherlands Paul was pleasantly surprised. A medal was presented to him from the Province of Limburgh (Netherlands) in appreciation for his small part in World War II. The Province was commemorating its 50 years of liberation.
Colonel Isbell’s military record is so voluminous that it would take pages to account for it. Instead mention is made here of his more significant experiences, and materials and photographs submitted by his grandson, Dr. R. Neville Gates will suffice for the remainder.

Colonel Isbell entered military service in the Army’s aviation section in 1918. Being a chemistry professor provided him a captain’s commission in 1941 and served actively in England, France and Germany during World War II. In 1945 he was honored with the Croix de Guerre by General Charles de Gaulle awarded “for military exceptional services rendered during the operations for the liberation of France.” The awards ceremony took place in the French Ambassador’s Office on November 14, 1977.

Colonel Isbell’s greater achievements, however, took place near the end of the war when he was in large part responsible for the fire bombs that were dropped over Japan in 1945 and for his involvement of nuclear experimentations at the Bikini Atoll. He continued his work in atomic operations at the Pentagon and at the Air Research and Development Command in Baltimore, Maryland. Fire bomb raids on Japan proved encouraging, but the advent of the atomic bomb developed no further need for fire bombing.

While at the Pentagon he was instrumental in getting his good friend, Dr. Charles Black, Wake Forest professor, transferred from the Army to the Air Force. Upon military retirement in 1955 Colonel Isbell returned to Wake Forest University as Professor of Chemistry.

A letter from Dr. Isbell to John Woodward, Wake Forest University Archivist reveals more of Dr. Isbell. It, in part, reads: “Dr. Black knew more about me than any other. We were best friends. During my ten year tour of duty in the Pentagon, I was fortunate enough to get him promoted from retired major in the U. S. Army, to colonel in the U. S. Air Force, retired. He brought me back to Winston-Salem from Air Force retirement in California in 1955 to teach again in the Department of Chemistry in 1957. I taught there until 1963 and retired again. I lost my best friend when Dr. Black died at age 75. ...
"With the exception of Dr. Black and Dr. Nowell, hardly any of my teaching colleagues know anything about my military record. [Dr. Nowell] ... his father, Head of the Department of Chemistry in 1926, was responsible for bringing me to Wake Forest from Yale University, where I was a candidate for the Ph.D. in Chemistry.

"...While I think of it, I organized and conducted the first Wake Forest Marching Band in 1927, and except for 2 years, conducted it until 1941, when I was ordered to active duty with the Air Force. I was honorably discharged in 1955 and was accredited with 30 years of service."
Campagnes pour la libération de la France
(Juin - Décembre 1944)

Décision N° 1048

Le Général de Gaulle,
Président du Gouvernement Provisionnaire de la République Française.

Cite à l'Ordre de l'Armée


"Pour services exceptionnels de Guerre rendus au cours des opérations de libération de la France."

Cette Citation comporte l'attribution de la Croix de Guerre avec Palme.

PARIS, le 18 août 1945
MILITARY RECORD

NAME: Alonzo W. Kenion, Jr., Captain, U. S. Army (Infantry)

ADDRESS: Hillsborough, North Carolina (Deceased)

MILITARY EXPERIENCE: Entered active duty, February 1, 1943
Served state-side shortly which included Infantry Officer
Candidate School
Departed for overseas duty April 2, 1943 with Company L, 18th
Infantry, First Infantry Division
Actively engaged as a unit commander in battle situations in
Sicily, Normandy, Northern France, Germany and the
Ardennes where he became disabled due to wounds.
Wounded on 29 July 1943 in Sicily, 20 November 1944 and again
February 3, 1945, both in Germany.
Hospitalized at Lawson General Hospital, Atlanta, GA.
until March 15, 1946.
Separated at Ft. Bragg, December 26, 1946.

AWARDS & HONORS: Silver Star, Bronze Star, Purple Heart with 2 Oak
Leaf Clusters, EAME Campaign Medal w/5Br Sv Stars,
American Campaign Medal.

CIVILIAN: Professor of English, Wake Forest University
Alonzo W. Kenion, Jr., Captain, U. S. Army (Infantry)
Harry Lee King, Jr., Lieutenant, U. S. Navy

Liberated Paris in WWII
(A Reminiscence)

Wading ashore in Normandy at Utah Beach post-D-Day from a landing craft, this writer’s first duty was at liberated Cherbourg and Granville for two months, experiencing assorted vicissitudes, when the surprise message arrived of reassignment to Paris as one of two French-liaison officers (the other being Lieutenant David Schulte of New York City) on the staff of Commander U. S. Naval Forces France (“ComNavForFrance”).

The ancient Israelites, at the news of their impending translation from Egypt to the land of Canaan could not have been happier.

Ah, Paris, Paris! That Paradise longed for by lovers of light, art, beauty, and all that is fine and splendid when they shed this mortal coil. Paris never disappoints, nor did it even after a devastating war and a long enemy occupation.

While a few famous pre-war restaurants strove to operate, oddly enough the best dining available for the local civilians and other guests lucky enough to be invited was at the luxury hotels allotted to the Allied personnel quartered in the city. Small eating establishments, coffee shops, nightclubs, and bars flourished. Upscale shops on the main Avenue, the Rue de Rivoli, and Place Vendome put on a brave show.

Civilian vehicular traffic was practically non-existent except for the occasional horse-drawn “fiacre.” The city’s taxis had been commandeered early by the many military establishments for their purposes. Military vehicles were much in evidence. The excellent Paris subway was an indispensable convenience. As in wartime London and Rome, the streets were safe at all hours.

Entering Paris so soon after Liberation one was met with an unforgettable scene of the entire city in joyous celebration. Merrymakers thronged the streets; no one was a stranger to anyone else. Allied military vehicles and personnel were greeted with cheers and a shower of flowers. Planes buzzed the full length of the broad, crowd-filled Champs Elysees from the Place de la
Concorde to the Arc de Triomphe. Joy reigned unconfined until far into the night for days. The gala atmosphere subsided only gradually and slowly.

Midst the myriad memories of the eventful year spent in Paris certain incidents stand out, or at least come to mind: for example, an early visit to the offices of the resuscitated New York Herald Tribune and receiving a copy of their last 1940 edition printed as the Nazi troops entered the city just before the staff refugeeed south to escape them; and other occurrences which follow.

The parade honoring returning General Charles de Gaulle enroute to Notre Dame cathedral to give thanks for the Allied victory, preceded by the impressive mounted Garde Republicaine and followed by units of his Free French Forces; a similar display honoring General Dwight Eisenhower and staff; an even more elaborate parade - staged for whatever reason - honoring the King of Morocco, led again by the French Garde Republicaine, followed by the richly-uniformed King in an ornate open carriage, ending with a long cortège of colorfully-garbed, superbly-mounted Moroccan horsemen honor guard, all advancing in a stately procession along the Champs Elysees pavement previously covered with a layer of desert sand (mistakenly judged by this writer to be a refinement to make the Moroccan horses and riders feel at home!); late one night passing the museum at the Trocadero, brightly illuminated at that hour, and learning the next day that the occasion was an all-night vigil honoring the deceased poet Paul Valery; a first convivial party at the storied old nightclub "Le Lapin Agile" in Montmartre; knowing that the Frenchmen are poor vehicle drivers, totally unsurprised one late night when my French friend's diminutive Simca conveyance entering the Champs Elysees at the upper end, and approaching a larger car entering at the distant lower end - the only two vehicles on the entire broad avenue - managed to collide at about the midway point; on the subway one late afternoon overhearing the passengers whispering excitedly "Les Boches reviennent!" ("The Krauts (Germans) are coming back!") learning upon exiting that the deadly Battle of the Bulge was then raging, all Allied personnel were confined to quarters, and that it would be a bleak Christmas; trips on courier duty to London, Brussels, and, eventually, Berlin; a leave to Switzerland, Rome and the Riviera; by prearrangement my bomber-pilot younger brother from his base near London flying low over the Navy hotel and waggling his wings in greeting as I waved back atop the roof; a dinner at the ex-Czarist exiled Russian officers club, appropriately in company of colleague ex-Russian prince
Lieutenant George Scherbatoff - with a large portrait of ex-Czar Nicholas II dominating the room; at Easter attending services at the Paris Russian Orthodox Cathedral, with its glittering ceremonial and magnificent choral music - while the rationale for the custom of having to stand for the entire time escapes one, the discomfort experienced was minimal; encountering on the street a former student who gave a harrowing account of his participation in the Battle of the Bulge; the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the outpouring of grief and expression of sympathy among French citizens encountered on the street; a farewell party with French friends in August/1945 for new duty in Frankfurt, Germany, and eventual return to the United States and release to inactive duty in June/1946.

Unlike the foregoing, two experiences require a somewhat fuller treatment. That is, before getting around to the all-important introduction to French airforce Lieutenant (Marquis) Alan des Isnards, his lovely wife, and his wonderful family - which gave focus, cohesion, and lasting meaning to the stay in Paris.

One important unit of the Resistance against the occupying Nazis was a woman, whose patriotic exploits became legendary. On leave in Cannes on the Riviera near her home, urged by my friend Alain, one of her former "soldiers," and armed with a letter of introduction from him, I was eager to make her acquaintance. Arriving by jeep at her walled villa, after ringing a bell at the grilled gate, through the grillwork I was informed by the maid that "Madame n’est pas visible ("seeable" in the French sense)." I could easily see over the wall, clearly espying the lady prone on a beach towel, wearing only a pair of sunglasses, otherwise totally nude, taking a sunbath. In brief, madame was only too "visible (in the English sense)." Abashed and disappointed, discretion demanded that I crank up the jeep and return to Cannes.

The early Spring of 1945 was highlighted by a visit to the Paris Navy HQ of Congressman Lyndon B. Johnson and party of the U.S. House of Representatives' Naval Affairs Committee. Lodged in the Navy’s Hotel Royal Monceau, they had a day and evening of activities planned for them by the Admiral’s staff, with emphasis on a large late-afternoon cocktail party to be followed by a sumptuous banquet. Both huge events were to be attended by all of the ranking Allied military officers, diplomatic dignitaries, and important members of the French officialdom. Assigned as the Congressman’s interpreter and "handler" for the day was myself, armed with a list of important persons especially to be presented to him. In the course of all this, readily observed were the
charm and tact the visitor displayed when meeting each person - in short, his famous expertise in "pressing the flesh" - outstandingly displayed in Congress and later as President of the United States. However, midway of the banquet, comportment became more relaxed. The French guests were puzzled and amused and perhaps bemused when several times LBJ banged a huge fist on the table rattling the china and crystal for a rambling toast (translated with difficulty by his "handler") and a call for all to rise and sing along with him and party "The Eyes of Texas Are Upon You." Around eleven o'clock, as the guests milled about sipping an aperitif, the distinguished guest called out loudly "Hey King!" and beckoned to me afar. He requested that I please accompany him to his room to place a phone call, which number he produced, since the night desk clerk spoke only French. As the number was ringing, he politely said "Thank you, Lieutenant King, You have been very helpful" - and I departed.

Although unforgettable recollections like the foregoing linger in memory, vastly more intimately memorable were the friendships forged during the year in Paris, many of which have endured until today. The earliest ones came about in an unusual way.

Seated at a table in the popular nightclub "Le Jardin Fleuri," were the junior U. S. naval officers George Scherbatoff, Dimitri Keusseff, David Schulte, and myself. The first two were Russian-Americans who later were to serve as interpreters at the Yalta Conference for Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill in their fateful deliberations with Joseph Stalin. Incidentally, upon returning from the Crimea these friends gave the writer two Russian cigarette boxes, (half-filled with cigarettes) possibly fingered by the three heads-of-state as they were deciding the future of Europe.

The nightclubbing quartet was astonished when a uniformed French air force Lieutenant approached speaking Russian, inviting us to join him and his family for champagne at their table - misled, as he said later, by the star on our sleeves but wishing to show cordiality to allies (he had once flown with the Russian Air Force).

The host party included the inviter, the Marquis Alain des Isnards, his charming wife Marie Solange de Dampierre, and several of the latter's relatives, including the beautiful young Countess de Dampierre. This family turned out later to be the nucleus of a wide circle of friends much cherished by the nightclub companions.
An introduction to Alain’s fascinating grandmother grew out of an inauspicious beginning. Unaware of the family connection, I was midway of a harangue criticizing French Admiral Henri de la Borde for scuttling his fleet at Toulon rather than turning it over to the waiting British squadron when Alain quickly interrupted to say, “Uncle Henry shouldn’t have done that!” — then going on to explain that his uncle was not pro-German but anti-British as was much of French naval officialdom (still piqued by the outcome of the Battle of Trafalgar and other contretemps, one wonders?).

The meeting with the Admiral’s mother was marred by another awkward gaffe on my part. As Alain and I went from room to room searching for her in her spacious apartment near the Rond Point suddenly the ancient lady herself rounded a corner preceded by her bejewelled hand held high for me to kiss. I ran under it! As I recovered my aplomb, the Marquise, in unaccented English, conversed engagingly. For some reason turning to the subject of languages, at my regret for retaining traces of an American-English accent in French, after protestations that it didn’t even exist, she went on reassuringly to say that while an Italian accent gave rise to mirth a slight English accent had “cachet” in France — even being affected by some actresses and other entertainers. When I remarked that I hoped to learn Spanish better, she commented that she “spent a week in Spain once,” omitting to explain that she travelled thence to attend the wedding of her Dampierre relative to the son of the late King Alphonso XIII of Spain! The conversation ended with a mischievous smile and a typically French summary opinion of Spain in general, to wit “Quel pays sauvage!” (“what a savage country!”) — the adjective used not being pejorative as in English but with the possible meanings of “wild,” “primitive,” or even broadly speaking, “picturesque.” At no time, either, was it mentioned that a de la Borde close relative was consort to the Queen of Denmark, demonstrating that some folks can afford to be modest.

Two other encounters merit special mention. At a reunion of Resistance veterans, as Alain and I entered, we were called over to a table presided over by a friend whom he casually identified as Baron de Rothschild, with whom after some perfunctory chit-chat and just as I was preparing to engage the baron in a discussion of high finance, Alain called me away to meet someone else. Later at a soiree at a Ramolino family home (the surname being that of Napoleon’s mother) I met their kinsman young Lieutenant Bonaparte — and had the tact not to mention the Retreat from Moscow,
Waterloo, Elba, or St. Helena.

There followed innumerable introductions to noteworthy personages. Introduction followed introduction, invitation followed invitation - to receptions, theater, opera, concerts, and more soirees. As a reflection and outgrowth of the initial introduction at the “Le Jardin Fleuri” nightclub, nearly all the surnames bore the much-valued nobiliary particle “de.” And, as specified earlier, a convenient reciprocal courtesy was a luncheon or dinner invitation to the U. S. Navy’s Hotel Royal Monceau on Avenue Roche.

To conclude with a mere catalogue of names would only produce weariness of flesh. Rather, one prefers to end this saga with evidence of the particular durability of wartime friendships. One fondly recalls return visits to Paris in 1966 and 1994, the interlude brightened midway by the visit to Winston-Salem and WFU of the Des Isnards-Dampierre family, who enjoyed themselves immensely. And ex-Lieutenant David Sculte and wife, fleeing annually from rigors of life on Park Avenue in New York City for summer residence in France, upon returning have given full updates of our friends there. Too, only recently the new Count de Dampierre thoughtfully sent a copy of his just-published novel, whose plot disguises the history of his family from the Crusades to World War II.

Paris, with its beauty and infinite variety, undiminished even in wartime, once experienced will remain the terrestrial Eden to which one will ever wish to return.
HENRY C. LAUERMAN, CAPTAIN, U.S.NAVY

After serving some time at sea duty late in the war against the Japanese I was put in command of a submarine, the USS Cabrilla. In the spring of 1945 the Cabrilla was on sea patrol, in the sea of Okhotsk, just north of the Japanese province of Hokkaido. For two weeks we had seen nothing, however, we unfortunately hit some ice and damaged our propeller. We could clearly hear loud sounds of “bump”, “bump”, “bump”. Then on this particular day in April we saw approaching a Japanese anti-submarine. The anti-submarine could detect our noisy bumps. We decided to attack the approaching vessel and fired two torpedoes. We missed! The target to be, turned and began to approach the Cabrilla. I then gave orders to take her down to 420 feet, our past depth. At that depth we expected to find cold water which would prevent sonic gear from detecting us and the propeller bumping would be unobserved. The water was not cold. Going any lower would, in my estimation, provide too much pressure on the submarine and crush the hull.

My thoughts were to surface and surrender which would save the submarine and more importantly, 80 lives. My executive officer, however, suggested that we go deeper - down to 525 feet. At 500 feet, fortunately, we got into cold water which made it possible to get away safely.

Shortly thereafter, since this was my first patrol, I remarked, “Aren’t we lucky not to be crushed by the sea pressure?” The executive officer calmly replied, “Skipper, we have taken the Cabrilla down to 575 feet!”

Moral: Never underestimate the work of your sub-ordinates!
USS Cabrilla - SS-288

Celebrating a Return from Patrol
After about a year and a half, the Army found it necessary to pull able bodied people out of "second echelon" (support) units, replacing them with limited duty types. I was among the dozen or so of my company deemed fit for combat and sent to a retraining center at Djebel Khar for a six week toughening up course. Those so selected were then sent to combat units where needed. British transports ferried us to Naples fighting by this time was beyond Anzio, beyond Monte Cassino, up in the Appenines south of Bologna. From a holding area at Caserta called a replacement depot we were parcelled out to active units, usually infantry. My new outfit was the 339th Bn of the 85th Division, a former national guard division from the Dakotas (I think). Its nickname was the Custer Division. Not a good sign. The battalion was off the line when I joined, but we soon moved up, passing through the positions of the envied artillery and engaging the enemy at pretty sporadic times. Generally the artillery (and sometimes tanks) would have bombarded Jerry's positions through the daylight hours and infantry would move up after dark to mop up, sometimes finding little, sometimes heavy resistance. Dead soldiers, both theirs and ours. Dead mules and destroyed and abandoned equipment were a frequent part of the scenery. I remember diving into a fox hole once and finding it already occupied, but the GI already there made no complaint, being dead. Another memorable sight was a German soldier sitting on the ground, leaning comfortably against a fence post, his pipe in one hand and a half eaten candy bar in the other and a neat round hole in his forehead.

One night, after a day of being pinned down by mortar and sniper fire, we moved forward after dark, meeting no resistance for a time and getting far ahead of artillery, tanks and even our own heavy weapons platoon. A scout scurried back to warn of enemy troops just over the hill we were scaling. To make the situation really nasty, light machine guns behind us began grazing fire. We dug in (what else?) and exchanged rifle and grenade fire for several hours, during which our strength was reduced from about 120 to 69. Then at the first faint light of dawn, a rainy dawn, down the hill in a mad charge came the 114th Fusiliers (so they later said). I surrendered my squad as did the rest of the company. Bravery seemed somewhat pointless at the time.

And thus on October 23rd 1944 my status changed to that of POW. We were quickly marched to the (German) rear. At one point we came under American artillery fire, taking cover best we could, along with the German guards. I remember thinking how inconsiderate that seemed. A few were wounded. One youngster got a shrapnel hit in the gluteus, another, older man had his arm nearly
taken off at the shoulder. A third man was blinded and a fourth lost so much blood he had to be carried on a makeshift stretcher, a door from a nearby house. They lagged behind of course and we never knew what happened to them. At the end of the day, well behind the front, we were loaded aboard trucks and delivered to a holding camp near Mantua, from where after several days we were loaded aboard a freight train for a two-day trip to Moosburg, several kilometers from Munich, where we were "welcomed" into Stalag VIIA (sound familiar, Leon?). Prison camp life was pretty routine. Disadvantages: little food, no medical attention to speak of, unheated barracks, boredom, forced labor for some. Advantages, just one———nobody was shooting at us. Anyone interested in the day to day experiences of that period of a bit over six months is invited to peruse the diary I kept from Christmas 'til the Third Army tanks liberated the camp on April 29th.

After liberation we were sent by truck and plane to Camp Lucky Strike, near Rheims, then to Le Havre where we boarded a Liberty ship for the trip home. From Fort Dix I was sent home for a period of R&R. (VJ Day occurred while I was home in Danville, VA. Quel celebration! Went downtown and was kissed by more girls in one evening than in any other year's time) A ten days stay in Asheville for more recuperation was followed by an assignment to Fort Riley where my duty involved "bird-dogging" troops being rotated from the ETO to the Pacific. Not happy campers. Offered a promotion and assignment to the Des Moines recruitment office. I politely declined and proudly wore my "ruptured duck", pinned to my uniform, home. (11/18/02)
Prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, I had been toying with the idea of applying to the State Department, or some other government agency, for a position in which I might use my education in foreign languages. Nothing had materialized in this direction when Pearl Harbor brought the realization that military service was my only choice. The question now had to be army or navy. I had always had, and still have, a fascination with the sea and ships. I also thought that I would prefer sailing on a ship to walking through the mud of some battlefield.

In early 1942, I requested my local draft board to allow me to finish the Master of Arts degree from Syracuse University which I could do in six months and to allow me to apply for Naval Officer Candidates School. The draft board agreed to both requests on a condition that I have my enlistment credited to Greensville County, Virginia.

I reported to the Naval Officer Candidate School, John Jay Hall, Columbia University, New York City 4 July 1942. There were about a thousand of us there to learn basics of naval service for would-be deck officers. Among other things, one can imagine the inadequacy of learning to use a sextant, a vital instrument used to measure the angle between the altitude of any heavenly body and the horizon, from the roof of John Jay Hall in the middle of New York City where the horizon is invisible on almost any day. Essentially, we learned the theories of this and many other things. The subject which appealed most to me was navigation. There was virtually no training in communications (there were specialist schools for communications officers) and no practical experience in gunnery.

Several branches of the Navy sent representatives to identify those who might be interested in patrol torpedo boats, submarines, and other specific branches of the service. I simply awaited whatever assignment came. Not long before we were commissioned, ten of us received orders to five oilers then in various stages of construction at Bethlehem Sparrows Point Shipyard in Baltimore, Maryland. Two of us were assigned to USS Niobrara (AO-72) and
ordered to report to various stations in Norfolk. Commissioning as Ensign USNR came 21 October 1942.

Prior to reporting to Baltimore where our ship was commissioned in March 1943, I spent three days aboard a Navy gunboat learning to fire a four-inch gun. At the time there were only four of these guns in the Navy, none of which ever got out of Cheasapeake Bay as far as I know. I spent two to three weeks aboard USS Wyoming, an older battleship used at the time as a training vessel in the Bay, I think to accustom us to “Navy way” aboard a larger vessel.

We spent the final days before our ship was commissioned in familiarizing ourselves with the location of everything and inspecting the whole ship including the cargo tanks which were, of course, clean and dry. The USS Niobrara was one of five sister ships built in Baltimore. She had been ordered by Mobil Oil, but was preempted for naval service and converted before completion. Mobil would have sailed her with six or seven officers and a crew of about 35. We had twenty officers and a crew of 220. We also had a 5in./38 gun mounted on the stern, four 3in./50s mounted forward of the bridge, 20 40mms and 29 1.1 in. guns. USS Niobrara was 603 ft. long, about 100 ft. in the beam, and drew 36 ft. of water when fully loaded. She had 26 separate cargo tanks and was fitted with an array of cargo pipes, pumps and flexible eight in. hoses slung from davits for fueling-at-sea. That procedure involved the oiler sailing a steady course, having the ship or ships (we could refuel two at once) come alongside, receive and connect the hoses, and maintain a very steady course and speed. This was not easy, especially for our helmsman since we were subject to strong air and sea currents created by three ships operating with only 25 to 40 feet of water between them. To define a few terms: “AO-72” means an auxiliary oiler, the 72nd oiler to be assigned a name and number. The AO-55, in which I was to serve later, was commissioned some ten months later than the 72. A 5in./38 gun fires a projectile 5 in. in diameter and has a barrel 38 times the diameter in length.

After the ship was commissioned, we conducted various exercises in Cheasapeake Bay. One of these was designed to teach ship handling. The captain had a wooden box thrown over the side while we were making standard speed (15 knots). Then he gave the con (command of the ship) to one of us junior deck officers and had us slow the ship, turn it around and bring the ship as close as possible to the box abeam the bridge. We learned that when the ship was fully loaded travelling at standard speed, it took four
miles to bring her to dead in the water.

After completing days of testing, we were ordered to an oil port (Houston, I think) to load 6,000,000 gallons of aviation fuel and return to Norfolk. There we were ordered to deliver this cargo to the U.S. leased, British owned, base in Argentia, Newfoundland and we had USS Osprey, a minesweeper as escort. Our captain was Capt. Theodore Huff, USN, our executive officer was Comdr. Schroeder, our gunnery officer was Lt. Ranieri, our navigator was Lt. Simpson, our medical officer was Lt. Bradley, all USNR. We received reports every few hours of the number and approximate locations of enemy submarine in the western Atlantic. None of our route was completely clear of subs until we reached Placentia Bay, a few miles from Argentia. The area of 100 miles or so off Sable Island, off the New Brunswick coast, was the most dangerous area because more allied ships passed through that area than elsewhere. Knowing that, and being warned to keep a sharp lookout during night hours, one can imagine the feeling created by two or three porpoises swimming toward your ship through phosphorescent waters on a dark night!

The Navy Base at Argentia was well equipped, had an excellent dock, and provided some unusual services. One was an officer’s log cabin with complete cooking facilities a few miles from the base and available transportation. The men in the signal tower were authorized to contact a local lobsterman and say, "There is a group of nine officers who wish lobsters to be picked up by 1700 hours. Can you accommodate them?" Given a favorable reply, our drivers were instructed to go by the dock, take us to the cabin, and pick us up at whatever hour we indicated. When we reached the dock, we found that the lobsterman had saved 35 pounds of lobster and had no sale for any that we did not buy, nor did he have any way of keeping any. To protect the interests of those who would come after us, including ourselves, we bought the 35 pounds at 35 cents Canadian per pound. When we reached the cabin, we discovered that three of our group would not eat this delicacy. So each of the six had a three pound lobster and the six of us shared the 17 pounder. Thank goodness the ship’s doctor was in the group and we had plenty of coffee. The next night I had the mid-watch (0000-0400). The captain came aboard about 0200 having been eating and drinking with some Marine officers, I assume, on the base. Fortunately for me, there was an experienced carpenter’s mate (petty officer second class) who was in charge of discharging cargo and who was standing in the shadows of the pipes etc. over the main deck. In the Navy, if a person coming aboard salutes the flag and the officer of the deck and requests...
permission to come aboard, he is not intoxicated; otherwise he is. The captain came aboard, observed the required ritual, and the following conversation took place:

CAPT: Mr. Parker, have you finished discharging No. 3 Main Tank?

CARPENTER'S MATE: (In a low voice from the shadows) Yes, sir.

ME: Yes, sir, Captain.

CAPT: And No. 3 Starboard Tank?

CM: Not quite, sir.

ME: Not quite, sir.

CAPT: And No. 8 Port Tank?

CM: Yes, sir.

ME: Yes, sir.

CAPT: You are discharging cargo under the Marine barracks, are you?

ME: (Knowing that no intelligent planner of a Navy base would put oil or gas lines under any barracks) No sir, Captain.

CAPT: Very well.

At about 0230, the captain's mess attendant came to the quarterdeck and informed me that the captain wished to see me in his stateroom. But I had learned that the Officer of the Deck never leaves the quarterdeck. My petty officer advised that he would call the Officer-of-the-Day and ask him to come to the quarterdeck. Lt. Ranieri came, told me to go, and assured me that he had served with the captain before. So now we have a lieutenant standing watch for an ensign and a mid-watch at that! When I reached the captain's stateroom, he told me to put aside my side arms, have a seat, and invited me to have a cup of coffee and a slice of apple pie with him. There followed a general conversation touching on my background and inquiring as to which parts of shipboard service most appealed to me. I indicated communications and navigation. Then after a little more conversation and a second cup of coffee, I was dismissed with the remark that I was to have the ship ready for getting under way at
1000 and to have the Osprey stand down the channel ten minutes ahead of us. I had little idea of what I was to do and told Lt. Ranieri that. His reply was, "So do it." Then he said that I should be on the bridge at 0800, and that he would be there to tell me what to do, but warned me that I was to do it, not he, because that is what the Captain would want. At 0800 the next morning, Lt. Ranieri and I were on the bridge. Under his direction, I did everything to make the ship ready for getting underway. The last thing was to test the whistle. That sound brought the Captain out on the deck behind his stateroom one deck below the bridge. His only words were, "What the hell is going on?" I saluted and reported the ship ready for getting under way. In response to his questions, I pointed out the Osprey standing down the channel and the pilot coming down the deck. In about three minutes the captain was on the bridge in full uniform, assumed the con, and said nothing more.

More than ten months later we were on a mooring buoy in Mars-el-Kabir, French North Africa along with five other oilers fueling the destroyers and destroyer escorts in the Sicilian invasion. They would come at night; each oiler fueled eight to twelve each night while two to three of our lifeboats patrolled to forestall any attempts at underwater mining of our ships which were sitting ducks. Captain Haff was senior officer present afloat (SOPA). The other oilers tried not to top off each ship with the idea of saving a bit of oil. We gave each ship all the oil they could take and all the toothpaste, toilet paper, fresh fruit and other things they needed, it being Captain Haff's idea that these men were fighting the war and we should support them in every way possible.

From the above, one can imagine that we were the first oiler ordered to the states. This movement was accomplished by our sailing to Gibralter (I do not remember that we had an escort), joining there with a slow (10 knots) Gibralter-U.S. convoy proceeding to Hampton Roads. Along the way we fueled the escort vessels, having retained enough cargo to do so.

The evening before our departure from Mars-el-Kabir, the captain called me into his stateroom. He informed me that on the following morning we would sail for Hampton Roads, Virginia; that we would join a westbound convoy east of Gibralter and accompany the convoy fueling the escorts on the way; that I would navigate the ship to Hampton Roads; that he would assign a quartermaster to record the star sights for me; that I would have a sextant which no one else would touch; and that I would make 0800, 1200 and 2000
reports of the ship’s position to him. He further explained that I would keep my own set of charts; that I could ask any question of the navigator but he was not to do anything other than answer my questions. Here was proof that he remembered our middle-of-the-night conversation months before. I learned navigation that voyage.

When we arrived in Hampton Roads, the captain informed me (I was now communications officer) that he would be at BuPers (Bureau of Naval Personnel) in Washington for two or three days and that I was to hold all messages until his return. When he did return, his first question was whether we had received any messages addressed to our ship as opposed to SerFor Lent (Serforce Atlantic Fleet) or other large units. I had not, but he indicated that I would. In about two hours we did receive a message addressed to USS Niobrara (A072). I decoded it and my heart sank as the clear-language message emerged from the decoding typewriter; the captain was transferred to the pre-commissioning detail of USS ELOKOMIN (A055). When I took the message to him, there was a very small smile and a question as to any other messages, which he thought would be received. After another couple of hours, another message came. In decoding that, I learned that several of my shipmates were also going with the captain. I had heard that it was the captain’s custom to ask for, and be given, a few chosen junior officers, chief petty officers, and petty officers first class to form the nucleus of a new crew. With this second message, the captain again asked about other messages and remarked that there probably would be. Again, after some two hours another message came and as I decoded it, I found that another four or five people, including myself, were being transferred to the same pre-commissioning detail. When I took this one to the captain, I was very much surprised to hear him say, with a smile, that he had requested me as navigator of USS ELOKOMIN with a jump promotion to Lieutenant. To this, BuPers had replied that if he wanted the man that much, he could have him, but there would be no assignment as navigator of a ship this size nor would there be any promotion. That left me with no particular assignment, but with a captain whom I admired and respected. The captain decided to send me to Philadelphia Navy Yard to receive the 220 crew members as they reported in and to assign billets on the basis of their individual capabilities, training and experience.

USS ELOKOMIN was commissioned 30 November 1943, but without the captain who, five days before, had been transferred to yet another pre-commissioning detail on the west coast. Our new captain, whom no one of us knew, had been commissioned with the
rank of Commander after some twenty years in the merchant marine, sailing on ships belonging to Cities Service Oil. He proved to be nervous in his unaccustomed position of command. He was detached from our ship on 4 July 1944. Our executive officer, Commander Milton Breece, who had many years of experience with Esso Standard Oil, was promoted to command and the ship immediately became a happier ship since we all knew that he was truly in command. Meanwhile, I had become navigator on May 1, 1944 and remained in that position until I was transferred to inactive duty in October 1945.
Percival (nmn) Perry, T4, U. S. Army

In June 1942, I joined other draftees from my home county of Chesterfield, S.C. on a bus destined for Charlotte, N.C. where we were joined by recruits from other areas in North Carolina. On the way to Charlotte, we stopped at several small towns and picked up other draftees. A larger bus carried us to Ft. Jackson, S.C. for military training. As soon as the officials learned that I could type, I was assigned to the "reception center" where I spent 12 to 15 hours per day processing recruits until it was time for maneuvers and overseas duty.

Our maneuvers were in Murfreesboro, Tennessee during January - March 1944. About 13 million acres covering several counties and including the Columbia River had been used by the XII Corps in 1863 during the Civil War. A memo announced that training would be "under active hostile conditions. The principle of camouflage, slit trenches, cover and concealment would be observed. Men will not expose themselves to air observation ... men must be prepared to defend themselves against air attacks, enemy guerrillas (sic) and raiding parties." We learned the reality behind terms up to that time unfamiliar words, "bivouac," "SOP," operations and situation map, "overlays," "field orders," and "light line." Most of us ate C rations for the first time, participated in blackout driving and reading a map in wind and rain. The maneuver military camp was located near a railroad and we could easily be moved to a harbor in New York for assignment in Europe.

Third Army, XII Corps Headquarters, under the command of General George S. Patton, Jr. sailed from New York bound for England on 9 April 1943 on the Queen Mary. Those of us of lesser rank slept in bunk beds hung eight beds high to an area. True to my worst fears I was seasick all the way and so were many others. In England, XII Corps was separated into several groups. My group trained at Kidderminster -- within a 25 mile walking distance of Stone Henge. While there a friend and I walked to Stone Henge but had to return in the dark as no lights were allowed. When we returned to base about 4 a.m. we were "chewed" for being absent and threatened with the loss of our hard earned stripes. While in England, I heard General George S. Patton, Jr. give his famous "blood and guts" speech which has so often appeared in movies and on TV programs.

The scattered groups of XII Corps began the process of
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The scattered groups of XII Corps began the process of
assembling for duty in France by converging at three sites. The second camp was Birmingham (15) June. From Birmingham, Corps moved through Oxford, Swindon, and Salisbury arriving at Braemore on 9 July. The night of 24 July was spent in an assembly area of Camp Hursley, near Southhampton. Embarkation took place 25 July.

There was great confusion and delays in getting to the port of departure but what a nightmare it would have been to have had to organize such a group. Life in England had little to offer due to strict rationing of food, gasoline and the ever threatening bombs. One of the titled Lords of the Kingdom was a kind and generous man who invited some of us to dinner occasionally.

The XII Corps landed on Utah Beach, France, 27 July 1944, 21 days after D-Day. Utah Beach is just north of Carentan, and we bivouacced near there for the first night. Many of the solid tips we had learned in training seemed to evaporate, being new to the territory and with some fear, we hurriedly dug our fox holes in an apple orchard albeit very near our own ammunition dump. Several German bombs were dropped nearby and you can be sure we had learned our lesson. The next night we bivouacced in an area near Bricquebec (Quettetot), France.

The Corps became operational 12 August, 1944. General Patton sent Maj. General Gilbert R. Cook an order "XII Corps will concentrate SE of Le Mans, prepared to operate to n, Ne or E, protect S flank of the Army. Your order should have added "and the right flank of the entire AEF." The battle lines moved rapidly. By August 14 CP was set up at le Mans, and by 17 August Orleans and Chateaudun had been cleared. 21-23 August, XII Corps seixed bridgeheads over the Yonne River at Sens and by 21 August had taken over the Loing River at Souppes. Martargos was captured but the troops stayed overnight only.

On August 23-24 the Corps seized a bridgehead over the Seine and captured Troyes. By 30 August the Corps had covered 250 miles in 16 days, gasoline and supplies were critically low. The capture of 155,000 gallons of gasoline at Chalons and Blesme enabled the advance to continue. General Patton received some short words from General Omar Bradley and possibly the high command for moving too fast and out of sync and not planning for the adequacy of supplies. Since ammunition supplies and location was a major part of my responsibility I felt quite uneasy. We moved so fast, no maps were available and often I went out to select an ammunition site, I had no idea if the selection would be correct. On one occasion, it was not and as the driver approached the town, I asked my jeep driver to drive up the autbahn bank and head back because we had not yet taken that city
according to news at headquarters. My training in French and German at Wake Forest and Duke was an invaluable plus for me and the Corps Headquarters as I frequently served as interpreter. My French enabled us to purchase eggs and fruit from the local French citizens to supplement our C-ration diet. The citizens were glad to get the cash and we were glad to get the food and to get some laundry done.

XII Corps took over the German Embassy, a castle in Luxemboourour City, and it was made into headquarters for general Patton and his staff. I was one of 12 men assigned to the Forward Echelon of the Ordnance Section, and we usually worked in the vicinity of general Patton's quarters. General Patton walked his dog every morning about the same time I reported to work. This opportunity allowed him to get his constitution going as he opened up a new chapter of profanity each day as he saw us. Frequently I hid behind one of the huge columns in the castle to avoid his morning greeting.

Between 24-31 August, the Corps seized a bridgehead over the Seine and captured Troyes. The engineers in the Corps had become specialized in amphibious operations and secured bridgeheads beyond the Meuse and Ornain Rivers and captured Commercy. 116,000 gallons of gasoline were taken at Commercy. The Corps continued to seize bridgeheads—Meuse and Ornain Rivers. Only XII Corps succeeded in forcing the Moselle River.

On 15 September the Essey-les-Nancy was captured which enabled the Corps to attack on the Maginot Line, which the Germans had rebuilt and reoriented; however, by 25 September XII had captured this fortress.

Winter was approaching and in spite of floods, mud, and heavy enemy opposition, the Corps forced a crossing of the Blies River into Germany—12 December 1944.

In four days and five nights the Corps moved 80,000 men and 11,000 vehicles from Luxemboourour to north of the region and halted the German breakthrough N of Luxembourg City. 279 towns and villages were liberated during November. within 24 hours we were organized and traveling to assist in the Battle of the Bulge. The drivers drove 24 hours per day to the battle site. it was especially hazardous in the dark since a blackout was declared, the winter was severe with near-zero temperatures and blinding snowstorms, the roads muddy or iced over. When we arrived we saw troops moving in waist deep snow drifts, a heavy fog lay over the
region which prevented the air support operations. The terrain ranged from sweeping hills and deep valleys covered by forests to precipitous heights. During the first eight days of the new year, neither side was able to muster sufficient force to break the deadlock. The STARS AND STRIPES reported that Luxembourg City was the Nazi Target and the Nazis were within three miles of the Duchy Capital.

XII Corps march across the rivers and land represent an outstanding record for an Army. By 10 February the Siegfried Line was smashed and by 23 February units reached the Prum River. After a swift advance the Corps on 7 March reached E. Saffig overlooking the Rhine River. 12-19 March Koblenz at the junction of the Rhine and Moselle Rivers was pocketed and before 22 March the Corps had captured Mainz and Worms. The German lines were falling and in two weeks the Corps had crossed the Moselle, Rhine and Main Rivers. In one month we had advanced 215 miles and captured 67,000 prisoners.

The deeper into Germany we travelled the greater the physical and psychological damages appeared. In April 6-9 at Vachs, the Merkers Salt Mine was uncovered and the Reichbank Gold Reserve (estimated at 100 tons) along with huge quantities of silver, paper currency, object d’art and valuable paintings which had been stolen from all over Europe. Between 9 April and 13 April the Corps had captured the entire German Prisoner of War files, and by 18 April XII Corps had captured sufficient territory and transportation facilities to cut Germany in two by crossing into Czechoslovakia.

Victory was in sight and compassionate leaves of absence were available. My father had had a major attack and it appeared he would not pull through. My family got in touch with the Red Cross and requested a leave. That leave was not to be granted but as sometimes occurs, the hand of fate provides a necessary relief. The unit held a lottery and it had been determined that two men would be granted a leave. Two other soldiers had gained that great opportunity, but one had promised a girl in England he would come back and marry her before they returned to the States. Another name was drawn—it was mine. I left my troop train filled with men bound for another military experience, which I feared might be my fate. From Paris, along with several other men, we travelled south to Cannes where we were allowed to travel on a Liberty Ship to the United States. Unloaded the Liberty Ship would rise above the water with every wave, so we made only half time so to speak. We returned by way
of North Africa but were not allowed to go ashore. There was no convoy to assist a single ship and there was great danger of a submarine torpedo attack. Given my seasickness syndrome, I lived and slept on deck. It took more than six weeks to get to New York and we had not been allowed to let our family know we were retuning. It was a joyous time for me and my family! My father had recovered from his heart attack and was able to drive but had to quit his medical practice.

The early release home meant I missed all the pluses available at the end of the war—earning extra points for discharge, travelling in Austria—visiting Hitler’s mountain hideaway and other travel in the area. Actually, I was concerned I would be bound for battles in Japan without my group identity. I did not know the Japanese language and would be of less value to a headquarters group. On the way to Miami, Florida, with precious gasoline coupons and a leave funded by the Army, Margaret and I had a great time.

I was not a part of this phase but I have included it for historical information. Garbenwohr (24-26 April) the Corps discovered a huge dump containing 2,000,000 poison gas shells. On April 26 XII Corps units crossed into Austria—the first American troops to do so. VE Day was celebrated at Grafenau 3 May-28 May.

I return to my personal experience:

As Staff Sergeant in the Forward Echelon of the Ordnance Section. Hq., XII Corps Ammunition Unit, I monitored the use of ammunition on the previous day’s battle, ordered ammunition supplies, and had the responsibility to determine the location of the ammunition site, most often without the aid of aerial maps due to the incredible forward progress of the 3rd Army. Near the end of the war, we found graves of recently executed war prisoners and required the local citizens to dig up the emaciated bodies and provide transport to a recognized cemetery. This scene is recorded in the film history of World War II frequently shown on a history series.

After the Rest and Recreation leave of 30 days at home, I was assigned to Fort Bragg, North Carolina to assist with the discharging routine for those who fought in North Africa and earned a sufficient number of points to be discharged. I completed my military service in the Fort Bragg, North Carolina, service center.
I was inducted into the army on June 14, 1943, at the end of my sophomore year at Davidson. In the fall of that year an army spokesman had come to Davidson to let us know that we had a choice: we could enlist then and finish out the year or we could as it were, in three weeks. Almost the entire sophomore class enlisted. Much of what followed was typical, I think, for my generation of college sophomores. After induction there was basic training, then ASTP (the Army Specialized Training Program), then the "falling off" into an infantry division (the 66th), where I spent the rest of the war as an infantry rifleman and sometime anti-tank crewman. At the last I was exalted as a private first class, and I was alive.

My outfit was lucky and unlucky. It missed D-Day by several months, but about 6 p.m. on Christmas Eve, 1944, it encountered in the English Channel seven miles off Cherbourg one of the last German submarines operating in those waters. It lost (in one "official" total) 803 men of the 2200 aboard. Over 200 were killed in the explosion of the torpedo.

Some of us were vastly more fortunate than these. We jumped to the deck of a British destroyer that moved in to the side of our ship like a taxi pulling in to the curb, directly below our emergency station. This destroyer, HMS "Brilliant," was the only rescue vessel to reach our ship before she sank, almost two hours
later. The jump itself was a heart-stopper. A great number—Who knows how many? 30? 45?—didn’t jump far enough and fell between the ships where they were crushed, in one of the favorite figures of that moment, “like grapes.” One fellow seized an immense rope that was lying about and swung himself over the gap, imitating Tarzan’s mighty yodel. Unhappy yodeler! The near end of the rope was unattached.

An hour later my companions and I were deposited on the docks at Cherbourg and hustled into an enormous room where the Red Cross ladies warmed us with coffee and doughnuts. An hour, perhaps two hours, later other groups from the ship, very wet and very cold—they had been in the icy water—were brought in and cared for. Years later it was learned, in a book entitled *A Night Before Christmas* by Jacquin Sanders (Macfadden Books, 1963), that extended Christmas Eve celebrations ashore had left few army personnel where they should have been, so that it took a great deal of the time to send rescue vessels to the stricken ship. Meanwhile great numbers of men were struggling in the choppy waters, clinging to the liferafts, spars, lifeboats, whatever would keep them afloat. It was during this grim waiting period that many exhausted soldiers slipped away and drowned.

For twenty years after the war I met no one who had heard of this tragic incident. Then, in August, 1965, I came to Wake Forest where, quite by accident, I learned that Ralph Fraser, then chairman, I believe, of the Department of German, had been on the *Leopoldville* that night. Less lucky than I by far, he had gone into the water but had found a boat and survived. It was through Ralph that I learned of Sanders’ book with its terrible tale of neglected responsibility.

Military historians argue whether the 66th (Black Panther) division was originally intended to reinforce American troops in the Battle of the Bulge, then flaring in all its intensity. Whatever the case, we were given light duty for the rest of the war. We were sent to Lorient, the German submarine base on the Atlantic coast, where, we were told, a thousand Germans had been holed up by Patton’s army in its drive across France. We understood (all three thousand of us) that our mission was to “secure” these Germans, to keep them from coming out of Lorient and linking up with their comrades in the Bulge. Apparently they did not want to come out, happily for us. So we sat out the war on this curious and quiet front while sounds of battle faded in the East. The experience involved me, however, in a situation characterized years later years by striking coincidence. In
April, 1945, just before the end of the war there was little food in Lorient. (We were told later that the Germans had eaten all their horses and dogs.) In order, one surmises, to relieve themselves of a troublesome burden, the citizenry, the Germans allowed several hundred old people as well as young mothers with children, to come out of the port. With several others I was sent to lead them out and to keep them safe from the mines thick on both sides of their exit road. A group of sad-looking, distressed people had slowly formed itself into a column; a friend of mine named Roland Carichner and I were at its head. Toward the rear others from my platoon herded restless children back into the road. Suddenly a photographer ran into the road ahead of us and snapped a picture. "Carichner," I said, thinking the photographer to be an American, "you have been preserved for posterity." In 1997, over forty years later, in France, in Lorient with my wife Edith, I bought a book entitled Lorient sous Occupation, there, on its last page, am I; there is Carichner, preserved for posterity. I am smoking a pipe and there is what appears to be a K-ration mis-shaping my jacket pocket. I was young. I appear untroubled. I suppose I was.
Herman J. Preseren, Lt. Col., U.S. Air Force

I spent my entire tour beyond basic training in physical fitness and athletics with the Army Air Corps, both as an enlisted man and as an officer.

I’d like to reveal a few incidents that may be historically noteworthy. I saw and experienced prejudicial treatment, flagrant effort to avoid physical fitness training, and an unusual method in eliminating flight training.

The military actually was segregated blacks vs. whites, but there were incidents in which both trained side by side. Such was the case in the Air Corps Officer Training Corps at Miami Beach in 1944. In my squadron (I was student squadron commander of Squadron 23) I chose a brown skinned black to march the squadron from our quarters to mess. On the way, a voice from the sidelines shouted, “Who is in charge of the group?” I replied, as I marched alongside and noticed the source of the question being an officer’s, “I am, Sir.” He shouted, “Come over here.” I did and upon approaching he asked, “Who in hell gave you permission to put that n---- in charge?” I replied. “No one, Sir!” “Well, get him out of there” was his answer. I did as ordered and took over the marching. My classmate replied, “There we go again!”

I, too, experienced prejudice at Keesler Field as a Staff Sergeant. I applied for Officers Candidate School upon urgings of my superior officer in January 1943. I passed all qualifications, but for a period of 15 months was never called, not until the Inspector General discovered the situation and told the officer in charge he couldn’t hold back would-be candidates on what he deemed was a noble act of patriotism. Approximately 12 of us were held back because our parents had the wrong birthplace. My father was born in Austria. All of us left on the next shipment in March, 1944.

In the fall of 1944 I was assigned to be in charge of physical fitness and athletics at Pratt AFB. In a few weeks I discovered. through a prevailing system, that men reported attendance yet my examination showed a lack of physical activity. In the prevailing system each person was given a slip indicating attendance and to be deposited in his squadron office. Hundreds of these slips were deposited weekly, but only tens actually
attended the sessions. I discovered that copies of the slips were mimeographed and being sold for three for a dollar. (Three sessions were required each week.) By examining the slips I discovered them to be forgeries. I changed the system to the chagrin of many GIs. Incidentally, the flight officers were the biggest culprits.

During the summer of 1943 at Keesler Field’s basic training center I was put in charge of a group of flight training washouts and to tell them why it was they washed out.

Literally, the Air Corps had thousands of would-be pilots on their hand. The corps needed a faster method for determining who should remain in flight training. A professor at Clark University, Don Super, author of a vocational test was given a major’s commission and asked to take on flight training after which he was to design a test measuring the possible ability of the would-be pilots. He did so and thousands of men were washed out because their scores were too low on his test. These men then were sent to basic training centers such as ours to take basic training. In the meantime they could determine whether to stay in the air corps as enlisted privates or to go home and be drafted. They had the possibility of applying for navigator or bombardier, but not as pilots. From these men there was a hue and cry many claiming, “I know how to fly, they didn’t give me a chance!” My job was to explain what happened and what their future could still be.
Paddison "Pat" Preston, Captain, U. S. Marine Corps

I entered the V-12 program at Duke University on 20 January 1942 after which I was sent to Officer’s Candidate School at Quantico. After being commissioned a Second Lieutenant I was assigned to the 1st Marine Division at Camp LeJeune. The division was sent into the Pacific theater, and at Okinawa I was wounded. I served two years on active duty and two more as a Reservist.

Note: On July 15, 2002 Mrs. Libby Preston wrote the following: "I don't know if you are aware that Pat died very suddenly on June 23, 2002. He was buried in Western Carolina State Veterans Cemetery, Black Mountain, NC on June 27, 2002. Pat was quite proud of having been a Marine Veteran and although he was eligible to be buried at Arlington, we chose the State Cemetery overlooking the beautiful mountains. He's in the right place."

Within a year after Pat’s death, Libby Preston followed him. She was well known for her political stance in Yadkin County.
John F. Reed, Colonel, U. S. Army

Our family lived in Denver, Colorado, during my early teen years. A Mr. Olinger owned a large mortuary and as a hobby he sponsored a military battalion of boys ages 14 and 15, called Olinger’s Highlanders. I became a member. World War I was going on in Europe at this time and the Olinger Highlanders sponsored a drive to sell tickets for a large evening’s entertainment, for the purpose of sending an ambulance to France. My father came up with the suggestion of putting on my uniform and accompanying him to the largest hotel in Denver at which many executives of Denver businesses gathered together to discuss the day’s events. Cadet Reed (me) in uniform approached one of these groups and gave the gentlemen a detailed conversation. One of them, a Mr. Schultz, asked why I was selling tickets and I told him that the Cadet that sells the most tickets gets a wristwatch. Mr. Schultz said, “If you come to my store, I’ll give you a watch.” The next day my father took me to the store and I stated my mission to a clerk, who in turn interrupted Mr. Schultz in conference. When Mr. Schultz saw me he told the clerk to “take this young man to the watch department and give him a watch of his choice.” When the contest was over and awards were made, the last statement was “John Francis Reed will you come forward to receive this award of a watch.” I now had a watch to wear on each arm.

I received a commission in the United States Army through the ROTC program at Penn State University in 1929; later I applied for a regular Army commission. After years of active duty I served in Japan, as a member of General Douglas McArthur’s staff. I ended my 30-year military career as a professor of military science at Wake Forest University, with the rank of Colonel.
MILITARY RECORD

NAME: John F. Reed, Colonel, U. S. Army

ADDRESS: 1200 So. Courtney Pkwy, Apt. 1105
Merritt, Island, FL 32952

MILITARY EXPERIENCE: Map Reading Instructor, Infantry School, Ft. Benning, GA
Assistnt Director & Director, Officer Candidate School, Ft. Benning, GA
Chief Liaison Officer, 38th Infantry Combat Division in Burma and China during World War II
Staff Member to General Douglas MacArthur, Tokyo, Japan
Staff Member to Army Chief of Staff, The Pentagon
Professor, Military Science, Wake Forest University, 1959-1964
Retired from Military, 1964


EDUCATION: Bachelors, Pennsylvania State University, 1929; Masters, Washington & Jefferson College, 1938

VOCATION: High School Teacher and Assistant Principal. Burgettstown, PA prior to military career.
Director of Placement and Student Aid, Wake Forest University, 1964
Paul S. Robinson  
Corporal, U. S. Army

In the fall of 1938, I became organist at Centenary Methodist Church, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. On "Pearl Harbor Day", I played the organ for a community performance of Handel's "Messiah." Exactly two months later, February 7, 1942, in Winston-Salem City Hall, I was inducted into the United States Army.

In the summer of 1942 we were on desert training and maneuvers in the Mojave Desert, California. (Very hot!) In the fall, we were shipped back east to Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania. (Very cold!)

On September 5, 1943 the 3rd Armored Division set sail from New York in a convoy to England. It took eleven days for the crossing, and we spent the winter in southern England near Salisbury. There I encountered a non-military occurrence - a bad case of mumps; spent two weeks in a hospital. In March, 1944, I had two weeks' furlough and visited William Robinson, "cousin" who was a policeman (Bobby) in Carlisle, near the Scottish border.

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About two weeks after D-Day, June 1944, we took part in the Normandy Beach invasion. One morning some shells exploded near our pup-tents. Chaplain Elliot was slightly wounded on one hand. Unknown to me, the Medics sent him back to England for treatment. I was left in charge of his Jeep, with a trailer holding his field desk and personal belongings, and a folding reed organ. He caught up with us about two weeks later when we were well on our way past St. Lo to close the Falaise Gap. We continued east, south of Paris, until we reached Aachen, Germany and set up camp near Stolberg. One night of December 1944 we drove all night to "The Battle of the Bulge" with "Buzz bombs" flying overhead.

In February, 1945 I had a three day pass to Paris to which I travelled via an Army truck convoy.

In July 1945 two chaplains of the Third Armored Division were sent on a special expedition that took us all the way back to the Normandy beaches. The purpose was to visit all the cemeteries along the way where any of our men were buried. Each chaplain
took a photographer whose job was to take a picture of the burial cross of each man who had been killed in action. Later, these pictures were sent to the families of the deceased.

On the following September 21, 1945 I was discharged from the U. S. Army at Indiantown Gap, PA with a total service of three years, seven months and 15 days.

**Organ Music in Battle**: In France and Germany, each chaplain was assigned a folding reed organ, and a box of small Army Hymnals. Thus we could set up for service almost anywhere -- inside or outside. I was able to get a lot of music from that box, pumping slowly for quiet music, and fast for loud. I took good care of it and protected it from dirt and moisture. I wish I could have brought it home with me. In 1951 I received a Doctorate in sacred Music from the Union Theological Seminary made possible through the G.I. Bill. (May 20, 1999)
Wilmer D. Sanders, T/5, U.S. Army

I could write about the goats that had me lying all night behind a fountain waiting for them to move and not answering my "who goes there!" Or I could write an almost humorous incident in Schweinfurt, since it lacks the horrors of combat. As the company interpreter it was my duty not only to clear out several inhabited (unbombed) houses, but to accompany anyone (German) returning usually at four to pick up necessities. One of the first to return was a teenager about 15, tall redhead with the usual backpack. We went to the cellar; his mother needed potatoes. However, when we got to the cellar and when he stooped over to fill his pack, he began to tremble. His answer to my why, "you are going to shoot me, aren't you?" He told me that they were warned about being alone with an Ami. After a few words of assurance he got the potatoes and left. On about his third return, he trusted me and took me up four floors to the attic where he opened a large chest filled with uniforms and memorabilia, all belonging to his father, a captain in the German Navy. He hadn't heard from him in over six months. Unfortunately, in my duties I had to take the antifraternizing rule seriously. I have wished many times that I had broken the law and written down his name and address. It was in Schweinfurt when I received over the radio news that President Roosevelt had just died.

By the way, our unit was the first to enter the concentration camp in Dachau. Luckily my buddy was the Captain's radio man. I was a mile away, merely rounding up German civilians to herd them through the camp to witness the horrible sight.

How We Won The War!

On one occasion while on guard duty at an outpost I heard the guard next to me yell out the challenge. In the distance headed more in his direction than mine I saw three figures coming our way. It was early in the morning and still too dark to recognize anyone. I did hear a muffled sound to the challenge. I then saw two unarmed German soldiers with raised hands, but still somehow able to support a third, a G.I. who also was a guard. As it turned out the Germans had to arouse the guard in order to surrender. In the C.P. the partially sober G.I. was stripped of his stripes by the captain himself. (Unfortunately too often the object most in need of "liberation" was alcohol.)
Early in 1943 about twenty of us at Catawba College were talked into joining the enlisted Reserve Corps. We were told that they would leave us in school as long as possible, and that when they did call us up we would be sent directly to Officers Candidate Schhol immediately upon completion of basic training. Within six months every one of us as a private in the infantry was on our way overseas. I ended up in the Anti-Tank Company of the 112th Regiment, 28th Infantry Division. We spent about seven months in South Wales, and then landed on Omaha Beach on D-Day plus 21. We fought our way through Normandy hedgerows and raced across France with General Patton after the St. Lo breakthrough. The division was transferred to First Army under General Hodges and severely mauled in the fierce fighting in Huertgen Forest. We were sent to Ouer River valley to rest and recuperate.

That was precisely where the German attack struck resulting in the "Battle of the Bulge." The 28th Division was split in two. Two of its regiments were forced into Bastogne, where they holed up with 101st Airborne Division. My regiment ended up on the northern flank of the "Bulge" where it helped to blunt the last gasp of the German attack.

After the "Bulge" was wiped out, our regiment was sent to the German-French-Swiss border to help French 1st Army eliminate the "Colmar Pocket," the last remaining German foothold on west bank of the Rhine River.

We ended up in southwestern Germany on V-E Day. I was blown up by a German Teller mine two weeks later riding in the back of a truck loaded with anti-tank ammunition. Fortunately, none of the shells exploded.
Note: This writer has made every effort to confine this log to matters seen and heard, and to include no facts read or heard after the event unless such facts have been reliably confirmed.

I was assigned to medical unit Foxy 29, a unit composed of doctors and Navy medical corpsmen who were to take part in the invasion of the Normandy beaches during World War II.

I was aboard LST 507 on April 27, 1944, when it left BRIXHAM, England to join convoy T-4, a group of eight LSTs going up the English Channel to participate in a practice invasion at Slapton Sands, near Torcross, England. Each LST had taken several hundred army personnel aboard. On the afternoon of that date, I was on the main deck when a boatswain’s mate instructed the Army personnel how to use the life jackets issued to them. He told them that life jackets or belts must be up under the arm pits if they had to go overboard. Under no circumstances should the jacket or belt be down around the waist “like a cowboy, would wear his gun belt.”

We had been told that day that a GQ (a signal for everyone to go to their assigned battle stations) would occur during the night. At approximately 1:30 A.M. on the morning of April 28, 1944, the GQ alarm sounded. I was in my bunk asleep on the starboard side of the LST. I jumped up, put on a pair of jeans, and went to my station which was one deck which was down in the bow on the port side of the LST. At approximately 2:02 A.M., a loud noise was heard, the ship listed slightly to the side and the lights in the compartment went out. In one corner of the compartment there was a ladder up to the top deck. Several, perhaps fifteen, soldiers were in the compartment with me. I could hear them hurrying to the ladder to get top-side. I waited until all had gone up the ladder, and then went up top-side. All of the middle of the ship was on fire. Ammunition was exploding and the fire was spreading. Vehicles were burning, and gasoline and fuel oil were feeding the fire. Men were jumping over the side. I also could hear men in the water calling for help. I decided to stay aboard ship as long as I could. A boatswain’s mate (I later learned that he was BM 1/C Joseph M. Dinneen) came up to me and asked me to go one deck down with him to get a “handy-billy.” I did not know what a “handy-billy” was, but we went down and with some effort brought up a large hose. He told
me to aim it at the fire and he would go back down and turn the water on. I did so, but no water came. He came back and said that the German torpedoes had hit the power supply and there was no water. He then requested me to help him get some life rafts over the side. He knew exactly what to do to get them over the side and I did what he told me to do. Contrary to Dr. Green’s report in American Heritage Magazine, I do not recall any difficulty in getting the life rafts over the side, but of course a boatswain’s mate would know the procedure involved. We managed to get some rafts into the sea, and I saw men swimming to them when they hit the water. I had decided that when the last life raft went down, I was going with it. By now, I had moved to the starboard side of the LST. Just as we came to the last life raft, I heard a banging noise above me. I looked up, and a man was trying to get a LCVP (small boat, holds about 30 men) down from the davit it was attached to. (I learned later that the man was Owen Sheppard, MM 3/C.) I yelled up and asked him if it was likely he would get it down. He replied in the affirmative and I decided to let the life raft go. It had now been at least twenty minutes since the ship was torpedoed and the deck was getting so hot that I could hardly stand on it. At this point, I do not remember any other man being on the deck. After what seemed to be an hour, but probably was about two minutes, the LSVP began descending. A large chain or rope with a large hook on it swung down, apparently from the davit or LSVP, and the hook hit a glancing blow to my head. I was stunned, and there was some bleeding, but I could not worry about it. The worst part of the injury was keeping the blood out of my eyes. When the LSVP reached the level of the deck, I stepped over into it. When we reached the water, several men climbed into the LSVP. Owen Sheppard and a coxswain (an expert on small boats) were trying to start the motor of the LSVP. (I later learned that the coxswain was William F. Gould.) There was some difficulty in getting all the lines and cables severed, which tied us to the LST. While this was going on, Earl Taylor, PhM 2/C, appeared in the water next to the LSVP. He was so cold he could hardly move. I leaned over the edge of the boat, put both of my arms under his arm pits, but could not lift him. He did not make it to the LSVP, but he did survive. I asked him later why I could not lift him. He said he that dead soldiers had a grip on both his legs. Ordinarily I would not have been able to reach down to him, but by then there were enough men in the LSVP that it was drawing water to within two or three feet of the top of the boat. Burning fuel oil and gasoline flowed from the LST, and continued to burn on top of the water. Many men burned to death in the water. The motor of the LSVP finally started, and we headed away from the LST. The back half of the LST was under water. We saw many soldiers who
were head down in the water, their life belts positioned around their waist so that they could not get their heads up. They forgot Boatswain’s Mate Dinneen’s instructions on how to wear them.

We picked up all the men the boat could hold, and proceeded a safe distance from the LST, expecting it to explode when the fire reached the ammunition hold. However, it never exploded, and the last we saw of LST 507 was the bow sticking out of the water.

We floated around in the water until just before dawn when a ship suddenly appeared. It was too dark for us to identify the ship, but we were relieved when a distinct English voice called out, apparently over a megaphone, "Ahoy small boat. Pull over to the side and we will lower a rope ladder." We climbed the rope ladder and found the ship to be the HMS Saladin, a British destroyer. (I have been told, but cannot confirm, that the HMS Saladin was one of the old destroyers given to England by Franklin D. Roosevelt early in the war.)

We were served breakfast aboard the destroyer. It was composed of fried tomatoes, black bread, some kind of mush, and hot tea. At the time, it seemed a delicious meal!

The destroyer took us into Portland Bill. We then went to Weymouth, where we were given a physical examination. We were told to speak to no one about the event we had experienced, under threat of court martial!

Some of us were then sent to Plymouth for "rest and rehabilitation." Hitler’s V-2 rockets (commonly known as "buzz bombs") were landing in Plymouth every day. The Germans were trying to hit an important railroad bridge. I later understood that they never succeeded. When the buzz bombs were heard, we listened for the motor to stop. That meant the bomb was coming down, and we ran for cover. The Germans had not developed an accurate guidance system for the bombs.

After ten days or two weeks in Plymouth, several of us were assigned to a Navy hospital in Milford Haven, Wales. There we received the casualties from the Normandy invasion.

I stayed in Milford Haven until the following October, when I was sent back to the United States and finished my Navy duty at a Navy Hospital at Camp Bradford, Little Creek, Virginia.

Two LSTs were sunk and another badly damaged in the German E-boat attack. It is generally agreed that nearly eight hundred men were killed by the attack, more men than was lost on Utah Beach on D-Day!

Every April 28th from that day in 1944 until this day, fifty-nine years later in 2003, I have asked the Lord to make my life worthy of being one of so few who survived Exercise Tiger.
Photograph of a Navy LST
David L. Smiley, M/Sgt, S-4, U.S. Army

I enlisted in Mississippi National Guard in 1939 as a musician in a college band that was a regimental band for the 155th Infantry, 31st Division. In November, 1940 the division was activated and sent to Camp Blanding, Florida. When the war began in December, 1941 a regiment was no longer entitled to a band. I was sent to a field artillery group of heavy guns at Camp Bowie, Texas. In October, 1943 we arrived in England. On June, 1944 we crossed Utah Beach, D-plus 6, under fire, and were in combat until we met the Red Army in Saxony near Leipzig. There are five battle stars on my ETO ribbon. In October, 1945 we left Saxony and Germany, and Europe, to return to the USA on the old Queen Mary, to Ft. Shelby, Mississippi, for discharge. Five years: I would take nothing for, nor would I care to have another!

Dr. David Smiley, a beloved history professor, related to me and to others in talks to military groups a few of his thoughts and experiences.

He believed that World War II was the last "clean" war to be had. Future wars may be nuclear, gaseous or biological.

His experience in Army supply during WWII extolled the supply ability: For example, during the "trying" days of the Battle of the Bulge, near zero freezing, every GI received a new, clean pair of socks daily to keep dry feet.

A "Bulge" experience: During the Battle of the Bulge the advantage of battle was with the Germans because of the low cloud cover for days. But finally one morning the sun burst out. Sgt Smiley was up early and out from his tent. In the distance he saw four German Panzer tanks approaching his unit. The tanks began to veer off, one to the right, one to the left, next to the right and the fourth to the left as if to encircle his encampment. His thoughts were to arouse the unit, but just before he moved out of the sky arrived four American fighter planes. In no time the Panzers no longer existed as a viable enemy. Sgt. Smiley, to this day, gives those American flyers his thanks and blessings.

In a parade through a French village two young ladies made comments about Sgt. Smiley's baldness as he rode by. He understood and replied, in French, to the embarrassment of the young ladies who dashed away.
This photograph was made on Sgt. Smiley's last leave before embarkation for Europe. It also represents the day he proposed to his wife, Helen.
Henry S. Stroupe  Ltsg  U. S. Navy

RECOLLECTIONS OF WORLD WAR II

On 7 December 1941, I was an instructor in Social Sciences at Wake Forest College and a part-time graduate student in the Department of History at Duke University. I spent all that Sunday in my room in the basement of Dr. C. C. Pearson’s home writing on my doctoral dissertation, and did not learn about the attack on Pearl Harbor until I went to Miss Jo Williams’ boarding house that evening. During the next several months I continued teaching, completed the Ph.D. degree, was married to Miss Elizabeth Denham, and applied for a commission in the United States Naval Reserve. An unexpected requirement for passing the physical examination to enter service was to have two sound but impacted wisdom teeth extracted lest they cause trouble at sea when dental treatment was not available. On 16 January 1943, I was commissioned an Ensign.

My first orders were to report to the U.S. Navy Pre-Flight School, Chapel Hill, N.C., for “thirty day’s temporary active duty under instruction in connection with the V-5 Instructors’ Course.” The most difficult part of the training program, which was conducted by tough Marine sergeants, was lying on the cold gravel-covered ground of the rifle range trying to score enough hits on a distant target to meet the requirement.

On 2 June 1943, I was assigned to the U.S. Pre-Flight School, Athens, Ga., as an Essentials of Naval Service Instructor. The school used several buildings of the University of Georgia. For this assignment I was able to take my wife along, and we were fortunate to find a small basement apartment in a private home on South Milledge Avenue. The only negative aspect of duty in Athens was not knowing from day to day whether or not orders to ship out would come any minute. My further training, which never did cease, included a shake-down cruise out of Charleston, S.C., aboard a destroyer escort. Most of the officers and crew became violently sea sick. I was also sent to the U.S. Naval Air Station, Glenview, Ill., to observe activities aboard the USS Wolverine, an oil tanker which had been converted into an aircraft carrier. Among the sad things I learned was that several cadets had missed the “postage stamp-sized” landing deck, sending their
planes to the bottom of Lake Michigan.

One vignette will illustrate the problems with which the instructors were confronted in teaching the Naval History segment of the Essentials of Naval Service. The organizers of the course had prepared a syllabus for the use of the instructors in teaching, among other topics, the attempt in 1588 of the Spanish Armada to conquer England. The syllabus stated that the English had sent “five” ships against the Armada, which consisted of more than one hundred ships, and defeated it. My superior officer, who was not a professional historian, was grateful when I pointed out that “five” was a typographical error, that the original author had written that “fire” ships were used by the English to disperse the Armada. Succeeding battalions of cadets got their naval history a little straighter.

Most cadets in the V-5 program came either directly from American schools and colleges or from service in the fleet. The former may have been better students academically, but it was from the latter that we learned in class discussions what life in the Navy was really like. Many had already seen action in the South Pacific and elsewhere.

Days in Athens were long and busy for officers, cadets, and staff, but there were also regular opportunities for entertainment and relaxation. The Pre-Flight School band gave Saturday night concerts, some of which featured well-known popular singers who delighted the audiences. Bob Hope received the most enthusiastic reception of the entertainers I saw. My own most enjoyable experience of this type in Athens happened in the fall of 1944, when the Wake Forest College football team came to town and defeated the University of Georgia Bulldogs. Another highlight was my winning of the prize Captain Smith gave for the best Victory Garden grown by officers attached to the base.

On 26 October 1945, I was ordered to report to the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Navy Department, Washington, D.C., as a Historical Officer. I spent the next three months helping write the medical history of the Navy in the Philippines, including Bataan. Our principal sources of information were the logs of Naval establishments and ships in the area.

On 1 January 1946, I was promoted from Lieutenant Junior Grade to Lieutenant. On 15 January 1946, the Chief of Naval Personnel released me from active duty and the next day Elizabeth, Stephen (born during the war), and I drove to Wake Forest,
arriving in the midst of a major snow storm. Mrs. J. H. Gorrell had agreed to rent us an apartment in her home on Faculty Avenue. I resumed teaching at the beginning of the second semester. My separation from the Naval Reserve was completed 1 September 1955.
Lyell enlisted into the Navy on September 13, 1943 and applied for a commission thereafter. He was commissioned an Ensign at Notre Dame on August 4, 1944. I was at Berea College, Kentucky, at the time and engaged. We had planned to be married upon his graduation. His commissioning was on a Friday, and our marriage took place the next day on August 5, 1944. He wore his white dress naval uniform for the first time at the wedding.

I accompanied Lyell to all of his stations state-wide. Our biggest problem at all places were an effort to find adequate living accommodations; seldom did we find a suitable apartment. Another problem existed in crowded transportation as we moved back and forth across the nation.

His first assignment was to attend communications school in Boston. This was a three month tour, but Lyell was not allowed to live off base for the first month, however, we saw each other on the weekends.

Now as a communications officer he was sent to Miami for one month and then to San Francisco, here but for only ten days. I had to find living quarters for myself because Lyell was sent to Hawaii to a Radar Training Center. He was assigned to the USS LaVallette, DD 448, which he boarded at sea near the Philippines and, later, returned to San Francisco. With a two weeks allotted leave we travelled back to Berea and eventually again to Frisco. There we celebrated VJ Day.

Upon discharge Lyell remained in the Navy Reserve program and served as the Naval Academy Information Officer, Coordinator for the state of North Carolina. His entire military service totalled 23 years.
Lowell R. Tillett, TSgt, U.S. Army Air Corps

Lowell was at Carson-Newman College, Tennessee, when he was drafted into the Army in February, 1943. After his basic training he was sent to Scott AFB to attend the Radio Operations and Mechanics School for an intensive 20 weeks of schooling. His height of 5'7" and light of weight, 116 lbs., qualified him possibly for an aircraft gunner; sent to Aerial Gunnery School, Kingman, Arizona for six weeks. The training provided him a specialty of radio operator, mechanic and gunner.

In March of 1944 he was sent to North Africa; thence to Elmas AFB, Sardinia, and finally to Villacidro, Spain where he joined a team of a B-26 Bomber cadre in the 37th Bomber Squadron of the 17th Bombardment Group. Thereafter, he flew 66 missions over various enemy targets in Europe. For his squadron's valiant actions Charles de Gaulle, President of the French Provisional government, cited them with the Croix de Guerre avec Palme with this notation: "for its outstanding part in the preparation and support of allied offensive in Italy which began on 11 May 1944, by attacking and destroying many most important objectives in support of the French Army, despite intense, heavy and accurate anti-aircraft fire." Personally, he was awarded the Air Medal which contained eleven oakleaf clusters, spent a year in the European theater and returned home with an honorable discharge in August 1945, after which he returned to his educational career.

"Needless to say, Lowell enjoyed seeing foreign countries: becoming acquainted with French, Italian, and German peoples; enjoying landscapes, towns, and lakes; attending as many operas, concerts, and plays as possible. You'd hardly suspect him of being a bomber. He took an Army college level course in music appreciation, trying as best he could while journeying from camp to camp to hang onto his precious 78 recordings."

Tom Phillips for Anne Tillet
Thank you for giving me the opportunity to remember World War II years and Jim Weaver’s experience. Florence Weaver, our daughter, and I enjoyed sharing our memories of those years. We hope the following account, while different from other’s wartime experiences, is another perspective on the effect of WWII on the post war activities of those who willingly volunteered their time in the service of their country.

Jim Weaver was eager to join the forces in WWII and would have welcomed a more active role than he had. Both his wartime assignments were in the USA, the first in the Tom Hamilton Pre-flight Program at Athens, Georgia, and the second at Ward Island, Corpus Christi, Texas. I remember how perplexed he was in Athens when his platoon had to take up streetcar rails in downtown Athens and, later, when he had to oversee a large Victory Garden. The contribution to the war effort was that it kept the young men physically fit and occupied. He understood the connection better when he was involved with the Obstacle Course, which was indeed physically challenging.

The association with other officers whose civilian occupation was athletics was especially meaningful to Jim Weaver and led to post war connections that were professionally rewarding. For instance, Jim’s friendship with Matty Bell, Athletics Director at SMU, led to the two men scheduling a game between SMU and WFC after the war. It was a very lucrative contract which benefited both schools but WFC, in particular, as the proceeds were used to increase faculty salaries that were woefully low at the time. The war had unintended consequences for those involved and some of these were positive and favorable to those who enlisted and to the institutions which they later served.

...Kate Barrow
As a young, eager Lt(jg) aboard the USS Lamprey (SS 372) I was sometimes thought to be overly enthusiastic in my job. The captain chided me once for being too cheerful early in the morning! On another occasion, at night, we were on the surface stalking a troop carrier close to shore in the South China Sea. Each time we got close to the firing point they would detect us (since we couldn’t submerge in the shallow water) and retreat up the coast. After this happened three times, I blurted out, "Let’s go get ‘em, Capn." But he didn’t take my advice and we returned to deeper water. The next day the Chief of the Boat (non-commissioned officers who really run the Navy) called me aside and let me know in no uncertain terms that he had been out there long enough, he wanted to get home to his family safe and sound, the Captain knew what he was doing, and I should keep my advice to myself. I did, the bomb was dropped, we returned to Pearl Harbor, then safely to San Francisco where we put the Lamprey into moth balls. I was one of the last to leave the ship.
Edwin Graves Wilson, Lt., U.S. Navy

Although I was on a destroyer escort during several campaigns against the Japanese (notably in attacks against Iwo Jima and Okinawa), my most memorable and most frightening wartime experiences occurred outside combat areas and had nothing to do with the conduct of the war.

First, my ship, along with many other U.S. vessels, was, for hours, close to destruction in a fierce typhoon in the Central Pacific Ocean in 1945. I remember being awakened by "General Quarters" about 3:00 in the middle of the night. I dressed quickly, went topside to see waves such as I could never imagine, and hurried to my battle station one deck below the bridge in the Combat Information Center. Before long we were in the middle of the typhoon, the ship's inclinometer showing that the ship was leaning 45 degrees to port and then to starboard, with powerful waves washing over the ship with such force that surviving seemed almost impossible. Other American ships were, in fact, destroyed, but, thanks to an extraordinarily skillful captain, our ship went through the storm without loss of life and without serious damage to the vessel. By nightfall we knew we were safe, and we were happy to receive orders to return to the naval base at Ulithi.

Some weeks later we were anchored in the harbor at Ulithi. Everything was quiet. Then early one morning a sailor who had always behaved, but presumably was under severe stress because of an absence from home for more than a year, found a pistol, rushed into the wardroom, killed one officer who was still in bed, wounded another who was up and around, and then went outside, acting wildly, to the place where another sailor was standing watch at the gangplank to the ship. The sailor on watch was, according to regulations, armed. He saw the crazed sailor coming, immediately understood what was happening, and shot him. For along time thereafter we were in shock that in such a peaceful place, so far away from the enemy, two of our fellow seamen could have become tragic victims of the War.
THEY SERVED HONORABLY

(For the following efforts were made to obtain military records, but for one reason or another were not available. There may be others; we regret any omission.)

Archie, William
Berry, Paul
Blalock, Carey
Browning, Robert
Copeland, Worth
Drake, Justus
Githens, Sherwood
Hagood, Johnson
Heath, Ralph
Machen, Ernest
McDonald, Thane
McGruder, Farris
Parcell, Harold
Rector, Lloyd
Robinson, Zon
Rogers, Gaines
Scales, James
Scott, Karl
Soule, William
Taylor, Charles
Taylor, James
Wiggins, Norman