

44th TANK BATTALION: Journal of S/Sgt Ray “Red” Cartier

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PREFACE

I suppose, being late in time, this book, or journal, or whatever, must be written.

My granddaughter, Kristine, had interviewed me for a school assignment over the phone, asking, "What was the single most important thing that happened to you, years ago, when you were just out of school?"

One of the biggest things going on was that Europe was going up in flames. Germany had invaded Poland and it seemed to be on everyone's mind, that soon or later we'd be dragged into it.

Then Kris asked about my days in the service. Over the phone things did not turn out correctly. The transmission must have not been too clear. When I read her school report, on which she got an A+, my story had come out that we had invaded Japan, which we didn't. We occupied Japan, in 1945. After a period of untold hardships, Japan surrendered and THE WAR came to an end.

After reading her report and telling her about the mistakes I found, Kris said, "Grandpa, why don't you write your story so I can have it?"

As I wrote, Europe was in turmoil and on December 7th, 1941, Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese, without warning, and the United States entered WW II.

On July 11th, 1942, Ethel MacFee, of Wellesley, Massachusetts became my bride. We were married in Wellesley and lived in Hopkinton, Massachusetts, my home town, until I was drafted by the U.S. Government on October 23, 1942. I became G.I. # 31210202 and was inducted into the U.S. Army at Fort Devens, Massachusetts.

So the important things were, the war in Europe, Pearl Harbor, our marriage, AND being inducted.

Now with Kristine urging me to get started, and my wife reminding me to do so, I dedicate this book to them both.

This is my story of THE war.

A booklet has been published by the 44th Tank Battalion, "Tank Tracks, Tennessee to Tokyo" that will more or less collaborate what I write here.

CHAPTER 1

I must start this story a few years before THE War.

While in Hopkinton High, I was a member of the football team and at the Wilmington game, I received a serious head injury which sidelined me for good. This is only to point out that while recuperating I had more of an opportunity to listen to the radio than most fellows of my age.

Europe was in a turmoil, and it was going from bad to worse. The saying of the day was, "We'll get dragged into it for sure, wait and see." It was on everyone's minds and every night on the radio we'd all be reminded that things weren't getting any better. So the immediate future didn't look too good for the young men of the country. Some fellows did go in, under that old draft that said, "Only for a year." There was even a popular song that came out, "Good-bye Dear, I'll be back in a year." That was in '38 – '39. Seven and eight years later some of these same guys who went in "For a Year" were released from active duty.

Writing this is only to point out what was lying ahead for the young men of the country.

Europe did go up in flames and the rest of the world watched. England finally entered the conflict but could not halt the mighty German army from taking France and all remaining countries. England tried and suffered heavy losses at Dunkirk.

On December 7th, 1941 Japan decided that she was powerful enough to deal us a mighty blow, did so, and attacked Pearl Harbor. It was devastating to the American people. Who would dare think of such an act, to be carried out against the great United States. Our country went to war against the Axis, which included Germany, Italy and Japan.

The boys who were singing "Good-bye Dear, I'll be back in a year" now knew that they were in for the duration. That became a household word, the duration. When one volunteered, or was drafted, it was for "the duration." And no one knew how long that would be, and no one was second-guessing.

Many of my friends volunteered, many waited to be drafted. I was with the latter group. Why hurry up to get yourself killed. When they called me in the draft would be time enough to go. So I waited and the following July, I was married to Ethel MacFee, and no draft calling as yet.

On July 11th, 1942 we were married in Wellesley at Ethel's sister's house. Who cried the most was her brother-in-law who was 6 foot 4 and weighed over 200 pounds. We lived in Hopkinton, Massachusetts, and it wasn't too long after the wedding that my draft number came up and, as the saying went, "My number was up."

Ethel never went to the post office to pick up our mail; I always stopped on the way home from working at Telechron, G.E. and picked it up. The day my notice (arrived) to report for my physical, she had walked uptown and received the notice. She was outside the post office crying when I arrived a few minutes later.

The physical was to be held the following week, at a four-story garage on Commonwealth Ave, Boston. To report by 8:00 AM sharp. And they meant 8:00 AM. When I finally found a place to park and got to the building and signed in, I had about 15 minutes to go. But others, not allowing enough time to find a place to park, were in line waiting to sign in when 8:00 AM arrived. They found out right then and there, military life was going to be something else!

“You bozoos can’t tell time, you can’t think for yourselves and plan to arrive at a destination on time?” “Well, we’re just the people to teach you how.” This, we found out later, came from one of our two guides for the day, who had been put on a hold-over, given uniforms the week before, and were now acting that they were career soldiers and we were the inductees.

This exam wasn’t all fun and games. The first order from our so-called wonder-boys was to disrobe, all but our shoes, stack our clothes in the lockers, pick up a towel to wrap around us, and get in line according to the alphabet. After some confusion, this was accomplished and we were ready.

We were told that after every exam, we were to stay in alphabetic order and proceed to the next station. We had to answer all these questions and statements by a very loud “Yes sir.” “We understand sir.” Of course we had to practice this “Yes sir,” “No sir,” and “We understand sir” many times until we had it down perfect. As I wrote, at a later time we found out that these two guys were nothing but a pair of “Jokers.” We learned slow, but we learned.

One Army doctor was for hearing. The saying was, “If he can look into your ear and not see anyone on the other side, you’re in,” or whispering in your ear, “Do you like girls?” The immediate “Huh!” for the startled answer was a dead give-away, you could hear. So you passed the hearing test with a 100% mark.

One G.I. to be had one eye. No fooling, one eye. He had told us he had tried to volunteer in the Navy, the Marines, the Army—with no takers. Then he got the notice to appear for the physical. He was walking on air. Maybe this time! But again, at the eye test station, he was again turned down. BUT, after the doc listened to his pleas, the doc and “One-eye” went for a walk. Later on during the day, we all found out that he was accepted for limited duty in the quartermasters. He must have been one happy fellow.

They did give your heart and physical status a good going over. Most of us were young, in the 20 to 25 range, a few in the older category, the 30s. But most were in that young age of “Let’s go and get this war over with, I have other things to do.” Oh boy! Did we learn, we learned slow. But we learned.

Maybe one of the funniest “stations” of the day was when we were told to fill a bottle for the urine test. Well, in our group we had two guys who were buddies and they had shown up, as early as it was, 8:00 AM, a little on the “tipsy side.” A few shades from being intoxicated. These two guys had us

laughing all the morning and were told to knock it off and get with it by our "Guides." Of course the two kept it up and many times we all were in gales of laughter, and this bottle test was the crowning event. When we walked into the "latrine," we were told to take a bottle from the shelf, fill it, and then put it back on the shelf with a card that had our name on it. This we all did, except the "buddies." They proceeded to fill bottle after bottle, and made sure that every bottle that they filled had their card with their name on it, put back on the shelf in its proper place. This caused those of us in the "latrine" to chuckle, but as more bottles were filled, it became a hearty laugh. This caused those who were not in the "latrine" to crowd in to see what was going on. Now the place was packed solid, and the antics of our good friends, the "buddies," continued. They even asked and received more bottles, which they proceeded to fill. This caused an uproar on our part, and our "wonder boys" tried to get in to see what was going on. When they found their way blocked by all of us, they went around and came in from the other side, saw what was going on, and all hell broke loose. They were irate! They called the MPs who appeared in a flash. The "latrine" was cleared and our "buddies" were hustled off to parts unknown, each escorted by an MP. We never did find out what happened, but it was our first experience with Military Police. It wasn't going to be our last, over the next three years, nor were we to like them any better.

Well, that is neither here nor there. After many more hours of exams, they finally came to an end. Most of us knew we had passed with flying colors. We were all escorted to a huge room, lined up "in ranks," and told to count off (after an explanation on what "counting off" was all about). Then the odd numbers were asked to take one step to the rear. After more confusion, this was accomplished. All this seemed kinda odd, but there was a reason, being now the officer and the non-coms (non-commissioned officer) could look up and down the line to see each individual. Then we were asked to raise our right hand. Now all this counting off and stepping to the rear made sense. They could not walk up and down the line and see who had and had not raised their hands for the oath of allegiance to the United States. Surprisingly, there were three who did not, and they were escorted immediately out of the room, without ceremony. Then the oath was given to us, and we became soldiers of the United States Army.

So on October 10, 1942, I, with the others, were given orders to return home and await further orders for active duty. We would be notified in a short time where and when we were to report.

We were now in the Army!

CHAPTER 2

We all went back of our place of employment, to wait for the arrival of the orders to report for active duty.

I must go back a few years, to 1940. After graduating from Hopkinton High, in Hopkinton, Massachusetts, I was employed by Telechron Company, which in a few years would become a division of General Electric. My grandfather worked in the punch press department and I was always fascinated by the machinery. I was determined to become a machinist, as my grandfather had been. He had worked for Brown & Sharp, in Providence, Rhode Island before returning to his hometown of Hopkinton and getting employed by Telechron Inc. My grandfather, who I called "Bamp," advised me to go down to Telechron and ask for an application for employment. I did, was hired, and spent 33 years with the company (getting ahead of myself...)

So let's return to 1942, and I'm at work and just about ready to punch out and go home. Those of us who had taken the physical were getting edgy. We knew the time was getting short and we'd be getting our orders soon. So a lot of us were standing around wondering who would be the first to receive the orders. It sure didn't take long to get the answer.

On the way home my usual first stop was at the post office; who was outside crying? My bride of four months, Ethel! She never went to the post office, and here it is, the second time that she has done it, and I receive THE letter. BOY! They sure were nice. Upon opening it, the first thing you read is, "GREETINGS." Here is the U.S. Government, sending you a personal letter, and it's "GREETINGS." It sure didn't take an M.I.T. professor to know that this was BAD NEWS. "GREETINGS" indeed.

After many tears, I guess by both of us, we did have to get down to reality. I had about a week to get things in order before I had to report. Of course, the people of Telechron held a huge party for all of us who were leaving for the service. It was held at the Marlboro Country Club and it would be easier to mention those who were not there than to mention those who were. They were very generous. I remember there were three of us who were leaving at the same time, Fran McIntyer, Al Award, and myself. There were many others from the Ashland, Hopkinton area, but we three worked for Telechron.

The last day we worked, it was bedlam. It seemed nobody worked that afternoon. It was, "Good-bye," "Take care of yourself," "Good luck," and many hearty handshakes and many hugs from the ladies and also from the men. They knew that this wasn't any tea party we were going it.

The last few days at home were quiet ones. We wanted to be alone and that was the way it was. We did visit a friend of ours, Barbara Achron and her new baby at the Framingham Hospital. Of course husband Everett was there also. Susan Achron was born the day before we were to report.

The orders read: assemble at Neven's Hall, Framingham, Massachusetts on October 23, 1942. A rollcall will be read at 1000 hours. (What the hell was 1000 hours?) We soon found out that meant

10:00 AM, and you had better answer your name when it was called, OR YOU'RE A.W.O.L. right before you start. We were learning, and fast.

On the day of departure, there must have been three, maybe four hundred of us new soldiers reporting. We march down Concord Street to the railroad station with a huge band in front playing military tunes. Of course we were all proud as could be, and every damn one of us out of step with the music. One fellow said that he was only one in step during the march.

At the station we again said good-bye to wives, mothers, fathers, sweethearts and everyone else who was around. Then it was "All aboard" and our train headed north to Fort Devans.

I can't remember the time that the train pulled into Fort Devans. But we all can remember, after getting off the train, we were exposed to things that were to come. The Cadre! These guys were old soldiers and they didn't even want us to smile. WOW! "Get out here and get in formation." "What a bunch of 'Yard-birds' and they're all mine." First time we heard the term "Yard-bird" but it sure wasn't the last. Off to the barracks, and assigned quarters. Then, go get your bedding, mattress, sheets, pillow and O.D. blanket. Back to the barracks and a lesson on how to make a bed. Then go make your own. I bet most of us made it at least three times before the idiot who tore them apart because HE didn't like the way it looked, said that they were good enough for now.

After all the beds were in order, some guy was outside blowing a whistle. Of course we wondered who in hell was blowing the whistle. Wow! It was one of those old soldiers and he sure wasn't pleased at all. We again got a dressing down on being yard-birds and not knowing anything. But we thought that if they wanted us, they'd blow a bugle, just like in the movies. Were we ever wrong! From that time on, anytime we heard a whistle, we moved! He now wanted us to "Fall in" and get over to the supply shed and get our uniforms.

Each of us, in order, went up the ramp into the building and there we were given our O.D. uniform (O.D., olive drab in color). By the time I got into the building the supply sergeant must have lost his marbles. The shirt was way too big, my pants were for a guy 6 foot 3, 36 waist. I'm 5 foot 7, and was 145 pounds, and this guy thinks a giant is standing in front of him. My shoes are size 8s, I take a size 7. My overcoat, I think he thought there were two of me, way too big. By the time I got to the sergeant who checked everything, the only thing that fitted me was the overseas cap. He took one look and said, "Come on young fellow, let's see if I can correct what these guys have done to you." He was old army, one look and you could tell that he had been around serving his army for a long, long time.

We started back at the beginning, and by the time I went out the door, "Ole Army" had refitted me to a "T." Everything was like it was special ordered. Going out the door, "Ole Army" gave me a pat on the back and said, "Good luck soldier, hope everything works out for the best." Now that made me feel damn good, it was the first time anyone called me a soldier.

After returning to the barracks, we were told to stay put and "chow" would be served soon. This was supper, and after supper it would be free time. BUT, we were not to use the phones. "Chow" was o.k. but of course there were many who passed it up because it wasn't like mother's cooking. They realized the next day that it was going to be a long time before they had another of their mother's meals. The phones, well, we found ones that nobody seemed to be watching, but the line was a hundred yards long and "lights out" was at 9:00 PM (2100 hours). Those who made connections on their phone calls were happy that they had gotten through.

Sleep was upon most of us in a very short time, but many were troubled and you could hear the sobs of those who were finding that army life wasn't going to be all peaches and cream. (I found many draftees, over the months to come, who had a hard job adjusting to army life.) (If one dared speak to them, about hearing the sobs during the night, one would find his head rolling down the barracks floor.)

The next morning came very, very early, 5:30 AM (0530 hours), and we soon found out that your feet had better be on the floor when the CQ came back from the other end. (CQ, charge of quarters). He's the guy who is supposed to wake up the bugler, but we had no bugler at Fort Devens, it came over a loud speaker from a recording.

At Devens we learned what "fall in" and "fall out" was all about, especially at 0530. When you heard that whistle from outside and your barracks leader yelling, "Fall in, fall in," "Move it, move it, move it; let's go, let's go, go, go, go, get out of here," you did understand that he wanted you to get out of the barracks and "fall in" outside in some kind of rank or ranks. There your name was yelled, last name only, and you better yell back just as loud, "Here!" After roll call, that's what all was about, to make sure none of us skipped out during the night, chow was served.

We'd get the order of "Right face" or "Left face" and, being Yard-birds, we were all bamboozled by all this military talk and jargon. (But we soon learned what was what, because for nothing better to do, they drilled us for hours on end.) So it was off to the mess-hall (dining hall) and there we did have a good breakfast. After mess, a meal, we again heard the whistle and the command, "Fall in" Let's go, let's go, go, go," and we went. Now it was a little doubletime, a little marching, and whatever else they could find to keep us busy for a few hours.

We did get a few lectures on military courtesy, such as every time you met an officer, you must salute him. There must have been 100 skillion officers stationed at Fort Devens; our arms were weary from all the saluting. But salute you must, military courtesy.

We also got some of our shots at Devens, one being the tetanus shot, the first of a series for tetanus. It made your arm as sore as could be the following day. Well, the next morning, at reveille (first call of the day), we found our arms hanging by our sides, too sore to move. Our barracks leader, who we found out later was one of the earlier yard-birds to arrive at Devens but couldn't get the right size shoe for his left foot, so as a hold-over, he was made master of our barracks, second floor. Well, to make a long story short, he didn't like the way that Bill Hanahy (from Hopkinton) nor myself snapped to

When he was yelling, "Let's go, let's go, go, go, go." So Bill and myself found out later that day that we had to scrub the barracks floor, on our knees, with scrub brushes supplied by the U.S. Army. What a hell of a job, especially when your arm felt like it did. We had to move all the bunks to one side, scrub that area, move all bunks to the other side, scrub there, and then put all the bunks back where they belonged. Our first punishment detail!

At Devens we were interviewed for the different branches of service we knew about. The sergeant who was interviewing me was a career soldier who came from Ashland, and he knew quite a few of the fellows who were before him now. I had been taking flying lessons at Bay State Airport in Westboro and thought maybe I could get into the Air Force. I was just about a half hour from getting my solo permit and thought, "Boy, I'm going to be in the Air Force." He never looked up but said, "Tanks." Tanks it was. Africa was happening and they needed "bodies" for the Tank Corps, so tanks it was.

A few days later, we all got the order to stand by, we would be moving to an Army base soon, somewhere in the U.S.

That weekend we were allowed visitors and our families all arrived to see their soldiers. Ethel came early and stayed as long as she could. My mother, my grandmother, my aunts, my brother, they all came. Of course it was again hard to say "Good-bye." But the good-byes were said later that afternoon and we knew that the next time we saw them, it would not be in the state of Massachusetts.

CHAPTER 3

The orders for our departure soon arrived and on an early fall day, we were loaded onto trucks and driven to the railhead at Fort Devens. Our duffle bags were our responsibility and we made sure we had our own. Carrying our equipment to the train, boarding and finding your assigned seat and sleeping quarters, took only a few hours for hundreds of draftees. As we entered each coach, a sergeant assigned you to a bunk buddy, or you were lucky and drew the upper bunk. Well, I was unlucky, in more ways than one. I drew a lower bunk and the guy that was going to be a bunk buddy was, by the look of him, one who didn't believe in cleaning up. He was one big dirty individual. I told the sergeant that I preferred the floor. Now, that caused one big hullabaloo. The sergeant is yelling in my ear that I'd sleep where I was told to sleep, and I was yelling back at him that I sure as hell wasn't going to sleep with anyone who hadn't looked at soap and water since they arrived at Devens. I sure didn't gather any points with this situation. I was in trouble right off and knew it. But to my rescue came another "draftee" who had no one assigned to share the lower bunk. I was rescued, but that sergeant had me on the list, from there to our departure from the train.

The train finally moved out of Fort Devens but no one knew in what direction, north, south, east or west. After about an hour of riding, some in our section knew the area and decided we were going

south. So south it was, but where in the south. All of us wondered and many were laying bets that they knew where. (No one did guess where we were going.)

Chow time on a troop train is something to see. Each of us would take our mess kit and cup and get in line and almost walk the entire length of the train, passing through the “kitchen;” then we’d reverse and as we went through the “kitchen” this time we’d get our food and coffee. So as direction was reversed, the last car was the first to get fed, then the next car and so forth. Kinda kept things moving, no long wait to be fed.

That night, sleeping on the train, being a new experience for most of us, was hard. A lot of us were trying to locate where we were and where we were headed. As we approached a train station, we’d try to get a glimpse of the name of the town or city. Many stations went by but we never did get to see a sign. Too dark for one thing and that troop train wasn’t slowing down at all going through a town or city. But we did know we were headed south.

The next morning the bacon and eggs hit the spot and the black coffee wasn’t too bad either. By the time we had eaten and cleaned the coach, put the bunks back up where they belonged, it was time to relax. Some just talked to others, some found decks of cards and card games were started. NO GAMBLING! That came over loud and clear. And we still headed south. It was a long day, but it finally became nighttime and everyone seemed to quiet down. We all just stared out the windows at the passing lights, still wondering where we were going.

Morning came, and those in the know still insisted we were headed south. The rumors were flying high at breakfast. After the coach was back in order, many continued the card games or got acquainted with new friends. After lunch our Sergeant told us to pack our gear and be ready to debark in a few hours. By the time we did get everything in order, the train seemed to slow down and we went onto a siding. From there it turned toward this complex of buildings. We were there!

Our train pulled into a railhead, stopped, and we were ordered to stand by our gear. Trucks pulled into the yard and we saw for the first time our “Cadre,” those old soldiers who were going to be on our backs for the duration. Right off, we were told to get moving, move, move, move! As we stumbled off the train with our duffle bags, we were told to fall in “on the double.” This meant, get the lead out. MOVE!

We were at Camp Campbell, Kentucky, the home of the 12th Armored Division.

As our names were called, we climbed aboard the appointed trucks and off we went in the direction of all those look-alike buildings. We were delivered to our destination and a “welcome committee” of “cadre” were eagerly waiting for our arrival. We soon knew that we, the raw recruits, were in for a rough time.

One of the cadre, we soon found out, was our good “friend” to be, 1st Sergeant Jenkins. (We found out later that this “old Army career soldier” never had a friend in his life, not even his mother.)

He was a career soldier from the top of his head to the bottom of his shining shoes. He was all Army! Within five seconds we believed him to the utmost. He was to be addressed as 1st Sgt Jenkins at all times; the other cadre were to be addressed by rank also. Period! We were ordered to stand at attention until directed to do otherwise. We were not to speak in ranks, unless spoken to, and it was to answer the question asked. At all other times, shut up.

He then introduced the other cadremen. Staff Sergeant Yates, platoon sergeant; Staff Sergeant Mitchell, platoon sergeant; Staff Sergeant Drennon, platoon sergeant; Staff Sergeant Fredericks, platoon sergeant; Staff Sergeant Everett, platoon sergeant; Staff Sergeant Heckett, supply sergeant; Staff Sergeant Jackson, motor-pool; Staff Sergeant Stayton, first cook. Then it was the sergeants: Hacker, communications; Parker, gunnery. That more or less completes the cadre list. Each was to become a big part of our lives, immediately.

We were then assigned barracks. I was assigned the first floor, with others, and we became 1st platoon. Each recruit was assigned a platoon and a barracks and a platoon sergeant. We had S/Sgt Mitchell.

We were dismissed to get assigned bunks, gather our bedding from the supply sergeant, and our towels and other goodies were given out. We spent about an hour learning the military way to make a bunk, the military way to hang your cloths. All of this was to be accomplished by 1530 hours. At that time we were to be ready for formation.

At 1530 the whistle was blown (this whistle, we were to hear many, many times over the months to come) and that meant "Fall in!" On the double! "Move it, move it, move, move, move!" Of course we didn't move fast enough for 1st Sgt Jenkins and we then were "dressed down." Standing at attention, we were lectured on how to fall out. "When you hear that whistle blow, I want you all to come cheer, to come cheer in a hurry." "You all understand!" No matter how many of us were standing in front of him, one or one hundred and one, it was always, "You all."

Heaven help the yard-bird who falls out for formation and isn't in the proper uniform called for. Like you ran like hell but you forgot your cap. Another lecture to us all on how to appear in ranks in the proper uniform. The no-hat soldier became an instant idiot and was told, "Go back and get your G—D—hat, and don't ever come out of that barracks without being in the proper uniform." "You all got that?" We sure did, we were leaning how to be good soldiers mighty fast. Don't ever forget your hat!

As were assembled, we knew we were in for some real tough "basic training." These career soldiers were rough and they were damn tough; in the coming months they proved it many times over.

Now it was time for a scenic tour of the base. A "Right Face" and off we marched. Four miles later, we had found out where the Field House was located, also Regimental Headquarters, the chapel, the PX (Post Exchange), 2nd Battalion Headquarters, the motor-pool, the bus stops (for whenever we were allowed to go to town), etc, then back to our barracks.

When we arrived back at our company area, we were greeted by our Company Commander, 1st Lieutenant Ciangillo. He then introduced the other officers who were assigned to Company "D." Lt Parks, Lt LaManna, Lt Lutus, and Lt Leary (others came and went to other assignments). These were the officers we had as we became Company D, 44th Armored Regiment, 12th Armored Division. "THE HELLCATS!"

There were other officers who were assigned to Company D. They came, then they were reassigned to other units. Some returned at a later date to Company D. Lt Julian P VanWinkle was one of these officers. After Tennessee maneuvers, he became our company commander, replacing Capt Fawks (more on this later).

CHAPTER 4

Company D was not at full strength until a few weeks after our arrival. In the meantime, those of us who were early birds were given driving tests. On how to handle a wheelbarrow! Camp Campbell was so new that we had arrived before the company streets were finished. The gravel was dumped at the end of the street and us drivers of wheelbarrows loaded up with gravel and spread it where it filled the hollows. We had a lance corporal, L/Cpl Lasky, who was in charge. Put it here, put it there, keep it coming, all kinds of orders. He became one big problem and started to make life miserable for many of us, me being on top of the list.

He had arrived about four days ahead of us and knew what had to be done, so they made him a Lance Corporal. Two stripes on a white banner, worn on the upper left arm (big deal). We had been working hard all morning and it was time for a break. We all smoked back then, and I started off to get a cigarette and sit down and relax. Naturally Lasky wanted me to keep going and move a couple more loads. Everyone else was having their break. After a few words, I threatened to blacken both his eyes if he didn't get off my back. Well, Lasky reported me to 1st Sgt Jenkins and I ended up with extra detail, like scrubbing under the kitchen sinks after chow. I finished at 1800 hours.

The next morning when I saw Lasky on the gravel detail, I not only threatened to blacken both his eyes but to break his G—D--- neck. This time there wasn't any report to 1st Sgt Jenkins and later I found that he had caused others to get extra details and he had been threatened with more bodily harm. So he backed off and got off our backs. Later he asked for and received a transfer to another unit for something else that he did that was stupid. More on that later.

Training began in earnest. Up at 0530, on the road for a mile doubletime, then chow. Then it was classes on military courtesy and the general orders, which we had to learn and memorize entirely. Our shots were given at the dispensary, by medics in training. It seemed the bigger the GI, the less he liked getting his shots. Saw many a big "Timber" hit the floor after he got the needle. Then it was back to classes.

Every day we had calisthenics. Sometimes the cadre would let the yard-birds lead and conduct the drill. Sometimes we would try to see who could do the most push-ups. In time, I noticed many of the flabby ones losing the flab and being able to stay with the platoon on the five- or ten-mile hikes. I wasn't in too bad a shape so I didn't mind too much. One day Sgt Mitchell told me to be the standard carrier, which meant I was lead man, carrying the standard (our Co D, 44th Armored Reg. flag). I wondered why I kept getting that duty until I finally got the nerve to ask. I was told that I had a good pace and during the five mile and ten mile hikes I never showed I was tired. So I became the "Standard Bearer" and our platoon became tougher and tougher.

We did good in all the basic training and wondered when we'd get with the tanks. We fired the rifles, the pistols, took hand-to-hand bayonet training; that was hard. Many a time I got the ole scabbard right in the tummy. Damn, that hurt. I swore right there and then I would NEVER, NEVER run out of bullets.

I became an expert with all weapons (got the badge to prove it and it's on my service record). All except the revolver. The old Army 45 revolver was so big my small hands could not squeeze off the trigger. The cylinder became troublesome because I had to put one finger alongside of it to fire. I couldn't hit the target. After many, many tries and still not qualifying, the instructor told the firing range to cease fire to the right and to the left (these orders are going over a loud speaker system). When all firing stopped, he took me out to the target and introduced me to this target that I could hit with a 45 bullet. The entire bunch of GIs who were on the firing line gave me the old "Haw Haw" and I knew that I was in for a lot of kidding. I had to qualify, no matter what. Back to the firing line, load and fire! I finally found a way to hold that junior cannon and get the round off without jerking the gun. I made marksman after my second round of firing. The sergeant in charge of the range could have cared less on how I was holding it as long as I finished with an acceptable score.

During the following month, more or less, we all were at the range many times for the different arms that we had to qualify in. From the M1 Garand to the BAR (that's the Browning Automatic Rifle). In between came the 30 caliber air cooled machine gun, the carbine, the 45 pistol (not the 45 revolver), the 37 MM anti-tank gun, the 50 caliber heavy machine gun, etc. I scored high enough to become expert in all guns and could "field strip" (tear down, clean and make adjustments) to every one of them.

I was made an instructor and promoted to corporal and assigned to the 30 caliber machine gun range along with Lt Drunkenmiller. We had fired almost the entire 2nd battalion when furloughs were posted. I wasn't on the list. A week later, another posting and I wasn't on that one either. Came the third posting, my name was on it but lined out. By now, most of Company D had gone home or was on the way. I asked old career soldier 1st Sgt Jenkins why I was lined out. "Because starting Monday morning we were to start firing the 3rd Battalion." "Why?" My loud voice brought Lt Giangillo out of his office and I got a little hot under the collar. "Why are we, Lt Drunkenmiller and myself, firing 3rd Battalion?" To make a long story short, I won, and got my furlough with three day passes added to the front and back.

After returning from my furlough, things were more or less still a little slow. The remaining few were given their furloughs and we were getting ready to go into a more advanced training. Those of us who were around for the holiday season drew guard duty. I drew Regimental Guard Duty as corporal of the guard. As corporal of the guard I would have my detail on for two hours, off for four. Then back on for two more, then off again for four. This completed your assignment. At the Regimental Guard Mount (the forming of all the guard details for that period of time) I met 1st Lt Leo Reinartz. Now there was an officer! He took special interest in all of the guard mount personnel and made sure that we all understood what we were to do. This guy was unreal! He was treating us like human beings. Lt Reinartz was out of 2nd Battalion Headquarters, G2. He was a graduate of Virginia Military Institute, VMI, and later, overseas, he was to be transferred to our company as company commander. More on this later.

After performing the guard detail on that weekend, I was posted for Divisional Guard on the New Year's weekend. Two weekends in a row, but my ole army comrade, 1st Sgt Jenkins, gave me no chance to complain. Before I had a word out of my mouth, he said, "That's it, you're on guard duty, get out." So that ended that conversation. This time I was on patrol and the patrol was way out in the boonies, protecting empty target racks. Absolutely nothing! Just a big pile of old twisted lumber. At 0330 when I was on guard, a jeep pulled up and stopped about 30 yards away but wouldn't put its lights out. I ordered the driver to either put the lights out or I'd shoot the damn lights out. Well, to make a long story short, it was S/Sgt Mitchell telling me and others at other useless posts that our posts were to be abandoned. New Year's Eve, and everything has happened. I just went back to the guard shack, fell in, and finished the night in my bunk.

The next week I was promoted to sergeant, a squad leader.

CHAPTER 5

I guess I'll have to go back in time for a while, just to fill you in on life in an Army barracks when we first arrived at Camp Campbell.

Of course, the floor was never clean enough, the clothes were never hung properly, the beds were never made right. The latrine was never spotless enough. There was always something that displeased our "cadre." When that happened, look out, keep your mouth shut and always give the right answers, always agreeing with the "cadre" that you weren't able to do these simple tasks without their help. (?) They always found something that wasn't right which had to be done over, and over.

If the floor was dirty, according to the cadre, it had to be scrubbed again. If the bunks were made wrong, they'd rip them apart and stand there while you remade it. If your uniforms weren't hanging right, you'd get the lecture on how THE ARMY did things.

One experience that was a winner was on Inspection Day. That's the day that everything is inspected. The floors, the windows, the latrine, your haircut, your shoes, your uniforms. Everything! Well, we felt our barracks was squeaky clean and we were super clean, uniforms, shoes, haircuts all proper. We were ready! In came Lt Giangillio followed by 1st Sgt Jenkins and our platoon sergeant, S/Sgt Mitchell.

Up one side and down the other, 1st Sgt Jenkins taking notes from the mumbling coming from Giangillio. We were viewed, reviewed, walked around, checked for bunk neatness, etc, etc. Giangillio, Jenkins and Mitchell now conversed at the stairwell. Mumble, mumble. Soon Mitchell comes back, we're still at attention, ram rod straight; he takes the wind out of our sail with two words, "You failed." "What?" We had worked our butts off to make sure that everything was A O.K. But—we didn't pass the inspection! There would not be any weekend passes for anyone on that floor. Zilch, nothing.

What was it that caused all that? Lt Giangillio had found a speck of white bon-ami in the corner of a window, so small one had to look at it from the correct angle or you wouldn't see it. We were restricted for the weekend, and the entire area had to be completely redone. Floor washed again, windows cleaned again, everything had to be done over.

Jack Gallant (who was to become one of my closest buddies) was fit to be tied. His wife Vivian would be expecting him to come to their one-room apartment for the weekend. He was about to sound off when a couple of us grabbed him and told him to shut up, this without the notice of S/Sgt Mitchell. We all had to change back into "fatigues" and get going. Jack took off out the back door as soon as the coast was clear; he had no detail, all we had to do was roll up a blanket and put it in his bed. At roll call, change your voice when his name was called and answer, "Here." We made sure ONLY one guy was doing the answering. It worked and we thanked the movie maker who showed how some prisoner escaped by doing what we had done.

I caught my share of problems. One night, shortly after arriving at Camp Campbell, I was shaving in the shower room with two other fellows. (The talk around the barracks had been, let's take in a movie after chow.) Seeing that the guy next to me wasn't a happy sort, I leaned back and asked the fellow beyond him, "Hey, you going to the movies tonight?" Well, the guy in the middle turned out to be a buck sergeant from upstairs whom I hadn't seen, until now, and he raised merry hell with me. "Don't you ever "Hey" me. I'm a sergeant and I'll fix your wagon but good." Every time I tried to tell this wonder boy that I wasn't talking to him, I took more abuse. So I shut up and waited for the worse. I got it. He took my name and the platoon and told me to report to him at the stairwell first thing after chow the next morning. I knew I had extra detail.

I showed up the next morning and so did he. He had a bucket, soap, and a toothbrush. I was instructed to scrub the stairs going up to the second floor barracks and to keep scrubbing them until he told me to stop. Knowing better to say anything at that time, I filled the bucket, put some soap in it, and went and got a regular scrub brush out of our latrine and proceeded to scrub like fury. (He had

gone when I came back from filling the bucket.) After about an hour and a half, back comes my “Hey you” sergeant. He’s furious when he sees what and how I’m doing it. Off he goes, and I continue scrubbing the stairs. A short time later, he’s back with S/Sgt Mitchell, and he asks what I’m doing. “Well, Sergeant, I’m scrubbing these stairs, not with a toothbrush as the sergeant wants to to, but with a G.I. brush, and I’ll continue scrubbing these damn stairs until they disappear, but with a toothbrush but with a regular brush.” “To me, the scrubbing with a toothbrush is not only degrading but stupid. I don’t feel like being degraded and I’m sure as hell not stupid.”

With that said, I went back scrubbing. Mitchell yells at me to pick up and clean up and get with the platoon. I did. Whatever happened after that, I never found out. To this day, I don’t know what went on between Mitchell and the sergeant.

Another incident that needs mentioning is the build-up of something ugly between Algrim and Chavez. Algrim, being a know-it-all, kinda picked on Chavez, who was Mexican and didn’t understand things too well. I found out he was a great guy, lots of fun, but he and Algrim were always arguing. To the point, being a corporal at the time and responsible for certain things, I knew trouble was brewing and asked Sgt Mitchell’s permission to move Chavez to a bunk down the barracks from Algrim. It worked for a while, but one morning I heard a lot of yelling and there was Chavez, with Algrim pinned against the wall, only Chavez has a knife that he wants to stick into Algrim. I ran down but stayed far enough away, to let Chavez know that I wasn’t about to jump him but wanted to talk. I told the rest of the guys to shut up and be quiet.

It took some doing, but Chavez finally let Algrim go, much to our relief. I took Chavez to the orderly room and 1st Sgt Jenkins, knowing that this could not be kept quiet. They took Algrim and put him in another barracks, telling him to stay away from Chavez. That ended that. But Chavez kept on getting into scrapes and finally went AWOL (away without official leave).

About a week later, coming back from Clarksville, who comes up to me but Chavez. He wants to go back to the barracks, not by the MPs, but if I’d get him a ticket, he’d go back on the bus. I got the ticket but zip, Chavez was gone again. We couldn’t find him and the last bus was due to pull out, and who gets on the bus right behind me, Chavez. On the way back to camp, we told him the best thing he could do for himself was to turn himself in to the O.D. (Officer of the Day). This he did. They court-martialed him and he spent time in the brig. BUT, when he got out, they transferred him out of D Company, 44th Armored Regiment. He ended up in the MPs, believe it or not.

The next time we saw him, he arrived in the company area with another MP. Sgt Chavez was spic and span. White leggings, white pistol belt, white helmet, damn he looked sharp. His dark skin made the white that much more impressive. His sergeant said that after he got out of the brig, he asked if he could become an MP. An officer heard the request and gave him to go. The sergeant that was with him in the jeep said that the following month, Chavez would be wearing corporal stripes; he had earned them on his own merits.

Another thing that brings back memories is the time we were all ordered to get short haircuts, and I mean short. Just fuzz tops. After we had all complied, we were beside a barracks one day, during lectures, when Major Carisone arrives to see how the training was coming along. A lot of us had our helmet liners off, sitting listening. Major Carisone wants to know, "What in hell happened to all your heads?" Then he asked all those still sitting there with their helmet liners on. "Take 'em off," and then, "What in hell ever possessed you guys to pull a stunt like this?" "You look like a bunch of cue balls!" Some GI sitting close to Major Carisone must have mumbled "Lt. Giangillio." He said, "WHAT!" Some more mumbling and he stomped off around the barracks building toward our orderly room.

The following days we noticed that Giangillio never took his liner off and was eating at the officers' mess instead of with Company D. He must have got a haircut; he was now "one of the boys."

There has always been a saying, that an Army travels on its stomach. Not if you ate in our mess hall! The food was terrible, not because of the lack of, but because the way our cooks prepared it. Unreal! Breakfast: bacon and eggs, the bacon was stewed in its own fat, the eggs dripped with the fat, and your plate became a huge oil pit. You soaked up some of the oil, or grease, with your "home fries" and toast. The only thing that was OK were the packages of cereal. (The cooks just passed that out to you when you asked for it.) If we were in the field, lunch was no problem, baloney or some cold cut, two pieces of bread, milk or coffee. Supper: pork chops, beef, potato vegetable, rolls, etc, sometimes; then we learned why only sometimes. Two of the 2nd cooks were selling our food, which to the civilians was mostly rationed, at good prices. Chow did improve 100 fold when Company D got two new cooks to replace the two who ended up in the "clink."

Before I leave this section I must tell the story of how we lost 1st Sgt Jenkins and S/Sgt Yates.

Jenkins was always riding the back of this older GI who was Jewish, let's call him Sam. Jenkins made Sam feel belittled at every chance he got. Sam couldn't march right, Sam couldn't fire the weapons correctly. He had two left feet, his military courtesy was lacking. Nothing right, everything wrong!

Sam was also at that age, 38-40, that the government was releasing from active duty. We had about eight GIs who fell into this category and they were waiting to hear of their status. (Two of this group would not take their discharge but stayed with Company D.) Sam was looking forward to getting away from Jenkins, no matter how it was to happen. They had all been interviewed for discharge and were waiting for the orders.

On this weekend, Sam is on the bulletin board as CQ for Company D. The "Charge of Quarters" sleeps in the orderly room, makes the bed checks, sounds reveille, and takes roll call (all those present or accounted for) which must be recorded when taken for the officer-of-the-day when he stops by for a check. Everything must be in order at bed check, because the officer of the day could spring a surprise check and you as the CQ had better be 100% correct.

The week before, General Headquarters had issued an order that all personnel ,ALL PERSONNEL, would be in quarters at 2300 hours (11:00 o'clock) on the Sunday evening. No more checking in at reveille; cadre, GIs, everyone was expected to be in quarters.

Well, come Sunday night, 2300 hours, no 1st Sgt Jenkins or his buddy, S/Sgt Yates. Sam now notes this on his report; two absent at bed check. At 0100 hours, Sam is woken by the officer of the day who has stopped by to see how Company D was adhering to the General Headquarters' order. "Two missing!" "Yep, two." Bed check proves it.

Jenkins and Yates show up at 0600 and are told to report to battalion headquarters. THEY ARE BOTH given a summary court martial and lost their stripes. They, both of the old cadre, career soldiers, are now "yard-birds" just like us. BUT they are transferred out of Company D, 44th Armored Regiment into the 43rd.

This makes Sam very happy. He left for home that week, discharged from the U.S. Army.

CHAPTER 6

Our training now began in earnest. We had been trained in firearms, we had done force marches of 12 to 15 miles, with full packs. G We knew our right from our left. We were ready to move onto tanks.

We all took driving tests for all vehicles that the 44th Armored Regiment had. Jeeps, weapon carriers, trucks, small one and the 6x6's. Then the halftracks, the motorcycles, anything that moved and had a motor, we had to pass and get our ticket signed by the cadre instructor. Most of us passed all vehicles, some didn't; they became assistant drivers. We soon wondered when the tests for driving the tanks would come up.

It didn't take long. Now we were in the tanks! Once you got used to the damn roar, you found that driving a tank was like driving a caterpillar tractor, by the levers. Shifting one of those monsters wasn't easy, but when you practiced a lot, it became as smooth as silk. I still hated the damn things; they were noisy, dirty, cold as could be in the winter, dusty as a desert storm in the summer. As for room, each tank carried five men: a driver, an assistant driver, a radio man (who also was the loader for the 75), the gunner, and the tank commander. If you think a submarine has no space, get into an M4 tank. (One thing we had that was better than a sub: we could get out and walk, if we had to. Can't do that in a submarine.)

After passing the driving test for the tanks and my ticket was signed, I started to help others get the hang of moving a tank. I had one character named Hickman. He always wanted to see how big a tree he could knock down. (Those M4s were unreal; a telephone pole was nothing more than a match

stick.) Well, we were running along at a good clip when Hickman sees a good-sized tree. The second he headed for it, I knew we were going to stop FAST. WHACKO! Did we ever. This tree was way beyond any M4; that's why it was still standing. It didn't teach Hickman a thing; he always remained a nut on knocking trees down.

Every time we went out in a tank, for driving practice or small maneuvers, the acting tank commander had to inspect the tank from top to bottom. Did everything work properly, did the turret revolve, did the gun controls work, was the engine oil correct, none needed, gas tanks full. AHH! The gas tank. The engine, etc. I discovered a gas leak coming from under the engine and so noted on the trip ticket. I refused to move the tank and went to my Lieutenant and told him of the leak. I was assigned to another tank. Again, this tank had to be checked out from top to bottom. All clear, let's go.

The following day, more of the same. I was the tank commander and was assigned the tank that I noted on my trip ticket as having a gas leak. Maintenance said everything was corrected and so noted on a maintenance slip. The inspection went OK, no problems, no gas leak.

During practice runs, the GI who was acting as the radiomen told me at a stop that he thought he had smelled gas. We pulled a maintenance check right there in the field but we could not see or smell any gas. Back to driving! Well, there was a gas leak, because our 32-ton tank caught fire and boy did we have a problem. There are four fire extinguisher handles, or pulls, two inside the turret and two just outside the turret, in the rear. Of course we all got the hell out of the tank and I pulled the two handles in back. No soap, we still had an engine fire. So like a dope, I went back down inside the turret and pulled the two inside handles. This put the fire out. Tanks carry 165 gallons of high octane gas. We had maybe used up about 50 gallons before the fire.

Now came the fun. The motor pool sergeant, S/Sgt Jackson, made the statement that when gas fumes are discovered, Maintenance should have been notified and the tank not moved. (I had a cadre sergeant who also inspected the tank when we smelled gas, and he said, "Move it." Move it we did.) But am I ever glad that the cadre sergeant said "Move it." Two days later I was summoned before a "Board of Inquiry" made up of all officers, some from Battalion Headquarters and others from Regimental Command. Wow! Did they ever ask the questions. After answering all the questions, I explained that I had filled out a trip ticket the day before and had refused to move the tank because of the gas leak. And the day after, I was again assigned to the same tank, this time there was no evidence of a gas leak and the maintenance slip noted the problem was corrected. But in the field, again the possibility, but I was told to "Move it" by a cadre sergeant and ended up with the fire.

I don't know if they were expecting me to "pay" for the M4 tank if I was found negligent. But their report came out that the fire was due to the age of the tank. It was one of the earliest M4s and was sent to the 44th Armored Regiment from Fort Knox, Kentucky.

Can't let this early happening go by without mentioning it. One day, when we had returned from the field after being out there since early sunrise, one of the other fellows reported that his tank

had a maintenance problem, and as the commander for that tank, it was his responsibility to get the tank ready for repair. He and his driver were ordered to take the tank inside the maintenance building. Justice, the driver, did so; he brought the tank around to the entrance and drove it in, BUT something happened to Justice (later we found out he passed out). Instead of keeping the tank straight on, he was going right and NOT stopping. Right through the wall and out the other side, and he was still going, heading toward the other building across the street. The tank commander had presence of mind to reach down beside the driver (Justice) and pull the main battery switch. That stopped the tank.

They did have to get Justice out of the driver's compartment and rush him to the hospital. They said he didn't come to until after he was in the emergency room and felt that there was nothing wrong with him. After a week they released him, and they still didn't know why he passed out. Neither did Justice.

Now our company started to form tank crews, and you were in the field, in the same tank, with the same crew. I ended up as driver for the company commander, Lt Giangillio. To this day I'll never know how this ever happened. He had a favorite trick; he loved to drive the tank and I always ended up acting as the tank commander. He'd drive, until the tank got so bogged down in mud he couldn't move it an inch. Then he said, "Cartier, it's your turn to drive." Now here's a 32-ton tank, bellied in mud, and he walks off. It isn't easy to get a tank, down deep, free and ready to go. Twice he pulled this, but the third time was really unreal. During the problem, this we called maneuvers, we had stopped and the tanks in our group had decided to go around this low area. Giangillio being the company commander decided to lead the rest of the platoon through this low area.

Guess what! We were the first ones in and we bellied up immediately; Giangillio was driving. No way was that tank going to move! He got out, turned to me and said, "Cartier, your turn to drive." He then left the area in a jeep, and it was up to me to get the tank free. I held two other tanks there for pulling power and we, the three tank crews, cut down trees and built a log road. Taking the tow cables from each tank, we hooked up two to pull out the one. By 0200 (2:00 am) the tank was free and ready to roll. The rest of the company had returned to the barracks and sleep; three tank crews, which included my group, returned to the motor pool where we still had to wash out the mud from the tracks and have the three tanks ready for the next morning.

I made up my mind right then and there that when the chance came, I'd transfer to the air force. (It never happened.)

CHAPTER 7

As training intensified, I was made a tank commander and assigned a regular crew: Earl Early, driver; Isaac Hardman, assistant driver; Manuel Quintas, radioman/loader; and Francis Heinze, gunner. And, we had our OWN assigned tank! This one was OUR'S. I was a sergeant and had my own tank.

We had been training with different ones as part of the crews. Now we were to work with the same ones, day after day, and may, just maybe, these were the guys you'd go overseas with. (This happened; we stayed together for the remainder of the war.) We were out on the reservation day after day, training, training. So many things happened that I'd be writing this story forever if I mentioned them all.

But, I gotta tell you about this. Traveling to and from the training area, we had to cross this bridge that was constructed to hold a tank. It was about 5 feet above the river, but the road sloped down from a hill, across the bridge, and up the hill on the other side. Well, coming back in from the "problem" (situations to solve from the cadre), we were all going along at a good clip and the lead tank went down the hill to cross the bridge. Some of the cadre, when getting off duty, would use this bridge to get to their quarters off base. Now here comes a cadre "old soldier" who is in a hurry. He thinks he can make the bridge, between tanks. Guess again. He didn't. When he got on the bridge, he realized that he wasn't going to make it because roaring down from the hill on the other side was a tank going along about 30 miles an hour. You don't stop a tank in 20 feet, and the bridge was not wide enough for a tank AND a car.

The driver of the car skidded to a halt, jumped out and into the river he dove. The tank hit that car, almost in the middle, and flattened it like a pancake and continued on to a stop. The remainder of the column had to stop. The driver of the car is bobbing down the river as we prepared to tow the car off the bridge and continue back to camp. That made the 12th Armored News the following week.

You just don't fool around with a 32-ton tank!

On this training reservation were some old houses, and it was fun to drive a tank right through them (no orders not to). BUT, we were told, before you do, check and make sure that the houses didn't have cellars. Well, one crew didn't check and their tank ended up stuck in a cellar. An 8-foot cellar is a tank trap, and we learned from this.

As we improved as a platoon, the company improved, and so forth. Now came the toughest training yet. HELLCAT. This was advanced to the point that we started to fire live 30 caliber ammunition at the other tanks. We "buttoned up" (closed all hatches) and went looking for the "enemy." We were "enemy" to the others. With 5 to 8 inches of armor, a 30 caliber wouldn't do a thing. It sounded like woodpeckers from the inside. But if that "woodpecker" came knocking on your tank, it meant that you were knocked out by the "enemy."

Then we started the firing of the 75 MM at targets set up across a valley. The targets were 55-gallon oil drums. You were given a sighting and you were to come on target and hit it by your third round. After days of firing, we became experts. We were knocking the drums apart with the 75s. We lived, ate and slept in the field for days on end. No weekend passes. I remember one driving situation where I had ducked down to avoid being hit by a branch just above the turret. That was a mistake. I

had given a "Right" to the driver, and not seeing this ditch in time, one track went over into empty space and we went over on to our side. We threw a track (the left side track came off) and there we layed. Oh boy! Did this call for a yelling session! Every time I opened my mouth to explain, more above. So, one learns to shut up. It took the maintenance crew over four hours, and we helped to get the tank back up and put the track on. It's one big job!

I can't leave the story of "Hellcat" unless I finish it with this. As I said, we lived, ate and trained in the field. Every night we were in another area and it was a must that we all dug "foxholes" before we sacked in. (Foxholes were for protection from an enemy's attack, especially during the night.) They had to be three feet deep, maybe three feet wide, big enough to get your body in. IT HAD TO BE THREE FEET DEEP. At this area, the place was all rock, terrible. I dug and dug and finally got to about two and a half feet, and it's all rock, so I called enough was enough.

I was awakened from sleep and crawled out of the pup tent to see what was going on. One of our new lieutenants, Lt Whitlow, was inspecting the foxholes and found mine not deep enough. (This is at 0300.) I had to fill it in, pick a new spot, and dig a new one. Again, it was all rocks and hard to dig. Of course this caused me to really look at these 90-day wonders in a new light. (I have never forgotten what this officer did, to this day.)

Now came the rumors that we, the 44th Armored Regiment, was ready for Tennessee Maneuvers. It was true, we were ready!

Before we leave Camp Campbell, there is another story to tell, how we got rid of Lance Corporal Lasky. In a card game in our dayroom, one of the other players was Cardie Ford. Ford is a miner from Virginia and not one to cross in anger. He caught Lasky cheating and pulled him from the card table, pushed him out the door, and proceeded to beat him to a pulp. The gang finally pulled Cardie away from Lasky. Cardie's advice to Lasky, "You had better ask for a transfer, because if I ever catch you cheating again, this is only a small sample of what you'll get the next time!" Lasky was gone the following week.

CHAPTER 8

Tennessee maneuvers were upon us. The upper echelon, the generals, the colonels, G2 people, everyone said we were ready. The 44th Armored Regiment, the 43rd Armored Regiment, we were all ready to get on with it; the entire Division was rearing to go. It was our own 44th Armored Regiment that concerned me.

We packed our gear and readied the tanks. The good-byes were said to wives, sweethearts and friends. Many found it hard to say the good-byes because at that moment, none of us knew where we'd be after maneuvers. But we were a combat unit and we knew that sooner or later, we'd be going overseas.

We had received a new captain just before we were to leave Campbell. Giangillio had been transferred and we now had Capt Fawks. He was to prove, to many, that as an officer he had a lot to accomplish. He had his way, and none of us seemed to find the man behind the captain bars.

For instance: during one of the problems, which started whenever they called it into action and stopped, usually on a Thursday afternoon or Friday. During that time, you were either the blue army or the red army. Attacking, or being attacked. During that time you HAD NO CONTACT with any of the local civilians. PERIOD! NONE! You attacked, and attacked, or defended your position.

The civilians in the Tennessee area were very nice, and when the problem was over, usually signified by a Piper Cub flying over the area, sounding a siren. That was the end of the problem and we were then allowed to buy food, pies, chickens and so forth. During a lull and before the end of the problem, which we knew was going to end at 1200 noon, a Sgt Soloway met a civilian who offered to cook John (Sgt Soloway) a chicken dinner with biscuits and the works. John said OK, BUT DO NOT BRING IT back to me until you hear the Piper Cub and the siren. OK was the answer.

Well, the civilian walked up the road just before the siren, and John, wanting to get the woman out of sight before something went wrong, paid for the meal and took the basket, and who should come around the corner in his jeep – Capt Fawks. He ordered his jeep driver to stop and he got out and took the basket away from John. AND while he was doing this, the Piper Cub flew overhead, sounding the siren. The problem was over, but not John's problems. He was ordered to appear before Capt Fawks and other officers and he was courts martialed and his sergeant stripes taken away. UNREAL!

After weeks in the field, tempers became short and we were all on edge. During the following week, we were moving around the town of Murfreesboro, Tennessee and we had to pull into an area and camouflage the tanks. Enemy aircraft! Get with it. So we pulled into the woods and started to cut brush to cover the tanks. I heard a big argument, and it turned out to be T/4 Calvin Amos, a 1st platoon man, and a Sgt Birtchell from the 3rd platoon. It was over a clump of bushes that Amos wanted to cut to camouflage his tank, and Birtchell said, "No, I'm going to cut it for mine." Up to that point I couldn't have cared less about the clump of bushes, BUT he then gave Amos a shove and he almost went down.

I then went over and told Birtchell to keep his damn hands off a 1st platoon man and never to do that again. He's a sergeant, and I'm a sergeant. We shouldn't fight in front of the men. BUT, we did! He whacked me on the upper shoulder and that made me mad. We went at it and Birtchell, not knowing a thing about how to throw a punch, didn't do too good. He weighed about 160-165 lbs. I weighed about 145 lbs. For every punch he threw, I hit him twice. By the time an officer arrived, I had given him a solid beating. My officer, Lt Hubble, had stopped the fight when Birtchell's officer came along, Lt LaManna. He gave me what for. LaManna got a little out of hand but I said nothing until Hubble asked how I felt. "Never felt better in my life," says I. THAT was the wrong thing to say. LaManna had me report to Company headquarters.

By the time I appeared before Capt Fawks, Birtchell had told his story. LaManna had told his and added on about how I had answered him, and Hubble said nothing. When I finally got to Capt Fawks, I knew I had bought myself a bag of trouble. Every time I started to explain how it happened, I was ordered not to speak. Knowing that anything I said would make things worse, I kept quiet (and THAT was a hard thing for me to do). He finally decided what my punishment would be. I would be restricted to quarters until he felt I had had enough. (By this time, knowing a little of how military law works, I knew he couldn't restrict me longer than seven days.) (I soon found out that I didn't know a thing about military law.) I spent 30 days restricted to the area and knew positively that any little peep out of me, Fawks would have me courts martialed and take my stripes.

Maneuvers were coming to an end. Now the rumors start; we were well trained, we'd be heading for Africa, no, maybe Europe. No one knew, but we'd be heading out soon.

We, 2nd Battalion, 44th Armored Regiment, were to be taken out of the 44th Armored Regiment, 12th Armored Division, and were to become the 44th Tank Battalion.

Companies D, E and F were to become Companies A, B and C. We were to have a light tank company from the 3rd Battalion join us as D Company. Then other components from other units in the 12th Armored were to be assigned to the 44th Tank Battalion until we became a fighting unit of medium and light tanks. At that time, none of knew where our destination would be. But we were to train some more and train again.

And we were to leave the maneuver area soon.

When the 44th Tank Battalion was formed, new officers were assigned to different companies. Some of those we had were transferred out. We gained Capt Julian VanWinkle and lost Capt Fawks. Capt VanWinkle had been with the old D Company as a 1st Lt, then had moved to Battalion Headquarters, G2. We liked him then, and we were to like him more in our future. He was now our Captain.

During the ceremony of transferring the battalion out of Division and the ceremony of transferring one captain for the other, when Capt Van took over our company, now known as Company A, I think one of his first official acts was to have me, Sgt Cartier, "front and center." "What in hell am I into now?" I'm ram rod straight going out from 1st platoon. I salute and I make sure I don't even blink.

He then releases me from my restriction. (How he found out, I'll never know. He never said and I never asked.) He then said, "Post" and gave me a salute. I returned the salute and returned to my 1st platoon.

(Later that day, as the trucks were loaded with GIs for the trip to Nashville, for those who had passes, Capt Van came over to me and asked if I had been to Nashville. I had to say no, because I had been restricted to company area for fighting. Capt Van reached into his pocket, came out with a 20

dollar bill, and said, "Get cleaned up, get a buddy, you're going to Nashville with those who officers. They'll give you a ride in and you'll come back by the truck. The 20 is a loan.")

My tent buddy was Manny Quintas, so before long two GIs were on their way to Nashville.

CHAPTER 9

Maneuvers were over and we were departing the Watertown, Tennessee area soon. Our gear was all rolled up and the tanks loaded and ready to be put onto the railroad flatbed cars. Being a tanker had its advantages; driving to the railhead, all the cars gave us a wide berth, no one tried to cut us off, and as we approached a car as we turned a corner, you could see the fear in the driver's eyes, "Is this thing going to hit me?" We made every corner without incident, except for a few civilian drivers aging just a little.

Our Pullman cars were something else. We had been sleeping in pup tents on the ground for the past month or so. Now we had beds! It didn't take too long to feel right at home. We traveled, and we traveled; by the time we got to our destination, we'd be at the end of the earth. We arrived, and we WERE at the end of the earth.

We were at Camp Barkeley, Texas! One could look in any direction and all there was to see were roads that disappeared over the horizon. The same trees, bushes, and dust everywhere. This was paradise according to some of our Texan GIs. They were home!

Here we were up early and to bed late. Train, train, and train. The big question was, where, and when? Lots of rumors but nothing that was concrete. We all had an idea but nothing to substantiate what we were talking about. We did know that the tanks would be used in the desert or the streets of Europe. (How wrong could we be!)

Our spare time was used up in Abilene. Good old Abilene! To most of the GIs the town was strange. It was a dry town, but after a few inquiries it didn't take long to find what was available. Many friends were made in Abilene and they'll be long remembered.

One of the training sessions we got into while at Barkeley was firing at towed targets behind aircraft. But this was at Fort Bliss, Texas and it meant another trip, so off many of us went, so many at a time. Now this was FUN! We were up at 0400, trucks loaded and ready to go. We were firing 50 caliber aircooled machine guns mounted on weapon carriers. When we arrived by truck, there were our heavy machine guns waiting for us to fire (as soon as the target appeared). It didn't take long and we could hear the range officer yelling, "Ready on the right, your target is coming into view." "Hold your damn fire, that's the PLANE, you damn fools." "Hold it, hold it!" "You idiots almost hit the plane; it's the target BEHIND the plane." Someone on the far right had opened up, and thankful is the pilot that this guy was a terrible shot.

All guns were unloaded and we gathered by the range officer to be lectured on how stupid we were. I had to agree, someone was damn stupid. That guy pulling the target must have asked for a transfer to the front line. His luck with him because of all the rounds that went whizzing up at him, NONE were close enough to cause damage, but that wasn't the shooter's fault – he was trying to hit THE plane.

We soon found out that arriving on the firing line so early in the morning, we had a little spare time before we had to be ready to fire. Sgt Hlipala came up to me in the semi-darkness and said, "Red, do you see what I see?" "Nope," says I. "Well, if you look close, you'll see that all the ammo is stacked BEHIND the weapons carriers." "Yep," says I. "So." "You know, sarge," (I was a sergeant too) "with a little bit of effort and a few of our guys, we could appropriate a little of that ammo for our own use." Great idea, so we went about 'liberating' ammo from those who never suspected that two buck sergeants were behind THEIR shortages. Our crews became experts.

We were firing on the range on the New Mexico desert. Company A had done such a good job that we were given passes to visit Juarez, Mexico. That evening after chow, the trucks took us to El Paso where, upon arriving, all those who had eaten at our mess hall back at Camp Dona Ana, took violently sick. The meal was chicken. I had been delayed getting my weapons carrier ready for the next morning so I had not eaten.

Sgt Bill Hlipala had been tied up the same as I was, getting his weapon carrier ready for the next morning; he hadn't eaten at the mess hall either. Both of us got in touch with the MPs and told them that those that they saw 'throwing and going' were not DRUNK but were sick and had to be gotten to a hospital quick. (They did cooperate.) They summoned trucks and other vehicles and all those we could find ended up at hospital or in the sick bar at the Fort Bliss Army base. A night to remember!

Our return to Berkeley was hailed as a failure. Some thought to score a possible, that's a perfect score, you had to bring down the plane. We took a rubbing for some time. But no one ever found out how two weapons carriers under Hlipala and Cartier got so damn much ammunition. (AND it wasn't our group that fired on the plane.) But why spoil their fun.

We still had to train, and as the time passed we became better and better. Our crews were trying to outdo the others, and in this way we fine-tuned our platoons. We became proud to be tankers and those that weren't tankers, I think kinda envied us. We wore our overseas hat cocked over our left eye; not the right eye, the left. (Never noticed, did you?) This was supposed to be because of General Patton; he said we were special. I was now a full-fledged tanker and even cocked my cap over my left eye.

The officers we now had were Capt Julian P VanWinkle, Lt Ivan Parks, Lt Kenneth MacDonald, Lt Leo Hubble, Lt Richard Podgers, and Lt Vincent LaManna. We also had in Berkeley two other officers who were with us in training, but when they had a call out for officers and men, Lt Leary and Lt Butrovitch were two who volunteered to go. Lt Butrovitch had been in Africa and had taught desert

warfare to the battalion. Now he was off again. (Leary and Butrovitch were two well-liked officers; we were to miss them greatly.) Lt Whitlow was transferred at Campbell to another unit.

1st Platoon's leader was Lt Hubble, with S/Sgt Bud Barber as the platoon sergeant. We had lost 1st Sgt Jenkins and S/Sgt Yates back in Campbell by transfer after their courts martial. S/Sgt Mitchell was also transferred at Campbell; he hadn't gone on maneuvers, and Bud Barber was promoted to Staff at that time.

So our NCOs were now 1st Sgt Ed Drennon; 1st Platoon S/Sgt Bud Barber; 2nd Platoon S/Sgt Cary Everett; 3rd Platoon S/Sgt Sam Fredericks; Maintenance Sergeant S/Sgt Merle Jackson; Supply Sergeant S/Sgt Harold Heckert; 1st cook S/Sgt Quiljje Stayton; Communications, S/Sgt Frank Hacker.

One cadreman that I must mention here, before we move on, is Sgt Parker. He was there at Camp Campbell to greet us and he was there to train us. Train us he did! He was a great buck sergeant and I personally felt that he did his utmost to make us yard-birds get over the 'hump.' The 'hump' meaning to withstand the abuses that some of these career old army NCOs put us through. He always had the time to stop and tell you it was going to get better, just wait and see. He was a career soldier and there weren't too many others that fit that mold he came from. He was transferred out at Campbell.

This is the team we went overseas with. At later dates, due to casualties, our T.O. changed. Some NCOs were given field commissions, those who were sergeants were promoted to staff sergeant, etc. All this will be mentioned as it happens.

Our 1st Platoon was tops, according to all of us in the 1st Platoon; we were ready. We worked together as a team and we operated as individuals dependent on others for support. We were Company A.

Furloughs were now top priority. If you weren't on the list, you wondered how soon you would be. There was a lot of hurry-up and wait and more rumors. Everyone had the answers but really said nothing. NOBODY knew the when and the where. Were we going to be able to get home on our furloughs or would we be too late? Maybe we'd get stuck on duty. Now, wouldn't that be something! We all crowded around the bulletin board every morning to see who was on the list. The remaining few, of which I was one, finally saw our names and we packed double-quick.

We had to take a limo from Abilene to Fort Worth to get a train. We saw the schedule and we were positive we'd never make it. We got the limo and headed for Fort Worth. Most of us felt dejected because we were sure we'd never make the train. After about ten minutes of watching the land zip by, I looked at the speedometer; we were doing 90 miles per hour. Good Gawd, 90 MPH! If we ever rolled, we'd end up so far off the road they'd never find us. We didn't roll and we did make the train for Dallas. In fact, we had a wait of 10 minutes before the train pulled out.

We arrived in Dallas and picked up more passengers and a couple more cars and some MPs. In 15 minutes we were headed for Chicago and most of us trying to get some sleep. Most of us zonked out in a few minutes and didn't wake until almost dawn. Being the early birds, we got a chance to get to the dining car and get a cup of coffee and a small breakfast before the rush was on.

It didn't take too long for the MPs to tell us the reason they were aboard. "Get that tie on and keep it on." "Who told you that you could gamble on this train?" A few of the GIs had started a small poker game after they had settled in for the morning. "Get your gear picked up and keep it picked up." "Do you hear me?" These two guys were about 6 foot 2 or 3. We not only could hear them but we could see them coming along the next car and warned everyone, "Here come our friends, watch it." There were MPs aboard every train I got on, from Fort Worth to Worcester, Massachusetts.

The furloughs were always too short and it seemed like I was home for only a couple of days and it was time to head back to Camp Barkeley. Boy, this time the 'good-byes' were harder than usual. We all knew that the unit was headed for overseas, still nobody knew where.

CHAPTER 10

We were alerted and all furloughs were cancelled, passes were no longer being issued. We were restricted to base and it wasn't too long after that when we got the orders to pack our gear and stand by. Phone calls were allowed, but you were warned that your conversation was being censored. NO SECRETS WERE TO BE TOLD! What secrets? We didn't know from nothing. Many of us were so far back in the line that it would take days for us to get to them. No matter. All calls were cut off, the end; get back to your barracks.

The next morning we rechecked our gear and stood by. Then the trucks arrived and we stomped out and mounted the trucks, and off to the railhead we went. Now there wasn't too much foolery; this was now serious business. We knew we were headed for some place other than a camp in the USA.

As we dismounted from the trucks and picked up our duffle bags, the 12th Armored Division band played military music as we marched, two by two, toward the waiting train. It wasn't too long a march, but those duffle bags got heavier by the minute. We entered the train, stored our bags, and settled in. It would be an overnight for sure; we had a real troop train. Each sleeping car had umpteen bunks, no place to put your body except in the bunk. BUT, some of the guys had real sleepers; how did they get those accommodations? OK, we solved that in a hurry. We'd spend the free time in their compartments; but funny thing, they didn't care and we settled in for a cross-country trip. We still didn't know where.

We did find out, though, that there were TWO trains, and as we pulled away from the platform, we went in one direction and the other train seemed to head due north. (??) Were they splitting the 44th in half? Later we found out that we both headed for the same POE (Port of Embarkation), only over different rail lines.

We left Camp Barkeley, Texas on March 7th, 1944 and arrived in Vancouver Barracks, Washington on March 11th. At that time, control of the 44th Tank Battalion passed from the 12th Armored Division and we became a separate tank battalion under the command of Colonel Tom Ross.

Vancouver, Washington and Portland, Oregon will always be remembered by the members of the 44th. The hospitality of these two cities was unbelievable. The people hosted many parties for the troops and the cities had welcome signs everywhere. All insignia had been removed from our uniforms and no one was supposed to know that we were a tank battalion (loose lips sink ships). (Remember those days?) In a restaurant, a booth full of GIs would find that their bill had been paid by some civilian who had already left the restaurant. Or, you'd be bowling for an hour or so, having a good time, and when you stripped the scoresheet off to pay for it, you'd find that maybe it was the next alley, gang of civilians who had just left, had already paid. I think the greatest comment that was made was an item in the local paper which read, "These GIs in our cities today are the greatest; good luck and God speed."

(Almost two years later, as the 44th started to return to the States, the city of Vancouver, Washington put in a request that the 44th Tank Battalion be brought back to the States through the city of Vancouver. The request was denied, not because they didn't want to, but because the 44th was coming home in bits and pieces, 50 with this unit, 200 with this outfit, etc. We had heard, those of us who returned, that Vancouver would have given us the biggest welcome that any unit had ever received. And I do believe they would have.)

On March 22nd, 1944, I was part of the advance party who boarded the U.S.A.T Kota Baroe, a Dutch vessel refitted as a troop carrier. In pouring rain, the troops arrived and we, the advance party, guided the way into the compartments below. Not too many were happy; it was 2300, dark, and the duffle bags were still heavy. Up the gang plank, down the stairs, pick a bunk and stay by it until the all-clear is given.

We pulled away from the dock in Portland, Oregon before dawn and sailed up the Columbia River. Those who had never set foot aboard a boat, ship or whatever said to themselves, "This is a breeze." They were still in the river. When the Kota Baroe sailed into the Pacific, that was another story. Were they ever seasick! When the ship turned course and headed down the coastline, there weren't too many of us that weren't sick, and I mean sick! I heard some fellows kidding those who were losing their 'toenails' about not being able to stand the sea. I never kidded anyone, being around the ocean as much as I had been in my younger days, I knew that it could happen to ANYONE.

The next morning at chow, breakfast, I went down to the galley as big as life. I still felt OK and in fact looked forward to a good breakfast. I got my bacon, eggs, coffee, rolls, etc from the kitchen and

went down the line to a 'table.' (You didn't sit; the table was high and you stood as you ate.) I was all ready to take a big bite out of my eggs when this GI could no longer hold anything, and wow! He lost it all. Here are these tables, enough to feed maybe 200 at a time, and there are only about 20 of us eating but, right close to me, this fellow is losing his marbles. Why couldn't he have gone to another table? I took my meal and heaved it in the bucket. I lost my appetite.

As we continued down the coast to San Pedro, where the U.S.A.T. Kota Baroe was to refuel before heading across the wide Pacific, the GIs started to get their sea legs. Some, but not all of them. Lloyd Dickerson, A Company, Capt VanWinkle's jeep driver, felt woozy, and when he stepped back from the rail, his upper and his lower false teeth were at the bottom of the sea. He had heaved them both! When the ship arrived at dockside in San Pedro, there was a jeep with two MPs standing by. They took Dickerson off, and by that afternoon when the Kota Baroe had finally filled its tanks with oil, Dickerson was walking up the gang plank with new teeth. Service with a smile!

When we left dockside, all the shipbuilders were waving flags, blowing horns, and waving. What a sendoff! We looked up and there were a couple of blimps to escort us out to sea. THEN we found out that we were going into the Pacific unescorted! Nothing! Not even a patrol boat! Once we lost sight of land, the Pacific became one great big 'lake' and we were nothing but a tiny dot.

We arrived at the equator after a few days, and of course we had to be initiated into the Realm of King Neptune. The 'ceremony' did take our minds off of our destination. They had announced that our initial landing would be Finschhafen, New Guinea. Right smack in the middle of all the action!

There was action aboard the U.S.A.T. Kota Baroe. After the Equator Celebration, they set up a boxing ring and announced that there would be a boxing tournament. Wow! Great! This should be something! Before the day was over, I heard my name on the speaker system, to report to the 'Officers Deck' immediately. That meant on the double. When I arrived, Capt VanWinkle, Lt Hubbell, and Lt Parks were all sitting there like cats who had swallowed the canaries. "Red, how would you like to get into the tournament and represent A Company?" "No thanks," says Red (me). "Aw, come on," say three officers in one breath. I had done some boxing as a youth, in Worcester, and in the Field House at Camp Campbell, and they all knew it.

While at Campbell, Billy Conn, the heavyweight contender, was in Special Services and had held sessions for those of us who did like to box. Conn was OK. He told us at one session that the only man he feared was his father-in-law. Not Joe Lewis who he was to box at a later date, but his father-in-law. It seems that his wife's-to-be father had sent him reeling from the porch because he didn't like his attitude. Billy Conn was admired by all the 12th Armored; he did a great job in boosting our morale.

No way could I get these three officers to accept my 'NO!' I was now a member of the tournament and into 'training' I went. Which meant you had a sandbag set up for all of us (a speed bag) and they gave us all rope to use for a jump rope. So I stopped smoking (big deal!). Three days of

skipping rope, punching the bags, etc, and they (the officers) said, "Let the tournament begin." I had been sparring with a fellow from the AA unit that was aboard with us, and we had had fun getting together.

My first match I took in the second round. This guy knew absolutely nothing on how to box. Nothing! I think he had been 'asked' by the officers of his company, Headquarters, to get in. OK for me, number one, and I'm the winner. The next day is my second boxing match. This guy is tougher, but I win again; I gave him a good boxing lesson. WOW! I have now won two fights and all I have to do to win my class is win the third fight the next day.

That night, all my buddies of Company A were giving me the lowdown on my next opponent. "He's a pussy cat." "Red, he knows nothing about boxing, you'll take him easy." After a match, the boxers usually went forward, showered down by a hose on topside, then went back and saw other matches. I had missed the match on my last opponent.

The next day, I'm ready, and so is my AA buddy. HE's the guy for the finals. Oh boy! I had sparred with him at least three times; we had gone at it full out a couple of times, BUT we both now knew who we were going at in the finals.

"AA" was good, damn good, but I stayed with him for the three rounds and I had him wide open at one point in the second round. My arms were so heavy from belting away at him for those two rounds that all I could do was pat him on the head with my boxing glove. My two arms were like a ton of lead, no way could I have landed a solid blow. The third round was a good one; we had the entire ship on their feet yelling and screaming. AND I WAS GLAD when the last round ended. "AA" and I hugged each other as we both stood in the middle of the ring with our arms around each other, just too pooped to move to our corners. The announcement came from the three judges, "AA" had won our class, and he should have, he was GOOD.

When they announced all the winners in all the classes, they had all received small trophies from the captain of the ship, U.S.A.T. Kota Baroe, Capt J. Van der Meer. Then he stepped into the center of the ring again to award another award, in the opinion of the judges, for showing the "highest sportsmanship" in the boxing tournament. I won that award. WOW!

(Sad note to that story, the trophy, a barometer and humidity/temperature gauge, was stolen from my gear a short time after arriving in New Guinea.)

Someone said that Kota Baroe meant Sea Wolf (??), and during our stay aboard the ship, we were always hearing the 'Wolf Call' over the speaker system to get our attention. Or it was "Hear this" then a Wolf Call. In time it became almost a habit and we were slowly being known as the 'Wolf Pack.' The name stuck, and our newsletter became the 'Wolf Call.' (And 50 years later it's still the 'Wolf Call'.)

U.S.A.T. "KOTA BAROE"

20 April, 1944

SUBJECT: Commendation

TO : Sgt Raymond B Cartier

1. I am very pleased to commend you on having evidenced, in the opinion of the judges, the highest sportsmanship in the boxing tournament held aboard the U.S.A.T. "KOTA BAROE." To their sound choice I add my hearty approbation.

2. After viewing these gratifying examples of sportsmanship in our ring, I am sure that many of us were inordinately proud that our men are so generously endowed with this precious quality that is so utterly nonexistent in those who oppose us.

3. I extend to you my hope and faith in the successful completion of your future tasks.

/signed/

J. Van der Meer
Master

CHAPTER 11

The Kota Baroe was still in the open sea when one day there was a submarine scare. Here is this refitted freighter-turned-troop carrier, somewhere in the south Pacific, picking up the sound of a submarine. It's general quarters and "stand-by." Everything shuts down, everything, period. The engines, the fans for air circulation, running water, everything! All troops to stand by their bunks with their life preservers on, and to abandon ship if need be. In the middle of NOWHERE, and we hear this. Some of the guys go beyond what is sane, and what is stupid. BUT, after two hours of just drifting, the Kota Baroe started the engines and took off, on a zig-zag course. Never did find out if there had been a real sub. ???

We landed at Finschhafen, New Guinea on May 11th, 1944. We had heard that we would be on the line immediately, but again that was a rumor. We went into an area known as Camp Washington and set up camp. The tents were pitched, the bunks put up, the mess hall erected, and Company A was in business. We were at our destination and there weren't any rumors telling us that we were to move out soon.

We were kept busy with our company areas. Ditches had to be dug because of the rainy season. When it rained, it RAINED! The streets became a quagmire. We employed a couple of New Guinea natives, with the permission of the Aussies, but after working all day, their pay was ONE cigarette. Just one, and you tore that one in half, put your half in your mouth and gave him the other half. And they liked it. The pay, I mean. They had absolutely no use for money. Nothing to buy. Give them something that they enjoyed and they'd work all day for it. The Aussies were their protectorate, and we did nothing with the natives unless it was approved by the Australian government. We named one who had worked for us, Sambu. He arrived most every morning from his village up on the hill, looking for work and his half cigarette.

While we were at this area my driver, Earl Early, had a ruptured appendix. He was rushed to a base hospital down the coast where he was operated on. BUT he returned to our unit a week before he was to be released. Everyone was glad to see him, especially me. I had my tank driver back. Then he got complications and back to the hospital he went. This time he was released from Company A and was listed as a 'casualty;' he was in bad shape.

I was assigned an assistant driver, Mike Doby, and Ike Hardman became my driver. So I now had Hardman as the driver, Mike Doby the assistant driver, Manny Quintas (Quint) the radioman/loaded, Francis Heinze (Heinzie) as the gunner, and myself, tank commander.

We suffered our first casualty in this area. We had been going out on patrols, looking for Japs, but more or less to keep us guys doing something. While on patrol, T/5 Hershel Lyle, being last man and rear guard, must have slipped on a rock crossing this good-sized stream, and struck his head and drowned. The patrol, changing direction, now meant that Lyle was on flank, but he wasn't. On back-tracking they found him in the stream, dead from drowning. He was buried in the military cemetery in Finschhafen, New Guinea on May 11, 1944. He was a Company A man, one of ours.

The patrols continued and sometimes we went out with some Australian soldiers. The Aussies knew the territory and I again think this was more of a training exercise than looking for Japs. I volunteered twice and I did find coming onto the native villages something else. The third time I went out, it started to rain, a downpour, just about three miles out. It continued for the remainder of the two-day patrol. NEVER volunteer, I kept reminding myself, but the Aussies were great to be with.

It was here in this area that Elma Carty, a truck driver, stole a refrigerator truck loaded with beef from Australia. The beef had just been unloaded and the driver was signing off in the docks tally shed when Carty went around the other side, got in and drove off. (We hadn't seen fresh beef in months.)

Carty drove the refrigerator truck, a reefer, just beyond the company area and into the jungle. He then walked over to Battalion Headquarters and announced to Col Ross that he had stolen a truckload of beef that had just been taken from an Aussie ship. Carty asked, "Sir, what would you like me to do with it?" Col Ross took the bull by the horns. "Get it out of sight, and I don't know a damn

thing about it.” The battalion had beef for weeks. Carty even volunteered to return the truck when all the beef was gone. He did so, by leaving it by some other company in the area. The truck was gone in a few days.

It was here in this area, 30 days after my son, Raymond B Cartier, was born that I received word that all was well. He was born on April 30th, I heard about it on May 30th. No cigars to pass out, so I passed out cigarettes. (He was 18 months old when I saw him for the first time.)

It was also in this area that Jack Gallant received word that his wife had given birth to twins. Jack’s explanation was when he opened the telegram, “Cheez, there’s two of them.” He was as happy as could be. (Jack never saw his children; he was killed while fighting for Manila.)

We were also close to the sea and the beaches. And while off duty, we were allowed to swim close by our Camp Washington. On one of these swim sessions, while a bunch of us were swimming, an LST tried to pull off the beach without warning us that they were about to do so. This caused a big water turmoil when the propellers turned and churned. One of the swimmers was Tripp, who had been floating on a mattress cover. This action caused him to fall off and, being a non-swimmer, he disappeared under the water.

All of us that were nearby went to see if we could find him. Ferguson was the closest and on the first dive he pulled Tripp back up. Everyone was yelling at the LST to shut its engines down; they finally did, and Fergie brought Tripp back to shore. That was a mighty close call; if Fergie hadn’t dove into that murky water, Tripp would have drowned.

Clarence Ferguson received the Soldier’s Medal for saving another soldier’s life.

By now a couple of tank crews were made up from our different companies and sent to the 603rd Tank Company where they saw action on Biak Island. Other elements were formed and they saw action at Tome, Dutch New Guinea. C Company was now put on alert and shortly after, they boarded a landing craft and landed at Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea, being the first full company to go into action from the 44th Tank Battalion.

Then the remainder of the battalion was alerted and we knew we were going somewhere. No one seemed to know, but soon we had orders to break camp and board the U.S.S. Marcus Daley.

We were packed in like a can of sardines. This ship was unreal. The tanks were slung by the cargo winches and up and away they went, down into the cargo holds. These tanks weighed 32 tons. Trucks were to be on topside and we soon found out why. There would be no meals served aboard the Marcus Daley, we would be feasting on 10 in 1’s and K rations. Our kitchens, which were in the trucks, would furnish the coffee and soup. We would not be allowed to use the ship’s heads (latrines). There was a trough built topside, with a hose running water all the time with seawater. This was our latrine.

Our destination this time was the Admiralty Islands, and we could tell that this trip wasn't going to be nice. Our cots were set up end to end, side by side. To reach your cot, one had to crawl over all those that were between you and the so-called isle. That wasn't for me! I grabbed my blankets and went topside and found a place under our supply truck and that was that. I was joined by two other GIs from the company; that was our 'sleeping quarters' for the trip.

We had a situation that got a little out of hand. The captain of the U.S.S. Marcus Daley must have read 'Mutiny on the Bounty' over and over, and in his own feeble mind, pictured himself as 'Capt Bligh.' This guy was a complete idiot. HE put all inside water coolers off limits to all army personnel.

There they were, just inside the bulkhead door, and the opening had a chain across it. That didn't bother us GIs. To get a nice cool drink, a little chain wasn't going to stop us. The next thing this "Master of the Marcus Daley" did was to put GUARDS at every bulkhead that had a water fountain. This Navy man was absolutely UNREAL. Our fresh water faucet came up out of the deck and that was where we were to fill our canteens. In the tropics, a water outlet like that would be hot all day. No amount of complaining did a single thing for us. Nothing.

We arrived at Los Negros, Admiralty Islands and got the surprise of our lives. There before us was one of the biggest collections of warships that we had seen up to this point. What an armada! Battleships, cruisers, aircraft carriers, destroyers, minesweepers, etc, etc. We knew now that we were in for something big. We disembarked from our good ship Marcus Daley and boarded trucks to our area.

Of course, our tents would have to go up in this little valley, and of course we knew right then that if it rained, we'd be in a lake. The NCOs tried to have the officers approve a move to higher ground. No luck. This was ours. So up went the tents and we completed our area by mid-afternoon. Then we had to go back to the Marcus Daley; they had finished unloading the tanks and the drivers were ready to move them to our site. They were all lined up by platoons and they would be loaded for combat the following morning.

That night it rained. Guess what? We were right smack in the middle of a lake, knee-deep right outside our tent. Our gear had to go on our bunks to stay dry. We took our blankets and went up the hill to a dry spot, rolled up in the blankets and a shelter half, and went to sleep.

After a few days of this and that, someone noticed an LCI (landing craft, infantry) anchored a little off shore. Right off: "Let's take it for a spin." "Nope," says I, "there has to be something wrong, it's been there for three days now; leave it be." BUT our good Company A man, Elmer Carty, decides that this is the time to become daring. Elmer is pretty good on jumping wires. So he and four others would-be sailors got a skiff and rowed out to the LCI. They got the thing going and off they went.

They were having a ball, but the thing would only steer to the right, or starboard. No way could they get it to go in any other direction, just starboard. One great big circle. So it wasn't too long before

some NAVY personnel saw that someone was trying to make off with their LCI. It was like the wild west; they're in hot pursuit of a landing craft that can only go in one direction. We had a ball watching Carty and his pirates get caught. But the Navy thought it broke up the monotony and the captured became friends of the Navy. We were learning to work together.

CHAPTER 12

We now knew that what was coming was something we'd been training for. We were preparing our tanks and Lt Rodgers made sure that his maintenance crew took care of every tank problem that was reported. Once he OK'd the tank, we would load some ammo then cover them with the tarp. We were ready.

We got our assignment; we'd be landing on "H" hour, with the initial landing, on October 20th. Leyte Island, the Philippines.

Information taken from our book, 44th Tank Battalion. Tank Tracks, Tennessee to Tokyo: As the days wore on, we were told how and when and with whom we'd be with in the initial landing. We continued as 6th Army, attached to the X Corps. Corps in turn attached the battalion to the First Cavalry. It was the 1st Cavalry who sent its officers to brief us on the mission. This was one of the many times we worked with the 1st Cavalry, an outfit that we became very proud of being with in the endeavors to come. A real first-class outfit.

We were loaded aboard LSTs and LCMs, our platoon and others went aboard an LCM (landing craft, medium). This was an open cargo deck; the tanks were exposed to the weather, which was OK for the entire trip to Leyte. We became part of this huge group of warships and as we headed out to sea, we were wrapped by combat ships, destroyers, battlegroups, and aircraft carriers; it was a sight to see. When darkness approached we wondered how this great big fleet was going to keep from running over each other. One could see in the faint light other ships in front, behind and beside your's. It gave us a creepy feeling to know that one mistake by any captain would result in disaster. We were told if you fall overboard and the ship behind cannot make a save, you're a forgotten GI. No ship would leave its lineup to try a rescue. You were a gonner!

On our 'cruise' to Leyte, we found that our ship, LCM 258, had another captain that thought we army personnel were something from another land, and we were to be treated as such. At meal times, the navy ate first, period! They had eggs for breakfast, toast, good hot coffee, etc. We were not allowed to get in line until ALL navy personnel had gone through. Then off came the eggs; our's were powdered eggs, no toast, maybe some bacon, and coffee. This continued for every meal, to the point that the navy guys were themselves feeling very uncomfortable about it. BUT for the entire trip, we ate second and had to wait while the navy went first. We tried to cut in the line; the cooks would not put anything on your plate if there was a navy person behind you. ???

When we reached Leyte (*map at attachment 1*), the bombardment had been going on for some time. The battleships were sending broadside after broadside into the shore (shelling from a battleship is called a broadside). We could see the navy Higgins boats circling; these carried the infantry, waiting for their signal to head for shore. Our LSTs and LCMs got in position and waited. Then the shore was hit by rockets. UNREAL! Thousands of rockets were streaming from the landing craft, pounding into the installations on shore. The sky was filled with them. Then the boats moved toward shore.

Every landing craft had a 'sunder.' He's the guy that sticks his neck out, to see how deep the water is that the troops are dropping off into. He either sends a weighted rope off into the deep or a long stick. Too deep and soldiers are going to drown. They are loaded down with gear and have no chance whatever of making shore.

Our sounder was from the 'Engineers' and he had a huge bulldozer as first vehicle off. This was in case of tank traps. He not only found out if the water was OK to drop off into, but if there were tank traps, he'd fill them in so the tanks could cross over.

Higgins boats, or LCI (landing craft, infantry) rammed their boats right up on shore, and as the troops debarked, the boat lightened and away they went, back to their ship for another load.

Our good ship, LCM 258, dropped its pull-off anchors behind and made the run for shore. Guess what! He was going to drop us off in 16 feet of water! The engineer yelled, "Too deep." Which meant that 258 had to pull off shore and make another run. This was unreal. We heard later that our good captain had refused the executive's request to back off and make another run. He (we learned later) was relieved of command. The second run was good and off we went. This all took place in less than ten minutes, but it sure made us wonder if we were going to get blown out of the water before we even touched the Philippines.

Two companies went for Tacloban, and the airport, part of B and all of D; the rest of B and all of A supported the infantry and went inland. Then B went with a unit up the coast and inland, and we went to Palo to support the 1st Cavalry.

For the first few days, our air-cover was from the Navy carriers; they did a tremendous job. The Japs were coming in and strafing, dropping their bombs and trying to cause all kinds of destruction. Then the P-38s arrived and that was Army; they could use the airstrip at Tacloban and fly more missions.

It was here in this area, Palo, that we meet Lew Ayers, as well known movie actor who was a 'Conscientious Objector.' He had refused to carry a gun and kill others. He did not refuse to serve. He was accepted into the Medical Corps and served as a medic. In just the short time that we got to know Lew Ayers, we heard nothing but praise from the wounded. He was driving an ambulance upon the line, serving the wounded and bringing them back to the 'Field Hospital.' We were there on a Sunday, at this field hospital set up in a Filipino church, and the hospital chaplain held services for us. Lew Ayers took

part in the services and talked to us later. He was a real nice guy. We never saw him again because we went up the coast, now assigned to 12th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division.

As time developed we settled into a tight well organized platoon. Lt Hubble as platoon leader and Bud Barber as Staff Sergeant, 1st Platoon. The other members were: John Brown, Calvin Amos, John "Cy" Minton, Jack Gallant, Arnold Brophy, Jim Muklewicz, Jim Chesser, Greg Savino, Francis Heinze, Virgil Carmon, Jonas Eastwood, Glen LaFond, Jack McKinney, Leroy Coulter, Ike Harman, Otha Carver, William "Bill" Dunleavy, John Cunningham, John Myers, Edward "Witt" Wittenberger, Manuel "Quint" Quintas, Milke Doby, and myself, Ray "red" Cartier. (Twenty-five damn good men; some were going to make it, others would lose their lives, others would be wounded. War is hell.)

Gotta mention this now. All tank crews named their tanks; it was a name that all had to agree upon. We settled on "Klankin Koffin" and had it painted on both sides of outrank. Spelled with two "K"s. This really made others look and wonder, "Are those guys nuts!" But it did prove out to be a well - chosen title.

We also had code names given to us. No more Sergeant Smith, it was now "Smitty," as I became "Red," Capt VanWinkle became Van, Barber was now "Barb," and so forth. No insignia was worn in combat. It was found that the Japs would lay in hiding for hours just to kill an officer or an NCO. All this came from combat units before us.

CHAPTER 13

After the landing became solid, we were moved inland. The troops moved in different directions, with different assignments. Our mission was to now head north along the coast to a town called Pinamopoan, and join forces with the 24th Infantry.

The lead tank was ours, the "Klankin Koffin," and all went well until we came to a river. I saw a wooden bridge that I knew would not support a 32-ton tank. We also saw two medium tanks, like ours, about 50 yards off shore that were indeed stuck in the mud. They were almost tipped over on their sides. They had been stripped and rendered useless by their crews. We found out later that they were a 'tank company' and had fallen on some bad decisions, this being one of them. They had tried to find the sandbank at the mouth of the river and fallen prey to the mud.

Van came up from the back and saw what had happened. He called back for Ed Eaton and made the decision that the three of us would venture out into the water and try to find the sandbar. We would arm ourselves with M1s and carry an ammo belt, just in case we were fired upon from the other shore. Great! So off into the water we went to find this damn sandbar.

Van and Ed are about 6 foot 3 or 4 inches tall. I'm 5 foot 7. So off we go, rifles over our heads to keep them dry. The water gets deeper and I start to wonder if I'm going to drown with all this weight I'm carrying or am I going to have to breathe through the rifle barrel. The water is now right up to my chin but I'm still on the sandbar. So are Ed and Van, only the water is only up to their chest, and we are at the other side of the river. We had the sandbar. Van signaled the tanks and we positioned ourselves to guide them across; we were sure we'd not get into the mud. We didn't; all tanks made it.

We didn't get to the Pinamopoan area until almost dark and the greetings from the 24th GIs weren't too pleasant; really sarcastic, and we didn't know the reason why. We kept quiet and set up our own perimeter for the night. Van and some other officers went to be critiqued for the push coming in the morning. Now it's really dark and no one should be moving around or somebody is going to open up and shoot.

At 2100 hours, I'm in a hole with Quin manning a 30-caliber machine gun, doing sentry duty, when we hear something coming down the road. (We had already put a round in the chamber earlier; doing so makes an awful lot of noise, especially in the dead of night.) I was about to yell "Halt" which I really didn't want to do because that says, "Hey, we're over here," when we hear Van's voice say, "Don't any of you tankers get trigger happy." Cheez, we almost did. If he had come across country, I'm sure the 24th would have fired. How lucky can one get.

About 0900 we got a hurry-up call for tank support. A patrol had gone out and on trying to come back in, they were ambushed and had wounded. There was a fierce firefight going on and they needed help. Van called for Barb and I to go get them out, the "Klankin Koffin" lead tank. BUT my gunner Heinzie had gone on a detail to pick up more ammo. I needed a gunner and fast. I yelled, "I need a gunner," and Bob Baenen, from Ed Eaton's tank, came running over and climbed into my tank. I had my gunner, and off we went up the hill. We were then assigned two tank nurses (tank nurses were infantrymen; they protect your sides from anyone getting so close; when someone is close to a tank, we inside have no way to get at them.) As we rounded the corner, all hell broke loose. I was on the turret gun and I could not believe what I was seeing. The Japs wanted to wipe out this patrol and were going all out. This was a hornet's nest! I spotted the patrol and we went right for them. I signaled them to get the litter cases in behind us, when I saw Japs on the hillside to my right, trying to throw hand grenades into my turret. So I closed the hatch and "WHAM!" There was an explosion!

What in hell was that? Then I heard Barb on the radio saying, "Christ, Red's engine doors have been blown open." ??? Still, what happened? Our engine had stalled and I'm yelling at Ike to get them started, if he could. He finally got something going and it was like they were going to die out again. Barb had signaled over the radio to pull to the side and he'd cover our withdrawal. The patrol had pulled out and were safe. Now it was, "Get Red the hell out of there." They did, and after some heavy firing we backed around the corner to safety. Then we found out what had happened.

It seemed as we approached the patrol, a Jap came up out of a hole with a satchel charge and placed it on my rear deck, right over the engines. Thus the "Wham!" It blew one side of the Whirlwind

Radial engine, but it did not put the engine out of commission. It did cause an awful lot of damage and I did have to have the engine replaced. We also had loaded up with high octane gas that morning, 165 gallons of 100 octane aviation fuel. That's what is used in the M4 tanks. How luck can we get. NO FIRE!

Our mission for the day was successful. We had gotten the patrol out and NO ONE was left behind; they all came out. We strayed in contact with the Japs long enough to cause them to pull back to another position. We the tankers had no casualties, just serious damage to one tank.

One of our tank nurses was a small Mexican GI. He was absolutely great! He was covering the left side of our tank when the Jap came up out of his hole and placed the charge on the back; as he turned to see the right side, there was the Jap returning to his hole. He took care of the Jap and then ducked; he knew the charge was going off in a moment. It did, but he didn't get hit.

When we had pulled back around the corner, we jumped out to see how bad we were and about how long we'd be out of commission. When I was about to climb up on the back of the tank, a correspondent started to ask questions about our mission. He also noticed that there was gear that had gotten blown apart. He asked me about it, and I told him that infantry had a habit of throwing their packs up on the tank because they were going the same place we were. Those packs got mighty heavy after a full day on the line. Later when I read his report, it was written as the equipment belonged to us, the tankers. It didn't!

I also had another problem when we were assessing the damage. Lt Hubble sent for me. He really gave me a bawling out. Never did he say, "Cartier, you and your crew did a damn good job." While on the line trying to get that patrol out, we had been firing everything; the 75, the turret 30, the bow gun, and I had the 30 going on the turret ring. BUT during all this, when I communicated on intercon, or out to Barber, the tank behind us, I failed to switch from intercon to radio and then back to intercon. He gave me hell because I didn't do so. I was so livid that one of the fellows knew that I was about to sound off and grabbed my arm and pulled me away.

Later when we finally got the "Klankin Koffin" back in the valley area, Van came over to us, our crew, and really told us what a great job we had done. We had stayed, even though we knew we were in deep trouble, until the patrol was out. We had accomplished something that they were sure couldn't happen, a successful withdrawal of the patrol. Van said, "Red, you and your crew whaled the hell out of them, we're proud of you and the "Klankin Koffin" and so are the infantry." With that he turned to go, but then came back and took me by the arm and off a few paces. "Red, don't worry about Hubble, I've already spoken to him."

I wasn't 'worried' about Hubble, but I sure was disgusted with him. How could any officer be more concerned with 'procedure' than the welfare of his platoon? My respect for him went right down the tubes.

My tank needed a new engine. Ours were Wright Whirlwinds, aircooled, and they told me that they'd have a new one in a couple of days. In the meantime, we became foot soldiers.

Newspaper article, accompanied by a photo captioned: SGT RAYMOND CARTIER, commander of the "Klankin coffin" on M-4 Sherman tank with the 24th Division on the Island of Leyte and who with his crew of four others escaped unharmed and performed the mission assigned after a 20-pound satchel charge of TNT had exploded on the rear of the tank.

Dose of TNT Not Enough to Open "Klankin' Coffin"

The thrilling exploit of a Hopkinson man, Sgt Raymond Cartier, commander of the "Klankin Coffin," an M-4 Sherman tank with the 24th Division on Leyte, P.I. is related in detail by Walter Simmons in a dispatch printed in the Chicago Tribune Nov 9, as follows:

"Klankin Coffin," an M-4 Sherman tank, proved today that American material is rough and tough, indeed.

Advancing in the hilly country beyond Capooacan, elements of the 24th division were pinned down at a sharp highway curve. One casualty, a wounded infantry man, had to be left behind. Tank support was brought up and a few minutes later the foot soldiers started around the curve again, while the tank, named "Klankin Coffin" by its commander, Sgt Raymond Cartier, Hopkinson, Mass, trimmed the high grass on either side with bullets.

Jap with a Satchel

The mission of this force was to return with the wounded man. At the point of the earlier ambush a 6 foot Japanese marine darted out of the grass and deposited a 20-pound satchel charge of TNT on the rear of the tank.

Pieces of nickel and debris hurtled thru the air as it exploded. The "Klankin Coffin" however kept right on going. So did the infantry men. They took care of the Jap, accomplished their mission, and returned triumphantly.

Armor Blown Away

Sgt Cartier hopped out of the tank to assess the damage, followed by the other four crewmen, Corp Robert Baenen, Green Bay, Wisc; Pvt Isaac Hardman, Lehi, Utah; Pvt Manuel Quintas, San Diego, Cal; and Pvt Michael Dobay, Far Rockaway, NY. All escaped without a scratch.

The tank rear armor was partly blown away and the right engine bank was ripped. Sgt Cartier accepted these things philosophically as curable by a 48-hour repair job. "But what makes me mad," he explained, "is that we had two boxes of rations and a couple of bed rolls on the bank of the tank. There isn't enough left to put in your eye."

The very next day, more tank support was called for because the Japs were still holding the are and they needed to break through to get into the valley beyond. This time Van called for Ed Eaton and his crew and a support tank (Bob Baenen is now with his rightful crew; he's the gunner in Ed Eaton's tank). As Ed approached the firing line, he was throwing grenades from the turret into the Japs he saw along the side of the road. Again, from the hillside to his left, a Jap sniper hit him just as he had pulled the pin from a grenade. He dr4opped the grenade and it went down inside the tank. He dove down for it, but it exploded before he could get his hands on it and throw it out. Ed is now seriously wounded and his tank is still engaged in fighting the Japs. They finally pull back far enough and another tank takes his position to allow us to try to get Ed out.

I and about three others who had been there with our rifles now tried to see what we could do in getting him out of the tank and to have the medics get him to an aid station. Baenen and others pushed him up as we pulled. The damn sniper opened up again and we had to duck behind the turret. The footsoldiers threw down a heavy barrage in the sniper's direction and we tried again. This time we got him out of the turret and onto the back of the tank. Again the damn sniper opened upon us and was determined to get Ed again. (I think he did hit him again while Ed was lying on the back of the tank; he was an open target.)

I yelled for help and three of us reached up and just pulled him off and let him drop to the ground. It was that, or the sniper was finally going to put more holes in Ed. He landed with a 'whomp' and the medics had him on a stretcher and off to an aid station. He was a mess. (We never saw Ed Eaton again until we started to have reunions back of 1974 and on.)

The only thing that saved Ed and his crew was the fact that maybe the 75mm shell casings there were all over the floor of the turret absorbed most of the blast.

One of the most 'believe it or not' situations was that of Bob Baenen. The day before he was in my tank, as my gunner, and we get our rear deck blown off, nobody injured. Then he's with his own tank and crew the next day and has a grenade go off next to him on the floor of the turret. This time, he has holes in his fatigue jacket from the shrapnel but escapes without a scratch.

This are became known as 'Breakneck Ridge.' (I called it 'Little Casino' after the hillside in Italy that the U.S. Forces had a time to capture.) Breakneck Ridge was also the area that we lost Capt VanWinkle. We were dismounted off the tanks and helping the footsoldiers keep the ground captured. We had lost another tank as it had tried to back up to get a better position and it backed over the embankment and became stuck.

Van was standing there with his M1 in his left hand, his right hand on his right hip. He was hit in the right hand, the bullet going through his side and out the back. I heard "Damn, that stings!" I didn't get to go over to Van right away because most of us were busy firing in the direction from where the

sniper had fired. When we did, he was sitting behind a tank, on a watercan, and a medic was attending to him. The bullet had gone through his hand, his side and out the back. He was put on a stretcher and evacuated.

Captain Julian VanWinkle was to return to Company A months later at Tagaytay Ridge, Luzon.

CHAPTER 14

Our tank, the "Klankin Koffin" was at Pinamopon, waiting for the new engine. This area seemed to be the area that the units were being resupplied and to get a few days' rest. The weather was lousy; rain, rain, and more rain. It was here that Buzzsaw Cain and Ray Conwell replaced my engine, under sniper fire.

A sniper had moved into as well concealed spot and he was raising hell with everything. They were using the beach to bring in supplies and evacuate the wounded. The sniper shut it down. He would let loose with machinegun fire onto the beach and the Higgins boats couldn't get in; they were taking too many hits. An infantry unit had been caught in a valley and had taken an awful lot of casualties. They couldn't be evacuated because of the sniper.

They formed a squad to go after the Jap and I was one who wanted him the hell out of there. We climbed the hill from the left, away from the last area he fired from. We moved toward the last firing. All of a sudden, to my right, a GI opened up full force, then another, and another. I was nowhere near this action but I knew that someone had found the sniper. They did and he was dead.

To show how determined the Japanese soldiers were, this guy had dug a four foot-wide hole and FIFTEEN feet deep, and not one bit of dirt around the hole. He had carried all of it away from the hole and spread it out amongst the jungle. Nothing could have hit him except a direct hit on the hole...he had been using a bamboo pole as a ladder.

When the engine was delivered by the primemover, a huge wrecker, the damaged one was hoisted out and the new one put in; took maybe an hour. Buzzsaw and Conwell stayed and did all the mechanic's work and again, under a sniper's fire. Another one had moved in. This time all he had was a rifle and the GIs threw so much fire into that direction that I think it was the second time he fired that was his last. It stopped.

Buzzsaw and Conwell did such a good job that we were ready to roll the next day. (We never had a bit of trouble with that engine to the day we received new tanks for the invasion of Japan.) The irony of this, though, is the NCO who delivered the tank engine with the primemover received the Bronze Star medal for the job well done. Buzzsaw Cain and Ray Conwell received a very appreciative 'thank you' from the crew of the "Klankin Koffin." Period. Nothing else.

It was here in Pinamopoan that one of our officers went to pieces and couldn't take combat. We never noticed until here in Pinamopoan that he wasn't doing the job as a platoon leader. He was always holding back and Larry "Stinky" Stringberg finally blew his top and told him off. If we hadn't held Larry, he would of beaten LaManna to a pulp. He just could not get with it, to the point he was not doing his duty as an officer, and Larry was a tank commander in his platoon.

The road for our supplies had been cut by the Japs and nothing was getting to us. And with the sniper upon the hill, it was a bad situation. While one group went after the sniper, Larry wanted to take a group and open the road. "No deal," from LaManna. Those that had cut the road had caught a truck convoy and shot the hell out of it. They also caught two ambulances with wounded and only one driver came out of it. Still LaManna would not take a group and try to open the road.

About three hours later, a unit from below the roadcut broke through and opened the road again. Now the question was, what about LaManna? Larry never did forgive that officer. (It became a very serious situation.)

The troops had finally broken through "Breakneck Ridge" and were on the other side of the hill looking down into the valley. Only now we had artillery come in on us and we couldn't spot their location. We pulled back to have a look-see and a F.O. (Forward Observer) was assigned to us from our own artillery to find the Jap's location. In the meantime we were still engaged with the Japs all around us. One skirmish after another, and it was on one of these skirmishes that Maurice Iverson was wounded. After he was hit, he walked to an aid station under his own power, and there they told him he was to be evacuated. So he walked back to tell us, and as he left he told us, "I'll see you on the other side of the valley." He then walked back to the aid station to await the trip to a field hospital aboard a jeep.

Note: It wasn't until after the Leyte campaign was over, Ormoc had fallen, and we returned to Tunga for R&R and had been there a few days that we learned that Maurice Iverson had died from wounds received on December 29th, just after Christmas.

Also when we were working with the F.O. we had climbed a high point to observe where these heavy guns were firing from. Three of us had gone up with instructions for all others to stay low; this gun wanted to knock our heads off. It was Bud Barber, myself and the F.O. Here we are crawling along, on our stomachs, with M1s and field glasses. Now we're trying to see if they open up on something. Wow! They sure do! They opened up on the damn hill we're on. Why? As we turn to get out of there, after the first burst hit, we see behind us a group of GIs who are walking around like this is a Sunday afternoon stroll. Damn! This is what the artillery has spotted. As we withdraw, another round comes in and BANGO, this time we have a casualty. Glenn LaFond, who had been trying to observe, was hit behind his knee and it was a mess. We finally got him off the hill and to the medics.

His jeep ride up and over the hill to a field hospital was the last time we saw him until after 1974on, at a reunion of the 44th Tank Battalion.

After Capt Julian P VanWinkle Jr was wounded, we were assigned 1st Lt Leo Reinartz as our commanding officer. This is an officer who had been with the battalion as a liaison officer, but back in the States, we of Company A knew him well. He was one good officer, well respected by all. We had him for eight days, and he was dead.

The third platoon had gone down into the valley and Reinartz had gone with them. They needed more tank support and asked for me to come down and bring LaManna with me. I gave him the message and at first I thought he was going to refuse. I told him to get on my radio and talk to those in the valley. He did, and he decided to go. BUT he would not take command of my tank. Anytime an officer is in your tank, he takes the command. He wouldn't, so when we took off, he layed on the floor of the turret and stayed there until he was released.

It was a wild ride down the mountainside. The Japs had the road bracketed and fired at least three times. Their artillery missed because I had Ike changing speeds and driving like a madman. These were the field pieces that we had been trying to put out of commission for days.

As we pulled into position behind a small hill, Freddy gave me a call on the radio to come along his left side and wait. This we did, and all hell broke loose. The Jap artillery had this area bracketed and we were right in the middle of it. (LaManna is still lying on my turret floor.) We took some HE (high explosive shells) mighty close. The infantry on our right had started to move out, as was the plan as soon as the tanks were ready. Another barrage from the artillery, and we saw Lt Reinartz gunning towards us, from the right, waving his arms for both the infantry and us to take cover. The artillery was too heavy.

There was a tremendous burst behind Reinartz and he went down, mortally wounded. No one tried to get to him until later; we knew he had been killed instantly. The date was November 27, 1944.

Freddy had us pull into a firing position and called for more tanks from the 3rd. Four of us laid down a heavy barrage, and I mean heavy. As fast as the loaders could load, we fired the 75s round after round. We now knew where these damn artillery pieces were and we were trying to cover all that territory. We did some damage, because there wasn't any return fire from that position ever again. (All this in the town of Limon.)

All this time LaManna was still in my turret, not lying on the floor anymore because of the 75 casings dropping out of the breach. After this action, Lt Rodgers arrived and took command of the 3rd Platoon and had LaManna taken by the medics to the rear. (We never saw him again in any capacity in the 44th, but I did see him in Manila at a much later date.)

We advanced across the valley and did we ever have problems. We had received another lot of ammunition, especially the 75s. They were all DUDS. Nothing was bursting on impact, NOTHING! We'd get into a situation that we needed the 75 and nothing was happening. Some were sticking in the breach. Now getting them out was something else. We had to take a rod that had a nose cone, lower

The gun, and poke this shell loose from the outside. In an area that has Japs all around! None of us liked this one damn bit. There had to be the “catcher” inside. When the shell did let loose, he had to catch it or it would bounce off the floor and ...God only knows what could happen.

Sometimes we’d loosen the gun from the mount (this could be done) and bounce the whole damn thing up and down, hoping that the shell would be caught when it did break loose. We pulled back to a supply depot and took out every shell with that lot number. All of us that had picked up this lot number were as mad as hell. Here we are, in combat, and having trouble with the ammunition that the civilians are supposed to be checking and rechecking. What are they thinking of when they let the bad stuff get by?

Now the objective is Ormoc. Across the valley was the city of Ormoc and we had heard that the Japs had reinforced it. As we entered the outskirts, a few of our tanks were in bad shape—tracks needed repair, engine work (not my engine, though), etc. They took Ike and put him with another tank; I got kinda worked up about it, but to no avail. My tank was too beat up and needed repairs, so Ike went with the 3rd Platoon and S/Sgt Fredericks. Freddy was good; he knew exactly what had to be done and the best way to do it. (His officer, LaManna, had been removed and sent to the rear.)

As they went into Ormoc, the remainder of us that were left behind did mop-up, trying to eliminate all the stragglers that the Japs left behind. These stragglers caused lots of problems; they would operate as individuals until they couldn’t continue. In the meantime, we had to worry about where they were, how many, and what were they up to.

I stayed in the area for a week or so then pulled back to the Tunga area, a few days before Christmas. We had been on the line, in combat, since we landed on October 20th. The remainder of the company joined us a few days later, in time for Christmas.

CHAPTER 15

On November 29, 1944 Captain Grant Cloud was assigned to Company A as its new Company Commander. He was out of Battalion Intelligence (G2). When he received the assignment, he went directly to the 3rd Platoon which was still taking Ormoc, with the 24th and the 77th joined the fighting after landing near Ormoc.

After Ormoc fell the 3rd Platoon and the others came back to the Tunga area, just in time for Christmas. The battalion NCOs put on a Christmas time for the rest of us. It took a lot to have us forget what we had just finished. Of the entire program, the part that the medics put on was the best, Ralph Dio Guardi and “Shorty” Christof. They were absolutely funny, especially Shorty Christof. He wouldn’t stop; every time he said he was finished and walked away from the mike, he’d turn around and come back, saying, “I got another one,” and he did. This went on for almost ¾ of an hour, and they finally had to physically carry him away from the area. Lots of laughter and clapping for “Shorty” Christof.

Quint took sick after Christmas and ended up in the hospital. They couldn't find out what it was and he got sicker and sicker. He was skin and bones. I had gone over to see him and he started to cry; they were shipping him back to the States because they couldn't put their finger on what was wrong. He didn't want to leave the ole "Klankin Koffin" and his army buddies. We had been together since Campbell. I told him he'd be crazy not to take the medical trip home, that any of us would go in his place if they'd let us. So he said his 'good-byes' and he went back to the States.

Now I'm one tanker short, a radioman/loader. At that time there weren't too many to pick from. We still had a full company but no Lt Hubble. He had gone to a base hospital with 'jungle rot.' Looks like leprosy (I never saw leprosy, but this looks ugly). Some said he was on his way home. For sure, I'd never miss him. The officers assigned Orvis Kaufman to the "Klankin Koffin" and I raised merry Cain. I didn't want him; wouldn't have him in my crew, etc. I was told, you got him and that's it!

Knowing from what I had heard from others, Kaufman was trouble. Never got along, didn't do the work assigned, etc. Well now came the business of getting the tanks back in A-1 shape. We worked our butts off because we heard that we were off to Luzon soon. The first day, no Kaufman in sight. Where is this guy? No Kaufman around. We pulled the tracks, put new cleats in, new connectors, put them back on, and that was some job. When it came time for chow, I called the guys and said let's go. (I still hadn't found Kaufman.) We were about to leave when I heard a noise from inside the tank; climbing up I looked down into one of the cleanest tanks around. Kaufman had been down inside cleaning out the mud and junk that had accumulated for months on end. It was spotless. I called the guys back to take a looksee, and they couldn't believe their eyes.

Off to chow we went. But I drag back with Kaufman and ask him what gives. His explanation was, "Red! You have a good platoon, you and the others always pitch in and everyone works. The other platoons have a caste system; you do this, you do that, I'll be the sergeant and make sure it's done right, you do the work." Orvis Kaufman became one of the best members of 1st Platoon and I had him as a member of "Klankin Koffin," the best damn tank in A Company.

Now it's getting near New Year's, and we're still working on the tanks and getting ready for the next assignment. Luzon it was, but again when and where.

New Year's Eve. I think for a minute or two it would have been safer on the line. There we knew from which direction the bullets were coming. When these guys opened up at midnight, they fired in all directions. Our squad tents became sieves, the roofs were riddled with holes. Unreal. The officers were crawling on their stomachs, yelling, "Cease fire, cease fire!" Of course nobody did. It was unreal, but something to laugh about for a long, long time.

The first order of business the next day was to get the tanks in shape and ready to roll. The next few days found everyone working hard to get back to normal. The tracks were in bad shape so they had to be pulled, worn parts replaced, and then put back on. This was a tough job but by working together, one crew helping another, all tanks were slowly getting full treatment.

We had burned out several 30 caliber machine gun barrels, so they were replaced and spares put in the storage area. The 75MM was torn down, inspected for wear and the breech gone over carefully. Everything was shaping up fine. All other weapons were field stripped, inspected, and put back together. All tank commanders carried 45 side arms. These were field stripped, gone over by the armorer who made sure they were in good working order, and we test-fired some. The 45 pistol is a close order gun; it was used when you dismounted in a hurry and needed something for protection. (One had to be an expert with the 45 to hit anything. It had an awful kick.) Everything was falling in line and in first-class condition. We're ready to roll! The ammunition arrived and we loaded and NOW we were ready for sure.

In their turn, each company headed for the beach and their assigned LSTs (landing ship tank). All tanks are backed on so when we hit Luzon, we come out head first, and we're below deck. All wheeled vehicles will be topside. This LST was loaded to full capacity. When they pulled off the beach, they snaked their way to their assigned position, as did the other LSTs carrying the remainder of the 44th Tank Battalion.

I don't think anyone blew a whistle and there wasn't any radio; we travelled under a radio silence (all signals were by blinker light, or flag signals), but there we were, slowly pulling out of the bay and into the South China Sea. We were leaving Leyte Island.

The next day the fleet was in one of the most fearsome storms I had ever seen in the South Pacific. Waves were breaking over the bow of the aircraft carrier that we could see behind us, the destroyers were rolling and pitching; unreal. The battleships would come up out of the sea and then smash back down. The LSTs were like a cork on the ocean. Up, down, shiver, up, down, shiver. We could feel the whole ship shake from bow to stern. Capt Cloud felt that maybe the tanks below deck should be checked, so I'm the one that gets called to go below deck with a detail and check out the chains that are holding the tanks in place. I passed the word, "Do not go between the tanks; crawl under or over, but do not go between." Just in case a tank does shift, why get caught between two of them? We all crawled under the tanks checking all the turnbuckles and found none that needed tightening. We were glad when we returned topside.

Another thing that caused great concern was the 'Kamikaze,' suicide Japanese pilots. They attacked the convoy and caused great damage. They deliberately crashed their planes into aircraft carriers, battlewagons, cruisers – any US ship that they could hit. The planes were loaded with explosives and they would dive-bomb their targets. It was unreal to see these Japanese planes crashing into the fleet. They flew through some heavy anti-aircraft fire and some went down, but some got through, too.

We were landing January 11th, 1945, S plus 2. When we unloaded, we heard the story of a 16-inch Japanese field piece upon the mountain to our left. It was mounted on a rail bed, and every time it fired, it would roll back into a cave. Hence it wasn't being hit and put out of action. It was giving the

landing parties fits. Who wanted a 16-inch field piece firing at you? The navy didn't seem to be able to wipe it out, so here we are, on the beach, and we see a huge flash, then the boom, and then the zip-zip-zip-zip-zip as it went over our heads. Sounded like a boxcar, going end over end. The shells were bursting beyond us but orders were passed down, "Mount up, get off the beach and assemble inland." Didn't have to tell us twice; we got out of there.

Each company of the battalion was now attached to different units for the drive south. A and B Companies were chosen to spearhead the drive for Manila, with the 1st Cavalry Division. A Company was attached to 1st Brigade Combat Team and B Company was attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team. This was to be a lightning strike for our objective was the Pearl of the Orient, Manila.

We crossed the Agno River and prepared to move on that night. With black-out conditions, any town was a dangerous town. We were passing through a small town in pitch darkness and it seemed that the Japs were everywhere. I was on the rear deck of the tank, 45 in my hand, holding onto the antenna, looking up into the trees, seeing all kinds of movements but no Japs. Mike Doby was riding outside of the front sponson (fender) with his tommy-gun. We saw some movement from behind a building and Mike opened up. Good God they were our own troops. "Hold it, hold it" I yelled at him. His bullets went just above the heads of three troopers. They were really ticked off, but so was I. They were not to go wandering around behind the buildings, and there they were. I sounded off, and they must have thought I was at least a 'bird colonel' because they never said a word. But I was really mad. They damn near got themselves killed!

That was the night that everything crawled, moved, or scared the hell out of us. The next morning I had an awful case of hives; unreal. As big as half dollars. I went to a medic and asked for something to stop the itch. The doc asked me if I was in the march last night. "Yep." Then he told me that my hives were caused by fright. He asked me if I was scared at any time that night! Was he kidding! (Those troopers must have had hives as big as saucers.) Mike really scared them, for sure. That was the only time I ever had the hives. (I was scared many times but never had the hives again.)

It was near this area while D Company, the light tanks, were reconnoitering the town of Gapan, that we lost our battalion commander, Lt Col Tom Ross, and Capt Charles Kudrle was seriously wounded. They were in a jeep and had just forded a small stream when a Jap heavy machine gun opened up on them. Col Ross fired back with a BAR but was killed. Capt Kudrle crawled under a Nippa hut and, feigning death, he laid there while the Japs looked him over; they moved out when they heard the D Company tanks coming. The next day Lt Colonel William Barksdale was our new Battalion Commander, with Major William Meredith next in command.

Near the town of Cabanatuan, our column held back while the Rangers went into the POW Camp and released the prisoners. These POWs were from the days of Bataan and Corregidor, plus others from other US installations. Many POWs were sent to Japan; these at Cabanatuan were underfed and beaten. When the Rangers cleared through our lines, then the 1st Cavalry and the tankers went in

and took the town. Not too much resistance; they had fled to Cebu. There Sgt Fredericks (Freddy) and Stringberg found them east of the town. Over 150 of them were killed before the battle ended.

We came to the outskirts of Manila and B Company and the Cavalry headed for Santo Tomas. This was on the night of February 3, 1945. As they burst through the gates of the concentration camp, the 3768 American and Allied civilian internees were finally released. The Japanese had used Santo Tomas University as the internment camp for all American and Allied civilians. The conditions were harsh and many died, but they all had faith that MacArthur would return, and he did keep his word.

A Company set up a perimeter to secure the streets in the neighborhood. A sniper kept shooting at us from the top of one of the buildings down the street. The infantry, our 30 caliber machine guns, us with our rifles--nobody was taking this guy out of the picture. "Jock" Dunleavy jumped into his tank, loaded the 75MM with a delayed HE shell, and then whacked the building with a direct hit. No more sniper!

CHAPTER 16

As we entered the section of the city that was known as 'Grace Park,' resistance became very heavy. The entire area had been well fortified by the Japanese. They had removed a 5-inch gun from a British freighter that had been sunk in Manila Bay and mounted it in this area (*photo at Attachment 2*). We later found that 20MM and 40MM anti-aircraft guns were also used against us. The streets and the fields were mined to the extent that they were using naval depth charges in roads. This place was a disaster waiting to happen, and it did.

B Company was assigned the task of seeking out this fortification and attacking and securing the area. They ran into big problems. All the streets were in squares, and they decided to cut across from one street to another for a better position. They had to cross an open field, and that's where the 5-inch naval gun caught them, in a wide open field, almost broadside to the gun. They suffered heavy casualties. Those who did get out of the tanks alive were either wounded or in shock. They couldn't get to safety because they were pinned down, and this lasted for hours.

We were in another sector and at that time we didn't know what had happened to B Company. We set up our perimeter for the night; we had a 30 caliber machine gun, in the ditches on both sides of the road, for cross fire. The tanks were in position to fire at any time. As the night wore on, we became edgy and we were hearing sounds coming from the front of us. It wouldn't take much for all guns to open up.

We heard this sound, and it turned out to be someone calling for help. "Help me, please help me." It was Fred Kincaid from B Company (we found this out later). We yelled, "Hold your fire, hold

your fire!" Then we ran out to assist this GI who was seriously wounded. We called for the medics and they were there in seconds. They took over and laid him on a stretcher, then put the stretcher cross-wise on the jeep, and away they went. It was the next day that we found that that it was Kincaid. I had served on guard duty with him and on other details back in Camp Campbell.

NOTE: Years later, at a 44th Tank Battalion reunion held in Owensboro, Kentucky, Fred Kincaid was there with his wife. First time I had seen him since that day in 'Grace Park.' He had heard that I was one of the first to get to him that awful night. His first question was, "Red, were you the guy that gave me a drink of water that night?" I had to tell him it wasn't me; we didn't dare touch him, and the medics were there and took over immediately. He said the biggest thing he remembers is asking for a drink of water and that someone gave it to him, and how nice that cold drink felt going down.

B Company lost eight men in trying to take that position and three tanks. We had never come up against such a fortification such as this one from the Lingayen Gulf to here. In other areas they used caves, but here they threw up barriers that were hard to over-run.

The next day A Company received the orders to attack and hold the position. Bud Barber was and had been acting as lieutenant of 1st Platoon since we left Leyte. I was and had been acting as platoon sergeant since then also. Lt Hubble had a medical problem and stayed in Leyte; we never saw him again. The 1st Platoon was picked to lead the assault and when it became time, off we went. By now we had a naval sapper with us (a sapper was one who found and secured the landmines from blowing). This guy was NAVY, and a NUT. We continued down the road and found that the mines were everywhere. Also the Japs were hiding in the culverts and had to be flushed out. As we approached the Society of the Divine (*photo at Attachment 2*), all hell broke loose. The 5-inch gun opened up on the "Klankin Koffin" and the Japs were everywhere; in the ditches, in the culverts, in the woods – all over. As Heinzie brought our 75MM into position to fire, we found that there was a big tree branch right in front of the muzzle of the 75. We couldn't shoot or we would cause the infantry damage of an exploding shell. At the same time our Navy sapper is yelling at me and signaling that we can't go any farther; I have a huge mine right in front of my track.

The 5-inch gun fires once and he's off target; that's the "Klankin Koffin." I yell over the radio, "That G—D--- gun is going to get me if you don't get it first." Then another round from the 5 inch. This time we see the dust cloud where the armored piercing shell hits and then goes off somewhere. John Brown, the gunner in Barber's tank, gets off one round, the 5 inch gets off another round at the "Klankin Koffin" and this time it's closer. The infantry are now running like hell to get away from the tank that's just about to be whacked. Brownie's second shot kits the 5-inch gun and it blew. This was really close; everyone felt that one more round out the Jap 5-incher and he would have been right on target. Us, and the "Klankin Koffin." Brown saved our lives.

(Ray's notebook at this point contains THE WOLF CALL, Fifth Fireside Edition, February 1948. Copy included in Attachment 2 at the end of this electronic file.)

The sapper and the infantry now returned because we were getting small arms fire and we wanted to advance. As we moved forward, there was a radio call for tank support on our right flank. They sent "Cy" Minton's tank off down the road. I got on the radio and warned him of the mines; there were depth charges, I said, and there would be a dirt mound at the placements. "Watch out, maybe you should wait for a sapper." But they moved on. Within two minutes I heard an awful load blast and I knew that Cy had hit a depth charge buried in the road.

The turret of his tank was blown over 30 yards (the booklet says 30 feet; the picture says different). Cy and his crew, all except Jim Chesser, died immediately; Jim died the next day. Two tank nurses also lost their lives later when small arms fire grew intense. Eight men from B, from men from A, and two men from the infantry. What an awful price to pay. (*See photos at attachment 3*)

That evening, as we went into a perimeter, we knew it was going to be one hell of a night. So we dug machine gun nests under the tanks and mounted the turret guns all night, plus the infantry were all around us. That night we were under one of the biggest artillery barrages we ever sat under. All night long our artillery would pound the Jap positions, then the Japs would pound back. BUT we never had any Japs try to get into our perimeter. They had tried that many times before, but not that night.

The next morning we were up and ready as soon as it was light. We were a few hundred yards from the Society of the Divine, and that would be one of the places we would have to secure before we passed it by. When we entered the building, we noticed nothing wrong; we went from floor to floor, making sure the place was clear of Japs. We went back to our tanks, the infantry returned to their positions, and the damn building blew. Many of us have wondered over these many years, "Why didn't they blow the building while we were in it?"

The Navy sapper had been clearing or had pulled the mines out of the road or field to allow us to continue. As I said before, this guy was a NUT, but he sure knew his business on explosives. He showed a few of us how it was done because he wouldn't be with us after this area was cleared and thought that we should at least know the basics in case we were hung up but had to advance. It was something that I wouldn't look forward to doing, unless I really had to. (Never did have to remove mines but we did have to drive around them many, many times.)

After this position was taken, we went into the city of Manila, clearing house after house, making sure we weren't leaving any snipers behind us. The 1st Cavalry had sent word ahead that all merchants open their locked doors for us to take a quick look-see to make sure that there weren't any Japs hiding in a 'Collaborator's' building or store. One store owner who stood in front of his locked door saying, "No Jap inside" was told twice to open the door; he didn't, and the 1st Cavalry sergeant did. He smashed the lock off the door, sent others in to investigate, and had the Filipino arrested for not cooperating. THAT opened every door from then on.

We came to some homes that the families were standing outside. Each infantry and some of us tankers went inside to make sure the places were empty. Most everyone did cooperate, but we did find

a few who seemed on the edge of being hostile. One family seemed to be really upset that we were investigating ALL homes and they followed us inside, saying that we shouldn't be checking their place because they were good citizens. I was inside with an infantryman and we were getting edgy. A door on a standing closet started to swing open, and both of us turned and fired into the closet. We thought that someone was coming out, and it could only mean a Jap. NOBODY was in there, but we sure filled the closet with holes. It caused the civilians to panic, the outside troops to send more in to help, and us to swear. It does make one feel good when the help comes double-quick when needed.

We started to work with some Filipino guerrillas who were assigned to the 1st Cavalry. They in turn were picking up the collaborators. It was a surprise to us that they were looking for these people as we took the city, and a surprise that they were finding them.

As we fought toward "Quezon City" we had a serious problem. There were Jap spotters (a spotter is a person who saw things from an advantage point and radioed the information to the artillery or mortars). They were in one of the twin steeples belong to a Catholic church. It was no problem to us; we were going to blow them out of there with a HE 75 shell. A civilian asked us to stop and said he could talk them out of that position, would it be okay to try. That was okay with us, BUT he and the Japs had to be out of the steeple in five minutes or we'd blow it to pieces. To our surprise, he succeeded. The Japs came down and left the church by a back entrance.

The Japs started to burn and blow Manila apart. Everywhere the buildings burned or they'd be blown up. Even next to us, early one morning, I was ordered to advance and see what was down the road. As we left this building that the Filipinos were taking sugar out of, the whole rear of the building blew and caught fire. The Filipinos had to be forced to stay out of the building, but they needed food so badly that they risked death to get something. The building became engulfed in flames and they stopped.

The city continued to explode and burn. Manila became a city of ruins, nothing was left undamaged. As the Japs pulled back into the 'Walled City,' across the Pasig River in the Intramuros section of the city, we were ordered into another section of the city. The 'Walled City' became a hell hole. The walls were 20 to 30 YARDS thick. Shells could not penetrate and the area was completely destroyed before it was taken by elements of the 1st Cavalry Division, the 37th Division, and parts of the 11th Airborne and tank support from the 44th Tank Battalion.

We stayed on one side of the Pasig River but we were preparing to cross. The infantry and 1st Platoon of A Company were 'feeling our way' when we approached this suspension bridge. The infantry started to send out a patrol to take a look when some Japs were noticed running toward the bridge from a ditch on our side of the bridge. They were taken under fire and one was dropped. The other went...somewhere, but we couldn't find any trace. So the patrol went forward, looked the bridge over very closely, and decided that it wasn't mined.

Being lead tank, I wanted to make sure it WASN'T mined, so I stopped just before and to one side of the bridge and took a good long look with the field glasses. I couldn't see any signs of wires or anything that looked like a satchel—nothing. We backed up a little and I had Ike drive over to the left side of the bridge. Again I couldn't see anything that looked like trouble. But why were the Japs running near the bridge? The engineers had said that this bridge would hold one tank at a time; as one went off the other side, put one on this side. Okay, let's do it! Ike backed the tank up and straightened it out to go on, when 'whamo!' They blew the bridge. It went up just a tiny bit, then down it crashed. This was unreal! Why didn't they wait until at least ONE Tank was on the bridge??? To this day, I wonder why! The luck of the "Klankin Koffin."

It seemed that our part of fighting in the city of Manila was slowing down. After a few days, we pulled into an area near the Pasig River, more or less an area to get our gear in shape and to get ready for the next action.

It was here that some of the men of the battalion received their field commission. It was a long time overdue; they had been acting as officers for a long time, now they were to receive their 2nd Lieutenant bars. There were six promoted at this time. Others received theirs at a later date. Those six were: Staff Sergeants James Savadge, Service Company; Melvin 'Bud' Barber, A Company; Carry Everett, A Company; Samuel 'Freddy' Fredericks, A Company, Leo French, D Company, and Sergeant Samuel Pedley, B Company. They became officers and gentlemen on February 22, 1945.

Also at about this time, those of us who had been acting as platoon sergeants were now promoted to staff sergeants. No ceremony for us, just the word, "You got your promotion." But the field commissions were way overdue; every one of them deserved the promotion.

It was also in this area that tragedy struck A Company. Having spare time and all duties filled, some of the guys started poker games and of course along with card games, a little bit of drinking 3 point 2 beer or anything that they could come up with. Some found some 'white lightning.' White lightning is a term used for the distilling of alcohol, and sometimes not the best to drink. This stuff was made by a Chinese who was selling it to the GIs AND it proved to be deadly.

Everyone had been warned. Stay with the 3 point 2 and wait until the San Miquel Distillery opened up again. (It was still in operation, even after the taking of Manila.) Many times we heard the words, "Don't drink the stuff they're selling on the streets."

Four of A Company men bought some and drank it while playing cards. One was told by a friend that it came from a Chinese who was a doubtful maker. So he stopped. The others continued playing cards and still drank what they had bought. That afternoon they all took sick and were rushed to a base hospital. Two were dead before the truck arrived and the other died that evening. (They were all signed in at the hospital as casualties of food poisoning.)

The one who had stopped drinking the stuff took sick and had his stomach pumped and survived. He was the one who identified the seller later the next day. The Filipino Army Scouts arrested the man. He was tried, and found guilty two days later. The next day the seller was tied to a post and shot. Quick justice! Some of us heard what had happened and none of us had any sympathy for the seller. He had killed three of our buddies with the bad liquor.

In retaking many parts of the city, we were hampered, in a way, by the over-zealous actions of the Filipinos. When the Philippines were captured by the Japanese, all 'state side liquors' (bottled in the USA) disappeared. The Filipinos buried all they could get their hands on. Now here we come and the people are so happy they dig up the 'state side liquors' and as we pass, they give bottle after bottle to the infantry and to us tankers.

I put out the order, "Take it but don't start getting tanked and we end up in a firefight with the Japs; none of you will be able to hit a damn thing." I had been dismounted (with the infantry and my G1) and I could see that the Filipinos were on cloud #9, MacArthur had kept his word, "I shall return." Some of the infantry were getting their drinks direct from the GI in front of him. The bottles were being passed back. OH BOY! It wasn't too long before the order went out from the S/Sgt of the infantry, "Leave the booze alone." Too late for a few! Between what they had drunk and not having any good food in their stomachs, and being a hot day, there were a few who ended up – 'Stinko.' I took one who was about to lay down by the side of the road and just forget everything and had my guys in the tank pull him up and POUR him down inside the turret. We threw his M1 and pack on the back of the "Klankin Koffin" and we continued on.

Our actions here made us life-long friends of the 1st Cavalry infantry. Later the same day, after the GI had a chance to sleep it off, we woke him in time to get to his own unit's perimeter for the night. He left us with many, many thanks.

A day or so later, in another section of the city, the action was really heavy. I had been lead tank for almost the whole morning and Greg Savino took over for a while. I needed a rest and to restock my ammunition. Greg continued up the street and I was his backup. His gunner saw some action to his right, moved the 75 around, and fired. It was a small fortification but was filled with explosives. It, and everything in it, went sky-high. What a blast! Now we were on a sharp lookout for any mounds or small pillboxes. These could prove to be dangerous.

Later that day, we had been working closely with the infantry. I had an officer from the 1st Cavalry who we had been with us for days yell at me from the ground, "Hey Red, reload my tommy-gun for me." It was a Thompson submachine gun with a Cutts compensator, AND a DRUM. We had Thompson submachine guns back in the States, some with drums, but mostly with the clips. (All Thompsons were turned back into the armorer at Camp Berkeley, Texas and we were issued the 'Grease Gun.' We swore that these guns were made from the tin cans that the people turned in in their 'War Effort.' It didn't take long, once we fired them in the nighttime, to have a very had taste for the 'Grease Gun;' there was a huge orange flash from the muzzle and that was a dead give-away to your position.)

Let's get back to the OTHER Thompson submachine gun. I took it and reloaded the drum. When I came back up out of the turret, the officer wasn't around and I asked one of his sergeants where he had gone. He had gone off in a jeep, but the sergeant said he'd be back. I said, "I got his 'Spit-fire,' make sure you tell him it's with the "Klankin Koffin." "OK" was the reply. (He had painted 'Spit-fire' on the stock.)

I never did see that officer again. We worked with the same brigade later on, but the officer wasn't with them. I did see the sergeant again and reminded him that I still held the 'Spit-Fire.'" His reply was to hold on to it, and the lieutenant would pick it up later. (I had the 'Spit-Fire' from then until the end of the war.) It was an unbelievable close-quarter gun.

CHAPTER 17

Our new orders arrived and A Company was now assigned to the 11th Airborne. D Company (the light tank company) was attached to the 1st Cavalry, and both units were to be in the Fort McKinley area. This was the first time that A Company had been assigned to the 11th Airborne to take on such a big advance on the enemy's lines. We soon found out that they WERE NOT the 1st Cavalry!

Advancing in a hilly area, I had spotted some action like someone disappearing into a hole in the hillside. I watched it for a while with the field glasses, and sure enough, I saw at least five more go into the cave. I had Heinzie bring the 75 MM gun on the target and he fired a round. Right at the mouth of the cave was the hit, and he was about to fire again when I noticed the infantry was watching the action like they were at a ballpark. They were just standing there, having a good ole time.

I knew that once we took a target under fire, they could and would return fire when they were ready. I had Ike drive the "Klankin Koffin" back off the crest of the hill, got out, and asked to speak to the sergeant in charge. Then I blew my stack! I could not understand any infantry wanting to get themselves killed. They knew as well as I did that we were able to get return fire. After saying my piece, we went back to the top of the hill, only now in another spot just in case they were looking for us. Heinzie picked up the target again and started to fire, and then we drew their return fire. AND again the infantry got caught napping. This time the mortar shells exploded right near them.

They had casualties and we had to get them off the hillside. It was a mess! In combat, you try not to bunch up; keep apart and your casualties will be less. ???

It was here that we came upon scattered nests of Japanese emplacements. I was on the turret gun when a Jap machine gun started to fire at the tank and at me. I dropped down inside and told Heinzie that there was a target to our left. He swung the turret around and as he did so, I reached up to grab the 30 and get off a blast, when the Jap let loose on the gun and I caught some fragments from the bullets hitting the tank first and then me. BOY, did that evert burn! I yelled that I was hit and at the

same time, Heinzie stepped on the 75 celinoid instead of the 30, and WHOMP, the bush, the gun, everything disappeared. The target was only about 30 yards in front of us.

I had been hit by five or six pieces of bullets that ha ricocheted off the turret into my arms and the back of my hands. I went to an aid station as soon as things slowed down. There a medic tried to pry the piece out of my arm until I said enough was enough. I went to a field hospital later and they took most of it out. I wanted nothing to do with a base hospital. After so many days and you are able, you could find yourself being transferred to another unit. And you couldn't do a thing about it. (The last piece was taken out of the back of my hand almost a year and a half later, State-side.)

We now went into the Laguna De Bay section and prepared to force the Japanese to withdraw, to surrender, or whatever. This whole area had been attacked and attacked until all the Japanese forces were surrounded. We had over-run the barrio (small town) that led into this area. Now we prepared to take the entire section and open up the roads and byways for the other troops to follow.

The air force was to give us some air strikes and first thing the next morning, there they came. P51s. Were they ever nice to see! But when they dive-bombed, they came up with the 500 pounders still hanging in the racks, BY ONE HANGER! Did that ever make us dive for a hole. They went out over the bay to try to shake them loose. But we could see that they weren't having much luck in trying to get rid of them. We jumped into our tanks and turned our radios over to their channels. They tried every which way and that way. One finally lost the one that was hanging. If they don't get rid of it, they can't land. What a mess.

Then we heard another strike was coming and soon, right over our heads and then up high they went. Another dive-bomb run. And another fizzle! These were hanging in their racks also. When we looked up and saw those big bombs still hanging and swaying under the P51s, we stayed damn close to the biggest hole we had.

As one plane flew over the barrio and then went almost straight up, we wondered where he was going to lose it. We found out! As he came around, those of us with field glasses kept all others informed. Then we all yelled, "Hit the ground, it came loose." It sure did, and by the arch it took, I swore it was going to land right on my head. But it hit just outside of the barrio and it was a dud besides. It didn't explode! The P51s went back to wherever they came from, and we continued the war in our own manner.

A Filipino official from the barrio close by offered to go and speak to the Japanese commander who he said he knew quite well. He said he would try to make the commander understand that all his forces were surrounded and it would be for the best to surrender. It was agreed that he could give it a try, but they weren't holding their breath.

He rode a small Filipino horse into their position, which was about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile in front of us. We waited! Then we heard a gunshot and figured they had shot the Filipino. But shortly after he appeared,

walking down the hill. They did let him return, and of course their answer was “NO!” They kept the horse. They needed food, so when we was about to leave, they shot the horse for food.

We then prepared to go in the next morning but also knew that we had a long, long night coming up. We immediately started to dig holes for machine gun emplacements. The part of the 11th Airborne that was up on the plateau to our right laid down a perimeter of mortar fire, getting their quadrants by smoke shells. They ringed us completely. We set up our perimeter, with a machine gun under the tank and a man to man the turret gun. Under no circumstance were you to go beyond the perimeter. If and when any action started, DON'T get up and walk, crawl, or roll. If you get up, someone will shoot you for sure.

That night they tried to break through our lines. Unreal! With all that fire power we had, and they knew what we had because the tanks and everything else was in the wide open. They still tried. Their casualties were very heavy; ours were minor.

Came the dawn and we were off. We advanced rapidly across the fields and into the hills. AND this is where Capt Cloud and I had it out, loud and clear.

When we work with an infantry unit, we are under the orders of that unit's commanding officer. We had been working really good together, and our tanks were told to stay put until this officer could consolidate the left flank. They had fallen back a little and he didn't want us moving too far ahead. So we held until further orders from him. BUT – what do I hear on my radio, “Red, this is Cloud, move it out and keep moving it.” He had to have been watching us through field glasses, because I didn't even know he was near this section at all. When a platoon or two platoons are working with another unit, you're under the orders of that unit's commander until relieved and sent back to your own company.

Cloud soon appeared beside the “Klankin Koffin” in a jeep, and I could see by the expression on his face that I was in for a bawling out. ??? I climbed down from the turret and started to explain why we were sitting there, when I realized that I had better just shut up and be quiet.

“Why are you stopped?” “Have you got engine trouble?” “You should be over the hill by now.” “Get this tank moving and let's get this area cleaned out.” I had no chance to answer, because just then the infantry officer came back in his jeep. Seeing Cloud standing there, wearing his pearl-handled 38 revolver (looking like General Patton), he knew something was up. He also knew that this guy (Cloud) was an officer from somewhere. It was enough to have him ask, “What's going on?” I started to explain that this was my company commander when Cloud butted in and wanted to know why HIS 44th tank wasn't over the hill. That's when I stepped back and let things fall where they were going to fall.

It didn't take but a second for the infantry officer to let Cloud know who was running the show, and it wasn't him. “Under no circumstance were our tanks to move anywhere, unless I order them to move. Period!” With that he turned to me and said, “Red, stand by, I'll call you on the radio as soon as we want you to move out.” “You'll also have another platoon of infantry joining your tanks.” “Keep me

posted how things go when we take off.” With that he got in his jeep and took off. In about 15 minutes the other platoon joined us and we were ready to move out as soon as we got the word. Now Cloud seemed satisfied; he got in his jeep and went back.

Over toward the beach where the 3rd Platoon of A Company was working, they had come upon a huge concentration of Japanese who were determined to hold on to the position. This wasn't going to be a picnic for anyone. Sam Fredericks and Larry Stringcerg were in that section and told us later how bad it really was. It took some time before that area and ours were finally cleared and we were released for another assignment. LaGuna De Bay was one we'll remember for a long, long time.

For us, it was up the mountain, down the mountain. We had taken off toward Mt Macolod (the million dollar hill), Mt Dalaga and Alitagtag. We became so beat that we were ordered to pull back and catch our breath. (More ammo, more maintenance, more sleep, more everything.)

B Company took our place at Mt Macolod and it turned out to be one of the bitterest battles of the Luzon Campaign.

We proceeded to Tagaytay Ridge, overlooking Lake Taal, and set up our A Company headquarters in a school house. Some of the other rooms we used to sleep on the floor. Better than being on the ground during a rainstorm. Here we prepared for the coming 'attractions' by giving our tanks a full going-over so they would be ready at a moment's notice. It was here at Tagaytay Ridge that Orvis Kaufman's money was a release to us all (Orvis was my radioman/loader). That foolish monkey was a joy to all. "Unk the monk." Everyone took a turn in having fun with it, and it caused a lot of laughs.

It was here also that we got the word that Capt VanWinkle had been released from the hospital and he was being reassigned to his old company, A Company. The following couple of days were normal, so I thought, when all us platoon sergeants and platoon leaders were called before Capt Cloud. He read the riot act to us all. Seems that a group had signed a petition seeking to keep Capt Cloud. "What did we know about it?" "Why had we allowed this to happen?" Etc.

I knew absolutely nothing about it. Everyone knew my feelings for Cloud; he was a good officer but it was awful hard for him to listen to any of us enlisted people. It was his way, and that was that.

Capt Van, well, he wasn't liked by the majority. He was a doer. If something had to be done, "Let's do it." Every one of us knew exactly what was going to happen and when. He felt the faster we hit them, and with everything we had, the faster this war was going to be over. I always found that he'd listen our suggestions if we thought we could do something in a different manner.

The petition was stopped and we were told, by Cloud, that we had been a great bunch to work with. Two days later, a small ceremony, and Capt Julian P VanWinkle Jr was back as our commander.

Here at Tagaytay Ridge, we set about keeping the area safe, setting up outposts, guard duty for those who would walk a post close to the schoolhouse. We again started to work with a Filipino guerilla group on the outposts. They were to handle one section and we the other. We supplied all the weapons. The 30 caliber machine guns, the M1s, the BAPs, etc. This was not my idea, but I soon found that I was one of those in charge. Every night we took our detail out and made sure their field of fire would criss-cross with the other detail of ours. We let the Filipinos handle their own setup, making sure they knew where we were and we knew where they were.

Every morning we had to go out and collect all guns. Get them cleaned and oiled and ready for that evening. I really think it was some kind of an exercise to learn to work with the Filipino guerillas.

Being so close to a barrio, it gave us a chance to get our clothes washed, buy some fruit from the Filipinos and in general, relax a little. But it was here that tragedy struck an unfair blow.

After collecting the guns from the outposts, we had them cleaned, inspected, and then stored on the porch of the schoolhouse. NO ONE but us GIs were allowed anywhere near the schoolhouse. The Filipinos were to stay near the gates to conduct their business of laundry or selling fruits.

This day, we had just been paid! We hadn't seen any pay for months, and the pay-officer arrived with the payroll. Many of us were down to our last few pesos, and now we had some money to buy whatever.

Clair Lipps was jubilant! He had paid all the poker debts he owed and had some pesos left over to have more poker games. He walked up the stairs to the schoolhouse and just then, a shot rang out. The bullet hit Lipps just above his belt line in the left side of the back. It exited up by his right shoulder, leaving an awful wide open wound. He gasped and went down! I was one of the first to reach him but there wasn't a thing I could do to stop the bleeding, except pressure. We yelled for the medics and for bandages to cover the wound and also to be able to apply more pressure.

1st/Sgt Drennon, Bud Barber, and the captain's jeep driver, Lloyd Dickerson, put Lipps in the jeep and raced down the mountain to the base hospital. They ended up in the hospital wing of the New Bilibid prison. Drennon said later that the doctors and nurses went to work on Lipps immediately.

As that shot had rung out, a Filipino truck had passed the schoolhouse. Some, thinking the shot could have come from there, raced after it and brought them back. After talking to the Filipinos and checking the angle of fire, they could not have fired the shot.

We found the gun that fired the shot. It was a 30 caliber machine gun that had been used on the outposts and stored on the porch. The bullet went through Lipps, then passed through a 6x6 porch post, through the outside wall, and lodged in the inside wall of the schoolhouse.

That afternoon and evening Capt VanWinkle tried to put together how it happened and who was responsible. All of us who had been handling the guns were asked to give our opinion and what we

thought had happened. I was just too stunned to even think. We had lost one damn good man. He died that evening.

The next evening when we were about to load the guns for the outposts, a Filipino woman appeared at the gate with a small boy about 7 or 8. The boy was crying and would not stop, no matter what we said to him. Then his mother told us what happened. It was he who had fired the gun.

We asked the mother to wait and we went and got Capt Van so he could hear what was to be said. It seemed the boy had found a 30 caliber bullet and, seeing the guns there on the porch with the latch covers up, he fiddled with the bolt long enough that he found that it slid back. He inserted the bullet and had his hand on the butt, holding the trigger back. That made the bolt fly forward and fire, hitting Lipps. This should not have happened, but it did. We did not allow the adults to come any closer than the gates. But the kids! We allowed them to enter our compound because we enjoyed giving the kids candy and other goodies we knew they had done without for a long time. We gave the kids the food that was left over from our meals. The adults we kept back at the gates. It was a child that killed our Clair Lipps, accidentally.

Our stay at the schoolhouse was coming to an end. We were ending the outposts after this final night and we were glad because it was getting difficult dealing with the guerillas. They were getting to the point that they didn't want to continue.

The next morning when Amos and I went to pick up the guns from the guerilla headquarters, we noticed a lot of action around the building but paid no attention to it. We entered the building and I gave the 'Colonel' a salute, more out of respect for rank than for the person wearing it. He didn't return the salute and made us wait to be recognized. (OK, he wanted to play games, let's play games.) Then he started to talk in Filipino and all the others looked at us and laughed. (So the games begin.)

Our guns hadn't appeared as yet, and the situation was getting one-sided, so I just pulled my 45 out of the holster, pulled the action back, and put a round in the chamber and held it by my side. Then in a quiet voice I said, "Colonel, I want our guns. If they aren't in our jeep in 30 seconds I'm going to blow your G—D---- head off." Amos now had his carbine in the ready and guess what, the colonel jumped up and spoke in Tagalog (the Filipino language) and the guns were put in the jeep mighty fast. The colonel apologized for the misunderstanding, saying that he didn't know that we were in a hurry.

We were in contact with a Filipino Scout unit. These guys stood for nothing foolish; they were the best the Philippine government had. I reported that we had trouble with this group and maybe they should take a looksee. (A group called the 'Huks' was forming and later did give the Philippine government trouble after the war in the country was over.) If they did investigate, we never knew; we were assigned to move out.

Would I have shot the 'Colonel'? I don't know, but I sure would have scared the hell out of him.

CHAPTER 18

We spent the next few days at the schoolhouse preparing for our next assignment. All of the equipment was checked and double-checked. The ammunition racks were filled, the gas tanks topped off, all oil reservoirs were checked, and our personal gear made ready. We were all set for our next assignment.

We didn't have to wait too long. The company was attached to the 158 Regimental Combat Team to continue sweeping, with the idea of backing the Japanese into the sea. We were to clear the Batangas Peninsula.

The 1st platoon (my platoon) was assigned to join parts of the 158 in the taking of the town of Ternate. The town had an outlet to the sea and the Japs had been sending speedboats out to crash and blow up any allied boat they could smash into. The bow of these speedboats was loaded with high explosives; when they hit something, they went along with the explosion.

As we listened to the commander of the 158, I wondered what this action was going to be all about. ??? We were to move forward into the town with a section of tanks (2); my section. We were to have with us a platoon of infantry (25-30) and we were to make contact. A section of tanks (2) and a platoon of infantry men (25-30), and we were going to make contact? There could be hundreds of Japanese just waiting for us!

The 158 Regimental Combat Team was well known in the Philippines. They were a great fighting unit and their fame had been well known. They were known as the 'Bush Masters' and they had accomplished all their missions that had been assigned to them. They were quite the unit! We knew that we, of the 44th Tank Battalion, had gathered some points of our own. We were a great combat outfit, but were we good enough to take a town this size with two tanks and 30 men??? This sounded like it was going to be a reconnaissance mission, but was it?

An officer said I'd be the one in charge, the platoon would follow my directions, and we could move out at any time. All communications would be through their radio. That meant that anytime I wanted to contact the rear, I had to either yell down to the infantrymen carrying the radio pack or climb out of the turret and go to the radio myself. This was crazy! This could end up as the biggest 'snaffoo' we had ever been in.

We were out about ten minutes when an infantryman on the right flank came running to my tank and pointing to the ravine that ran along our right flank about 100 yards away and then curved behind us. Everyone looked! There were Japs running down into the ravine, and this was trouble. They were going to get in behind us. I got on our radio and called back to the other tanks that we were pulling out. With that I signaled the infantry to withdraw.

I heard on our radio, "Come in, come in." "What's going on?" (Come in, come in is a term used on radio to transmit.) I just got out of there to see what this commander had in mind. Besides the Japs

coming into the ravine, we notice that there was a minefield that we were approaching, and that had to be dealt with.

When we returned to the starting line, I had a sergeant come to me and tell me that the Colonel wanted to see me. Oh boy! I'm in the soup now for sure. But the infantry sergeant came and said, "Red, let's go, I'm with you." So we made our way to the CP (Command Post).

The first question asked was, "What's going on out there?" Being a little upset with this whole damn operation and the way it was coming together, I answered, "Colonel, some guys are going to get hurt out there and there isn't a thing I can do to help them." Now that is an intelligent statement, coming from a seasoned platoon sergeant who has been in combat umpteen times since arriving in the South Pacific. "Someone is going to get hurt." What an idiotic thing to say! But I said it.

I'll never forget the colonel's answer. "Sergeant, I know there are a lot of GIs getting hurt, it's a nasty war." "So OK, tell us what we can do to take this town, and we'll try to do it."

I had thought for sure that I was about to be thrown to the wolves, but here's an officer who was asking two sergeants what could be done to keep the casualties down.

Between the sergeant from the 158 RCT and myself, we outlined an attack that would put more men and firepower where it should be. We needed an engineer to clear the mines and get us a path through the field. We needed a platoon of tanks and a company of infantrymen and a field artillery unit, which the 158 has, to put down a field of fire and chase the Japanese out of the ravine. Or throw some mortar fire in on them. But they had to be driven out so they wouldn't be behind us. Then I suggested that the artillery 'walk' us through the town. That meant that their field of fire would be just ahead of us all the way, driving out the Japs who decided to stay put and defend the edge of town. We would control the fire by radio, from MY tank, the "Klankin Koffin."

As we started out toward the town, a vicious concentration of mortar fire went into the ravine. Anything that stayed after that, we wouldn't have to worry about. Then the artillery came in and we 'walked' right behind it into the town. There we came across numerous pockets of resistance that was soon overrun. Our 'team' was working well and the casualties were light.

Greg "G" Savino was engaged with another section of town and before long he had one hell of a battle going on. BUT, it wasn't too long that he gave me the signal that all was well. "G" was in my section and we always worked good together. When we came together at the end of town, we knew that we had done a good job.

By that afternoon all resistance was over. We had casualties, BUT we lost no lives. No KIAs (killed in action) but we did have about 20 WIAs (wounded in action). To us that was GREAT.

Later we found out that on the edge of town, coming in, the second wave of infantry came across three (3) brand new 57 MM anti-tank guns that were emplaced and ready to fire. Ammunition

was there, BUT we drew no fire from them going in. The only explanation we had was the artillery drove them out and they couldn't come back because now here came the tanks and infantry. Three brand new 57 MM anti-tank guns. They were turned over to GS (Intelligence).

When we reached the river, we were more or less relaxed. Dismounted, we were looking things over when all of a sudden an infantry man, close by, started to fire his carbine. A Japanese soldier had been hiding in a hole, under a bush, and had raised his rifle to fire at a GI who was wearing a 45. He was killed and then we were on the hunt for others. One of their tricks was to lay in wait until they could kill an officer or an NCO.

The campaign for Ternate ended and we continued down the Batangas Peninsula, destroying enemy positions at Cuerna, Dagatan, and the town of Batangas. Later when we had returned to the north and the town of Canlubang, near the sugar refinery, for some much needed rest and relaxation, we heard that the 158 Regimental Combat Team had given A Company an official commendation for the work we had done with them.

We found them great to be with, and they would LISTEN to what others had in mind. Case in point: the battle for Ternate.

We were at Canlubang when most of the fighting in the Philippines started to wind down. This was our R&R area, but it also turned into our training area for all the replacements that were to come.

CHAPTER 19

It was here in Canlubang that a tent city was built for the 44th Tank Battalion. We were to have R&R and get ready to train the replacements that were to arrive very shortly. Some would be coming from other units and some straight from the States. Raw recruits! This training would be for all of us, for we were going to invade Japan, although none of us knew when.

Baseball teams were formed. A baseball field was built. A stage for having movies and stage shown put on by outside people (USO shows). Some of the best things being build were showers in every company's area. Cold water, but showers to get cleaned after a day in training or after working all day on the vehicles. We could wash off the day's accumulation of dirt.

We had tents over our heads in case of rain; we had cots to sleep on. We had a building that was our 'mess hall' where our cooks would cook our meals and we'd come in and sit down to eat. This was the first R&R we ever had. And we ate it up!

It was here in Canlubang, near the sugar refinery, that word came out that if you had enough points, you were on your way home. A lot of the old career cadre had enough points and some left over. Some of the fellows had small families, and that made points. Some had all of these and were also

decorated, Silver Star, Bronze Star, Purple Heart, etc, etc. So as the points were counted, we soon found out that we were going to lose seven of our A Company GIs.

1st/Sgt Ed Drennon, S/Sgt Quilgie Stayton (1st cook), Sgt Walt Cornett, Sgt Newman Brown, Cpl Aubrey Green and Tec 5 Einor Korhonen (we never dared call him Einor).

After the announcement of those going home, I was in the orderly tent with Ed Drennon and some others and we were more or less horsing around and having fun with 'Unk the Monk' who had showed up inside the tent. Drennon had asked me to fill out the morning report so he could get to chow early. When he was buried with things to get done, like the duty roster and the sick list, etc, I would help with the 'Morning Report.' That was a MUST, every morning. THAT had to be at battalion headquarters by 0800 sharp.

The more we fooled around, the more noise the bunch was making. 'Unk the Monk' was cause of some of it also. It was great to relax and laugh a little, and with this bunch we could. Spargur, Scalion, Stringberg 'Pop' Ryder and Hacker. We were the platoon sergeants and staff of A Company.

The CQ (Charge of Quarters) had been in the orderly tent but had gone off and now he was back, and he says, "Sgt Drennon, the old man (company commander) wants to see you and Cartier right now." What this was all about was beyond me. This was before chow (breakfast) and usually all orders come after first formation.

As we walked up to the officers' quarters, we both tried to guess what was coming. Whatever, we soon found out. As we entered the tent, we both saluted (military courtesy) and there were all of A Company's officers there. ??? We were given "At ease" and then I noticed that all the officers were smiling and so was Drennon. Then Capt Van said, "Red, I've talked to all the officers, and I told 1st/Sgt Drennon that I had chosen you to replace him as 1st/Sergeant when he leaves the company for the States." He then said, "Sgt Drennon has recommended you highly." So 1st/Sgt Cartier, what have you to say?" I was stunned.

During the Leyte campaign, I was a "Buck Sergeant" (three stripes). As time went on and we lost Lt Hubble, S/Sgt Bud Barber was acting platoon leader and I was acting platoon sergeant, 1st platoon. We stayed this way until the promotions in Manila.

Now I was being promoted to the highest position of an NCO (noncommissioned officer) in our company. This was quite an honor and I felt mighty proud.

When we finally returned to the orderly tent, the word had arrived before we did. Those who we had left behind were the first to congratulate me, and they were sincere. We had been together since Camp Campbell days and we all hoped we'd go home together.

During the Leyte and Luzon campaigns, I was never the one to say, "Let Joe do it." We always did our best and everyone had a high respect for the crew of the "Klantin Koffin." We did what we had

to do, and more. Many a time we had to work with other platoons and never once was there any hesitation on our part to do the best we could.

During these times working with another platoon, I made suggestions on how I thought things should go. Never ordering, but always suggestion to the platoon sergeant, that maybe there's a better way, and that always worked well. In battle, everyone must support the other, or it's -----.

After the first formation and Capt Van announced the promotion and so posted, I took over the company from 1st/Sgt Drennon. This was the last formation of A Company that Ed held. A few more days and he was gone, back to the States.

A few days later something happened that had to come to a head. After chow and first formation was on its way, I went down to the motor pool to see what was happening to some new equipment that had arrived. Two NEW tanks. As I was talking to 'Buzzsaw' Cain, a maintenance man, his sergeant, T/Sgt Merle Jackson came up and did he ever me an earful. Jackson was the sergeant in charge of the motor pool and all of the maintenance crew. "Who in hell did I think I was, coming down to bother his men and snoop around." He got so hot that Cain took off and left the area.

I just stood there until he was finished, then pointed toward the orderly tent and said, "Let's go, Jackson, you're going to learn right now who's running this company." I turned and went toward the orderly tent and Jackson right behind. I knew what was bothering him, and it had to be straightened out now; he thought he should have been made the 1st sergeant. He was the highest NCO next to Ed Drennon; he held a T/Sgt, which was Technical Sergeant.

I never got off a word before he really started to sound off again. Not being able to get a word in, I now pointed to the officers' tent and said, "Let's go see who's going to run A Company, you or me." I asked permission to enter, and I could see that Van had heard the conversation. Jackson never got a chance to say a word. Van said, "Jackson, we put Cartier in as 1st/Sergeant, now you know that means he's going to be everywhere and he's going to run the company as he sees fit." "Everyone will take orders from Cartier or there will be other promotions within the company." "Are there any questions?" Jackson had nothing to say; we saluted and left the officers' quarters.

About a month later, Jackson came up to me and apologized and admitted he was wrong AND that I was doing a good job as 1st/Sergeant. He felt that being old cadre, maybe he stood a chance on becoming 1st sergeant. He was a Tech/Sgt and did do his job to the outmost.

Another problem that came up was with our new first cook, S/Sgt Fred Haverluk. S/Sgt Stayton had been courts-martialed because of insubordination. He failed to obey direct orders from Capt VanWinkle on his behavior. Capt Van had him reduced to a PVT (Private) because of his actions. Being old cadre and first cook for many years, he held the rank of S/Sgt. When he received his orders to be returned to the States, he asked my permission to speak to Capt Van. Knowing what he wanted, I

advised him to forget it and go for his stripes back in the States. Well, he pleaded and I said OK, and he went to the officers' quarters. Soon I had a runner who told me that Capt Van wanted to see me, NOW.

When I arrived, he ordered me NOT to allow Pvt Stayton to see him again, under any circumstances. Stayton had asked if he could have his stripes back, to return to the States as a Staff Sergeant, 1st cook. Van's answer was of course, "NO."

Now the other problem was with S/Sgt Haverluk, and this was my problem. He came from another company, transferred when Drennon was the 1st Sgt, after Stayton had been removed as first cook.

I went up to the kitchen to see what would be needed and to inspect the stoves, the condition, etc. Haverluk blew his top. "What are you doing in my kitchen." "Get the hell out of here and stay out." Well now! Here it hasn't been two days since Jackson, and just one day since Stayton. AND I wasn't in any mood to listen to a new cook tell me that I couldn't inspect his kitchen.

"Haverluk, loosen up!" "AND, if you ever come at me that way again, I'll make sure that I have a new first cook before you can blink." "I'm the 1st/Sgt of A Company and I'll run the company the way I think it should be run." "You keep your kitchen up to par and keep your KPs in line, then you and I will get along." "OK?" S/Sgt Haverluk became the best cook the battalion had. After my next visit, I never bothered him again with my 'snooping' and we became close friends.

The company became very attached to Haverluk. He'd have coffee and pie for us after a show. Or the kitchen would be open just to sit around and chew the fat and have a cup of coffee. His KPs, it was a day off of rifle practice or maybe a 12-mile hike. But a day in Haverluk's kitchen was something else. His regular kitchen staff was great.

Now that all the nitty-gritty things were overcome, it was, "Get on with the training to show the recruits how to be survivors." This was a hard thing to do to a bunch of replacements. A lot of them wanted to learn; some, well maybe I'm interested. Some you had to convince them the hard way, that what we were doing was trying to keep them alive, because "You are not worth a damn if you're dead." So listen up, pay attention, and just maybe you'll come out of this alive.

The first three graders had been briefed on where we were going to land in the invasion of Japan, the island of Honshu. Who were we going in with, the 1st Cavalry. And it was going to be a rough one. The beach was wide, but the way to higher ground was through a bottle-neck. GREAT! We were told that the invasion was going to cause high casualties and that we had better get ourselves back to a 100% military team.

As the days wore on, our replacements kept on coming in. The training was intense, and each of the staff had his thing to do. Teach gunnery, teach the firing of the 75, get the men to work closely with one another. The firing range was the most important. They had to be familiar with all the guns we used. Train, train, and train!

I was handling the group on throwing grenades; pull the pin, hold it, let the pin fly, hold it and count to three. One thousand one, one thousand two, one thousand three, and on one thousand three you have the grenade on its way. We used olive drab (OD) colored grenades, five second fuses. The yellow ones were three second fuses, just pull the pin and get rid of it. (We didn't use the three second grenades too often.)

Well, I ended up with a smarty-pants replacement; he decided to hold the grenade for the three seconds, but instead of lobbing the grenade over the hill so the burst would be on the other side, he throws it as high as he could, straight up! I yelled, "Hit the dirt!" We all dropped to the ground, and the grenade exploded just over the crest of the hill that we were using in the practice. If it had exploded BEFORE it went over, I really don't know how many of us would have been killed. What an idiotic thing to do.

A few of us who were there were considered as 'old timers' and had survived the almost 18 months of combat, from New Guinea to here, and this 'Jackass' of a replacement almost killed us with his stupidity.

I was never so mad in my life! Here we're training for the invasion of Japan, where many would be casualties, and his happens.

PFC Palmer Abshire, the replacement, was 'dressed down' but good. I sent him back to the company area and to wait for me there. I completely ignored him until I had filled Capt Van in with the details and decided what he was to do for punishment, and then went to the orderly tent and got Abshire. He dug a new garbage pit and was told to maintain it until released. That meant every day he made sure the garbage was properly disposed of, covered, and NO FLIES. The pit was 4x4x4 and he maintained it for two weeks, besides not missing a single minute of the training that was going on.

To this day, when I think of that incident and how close to being killed we were, I shiver. I really don't think Abshire realized that he could have been killed too.

Another winner was another replacement. Most of the company was out on the 75 MM tank range firing at barrels on a hillside, 300 to 400 yards away. I had stayed in the company area to attend to some other things and then decided to go out and see how things were going.

I watched the hits from the back of a tank with my field glasses and they weren't doing too badly. When that round was over and a new crew was to fire, I hopped off the tank and went to a group that was standing there. I yelled at Elmer Carty to bring a truck over and said to the group, "All of you, climb aboard this truck, go out and set up the targets again, and then go back in and clean up." By then Carty had the truck there and all were climbing aboard when I heard, "The hell with this, I was out there the last time setting up the targets." "I'm not going." I couldn't believe my ears, a recruit is disobeying an order from the 1st/Sergeant. "What was that?" "I'm not going, I did it the last time." The lip that

was coming from this PFC John Campbell was like he never heard that he was in the army, and in a combat unit, and in a combat zone.

“Campbell, get aboard that truck, NOW, and when you finish, I want you to go back in on this truck and go directly to the orderly tent.” “I want you there waiting for me when I arrive, do you understand.” He did go out and set up the barrels, he did go back to the company area, and he did go to the orderly tent.

My first stop when I returned was at the officers’ quarters. I filled Capt Van in on what went on and what I’d like to happen to Campbell. A summary courts-martial, loss of his PFC stripe, and extra detail. (It could have been a lot worse.)

Campbell lost his stripe and was restricted to the area, plus extra details. But being as brazen as he was, he still used the PFC on his mail until told to stop by the censoring officers. He then decided to be the biggest hero coming out of the South Pacific. The officers who were censoring his mail couldn’t believe what they were reading. Hand to hand combat! How he saved the platoon by his bravery by taking on a charging group of Japs. Every single letter he was writing to his wife was filled with him being in action. AND he had as yet to fire any shot in anger or even take part in patrol duties. This guy was unreal!

Campbell continued to be a source of constant problems. The officer allowed me to read one of his letters and I couldn’t believe any person would do such a thing--to be a hero on paper. They finally showed him how his letters were being cut up, and how they planned to continue doing it until he came to his senses and stopped being THE Hero.

CHAPTER 20

Our supplies were being held up for some reason and Capt Van asked me to go to the depot, just outside of Manila, and see what was the problem. (This is battalion business, not company business. But who was I to refuse a trip to Manila and see what it looked like now after it was taken by us way back when.) To make a day of it, I took along a couple of the S/Sergeants. We might as well take those who were off-duty that day, and we all could enjoy.

When we arrived at the depot quartermaster, I finally found out that what we wanted was to arrive the next day. So, that gave us more time in Manila. We didn’t have to bring back what we had come for; it wasn’t available. To Manila we went! What a difference to see it this way; people, soldiers, sailors, and WACs. First WACs we had seen. WACs were Women’s Army Corps. They had been formed to take the place of many of the men who then were released for active duty.

We went to the USO headquarters and asked for playing cards. They gave us two cartons and wanted to know if we needed more. We settled on a carton of pinochle cards. How many packs in a carton? I don't know, but we had three cartons and that's a lot of cards.

It was here while coming down the steps that I met T/4 Bolash. He was one of the A Company men that we lost back in Camp Barkeley, Texas. During the physical that we all received before going to the POE, he and 'Swede' Larson were both found to have hernias. Both had to be operated on and both were transferred out of the 44th. Now here is Bolash and he just came from the USO trying to find where the 44th Tank Battalion was located.

We talked for quite a time, and he promised to come to Canlubang to see his old A Company. (He tried to transfer, but they refused.) He told me that after 'Swede' Larson and he went to the hospital, Larson was transferred to another unit and they never saw each other again. (When these two GIs found out that they were NOT going to go with A Company overseas, they both stood there and cried.) Bolash did visit with us a couple of times but they would not give him a transfer.

This all took place around July 4th, because we had been driving on the left side of the road, and now, after July 4th, you drove on the right. How do I remember? I got a ticket for driving on the left side of the road. Wouldn't have gotten that ticket, except one of MY staff sergeants decided to sound off to the MPs who had just happened to be driving towards us as I pulled to the left to let a GI off that we had picked up on the way back to Canlubang. Of course the smart MPs had to say, "Hey, soldier, don't you know what side to drive on?" And that's all Spargur needed.

I was going to let well enough alone, but now I was in trouble. I got a ticket. It had just turned dark and we were in a hurry to get back. So I took the ticket and away we went.

By noontime the next day, everyone in the battalion knew I had gotten a ticket. I had to go down to battalion headquarters and listen to Sgt/Major Zumkeller give me a lecture, then it was CWO Barney Liss, then it was CWO Formansky; they all took turns. We did get a good laugh out of that one ticket. Going back to the company area, I had to pass in front of the officers' quarters when I heard, "Sgt Cartier, here in my tent please." That was from Major Meredith. He not only kidded me but said, "Sit down, I'd like to offer you a drink." So the two of us sat there for almost an hour, talking about what was to come and how we hoped the 44th would come out A-OK. After enjoying the 3 point 2 beer and wishing him well on our next venture, I returned to the company. (Major William Meredith sent me a wonderful commendation for the job I did with A Company, 44th Tank Battalion. It hangs on my wall today, and I'm mighty proud of it. – *copy shown at attachment 6*)

While at Canlubang, 1st Lieutenant Norman Hamilton, from Hopkinton, Massachusetts, the town that I grew up in, came to visit with me and another GI from Hopkinton, George Meninno, who was with D Company, 44th Tank Battalion. Norm brought along a Capt John Smith. They had come from Clark Field, north of Manila, and the base of the B-24 bombers that they flew. They were pilots from the 13th Air Force.

George 'Andy' Meninno and I started school in Hopkinton together and graduated from Hopkinton High School together in 1940; we were both inducted into the service together. We both ended up in Camp Campbell, Andy in light tanks in the 3rd Battalion and I in the medium tanks, 2nd Battalion. We both were in the 44th Tank Battalion when it was formed. And we both went overseas together. The both of us returned to the States around the same time. (I had a few more points than Andy.)

Back to Norm and John. They stayed at A Company for the time they spent with us. They wanted to drive a tank, but the only tanks able to move were the lights from Andy's company. Our's were all under maintenance, tracks being rebuilt, new engines, etc. So out in a 'light' we went. They had a ball, Andy showing them all the little tricks of handling a light. After three days they had to return to Clark Field and invited Andy and me to come and visit them if we could.

Andy couldn't get the time off, but Van gave me three days, and he meant three days. I had to be back by roll-call on a Tuesday morning. Catching a truck or any vehicle going your way is no problem. Hold up your hand and they stop and pick you up. Arriving at Clark Field that afternoon gave me a chance to meet all the crews in Norm's group. The next morning, they were taking a B-24 for a test and I'd be able to go along.

Once off the ground, the B-24 headed over Bataan and Corregidor at five thousand feet. Then Norm removed himself from the co-pilot's seat and had me sit there. WHAT a sensation. Capt Smith was at the controls, and he came over the intercom, "Ray, take hold of the controls and put your feet on those big pedals." They actually let me handle the B-24. John's hands were always close to his controls, but there I was flying a B-24. WOW! Then John signaled me to release control and I did so. Then he pointed down.

There we were, approaching the 44th Tank Battalion's area. Norm was showing me this on a map. Then he went and strapped himself in, on a seat behind me. Then John dove the B-24 right for the water tank that was in our area. Zoom, down, and then UP. What a feeling! I thought I was going to go right through the floor of the plane. I looked out and everyone was waving like mad. Then John banked the plane and came around again and this time he waggled the wings and we returned to Clark Field. We had been up almost four hours. Seemed like minutes, but it was almost four hours.

The next day was spent looking and enjoying my visit. Other B-24s had gone off on missions and some were late in coming back in. Things got awful quiet for about an hour, then a radio picked up their signal, and all was well. After they landed it was found out that they had to avoid a section because of the Japanese fighter planes in that area.

I had to say my 'good-byes' and get a ride back through Manila and back to Canlubang. Norm tried to get me aboard a C-47 but it was being held up because of cargo that hadn't arrived. It would have taken me right to an airstrip north of Manila.

I stopped a truck and by nightfall I was eating in Manila, and a few hours later I was signing in; I was back at A Company, ahead of my deadline.

I had received a letter from Ethel's brother, Jim MacFee. He was in the Navy and his ship was not stationed in Subic Bay—the biggest naval base in the South Pacific, north of Manila. I didn't understand his letter until the second one arrived. By his 'code' he told me where he was.

Subic Bay was in the area of Bataan Peninsula, and parts of the area were still feeling the effects of roaming bands of Japanese soldiers who were separated from their units but causing havoc on the highways.

Nothing big was going on with the 44th, so I again asked permission to take time to see my brother-in-law. Permission granted, three days. When I finally arrived at Zig Zag Pass, there wasn't any way I could travel this road unless it was in an armed convoy. This is really nice; I leave an area that is reasonably safe, I travel to this area and you have to fight your way to your destination. I picked up a convoy going to Subic and became the turret gunner.

After a fast trip down the Pass, I arrived in Subic Bay only to find out later that Jim had gone by sea down to Manila. Nobody home!

The next weekend, I asked and received permission to try to see my brother-in-law, again. This time I was more successful and Zig Zag had been cleared of all enemy action. We visited for a day, drank some 3point 2 beer on the island, talked about home, and ate. They had liver and onions—NOBODY ate it. I went back for seconds, and all the navy thought I was sick from the tropics. I returned to the 44th the next morning.

Capt John Smith and Lt Norm Hamilton had given me the word that they were due to fly into Okinawa any time soon. They said that if they did, they would come back to Canlubang and buzz the area.

I was in the orderly tent when I heard the gang yelling, "Red, your buddies are coming, get out here quick." "Here they come, J---, look, he's going to hit the water tower!" I heard Capt Van call from his tent, "Red, your buddies are taking off for Okinawa." I had told him what they had planned to do if they received the orders. Everyone was outside waving, everyone. Capt Van was waving the most of all.

Gawd, when they leveled off, we all swore that they were lower than the water tower. What a roar from the engines! They went beyond and then came back, wagging his wings as he passed over head. What a thrill!

CHAPTER 21

The training was in full swing. Everyone was getting in tip-top shape and we were back to an A-1 outfit. The tank crews were all in place and they had been working together for some time. Everything was clicking and it made all of us feel good. We were as ready as we ever would be.

I had asked Heinzie to take a tank commander's position and the sergeant stripes that go with it. He refused, saying, "Red, we came together at Campbell, let's see if we can end this war together." He would not take the command of the "Klankin Koiffin."

We had all the tanks on ready, a lot of them were new. All tank commanders received new 45s, the latest made by Colt Firearms Company. They were a thing of beauty. Being 1st/Sgt I received a new 45 also. Everyone of us went to the range and spent all morning test-firing. It was a great close-quarter gun.

I was talking to T/4 Jackson, our maintenance sergeant, and asked about the maintenance tank. Was that also ready to be loaded? The maintenance tank was a stand-by. If any tank on the line went down, the maintenance tank would take its place, just switch the crew. An IDEA! The first sergeant is usually in the rear with the company commander, more or less steering the tanks on the line. (The rear, the middle, some place where he can control what's going on.) The 1st/Sgt is usually in a jeep, flying from one place to another. The idea! Why not let the 1st/Sgt command the maintenance tank with a full crew. (Before, only a driver and a man in the turret were necessary.) With my idea a full crew was with the tank at all times. If the tank they were replacing had casualties, they'd stay together, if not the crews would be switched. It sounded good, so we just took the "Klankin Koffin" and made it the maintenance tank, crew and all. We were staying together; the other tank and a new crew went to the 1st Platoon.

Our idea never was tried out in battle. The war stopped on August 6th, 1945. The United States Air Force dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, a Japanese Army depot. When Japan hesitated on its surrender, another atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. These bombs were devastating. The world had never seen such destruction.

A few days later was the reading to the U.S. cabinet of the document proclaiming the surrender of the Japanese, bringing the long bloody war to an end.

The official signing of the Peace Treaty took place on September 2, 1945 aboard the battleship Missouri.

We took the news of the end of hostilities calmly. We were damn glad that we didn't have to make the invasion of Japan a reality. We had gone back to full military conduct and we knew we were in for a tough time in the landings.

Van had insisted that we get back to the Army's way of doing things. No more code names, no more buddy-buddy. A sergeant was a sergeant and an officer was an officer and would be addressed

as such. It was 'spit and polish' and we became a sharp outfit, and A Company was the best company in the battalion.

I had said a long, long time ago that A Company was the best, 1st Platoon was the best of A Company, and the "Klankin Koffin" was the best damn fighting tank of all.

We now waited for orders to pack up and head for the beach. Our destination was Tokyo. We would be going in with the 1st Cavalry to occupy Tokyo; we would be the first into Tokyo, as we were the first into Manila with the 1st Cavalry. Quite an honor.

Within a few days we received orders to strike the tents and be ready to move to Talaga Beach and to load onto the LSTs as soon as they came in. On August 30th, 1945, we said good-bye to our rest camp at Canlubang. The colors were brought down and the convoy moved out.

We arrived and had to wait because our LST wasn't on the beach. It beached the next morning, and a ramp was built by the engineers with a bulldozer. When all was ready, we loaded. We squeezed and loaded some more, then squeezed some more. All vehicles were aboard, all equipment was accounted for, and now roll-call to make sure all GIs are aboard. Reynoso's name was called three times, and I said, "Damn." I knew exactly where he was. He was back in Canlubang with his Filipino girlfriend.

I reported to Capt Van that we had one missing, Reynoso, and if I could borrow a jeep, I'd go back and pick him up. He arranged for me to take a jeep and I took S/Sgt Scaglione with me. We tore back to Canlubang and went to the little settlement near the sugar refinery. There we found Reynoso, our missing soldier. Nothing was said; we waited for him to say his 'good-byes' and we took off for Talaga.

No need to hurry. Our LST was stuck on the beach and had to wait for a high tide or a sea-going tug to pull her off. The tide came first.

Van read the riot act to Junior Reynoso and so did I. I had him on extra detail for the entire trip to Japan. I told him to stay put; I didn't want to go looking for him again.

After Reynoso left, Van gave me the news that I was the ranking NCO and would have to run a duty roster while aboard the LST. He also told me that the captain of the LST would not allow any pets whatsoever aboard. No dogs, no monkeys, no birds, no pets. So I had to spread the word, get rid of your pet. The word is that he'll have the pet thrown over the side if he finds them. This guy is a real nice guy???

Orvis Kaufman with 'Unk the Monk' was upset, but I had told all owners of pets that the LST beside us would allow pets; take yours over there and pick them up in Tokyo. So was was like Noah's Ark, all the animals went to another LST.

Shortly after getting aboard myself, I had a sailor look me up to tell me that the captain of the LST wanted to see me on the quarter deck, pronto. Now before me stands this great Navy captain who does not like animals. He doesn't ask me, he tells me, that I'm going to bunk with the chief petty officer. He doesn't ask me, but he tells me, that I'm going to eat in the petty officer's mess. This guy is unreal!

When he stops long enough to catch a breath, it's my turn. "Sir, thank you for your concern, but I prefer to eat and sleep with my men. I've been doing so since New Guinea, and I see no reason to quit now." "I'll report to MY captain of my whereabouts." "I'm sure that this will be satisfactory to all." And with that I turned and went to find Scaglione, because he was going to find a spot for my bunk, under a gun mount, on topside. He found two spaces, one for him and one for me.

Before I reported to Capt Van, the skipper of the LST spoke to him first. Van was 100% behind my decision, and that was the end of that.

Before we pulled out to sea, I have the duty roster all set. We had to sweep down fore, mid-ship and aft. We also had to furnish men for KP, for 'guard duty' (?) AND below deck. We always took care of the latrines. I don't think a navy person did anything beyond the maintenance of the LST.

One of the pleasant surprises we had the next morning was that we were going to get booster shots, and ONE for Bubonic Plague. The plague was carried by fleas from rats and we were going into a country that had been bombed, burned, and the ruins were everywhere, and so were the rats.

No problem, we've been having shots off and on since we entered the Army. So we're going to get a few more. The LST was now off the beach and anchored in the bay, waiting for the convoy to form. We got our shots! Everything went along well. I made sure that ALL of the GIs got theirs. Job well done.

By the evening meal, I wanted to just go somewhere in a hole and die, along with about a dozen others. Were we ever sick! I climbed into my bunk, under the forward gun, and told everyone to go away. Don't bother me, and when I'm dead, just throw my body over the side with the others who are as sick as I am. For two days we all were afraid we were really going to die, then it was we were afraid we weren't going to die. We never had a reaction to shots such as this.

Capt Van came forward to see how I and the others were doing, and he asked if we wanted to go to the sick bay. We all agreed that it would be easier to stay topside than go below where it would be hot and close. We did recover. S/Sgt Scaglione took care of the duty roster with the help of other S/Sgts.

I have to mention this. We had in our company a Pvt Joseph Wetherly, one of the biggest goldbricks any of us had ever seen (a 'goldbrick' is a soldier who does anything—anything—to keep out of doing what he is supposed to do). When it came time for a landing, Joe ended up in the hospital. When he came out and we were still in combat, he would end up back in the hospital with some other ailment. We think he deliberately got caught stealing food, to resell to the Filipinos, when it became

time to go into Luzon. They did let him out of the 'guardhouse' to go, BUT all assignments were full so he stayed with headquarters.

On the duty roster, I had him sweeping down the aft section of the LST. When I went to make my rounds, the aft section was a mess, and there sat Wetherly talking to a sailor. I really blew my top. I even threatened to throw him over the side and take my chances at a courts-martial. While I'm 'dressing him down,' one of our latest field commissioned officers appeared and started to tell me to 'get off' Wetherly's back. Lt Myron Hale started to say something to me when I heard Capt Van's voice advising our new Lt Hale to mind his own business. He had been taking this whole thing in from the upper deck and knew what my sounding off was all about.

Wetherly received that detail as long as he was aboard the LST. And he kept it super clean. The sad thing about this was, Joe Wetherly was entitled to every single ribbon and commendation that the company received because he was part of the company.

CHAPTER 22

When our LST arrived at our docking site just below the city of Yokahama, we were six days behind the first group that had left the Philippines. By the time we pulled along the pier, the LST that had all the pets had unloaded and was pulling out to sea. You had better believe that there were many unhappy GIs. All the dogs, monkeys, etc were disappearing out of sight. The LST was leaving the area. Orvis Kaufman lost 'Unk the Monk.'

When our LST was unloaded, we had two columns on the road, one on each side. As we prepared to move out, two Japanese came walking down the street and were just about to walk amongst us and the tanks when I challenged them on why were they there. Not speaking English and I not Japanese, we didn't understand anything. But they were insistent that they were going down the street, between the two columns.

"Oh, no you're not." "Go around that way." And I pointed the way to go. When they looked back at me, I had drawn my 45 and had two or three other GIs with their rifles standing by. They went around. We didn't want any incidents that would cause problems.

Just as I was going to ask Capt Van for permission to move the column, a Naval officer approached him and said something that I didn't get to hear. But I sure did, in two seconds.

"Sgt Cartier, it seems that this LST has had all its stainless steel mirrors removed from both latrines (in the navy they're heads). Get them back immediately." There was a roar of laughter, and I could see that Van thought this was quite a joke. I went up and down the column, "Give us those mirrors now." Still no mirrors.

I had kept seeing this head of Pfc Dick Beard, popping up and down in the turret of the “Klankin Koffin.” Finally he says, “Sarge, take a walk; we put the damn mirrors in your tank.” Sure enough, I hid behind another tank as they were all taken out and returned to the LST. I hope the skipper of that LST remembered that for the rest of his days.

We moved from the dock area to our quarters in a motorcycle factory, Miyata Works, Limited. The fourth floor was ours. The entire center of the huge factory was open and we could watch all that was going on down on the ground floor. We set up our cots and made ourselves as comfortable as could be, when I had a call from Capt Van.

He told me to take one of the jeeps and whoever, and go sightseeing around Yokahama and Tokyo. (No guns were to be carried, NONE, but he advised me to wear my shoulder harness and take the 45.) We soon found out that this war was over.

We traveled up and over, and down and around, meeting countless Japanese. Nowhere did we see any hostility. We saw smiles and lots of people willing to show what was what. The destruction was unbelievable. What wasn't knocked flat by a bomb, the incendiary bomb (fire bomb) leveled everything else. The residential areas of Japan were all made of wood and paper. The fires raged night after night from the bombings. We found the people willing to forget that there was a war.

We went about the business of getting our quarters in shape. We had a Japanese interpreter who handled all the workers. He had graduated from USC. Returning to Japan to be married, he was caught there when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. He refused to take up arms against his adopted country, the USA, and he was put on labor details for the duration. Now he was in charge of our Japanese workers.

Our lives in Japan became routine. We became an Army Post in Yokahama. We had details to perform, work that had to be done, formations held, and numbers counted. Soon there was another call for more GIs to head for the USA, and this time I had enough points and some to spare. I was going home.

Turning in all my gear that I could not take with me, I gave Capt Van my ‘Spit Fire’ Tommy gun. I still had it and I wouldn't have given it to anyone else but Capt VanWinkle. I had promised him that. The new 45s that were issued to all tank commanders was something I wanted to take home with me. So on the QT, I told Van what I had in mind. On the QT he told me that all guns were being confiscated, either at departure or when you are inspected in the States. He was willing, in a way, but he assured me that it would end up with someone else and there wouldn't be a thing I could do to stop them from taking it. So I turned in my beautiful brand new 45. That was a real handgun!

When I said good-bye to the officers and MY company, I had tears in my eyes. We had fought together, we had seen our buddies killed. We had seen many wounded and never returned to duty. We

had seen the horrors and we had seen the joys. Now it was time to get on with the rest of our lives. We were going home.

The morning of departure, it was again hard to say the good-byes. A manly hug, a strong handshake and get aboard the truck. You were out of sight on the first turn.

At the railroad we boarded a super-speed train. By the looks of the station and the tracks, the bombers must have missed all this. (They didn't; the Japanese rebuilt the rails as fast as possible. This was their transportation.) We traveled north to an airfield where we stayed to board our transport for home. ALL of us were transferred to the 172 Cannon Company, 43rd Infantry Division, for transport and rations. Period!

That order for transport and rations was soon tested. Again I was the ranking NCO going home from the 44th Tank Battalion. I held the orders. That evening one of the tankers came to me and said, "Sarge, what's going on? I just came by the duty roster and most every damn 44th tanker in on detail." That couldn't be, because we were only transport and rations.

I went to see the sergeant who was doing all the duty rosters, and he told me that that was it. "The 44th had details." (I had no shirt on, so no stripes. I didn't bring our orders, so no argument.) But it only took me two minutes to put on my shirt and my field jacket, with all those stripes, three up, three down, and a diamond. I went back to the sergeant and laid the orders on his desk, before he looked up, and said, "Read the orders. We're 44th Tank Battalion, transport and rations." When he looked up and saw all the stripes, he had nothing to say. BUT he did go and get a second lieutenant to read the orders.

Before the lieutenant could say a word, I said, "Lt, I have our orders. It says nothing about details. Transport and rations. PERIOD. We didn't come up here to work our butts off, we're going home. OK, Lieutenant?" His answer was, "OK, Sergeant, see you on the boat." (Another one for the Klankin Koffin.)

The next day we toured the airfield. All the propellers were removed from the fighters and one from the bombers. What a mess of planes! Hundreds, all lined up, with no propellers and no place to go.

The next day we boarded trains again, this time we went to the docks. As each name was read, we picked up our duffle bags and climbed the gangplank to board the USS General Pope. Our ship for home.

CHAPTER 23

The USS General Pope was a converted luxury liner. It made one great troop transport. Under the Transportation Corps, this ship was run a little differently than the LSTs and the LSMs that we were

accustomed to. Again, being a ranking non-com, I found myself in charge of a section. One hold, three floors, and umpteen GIs.

I immediately found three staff sergeants and gave each a compartment. "This is yours, keep it as you would your own quarters. Any problems, we'll get together." The only problem I saw that was coming up was that the ship's brig was in the second compartment, and already there was a sailor occupying the space. He became the best friend that these combat veterans had ever seen. While others watched, he smoked, ate very well, and even was allowed to sit and just talk. While he was in the brig, the GIs were determined to pull the wool over the brass' eyes.

Transport Command ran a great ship. The food was great, activities were many, and we just sat back and enjoyed. NO DETAILS FOR US. The only other incident that happened, happened. I was told, very politely, "Sarge, go take a walk and don't come back until we send for you." Seems that one of the Marine guards got a little out of hand. He was downright nasty; one stripe and he thought he was commanding general. I had been up against him before and had told him to "Lighten up!" But I guess he didn't listen.

The GIs had put up with him long enough. This was going to be a long voyage to the States and they had already had enough of the Marine. I learned later that a group of GIs had pinned him up against the bulkhead, took his helmet liner and his pistol belt and threw them over the side, then said to him, "You're next if you don't smarten up." Someone took his 'billie' (night stick) and that was never found; never.

Was I ever glad that I had been talking to one of the transport officers while all this was going on. Big hullabaloo, but nothing was ever found out on who did what. When I was questioned, I told it like it was, that this Marine was a loud mouth, but I thought he'd meet someone after dark and then he'd get what was his due.

The remainder of the ocean voyage was great. We had the gamblers, the winners and losers. We had the guys who just wanted to relax, shoot the breeze and talk about home. I was in charge of three compartments and one hold, and I never had one single GI get out of line. They were a mix of units, all proud and glad to be going home. They were elements from the Americal Division, the 1st Cavalry Division, the 43rd Infantry Division, the 112th Cavalry Regiment, and the 44th Tank Battalion. All made names for themselves in the campaigns in which they fought and died. It was a long war and now we could talk to the others on where we had been and what we did.

Small attachments from other units were aboard: 82nd Chemical, XI Corps Field Artillery, 760th Field Artillery, 517th Field Artillery, 744 MPs, 238 Chemical Service, 637th Tank Destroyer, 131st Engineers, 872 Aviation Engineers, and the 161st Coast Artillery. I mention these units because they were listed in the USS General Pope's newsletter, AND just maybe it was one of these units that gave us the sapper, or the artillery field of fire, or checked out a bridge for us, or maybe built a bridge for us to cross. Every unit had its thing to do, and they all did it well.

The day arrived that we could see the Golden Gate Bridge in the distance. By the time we sailed under the bridge, every single person aboard was topside, yelling and waving their arms in joy. By Gawd, we made it; we're home.

After passing under the bridge, we docked at a pier where a huge brass band was playing military music. If I can remember right, every member of that band was a red head. It seemed that the commanding general of the 43rd Infantry Division was a red head. This was their way of saying, "Welcome Home." (*Newspaper article of the 43rd's arrival at attachment 7.*)

After debarking from the ship we all went aboard a ferry and were shuttled down the bay further to an Army base. There we were checked into barracks and told to stand by, we were to be processed immediately. Within hours we were in a fieldhouse, having equipment that wasn't needed by us any more stacked in a pile. All our personal gear was looked at and inspected. (Oh, why didn't I take my 45?) The inspection was nothing; I could have had a submarine in the bag. Nothing was removed from our personal bags, nor were there any questions asked, "What did you bring home, soldier?" The entire inspection was a farce.

Back to the barracks and we were told to stand by again. We would be fed shortly, then it was free time again. We were advised to stay close to the barracks because we would be boarding a troop train for the east coast as soon as possible. Some took the chance and slipped out of camp to the nearest town but, anxious to be there when the train did pull in, they weren't gone for too many hours.

Within a few days, our train was in; we loaded and headed east. All across the country we saw thousands of people lining the streets as we passed through. We were the first troops to be returned to the United States from Japan. What a welcome! At one stop-over the Red Cross was there, giving out cigarettes, coffee, donuts, sandwiches, etc. The troops weren't supposed to (but did) draw pictures, with chalk, on the sides of the Pullman cars. Every car had a picture of the unit, a slogan; GIs printing their own personal messages. Quite a sight.

After umpteen days we finally reached Fort Devens. This was the place I left three years ago, and after being two-thirds around the world, helping to win a war, here I was right back where I started.

From the railhead, a quick trip in a truck to barracks. There the sergeant in charge told us that there was a new system of discharging the GHIs. There wouldn't be any furloughs, no passes, no phone calls. We were to be processed immediately, starting at 0600 the next morning. Within two days we would be out of the Army and civilians again.

This really didn't set too well with us. No furloughs, no passes, no phone calls. Who ever dreamed this up wasn't thinking at all. We were going out, we were going to make contact with our families right now. My wife lived within 30 miles, and I'm not to contact her. These people are not veterans and we were; we're going to get in touch with our families.

It seemed every barracks was notified about the new system at the same time. And it seemed that every veteran was going to make contact, period. The whole place was in uproar. Our barracks emptied almost as soon as the other one did. We were headed for phones to bring our families to Fort Devens. They sure as hell were going to have to courts-martial an awful lot of soldiers, because it was a steady stream to the nearest phones, on the base and off the base.

I went to an orderly room and asked the CQ if the line could get outside the base. He had nothing to lose, so his answer was "Yes." So that's how I got through to Ethel, my wife. She was surprised to hear from me, because the last time she had heard, I was in the Philippines. Now here I am, at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, my entry point three years ago, waiting for information on my separation from the Army.

After I finished my call, I told the CQ that I was sorry that I pulled rank on him, but we returning veterans were determined to contact our families no matter what. Being CQ and a corporal, he really didn't care. I was a 1st Sergeant and I wanted to use the phone; go ahead, use the phone. While we were talking and I had passed along the information that here was an available phone for them to use, a 2nd Lieutenant came into the orderly room. I explained to him that I as first sergeant used the phone and called others in to also use it. We wanted to contact family and that was that. All he said was, "Sarge, go to it." and left the building.

Before long there was quite a line of GIs waiting to get to the phone. We also heard that the officers in our section of the separation center were working furiously, trying to go back to the old system, a furlough and then separation.

After we made contact at home, leaving the message of where to come for us, we went back to the barracks, rolled up our mattresses, picked up our gear, and headed for the main gate. Our barracks sergeant came running into the building, yelling, "Don't leave, everyone will be getting a blanket furlough. They're changing the paperwork now. You'll be able to pick up your papers and sign out in ten minutes."

We waited, and shortly after we received our furloughs and were on our way.

We walked out to the main gate to our families to arrive, and of course we had to deal with the MPs. "Can't stand there! Move it over there and don't block the gate." This is coming from two spit-and-polish MPs who were throwing their weight around. So be it! We had our heavy coats on because of the October weather, cool and misting. I removed my O.D. coat and NOW, I pulled rank again. (These were two young MPs and they were about to be taught, "Don't horse around a veteran.") When they looked up, they saw me enter the Gate House a 1st/Sgt, with a chest full of ribbons, 18 months' worth of overseas duty slash marks on the sleeve, and not in a good mood.

I came right out and told them, "You had better get a better attitude, because there were more of us to come. We were going to stand under the overhang of the building to stay dry. If you don't like

it, call the Officer of the Day.” With that I walked out. There never was an appearance of the Officer of the Day. The MPs returned to checking vehicles entering the base.

About an hour later, a car arrived driven by my brother-in-law, Helge Lindholm, with his wife Kay and MY wife Ethel in the back seat. What a reunion! I was home.

Thirty days later I reported back to Fort Devens to be processed and be separated from the military. Many of us were asked that dumb question, “Why don’t you join the Reserves, that way you’ll keep your rank and maybe you could become an officer.” “Jeessee, after three years, they wanted us to take more of Army life.” Not me; I told them that I was the best damn civilian that they ever saw. And, that’s what I became, A CIVILIAN.

Some would ask, “Were you a good GI?” My answer would be, “I did the best I knew how. I was a tank commander, a platoon sergeant, and the 1st/Sergeant of Company A. I held the highest respect from my 135 men who were part of Company A. Our T.O. was higher due to our casualties, at times, but never was I challenged on my authority (except for a disappointed maintenance sergeant and once from our first cook).

Some would ask, “Were you a hero?” My answer would be, “Heroes are everywhere. They were around you, behind you, beside you, they were you, and you didn’t even know it.”

Some would ask, “Were you scared?” My answer would have to be, “Only a fool isn’t scared. Every time we went into action, day after day, the fright was there. The question was always on your mind, is today the day? One had to adjust to every situation that came up.” And adjust we did.

The ‘war’ was plain Hell. We had lost many close friends. We had seen many wounded. Some would never contact other members of the company, or battalion, ever again. Although when we were a platoon or a company or just a tank crew, like my group from the “Klankin Koffin,” we were inseparable. *(Photo of Ray and the “Klankin Koffin” and crew listing at Attachment 8.)*

Many have attended reunions of the 44th Tank Battalion Association, but many haven’t. I personally have written many letters to former members of A Company. Some choose to answer, some never have. The letters were received, because of the return mail postage.

But that’s neither here nor there. We did what we had to do, and we’re damn proud of the job we did.