

STORY OF THOMAS T. PERRETT (31434488) – STARTING DECEMBER 7, 1941

I was born July 9, 1925 in Malden, Mass.

On December 7, 1941 I was going to high school in my home town, Saugus, Mass., which I had lived in since I was one year old. On December 7, 1941 I was only 16 years old. At that time I was a patrol leader in the Eagle Patrol in Troop 64, Boy Scouts. We did our civil defense duty by being messengers on our bikes in blackouts. My post was in a school two miles from my home and on the outside edge of Saugus. When I was 17 ½ years old I joined the civilian air reserve where we met twice a week, Wednesday and Sunday. We had uniforms with Air Force pins. Wednesdays we had Morse code, radio and air navigation. Sundays we learned how to fly and use air navigation. When I was 18, I signed up for the draft while still in school. June 23, 1943 my left eye was injured when I was hit in the left eye by a spring and bolt from a rifle. My father drove me to the eye and ear hospital in Boston where they were able to save my eye. The young fellow in the bed next to me tripped over a chair in a blackout. He broke his glasses and cut the optic nerve to his left eye. Even though his eye wasn't cut, he ended up with a glass eye because the optic nerve was cut. They put drops in my eye for several days. Then the doctor put a light to my left eye. I told him I could see a light far off. He said it was a good sign. After two weeks in the hospital they sent me home but had to put drops in my eye for months. I went to the Boston hospital once a month for tests. Each time my eye showed improvement. I had to give up the civilian air reserve and my flying as you had to have 20/20 vision in both eyes. I decided to pass on the knowledge I learned in the civilian air reserve to young boys who wanted to fly so I became air scout leader in Troop 64 while Captain Parker was troop leader in Boy Scouts in Troop 64. Most of the air scouts went into the U.S. Air Force when they were old enough to enlist.

While in the last year of high school I was called up in the draft but my eye was still healing so I was classified 4F twice. This let me graduate from high school. The doctor in Boston told me I had a horse shoe tear in the back of the eye that had healed to a fine line. I had a non-progressive cataract but each day my sight would get better. After I graduated from high school I went to work for G. E. for a month when I got my third draft card as AI. My bad eye had healed to 20/25 which the Army would accept. I went to the draft board and told them I was IA and wanted to go to Fort Devens in the first group, which ended up being 15 Aug 1944. At Fort Devens they gave us a test on Morse code. We were supposed to put down the “..-“ but I put down the correct letter. Captain called me into his office and asked me why I had put down the letters instead of the “.-“. I told him I knew Morse code. He studied my words, then said, son, you are right. It does spell right. He said he was sending me to radio school in Alabama. When I got to Alabama they told me the radio school was closed two weeks ago and that it was all infantry school now, so I went through infantry school. Graduated and went home for leave. I think it was 5 days as the Battle of the Bulge was going on and they needed us bad. Had to report back December 26. I had to leave Christmas day at 1 pm. A funny thing happened to me while going through our final training one day in the rain. The general singled me out to show the rest of troops how to jump out on a rope and swing across the river. I had done it beautifully the first time as the rope wasn't slippery. This time I jumped out, caught the rope and slid down the rope and landed on my back in the

mud on the other side of the river. The general then said, guess the rope is too slippery but see how he jumped out to swing across. Boy did I get teased by my buddies. I shipped out January 8, 1948 on the Queen Elizabeth and January 18th was at the front in France.

In December 1944 while waiting for transportation overseas I pulled one day of guard duty at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and one day of guard duty on the White House steps.

I shipped overseas January 8, 1945 on the Queen Elizabeth with two of my buddies from my home town, Saugus, Mass. Their names were Al Duncan and Al Dunham. We were separated at a replacement depot, each going to a different outfit. I was very lucky and was assigned to Co. C, 1st squad, 1st platoon, 66th A.I.B., 12th Armored Division., as a 30 cal. water-cooled machine gunner. Twenty-one of us were assigned to 7 boxes of records for all of the soldiers records on the Queen Elizabeth. Three men to a box. One man for each box around the clock at all times. We (21 men) had a beautiful cabin on A deck so if the ship was hit, we could get off with the records. The 21 of us were given a tour of the ship by the captain in both day light and night time so we could get off the ship with the records if the ship was sinking and not to survive if the ship was sunk and we lost the box of records assigned to us. The meals were twice a day, breakfast and supper. They had three shifts for each meal. They had three color buttons for the shifts that you were supposed to eat. We had all three color buttons in our cabin so we ate four times a day. The captain kept us informed of everything that happened as we were sailing across all alone and nothing as convoy. The Queen Elizabeth was too fast for a convoy and depended on her speed and a zig-zag course to cross in 5 days. On midnight the third day out of New York I was having a cup of coffee in the kitchen when the ship lurched and shuddered. The coffee pot almost slid off the table. The next day the captain told the 21 of us to be real alert as he had caught a sub on the surface last night and had rammed it and sunk it before it could submerge.

January 14 landed in Glasgow, Scotland; overnight by train to Southampton, England. Marched 5 miles to a ship. Next day sailed to LeHarve, France. We were the first troops to use a floating dock January 18, 1945 to land in LeHarve, France. It was raining, muddy, and a bad picture to start. For a mile in any direction there wasn't a building or tree standing. We went by truck to a replacement depot. Sixty-eight of us went by truck to the 12 Armored Division where we arrived on January 27 as reinforcements at Mittelhausbergen. Eight of us went to 1st squad, 1st platoon Co. C, 66th A.I.B., 12th Armored Division. There were only four men left in this 1st squad after Steinwald January 16, 1945. These men were S/Sgt Donald M. Hurly (squad leader), Sgt. Richard A. Brock (assistant squad leader), TS John R. Higgins (drive of our halftrack), and Russel Scott. These were the old timers of my squad. On January 27, 1945 eight new men were assigned to this 1st squad, 1st platoon, Co. C., 66th A.I.B. These men were Thomas T. Perrett, 31434488 (machine gunner), Robert W. Christen, 36983584, Gordon C. Albertson, 37599575, Benjamin S. Burriesci, 42136250, Aubrey L. Long, 36468924, Alvin Brockaway, 42136955, Emmett B. Killingsworth, 37749805, and John G. Klutsarits. These 12 men all signed their names February 9, 1945 in a pair of wooden shoes (sabots) after the Colmar pocket battle. On January 28, 1945 we were issued different weapons if we desired. I was offered a pistol if I desired as I was the machine gunner but I kept my M1 instead, which I wore on my back if I carried the 30 cal. machine water-cooled gun when we went into battle on foot. Mostly we left the machine gun in the halftrack so I was glad to have the M1 on the patrols. On January 27 our Company C. commander, 1st Lt. Ogden R.

Fox welcomed the eight of us new men and introduced us to our squad leader of the 1st squad, 1st platoon, S/Sgt Donald M. Hurly and his assistant squad leader, Sgt Richard A. Brock. At that time he assigned me to be the machine gunner for this squad. 1st Lt. Ogden Fox did not have a platoon leader yet for the 1st platoon so that was why he had to do the introductions. We got a new 2nd Lt. for our 1st platoon a few days later but he did not last long and I forget his name. All I remember about him is that he was very nice and we all liked him.

On January 29 they took us out in the halftracks on some lonely road to practice loading and unloading from the halftrack. My squad leader, Donald Hurly, had a grenade in his right pocket. When we dismounted for the first time, he felt like something was tight in this pocket. What had happened was the pin had come loose and the handle was half extended. When he removed the grenade from his pocket the handle flew off and the 4 ½ second timer started. Don looked around and saw soldiers all around him. There was a deep ditch on both sides of the road so Don yelled "grenade," hit the ditch and then threw the grenade on the street. Everyone was in the ditch thanks to Don, so no one was hit. After that, Don made all of us bend the pins on all our grenades.

On February 3 we moved out to attack Colmar. We arrived at Colmar outskirts early in the morning and our halftrack took up a position in a field next to the woods. Just at daylight I noticed from my gun turret that I had been manning all night, a large rabbit. Don told me to climb down and let my assistant gunner take over for a while. Just as I got down and before my buddy could take over, a German threw two grenades at us. One landed by our right front tire (it gave us a flat) and the other on our front hood. Lucky for us we had the armor shield over the front glass. T/S John R. Higgins, Donald M. Hurly and I were showered with broken glass but none of us were injured. We were lucky! We never saw the German as he ran as soon as he threw the two grenades. We were told to dismount, fix bayonets, and attack a hill close by while our halftrack driver had the task of replacing our right front flat tire. At 5:15 am we were in the woods on top of the hill outside Colmar. I started digging three machine gun holes but each time I had it dug about two inches deep, they made us move forward. We could hear the church bells ringing so we knew the Germans were aware that we were close. We entered the town and saw dead Germans on the roadside. The FFI had beat us to these fellows. We made our way through town until we came to a church that had a sniper in it. As we were going up this street, a French Moroccan squad was coming down this street. The sniper tried to run to us but the first French Moroccan got him with a burst of machine gun bullets. After getting to the center of town, we put up in a hotel for a few days. On February 9, just before noon, we were told to mount up for a patrol in the Vosge Mountains. We were to be the point. We had a tank in front of us as leader and we were the first halftrack going down one mountain road. We lost our left track with a big bank—I thought we were hit for a minute. Due to the great skill of our halftrack driver, John R. Higgins, he was able to bring us to a stop and after a short delay, had us on the move again. The lead tank in front of us was hit by an 88 as it was turning on a curve. All on board were killed. Our driver told us all to hang on as he was going to turn us on our side on the right side of the road. (It was only a one-lane road over the mountains.) We tipped on our side so the tank behind us got a shot at the 88 gun and knocked it out. They pushed our knocked-out tank out of the way and tipped us back upright. We had a couple of cases of wine, cognac, and champagne in the halftrack at the time. The halftrack smelled like a brewery as most of the bottles

broke when we tipped on our side. We continued on after that. I think we ended up in the vicinity of Falquemont. We were showered with apples and wine. We set up an outpost at the end of town and put out patrols in the hills for prisoners. We took quite a few, including one German that ran for two miles ahead of a hail of bullets every time he slowed down. On February 8th we did a victory parade and review for General DeGaulle in Colmar. I was the second man DeGaulle stood in front of and saluted. I was fourth in line in the first row and he turned and saluted every fourth man. He looked real sharp and exercised this maneuver very sharp.

On February 12th we returned to Longeville by way over the Vosges Mountains for rest and maneuvers and inspections. I and a few fellows had to dig a few 6x6x4 holes as we never had our gas masks. We used to keep our socks and smokes and candy, etc., in the bags but threw our gas masks away as they never worked good. I never found one that worked and did not leak. John ran a wire from our halftrack to our second floor room of our sleeping quarters so we had a light at night. We had a table and a stove in our room. We slept in our bed roll on the floor at night. Played cards (pinochle) most of the time while we were here. I got a one-day pass to Nancy and a cold shower while we were here at Longeville; also all the men in my squad signed a pair of wooden shoes (sabos) dated February 9, 1945 which I mailed home at that time and still have (NOTE: These are now in the 12th Armored Division Museum in Texas.)

On March 2 we were ordered to mount up to go on attack against Forbach. On the way to Forbach the convoy was stopped at a two mile open space that had pill boxes covering this open space of field and road that we had to cross. 1st Lt. Ogden R. Fox, our company commander, singled me out to ride on a light tank as machine gunner to ride up to the first pill box and see if they were manned. The commander in the tank told me not to fire the machine gun unless I was fired on. We rode across the mine field until we reached the deep trench that had been dug as a tank trap. At this point the lieutenant told me to hang on tight as we were going through it fast. I thought I was holding on tight but I ended up sitting on the lieutenant's head with my feet and hands sticking out of the hatch, and we were four feet in front of the pill box. The tanker had the canon almost sticking in the hole of the pill box. We traveled down the line and found all pill boxes empty so we returned to our column and continued to Forbach. Up to now it had been easy!

We went into Forbach as veterans now. Our spirits were very high. We added a new man to our squad just a few days ago, his last name was Bullets. We dismounted in a field just outside Forbach. This time they told me to take the machine gun with me. My squad was less than 100 yards from our halftrack when it was hit by an 88 shell. It hit the 90 octane gas tanks that the fellows used for back rests when en route. The halftrack went up in flames. The only thing that T/S John R. Higgins, our half-track driver, could save was my musette bag that was hanging on the door near the gun ring. The bag was on fire but John put the fire out and saved it for me. I sent the bag home with some of my souvenirs. I still have it. (The musette bag is also in the museum in Texas and shows the side that was on fire.) My squad all lost our wallets, money and valuables that we had to leave in our strong box in the halftrack when we went into battle. John said it was too hot and he could not reach the strongbox. All he could reach was my musette bag that only had my socks, underthings, cigars, etc. Some fellow was taking pictures of us with a movie camera as we walked in two columns into Forbach. I saw him

taking my picture, walking with the machine gun on my shoulder. Right after that we rounded a corner and all hell let loose. It was the worst mortar and shell fire I ever saw. There was a shell exploding every second on both sides of the street. I was knocked down from a shell that hit the wall to my left. It felt like someone hit me with a sledge hammer. The man in front of me was hit by the same shell. I sat on the ground and thought where I was hit in the side; I had a belly wound. I watched the man in front of me get up holding a bloody handkerchief to his jaw. I decided to stand up myself and felt for blood on my side. To my surprise I found I had been hit in my cartridge belt. One of my clips of bullets had a one-inch long deep dent across all four bullets. Wish I had kept them for a souvenir but at the time I figured they were no good bent so I took them out of the belt and threw them on the ground. Two men on the right side of the road had been hit in the legs by the same shell. I decided to walk on the right side of the road and crossed over only to be knocked down again. This time a piece of shrapnel hit my right upraised foot and spun me around so I fell. It put a ¼" cut in the double layer of leather near the arch, and cut my sock but did not even cut my foot. (I found this out later.) I got up and decided to walk down the middle of the street. At this point our first sergeant blew his whistle and called us all into a building on the right. We no sooner got into the building when a German machine gun opened fire at the end of the street and killed two medics carrying a wounded man on a stretcher outside. The shrapnel coming into the rooms drove us all to the cellar. We met a German couple in the cellar that was making potato soup. Our sergeant made a deal with them. We gave them our K rations for the soup. Boy! Was it great. Best potato soup I ever had!

While we were still in that cellar I was standing on some boards when I felt a knock under my feet. I stepped off the wooden boards and two kids came out of a tunnel. It seems they had a tunnel from one house to the next so they did not have to go outside to get their neighbor's house. That night (I think it was 2nd Lt. Ansel E Hugunin) took our 1st platoon on a hike to put up an outpost. After a half hour walk in the dark, taking different streets left and right, I think we got lost. My 1st squad was point with the lieutenant leading. We were just turning a right corner when Ansel stopped us. There was a German patrol marching straight for us. We opened fire on them and they jumped for cover. The lieutenant told my 1st squad to stay there for ten minutes and give him time to get the rest of the platoon back to our lines. After ten minutes S/Sgt Hurley and Sgt Brock decided to take a short cut back to our lines. We went to the left. We had not gone too far when we were jumped by the Germans. One bullet was fired from a machine gun and then it must have jammed. The bullet went between the point man and me. It made a big spark on the brick building to our left. We all hit the dirt fast and the next minute the machine gun raked us with fire. I was lying on the right side of some cement stairs and the point man was on the left exposed side of the stairs. Why he wasn't killed I will never know. I had my water cooled machine gun stuck out in front of me on the ground for some cover. My head was just even with the bottom step. I put my right hand on my helmet as it was about to fall off and a bullet ricocheted off the first step and nicked the fourth finger of my right hand at the second knuckle. After we got out of there the point man showed me where he had been nicked on his right cheek and I showed him my hand. We both thought how lucky we had been with minor flesh wounds only. The Germans threw a potato masher at me. It landed six feet in front of me. I could not get up to get it as the machine gun bullets were just going over my head. While I was waiting for the grenade to go off, I had a flash back after I counted to sixteen. I remembered a girl's name in school whom I went to school

in the sixth grade with and had forgotten. It was Peggy Foster, and 45 years later I can still remember it! Richard A. Brock saved our lives when he silenced the machine gun with rifle fire while he told us to crawl to the side of the building with the rest of the squad. I told him I thought the machine gun had been hit as I smelled Preston. They told me to leave it and join them at the 8-foot high barb wire fence at the back of the building. We climbed a tree to get over the barb wire and got back to our outfit without any more trouble. The next day when we attacked, someone picked up the machine gun. It had not been damaged. They said there was a potato masher about six feet away from it. It looked like someone had partly cut the string so when the Germans pulled the string, it broke. Someone had saved our lives. At this point I was beginning to feel I was living a charmed life.

The next day we moved up to the railroad tracks. They even tried screaming memies to stop us. Just after, I watched a German run across the tracks to surrender. We all ran across the tracks except Tex. He picked up a 5-gallon water can and just walked across. What a man – nothing scared him. One man was killed crossing these tracks. He was hit by a burp gun. They got the German before he could get away. We held 5 houses out of 15 that were spaced like a horseshoe with wood all around and 100 yards of tracks at our back. My squad with the lieutenant held the first corner left side as the command post. We held it for 5 days and nights. There was a coal mine surrounded by a high stone wall about 1,000 yards from us. They kept the screaming memies in the tunnels. They had two high towers with machine guns in them. One was made of steel and one was made of cement. They used these for directing their mortars and shelling. The trail blazers tried to attack these through the woods to my left just before dark, but were driven back when they reached the wall. They ran into shoe mines all through the woods. That night we took in the survivors who were badly shaken up. The next day I counted 3 hits by 105's on the steel tower and 5 hits by our 105's on the cement tower but to no effect. They gave me a bazooka with one round (said that was all I would be able to fire anyway) when they heard a tiger tank in the woods on my side. I was grateful when it never came out of the woods. Earlier we had fired 21 rounds at an empty pill box for practice and only three rounds exploded. Captain Fox had sent all this bad ammunition back and said he got new bazooka rounds as no one wanted to carry the bazooka after that incident. One night there was a German patrol under my window which was on the second floor. All first floor windows had logs covering them so we had a man at each second floor window. I threw two grenades at them but they just ran around the corner of the building and got away before they went off. After that the fellows started calling me Grenade. On the next to last day that we were there, the lieutenant borrowed a razor from the German's house and shaved for the first time in five days. He was all cleaned up and had his feet up on the stove. Gordon C. Albertson had just closed his door and was asking me for a match to light his cigarette when a shell hit our house and caved in his roof. He told me the cigarette saved his life and he would never quit smoking. The same shell sent soot down the chimney and out the stove and the lieutenant was all black. It turned out to be a joke as he was very good natured with the men when they laughed at his being covered with soot. One fellow had the runs so he went into the outhouse which was located 20 feet from the house. He came running into the house with his pants half up when a shell almost hit the outhouse. He claimed the Germans must have seen him go in the outhouse. The last night we were in this house, I had an airburst outside my window which knocked me out. I must have been out for a while because when the fellow in the room

next to mine came into my room, I was on the floor. He said after the shell explosion he had been trying to get me to answer him for 15 minutes so he came into my room just as I was coming around.

On March 9 we got good news: we were being relieved. The Air Force was going to start bombing the mine at 11 o'clock and keep it up until 12 noon so we could pull back safely. The Germans shot down the first plane, but the bomb he dropped took both towers down in a cloud of smoke. We watched as the planes formed a perfect circle, dove one at a time, strafed, and dropped one bomb at a time from their wings. When the last plane was getting ready to drop its last bomb, a new squadron joined them and never lost the distance in the circle. Because of the planes' bombing, we were able to walk across the open tracks and back to our halftracks without one shot or shell being fired at us. When we got back to our halftrack, T/S John R. Higgins greeted us with a smile, new halftrack and a bottle of wine for each one of us. We were all glad to be going back to Longeville for a short rest which would be the last one for a lot of the men until V.E. day on May 8.

In closing this episode of my story, I must mention we lost Russel Scott who was wounded real bad by 14 pieces of shrapnel at a crossroad going into Forbach. Our new man, Bullets, was next to him and he was evacuated also but I do not know if his was only concussion or wound. We never saw either again. They told us Scott was sent back to the States to recover. He had been keeping us all supplied with wine and cognac and would be sorely missed by our squad.

On March 14 we were back in Longeville for maintenance and rehabilitation. When we were being shelled in Forbach and I was knocked down twice, I failed to notice that my gas mask bag had a big hole in the bottom of it. A piece of shrapnel had cut a long rip in the bag and I lost all my spare socks, candy, and tobacco. I did not notice this until I went to change my wet socks and check the right foot that had the ¼" cut in the shoe. My sock had a ¼' cut but my foot wasn't cut. I had to wear the same wet socks all the time we were in Forbach. I threw this gas bag away like the dented bullets as they were no good. When we got back to Longeville I had a bad case of trench foot and started having eye problems. I don't know if it was caused by shell shock or because while we held 5 houses out of 15 we couldn't sleep for three days and night as we all had a window to guard and keep the Germans at bay. I reported to sick bay March 15th for treatment of my trench foot. I mentioned to the medic my eye trouble and he put my feet in some purple liquid for an hour, then sent me to 82nd Medical Battalion hospital where I went by ambulance to Medical Hospital in Dijon, France for treatment of my eyes. This was the U.S. Army General Hospital in Dijon, France where I arrived on the 16th for treatment of my eyes and a wound to the third finger of my right hand (just a nick, which a bandage took care of). A nurse dressed my finger and wanted to give me a Purple Heart for it. I told her it was only a nick and I didn't want to worry my parents thinking I had been hit bad, so I turned the Purple Heart down. When I arrived at the hospital they took my P38 pistol away from me (I never got it back – they said they lost it). I refused to let them take my bowie knife, so the doctor let me keep it under my pillow. The doc examined my eyes. When I told him that I had been knocked out by a shell for 15 minutes the last day we were in Forbach 9 March 1945 and had been seeing black spots off and on for the last seven days, he put drops in my eyes and told me I would be blind for a few days, not to worry as it would be temporary. If my eyes did not get better in a few days, he was going to send me back to the States. After seven days of eye rest the doc said I was ok for combat again as they needed machine gunners bad. The nurses and

doctors in the hospital were wonderful. All the wounded men were great. I never heard any moaning or groaning or complaining during the 9 days I was in there. The second day I was in the hospital I asked the Red Cross if they could locate my mother's sisters. They lived near Paris and my mother had not heard from them since the beginning of the war. Later when I got home I found out that the Red Cross located them fast and got word home to my parents that they were all safe. Later, one of the aunts and a cousin hitch-hiked 100 miles to come and see me in the hospital, but I had left for the front two days before they got there. I buddied up with a ranger in the bed next to mine. He told me he had a glass eye. He lost his eye when he peeked around a building and a piece of shrapnel hit him in the eye. They did such a good job on his eye that he used to laugh at me because I couldn't tell which eye was the glass. The day before we were to go back to our outfits, a French girl took 12 of us on a tour of Dijon. We went in a bus to a high building. She said if we got separated to meet here at the bus at 5 pm. We all climbed to the top of the building and were looking the city over when my ranger buddy pointed to a bar at the bottom of the building. Needless to say, the two of us sneaked away from the rest and spent our day in the tavern. To our surprise, the bartender refused to take our money all day. At five o'clock we thanked him and went back to the bus. We were greeted by the French girl guide with the remark, where have you naughty boys been all day? We looked all over for you. While I was in the hospital, every day a nurse would take my arm and walk me around as I could not see. The second day when she was walking me, I heard a voice say, Hey, Tom Perrett! It's Al Dunham from Saugus. We had gone into the Army together and had been through basic training, etc. Even went overseas together. We sat in the train going through France together and were separated at the replacement depot. Al went to an infantry company. He told me he had been hit in the right leg by a machine gun bullet. He showed me the stitches. It was about six inches below the hip. He said he laid in the field until dark and crawled back. The hospital was well organized. They seemed to have placed everyone where the next person to you was in worse shape than you. One fellow I talked to said his father told him he had a hard head. He laughed and said his father was right. He had been hit by shrapnel in the forehead right between the eyes. He had a two-inch round gash two inches above the bridge of his nose and two of the most swollen black eyes I ever saw. Another fellow I spoke to got hit in the back of his helmet by a bullet. It went from the back of the helmet liner and his scalp to the front and then down, so he had 14 stitches on his scalp and two on the tip of his nose. The day I was leaving, I took a walk into the amputation ward. I will never forget the courage these fellows had. The nurses had the beds set up so that as you entered the ward, the first person you spoke to had only one limb missing, but as you walked further, they had two, then three – each bed got worse. I stopped to talk to each person and each time I got the same reply: Oh, I am o.k. – the next fellow on my right is worse. It went this way all the way down to the next to last bed. This fellow had lost both legs and both arms and one eye. When I talked to him, he said he was lucky, he could see the movies on the ceiling. He said the fellow next to him in the baby basket which was the last in line, could not even talk. With that I made a very quick exit. But I will never forget the brave front these men showed. My hat had to go off for these courageous men!! With that thought in mind, I went back to the front.

They took a bunch of us by truck from the hospital to rejoin our units. On the road we had a fighter plane dive down on us. Being on the end seat, I had my rifle pointed on him all the way down but as it had American markings on it, I did not want to shoot at it. Lucky for us our driver took a sharp

right off the road and the plane missed us. I think it was a captured American plane flown by a German. Later I found out that same day, an American plane strafed one of our tanks loaded with 12th Armored men riding on top of it. Duncan was hit in the stomach by a 50 cal. bullet and died. I am almost sure this was the same plane that dived on us. Today I am sorry I didn't shoot at it. It was so close I could not have missed it, and I had 8 armor-piercing bullets in my rifle. That night the truck dropped us off in a field with 100 other men waiting to join their outfits. This field was on a road than ran parallel to the autobahn. First thing I did next day was to dig a big hole and put rail ties over it with dirt for the roof covering. It had an L-shaped trench leading into it. It could hold four men and it did when bed check charley came around the next night. Bed check charley was a German plane that flew after dark and used to strafe any light he saw. The second night I was in this field, he strafed a light he saw half a mile from us. It turned out to be a field hospital. He killed a doctor, nurse, and a German soldier they were operating on. Next day four of us walked 5 miles up the road to see the 7 tanks that our outfit had knocked out two days ago. They were spaced roughly ½ mile apart. We got back after dark and the M.P. at the field gave us hell. He said the woods were still full of Germans that came out after dark. Next day I took a few guys with me into the woods looking for the Germans but we couldn't find any. I was taken to 12th Armored H.Q. by truck where I was told half my platoon was taken prisoners the day before and they wanted me to work with them for a while. They wanted to keep me alive so I could identify the men in my platoon if the Germans shot them. Besides, they didn't know where the rest of my company was. Captain said the battalion got mad and took off on a mad dash through Germany. The second time we moved H.Q. to just over the Danube River at the Dillingen bridge. It became the first armed unit to cross the Danube River by force in history. On May 8 the war in Germany ended. H.Q. was now in Ellwangen. The Captain said he would make me a corporal if I would stay in Headquarters and learn to type, but I told him I wanted to be returned to my old C. company, 66th A.I.B. I wanted to see my old buddies. C-66 was now billeted in Rosenberg which was roughly 3 miles outside Ellwangen. The next day I was returned to my old squad and again was the machine gunner. We made raids on towns looking for S.S. men and Gestapo men. We found a lot of them hiding in civilian clothes. We took over a large factory close by and kept them prisoners for war crimes trials. I was guarding these men when I got orders in July 1945 to report to LeHarve, France to ship back to U.S.A. on the ship Sea Porpoise. We were to go home for 30 days' leave then report to California to start a new armored division to invade Japan. We were two days from U.S.A. when they dropped the first H. Bomb. One day from U.S.A. New York when they dropped the second H. bomb. We landed in New York August 13th at 4 pm, and at 4:30 pm Japan surrendered. At 5 o'clock we unloaded to a great celebration. We were served milk and cookies at the landing. The girls were kissing us. What a day. They took us to a camp and gave us all a big steak and dinner. They sent us home next day for 30 days' leave. While I was home I got a telegram to extend my leave to 45 days, and then to report to Camp Swift near Austin, Texas to the Second Infantry Division. I was put in a 57mm recoilless rifle squad. They had two of these 57s in my squad. I was made squad leader with the rank of Acting Sergeant. We practiced marching every day and had weekend passes to Austin every weekend. We had night exercises in the woods. On one I was leading my squad through the woods at night when I fell off a small cliff and hurt my two knees. I ended up in the hospital when my left knee swelled up like a football. Tried to march in the Victory parade at Austin but they took me out of line when I started limping. Took me by ambulance to the hospital where they packed my leg in ice for a week. After that they shipped us by train to do Victory parades in

New York (city), then to San Francisco, Cal. This was our last Victory parade. They shipped us to Fort Lewis, Washington. While there they had a jail break in Alcatraz. I was told to get my squad in a waiting truck. They had our 57 recoilless rifle and ammo already in the truck but we were told to bring our rifles. When we got in the truck the motor was already running. They gave us ammo for our rifles and said my squad had been chosen to go in through a hole we were to blow with the 57 recoilless rifle and capture the convicts. Just as we were going to go, the first sergeant came running out and said the order was cancelled. The Marines were going to do it. We all cheered for the Marines. We had been told that the convicts had got into the armory and had all sorts of weapons. The next day the paper said the Marines fired one bazooka round and the convicts waved a white flag and threw out one pistol. That's all they had. So much for false information. A few weeks later, 25 June 1946, I was honorably discharged, thus ending my Army service, earning the Combat Infantry Badge, Bronze Star, Victory Medal, American Theater Service Medal, Army of Occupation Medal (Germany), European-African-Middle Eastern Service Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Two Battle Star (Rhineland and Central Europe), and two French Medals, de La Guerre 1939-1945 and La Victoire de Colmar. These two French medals were only authorized to wear under the U.S. medals on August 30, 1953.

This concludes my story.

Thomas T. Perrett, Machine Gunner

1st Squad, 1st Platoon, 12th Armored Division

Co. C, 66th A.I.B.