

## **LLOYD ENGLAND HALL**

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Along early in the spring they began to sending out classification, drafting the boys from all over the state. We began to get our notices then, along about the 1st of September. After we taken the examination, we began to get the calls from the 15th to the 19th of September to report to the local board at Mountain View [Arkansas]. And there was a pretty good bunch. There was forty-two I believe in the first call. The age ranged from about twenty-one years to twenty-two...wasn't very many past twenty-two years of age.

About the only transportation we had then was by foot. We had to walk, so we began to walking down to Mountain View the day before. We stayed all night at Mountain View, and the next day we was due to leave out and catch the train at Sylamore. We lined up in front [of] Lackey's store building, about the biggest building there. Then we had our picture made. We didn't have any transportation. We had one old T-Model car and there was three or four rode in it. I believe they had one Ford pickup and a Ford Touring car and a hack pulled by a team of mules and there was two or three rode with him. They had some hacks, buggies, two or three, but the most of them had to walk. But the ones that walked were mostly kept in front of the cars because the roads were so rough that [you] couldn't make over ten or fifteen miles a hour, if it made that much.

We got to Sylamore then and the river was awful low. We managed to get on the ferryboat but it didn't go far enough out. The apron didn't [go far enough], we had to wade the water. They'd herd us across, about twenty-five went across at a time. But we managed to get to Sylamore, to the depot, and we waited about thirty minutes for the troop train to come through. It was mostly loaded with draftees. There was a few regular soldiers on there. It was pretty well loaded from other counties, Baxter and Izard. We got to Batesville and picked up another bunch, thirty-five or forty, maybe fifty. We rode that train into Newport, and there was another bunch a waiting at Newport, three or four cars that had come in from the northeast part of the state, from Blytheville, Jonesboro and that country. After picking up that bunch then, well the train went on to Kensett [Arkansas] and there was another bunch a waiting. I believe there was three cars had come in on the Missouri and North Arkansas line.

By the time we got to Little Rock there was a quite a few. We [were] pretty well all night getting to Camp Pike. They caught the troop train...all of the boys that had got the call to report to, they called it Camp Pike then. [We] headed out about four or five miles from Little Rock and later on they probably called it Camp Robinson. And they (sic) was a lot of them didn't know what to do. It was just like, kinda like a bunch of cattle in a strange place (laughs).

The boys began to wonder where we were going to eat breakfast. The sergeant told them "We will make some kind of arrangement. We'll have breakfast. It might be late but we'll have breakfast." You take a bunch of men like that and it takes a lot of food to feed them. They finally called us. We went in there and they had scrambled eggs, a little bacon, plenty of coffee. The cook was a colored guy, so we had a pretty good breakfast.

The camp wasn't completed when the first call went into the camp. A lot didn't have the doors or winders [windows] in them. They had a roof on them, no doors or winders. But they was still a working on the barracks, some of them was pretty well

completed, a lot of them was still working on the barracks. There was a lot of people, a lot of boys in that call. You didn't (pause) didn't realize what it was all about. Maybe some of them didn't care, but we went in as replacement troops at Camp Pike, and they began to issue us army clothes, mess kits.... It wasn't organized into any one company. They began to place us in different companies. Some into infantry, some in the artillery and some in the machine gun battalion and different places.

So we put in about six or seven weeks basically. They called it Basic Training and a lot of the boys wasn't very happy about it! Some of them never was used to doing any work, and a lot of them from this county, they didn't mind it very much because they was used to work. But most of the city boys, they never done anything but go to school. They hadn't worked very much. They began to complain, to grumble about it. A lot of them didn't want to be pinned down, but you had guys talking to them, [they'd] explain "Now you, you in the Army now. You're in the Army, you got to do whatever we tell you, whatever the commander says." And some of the boys [weren't happy]. I remember one evening, there was several evenings we [would] come in from the drill field, there was where we was given drill and instructions. It was about a mile from camp. We'd come in and there was two or three boys that wasn't satisfied. Some of them never had stayed away from home all night. Two from Mountain View, farm boys, it was their first time they'd ever stayed away from home. It was a... They didn't seem to be enjoying it very much (laughter) cause they was out... They would tell them that you're in the Army. They wanted to know when they was going... Some of them wanted to know when they was going back home. Others would say when the war was over. It might be ten years. That wasn't helping along very much. They'd get to studying about it. They began to realize and all, that war was kindly serious, something to study about. I found out that you; they can't make a soldier out of just any mind or any boy. That was my first experience.

And one boy that I was raised up with from Timbo one evening he come in with a company that had begun to come in, well this boy...we heard somebody a squalling and taking on like they was a going to a funeral and he was a crying and taking on. We looked out to see who it was. They had to pass our barracks and go on up the next barracks. And this boy, he's a taking it pretty hard. He was a squalling and he wasn't a holding his gun up like you were supposed to. He had the rifle, with a big ole barrel on it and he was just a letting that go around most any way. Several boys said "What's a happening out there anyways?" We thought somebody got hurt. I said, "that's Bill Goodman from Timbo." I said "He's not used to this Army business." He'd been in there maybe a couple weeks, but anyway he's taking it pretty bad, pretty serious. He's just a squalling. They said they better send him home or he's going to disturb everybody in the whole camp. Anyway, he stayed around there with us a couple of weeks and they finally sent him home with some others. There's others in there that thought it was suicide.

Our lieutenant was from Texas. His name was Vest and he was awful easy going guy. And after we had been there a few days, took our shots, he said get ready to go out and drill. At the beginning we had only drilled a couple hours a day, taking basic training. And he thought that some of the dumbest boys he ever saw... He said "They're that way in Texas, Arkansas (inaudible)". We had two boys in there that lives in Calico Rock, its in this county, that couldn't keep step. He was all time after them because they couldn't keep step with the company. Dozier were their names, two brothers. And we'd

go out to drill. They would make you think of Ernie [Gomer] Pyle on TV. He was always out of step, well that's (laughs) that's the way these boys was.

We had to go out about a mile I guess, from the camps to the drill field. They had trouble with the Dozier boys they called them. One of them, Jim, was the youngest, the oldest, Lowell was the oldest then Jim. We'd be out drilling right face, or left face, or about face and everybody would turn right, right face or left face when they gave the orders. Well, this fella Dozier would turn right the reverse, he'd turn left face. He said "I just can't catch on." So the Lieutenant told me, said take him over across the railroad over there and drill him till noon and learn him about right and left and about face. I went with him over there and we was the only two on over across the railroad at that time. The next day they had several. Sometimes I would get sorry for him and he'd say, "Now, I can't get it." Well, I said "You can turn to the right?" "Yeah" but he said "Now, when it comes to about face," he says "I turn to the left or anyway." That was my job to train that fella Dozier right face or left face, about [face]. And it seemed like he'd try, he'd try his best. He says "I can't catch on!" Well, I'd tell him, I says, "Oh its easy!" I said "You, you can just turn, when they give about face or your can turn to the right and when they give a left, left face you can turn to the left. I don't think he ever did learn it. They transferred his brother. He couldn't keep step with the company. They put us where, they found out that we was on guard duty and that we had to pass in review and every man better be in step because if they didn't... they had to have generals and colonels all a watching. So this Dossier was out of step and when we got ready then to go on to guard duty on the post, well the Lieutenant come up and told Dozier, he said "Dozier you're out of step again!" He said "I don't think so." Well the Lieutenant said "Maybe not." Well that night they transferred him. They tried to put him in supply company. He was the only one in the company out of about two hundred and fifty that was out of step.

After they transferred him he'd come back over and visit the company. There was several boys there that he was raised up with from Stone County and he told them, he said "Now I'm a, I'm a learning now to drive a truck". They had him a driving a big truck. He said "The day before he drove the truck in by hisself"(sic). They always kept some instructor with him to show him how to drive the truck. And he said "I drove in by myself." He was telling me about it and I said "You're getting where you can drive?" and "Oh yeah!" he said. Well, the next day or two later they told him to drive the truck in and he had to make a turn, a short turn. He got to where their kitchen was [and] he run that truck in the kitchen (laughter). He tore a big hole in the kitchen. The next time he come over there he said "Never did no good." I said "What's the matter?" He said "I run into the kitchen" (audience laughs). Come to find out he couldn't drive a truck. Well, the last account I had, Dozier was still being transferred from one place to another. From one company to another. He said he couldn't keep his mind on his business.

We had another boy, he lived over about Flag, he was raised at Flag...a fellow named Bradshaw. He was slow about learning and the sergeant, he was drilling that company that he was in, he had him carrying a rock around every day because he couldn't learn. One day he came over there and was a talking to me about it and he said "Do any of your boys have to carry a rock?" It weighed about fifty or sixty pounds I guess. And I said, "No we don't. We just go out and drill so many hours." He said "That sergeant makes me carry a rock," and he showed me his shoulder and it was wore threadbare. Now I told

him, I said, "I wouldn't carry any rocks if I were you." I said "get two rocks, about good size throwing rocks, and when that sergeant comes out you tell him"...he'd always find Sam [and ask] 'Where's your rock?' "and you show him. Here's a rock and I'm going to use them!" Well he got...that sergeant, he got all confused and he reported him back to the company commander. He said "You're gonna have to do something with Sam." He said [company commander] "What's the matter with him?" He said [sergeant] "He brought two rocks." That ended all that, but they transferred Sam that night to another company.

We stayed around there, in Camp Pike. In the meantime I had the measles. We got up one morning and there was a guy there, he was broke out with the measles. He didn't sleep any that night. He just rolled and tumbled. He was sick and I told the other boys, I said "we'd get the measles because that guy had them in the last stages." It wasn't long until everything in there had the measles. Now, the hospital was full. We got over it in about a week. I stayed in the hospital about a week. Its when they sent us back to camp the doctor said "Now, you, you not supposed to do anything for at least two weeks." He told all of them the same. Before I got over the measles, well, they transferred the company to Louisiana, Camp Beauregard. A lot of the boys was still weak over having the measles. I was one of them. I hadn't been out of the hospital but a couple [or] three days. We (inaudible) along at Camp Beauregard, the hottest place in the United States. Well, down in Camp Beauregard, then we took up our quarters, living quarters, in tents, a squad in each tent. [We] had barracks [rather than] mess halls to eat in. We didn't have very much to eat at first. I remember we couldn't sleep every night because a boy was a hollering, "I want to eat!" We kindly (kind of) toughed it out till it got to where they kindly organized and they begin to feed pretty good.

I stayed there around Camp Beauregard that winter and the next summer then... It never got very cold down there. It come one snow while we was there. At first I was in the infantry. There was a lot of our boys in what they call the infantry. Well they made it up a bunch...our Lieutenant... A guy from Berryville, he come out and he wanted to pick his men out of the company, about two hundred and fifty in the company, and they told him to pick out a bunch out of the company. He said he wanted to pick his men out of Stone County, Stone [and] Searcy. He wanted big men if he could get them. [Of] Course they had some pretty big men. So he picked out his company. They was all good size men. Most of them weighed from one hundred and eighty to two hundred and twenty. They had to be about six foot tall. They had a few that was a little under the six feet tall. They called them a B gun section. There was fifty-two of us... and he picked out fifty-two men and they trained us with what they call a millimeter gun. They called it a 37 millimeter...was the smallest and they had another, it was 75 millimeter but we took the same training with a 37mm as they did with a 75. That was the gun that we used and it held up a couple of miles on the level. Well, I got in that section, Charley Rushing and Eb Hinesly and some of the other boys around here, we was in what they call the B gun section.

So we started in with the training and it was everyday. We trained so much everyday except Sundays. Sometimes we'd get Saturday afternoon off. Most time we train everyday in the week. And after [at] night then, we'd had to study the drill manual, General Orders, and we had to memorize all that stuff. And there was some of the boys that, who never could learn the General Orders. They was slow to learn it. Anyway, he

got fifty-two out of the company. Well, after we took that training, then they transferred us to what they call the Officer's Training Camp and a lot of the boys didn't pass on account of their feet a being flat. They put us on a table, we'd take a sandbag and put on our shoulders and they'd examine our feet to see if we had arches. If they didn't have arches they wouldn't take them. They turned a lot of the biggest boys we had down on account of flat feet.

Now the Lieutenant told us, said "now your gonna see the best soldier you ever looked at when your commander comes in." He was a captain but he was three-fourths Indian. He was from Oklahoma. He said "You'll see him cause he's gonna come in today." Well we was all in there waiting for him. He's the one give us instruction and he come in... he weighed about 240 pounds and was 6 feet 4. He was much a man! But he was reasonable. He'd talk just as kind to the boys and explain things. We'd go out to drill and [he'd] always forget something. He'd get the boys to go back and it was almost a mile back from the drill field, back to the barracks where we was staying. And he forgot his drill manual [one day]. The dust was about... where we was drilling in that sand, was five or six inches deep I guess, and they kept it stirred up all time. And this captain, he pointed... he'd always point to some man to go back and get certain things that he left. And he asked me one day if I... [he] said "you go back and get my drill manual in my office." I was dreading it cause it was almost 110 degrees in the shade, awful hot place. He said "better double time." Mostly he said double time. Well that doubling time meant to get up and run. Oh, you didn't have to run fast, just get up and move. So I went back and I was dreading going in to his headquarters. All that stayed in there was generals and majors and lieutenants. I knew I had to do something about it. I went to the door and they said "come in." And I told him what I come after and he got some kind of drill manual and handed me and I struck out back running. When I got up to where he was waiting for me... when I got up to there I handed him the book and he thanked me. [He] said "You made good time." Well the next [day] he'd pick on some other guy and he would send him out somewhere. He was just trying the boys out.

You had two in my company, one was Joe Ward, he was from this county, and J. T. Gammill. They was pretty well educated. Both of them had had college. I think Joe said he had maybe two years of college training and I guess Gammil completed college. But they didn't want to drill with the other boys. They wanted to get into Officers Training Camp. So they made their application to get into the training camp. They sent them then to some other place to take the training, well they both failed. After about six weeks training and they failed. So Joe said that "Education helps all right" but he said, "it takes more than an education to make a soldier." They had a guy in there by the name of Henderson. He was from Stone County. He was from over there at Calico Rock. Well he decided to go back to our old Officer Training Camp with them and they told him, said "You'll never make it." He only had about an eighth grade education. Well when they got... they took the test, took the examination, Henderson passed and Joe and Gammill failed. They failed a second time. Joseph, Joe told me, he said "that Henderson is smart." [He] said "No, he just gets in there and fights." He said "That's what it takes." So Henderson come out as a First Lieutenant.

We went ahead then in that officers training camp. We was supposed to be signed up for ninety days, but about the time the ninety days was up, in July, the whole division got the call to come overseas. Well, I'd done away with all this training. It didn't seem

to benefit so we got ready then to catch the troop train and left out. But first we went to New Orleans, Louisiana. Then we went on the coast of New Orleans to Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and on into Virginia. We was on the road about a week. We finally wound up at Newport News, Virginia. That's where the ship was waiting. That was another hot place up there. It was awful hot if I remember.

They give us orders to be down at the loading dock, they called it, at a certain time. And they [we] was a going down there...most all the boys was pretty well loaded with...they had blankets, extra shoes, but the band, our band, they had more. They had to carry their music instrument with all this other stuff and they had the pack on their back. There was a boy the name of Riley. He was little...a little Italian boy. He had some kind of horn, some kind of music instrument. Well, I looked around and he was just staggering around, about to fall out. And he said "I'm gone!" I reached back and got his music instrument. He kindly straightened up and he managed to get down to where we crossed over on the ship. He didn't fall out. He said "That saved my life!" He had more than he could carry and the heat... [was too much].

So we managed to get down there and we loaded on the ship and headed to...[France] At one time it was a ship that they'd haul livestock to England and different places. But they'd kind of overhauled it and made a passenger ship out of it. It was a big ship. I think it held about six or seven thousand soldiers. We begin to pull out going East. About the second or third day out our water played out. We didn't have any drinking water. Our water works went bad and they didn't have any water to make coffee with. But the man overseeing the ship, he said "We're working day and night (to) try and get things straightened out." In the meantime groceries, meat, beef and pork and chickens and stuff, it begin to spoil because the cooling system had went bad and the cooks was worrying about that. He said it would take us about eleven or twelve days before we reached France and we're going to run short of supplies. Well they managed to have enough to get by on. There was a lot of the meat we couldn't eat, it was tainted [because] of hot weather. Anyway, we landed in France... they got the waterworks all straightened out.

Then about the fifth day out we had to look out for submarines. They claimed it was the Germans [but] they didn't know exactly. Their submarines would come up and shoot into them ships and sink them. They'd shoot a hole about eighteen inches square in the side just under the water edge. Well the water would run in that and sink the ship. That's the way they would sink the ship. So we got about the fifth day out...One night it was foggy and kindly raining and there was guns stationed on the deck on the ship. There was two in front and two or three on the sides. The boys stayed out there all the time operating these guns in case they was attacked by the submarines.

Everybody got seasick. Then they's [there was] a storm. I was on deck because it was so hot you couldn't sleep down in there in the bottom of the ship. Everybody would get on deck, stay out there. They'd have to breathe. And so I was out there one night talking to a sailor. The sailor was on guard, he said... And they made, the boys had made cots down all over the deck where they could have room to spread a blanket. Most of them was asleep. Well, that sailor, he told me, we was running into a storm and it ... we got about four or five days (pauses)... but in a few minutes, well we hit that storm and I thought the ship was going to sink. It'd go sideways. Them boys then that was on the deck asleep when the storm hit, it blowed all them over, just over to one side. The next

morning everybody looked like they's (sic)... asleep... over a hundred blankets (inaudible) piled up and on one side of the ship on deck. And they couldn't find the way! It was dark, you couldn't turn, wadn't [wasn't] allowed to turn light on. You wadn't (sic) allowed to strike a match. Them boys then, they couldn't find, or hardly find their way back down in the body [of the] ship. Some of them lost their coats, shoes. It was, we thought it was a miserable time, and the next night then it was still.

The war had set in. They set in to shooting one night and they thought they'd located the submarine. It was about a half mile I guess, in front. Well they fired several shots at that, but it was something a floating but it wasn't a submarine. Well the ship turned around, went back and went a different route just in case it was a submarine. They began to fire their guns and everybody fell out. We had to fall out and get out on the deck on the ship and line up. Put our life preserver on in case the ship was torpedoed. They assigned each squad up to a life boat. They had boats tied on the side of the ship. It was kind of a scared outfit. A lot of the boys was scared terrible. But you couldn't do nothing about it. You just had to let it go at that.

Anyway, we managed. After about eleven days, we landed in France at Brest, France. But before we landed, some of them thought that was the only ship in the fleet but there was seven or eight. After you got out where the water wasn't so rough you could see other ships was loaded with troops.

We drove up into the harbor there and then into (inaudible) and that first night we stayed on the ship or slept on the ship. The next day then, all the boys unloaded and they was unloading while they [others] was unloading the ship. They had a bunch unloading off on the ground. The company that I was in, they would get that stuff and carry it back so they could let more stuff down with a hoist, and they'd carry it back out a way...the suitcases and trunks and everything. They finally got to unloading Army trucks [and] we didn't know they was on the ship but they was and they unloaded a bunch of them there. And [we] found two or three locomotives. They unloaded them over there. We thought there was a train there to get them back out of the way.

These boys was working on the ground unloading, moving this stuff where they could unload more. I was on guard. They put me on guard on the ship, not to let anyone in the ship or out, without a pass, because there was people going by and stealing stuff if they didn't keep a guard on them. They had a gate and I stood there at that gate. But these boys that was a working on the ground, carrying this stuff back... I could see them out there. There was about forty or fifty barrels of wine. They kept wine in wooden barrels [that] looked like our barrels. Well, them boys worked till they got kindly hungry and tired. One of them took a railroad spike and drove it in this barrel of wine, down about two thirds a [of the] way towards the bottom and they got to drinking that wine.

Well, that Lieutenant Lawrence, he was the one [in charge]. I thought, now they'll drink that till they all fall out. But Lieutenant Lawrence, he was in charge of the detail and he liked wine about as well as the other boys did. So the whole bunch [got drunk]. By four o'clock we was supposed to leave and go up to a camp three or four miles. They called it Napoleon Camp. It looked more like a prison camp to me. The barracks was nice, big long barracks but they had a wall around every building, eight feet high and had it filled full of glass. I supposed at one time it had been a prison camp. [The glass]

was to keep the prisoners from climbing over the wall. The rocks was mossed over it was so old. They called it Napoleon Camp.<sup>1</sup>

We stayed there a few days and they finally bailed us out to go in the central part of France. We was west of the city they called...I can't remember the name of the town, but we could see the city from where we was located. On a dark night you could see the lights of artillery [and] signal lights. They'd send up signal lights down on the front.

We stayed there at this place till sometime in October. So we caught the train then, on up next to the Argonne Forest. We got up there then. Why, you could hear the guns in most ever direction! I think they said the line between the Americans and French and Germans was about a hundred and seventy mile from the south back northeast. That's where the main part of the fighting was going on. We went right in, then they had the company...I don't know, there was several thousand, and the company sent us to the [front]. [We] was called replacement troops. There was a lieutenant, he was in charge of the detail. He was in front and further back there was another officer. We traveled all night. About 4 o'clock, I guess, we run into some MP's that was on guard up there. I was in the 1st squad and I noticed [we were being shot at]. I thought maybe they was shooting at us. They [Germans]was shooting at us from an airplane [with] a machine gun.

Well, the MP's come out and wouldn't let us strike a match or light a cigarette, but some of the boys would. They'd smoke a cigarette [even] if they'd a knowed they was a going to get shot. This MP come out and said, "Whose in charge of this detail?" This lieutenant said, "I am." Well he said, "You're gonna have every one of your boys killed!" He said they'd been a shooting at that company for five or six hours. And that lieutenant, he didn't know [not to let his men smoke]. He was a new man as well as the rest of us. And he [MP] said, "If they ever get the range they'll kill everyone of them!" and we was in company formation. He said, "You scatter these boys out. A squad here and a squad there before they all get killed!" That lieutenant, it scared [him]. He told us "scatter out!" That plane would circle and he come back and you could hear the machine gun and see the fire but they was shooting over us. And he [MP] said, "A lot of the boys are getting killed up here."

Well it come daylight [and] I thought to myself now we'll have good coffee and pretty good breakfast. But we didn't have. We didn't get any water to make coffee with. They'd drop them bumbs [bombs] and gas. Some of them had gas in them and they had poured all the water up. We had a canteen full, [which] held about a quart, to drink on along.

I remember very well we had a guy from Camden. A big tall boy. His name was Lonnie English. He'd never saw a [dead body] and he was a looking around as it come daylight and there was a couple a boys had been killed the day before. One of them had fell and lodged in some grapevines. He had a grapevine around under his arm and he was almost standing up. So English said, "They shoot us down so quickly they don't got time to fall." And he pointed out that guy and he looked like he still had his rifle in his hand. But his rifle, the butt was against the ground, leaning up against some bushes or grapevine. It was pretty bad now. There was a bunch of them...lots of boys killed there.

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<sup>1</sup> Perry may have been referring to the old drill ground of Napoleon, which was used as a field for final training for the reinforcements for the front line.

One that I remember, he was a young looking man about twenty one years old. About daylight, [we were] fixing to make some coffee, if we could find any water. They didn't haul water in there in cream cans and barrels [with] a hole in the middle. But this boy, he'd got shot the day before or a bomb had exploded close by his feet and had knocked most of the flesh off both legs. They sent the Red Cross boys out there to pick these boys up. Well, they left this boy. They thought he was dead, bled to death, and they left him. The next morning a lieutenant come up there and he asked the boy [Red Cross] if they'd brought this boy in. They said no. Well he give them a bawling out. He said, "You go and get this boy and bring him in to me!" They had what they call a first aid tent. They went out and got this boy on a stretcher and carried him in. I guess he was a hundred yards away from where we were at. They carried him in and he was still living. They took him in this first aid tent and kindly dressed him up. He had more nerve, he told them to give him a cigarette and talked. He said it was kind of rough last night. It wasn't hardly freezing cold but it was close to it I guess. He stayed all day, the day before, out there on the ground...laid on the wet ground. The ground was wet and that night [too]and was still alive the next morning. They took him in there and kindly dressed him up a little, then they sent him to the base hospital. He said he'd get well. He couldn't move his leg.

The boys that we relieved [were in] the 32nd Division. There was eleven in the company that I went in. Eleven left living out of about two hundred and fifty, but there was eleven still in there. There was some few in the hospital that had been wounded, but there wasn't very many left in the company, Company I. I went into Company I and there was oh...

Some of the companies [had been up there] twenty [days] some thirty. Well, they'd [Company I] been up there for twenty-nine. I think one of the boys told me he'd been up there twenty-nine days on the front.

They was eat up with lice. One guy said, "I had not washed my hands or face," he said, "in a month." Some of the uniforms had blood all over them, but they was still a going. One guy, he was setting over in the sun and I went over and talked to him. He said, "My clothes are dirty," and he was putting his shoes on. He said it was the first time his shoes had been off in, I believe he said twenty-nine days, twenty-eight or twenty-nine days. They'd been up there on the front and hadn't been relieved. They didn't have the men to relieve them. I told him, I said "I've got five or six pair of socks." He said he'd be glad to get them. Well I let him have three or four pair of socks and some sweat shirts. I had some extra sweatshirts.

He said the cooties...they called them cooties. [They] was the little gray lice and their clothes was full [of lice]. They mostly caught them in these dugouts where they [slept]. [They] slept anywhere where they could keep warm. He said, "If I just had a change of clothes I'd be all right." Well, in a few days they finally sent them some clothes in there. [They] was eat up with lice.

He said a man gets up there where he don't care whether he's dead or alive. He said we didn't have anything to eat except hardtacks and a little corn beef hash [that] they had in the cans. That's about all we had to eat. (Inaudible) didn't want anything to eat.

They took it pretty good, some of them. There was, I believe, about sixty people [dead] where our pup tent was and they looked like he'd laid there for a week. He was on the stretcher, the canvas stretcher with handles down them. We carried the dead boys out

[on them] and the wounded ones. Some of them old regulars, I didn't think it sounded very good, they called them [men on stretchers] quitters. They was talking to this dead boy, they said, "Fritz, you better get up! Your country needs you." And we slept there several nights. They finally come in and gathered up the bodies.

And the war would have went on for years, but General Pershing [took over] about that time. General Pershing [was] from Missouri, took over command. At first you had General Foch from France and another general, he was from Great Britain, he was from England. They was running the whole show. Well, they decided they was a going to put Pershing in there and he told them, he said...now he when he went and took command, he said "There's going to be a change!" He said this war can't go on forever, but he said we are a going to make a change. Well he did! About the time we got up on the front, they began to move in the artillery. [It is] what they call the field artillery and coast artillery. While we was there they set this artillery up. Some of the guns would be ten or twelve steps apart and some of [them] fifteen or twenty steps apart. All those guns was elevated back east to where the Germans was dug in. They had trenches and barb wire entanglements.

Pershing, about the third or fourth night after we got up on the Argonne Forest, they hollered, "Everybody fall out!" We couldn't sleep because it was just like here, there, just like it was a coming a bad storm in this country. Just flash, flash and the guns, the sound of them was like thunder.

Well, when Pershing got all the guns placed and enough ammunition to last seventy-two hours, they told us that night...they said now they [were] gonna start a seventy-two hour barrage and said be on the alert. We might have to move, you can't tell what's a going to happen. But he said it'd begin about ten or eleven o'clock. That night it was foggy. You couldn't see and you couldn't strike a match [or] they'd bomb you.

So this started in a shooting, eleven o'clock and the next morning it was the same old thing. All that day and the next the same thing. It kept on going two or three days and nights. Finally it ceased. There wasn't nobody to shoot at. They'd just drop a bumb here and one there and then they'd raise their sights... clean, killing everything and what they didn't kill they was a wounding. But that night while they was beginning to shoot, I was a sleeping with a boy they called Wallace. He was from Big Flat and he said it was time to smoke a cigarette. Well, I said "You'd better leave it off!" I said... Them planes you can hear them planes all the time. Well he got a blanket and doubled it and got down on his hands and knees and spread that blanket over him where they couldn't see the light and he smoked a cigarette. He was just a puffing and coughing and inhaling all that smoke. I told him "That'll kill you." He said "I just got to smoke one. [He] said "I was nervous and I can't stand [it].

Well a short time after he smoked this cigarette, old Major Martin, he was about half a mile south, staying in a dugout. Well he walked out and some kind of horn, he hollered through "I said lights out! Plane up!" Some of them had little fires built up out of dead sticks and leaves, some of them leaves. The boys got back at him. They said "Who is a doing this?" Well, he hollered three times that there was a plane up and lights out. He hadn't more than got back, about two minutes after he got back in the dugout, there was a plane come over and he dropped a bomb right square...we thought it hit right at...But he went on over and dropped another bomb. The boys begin to move around. It hit the... they called it a picket line. They had a big line down there and they had three or

four hundred head of horses tied up on that line. Well this bomb hit in the center of the horses. [It] killed nineteen, wounded thirty-five or forty but it killed nineteen.

They hollered fall in. The officers had everybody fall in. Said they was a going to bomb us out. Over next to the east where the horses was tied up they had a bread dump. They had carloads of bread there, French bread. Loaves, some of them, loaves to be thirty inches long. They was hauling bread out there on a narrow gauge railroad. There was a narrow gauge railroad come up there to that dump. [Then it would] turn around and go back down. That was the end of the line. We looked that bread over and there was a pile as half as big as this house, piled up high. I knew he dropped a bomb on that bread. It was about fifty yards I guess, from where we was sleeping. The next morning we went down there and there wasn't no bread there hardly. It was scattered around for a quarter mile in ever direction. That was about all we had to eat was that bread [and] hardtacks. We had plenty of hardtacks, but the hardtacks that we carried in our reserve rations looked a whole lot like crackers. They was made lot like a cracker but they didn't have any salt in them. It was just flour and water. But we'd eat the French hardtacks. It was made something like these hot rolls that you buy now in the grocery store but they were hard to eat. Some of the boys would throw them against trees and they'd bounce like a baseball (audience laughs) and one old boy told me, "You don't know how to handle these hardtacks." He said "You get a cup of coffee and let one soak over night and said it was pretty good eating. (audience laughs) (inaudible) He said that's the only way you could eat them. The boys sat around and chew on one for a hour and maybe he'd get that hole in it. (audience laughs) You wasn't able to eat them, but we had plenty of hardtacks, but it was a miserable time.

A lot of people wonder why this is so... We have these wars and why we always become involved in these wars. Its not for us to understand. I remember Woodrow Wilson, he was the president then and he said [if] the people come out against these wars as much as we favor them, he said we'd be lots better off. He claimed that the winner's always the loser, financially. Well the United States still owes a big debt over World War I which was fought fifty-seven, [or fifty] eight years ago. We didn't gain anything and Germany didn't gain anything, just a massacre. Bloodthirsty people likes to see people kill, but I don't go for it. There's too much innocent blood shed. And as long as any nation prepares for war, its like I told them about these hydrogen bomb and atomic bombs, somebody's gonna use them! If the United States don't use them they'll sell them to some other nation and they'll use them. Probably use them against our own people. But its just so ordered for it to be worked out this a way. People slaughter people, wound people... Even peaceful nations... I'm opposed to war and people that run for office... I'm opposed to war but that don't make it so. That's what Woodrow Wilson... he was elected on that plan, on in favor of peace and prosperity. Well six months after he was elected we was a making off to Germany, and getting ready for... to fight somebody or kill somebody or get killed.

I used to wonder when I was a young man, why? Why is it that people want to go out and kill people or get killed? Why is it necessary? Anyway, it happened and still a happening. We still having (inaudible phrase). We may not have any boys down there, but we always become involved. United States pitch in their nickel and say... well... or their certain grievance, we're supposed to do so and so, but I can't see that it helps to protect these people according to the histories. We've always had war somewhere in

these European countries, and Asia, and Chiny [China] and everywheres else, and it just kinda throwed a hardship on the people in the United States to pay taxes and try to protect these other nations.

When it wound up, Germany was the best friend that we had. You take all [the] boys that put in time over there, they'll tell you that the French people are overbearing! Hard to get along with, and the British is about as bad. British is kindly cowardly. I remember when we landed up on the front, the front lines, there was a British, a company of British soldiers come right in behind us. Well when they began to bumb the section where we was at these British left out that night. Somebody come in and said "where's the British soldiers?" There was a MP on a motorcycle, he said "they [are] about three miles back west and still a traveling." (laughter) He said they's (sic) afraid they'd get killed. Well, the Americans didn't think about leaving out. We just stayed where we was at and done the best we could and toughed it out.

It was...And they talked about boys, the bodies they sent back here, and I told them "Now, you don't know if its your boy or somebody else's boy." They said "Why?" Well, I said "I saw them bring them. It was about a quarter of a mile from where we was stationed. They (sic) was a field. It was about a acre wide but it was four or five acres long. And it laid in a valley running east and west. Up on the hill above this field was a German soldier up in a tree with a machine gun. He had a kind of tree house made. And he was up there and ever boy that crossed that field, he killed him. And they finally located him and they notified the artillery, but he done killed, it was a hundred or more, we counted. And they notified the artillery and they shot in a direct shot, and the others was all gone but he was still up there. The others had all retreated and this guy, he [was] still up there operating that machine gun. And we went up there to see about where they had shot. It tore the house down, had a kind of a little old cut of a thing way up high in a tree. And that artillery...and all that was left of him, one of his legs hanging over a limb. It still had his boots on, but that's all you could see of that German that operated that machine gun. But he'd been operating that there for, I don't know how many days because on the ground where he was shooting, there was a pile of, bandoleer they call them, that held cartridges went in the machine gun, bandoleer, there was just a big pile of them. They'd go through that machine gun and fall out on the ground and he'd put another one in there. They shot four or five hundred times a minute, just a blaze of fire. So we went down the next day then, detail come through with a bulldozer that was a burying them boys, and they dug a trench up through that field. It was about three or four feet deep. They took the bodies off in there and then took the bulldozer and throwed dirt over them. But they took identification card, some of them had identification and some of them didn't have because they... after they was shot down, why...They just stuck up a little cross of, at the foot of each of these graves. Well, I said "Now, they can't tell whose body they are in there". There's a hundred buried in one grave and there was a...[Of] course if the parents wanted the body shipped back to the United States they'd go and get a body, someone, somebody's body. They never knew exactly who it was. Of course, if a person died in the hospital they'd, it'd be easy to identify them with a, dog tags they called them. He wore around his neck, but they (sic) was some of them, there wasn't much left. If they got a direct hit with a artillery shell, wasn't nothing left but...

We had one guy there, he was from Ohio and they gave us orders, said "You, you boys watch out for gas", tear gas and mustard gas, differerent kinds of gas. So we went out

to where they [there] was a building, they kept this gas stored in there and out in front they had a loading dock, a porch all the way across in front of the building. They'd back the trucks up there and load this gas in it. And this guy was from Ohio, Beedigs (?spelling) was his name, and he seemed to know more than the rest of the boys. I told him, I said "I'm not..." I didn't get around very close to the porch, you could smell the gas, but it wasn't (sic) very strong. He said "I'm not afraid of it!" He got on that porch and he danced clear across to the other end and turned and danced back and he started sneezing! He began to inhale that gas. That night we went back up to the camps to eat supper and he was still sneezing. Well, he couldn't eat his supper. He kept that up all night and the next day they took him down to the first aid... He was sick for the longest over there inhaling that gas. It would ...and some of the boys had to take one guy from Tennessee, he had... END OF TAPE

## SECOND TAPE

John Perry: Anybody want to ask any questions? I've kinda neglected that.

Phillip R. Rushing: Any of you have any questions you'd like to ask him? Think of anything you'd like to...

Student: What kind of gun did you carry? Machine gun or just a rifle?

John Perry: We carried, most of the boys carried a 45 Colt revolver. You could carry them and all the boys had them and all the boys in the infantry carried a rifle. And now some of them, the machine gun section, they carried machine guns. And another outfit, they had a kind of an automatic rifle they called it a "Sho- Sho."<sup>2</sup> It was made like a rifle but it was fired automatically. It shot about six or seven times, by clip. You put the clip in from underneath. But most of the bunch I was with, we carried 45 Colts, pistol.

Phillip R. Rushing: Anybody else have any questions? What, how deep and big were the trenches? How wide and deep?

John Perry: Well they were, they were deeper than your head. They were six feet, six and a half and some of them would be a little bit shallower than that because it'd get muddy in there and they put plank in there to stand on and that would be (inaudible) a little closer to the top.

The trenches, they didn't make them straight. I heard some of the boys was telling about being in a German trench and said they was just down there hunting souvenirs. And they was walking through this trench and they'd go a little ways and then they'd have an elbow that turned back this way and so on, in and turn back...And they run into some German soldiers down there. They weren't (sic) armed. And said they run right into them in this trench. They (sic) was a... but... But these trenches weren't much protection. It was a ... You could hardly stay in there. They mostly used what they call fox holes, shell holes. They had what they called a fox hole, about big enough for one man. He'd dig it out himself (sic) and get in there.

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<sup>2</sup> The Chauchat, pronounced "Sho-sho" by the Doughboys, was one of the most manufactured automatic weapons of WWI. Many American soldiers were issued these French machine guns which, according to many, was not a very dependable weapon. However, it was the world's first successful squad automatic rifle.

I was talking with one boy, he was telling about a captain, a lieutenant a getting killed. He said "Now some folks thinks that these officers is killed by the enemy." But he said "That's not so!" He was from Michigan. He was a corporal. He said "I saw two men killed," he said "a captain and lieutenant." He said they was trying to advance over a river and they (sic) was a, the Germans was a shelling them. And he said this captain just raised up in front of him and somebody shot him in the back, some of his own men. He said "He fell and rolled off in the edge of the water and about the time he," he said "just a few minutes later there was a lieutenant took command, ." and said ""somebody shot him." He said he could hear the guy, the shooting was in back of him. He said this lieutenant fell and he said he could see (inaudible) and said he shot him in the back. Well, there was a lot of these officers that was killed by their own people, own soldiers. We found that out before we ever went up to the front. I know the officers that was in charge of my company, he said "Now, if we've got any misunderstanding, any settlement to make" he said "lets come to some kind of understanding before we go to the front." He said " There's lots of them officers getting killed up there by their own men, (inaudible) officers. Maybe if he'd bawled some guy out or give him a cussing, he'd say "I'll see you up on the firing line!" And he wouldn't forget it! And they killed a lot of these I guess there was about as many officers killed by their own men as the enemy killed. And then they got to transferring the, our lieutenants, the second lieutenant and captain. They transferred them to another company, another Division and they'd send new men in, in charge of our company. But it all goes with these wars.

Phillip R. Rushing: Anybody else have any questions? I guess Mr. Perry may be getting sorta tired. We've been in here about an hour and if you don't have anymore questions...

END OF TAPE 2

## THE MAKING OF A SOLDIER AT CAMP PIKE

### *The World War I Letters of Private Hobart Wilson*

The following letters were written by Thomas Hobart Wilson of Sapulpa, Oklahoma to his parents while stationed at Camp Pike for Infantry Basic Training during the latter part of 1918. Hobart, as he was called, was born in Hillsboro, Texas on August 15, 1896. Hobart was the second child born being preceded by J. Mead Wilson four years earlier.

The Wilson's lived in Denison in 1900 where the father, Thomas A. Wilson, was chief railroad dispatcher for the "Frisco" RR. By 1910 they had moved to Sapulpa where Hobart's uncle, C. B. Cox, his mother's brother, had opened the first Ford dealership. Hobart's father liked the area so well he opened a grocery and market on East Dewey. Mr. Wilson is credited with bringing the first milk cattle into Creek County, a herd of Holsteins, to allow him to provide fresh dairy products along with other fresh goods. Later Mr. Wilson sold that business and bought the largest market in the area called King's Kash Konzern. During an earlier interview on Sapulpa, Hobart stated "I was raised up in a grocery store." He then named about six or seven "cat houses." "The reason I know those places so well is because I delivered groceries, I've been up in 'em..."

In later years, Hobart, as well as Mead, would operate cafeterias in Sapulpa and Tulsa. Throughout his life Hobart was also employed at the State Capitol in Oklahoma City, the Tax Commission in Tulsa, Douglas Aircraft Company and eventually opened a restaurant in Tulsa after 1965. Hobart Wilson died on June 22, 1983

The following letters describes life at Camp Pike and all that Hobart experienced. At first he seems not to have particularly cared for military service but by the time training was over, Hobart hoped to get overseas and into the action. The war would end while he evidently was enroute to embark at some eastern seaport. The delay in being sent overseas was caused by the need for qualified instructors. Hobart progressed well and was promoted to corporal and tasked with helping to train the new recruits before they were sent to Europe. The letters give a glimpse into what the soldiers experienced day to day at Camp Pike, as well as Hobart's concern for his parents and events affecting their lives in Oklahoma.

The spellings and grammar are as Hobart wrote in his original letters. Some footnotes have been added to assist in explanations when needed.

Post card distributed by the canteen service The American Red Cross of Van Buren,  
Arkansas  
Mrs. T. A. Wilson  
Sapulpa, Okla

Am here at 1130 will be there about 8 am  
Will write later  
Hobart

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Postcard from YMCA  
 Mr. T. A. Wilson, Sapulpa, Okla  
 August 30-18  
 Thos H. Wilson  
 (on side of card: Write me at Casual Co 36 162 Depot Brigade)

Dear Mama & Papa

Sorry I did not get to be with you more before I left. We left about 430 arrived at Claremore about 700 PM. Went from there on the Iron Mountain to camp. Arrived here about 6 this am. Arrived at Camp at 9am. About 2 thousand came in this am.<sup>3</sup> This is a real nice place. Think I will get in the office work. Will write tomorrow and tell you where to write to me. Hobart

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Post card "Forget me not" a parting message  
 Mrs. T. A. Wilson  
 Sapulpa, Okla

Sept 2-18

Dear Mama.

Have been real busy. We have had 5 examinations but are still in quarantine and will be for 14 days more. We don't get much to eat. Has been awful dusty and dirty today. We sleep out in the open and eat out in the open. Will get my uniform tomorrow. Have not heard from you.

(side of the card) 36 Casual Co. Camp Pike, Little Rock, Ark.

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<sup>3</sup> According to the Camp Pike Newspaper of Sept 10, 1918 vol. 1, no. 49, Oklahoma had sent 6,673 men out of the 13,574 that arrived in the month of August.

Letter dated Sept 3-18 to Mr. T.A.Wilson, Sapulpa, Okla.

Top of the letter states "send me a small box of jelly & fruit & sugar & pepper & salt shaker."

Sept 3-18

Dear Papa & Mama

Recd your letter about noon today. Was sure glad to hear from you. Sorry your two help quit you. I don't think you lost much when them two bums quit. I told you all the time. Where did they get enough money to take any place over. You ought to knock the devil out of them both if they ever come in the store again. They did not quit while I was there. Thought you might have to quit business if they were not there. Don't hire any help any more where one knows the other. Don't let anyone but yourself run the business. Why don't you do away with that petty cash business. I guess they thought they had something on you when they quit. Watch the cash yourself and don't trust nobody with it. Wish I was there now. I could go up there and whip both of them for the way they done.<sup>4</sup> How is the farm & when are you going to sell your stock. How is Mead and his business.<sup>5</sup> You ought to go down there every time you can. If you could sell that business and Mead could come up there and help you everything would go fine. Where is Lonnie now. I want to write to him.<sup>6</sup> Who is your new meat cutter and how do you like him. Who did you hire in your fine book keepers place. Anyone ought to be better than that Irish louse. Don't let that gang of thieves come in your store again. I have not got my uniform yet expect to get it tomorrow. Most all of the boys got theirs today but a few of us were held for observation. I was held on account of my eyes. I will pass all right. We had a fine rain this morning. We are sleeping out of doors in some mule sheds, but as soon as we get out of quarantine we will get to sleep in the barracks. We have a cot, a straw mattress and two wool blankets. We have three meals a day but they are not much. For dinner today we had some lima beans, bread, meat, and boiled potatoes, and water. For breakfast we always have coffee. Don't have real butter or any fancy stuff. Have not had much to do the last three days. Sunday we had a general examination for physical. They examined our legs, arms, head, throat, lungs, and everything. This is a real nice place up on a hill it is not so hot here but awful dusty. This camp occupies 10,000 acres. About 8,000 men coming here tomorrow. This camp is a infantry camp nothing else. We made out our insurance I took 10,000 dollars, 5,000 for you and 5,000 for mama. It cost 6.50 a month. In case you die before mama it all goes to her. They do not keep men here long it is just a replacement camp. They give your uniform and train you a few weeks and then send you to some permanent places. Harvey and I are together. There is several Sapulpa fellows here. We get up at 5 a.m. eat at 6:00 and to bed at 9, with the lights out. There is about 275 men in our Co. They shipped in about

<sup>4</sup> Sapulpa City Directory 1920. Thomas A. Wilson, Cpl Wilson's father, ran a grocery in Sapulpa, Oklahoma.

<sup>5</sup> 1900 U.S. Census Grayson County, Texas. The Wilson family lived in Dennison on Sears St. where Thomas A. was chief dispatcher for the railroad. J. Mead Wilson was born August 1892 in Missouri, the oldest child of Thomas and Anna Wilson and brother of Cpl T. Hobart Wilson.

<sup>6</sup> 1910 U.S. Census, Creek County, Indian Territory (Oklahoma). Lonny Shoemaker, born 1890 in Missouri. Lonny was a border with the Wilson's as early as 1910.

1500 Mexicans here from New Mexico. There are also about 1000 Negro soldiers here. Our mess kit consist of a tin pan to eat out of and knife, fork, & spoon. We are getting ready to eat supper now so will close. Tell all the folks hello and grandpa too<sup>7</sup>. Write more next time. We have to take a bath everyday and shave everyday. Haircut every week. Wish I could come back home but I can't. The boys say it is awful hard to get a furlough. Answer soon and remember what I told you.

Sept 7-18

Dear Papa & Mama

Recd your letter yesterday. Was glad to hear but you did not send much news. It has been raining here most everyday and has been awful cool. We have not had much to do the last few days but to rest. It gets awful tiresome when you have to stay in quarantine. We are not allowed to leave this place where we are. Can't even go any place in the camp. We had a real good breakfast this morn, had oatmeal & milk, hash & some scrambled egg & cantaloupe. There are a few Sapulpa boys left with us yet. Run out of ink so will have to use the pencil. Will not get out of this place until next Thursday and maybe not then. Have you been having plenty of rain there.



It has been mighty cool here at nights. Only have two blankets to sleep on. One on top of the mattress and one for cover. I slept with my clothes on last night. Think I will get in doing clerk work or else in the grocery part. This camp here is all infantry. It is just a replacement camp where they bring you in give you the shots and uniform then drill you for a while and send you some place else. There is a lot of boys coming in here everyday, and a bunch going out. Have not heard from Mead yet. How is everything going at the store. How is papas health is he feeling all right. Why don't he write to me. Have been vaccinated and I think it is taking, my arm is real sore. Wish I was home today instead of down here but it can't be helped. Will close hoping to hear soon.

Hobart

<sup>7</sup> 1910 U.S. Census, Creek County, Thomas Wilson age 60 born in Oklahoma was the grandfather of Thomas Hobart Wilson.

Sept 14-18

Dear Papa

Recd your letter and was sure glad to hear from you. Have not been very busy this week. They have drilled us a little but not much. We go up and do work at different places about every day. One day we moved big rocks all afternoon, yesterday we moved some wagons and stacked lumber. We are still in the same place we were but are out of quarantine. Got our third and last shot in the back this afternoon. Will not have to take any more shots.

They have transferred all the men out of our company but about eighty. They send them over to some training battalion or some other company. Send a few to one training place & some to the others. I have not been doing anything particular yet but had a another test the other day. I suppose I made good I don't know. A man don't know anything in the Army. We are liable to be called out any time in the day. We have reveille at 6 in the morning that consists of a roll call and stand attention and retreat at 5 pm in the evening and roll call also. This is an awful dusty place on a little hill every time the wind blows we get all the dust. You can't keep clean. Our beds are outside and clothes also where they get all the dust. I sent my old clothes home today by parcel post. The cuff buttons and collar buttons are in my shirt. Take them out and use them because they are no good to me now. Have the rest washed and put away. We don't get so awful much to eat. The Canteen is right close I go down there and buy candy and soda pop. Get hungry at times. This army life is not what it is cracked up to be. It is sure a hard life, but alright for one that don't care. I hope you get the highest possible price out of your cattle and everything else. You are a busy man now with all that to look after. I think it is time you are sending Donald home he is an additional worry to you. Would sure see that CB pays his house bill because he owes it all if you owed him you would pay it.

How is the Jack and John store running are they doing any business and when did them two tramps get the money to open a store. Did Jack steal any of your money or do you know. Why don't you go back to the old way of keeping books. Watch your money and help and didn't trust them to much. Watch the delivery boy also. Wish I was going home tonight it gets lonesome at times when you know you can't go no place. The shoes they issued us both pairs are work shoes and about two sizes too big. I will have to buy me a pair of dress shoes if I get any. The underwear is two piece suits. I don't like them and am going to wear BOR. The pants they gave me are a little too big. Had to buy a pair of leggins. I think it is a shame a fellow has to buy his shoes when he is working for Uncle Sam. We have a good lieutenant. The boys that were transferred from here have their guns and are drilling hard every day.



Don't know much more to write so will close. See that they send that paper to me have not recd any yet. Send me a little more money next week I am a little short. If you send it in a letter send it registered then I could be sure and get it. Tell grandpa and all hello.

Your son  
Hobart.

Write more if you get time I like to hear from you. How is the club doing

---

Sunday 22  
700pm

Dear Mama & Papa

Recd your cake today but no letter. Would like to hear from you. Heard all about C B shooting J H Stroup.<sup>8</sup> Was too bad but I know something like that was coming some day because he was too high tempered.<sup>9</sup> Am out of money but am getting along ok. Like this life better every day but would like to be home better. Was examined again today will be transferred tomorrow morning to the 3<sup>rd</sup> training battalion.

I suppose we will get our rifles as soon as we get there. Some of the boys that came here with us have got there orders that they will leave some time next week for Camp Dix, New Jersey. I don't expect I will be here much longer than three weeks. They are training the boys pretty fast and sending them across as soon as they can of the 250 men in the company when we came here about 35 men is all that is left here. A man that has got a trade is just out of luck because they put you where they want you. I suppose I am a class a man I don't know for sure. The men are leaving here mighty fast. I saw two train loads leave here Saturday. They were 13 coaches long too and full up. They were going to Camp Dix. Over 30,000 men have left here in the last two weeks. A large number leave here tomorrow. We drilled a little today all went to church this am then had a service this afternoon. How is papa feeling. Hope he is in the best of health. Would like to hear from him a little more often. I like to read his letters. I know he does not have much time but he can take a little time at night. Is grandpa still with you. How is everything at the store. Do not send me any more mail to this CO or place. Will write you again in next day or so and tell you where to send it too. Hoping to hear soon will close.

Your son  
Hobart

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<sup>8</sup>The Sapulpa Herald, September 17, 1918. "As the result of a quarrel following a trivial collision with their automobiles at a point just south of the streetcar barns on South Main early last night, C. B. Cox, prominent auto dealer and man of affairs, shot and mortally wounded John H. Stroup, who until recently ran a grocery store at 319 E. Dewey. Stroup died in the Tulsa hospital at 3 a.m. this morning while emerging from anesthetic."

9-25-1918

8-PM.

Dear Papa and Mama



Moved to my new home in the barracks Monday afternoon. There was 40 of us transferred at the same time. I am now with CO K 3<sup>rd</sup> training regiment. Was issued our guns, cartridge belts and haver packs the same night. The cartridge belts hold 100 shells, 10 shells to the pack, also have our bayonets. I am acting corporal going to the non commissioned officers school every afternoon from 1 till 230. I like it fine but it is mighty hard work drilling with the guns. Was out drilling every day since I got my rifle. We are now under quarantine and cannot leave the barracks except to go out on the drill ground. They call it Spanish influenza. I sent you a telegram last night. We are sleeping now in the barracks now up stairs. Have a regular mess hall to eat in I think our Co will go out to the rifle range one day this week. It is about 5 miles out and same back. Will have to send suit case home are not allowed to keep them here. We can't keep anything except socks, underwear, and toilet

articles and we put them in our barrack bag. Am sending all of the letters that you folks wrote back because I have no place to keep them.

We have to drill from 7 till 1130 and from one till 530. Stand retreat with our rifles at 6pm. A soldier don't get much time to write because he has to wash his own clothes, shave everyday, keep his rifle clean, take a bath everyday, take your blankets outside every morning and on top of that stand inspection on Saturday. Have not been to Little Rock since I have been here. Don't come down here now for I could not see you because the whole comp is under quarantine for 7 days. Why don't you write more. Tell all the folks hello and tell Mead where I am now. Will send you my picture soon.

Ans soon  
Hobart

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Sept 29-18  
530 p.m.

Dear Papa, Mama

Recd your letter and cartoon of cigarettes today. Was sure glad to get them because I was absolutely broke. We have been having fine weather here but have had a

few real cool nights. I don't mind the weather so bad here because we are inside now. Me and my pal are sleeping upstairs in the corner of the barracks. We have been issued one more blanket since have been here. Have three now. I have full equipment now have rifle, bayonet, cartridge belt, poncho or rain coat and haver sack which we carry our equipment in such as mess kit, toilet articles and one blanket. I had my first general inspection here Saturday morning. We lined up at 9 am and first had inspection of rifles. Then had inspection of underwear and shoes. I passed both inspections ok but the Lieutenant told me to get a hair cut. He told me I had the cleanest gun yet. A lot of the boys names were taken for dirty rifles and underwear but mine was not taken. We are off after general inspection and have nothing to do until Monday morning. The camp here is still under quarantine will be raised some time next week. Some fellow broke out with measles just across from our barracks today. Don't know yet whether we will be put under quarantine or not for that.

We have five lieutenants over us now. They seem to be fine fellows. Our commanding officer is a prince his name is Herbert Daly, he is 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. And commanding officer. I am acting corporal and have a permanent squad to drill now. Was assigned to this squad Friday. Have been going to the non-commissioned officers training school every afternoon from 1 thru 230 and sometime after supper for an hour or so. There was 4 batoons (platoons) of us on the field Friday and the major was giving us the commands. We drill from 730 am until 1130, then from one till 530 p.m. It gets pretty tiresome sometimes carrying a gun all day. Have got a blister on my hand already. We have to carry our blankets out every morning and bring them in the afternoon. I suppose everything is running fine and you are feeling the same. Have not felt bad since. Have been here but have been tired some nights. If you or Mama think of coming down some time wire me in advance and let me know. I heard today that we would not be here but about three weeks. Don't know how much truth there is in it. The last Co that was here just stayed one week and they shipped them on out. Hope Mead is doing better now. He had better begin thinking about saving your money because times is going to get hard. If I were you rather than to lose any more there I would sell out. If you have to make a little sacrifice. Mead don't care much about saving your money it seems. He don't write me any news when he writes to me. One letter sent clippings of a newspaper and that was all. I hope C B comes out all ok. They took our measurements today for over sea clothes. I signed my first payroll sheet of the governments this week. Get paid some time between 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>.

Send me a little something to eat once in a while. The same old thing gets a little stale when you get it all the time. Need not send any cake but some cokes and candy now and then and I will be well satisfied. I like this life better every day don't think I would come home if they would turn me loose (not). The model of our rifle is no 3 0 it is an Enfield rifle. Tell grandpa not to go home till I get to come home I want to tell him about the army life. If you want to know anything about this life just let me know and I can give you all the dope

good bye and Luck to all  
Hobart

(on back) How much money did your sale net you. How is business. How is the Jack & John store. What become of your restaurant. Have you moved yet. Write more when you get time because I like to hear from you.

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Oct 4, 1918

(top of this letter has been torn)

Dear Mama and Papa

Recd your letter today noon. Was glad to hear. Am writing tonight because I might not have time tomorrow. Have been drilling all day today and it is sure hard work. Has been real warm here the last week. By the time we get all our harness on and wear it all day it gets pretty tiresome before night. I am helping to drill the men and teach them how to do the different things. If I get to be non commissioned officer chances are I will not get to see any over sea duty. All the non com's here have been here from 6 to 12 months. Was one of 10 to be recommended for non com officer. I am corporal - have a squad of men to drill every day. Don't expect this Co will be here for longer than two or three weeks at the least. Don't know whether I will be one of the men left here or not. We go out on the drill field every morn at 730 till 1130, 1 till 530 then start retreat at 6 p.m. go to school from 630 till 730, are off then for the night.

Orders came from headquarters tonight that no men could be allowed to leave camp or gather in the picture shows, YMCA or any public gatherings.

Hope Papa is feeling better by now. Do you keep the store as clean as I used to. I am feeling fine no danger of me taking sick. Don't worry about that. About time to go to bed so will close.

Hobart

Have not heard from Mead for two weeks.

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October 6-18  
Sunday night.

Dear Mama and Papa

Recd your letter Saturday noon. Will write tonight as I do not have as much time thru the week as on Sunday night. Do not have much to do from Saturday morn after inspection until Monday morning. We certainly have to be clean on Saturday. Have to be shaved, a hair cut, clean underwear and clothes on.

Has been warm here for last two weeks with the exception of a few days. Got my stripes Saturday, I am a real Corporal now not an acting one. I think we will take a hike out to the rifle range this week and do a little shooting. The way I understand each man shoots 60 shots. You are supposed to shoot 10 shots in a minute and 20 seconds. Four of five companys go out at a time. I suppose you know how many men are in a Co 250. I think we will be out of quarantine next week although an order has been issued now that

no visitors could be allowed in Camp. Has been several deaths at the base hospital in last week. One man died there from our Co.

Think we will get our winter clothes about the first cool snap. I suppose old Sapulpa is pretty dull now. It is too bad that the Greeks and Chinks have all the restaurant business. Seems funny where the Jack and John got their money to start a store. Who is backing them are they getting any of your business. I hope not. Don't seem that they could last long way business is now. How much did Rooth owe you. Have you lost many bad accounts since I left. Watch all those credit slips and keep them collected. Did you ever get your money out of city for meal tickets. Did you get money from Creek County. How about Mrs. Gorb do you ever ask her for money. Have ever got your money from Indian accts. How much money did your rest. bring you. Did you get your \$25 back for that meter deposit. Did Doty come back to town with Mrs. Aulls. Who is your delivery boy now. What help have you and who are they.

Wish you would find out what balance I had at the bank write me and let me know also send a blank check and I will send it back to you. Were the car load of cattle you shipped to Okla City some you had left over or not. Have not heard from Mead in a long time he must be pretty busy. Who will you have working for you now don't tell them any of your business affairs but keep them to yourself. That was one mistake you made with that Irish you told him too much. How are you feeling now don't work yourself completely down before you quit. Answer as many of these questions as you can when you get time. Suppose you and mama get lonesome at times since I have been gone. Tell mama hello and also all the other folks. What became of Bum. Tell me where that Jack and John got there stakes.

good night  
your son  
Hobart Wilson

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October 13-18  
Sunday morn.

Dear Mama and Papa

Recd both of your letters and the package several days ago but have put off answering until today. Don't have much to do on Saturday and Sunday but loaf around. Did not have any inspections on acct of Saturday being a holiday. Our company was out on the field Saturday morning. We played several different kind of games and the men that won the races recd war saving stamps. Had a potato race, pie eating contest, shoe race, and some squad drills. This is certainly a fine and pleasant morning. The sun is shining bright and is nice and cool. We had message in the regiments last night that peace had been declared. Believe me there was sure some noise made. They had to call the regimental guard to make the different company be quiet. We got the message about 11pm. Our first Lt. was made Captain Saturday. He was our commanding officer before. He certainly is a fine man every one likes him. The Major of our regiment leaves for France next week some time. I certainly do want to go and am going to try to go with

this next bunch. When one hears all the good news it certainly makes him want to be over there. I suppose there will be a large number of men leave here as soon as quarantine has been lifted. I think we will be out next week or two. How is everything in old Sapulpa now. I suppose it is pretty dull. I don't think the Jack and John has got all your business yet have they. You asked me had I taken any insurance, yes 10,000. I suppose you will get the papers some time soon, it cost me 6.50 a month. We recd our pay last week I draw 25.50 next month I will draw a little more. A corporal gets 36.00 a month.

We have a pretty easy time in the mess hall we have our own table to eat at, always eat before the privates do. We tell them what to do when we want to. The sergeant and corporals don't mix with the privates much. We are what they call non commissioned officers. You say you fired that Bum. I don't guess you lost anything and whatever you do don't put him back to work any more. How is everything in the store running. I hope it is going smooth, how is your new man doing. Glad to know Mead is doing better, just one thing he ought to learn and that is to save his money and not spend so much. When he gets in the army he will sure change his mind in several ways. There has been a water shortage in Camp and we are not allowed to wash any clothes only time we are allowed to take a bath is between 11-12 6-7. Some mornings the water is off and we don't get to wash our face. Send a little more news about the business and how everything is going I like to know. Also tell Mead to write to me. What become of Ben Peters. How did C B and his trial come out. Hoping that your are feeling as fine as I am will close.

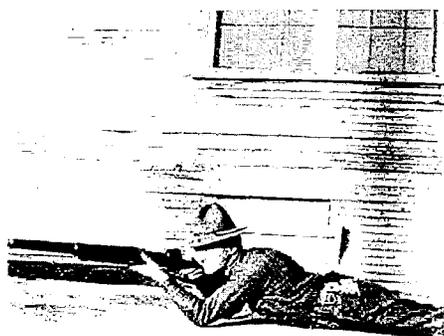
Corporal Thomas H. Wilson  
Co K 3rd Regiment  
& Replacement Camp

What became of Harly Anderson never did hear from Lonnie. Has Ches Crafton gone to war yet.

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October 14  
Monday Night

Dear Mama and Papa

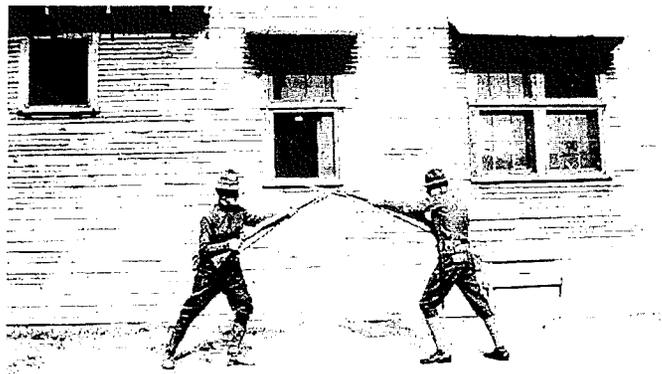


Am writing again tonight because I might not have time to write later on this week. Our regiment was out to the rifle range today. I done my first real rifle shooting at the targets. Had to get up at 4am and it was real chilly but we had to go. Eat breakfast at 430 started for range at 5am. Arrive there about 7 am it is about 4 miles from Camp.

Each man shot 60 cartridges. 5 to each clip. Shot 10 shells at each time some from 100 yd range on up to 300 yard range. All we had for dinner was one jam sandwich and one ham, the ham was raw at that. I was about all in when we drove in. I am sending you a money order for 15.00.

Thought I had a little too much extra money so would send it home because I might ask for it back most any time. I think we will be out of quarantine some time this week. Hope so at least. Don't know much more news to

write so will close as it is about bedtime. Have you ever recd the suit case I sent back home yet. You never said whether you did or not. Anything you want to know about the rifle range just ask me in the next letter. It is about bedtime for me so will close. Have to turn in at 9.



Corporal Thomas H. Wilson  
Co K 3rd Regt  
Camp Pike Little Rock  
Arkansas

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October 22-18  
8pm

Dear Mama and Papa

Have neglected writing you for last three or four days but have more time to do so tonight. Recd letter from Mama last night after I got back from the rifle range. A few men of our company were out to the rifle ranges yesterday. Went out about 730 an and did not get back until 830 at night. Our company was put under guard tonight. The will be guarded until about Thursday and will leave then for an eastern port. I was not lucky enough to get to go but hope I will be when the next bunch goes.

They are to bring all the men that are able to go. All the men that will be left are non commissioned officer and those that have not had their three shots yet. These men that have to go are kept under guard and are not allowed to get outside of the barracks area. There will be about 9000 men leave the camp between now and the first of month. If any of these mens parents come down to see them they are not allowed to do more than talk to them. Have not been to town yet so cannot send you my picture until I get to town.

Have you ever recd my suitcase I sent home you have never told me yes or no. Did you receive money order for 15.00 that I sent you I want to know. Send my sweater to me some time soon. Also some good old home made candy. Hope papa is feeling

better by now. Have not heard from Mead for some time. Papa asked me how much a corporal made answer is 36.00 per month.

The different ranks are private, first class private, corporal, sergeant, first lieutenant and second lieutenant. Hoping to hear from you soon I remain as ever Your son

address letters as

Corporal

Thomas H. Wilson

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October 26-18  
Saturday

Dear Dad and Mama

As I have plenty of time will answer your last letter. Don't have any thing to do on Saturday and Sunday but eat and sleep. The company that was here when I was transferred left yesterday for Camp Dix. They took all the men except about 35 of us non commissioned officers. Our captain told us last night that we would get another bunch Monday morning and keep them here about a week. Every man has to go out to the rifle range before they ship him from this Camp.

He also told us that all of us non com's would be on our (way) in two months from now. I sure want to make the trip. I suppose it is a hard proposition to get any dependable help now. Had to take Bum back did you. I would sure watch him. How come him to quit the big store. Seen about 700 men pass here today on way to the trains . Believe me they are sure shipping them out. This war is not half over yet. Hope you are feeling better by now. How is your business at Okmulgee. Have you still got most of the rest buis (restaurant business). How is the Jack and John store. The flu is all about over in Camp now. Are you still living in the same place. Wish I could come home on a furlough but I don't think there is a chance for me. Some of the men here have been here from 10 to 12 months and have not had a furlough yet. About the only way I would get to come home is for you to get real sick. Hoping to hear soon will close

Hobart

Did you get that 15.00



LIBERTY THEATRE  
 CAMP WHEELER, GA  
 NOVEMBER 12-13-14-15<sup>10</sup>  
 The Military Entertainment Commission  
 By arrangement with  
 G.M. Anderson and L. Lawrence Weber  
 Presents  
 "NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH"  
 By James Montgomery  
 The Latest New York Success  
 From Novel by Frederick Isham. Bobbs Merrill Co.

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

Robert Bennett	J. Henry McKenna
E. M. Ralston	Will Chatterton
Richard Donnelly	Frank Backes
(Comprising the firm of E. M. Ralston & Co.)	
Clarence Van Dusen	Ed West
Bishop Doran	Walter Naylor
Gwendoly Ralston	Gertrude Fowler
Mrs. E. M. Ralston, her mother	Mrs. R. E. French
Ethel Clark, a neighbor of the Ralstons	Anabelle Neilsen
Mabel Jackson	Frances Hall
Sabel Jackson Of the Varieties	Thurley Ross

SYNOPSIS

ACT I.

Uptown office of E. M. Ralston & Co. --Afternoon  
 Ten Minutes Intermission

ACT. II

The Ralston's Summer Home\_ the following day, 12:50 p.m. Midday.  
 One Minute Intermission

ACT III

Same as Act II. -- 3:15 p.m.

EXECUTIVE STAFF FOR MESSRS. ANDERSON & WEBER

E. G. Davidson	Manager
Warren P. Lake	Business Manager

Coming, for Six Nights, Commencing NOV. 18th  
 "Hearts of the World"

12 Reels

The Greatest Picture that was ever Produced

By D.W. Griffith

18 Months in the making. Scenes actually taken  
 on the battlefields of France.

<sup>10</sup> This evidently was a program from a show Hobart attended on his way to the East Coast to embark for Europe.

Co."K". 9th.Bn. 3rd. Group Replacements  
Training Center, Camp Pike, Arkansas.  
December. 19th. 1918.

Dear Madam:

In a few days your soldier will receive his honorable discharge and start for home.

He is bringing back many fine qualities of body and mind which he has acquired or developed in the Military Service. The army has done everything it could to make him strong, fine, self-reliant, yet self controlled. It returns him to you a better man.

You have been an important member of that great army of encouragement and enthusiasm which helped to make him and us all better soldiers. You can now be a great help in keeping alive the qualities he is bringing back from the army, in making him as good a citizen as he was a soldier.

His fare and necessary expenses to the point of his induction will be paid by the Government. He will receive all pay due him. He may, if he wishes, wear his uniform for three month from the date of his discharge. The government will also allow him to keep up, for the benefit of his family, his insurance at the very low rate he is now paying.

Is return to civil life will bring many new problems for you both to solve. The qualities he brings back will help you now as your encouragement helped him while he was away, and in your hands and his rests the future of our country.

As his Commanding Officer, I am proud of him. He has done his duty well. I, and his comrades, will bid him good-bye with deep regret, and wish him every success after he returns home, that spot in every man's heart no other place can fill.

Sincerely yours,

H. A. Daly,  
Capt. Inf. U.S. A.  
Comd'g. Co. "K".

Letter written to Hobart's mother upon completion of his military service.

## Response to the Questionnaire from Nelson Reed who attended Infantry Replacement Basic at Camp Joseph T. Robinson during World War Two.

My name is Nelson A. Reed, 4/6/26, and I was born and raised in Saint Louis, Missouri.

I was single then, having just graduated from high school. Induction was delayed for two months because of an influx of men who had lost agricultural deferment, and I spent that time in the Art School of Washington University in Saint Louis. I was drafted August 11, 1944.

My brother was already in the Army Air Corp, so I'm sure my mother wasn't too happy about my induction, but that was what you did, and both she and my father were supportive. My younger sister would have the traumatic experience to twice opening the door for the same man, the one with the solemn face who delivers the telegrams that begin, The War Department regrets..."But both were only wounds, both of us came home.

I arrived at Camp Robinson by train from Jefferson Barracks in early September, after what had seemed to me a long period of waiting. Regular increments of enlistees were sent off, and they left us to wait and wonder. I have no recollection of the trip or of first impressions of Robinson. We were assigned to hutments, and my hut mates were three Mexicans, (there were so many Mexicans in the training company that they used Red, white, and green streamers on our company banner,) two farm boys from Southern Illinois, and a Norwegian/American farm boy from Minnesota. He talked Norwegian in his sleep, and not at all during the day. One of the Mexicans (from Sonora, I believe) was one of the best soldiers in the company, expert shot, very athletic, friendly, and would have made acting non-com accept he couldn't read or write English. I helped him with his correspondence with an American lady friend, both in coming and out going. One of the farm boys couldn't stand the classical music I listened to, (for years after I winced at a bravura violin passage); and when he was assigned officer latrine duty on the Saturday his parents had come for a visit, none of his home town friends would help him out. He offered me \$10 to take the duty, which was big money then. I said I would do it free if he would make no more remarks about my radio. Desperate, he went looking again for others who didn't ask such a high price, and finally accepted my terms. He kept to the bargain. I also learned about pickled pigs feet, sent him from home, which looked like a medical specimen, but tasted fine. Travel and the army is broadening.

I was assigned to C Company, 113<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 78<sup>th</sup> Regiment.

None of the names will come back to me. The captain "the old man," was 24. Looking at the company photograph I'm impressed with how young the officers were, 19 and 20. Some of them had served in the Aleutians, and told us we didn't know what cold was like, but they caught colds like the rest of us in the winter training. The top sergeant was old army, kept a "Smokey the Bear" hat in his office, wore an American Defense Ribbon for service in Panama years before, until he was told to take it off. We had a corporal who was also old army. When told to take a man' name for some infraction, he would bypass the guilty Santerrazo, or Forkiwitz, for the unfortunate Fox. The "O" was where this corporal would sign his name, the "X" was how he signed it, and all he had to do was copy the "F" from Fox's helmet liner. Colonel Waterbury looked like a colonel, mustache and all. I don't know if he had a riding crop but he gave that impression. The captain was remote, the lieutenants were young, and the sergeants were professional.

Glen Fox, with the unfortunately simple name, had the almost unique experience of getting through months of combat in northern Europe without be hit. I saw him years later in Saint Louis and recognized his walk. That war time luck ran out. He was killed in an auto accident.

A guy named Meeks (I think) was always getting in trouble. When we shipped out for our "Delay in Route" overseas leave, the entire company went with one exception. Meeks stood there in fatigues looking desolate and deserted. I later learned that he was the only one of us to go to the Pacific, to the Philippines, and he survived the war.

Stephen Fitzgerald was sitting on the floor of a ¾ ton reading, I was on the bench above him, and I craned my neck to find out that it was French poetry. You, I thought, are going to have a rough time. He did, captured in the Colmar Pocket, dropped to 130 pounds, was operated on by an American prisoner doctor without anaesthetic. Survived and I had lunch with him last week.

We lived in hutments, joined to the mess hall with wooden walkway. Hot when it was hot, comfortable the rest of the year. The food was ok. The mess sergeant insisted we come in full uniform, with tie in hot weather. After a particularly hard day in the field, we went on strike, didn't eat any of his food, and marched over to the PX. As he was rated on the amount of garbage checked each day, he was in trouble, and was forced to beg our pardon. A big victory for our side.

I had subscribed to "The Rifleman," a magazine, was active in the State Guard, and was one of the few people that wanted to be in the infantry, so naturally, I enjoyed the training. When we got to mortars, I thought, good, a weapon that can be fired out of sight of the enemy, forgetting that they would have them too. Training got realistic, I thought, when we took a mock German Village with pop-up targets. In fact, we would be the pop-ups. Also impressive were the proximity fuse artillery shells fired over our heads, a "secret weapon" at that time, and the shrapnel trashed the bejesus out of a wooded bridge. That was the first time we hear artillery, and after wading through a hip deep stream in winter, some of our platoon went white when they heard that whirra-whirra overhead. I laughed at them, then found I couldn't load my rifle, my hands had lost all strength. It was the cold, not the sound of shells.

Every time I was point on a patrol, I would walk into a hidden machine gun, and I couldn't figure out how to avoid it. The way to find the enemy is for someone to get shot. This is how it worked out. We were put in good condition by our training, taught our weapons, had pretend combat, and it was nothing, nothing like that at all.

What did I do for fun? That question does not compute. I wrote a lot of letters. It was pleasant to sit in the beer garden and listen to the Mexicans play guitars and sing. I hadn't learned to drink beer yet. And through my father's efforts, he wondering what kind of people I was mixing with, arranged an invitation for dinner at the home of the Episcopal Bishop of Arkansas. The also invited a thin, pale, blonde young lady, who didn't say a word all evening.

I was made acting sergeant, squad leader, in training, and over seas, (where there was a lot of room for advancement) I made the same rank but didn't last long enough to keep it. My specialty was 745, Infantry rifleman, and you don't want to know what it was like.

I left Robinson on Christmas Eve. We were shuttled aside to sit on a siding for some hours while priority freight went by, and that DOR went by in a flash; the girl friends, parties, and there was the gang plank, an MP with a Tommy gun on one side, a Red cross women who gave us a bag with shaving gear on the other. I used that bag to carry hand grenades. We crossed on a luxury liner, the Louis Pasteur, French efficiency and cleanliness, English cooking and wondered what pleasure cruising was about. (The French are now both clean and efficient, and the English have learned to hire the French to cook, but that is now and we are talking about then.) The North Atlantic can be rough in winter, escorting cruisers struggled with I swear, forty-five foot waves, escorting destroyers spent most of their time under water. We landed in Liverpool and were told we would be shipped to some camp for further training. All signs were down in England at that time, but when we saw cranes at our destination, we knew the training

wouldn't be in England. We crossed in an old open-hull, Scottish freighter to LeHarve, and took the scenic route across France in the historic 40 and 8s, Amiens, Rheims; but those cathedral towns were nothing but railroad yards, where several hundred thousand soldiers had relieved themselves-no one told me to expect that. I did get a chance to use my high school French, but our needs were not complex. Then Metz, then by  $\frac{3}{4}$  ton over snowy roads, sliding down at each crossing to a small Bailly bridges, each next to a destroyed bridge, then up the other side., There was a picturesque castle in Luxembourg where we slept on the floor, and heard the rumble of artillery. We were offered a chance for that further training, and everyone sat up. The course was in mine removal, and we all lay down again.

I joined F Company, 319 regiment, 80<sup>th</sup> Infantry for that advanced training, surprised to see the front was in color, rather than the black and white of all the movies, and that there was not music, as in the training films I had seen in the theater at Robinson, now Lloyd England Hall. Then came artillery, patrols where you got shot at, and our advanced course was to practice taking the Sigfried Line. Patton later looked at where we crossed the Our and commented, "well I really earned my money that day." He was not in my boat.

We crossed the river in the dark, our way lit by 50 caliber tracers, ours; and explosions, theirs, and landed untouched on the German shore, while others were not so lucky. I went up the slope, saw tracers go over me on one angle, then another, from a weapon hidden by the steep slope and threw a hand grenade at the point where the two line should converge. One of the Germans stood up, arms in the air, his long green coat frayed and torn, the other man in the machine gun nest stayed there. I tried to do the same to a pillbox-not knowing there was a machine gun posted behind for just that circumstance and got two bullets for my trouble. They helped me back down to the river, German prisoners under guard used to ferry us back to the Luxemburg shore. A group of wounded there began turning gray, so another man and I decided to try for the village up the hill, the village where we stared, he helping me because of my bad leg. They mortared us, killing him, knocking out my other leg. I lay there, I don't know how long, until two corpsmen came running down and carried me back to a barn. Brave men. Strapped in a litter across the nose of a jeep, we raced out of the cover of the village and up the hill diagonally, like a duck in a shooting gallery, giving them one more chance at me, with clusters of three mortars shells at a time, and over the hill and out of sight. Brave driver. An operation first, then to Luxemburg City, by train to Paris, where our litters were spread out on the floor in the main hall of the Gare du Nord, and girls walked among us, slipping their business cards in our blankets. Good for morale. By plane to England where we were met over the Dover cliffs by Spitfires, a lovely spring, and artist's daughter to walk out with when I learned to walk again, to do water colors with until someone used silver paint on model airplanes and didn't clean the brushes. One morning the flag went to half staff, for the death of President Roosevelt. Another morning we woke to find the hospital filled with released prisoners, Englishmen from all the way back to Dunkerque, Scotties from Crete, Canadians from Dieppe, Gurkhas and Punjabi from god knows where, living history from a time when I was in Junior High School. Also an indication that it was coming to an end. We did VE in Bristol and did it Bristol fashion, and then we did it again. So they shipped us home, troopship after troopship piled high with men in uniform, as we zig zagged out from Portsmouth, cheering each other as we passed, more soldiers than any of us had ever seen, steaming past the Isle of Wright. They gave me a Combat Rifleman's Badge, a Bronze Star, a Purple Heart with cluster, and a little golden eagle to sew on my uniform, and I was discharged on the 30<sup>th</sup> November, 1945.

My only thought on my visit the other day was how strange to be there after fifty-five years, and not to recognize anything but the theater and the big striped metal tank. Those golf courses were crowded with buildings, and streets and soldiers. I've visited the Sigfried Line with my son, and that was as it had been, pill box and all, and I even found a belt of bullets from

the gun that got me. Then I went to another place, where I had run, thrown myself down and run again. The hills, the valley were familiar but nothing else was the same. Buildings every where, not rough exposed stone walled farm buildings, but new, freshly painted, a town, a large truck stop. I went into the office to ask after a nearby castle. The girl at the counter made one suggestion, and I said "no, the Germans were there." I was dealing with, remembering a moment in time, a winter's day before she was born, and we both broke out laughing.

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## **EUGENE ALLEN PARKER, JR BATTERY F, 206<sup>th</sup> COAST ARTILLERY**

I was born in Bertrand, Missouri on 14 March 1919. My parents were Mr. and Mrs. Eugene A. Parker. My mother's maiden name was Grace Strickland, a native of Bertrand. My father was a native of Plummerville, Arkansas. I had 3 brothers and 1 sister; Joseph Newton, Robert Albert, Dacus Bush and Ida Mae.

My parents moved from Bertrand, Missouri to Plummerville, Arkansas when I was a baby. We lived in Plummerville until 1923 when we moved to Morrilton, Arkansas where I grew up.

On 3 March 1945, I married Carmen Madelin Coursol from Edmonton, Alberta, Canada and had 2 children, Patricia and Camille. We have 2 grandsons, Craig Stephen and Christopher Blake, and 2 great grandsons, Tanner Glen and Mason Andrew.

### **EDUCATION:**

I attended public schools in Morrilton, Arkansas. I attended college at Arkansas Tech, Arkansas State Teacher College, University, Command and Staff Officers School.

### **ARKANSAS NATIONAL GUARD:**

I enlisted in the Arkansas National Guard when I joined the Battery F, 206th Coast Artillery (Anti Aircraft) on 13 September 1938, located on the Arkansas Tech Campus.

During the summer of 1938 my chance to attend college happened, thanks to Mr. Ancel Heal, a member of my Baptist Church and a local lumber company owner. Mr. Neal inquired about my desire to attend college. When I gave an affirmative reply and explained my financial problem, he said he believed he could help me enroll in Arkansas Tech, in Russellville, Arkansas, 20 miles from Morrilton. We drove to Russellville and visited Dr. Joseph William Hull, President of Tech. As the result of that visit, I was enrolled in the "Red Hill" resident training project sponsored by the National Youth Administration. (NYA).

"Red Hill" was a Hughes Cooperative Resident Training Project developed by Mr. Claude Allen Hughes, head of the Agriculture Department at Arkansas Tech. He developed a plan by which boys could go to Arkansas Tech without direct financial aid. Mr Hughes developed the idea in 1935 and with the assistance of Dr. Hull, drew plans for his proposed project. No means appeared by which the project could be financed, Mr. Hughes decided to ask the WPA for an appropriation but the WPA could not correlate with his plans and could not get an appropriation.

But the idea was not given up. Later in a meeting in New Orleans, Dr. Hull presented the plan to Mr. Aubrey W. William, National Administrator of the Youth Administrative. The plan was accepted and work was begun at once.

Upon approval of the plan by the NYA the college started picking boys for the work. Many applicants were sent in out only a few could be accepted. As there were no buildings on

the present site of the project (Red Hill), the boys had to stay in the basement of the boy's dormitory in Parker Hall and in tents until we completed building dormitories on Red Hill. I stayed in a tent in 1938 and 1939.

With in the next two years 2 dormitories, a recreation hall and a dining hall and a dining hall were completed. The new boy's dormitory, the most modern and largest building on the grounds was completed in 1939, during the period I was there.

The average enrollment of the project in 1940 was 100 Youth. The supervisory staff was composed of a project superintendent, a construction supervisor, a woodwork foreman, a sheet metal and blacksmith foreman, and an assistant foreman.

Work experience such as construction work, woodworking, cooking, laundering, and forming were offered the boys so that we might prepare ourselves for a place in private business or industry. My job was on the school farm, working with Mister Stormbough, taking care of the hogs and beef cattle and horses.

We worked half a day and attended college classes half a day. We were able to carry 12 hours college credit during the regular school year and take 3 hours during the summer semester to earn 15 hours credit per school year. Mr Stormbough was an excellent mentor who taught me a lot about raising pigs, cattle and horses. I shall always be thankful to Mr. Hughes and Mr. Stormbough for the time spent during the NYA program. I spent my freshman year at Tech as a member of the NYA program. During my sophomore year I lived off campus with 3 other students and we batched.

James Bell was the National Youth Administrative Instructor in 1938 thru 1939. Dan Stephens was the mayor of Red Hill during this period and president of the Freshman Class of 1939. Dan was from Choctaw, Arkansas.

My Red Hill friends were Dan Stephens, Paul Goodwin of Strawberry, Arkansas, Philip Sikes of Hector, Arkansas, Wayne Forsee of Lead Hill, Arkansas, Russlee Hames of Centerville, Arkansas, Ervin Haney of Atkins, Arkansas, Gerald Hickman of England, Arkansas, Russell Hickey of Cherry Hill, Arkansas, Jess Hunter of Mulberry, Arkansas, O.J. Lewis of Ola, Arkansas. Other Arkansas Tech friends from Arkansas: Robert Bonham Parker, Plumerville, J.D. Cartwright, Adona, Edward DeLong, Morrilton, Terrell Gordon, Greenwood, Sara Lee Gordon, Morrilton, Hershel Linle, Mulberry, Ike Linch, Flippin, Ben McClarin, Springfield, James Malone, Hot Springs.

Professors I remember at Arkansas Tech: John Edward Tucker, Dean of Men, football coach and chemistry teacher. Charles W. C. Aulsbury, Animal Husbandry, Everett S. Tomlinson, Botany, Claude Allen Hughes, Agronomy, Lillian Massy, English, Howard Godfrey - Physical Education, Herman Dean, Mechanics, James Bell, NYA Instructor.

After two years at Arkansas Tech, from 1938 - 1940, I graduated with an associate degree in Agriculture. While at Tech, I would hitch hike the 20 miles to Morrilton over the weekend and work Saturdays at O'Neals Store.

I joined Battery F, 206th Coast Artillery (Anti Aircraft) on 13 September 1938 to help pay my college expenses upon enrolling at Arkansas Tech. At that time I had no idea that my 26-year military career was beginning in Arkansas Tech, Russellville, Arkansas and would end as a Lt. Colonel in 1964.

We drilled at the Arkansas Tech Armory twice weekly wearing World War I uniforms with the high neck tunic and the wrap around leggings. Captain William W Smith was the Commander of Battery F, 206th Coast Artillery (AA).

During August 1939, Battery F spent 17 days at Fort Barrancas, Pensacola, Florida. During our training we fired 30 caliber machine guns at Balloons.

Our unit spent 8-15 December 1939 in a camp on Morristown Mountain near Russellville, Arkansas.

During August 1940, I spent 21 days on maneuvers near Camp Ripley, Little Falls, Minnesota at the mouth of the Mississippi River. I became a corporal in Battery F and served as a gunner on a 37 millimeter gun.

After graduation from Arkansas Tech, I enrolled at Arkansas State Teacher College, Conway, Arkansas in September 1940. I retained my membership in Battery F and drilled with the 153rd Infantry on the college campus. Colonel H. L. McAlister was the college president and commander of the 153rd Infantry.

After completing my first semester of my junior year in college, my unit, Battery F, 206th Coast Artillery (AA), was activated for Federal service on 6 January 1941. The 206th Coast Artillery (AA) regiment was sent to Fort Bliss, El Paso, Texas for 9 months of desert training. We arrived at Fort Bliss on 18 January 1941 and I moved into tent number 21 with the following soldiers: Harold F. Goatcher, Donald R. Grimstead, Lionel Lozenby, Robert Graham and Robert Gilmore. Later I moved into tent number 6 with Doris Billingsly, Ewell Story, James Brashears, Henry G. Boumann and Lionel Lazenby.

My regiment, the 206th Coast Artillery (AA), was located on the Anti-Aircraft Training Center area in the desert at the foot of Mt. Franklin, 5 miles north of El Paso, Texas.

We immediately began an extensive beautification program at our camp site by building rock walls around the six man tents that set on a wooden platform, with a gas stove in the middle of the tent. At the same time we were receiving the necessary inoculations. The 206th Coast Artillery (AA) regiment breezed through the 13 weeks of extensive desert training with a very high rating in efficiency and intelligence.

During this period the regiment was learning the "Silent Manual of Arms." I stood on a platform facing the entire regiment leading the men during several drills conducted for the Regimental Commander Colonel Elgin C. Robertson.

I was one of the 12 selected from the regiment to go before the Officer Candidate Board, but was not selected to go to the Coast Artillery Officer candidate school, Fort Monroe, Virginia.

I was selected to attend a three weeks Chemical Warfare School and made the highest score in a class of fifty officers and enlisted men. Brigadier General Innis P. Swift presented me with my Chemical Warfare Noncom (Corporal) for our regiment.

On 28 July 1941, Harold F. White, Robert W. Riley and I passed the physical exam for the flying aviation cadets candidates from Battery F. Elmo Cunningham of Battery B also passed the exam that day.

During our desert training, we made an eight-day maneuver in New Mexico eating dust, we also made several one and two day maneuvers in Texas. Our blackout maneuvers "take the cake." It was not unusual to travel 30 to 35 miles per hour at night across the desert with our vehicle lights out, while driving through fogging dust.

We completed our 9 months desert training and were sent to Dutch Harbor, Alaska, with the entire 206th Coast Artillery. Our next door neighbors during the training at Fort Bliss, the 200th Coast Artillery (AA), from New Mexico were sent to the Philippines where they were wiped out. My unit, the 206th Coast Artillery (AA), departed Fort Bliss, El Paso, Texas by troop train at 4:30 pm 1 August 1941. After a 96 hours train trip, we reached Camp Murray near Tacoma, Washington on the morning of 5 August 1941. We remained at Fort Murray preparing for our continued trip to Dutch Harbor, Alaska until 11 August 1941 whenever we issued warm clothing.

At 6:30 p.m. on 11 August, we departed Seattle, Washington, aboard an old banana ship the St. Mihiel for Dutch Harbor, Alaska on Unalaska Island. The 206th Coast Artillery (AA) arrived Dutch Harbor during this afternoon. On 16 August 1941, we were quartered in warm barracks with open bays and central bath and toilets. We had a mess hall, small canteen, and movie theater.

Dutch Harbor was inhabited by Aleuts and a few American business people - The Siens - Drake Construction Company was located on Dutch Harbor and was building the Naval Base similar to the one at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. They employed a large number of civilian workers from the states.

The soldiers here carry on regular camp routine duties and serve on outpost duty at the various gun positions on Hog Island where 206th Anti-Aircraft and radar batteries were stationed.

We had soldiers, sailors and marines on duty here and we sometimes got into fistfights to pass the time of day. Most of my duty time was spent pioneering our gun emplacement on Ballahoe Mountain serving outpost duty. I found plenty of time to think, read and write letters, "what a boring life." Yes, Dutch Harbor is a land of constant precipitation and I do mean constant.

On 10 November 1941, I received my call from the Army Air Corps for Aviation Cadet Training and was ordered to report to Kelly Field, San Antonio, Texas as soon as possible.

On 21 November 1941, I received an honorable discharge from the Army of the United States at Post Headquarters, Fort Mears, Alaska. Took physical exam for discharge and reenlistment that day.

On 22 November 1941, at about 9am I was sworn in as an Aviation Cadet by Captain Shoemaker, Adjutant, Fort Mears Post Headquarters. I was paid by finance officer Captain Jennings at 9:10am. I corrected his mistake in giving me too much money. Lt. Griffin identified me to the Finance Officer and Lt. Wall arranged for my transportation to the ship, which I boarded at 10:15am. The U.S.S. Chirikof cleared Dutch Harbor at 11am today and took the inside passage route for the mainland.

I reached Seattle, Washington at 9am Friday, 5 December 1941, two days before the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The trip by ship from Dutch Harbor to Seattle, Washington took 13 days. We spent 2 days on Kodiak, Island and two days at Seward, Alaska. I departed Seattle by train on 9 December 1941 and arrived in San Antonio, Texas on 15 December, to begin firefight training at Kelly Field.

My wife Carman M. Parker and I have been married 55 years. We have a daughter, Patricia Heuck and two grandsons, Craig and Christopher, and two great grandsons, Tanner Glen and Mason Andrew.

We have visited over 60 countries and have sailed on 25 cruises since retirement in 1988.

I was commissioned a 2nd Lt. in the Army Air Corps on 5 August 1942 and retired as a Lt. Colonel in the U. S. Airforce on 30 June 1964. My military service from 1938 to 1964 resulted in 26 years of military service. Outside of the U.S., I served in Canada, Japan, France, Germany, and Turkey.

I retired the second time on 31 March 1988 after 24 years as a civilian with the Air Force Intelligence Agency at age 69. Most of my service was stationed at Kelly AFB, San Antonio, Texas. During the Vietnam Conflict, I was stationed in Hawaii at Wheeler AFB for seven years. I received the Outstanding Civilian Career Service Award at my retirement ceremony which recognized me as a valuable asset to the Intelligence Mission coupled with absolute loyalty and service dedicated to an country throughout 50 years of Federal Service.

**SAMUEL T. SMITH COMPANY F 153<sup>RD</sup> INFANTRY  
ARKANSAS NATIONAL GUARD**

My name is Samuel T. Smith and I was born in Carden Bottom, Arkansas, at the time called Casa Route 3, June 17, 1921. My parents were Samuel A. and Gladys B. Smith and I grew up in Carden Bottom, Ola, and Dardanelle, Arkansas. I attended the first ten grades in Carden Bottom and eleventh and twelfth grades in Ola, Arkansas. After service I attended two years at the University of Tennessee.

In 1938, I enlisted in the Arkansas National Guard. My unit was Company "F", 153<sup>rd</sup> Dardanelle, Arkansas. It was an Infantry unit and my job was rifleman, runner, and squad leader. My officers were: Captain Cox, Lt. Moore, Lt. Elbert Foster, Lt. Frank Ingram, 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Sam Brisco, S/Sgt. Elmer Moore, Sgt. Paul Parks, George Pfeifer, Wilson Word, David Coleman, Albert Taylor, Thurman Raney, George Proszaka, James Frasier, Tom Grace, Thomas Bolen, Oliver Pockus, Fred Keeter, Oscar Haggard, Mahon Ramey, Hal Green, Jack Corn, George Pazdera, Cpl's: Frank Klobber, Cecil King, George Mc Gohen, Leron Woods, J.R. Pratt, William Ellis, Eugene Hodge, Herbert Taylor, James Levesy, Pud Walker, Lenord Cullens. (Taken from company picture taken August 23, 1941, camp Murry Washington.)

Pete Ellis, Willie Stubbs, Cecil Lacey have remained close friends through the years and we still try to visit as often as possible our 153<sup>rd</sup>. reunion in May or June. I ran around with J. R. Pratt, Tom Grace and George Pazder as well as the others. Pete and Bertha Ellis were best man and brides maid in my wedding May 5, 1945.

I was activated in December 23, 1940 and finished High School by correspondence. I received a pass to go home and graduate with my class. I was so proud to be in service for my country, I had never been away from home before, but so many of my friends were in the unit with me I never got home-sick. We helped each other.

We went to Camp Robinson and trained until we shipped out approximately June 1941 to Camp Murry, Washington. When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor we were sent to Payne Field, Everett, Washington for Guard Duty until an Anti Air Craft unit from Texas arrived, then we were sent back to Camp Murry. On January 11, 1942, we shipped out aboard the USS St. Michiel. We arrived in Dutch Harbor January 25, 1942. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of January we boarded the USS St. Michiel again and arrived at Chemofski Bay at 2:00 p.m. No trees in sight, it was cold. We had to unload everything on the beach then we were loaded on a barge and towed 100 miles of open waters to Umnak Island.

We were sent to the Aleutian Islands on February 8, 1942 we landed on Umnak Island. Our purpose was to construct air fields for land based planes. We unloaded steel and other supplies while guarding from attack. In August 13, 1943 we boarded ship for Kiska. The seas were so rough they couldn't get the landing craft in as close as they needed to. We stood about 11 hours packed with no room to move, no food and no bathroom. When we finally stepped out of the landing craft we were in cold water over our waist. It was dark and fog so thick you could cut it. We all did what had to be done. Kiska was free of Japanese August 18,, 1943. We were in the invasion of Kiska.

When we left Camp Murry we did not know where we were going until we got out to sea. We had a sense of adventure and looked forward to what each day would bring. We encountered many hardships and had to adjust to the cold windy weather. Also sleeping in the snow and doing with out the comforts of warm beds. At one time we only had pancakes and peanut butter to eat. We were told that our supply ship had been sunk. But over all, close friendships overcame the hardships.

We returned to the states in March, 1944 to Camp Shelby, Mississippi and was deactivated. I was sent to Camp Joe Robinson, Little Rock, Arkansas and assigned to an Infantry Replacement Center training recruits.

It was great to be back in Camp Robinson, it was so close to home. When the war was over I had enough points to get out and I went to school for one year and then worked for International Harvester a year. I liked Army life so I went back in the service and was assigned to recruiting duty for four years. I was commissioned and called to Active duty during the Korean War.

I had spent eight months in Letterman General Hospital in San Francisco, California, and was given a medical retirement September 5, 1952. That was one of the lowest days of my life. I wanted to stay in service, it was my life.

I did not remain in the Arkansas National Guards after completing Federal duty. We deactivated before the war ended. After the war we felt out of place, at first, but later we were one big family.

I joined the National Guard when I was 17. My parents had to sign for me to get in. I was so proud to be a part of the guard. The two weeks bivouac in Tennessee and Minnesota were good training and made us feel like we could protect our country.

One of the biggest thrills while in the Aleutians was when Bob Hope, Jerry Colona, and Frances Langford came to put on a show for us.

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## **HEINZ WAGNER**

### **A German Prisoner Of War Held At Camp Robinson During World War Two**

*The following questionnaire resulted from the recent visit of Heinz Wagner, a former POW held at Camp Robinson, on July 31, 1999. Mr. Wagner planned a trip to the US to visit relatives and wanted to revisit the scenes of his days at Camp Robinson. Included with the questionnaire are photos of Mr. Wagner and records from Camp Robinson when he was held here. The questions were translated to Mr. Wagner by his grandson who then returned them to the Arkansas National Guard Museum. Of course many things had changed since the 1940's but when asked if anything was familiar, Mr. Wagner pointed upward and said "the Arkansas sun is exactly the same!"*

*Heinz Wagner was 18 when he went to war in Rommel's Afrika Corps as a rifleman in the German infantry. During the North Africa Campaign Wagner and many Germans were captured. A large number of these were sent to Camp Robinson where they would remain until the end of the war. One interesting item that Mr. Wagner brought with him was a ring worn since his days as a POW. It seems a ring salesman visited the camp and the prisoners were allowed to purchase "class" style rings. Mr. Wagner still wears his, which read "Prisoner of War, Camp Robinson". When time came to leave Mr. Wagner, with his family around him, bent down and picked up a small brown rock. "Can I have this?" he asked. When told of course, he placed it in his pocket and smiled.*

**1. Please list your full name.**

My name is Heinz Wagner.

**2. When and where were you born?**

I was born in Neugersdorf in Saxony in Germany at the 5<sup>th</sup> of November in 1923.

**3. Please list the names of your parents.**

My father was Reinhold Wagner and my mother was born as Martha Jentsch.

**4. What type of schooling did you have and where did you attend school?**

First I was in school for 8 years in Neugersdorf. Then I was in a vocational college for 3 years. I finished in April of 1941.



**5. How did you enter your military service? (Did you enlist or were you drafted)**

I was drafted for military service.

**6. When did this occur?**

In August of 1941 I entered the RAD<sup>11</sup>

**7. Were you single or married at the time?**

I was single at this time.

**8. Describe how you felt about entering military service.**

Under masses of people, which were drafted too, everybody was hoping to come anywhere but to the front.

**9. How did your family feel about your entering military service?**

My father had served in World War I, so he did have a presentiment what it would be like. So my parents were anxious and afraid.

**10. Where did you go through your training phase of military service?**

During RAD I was in "Mährisch Ostrau"<sup>12</sup>, in the "Sudetenland"<sup>13</sup>.

I began my army time in "Antwerpen" at the training facility "Maria de Heide".

<sup>11</sup> "Reichsarbeitsdienst"

<sup>12</sup> Name of the location.

<sup>13</sup> Name of the area.

Then I was in "Cognac" in France, where I learned about explosives, machine gun<sup>14</sup> and camouflage..

**11. Describe what your training consisted of.**

It was a normal basic training. We practiced drill, shooting, throwing hand grenades and the handling of explosives<sup>15</sup>.

**12 Do you feel this training assisted you when you were sent forward? Describe why you feel this way.**

Most useful was to know, how to "live like a mole" (camouflage), because of the air superiority of the Allies. Other things like shooting, and throwing hand grenades were useful too, of course. Later at the front I got to know a soldier from the Foreign Legion, fighting for Germany. He teached me not just to drink the water. It really was better to rinse out the mouth with the water for a while before swallow it.

**13. After leaving your training site where were you sent?**

We were sent to Italy to "Santa Maria" near "Neapel" to a front unit. This unit was refilled with us. It was the "Schutzenregiment Herrmann Goring". I was in the 5<sup>th</sup> company.

**14. Please describe your journey to the front. Also include the name of your unit, what type of unit was it (Infantry, Artillery etc.) your rank and your duties in that unit.**

We left Italy by plane<sup>16</sup> from airport in "Neapel", heading for "Tunis" in Tunisia. We were the last that crossed the Mediterranean without any casualties. All of our vehicles and our field kitchen were sunk while crossing the Mediterranean by ship. So we were in "Tunis" with empty mess tins. In a telephone book in "Tunis" I found a map of Tunisia. I kept it to mark the places where we were going. This map I kept is still in my house. But because it was so long ago, I do not know where it is.



<sup>14</sup> MG 42

<sup>15</sup> Especially "Haft Hohladungen"

<sup>16</sup> Ju52

I am still looking for it and I will try to send you a copy if I find it. Here are some names of places I still remember:

- I near "Zaguan"
- II "Pont du Fahs"
- III near "Goubelat"
- IV "Hill 107"<sup>17</sup> (I added an excerpt of a book about an action I was part of.)

**15. Where were you captured? What Allied troops captured you?**

I was captured in "Enfidaville" in Tunisia by British troops. It was the 10<sup>th</sup> of May in 1943.

**16. Were you wounded at this time? If so describe the treatment and care you received as a result.**

I was not wounded.

1. Retreator, Air Force (Grade and alpha or suffix)	10. May 10, 1943 (Date of capture or arrest)																														
2. * (Hostile unit or vessel)	11. Enfidaville, Tunisia (Place of capture or arrest)																														
3. A-Flug, 308 St, 51, (Hostile serial number)	12. British (US mistook Aug 8, 1943) (Unit or vessel making capture or arrested address)																														
4. Nov 5, 1923, Neugersdorf, Germany (Date and country of birth)	13. Cabinet worker (Occupation)																														
5. Pittauststrasse 17, Neugersdorf, Germany (Place of birth or present residence)	14. 8 yrs (elementary) (Education)																														
6. Marta Koenig Warner, mother (Name, relationship of nearest relative)	15. German (Knowledge of languages)																														
7. Same as 5 (Address of above)	16. Good (Physical condition at time of capture or arrest)																														
8. None (Number of dependents and relationship)	17. S (Married or single)																														
9. None (Address of above)	18. Prot (Religious preference)																														
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REMARKS: Original SP4 - 2A																															
<p>17 In German books known as the "kaktusfarm". Do you know it as the "cactus farm" perhaps?</p>																															

17. Please describe the events that caused your capture.

We had no weapons, ammunition or food. There were no supplies. Because of retreats, the units were mixed. So nobody could find his own unit. Then we just waited until the Allies came. It was not like war any more. They just came over to capture us. They knew that we would offer no resistance to them and they treated us with respect.

PRISONER OF WAR POST KRIEGSGEFANGENENPOST	(Ab)	Postage paid Postales
CARD OF CAPTURE FOR PRISONERS OF WAR GEFANGENENMELDUNG FÜR KRIEGSGEFANGENE		
<b>IMPORTANT</b>		
This card must be filled in by each prisoner immediately after his capture, and for each subsequent change of address upon arrival in the new camp or hospital.		
<b>WICHTIG</b>		
Diese Karte soll von jedem Kriegsgefangenen sofort nach seiner Gefangennahme und bei jedem Adressenwechsel gleich nach seiner Ankunft im Lager oder Lazarett ausgefüllt werden.		
W. D. P. M. G. Form No. 6 (Rev. Dec 9 August 1943)		
<i>Herrn</i> <i>Reinhold Wagner</i> <i>Neugensdorf</i> <i>Zittauerstr. 18</i> <b>10604</b> <b>U.S. PRISON</b>		

Deutlich schreiben! Druckschrift erwünscht!

Write clearly and in printed letters!

Vorname—Surname <i>HEINZ</i>		Name—First name <i>Wagner</i>	
Date of birth Geburtsdatum <i>5. 11. 1923</i>		Place of birth Geburtsort <i>Neugensdorf, i Sachsen</i>	
Rank Dienstgrad <i>Gef.</i>		Unit Militärische Einteilung <i>Luftwaffe</i>	
Army No. <i>4 FL. Ausb. Rgt 51</i>		Last civilian residence Letzter ziviler Wohnort <i>Neugensdorf O-L</i>	
Beschriftung der Erkennungsmarke <i>2742</i>			
Family's address Familienanschrift <i>Reinhold Wagner Neugensdorf (Sachsen) Zittauerstr. 18</i>			
Coming from (Camp No., Hospital No., etc.) Komme von (Lager Nr., Lazarett Nr., u.s.w.) <i>Oran Afrika im 127</i>			
Captured: <i>10. 5. 43</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>unwounded</i> * <input type="checkbox"/> <i>slightly wounded</i> * <input type="checkbox"/> <i>severely wounded</i> * <input type="checkbox"/> <i>ill</i> *			
In Gefangenschaft geraten: <input type="checkbox"/> nicht verwundet * <input type="checkbox"/> leicht verwundet * <input type="checkbox"/> schwer verwundet * <input type="checkbox"/> krank *			
Am well * <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Am: recovered</i> * <input type="checkbox"/> <i>convalescent</i> *			
Befinde mich wohl * Bin: <input type="checkbox"/> geheilt * <input type="checkbox"/> in Heilung *			
16-36582-1			
Present address: Gegenwärtige Anschrift: <i>Box 20</i>		P. O. W. No. Gefangenen Nr. <i>879-59154-10</i>	
Locality Ort <i>New York NY</i>		Camp No. Lager Nr. <i>Box T Robinson</i>	
Date Datum <i>9. 10. 1948</i>		Signature Unterschrift <i>Heinz Wagner</i>	

Cancel what does not apply! No further details permitted! See explanation on reverse side!  
Nicht zutreffendes durchstreichen! Weitere Angaben nicht erlaubt! Siehe Erklärung auf der Rückseite!

**BASIC PERSONNEL RECORD**  
(Allied Enemy or Prisoner of War)

8 WG 59154  
(Government serial number)

WAGNER, Heinz  
(Name of interviewee)

Height 5 ft. 7 in. Reference \_\_\_\_\_  
Weight 163 INVENTORY OF PERSONAL EFFECTS TAKEN FROM INTERNEE  
Eyes blue 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
Skin ruddy 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
Hair brown 3. \_\_\_\_\_  
Age 20 4. \_\_\_\_\_  
Distinguishing marks or characteristics: 5. \_\_\_\_\_  
scar over right eye 6. \_\_\_\_\_  
7. \_\_\_\_\_  
8. \_\_\_\_\_  
9. \_\_\_\_\_

The above is correct: *Heinz Wagner*  
(Signature of interviewee)

Oct. 21, 1943, P.O. Camp, Camp Jos. T. Robinson, Ark.  
(Date and place where processed (Army post-office, naval station, or other post-office))

RIGHT HAND				
1. Thumb	2. Index finger	3. Middle finger	4. Ring finger	5. Little finger
LEFT HAND				
6. Thumb	7. Index finger	8. Middle finger	9. Ring finger	10. Little finger

**18. Describe your feelings and emotions upon being captured?**

Because of the last events all were very tired and we were happy that it was over for us now. So we could lay down and rest. There were some fanatic Germans too that wanted to spread chaos before the capture to confuse the Allied troops. But nobody did want to do so. All dissociated from these fanatics. There was no reason for anyone to do so because nobody wanted to fight any more.

**19. Describe your travels after capture. Include how you were moved, the route of travel, how you were treated by your captors.**

Some camps you were only allowed to enter if you got or already had a vaccination. From "Enfidaville" we were brought to "Tunis". There was a camp at a site of a horse race course. Before us there must have been captured Italiens. It looked terribly dirty and so we first had to clean. Water was very rare and bread too. I got to know a friend there which managed to get me to the field kitchen. So at least I had enough to eat although it was a hard work. We only made bread, for the English too. All in all I went through nine camps. I can not remember all

the names but I remember “Tunis”, “Constantine”<sup>18</sup>, “Chancy”<sup>19</sup> and “Oran”<sup>20</sup>. We were treated fairly. There were controls everytime we entered a new camp or left one. Especially they were looking for pocket knives.

#### **“Olivenhain”:**

Only rolls of barbed wire were at the borders of the camp. We had heard that in the surrounding area there should be a food depot. Guards were only patrolling in jeeps. They were British. Because the ground was uneven, we could wait for the right moment to get out of the camp, heading for the direction we thought the depot could be. Only reserved food was eminent for us. It was dark and we could not see what we got. We were five and everyone took what he could get. I had four cans under my camouflage uniform. Sneaking back through the area the guards must have noticed something. They began to shoot at us. But because of the uneven area they could not hit us. We had to hurry to cross the barbed wire again. So I hurt my head at the barbed wire. Next morning we were curious what we had in our cans. The others had a kind of very sweet stewed fruit. It was peach and orange with its juice and peel. Because we nearly got no water the sweetness was not good – it made even more thirsty. But I had peeled potato in water – it was the best thing you could have in my situation. Because of the coldness in the night I ate a half can in the morning and the other half in the evening. During the day it would have been too hot and the taste also was not that good.

#### **“Constaintine”:**

In this camp I met a German sergeant<sup>21</sup> who had the same name like me and had learned the same profession too! He was very happy to meet a person with the same name but he treated me like his private slave. I wanted to get away from him as fast as possible. We were divided in tents which also were divided in rows. The row that was standing next to the trench was the next to leave the camp. My tent was still far away from this row but I just walked over and sneaked between them to get away. But because there should be only 25 persons I was “too much”. And nobody knew me. But there was a very nice German medical sergeant that told me to come with him and his people. His nickname was Gandhi because he had a beard which was very rare. So I came to ““Chancy”” He saw the wound at my head that I got from the barbed wire. So he cut off my hair and attended my wound with iodine and made me a new bandage every day. Gandhi cared very much for his people and for me. When he saw that I had two different shoes he asked me about it. (I had them since the last days at the front. One lost its sole and we could not get new ones. So I got one shoe from a wounded soldier. But it was bigger than the other one.) Gandhi took me to an American officer and I got a new pair of shoes with a rubber sole. We only had leather with iron thumbtacks. So this new shoes were wonderful for me. I could not stand by Gandhi because I was not a medical soldier. So we were divided.

#### **“Chancy”:**

We got noodles with apricot. This was so wonderful! Because before this day we only got dried food.

One time we were moved by train and crossed the mountains at a winding railroad. We were locked in closed goods trains. Our train climbed a hill and crossed a bridge. And then there was a long right bend and behind it a high bridge with four pillars. The train stopped. Through the boards we could see a little bit. The train whistled for a long time and we wondered. We

<sup>18</sup> The name of the camp was “Olivenhain”

<sup>19</sup> The first American camp.

<sup>20</sup> The last one.

<sup>21</sup> He was from a “Gebirgsjager” unit.

realized that the train could not go forward any more and it slowly began to move back, down the hill again. We were afraid because right of us the rocks went high up and left of us it went straight down. Some guards left the train too. We were afraid that the train could fall down and there really was no space for us to leave the train because of the rocks. And we were locked like in a trap! But then another locomotive appeared. They divided the train and in two parts we crossed this dangerous bridge and hill.

In another camp we were moved by semitrailer with open load rooms. All the drivers were black people. And they were driving like the devil while his tail is burning (really crazy). The guards followed in jeeps and always kept distance. Sometimes they stopped semitrailers to tell the drivers not to drive too wild.

**20. Describe your trip across the ocean.**

I traveled with a Liberty ship. The convoy consisted of nearly 100 ships. In September of 1943 we left "Oran" and it took us 27 days to cross the ocean. The ship was crowded when I entered it with five other prisoners. We were the last at the ship. So we had to wait next to the kitchen while the guards were looking for some space for us. Through the window a black cook with a lot of golden teeth smiled at me. He asked for a souvenir. I gave him a German penny and my water bottle. Then he vanished and I did not expect to see him again. But he came back with my bottle, filled with water and a cutlet bone for me. There were two decks for the prisoners. But I was under this two decks with four other prisoners because the other decks were full and there was no more space for us. Our place was a hole next to the anchor chamber. We realized this when the anchor was lifted as the travel began. The first two days we had no light down there. Whenever you had to go to the toilet you had to tell it a guard and he showed you the way. There were 12 toilets from left to right of the ship in a room at the top deck. When it was stormy weather you should try to sit in the middle. Else you would have a very dirty experience. Other people got a ticket that allowed you to stay on the top deck for 15 minutes every day. Because we five were so deep down, we could stay on deck as long as we wanted to and so we saw more from the travel. We saw the red mountains of Africa at the left side and the green of Spain at the right side as we passed "Gibraltar" while the sun was going down. One time there was alert because of submarines. As much prisoners as possible were brought on deck and our ship moved to one side of the convoy. Destroyers were cruising around like crazy between all the ships. But nothing happened.

**21. Where did you enter the United States?**

We arrived in New York at the 18<sup>th</sup> of September in 1943.

**22. Describe your thoughts, feelings and emotions when you arrived.**

We did not know how it would be and what we would have to do. We were curious.

**23. How did you travel to Camp Robinson? When did you arrive at Camp Robinson?**

We were brought to the camp by train. But we did not know where we were going. At the 9<sup>th</sup> of October in 1943 we arrived I think.

**24. Describe any first impressions of Camp Robinson when you arrived.**

Everybody was happy that there were shacks, toilet, bathroom and kitchen. Most important for us was the bathroom because we could not wash ourselves for month.

**25. Describe your living and working conditions at Camp Robinson. Go into as much detail as you desire. What was a typical day like? What types of food were you issued. Where did you work? What did you do for entertainment? Were you allowed correspondence with your family? Do you remember any names of your US guards? What were some of the names of your fellow POW's? Anything you can remember.**

We did build bridges across the small brook. The first two month we only worked inside the camp. Then we also worked in a quarry, splitting stones. At the training facility near the camp we relocated the stones as footpath. When soldiers left their barracks<sup>22</sup> we had to clean there.

**The day:** Wake up, headcount, breakfast, work until lunch at 12:00 till 1:00 p.m.<sup>23</sup>, work until supper at 6:00 p.m.<sup>24</sup>, leisure time or choir, theatre group, band from 7:00 till 10:00 p.m., lights-out

**Food:** Breakfast: cornflakes, milk, sugar, four pieces bread with marmelade, butter, sometimes bacon, always one fruit<sup>25</sup> Lunch: cup of broth, chicken pieces, noodles, bannmange, one fruit<sup>26</sup>

First we had American lunch. But we were too hungry because of the little we got in the war. So we got food that was similar to the food we got in the "Wehrmacht": More potato meals and stews. Supper one spoon full of potato salad, bread, one pair of frankfurters, apple  
At Christmas and Thanksgiving Day we got turkey.



**Culture:**

There was one shack for culture. We had a choir and a band<sup>27</sup>. One group was learning English but interrupted by anger because not all German superiors did like this. "Kleiner Fuhrer durch Amerika" was the name of a book that we got. In lessons we were taught to get to know democracy.

Every company had two manual workers that were supported by prisoners that could not work. They built everything that was needed<sup>28</sup>. Everyday one shack was on duty in the kitchen. Most important there was cleaning. Everyday everything was cleaned very thoroughly and with a lot of water. All was sprayed with hot steam. Tops and bottoms of cans were cut off and the cans compressed, then collected and brought away. During week everybody could talk to the German camp vicar. And on Sundays there was service. On Sundays there was no work and I think on Saturdays too. But in Helena, where we had to harvest, Saturday was a workday.

<sup>22</sup> Not daily. Only when soldiers left definitely.

<sup>23</sup> When we did work outside the camp we took the lunch with us.

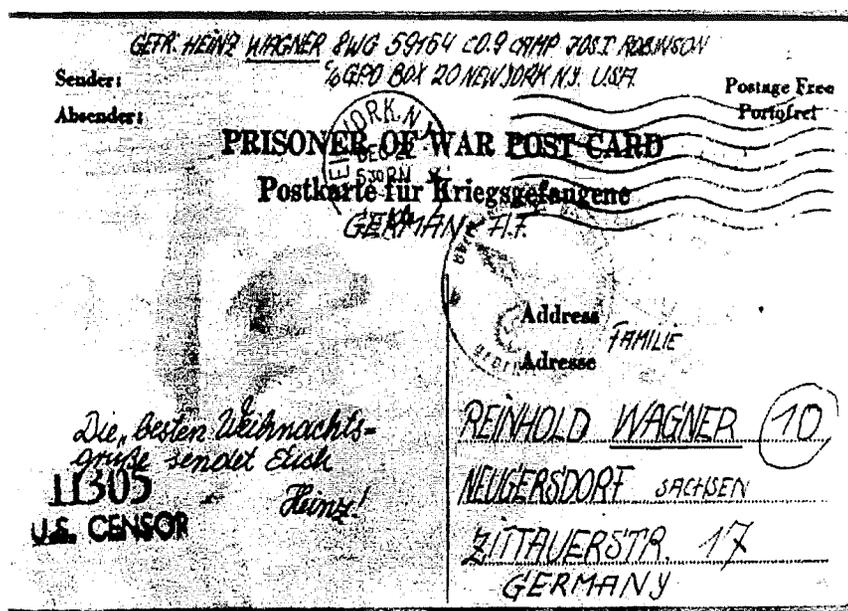
<sup>24</sup> When we worked outside the camp we returned at 5:00 p.m.

<sup>25</sup> Mostly an apple.

<sup>26</sup> For example a grapefruit.

<sup>27</sup> With piano, saxophone, violin, drums, trumpet, guitar, trombone

<sup>28</sup> For example tables and also the scenery for the theatre group.



We could write. There already were lines at the letters you had to refer to. Every month you could write two letters and four postcards. We could get them without paying for it. They were distributed to us.

Names: Captain West<sup>29</sup>,  
Colonel Bethwell<sup>30</sup>,  
-Hermann Kuntze<sup>31</sup>  
Unterer Damm  
21a Gartersleben  
(near Magdeburg)  
-Erhard Wendler<sup>32</sup>  
Waldenburger Str.  
138Oberfronhna (Erzgebirge)

I do not have any contact to people I met in the camp.

**26. Describe any incidents that were beyond the day to day routine. (Soccer matches, games, deaths of other POW's etc.)**

There was always something going on. There were a lot of soccer matches. For example the kitchen team vs. the choir. Everybody played. Also people that had never played before in their life.

**27. When were you notified that the war was over? Describe how you felt about this.**

We had "Chicagoer Abendpost"<sup>33</sup> and "New York Times". There we read about the end of the war. So we had hope to go home again soon.

**28. When did you leave Camp Robinson?**

We left to a camp where there only were tents. But I do not know anything about it or where it was. We stayed there for nearly four weeks. Then we were brought to Helena. It must have been after 1944. I do not remember exactly. There we had to work at cotton fields and had to clear<sup>34</sup>. Then we came back to the main camp Joseph T. Robinson where everyone got a coat. By train we traveled somewhere north of New York. A lot of unfinished Liberty ships were lying around there. We were looking forward because they told us we would go home now. So we thought we would go to Germany. But the harbour we reached, was not Hamburg, it was Sheffield! All in all I spent one year in Great Britain. There were four camps that I passed. In the first three camps we only worked inside the camp or had to build roads. In the fourth camp we were sent to farmers that could order us. There we had to harvest at fields.

<sup>29</sup> Perhaps this is a nickname.

<sup>30</sup> He was the camp officer for our company. He was nearly 60 years old at this time.

<sup>31</sup> He is more than 10 years older than me. I do not have contact and do not know if he is still alive and if the address is still the same.

<sup>32</sup> I also have no contact to him and do not know if he is still alive or if his address is still the same

<sup>33</sup> In German language.

<sup>34</sup> (To make free area where there were trees before.) I hope you can understand this. There was no better translation.

**29. How did you travel to return to your home?**

At the 19<sup>th</sup> of August in 1947 I was sent to the Russian Zone. By ship we traveled to "Hoek" in the Netherlands<sup>35</sup>. By train we were brought to Munster, then Friedland, then Leipzig. In Leipzig we had to stay four weeks in a quarantine camp. From there we got a ticket so that we could go home.

**30. Describe your feelings, thoughts etc. upon reaching Germany and your home. What changes did you encounter upon arriving there? Describe your reunion with family members.**

My parents knew from one of my letters that I would come from Leipzig. So my father went to the railroad station everyday<sup>36</sup> until some day I was in a train. So I met my father and we went home. There were my mother and my grandmother. The weaving-mills<sup>37</sup> were working for the Russians now. In most of the other factories the machines had been removed and were sent to Russia. The clothes factories were making Russian Uniforms now. My family was glad to see me healthy home again.

**31. Describe your thoughts and feelings upon revisiting Camp Robinson in 1999.**

It was interesting to see what or if something still would be there. I was surprised about the interest for me and my story and the warmth and friendliness how I was welcomed. It is very nice that there is still interest for the past. I am proud that I can help you by just telling my story. It is also very nice for me to have a reason to remember my time in America. And now I can use this chance to write down everything I still can remember. My grandson Marek is visiting me every second weekend and he helped me to write all this down. That is why it last so long until my story reaches you. I hope I was helpful for your work. If you have some more questions just let me know and I will do my best.

The following information was provided by Heinz Wagner's grandson to give some more detail to events as they occurred in Africa during the battles which led to the capture of Wagner. The books are from German histories and are cited in full.

**Kurowski, Franz:** *Von der Polizeitruppe z.b.V. "Wecke" zum Fallschirmpanzerkorps "Hermann Goring,"* Biblio Verlag, Osnabruck, 1994, page 80/81 (ISBN 3-7648-2439-5)

The end in Tunisia

At the "Kaktusfarm", so called because of tight cactus hedges, which surrounded Hill 107, the men of platoon Schafer of 4<sup>th</sup> "Jagerregiment" HG were lying. They defended this important hill, which prevented a direct breakthrough to Tunis, with their last action. In the afternoon 30 bombers headed to this hill and dropped heavy bombs at the "Kaktusfarm". Then fighter-bombers flew across the hill and fired at any emplacement they could recognize. That was when the last parked vehicles of the 4<sup>th</sup> platoon were destroyed. At the early 30<sup>th</sup> of April the enemy tried again. Three in front going tanks were destroyed by own requested artillery fire. The infantry was repulsed. One more bomber attack and the following tank attack

<sup>35</sup> Coming from Sheffield.

<sup>36</sup> Only one train a day was coming.

<sup>37</sup> Where my father and my mother worked.

accompanied by infantry also broke down. The first 10 enemy tanks were standing glowing and burning at the slope of the hill. As some enemy tanks broke through, they were destroyed by first sergeant Schafer with the platoon squad by explosives and "Haft Hohlladungen". As it got dark 14 more enemy tanks were lying at the slope and at the hill. As it was dark, second lieutenant Endlich from 1<sup>st</sup> battalion/Jägerregiment HG appeared with the report that the hill had to be held for 24 hours more. The next enemy attack was in battalion strength. From west and south tanks were coming. The own artillery – introduced from the hill – laid barrage. Short time before midnight first sergeant Schafer did lead back his 48 soldiers, most of them wounded. At the hill and the slopes second lieutenant Endlich counted 37 destroyed enemy tanks. First sergeant Schafer was suggested for the "Ritterkreuz". It was done to him by an American colonel at the 8<sup>th</sup> of August in 1944 in the P.O.W. – camp Harne in Texas. The whole camp garrison was there.

**Kurowski, Franz:** *Deutsche Fallschirmjäger 1939-1945. Edition Zeitgeschichte.* Special edition, Tosa Verlag, Wien, 1994, pages 303/304

The last time the men of "Fallschirmjägerregiment" 5 resisted decisively at Hill 107. Up there first sergeant Schafer with his platoon of paratroopers had established behind thick cactus hedges. From this hill the platoon could fire excellently to the northwest and Medjez el Bab. The enemy tried several times to take this hill rapidly. He always was thrown back. As, at the evening of the 28<sup>th</sup> of April, he attacked with strong forces, the 48 paratroopers with first sergeant Schafer could throw him back again.

The next attacks were supported by tanks. Again the last "Tiger" – tanks of "Oberstleutnant" Seidensticker joined the fight and battered some "Tommys" down before they turned away. At the 29<sup>th</sup> of April bombers of the "Stubborn 18" flew across the hill and bombed it. Fighter-bombers followed and the next morning the attacker tried again. Schafer requested "fire at the own position". Three attacking tanks were crushed, the enemy thrown back. As the evening of the day came, 14 destroyed enemy tanks were lying destroyed around the hill. Second lieutenant Endlich from 1<sup>st</sup> battalion was making his way through the attacker front and appeared at the hill. "Defend one more day, Schafer!" he beseeched his comrade. Schafer and his men defended. Not until he got the order next evening, to evade to direction Massicault, the paratroopers of his platoon retreated. 37 destroyed enemy tanks remained. Schafer was suggested for iron cross, he got in American captivity by the Red Cross.

**Kuhn, Volkmar:** *Mit Rommel in der Wüste. Kampf and Untergang des Deutschen Afrika-Korps 1941-1943.* MOTORBUCH Verlag, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, 1992, page 204 (ISBN 3-87943-369-0)

Until 4<sup>th</sup> of May the enemy could come near the line Bordj Toum – French Ferme – Fournak-sartyr- "Kamelberg-Hohen" near Pont du Fahs. At Hill 107 and a near hill the men of "Fallschirmjägerregiment" 5 were defending. The "Kaktusfarm", where the platoon of first sergeant Schafer was defending, was attacked by strong English forces since 28<sup>th</sup> of April. There Schafer defended against strong tank and air assaults for three days. His men destroyed 37 tanks. For this performance he got the "Ritterkreuz" at the 8<sup>th</sup> of August in 1944 in captivity in camp Harne, Texas.

