

1.

1/11/03

The last Chapter of a G.I.s Book

The end of the war on the 5/8/45 was the greatest news that we as Americans Soldiers ever wanted to hear. But only the survivors could cherish the moments of victory. I was really the only one still with the platoon. I had started back on the 10/5/43, as a replacement to the 143 Reg. How happy and so very sad on this V.E. day. {Victory in Europe] This platoon, had changed personnel many time's, in over five campaigns, that I had survived. was more than a miracle.

Now the war was over in Europe. The war in the Pacific was still going on. This left many questions for this Div. and its men, where do we fit in the unfinished war in the Pacific. The Army had implemented a point system, which for most of us was a real farce. Combat Days were not the first priority. By the time this system was in place every job had changed. All the original Guard men had left for home on some kind of hardship case, or days in actual service, not combat days. I was acting First Sgt. of men who were trying desperately to put points together. I was offered a field commission, but not interested, as another war was not in my liking. Besides it met my Discharge would be on an unknown date. I had all the War I wanted.

The war being over, our duties were to help the ravaged displaced persons start their liberation. What a difficult job, they spoke several languages, and were very louse infested people, we sprinkled {DDT} on those poor souls. They were walking zombies. many were completely immobile. A few fights would break out against a group going after a collaborator, which you could tell by his clean striped suit and a very full body, he had been eating well.

Our Next duty was to search every home in the rural areas in the Southern parts of Germany. Pulling guard duty, and to do much of what the Guys called Chicken shit army procedures. We lived in the homes we took over while in the village's we were searching. Our orders were to pickup anything concerning the Nazi War Machine. While this was our primary duty, for several months, our mind was really only on trying to get points. To be able to ship home and, get out of this Army was our first goal. Captain Chambers my Company Commander had been wounded very bad, and was in the hospital in England. So the Silver Star was lost in the Army schuffle that Captain Chambers was writing me up for, this was stanard procedure for filing for any medals.

For me my search was answered, as I was calling several old phone numbers, from an old post card that I had with my papers and messages from the war.

The number I called was for a Harold Warner, at Selingsgrove Pa. an address that was from his Army Days. But it was still a good address. His wife answered, and I asked if Harold Warner was there, she said in a very soft voice; yes I will get him. My first question was, why hadn't I known you as you had shown up in the Div. roster as being in Company B. Harold came back with an answer that he was Chambers, driver, runner, and in general his go to G.I. during his time being with him during the war. Harold was quick to ask if I had read the letter that Cpt. Chambers had posted back at our company Hdq.

Again this was news to me. This letter had been posted after I had shipped out for home, around the 8/15/45 thru camp Luckey Strike in the sixtytherd Div. So as we continued our conversation, Harold said, that he would mail the letter to me, stating that Chambers had written some great things about us G.I.s, in Co.B. He was a very well liked Captain, and I really would like to read the letter. So it wasn't long the letter came in the mail as Harold had promesed. This letter is in my book. {The Hunter and The Hunted} Author-- Bennett J. Palmer. The push was on for any points any points to speed up our chances to head for home. I was proud recipient of the C.I.B. medal which was earned the Hard Way, along with the Bronze Star and three oak leaf clusters, one for days combat and the other two for meritorious service. Plus the Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster for being wounded in Italy, and the second time in France. According to letters that I mailed home I would finally move on to Camp Luckey Strike in France with about 78 points. We made part of the 63 Div. we would leave France from La Havre seaport and Sail to Southampton England. Many of us would spend a few hours in London but our heart was not in London. As we board our ship to return home, much to our surprise the name on the side of this ship was the Queen Mary.

Boy we thought we had first class shipping. But we soon found that the Queen was still a troop carrier and bunks were six and higher in some areas. But we were going home. This was the moment we had all been waiting for. Even though there weren't many of my combat friends left to come home with, it seemed so sad that all I new was the 36Th. Div. I only know of one person that was on the ship as we left England. Dave Arvizu that had been in my platoon since March of 1944 as a new replacement. He had arrived back at our Reg. Hdq. From rehabbing from a serious wound, he had received as we were entering Germany. As we landed in the New York Harbor, with a few bells and whistles, ringing and the tugboats blowing water in the air, this is as close as I ever get to any celebration that we are back and the war is over. The rear echelon have done all the partying. But of course combat soldiers made dam poor parade soldiers. This is now the 10/20/45, the war had ended close to six months ago and we are now just getting home. So my book tells a bit of my life from the time of Discharge until about 60 years later when I have this need to write of a Combat Soldiers History of over five Campaigns in the same Platoon.

This I call the last chapter simply because, I did not go into detail of how the war medals were obtained. Of course this is a G.I. perogative to bitch so here I go. Since I have read many citations of M.O.H. and C.M.O.W. It really pains me that most of the young Soldiers that I call the G.I.kids had no knowledge of Military procedure of medals and how they were acquired. After the war, it was a very serious problem; many points were passed between Officers and the enlisted men or just plain old Army Regulars. In the past years when I have been on the Web page, of our Div. and find only 15 M.O.H.W medals, were all that were written up for the 36h. Div. in Six campaigns in W.W. 11. I have read twentythree Citations for The Japanese American units of the 100th. Battalion and the 442 Reg.

3.

WE fought along side these soldiers in Italy, and again in France. They were responsible for freeing up, our 141 lost Battalion, at Bryiers France. In reading these citations I wonder where in Hell I was, during this war. In all the combat that I was actively engaged in, patrols taken, prisoners taken, every kind of combat in just under four hundred days on line with the same platoon, and I never had one German stand and let me mow them down, many of these citations talk of shooting as many as twenty three Germans by one rifleman. In my opinion all these Citations were in the name of reparations for past censuring, for putting the Japanese civilians in camps during the war. We didn't start this war, but Americans Soldiers dam well fought on two sides of the world at once. In my opinion they fought well but not a Dam bit better than any American Unit. I think the record of continous days combat had much to do with soldier's morale. Our Div. Had been on line since the 8/15/44 the date of the Invasion of Southern France, so Soldiers fight to stay alive, never knowing our fate in battle.

The above story has bothered me a great deal, but knowing from Experience, how these medals were acquired after the war, I can say with pride that I am not wearing my Combat Buddies deserved medal. I have since talked to some of the survivors of the 100 Battalion and some from the original 442 Regiment, and many are just as upset as many of us in the regular American Army. One must remember that by this time in the war, if you had survived, we were now the Non Commissioned Officers, as attrition and most of the old guard had left for rear echelon jobs, or been K.I. A. wounded and reclassified. Or sent home as hard ship case's. For the G.I.Kids there was no manual's of how to write each other up for medals. We thought we were just doing what Soldiers did in War. To this day at seventyeight years old, was it seeing death on both sides so often, and that we had lived with it so long, was it that if we had lived another hour would it have made a difference, had we turned cold and only thought of our individual survival, of which we had not one reason to believe we would survive for the next minute in battle. Was it different for myself having survived, over five campaigns in a long and horrible war. Medals were the last thing we thought about in combat. I can assure everyone, I am not wearing a buddies deserved medal.

My other big gripe some years after the war, was why now aren't we all Americans. Some want to be called African Americans, Japanese Americans, why not Irish Americans.sounds kind of dumb. Being in a Infantry div.where no one asked what Nationality I was. We were American, and Dam Proud of it. Politics even in wartime never ended. By the way reparations had been payed some years back, to familys of these Japanese American Soldier's. In my opinion we in America were all immigrants some where in our family tree. Now of course the colored want reparations for their family's being slaves, and were freed by Yankees during the Civil War. Where does it end, does the Govt. owe every eighteen to twenty year old's, parents for their sons being killed or maimed during the war.

This last chapter so to speak; is some of the many things that I had problems with. So I have tried to explain the ones that bothered me, for near sixty years. Having dedicated

4.

this book to all those whose lives were taken in the European Campaign, and in the Pacific these are my Heroes may God rest their Soul.

I have written my combat history, of my service in WW11, my never ending thought goes back to the families who son's never came home, the Gold Star mothers who new very little of their son's terrable fate in a very long war of attrition, mainly in the Infantry Companies. Where our communications to our homes and families was a V mail, or a short letter, scribbled under a blanket with a flickering candle for a bit of light. Hoping the Germans wouldn't see the light and start shelling us. Our letters were censored by our Platoon leaders, and most of us had a bit of jargon that we were able to give the families a little idea where we were. The G.I. kids of WW11 were the 18 to 20 year old school dropouts, who had been drafted and given very short Infantry training. In 1943 A million of us kids, were shipped to Casablanca North Africa. Most of us never had a furlough home. By December 1943 I was wounded at San Pietro Italy, sent back to North Africa to rehab, and by January 22/ 1944, I returned to find my Co.B was a broken platoon, of the few who had survived Mark Clarks Rapido River feasco. What a very fast year 1943 was for the Combat Infantrymen. To again be thrown in to combat .We were the expendables, as I will learn the Army will keep sending us back on line as long as we can carry a gun, and survive to fight another day.

I hope I can be satisfied that I have spoken to all the things that really bothered this old Veteran for so many years God Bless their Souls, for they are the ones we must always remember. Written by a very Proud American, author of {The Hunter and The Hunted}.

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