

William L. Blank SN: 13063565 , S/Sgt.  
Co. G . 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment  
82nd. Airborne Division

I enlisted in the Airborne after seeing a movie newsreel showing parachute training. Since I had never been in an airplane before, I thought I should take a ride before signing up, mainly to see if I could do it. After the ride, I was convinced it was for me. I enlisted on April 19, 1942 and was sent to Ft. Lee, Virginia, and from there to Camp Wheeler, Georgia. There I took 16 weeks of basic training. After the completion of basic, we were sent to Ft. Benning, Ga. for parachute training and this training was completed on August 29, 1942. I went directly to the Frying Pan area and was assigned to Co. G where we stayed until we moved to Alabama area on October 1, 1942.

While in Alabama area, we were constantly undergoing extensive training and maneuvers. On one occasion we were scheduled for a 16 mile march. Co. G was the lead company and we started out in pouring rain. We marched to our destination only to learn that the rest of the battalion had returned to camp after the first hour. Our radios were unable to contact battalion headquarters, so we were the only company out there. After we learned the problem had been called off, we moved to a small village where we practically bought out a small store of everything they had which could be eaten without cooking. Trucks were sent out to transport us back to camp.

The 504th Prcht. Inf. was in a neighboring camp and we became friendly rivals. Often fights would occur between the two regiments. Boxing was promoted between the two regiments and Co. G and the third battalion produced two of the champions, one being Tommy Thompson, the other from G Co., the name I cannot recall.

Phenix City, Ala. and Columbus, Ga. were the two towns frequented by the two regiments. Phenix City was the most notorious city and you didn't go to this town alone except at great risk. Battles were frequent and several troopers were killed which resulted in a planned attack the plan was to burn down a place called Cotton's Fish Camp. The word leaked out so this was averted. Everything was open and legal in Phenix City.

The third battalion had a daily retreat parade regardless of what training had been done during the day. We made a number of jumps while in Alabama and my first night jump was my 13th. I recall the we lost a couple of troopers who slipped out of their chutes over a black top road and were killed. They had mistaken the road for the Chatahooche River which was between us and Lawson Field at Ft. Benning.

We left the Alabama area by train for Ft. Bragg, N.C. on Feb. 3, 1943, where we joined the 82nd Airborne Division. We continued our extensive training schedule. In March, 1943 we made the first regimental mass jump at Camden, S.C. Company G was to hold the bridge over the Catawba river. One of the G. Co. men landed in one of the tallest trees in S.C. After letting down his reserve and jump rope, he was nowhere near the ground. Equipment had to be sent out to get him down. It was reported that one jumper's chute was caught by a following plane propeller and threw him up into the air. He came down safely on his reserve. My position was beside the bridge and during the night there was much traffic going across the bridge to a night spot. We stopped all cars(to search) and ask if they had anything to drink. Most did and this made for a nice night. We pooled our money and I hitched a ride to a Camden restaurant for sandwiches. When I arrived it seemed as though all of the regiment was there. I enjoyed the food and hitched a ride back. It turned out to be a very nice night.

Fayetteville, N.C., being the only town close by, didn't have much to offer except the famous Town Pump. This was filled nightly with hundreds of troopers. Fights were common among the troopers, especially the MP's that patrolled the town. On one occasion just before leaving Bragg, a small war between troopers and MP's broke out. The MP's took a beating.

Just prior to leaving Bragg, our company had about 32 AWOL's and the company commander was replaced with Lt. Meyers, a West Pointer. It was believed some discipline could be restored by him, but his career went down as fast as a trooper without a chute. The AWOL's were rounded up and made to pitch tents outside the barracks. An armed guard was placed over them and instructed to shoot if they tried to leave. A Co. G man was on guard and just before lights out, he shot and killed two of them. Two boys with the same last name but unrelated. The man who shot them was later transferred to Parachute Engineers and Lt. Meyers received one of his several demotions.

On or about April 20, 1943, we removed our parachute identification including our jump boots. Strict restrictions were placed upon our movements including the camp area. Some of the troopers, however, did get outside the restricted area and found that an engineering outfit at the camp had been issued jump boots. This was resented by the troopers since they thought this was our special equipment and our badge of distinction. This resulted in fights and in some the offending boots were cut down to GI shoe size. We were constantly on alert movement sessions. When the day finally arrived on or about April 28, 1943, we boarded trains for New York harbor where we sailed in a large convoy for a destination not yet known. Rumors had us going all over the world. We eventually learned our destination was North Africa and we arrived in Casablanca, French Morocco on or about May 10, 1943. On the way to Africa we were instructed on all of the do's and don'ts of conduct when we were exposed to the Arabs and their customs. They were so successful in their instructions about dealing with Arabs that we had little contact with them. We did go to town in Casablanca but we kept our distance from the natives. After a couple of days we left Casablanca by truck for Oujda, French Morocco. Here we pitched our pup tents out in the middle of nowhere, dug slit trenches and set up Lister bags. The weather was so hot during the day it kept down the extensive training to night problems. We used the mornings for physical conditioning exercises. The Arabs came every day to trade their wares with the GI's. They could carry more things under those long robes than can be imagined. They liked cigarettes (especially Camels), mattress covers and boots. While at Oujda we made a special jump for all of the high Allied officials and officers. We flew for some time at very low altitude prior to jumping and because of the heat, it was a very bumpy ride with everyone on board getting sick before the jump. When the signal came for us to jump we were relieved to leave the plane. It was a rather windy day and this caused a number of rough landings and broken bones.

Our only diversion from this camp was an occasional visit to Oujda which had very little to offer but it was a change of pace and gave us an opportunity to try our skill at trading with the Arabs in the shops. I am sure we got the worst of the deal but money was not very important to us then.

Our kitchens were set up outdoors and the mess line was the same. Every day at meal time a dust storm would blow right down the mess line and the food would be full of dirt.

We had an invasion sand table set up in tent in the company area. One night I drew guard duty to keep unauthorized people out of the tent. To my delight, I saw Gen. Gavin coming toward this tent. In order to have some fun and to let him know it was being guarded, I let him get close, I clicked the safety off on the rifle and commanded him to halt. He came to an abrupt halt and I let him proceed after giving the proper password. He knew that he would be shot if he didn't comply. He taught us well.

On or about July 1, 1943 the division moved to Kariouan, Tunisia, for the final preparations for the Sicilian invasion. Some of us went by plane and others by train. I fortunately went by plane. We pitched tents in an olive grove and did very little except get some weapons and equipment in order. Kariouan was off limits since it was supposed to be a holy city. While at Kariouan we were treated to an outdoor show put on by Bob Hope and his company. Shortly thereafter, we left for the invasion of Sicily on the night of July 9, 1943. My flight to Sicily was uneventful or at least it seemed so. My stick landed in an olive grove some where south of Biazza ridge. It was a good jump, we landed very close together. We gathered up what equipment we could find. It included a machine gun and mortar. After a short time we got together with Lt. Isaacs and some other troopers and moved out to the northeast. We did not encounter any opposition until daylight

when we came upon a farm house occupied by Italian soldiers. They opened fire and after a brief skirmish, they surrendered. We took them prisoner and moved out in the direction where we crossed the road just north of Biazza ridge and proceeded to a hill a short distance in sight of Biazza ridge. While crossing a grape vineyard on the way to our first defensive position, a German fighter plane came down very low across us. But he must have had his mind on the ships laying just off shore since he didn't try to harass us. We proceeded to the hill just ahead and set up our defensive position. We had a commanding view of the sea and the road below. Later we were joined by a group from the 45th Infantry Division. They had come ashore over the beach. I don't know how many men we had on the hill but we were not worried about any surprise attacks. That night the 504th Combat team came over and we witnessed their slaughter. Every ship laying off shore opened up with anti-aircraft fire on those low flying planes which were clearly marked. We witnessed the movement of German trucks and tanks up the road toward Biazza ridge. We wanted to fire on those trucks and tanks but the ranking officer on the hill was with the 45th Inf.Div. and he prevented us from firing. This officer had radio contact with the Navy but he only called in artillery fire when a German tank started firing on a hill between us and the beach. We knew nothing of our troops on Biazza ridge at the time, but the next night there was a terrific battle going on at Biazza ridge. We witnessed the heavy fire that took place.

About the third day after the Biazza ridge battle, things were relatively quiet where we were. Tony Costello and I decided to see if could find something for the prisoners to eat. We went north along this ridge until we came to a farm house. We found an old man and woman in the house. They were cooking a large pot of spaghetti. Tony spoke Italian and he explained our mission. After we ate the old man put the pot of spaghetti on his head and followed us back to our position. Immediately after we arrived, our group moved out toward Biazza ridge with the prisoners. The old man was left with his pot of spaghetti which I presumed he took back home.

Arriving at Biazza ridge, we saw the results of the battle. I lost a good friend and one of my squad, Alfred Glascock. It seemed a tragedy that we were not allowed us to fire on those Germans when we saw them going down the road toward the ridge. We could have put pressure on them and had them in a cross fire with our men on the ridge. At this point, we got better organized and were able to move as a combat unit.

We moved from Biazza in organized groups and proceeded on toward our final destination which was Trapani. The fighting along the way was limited to light skirmishes and the capture of many Italian troops. When we made the final approach to Trapani, we were aboard trucks. Just outside of the town we unloaded for the assault on the town. The Italians had a commanding position just outside of the town and they fired a few rounds of artillery at us without too much effect. We fixed bayonets and went toward the town. We crossed an open area used for an airport and expected the worst since there was no cover. Fortunately, the Italians were not in the mood to defend the town with any zeal, so the town was taken without great difficulty. We acquired a large number of prisoners which we placed in a barbed wire compound. There wasn't much interest among the Italians to escape since they thought that they would be shipped to the States.

After being in Trapani for several weeks, we were flown back to Kairouan, Tunisia. We received replacements and weapons and returned to Sicily to prepare for the next mission. The next planned mission was to be dropped in Rome, Italy. We received our briefing and were in the process of loading into our C47's when the word came that the this mission was aborted. Another mission was planned for a drop on Salerno, Italy to reinforce the invasion force already there. We jumped on the Salerno beachhead on September 15, 1943. At the briefing, we were warned that jumping too soon would land us in the sea and too late would land us in among the Germans. Our flight was proceeding without difficulty until we approached the DZ. When the red light came on we stood in the door ready to go. The red light went out and the plane went into a steep climb and it seemed we flew for several minutes before we got the green light and jumped. As we came down, we could see all of these fox holes, we were certain we were among the Germans. After crawling around for a while, we found they were abandoned fox holes so we gathered up our equipment and moved out to find the rest of the company. No resistance was met on the drop zone. After joining up with the company we moved out to some high ground overlooking the beach. We had a good view of the fleet

laying offshore. We watched German fighter planes attack the ships and the American fighters attacking them. On one occasion an American fighter was chasing a German fighter right over our position. One of the rounds from the fighter went through the leg of one of our men. He was so interested in the dog fight, he didn't realize he had been hit until he looked down and saw the blood. We continued to move up to much higher ground where I took a recon patrol to the top of a mountain where I found a small farm house empty and no sign of the enemy. Since the bridges had been destroyed to the north, we were loaded on landing craft and made an end run up the beach and landed at Mairori on September 28, 1943 at 11:00 PM. We loaded trucks and we were transported up the mountain. It was pouring rain and we were so high the lightning seemed to be below us. When we came to the entrance of a tunnel, we unloaded and moved into the woods. It was the darkest night; we couldn't see 10 feet ahead and the rain continued all night. When daylight finally came we found a barn about 30 feet in the distance. If only we had known it was there, we could have gotten in out of the rain. With daylight we were able to march on through the tunnel on toward Naples, our destination. We moved into Naples without too much difficulty and set up a defensive perimeter at Garibaldi Square. We closed off the square to prevent a congregation of civilians. The town was pretty much destroyed, including the public water system and everything useful. This was done by the Germans on their way out of town. There was spasmodic shooting from the roof tops by what the civilians said were diehard Fascists. Thousands of civilians came to the square; most of them had weapons which they promptly turned in. We broke the rifles in half and made a pile of them. G company spent the night in a bombed out railroad station. The next day we moved to a bombed out theater where we were organized into patrol groups to patrol the city and to keep order. My group was assigned to the area near the docks, which by this time was beginning to unload supplies. Our biggest problem was controlling bread lines at bakeries where there was a limited amount of bread being produced due to limited supplies. After several days I was taken sick with malaria and jaundice. After several days at the evacuation hospital, I was sent to the 3rd Convalescent hospital just outside the city in an area that was designed for a World's Fair. It was a tent hospital which had just arrived from the States. While there, we were bombed for three nights in a row. The first night we lost a number of men, some from the 82nd. My row of tents took two direct hits and we counted 14 dead at this spot. The hospital had not been properly marked and the Germans probably thought it was a supply depot. I was sent from this hospital to a replacement depot where I heard that the 505 was moving out. I didn't want to be left behind so I jumped on a truck headed for Naples and got there just in time to move to the dock and boarded a ship for Ireland. We were in a convoy in the Mediterranean and while on deck, we heard the call, "All hands to general quarters, prepare for a torpedo on the port side, this is no drill". Everyone ran to the port side to watch for the torpedo but the crew ordered us all to go below. We felt quite uncomfortable below with expectation of being hit by a torpedo. Fortunately, no torpedo hit and we were finally allowed to return to the deck. We later dropped anchor at Oran, Africa and were taken ashore for exercise which included soccer. After returning to the ship we proceeded to Belfast, Ireland and on to the small town of Cookstown. Our stay here was two months during the winter of 1943. Training was not too extensive while in Ireland and passes were issued rather frequently. We went to Belfast for entertainment since it was a large city. One of the well known and frequently visited places was Ulster Hall, a public dance hall. Troops from all kinds of outfits came and fights would occur often. In February, 1944, we left Ireland for Quorndon, England which was to be our base of operations for the next two invasions. Training was intensified; the order to move out at any time during the night was a constant practice. While in Quorndon we were taken to Sherwood Forest to go through the British Commando obstacle course. A number of practice jumps were made while here.

As D Day came closer, restrictions were increased and while we knew nothing of the details, we were expecting to move out any day. That day finally arrived. With full equipment, we were transported to be briefed and await the invasion of Normandy, France. At the base we were housed in a large hangar and given a sand table briefing, issued escape kits, ammunition and supplies and told to await orders to load up. Our mission was to drop at Ste Mere Eglise, France, secure the town and block the roads leading to the beach. When the order finally came, we loaded and proceeded to Normandy. During the flight we received a fair amount of fire from below but with no apparent damage to our plane. My stick made a near perfect landing in a field close to the point where the Pathfinders had set up their lights. We assembled rather quickly on Col. Krause and after we gathered a few more troopers, we moved out to Ste Mere Eglise during

the very early morning hours of June 6, 1944. Nearing the town we met an old Frenchman who Col. Krause questioned about the town and degree of troop strength. We went into town expecting a big fight, but things were relatively quiet. We saw a number of troopers who had landed in trees and on light wires, all of which were dead. They had not had a chance to get out of their chutes. After covering the town, we found that practically all of the Germans had left. When daylight came we went out to locate equipment bundles and retrieve whatever equipment that could be found. When we returned, defensive positions were set up around the town. My position on the edge of town facing Montebourg. The Germans had dug some nice fox holes and trenches; this saved us much work. By mid afternoon the Germans started to try to retake the town. They came at us from all directions and the shelling began about 900 yards in front of me. There was much German activity and we kept constant fire back and forth. They made an attempt to drive a truck through our mines we had spread across the road. We then opened up with all small arms and the truck burned in the road. The shelling continued for about three days and tanks were reported headed for town. We were told we would fight to the last man. We took inventory of our ammunition and waited for the worst. Three of Ron Snyder's men from the 3rd platoon were hit by tank fire just a few yards behind my position. One received a direct hit; it took off both legs. He died later at the aid station. On the second day of the invasion, a glider landed just in front of our position. German machine gun fire went through that glider like water down a creek. We didn't think anyone could be alive. We through an orange smoke grenade to let him know he was with his side. Surprisingly, the pilot ran out and dived in the trench we were using. That pilot's head never came above ground until the invasion force from the beach arrived. When the first tank appeared to our front, I called for Dinsmore in the trench to tell me if it was one of ours. As he raised his head up, he said it was ours. A sniper from somewhere in the town shot him through the neck and he died shortly thereafter.

After the troops from the beach reached our position, we were organized in a regular attack force, although many of our men had failed to regain contact, were prisoners, or had been killed. With the troops remaining we moved out in the general direction of La Haye du Puits. As we proceeded in our attack, we came upon a small town where there was railroad track on an embankment with the road going through the underpass. Our men were on the embankment and the Germans directly on the other side a couple of yards away. I raised my head to look across and as I did, a German directly opposite raised up and we looked each other in the eye and ducked down. The German threw several of those blue grenades at me but they rolled to the bottom of the embankment and exploded without harm. When I raised up again, I caught him coming up with my tommy gun. They had a small tank just up the road aimed at the underpass. He was firing down the road at anything that moved. Fortunately, he only had armor piercing shells and they didn't cause any damage until Col. Krause tried to roll out a 75mm pack howitzer to fire back to fire back which resulted in the loss of the gun and the crew. The tank made an attempt to drive through the underpass but bazookas on either side hit him. Unfortunately, he was able to reverse it back up the road. I crawled over to the underpass to get a good look at the tank and as I raised up, he fired at me and the shell went through the steel of the underpass. Luckily, it was not high explosive. A few minutes later an American fighter plane was approaching at a very low altitude. We waved at him and he dropped a bomb which hit at the bottom of the embankment. Everyone ducked for cover when they saw the bomb coming. When it hit, it buried in the ground with a delayed action fuse. Ernest Brunson raised and said "A dud". At that moment it exploded throwing rocks and dirt everywhere. I understand there were some minor casualties from the rocks, but nothing compared to what might have been, had it exploded on impact. Short thereafter, we moved back from the railroad embankment to high ground a few yards away. While several of us were gathered in the corner of the hedgerow, a German machine gun had crossed the tracks down below. He began firing at us but his sights were too high. We went through an opening in the hedgerow and hit the ground. The machine gunner had gotten his sights right and we lay there. George Harmon, who was next to me yelled "Oh, I am hit". I looked over at him and there was big hole in his jacket. When I pulled his clothes back the damage, there was the imprint of a bullet which only burned him and hadn't broken the skin. I later learned the same bullet had gone through my belt and equipment. A short while later, we moved to the left and crossed the railroad tracks and set up our position in an orchard a little way from a farm house. A sniper was taking pot shots at us from the corner of a barn. One of our men finally located his position and the next time his head came around the corner of the barn, our man got him through the the head. Arnie Paulson was off to my left and he had a good view beyond the farm house. He directed our mortar fire and we laid about 6 or

8 rounds on a group of Germans issuing rations. Later we counted 8 dead from the mortar fire. While still in the orchard, three Germans came walking up a little dirt road which was just behind our position. They did not realize we were there. They were quickly disposed of. We soon moved out chasing after the Germans who had enough for awhile.

Moving toward La Haye du Puits, we met light resistance and some occasional artillery fire. We finally came to high ground just in front of La Haye du Poits, which the Germans had occupied trying to halt our advance. We moved to the foot of the hill and started to receiving fire from the hill. One machine gun crew set up in the corner of a hedgerow and was quickly knocked out by a German machine gun on the hill. Marty Scherser, our medic, went out to take care of them and was killed by the same gun. The killing of our medic made us pretty mad and three of us decided to find the machine gun and put it out of action. Fritz, Pynson and I started crawling up a hedgerow where we thought the gun might be. Fritz decided not to go any further, so Pynson and I continued on. After a short way we heard some noises from the other side of the hedgerow. Not knowing for sure whether they were Germans, we decided to fire a shot over their heads to see if we could draw some fire. They responded with a couple of egg-shaped grenades which rolled down the hill and exploded. We knew we had found them. I tried to unload a clip of tommy gun ammo into their position but the gun jammed. Pynson and I made a hasty withdrawal to our mortar position where we proceeded to lay in a heavy concentration of mortar fire. Just after this encounter, we moved back in and found we had been successful. Four prisoners were taken; MacDonald took care of them. Since the Germans moved off the hill, we moved up and took a position overlooking La Haye du Puits where we dug in to await the 8th Division, which was coming up from the rear to relieve us and to assault the town. The Germans were just in front of us and we kept them from taking our position. The 8th Division was coming from the rear and they started to fire on us until they found out we were Americans. They went through us and down through the town. After they had passed through the town, two of us went down to the town. There were many dead 8th Division men. I believe this was their first combat experience. We were soon loaded on trucks and headed to the beach for our return to England. While driving along the road, we saw Krompasky standing beside the road. He had not been seen since the jump. We stopped and picked him up and went to the beach and were loaded on LST's for the trip to England. Col. Krause had acquired a jeep and when we got on board the LST, he gave it to the commander. They had it painted navy gray with Navy identification before we reached England. We returned to our old camp at Quorndon and were issued a 7 day leave, which was welcomed relief after 33 days of continuous combat. We had returned with about one half of the men we had prior to the invasion.

We quickly received replacements and were back to the regular training routine. On September 8, 1944, we were moved back to the airport to prepare for our next mission. It was to have been in Belgium and after receiving our final briefing and getting our weapons in good order, the word came down that the jump had been called off due to the fact the ground forces had overrun the DZ. We returned to camp briefly and moved back to the airport on September 15th for the Holland invasion. We went through the same briefing procedure and learned the jump would be in daylight. We were pleased we would at last be jumping in daylight so we wouldn't be so scattered on the DZ. We departed for Holland on September 17, 1944. It was a beautiful day. As we crossed the Channel into Europe, I stood in the door looking out and enjoyed watching the fighter aircraft attacking German anti-aircraft gun positions. Occasionally, I would hear small pieces of flak hit the plane, but no damage was done. One reason for standing in the door was to get my stick out in a hurry if the plane became damaged. We finally reached the DZ at Groesbeek as planned. We poured out on target. We were getting small arms fire from the woods along side of the DZ, but none of my men was hit. It was a beautiful sight to see all of those chutes and a steady stream of C47's. Just at the point where the C47's made their turn to return to England, there was a battery of 40mm guns which knocked down several of our planes after they had dropped their load. We assembled quickly and moved into the town of Groesbeek. We were met by cheering Dutch people with their orange armbands. They had quickly rounded up the few Germans and sympathizers. We started to digging in on the edge of town facing the German border which was about three miles away. A short time after, we arrived and were all around the railroad tracks that went through the town. A slow moving freight train went right by us without a shot being fired. I suppose we were so surprised to see it we didn't recognize it was a threat to us. The Germans were about 1000 yards to our front and we could see them moving back and forth around some buildings.

We laid some mortar rounds on a house and it looked as if sparks were flying from it. I turned around and saw Capt. Isaacs and Lt. Mastrangelo coming up from behind us in an orchard. I saw the limbs fall of the trees over their heads and told them to get down as those sparks turned out to be a 40mm gun firing at us but a little too high. We hit the ground and no one was hurt. That night I was called on to take a recon patrol to our front toward the German border. We moved out over the flat terrain with no cover except the darkness. About a mile out, we found the Germans digging in in large numbers. Each time we tried to go around them, we ran into more of them. We finally returned and reported the heavy concentration of build up in that area. Several nights later, the Germans made a heavy attack on our positions with use of artillery and heavy small arms fire. Their attack was not successful but they caused some damage to our troopers. I was sent out to an outpost to take over after the death of one of our platoon leaders, Lieutenant {his name I cannot remember}. He had been shot through the temple by one of his own men. It was an accident caused by his own instructions. He had told his men to shoot anyone crossing the tracks. He crossed the tracks and was coming back and was dropped in the middle of the tracks.

The Germans kept up their attempt to penetrate our lines without success. At one time after several days, our ammunition started to get low and we had to fire only at sure targets. One night when we had an outpost in a house in front of our lines, a call was received from them. They said the Germans were coming and asked if they should fire at them. They were asked how far away they were. No answer came back and the house was set afire. While the house was still burning, I was asked to take a patrol out to get a prisoner. With the burning building and the moonlight, it made movement very difficult. We spotted a great deal of German activity along our front so we crawled down a small ditch about 8 or 10 inches deep toward the Germans. On the way down we heard the sounds of the Germans moving the bolt back and forth on a machine gun off to our left. We moved down to the road where we had seen the German movement, but all was quiet at this time. I was in the ditch on the side of the road and my men were to the rear and right rear. After what seemed to be a long time, we spotted two Germans in the shadows off to our left, obviously on guard. One of my men began to cough and the guards moved over to check. One of the guards got in the ditch with me up the road and the other one came down the middle of the road directly in front of me. He was carrying a bolt action rifle. I tried to get him to put his hands up. On my third try, he fired from the hip at me and started to run. He was hit at least 30 times by my tommy gun and Pynson's rifle. When the shooting stopped and I looked back and saw all of my men running back toward our lines. They thought that I had been killed. I crawled out alone with Germans taking pot shots at me without success. The next night Cantrell took another patrol out and he followed the same route. Unfortunately, the machine gun that had not been working the night before, was in action and the patrol was stopped before they reached the road. One man was killed.

After Groesbeek, we moved into Nijmegen and we set up defensive positions along a dike in an area called the Polder. The Germans had their positions on the dike to our front. A listening post was placed out in front of the dike and one night the Germans slipped in and took one of our men as a prisoner. The next night I was asked to take out a combat patrol to their lines and get a prisoner. I was sent to Battalion Hdq. where they assigned a Dutch underground man and one of the Battalion sergeants to go with me. The Dutch man spoke the language and knew the terrain, so I thought he would be a big help. He was not much help when I needed him most. After searching some houses on the way and finding nothing, we started across this bare field toward the dike. With the Dutch man and the Battalion Sgt. and me leading the patrol, we came upon a German listening post. The German stood and said something I did not understand. Then my Dutchman hit the ground and threw a hand grenade at him. I followed suit. During the flash of the grenades, the German started to run. This activity woke up all of the Germans in the area and flares began to be fired, lighting up the field like a night ball game. We started to receive some rifle fire from a hedge to our left. We returned the fire and moved toward the hedge. As we got close, a machine gun opened up just missing my head. I tossed a grenade into their hole and put it out of action. The firing stopped but the flares were continuing. Blasik crawled over to me and said he thought we should get out of there since we were the only ones left up there. One man, a Polish trooper, was dead and the Battalion sergeant was injured and could not walk. Blasik and I picked him up and started back to our line. In spite of the flares, we were able to return to our line without injury. A Lieutenant, whose name I do not remember, decided to bring up the rear

of this patrol and it was his remarks to the men, that caused them to leave us out there alone. This Lieutenant was later transferred to a motor pool job when we returned to the French rest area.

After we pulled back from the dike area, we were bivouacked at a farm house in a rest area. One night we decided we would go down to this field where there was herd of cattle. Our motive was to get a cow to butcher. We got the cow and brought it back to the barn. We posted a guard at the door to keep lookout for the Dutch. (It was a \$500 fine if we were caught killing one of their cows.) We had the cow skinned and hung in the barn ready to cut up when the guard said some Dutchmen were coming. They came in the barn to get some equipment; we thought we were in trouble for sure but nothing came of it. We enjoyed the meat which was quickly eaten.

After this, our stay in Holland was ended and we were transported by truck November 16, 1944 to the Suippes and Sisone, France area. We were housed in a large two story barracks, given back pay and cigarette rations. We began to receive some replacements and get our equipment back in shape. Some of us were given three day passes to Paris. One night while attending a ballet at the camp theater building, they started calling for the highest ranking officers. The calls kept coming on down the rank. We jokingly said they would be calling the Sgts. next. We knew something was happening but had no idea what. About 2:00 AM, we were ordered to fall out. It was then we learned that the Germans had broken through our lines in Belgium. We were loaded on trucks with full equipment at 10:00 AM, December 18, 1944. We drove for some time and arrived at our destination that night. We unloaded and dug in for the night near Werbomont, Belgium. The next morning we fell in and started down a mountain road. After a short distance, we came upon two German tanks which had been knocked out the night before by American tank destroyers, which were waiting around the curve in the road. The wrecked tanks were full of American rations which they had captured during the breakthrough. We moved on past these tanks and crossed a bridge over a small river on toward defensive positions. The first such position that I recalled was at Grand Halluex. We dug in along the railroad tracks and river which passed through the town. Soon after our arrival, the Germans made a concentrated effort to push through us but were held on the other side of the river. The Germans were supported by tanks and we had the aid of a tank destroyer who knocked out several of their tanks. They made an attack on our position and turned back when the bridge was blown. After a couple of days at this position, we were ordered to withdraw to straighten out the defensive lines. We moved several miles to a crossroad where we set up defensive positions in and around a group of farm buildings. That night the Germans moved up and had in mind setting up positions where we were dug in. They were driven back and we retained our positions. The next couple of months were spent in continuous attacks and movement toward through the deepest snows and coldest weather I ever experienced. We spent most of our time in movement through the Ardennes forest and often found the Germans would come up from the rear or from some unexpected directions which added to the confusion of battle and constant alert we faced. In late January we moved into the forest to attack the Siegfried Line. The German resistance was constant and often at close contact. On the day before my injury, we came to this clearing in the forest and we began to receive some fire from the other side. The hillside on the opposite side of the clearing was lined with pill boxes and through the center of the clearing was a small stream and barbed wire. We were ordered to advance across the clearing to attack the pill boxes. The creek was about chest deep and the barbed wire slowed the crossing and made us perfect targets. We lost one man at the creek, but the majority made it across. In the immediate area where we crossed, there were two pill boxes. We could not hear any sounds from the boxes, so three of our men led by Krompasky attempted to enter the pill box. They were immediately fired upon by a machine pistol which killed Krompasky and wounded the other two. I crawled up on top of the pill box where there was a chimney and dropped a Gammon grenade down the chimney. My grenade killed one and forced the surrender of 14. They had captured three 82nd men, who were held prisoner in the pill box which we recovered. At approximately the same time MacDonald attempted to enter the other pill box and was shot in the head by a machine pistol. He was seriously injured but was still alive when this written account was made.

After dark we moved out to set up defensive positions. I was instructed to take a patrol to contact H company and let them know where our position would be. I was cautioned by the Battalion Commander to be careful because the area was full of mines. This was amusing because it was dark and the snow was waist

deep. That night we dug in and attempted to stay warm even though we had been soaked from wading the creek. The next day, February 3, 1945, we were told we were being relieved. As we started marching single file down through the forest to cut down on our chances of stepping on mines. I was unlucky enough to step on one. The medic was just behind me and was knocked down. He started to work on me immediately and Chris Perry, our Company medic, came back to where I was and took over my case.

I was carried by litter until put on a Weazel and taken to a road where I was transferred to a jeep which took me to the Aide Station. I was unconscious during much of the time and do not recall how far or how long was required to transport me to the field hospital at Spa, Belgium. There my left leg was amputated below the knee. After a couple of days at Spa, they took me to a railroad station at Verviers and left me on the floor until the train came to take me to Paris, France. I do not know how long I was there. The train finally came and took me to Paris. They loaded me in an ambulance for the trip to the hospital. When the ambulance door opened, there were more Germans than I had seen in one place. I reached for my P38 pistol, which I had between my legs and was prepared to shoot them if they dropped me. They handled me more carefully than anyone else had and I was relieved when I finally got into my hospital bed.

After a couple of weeks in Paris, I was put on board a four engine hospital plane for New York. Our route was to be via the Azores, Bermuda and New York. After flying for a couple of hours, the nurse said we would be landing. I thought it would be the Azores. It turned out to be Paris again. One of our engines had stopped after we had reached the coast and we had to return. A couple of days later we were reloaded and the flight was completed. We landed at Mitchell Field, Long Island, N.Y. I spent a couple of days at the Long Island hospital before being flown to Walter Reed General Hospital, Washington D.C. I stayed there until I was discharged on December 1, 1945.

#### Awards and decorations

Jump wings with 4 Invasion Stars  
Combat Infantry Badge  
Silver Star Medal  
Bronze Star Medal  
Purple Heart Medal  
African/ European Medal with 5 Stars  
Victory Medal  
Distinguished Unit Badge  
Bronze Arrowhead

During the retyping of this, my personal account of World War 2, it reminded me of the impact the war had on me and the development of my personality and the directions of my future life.

When I entered the army I was an unfocused young man with no specific goals and a desire to get away from home, where I felt I was unwanted. The war with all of the horrible and dangerous events that put life in jeopardy many times each day, changed an unfocused young man into one that developed confidence and the attitude that he could accomplish any task that was required of him.

My combat injury would prove to be a significant shaper of what would be a happy and prosperous life. The injury put me in the hospital where fate brought me in contact with a beautiful and wonderful young woman who was to become my wife. She provided the right balance to my life and taught me the meaning of true love.

This injury also changed my direction of future employment, when because of needing to see a V.A. doctor, I learned of a position with the Federal Government. This job led to many opportunities to demonstrate my ability to affect changes in government policies and practices that proved to improve service and reduce costs. It was a very rewarding experience and provided income that allowed for a comfortable life style.

I hope that anyone who reads this will understand that sometimes the terrible things that happen can prove to provide situations that can lead to positive and happy results. God brought me through all of the negative and positive aspects of my life and I would have been nothing without him.