

**ARMY LIFE
AS REMEMBERED
BY NORBERT P. BEACH
(Dictated to Paula DeForrest)
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505 Regiment
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After December 7, 1941, my association at the time was with young men a little older than I was; some were in the National Guard being called up. Some were being drafted. And some volunteered. And I began thinking about volunteering and going into the service. I saw a movie about parachute troops and the parachute school. I got to thinking about that and found out more information and found out that they paid \$50 a month extra. So after April 7th I went to San Angelo to the recruiting office and asked about enlisting and about joining the parachute troops. The recruiting officer told me that yeah they were looking for young men like me and they would put me into the parachute troops right away, which was a damn lie. But my mother would have to sign for me because I was 18 years old and back then you had to be 21 years old. So I went back to Ballenger and worked for a few more weeks and talked my mother into signing for me. Approximately the first week in June, two men that were older than I (James Bell and Ruben Dryer) found out that I was going to enlist and they decided they would enlist with me. So we went to San Angelo to the recruiting office and they put us on buses to San Antonio, TX, Ft Sam Houston. When we arrived, there were so many people, they couldn't process us so they put us up in a hotel for two weeks, which was a vacation time really because they paid for everything and we had a lot of fun. We spent what little money we had. Approximately 22 June 1942, they inducted us into the Army and we got separated and for two weeks we got our shots, pulled KP, dug ditches, and filled them back in. If I had any money, I think I would have went AWOL. After two weeks, they sent us to Camp Walters, Mineral Wells, TX, where we trained for approximately three months. I was in a platoon with Audie Murphy and had a platoon picture that got lost in the last 20 years. He was a little guy, 110 pounds, but he would try anything. In our training there, we learned how to do close-order drill, shoot rifles, disassemble them, clean them, and reassemble them. The same with machine guns and mortars. During this training we had one night bivouac, that is overnight out in the field. Approximately the third week in September 1942, we had paratrooper instructors come to the area and put us through some rigorous maneuvers to see if we were fit to take parachute training. I was one of a few that was selected to go. So around the last week in September 1942 we were sent to Ft Benning, Georgia to parachute jump school, where we went through rigorous training for three weeks, jumping out of mock planes, learning how to pack a parachute, and the fourth week, we made our five practice jumps. My fourth jump, I hit a crosswind and I landed with my head rather than with my feet. It busted the plastic helmet that I was wearing. After we finished the fourth week a few of us were transferred to the 505, which was stationed in Alabama, next to the Chattahoochee River, across from Ft Benning. This is actually part of Ft Benning, but we the 505 were detached there by ourselves. Upon arrival there, I was assigned to the First Platoon and was given a 10-day leave to go back home, which most of that time was travel time. I think it took me three days by train to get home and three days to get back. After my return, we went through rigorous training, five-mile runs every morning, calisthenics, and field problems. Also,

two more practice jumps. One of our field problems consisted of a 24-hour forced march, which covered 54 miles. Quite a few people dropped out. What brought this on was the 505 and other units had passes to Columbus, Georgia and got into fights. Twenty-seven people got thrown into jail. After the forced march, some people got on their class A uniform and were heading back into town and Col Gavin made the remark that those able to do this must be some tough son-of-a-guns. Phoenix City was in Alabama, which was a lawless town, or the law was crooked. We had numerous problems there. I went into town with a group of guys one evening and after the second drink I had, I began to get whoosy. So I went out in the alley and hid under some cardboard boxes until I regained my consciousness and caught a cab back to camp. That was my last trip into Phoenix City. Christmas 1942 was in the barracks. Most of us were broke, had no money, because it was the end of the month. We only got paid at the beginning of the month. (Private's salary - \$50 and Jump Pay - \$50.) So we pooled our money and had someone go into town and buy whiskey for our Christmas celebration. One of our overnight training missions in January 1943 was extremely damp and cold. As I put my blanket down and laid down on it and covered up, after a few minutes I woke up and my blanket was froze to the ground. So it not only rains in Georgia, it gets cold. Toward the end of January, we moved to Camp Mackall, North Carolina. We were there one day, and they moved us to Ft Bragg, North Carolina, where we joined the 82nd Airborne. On arriving there, we found living conditions much better than anywhere we had been because of two-story barracks that were insulated and heated. The chow was horrible. You'd have goat or mutton for lunch and then warmed over for dinner. Most of us went to the PX for the evening meal. Couldn't stand the smell of the second warm over. I was assigned to Company Headquarters as a radio operator and was promoted to Corporal. While there we continued our training, made one jump in a snowstorm, which was an odd experience. I jumped so low that when my chute opened I swung under one time and hit the ground. Also we made a mass regimental jump where Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Anthony Eden were in attendance. We had a tragedy as one plane lost power and got below the previous jumpers, consequently cutting the chutes off some of the troopers. Also some comedy, one trooper landed on a share croppers shack, came right through the roof as the Negro couple was eating breakfast. I don't know if they ever saw them again. I was Company Orderly, which oversees the outgoing passes and is responsible for waking the Company the following morning. One weekend, during the night, returning troopers turned off my alarm and I overslept. This was the first day of Capt Norton's assignment as Company Commander. (Capt Norton was promoted to Brigadier General by the end of the war.) I was called into his office and reprimanded for oversleeping. While at Ft Bragg, we had numerous training exercises and some weekend leave to go to neighboring towns. One weekend I recall, there was about six of us went to Southern Pines, North Carolina and went to a nightclub on a Sunday night. Champagne was reasonably priced. I assume we drank too much. We got back into camp just as the company was getting ready to go on a 20-mile hike. We had to change clothes and fall in. I think that was the roughest 20 miles I ever made. Around the first of April 1943, we went to Camp Edwards at Cape Cod, Massachusetts, taking off all our airborne identification, boots and insignias so the enemy could not identify us as airborne troops. There we made another practice jump, some tactical training, and they put us on trains to Staten Island, New York, to get on the U.S.S. Monterey (ship) to go overseas. This was in the latter part of April 1943. As we got out to sea, they discovered that our medical records were not on board, so we had to take all our shots all over. On the way overseas, we had numerous U-boat alerts (German submarines). We arrived in Casablanca, North Africa on May 3, 1943. The 82nd was the

first American Airborne Division to serve on foreign soil. What a different world! People were different/lived differently. We were marched outside of town and pitched pup tents for the night. We were then put on open train cars and headed out in the desert. After a day or two, we arrived at Oujda, French Morocco, North Africa, which is out in the middle of the desert. We pitched pup tents, two to a tent. You'd freeze at night and 30 minutes after the sun came up, you were burning up. Our mess halls were in open tents. We'd eat out of mess kits, but with the wind blowing and the flies, we ate a lot of sand. There was a lot of dysentery at that time. While there, we trained and made two jumps, one for General Patton and his staff. This particular jump I was the last man in the stick (a stick is an 18-man group in one plane) and the second man in front of me froze in the door and by the time the man in front of me (Elmer Blubaugh) and I got him pushed out, we were about five miles from the jump field. When I jumped, I was out by myself and made the only standing landing in all my jumps, with nobody there to see me. But I was lucky, back at the jump field, the jumpers hit a crosswind and we had numerous guys hurt. Then another time, we jumped at 12:00 at night and the equipment bundles were lost. (Equipment bundles were machine guns and ammunition, 60MM mortars and ammunition.) I was assigned with two men out of my platoon to find these equipment bundles and bring them up forward. It was daylight when we found them. We tried to catch up with the company, and we could see at a distance that the chow trucks were out there feeding breakfast, but we couldn't make it there in time to replenish our water supply or get any food. We cut cross-county and we caught up with our company at about 11:00 that morning. However the water and chow trucks had already returned to camp. I was out of water in the desert heat. I knew I wasn't going to make it. There was an Arab shack out there in the desert so I fell out of formation and headed for this shack. When I arrived the people that lived there knew what I wanted after I showed them my canteen, so they drew some fresh water out of their well, which I will always be grateful to them for that. I leaned up against the tree with my rifle across my lap and went to sleep, because I'd had no sleep for about 34 hours. After I woke up I drank some more water and refilled my canteen and headed toward our camp, which I could see in the distance of about 10 miles. I headed cross-country toward camp, going through a wheat field, where they had shocked their wheat bundles. I was running low on water and knew I wasn't going to make it, so I crawled under one of these wheat shocks and waited until dusk. Then started out toward camp. I made it back about 9:00 at night and was immediately called to the company commander's (Capt Norton) camp. He chastised me for doing what I did because we weren't supposed to drink that Arab water. I explained to him what had happened, what we went through and before I died from thirst, I'd drink that Arab water again. After more training, we moved up to another camp in the desert in North Africa in an olive grove. It was hotter than it was at Oujda. We trained at night because of the heat and wrapped in our GI blankets under the olive trees to stay cool in the daytime. We did get one break. We were about 20 miles from the ocean and we got to go swimming one day, which was a real pleasure, although I did get a sunburn. Soon thereafter we moved to an air base and camped there for a few days and drew ammunition and equipment, C rations, escape kits, and musette bags, preparing for our drop into Sicily. (C rations were hash or potted meat in a can. K rations were three cigarettes, potted meat, crackers and a chocolate bar OR cheese and crackers, cigarettes, and a chocolate bar. Musette bags were backpacks, which contained our socks, underwear, etc.) We left Africa on July 9, 1943 and jumped into Sicily on July 10th. (FIRST COMBAT JUMP) They scattered us all over the island. Four men and myself did get together and found a road, but we did not know where we were. We had a Squadron Sgt as our leader. As we huddled in the bar ditch, the Squadron Sgt

decided he'd go out and see if he could locate anything. As he was crawling back into the bar ditch, one of his own men shot him through the chest. Fortunately, he lived. We turned him over to the infantry as they made their beach landings the next morning. At daybreak I asked the men to stay there as I was going out on patrol to see if I could find any other paratroopers. As I was on patrol, the Navy was lobbing 14-inch shells overhead. As I was heading back toward where I had left the men, the infantry had already come in from the beach landings. We hooked up with them and had some battles against the Italians, but they surrendered pretty quickly. Then we run into a few more of our own men and joined up with them, trying to find our outfit. As evening approached, we found a cellar that had vats of wine in it and the First Sgt we picked up on the way asked how many were here. Somebody said four. He pulled out his 45 and shot four holes in one of the big wine vats. We lived well the rest of the evening. The next morning, we again went out, had some scrimmages, trying to find our outfit. We had small encounters with German troops and were strafed by their fighter planes. It was not until the next day that we ran across a large proportion of our company. A few days later, we got the regiment together, what was left of it, and moved against a coastal city of Trapani. It was fortified with a garrison of Italian troops, which shelled us heavily as we approached, but they soon surrendered after we made contact with them. We had the assignment of guarding the prisoners in a compound in the city of Trapani. There was a tuna-canning factory on the coast and we got our fill of tuna. We guarded those prisoners approximately three weeks and then flew back to Africa to get replacements. General Kurt Student (the German Airborne expert), after the war, stated that if it had not been for the American parachutist, the Herman Goering Division would have pushed the beach forces back into the sea. The replacements were on a night practice jump and I was assigned on the jump field to help with the injured and pick up chutes. So I missed most of the Bob Hope show, which was playing at camp that night. We trained some more and there were a lot of rumors going around that we were supposed to jump on the air base in Rome, Italy, because the Italians were to surrender. But the Germans found out about it. Consequently we were notified and canceled that jump as the Germans had surrounded that airport. Soon after that, beach landings were made at Salerno, Italy by the infantry. We flew back to Sicily and from there we flew to the beachhead in Italy and we jumped in support of the beach landing and broke up the German attack. (SECOND COMBAT JUMP) We took up positions in the mountains overlooking the valley and sea. In about 10 days, they pulled us out and put us on some landing craft infantry (LCI) and went up the coastline. We made some beach landings, looked for the Germans, did not find any, got back on the LCI and went back to Salerno. From there on we moved on up the coast, running into very little resistance and took the city of Naples, Italy, where we were greeted with great crowds of people. We policed the city, which was good duty. After a few days, we had ships pull into the harbor and the Germans tried to bomb them every night. Our barracks was in a warehouse at the edge of the harbor, so we had a fireworks show every night. While there, I met a man from Houston, TX that was assigned to one of the ships. I showed him around town and he invited me aboard ship for lunch. To my great surprise, we had steak and a choice of two kinds of pie for dessert, which neither one I had seen since we left the states. There was a young orphan, an 11-year old Italian boy, somehow got hooked up with our company. I got acquainted with him real well. He learned to speak some English. He'd eat with us and slept with us and shared our chocolate. He showed me around town and went to church with me. Naples had some beautiful churches. While stationed in Naples, Italy, we were called out to repulse a German attack at the front line, which we did successfully. Also, we loaded on LCI's and moved up the coast of Italy and made a beach landing close to Caserta,

Italy. In unloading from these LCI's, we just unloaded down a ramp and as I stepped off, I went neck deep in water loaded with my radio and all the equipment. I didn't know if I was going to make it, but I kept walking and the water became shallow soon. I got ashore and we went inland for several miles and did not contact the Germans. We moved around for approximately four hours, then went back to the LCI's, loaded, and went back to Naples, Italy. We continued policing Naples till approximately mid November 1943. We got on a ship headed for Oran, French Algeria, North Africa. It was difficult to leave Italy and my little orphan friend, since he didn't know what was going to happen to him. Arriving in North Africa harbor, we stayed there for approximately two weeks and had two movies on ship. They showed one on one night and the other the next night. One was Stormy Weather and the other was Casablanca. I think I saw both of them at least a dozen times. We did have some passes to go into town. I went into town one time, didn't do anything, just looked around and came back aboard ship the same night. Food on the ship was still better than our regular Army chow. From there we sailed on to Northern Ireland, arriving in Belfast. We moved on to Cookstown. We were there for a short time and had passes to go into town, did some training, but very little as it rained continuously or was overcast. We spent Christmas 1943 in Northern Ireland. In early February 1944 we again trucked to Belfast, got on boats, and went to England. We were in a camp we called Tent City. The whole regiment was stationed in that area in Quorn, England. There were two larger towns close by, Loughborough and Leicester. Our liberty was good. We could get a pass almost every night when we were not in the field training. While there, we got replacements from the States and made two practice jumps. One jump I remember where I landed on the down slope of a little ravine, landing heels first, which jarred me pretty good, but I was lucky. Sgt Don Edwards of my Platoon landed on the upside of the ravine, plowing into the embankment, bleeding his nose. One funny incident I recall while on maneuvers, we were supposed to have everything blacked out. Another soldier and I got under a raincoat to try to read a map using a flashlight. Apparently we didn't get covered good because the Company Commander, Capt DeLong, came along telling us to "get that damn light out or I'll stick it up your ass (slight pause) crossways." We got a big laugh out of that. Toward the end of May 1944, things got real tense. We moved to the airport where they had set up cots and started briefing us on our landing in France. They had sand tables set up to represent the terrain where we were going to jump, but they apparently forgot to put in the hedgerows. While there, there was quite a bit of gambling going on. We were issued French money and told to cut our hair short as we were going to be in combat for a long time. We were issued a full load of ammunition, two regular hand grenades, a plastic hand grenade, and a land mine. I had all this plus my 300 radio, which weighed 40 pounds. My lightest piece of equipment was my cricket. Everyone was issued one. This was a child's toy used to identify friendly troops. The code was one click was to be answered by two clicks. Once I got all my equipment on, it weighed well over 100 pounds. On the 4th of June 1944, we got all ready to go, getting into our equipment, and the mission was called off. On the 5th of June 1944 at approximately 10:00 p.m., we again got our equipment on and headed toward the plane (C-47). We were loaded down so heavy that we had to help each other into the plane by pushing from behind. We taxied down the runway. It seemed like we bounced three times before we got off the runway. The plane was loaded down so heavily, it had a hard time taking off. As we flew over the ocean, we could see all the ships down below. We flew low until we hit the mainland. Then we raised to our jump altitude. Soon after hitting mainland, we drew a lot of anti-aircraft fire, plus we hit a fog bank. We jumped at approximately 12:30 p.m. Numerous planes got lost and they scattered us over a great area of the Normandy peninsula. (THIRD

COMBAT JUMP) Just a note – the parachutes we used were camouflaged and not white like the movies. Therefore the Germans could not see us as we jumped, except with searchlights. I was fortunate. I landed amongst some of my own company, which included the Company Commander (Capt DeLong). We also recovered some of the equipment bundles, containing 30 caliber machine guns, plus ammunition and 60 MM mortars with ammunition. Again we were fortunate to recover most of these bundles, which were dropped with white parachutes. We teamed up with some more 3rd Battalion people, which “H” Company was a part of. Our Commander was Col Krause. We moved toward Ste-Mere Eglise, taking the town at approximately 4:00 a.m. St Mere Eglise was the first town to be liberated in the battle for Normandy. In the early morning hours of D-Day, they started bringing in the Glider Troops, which had jeeps and anti-tank guns. Their landings were real tough because of the hedgerows. Consequently a lot of Glider people and equipment were lost. Some of the anti-tank guns were salvaged and put into position to cover the roadblocks. We started setting up a perimeter defense, putting out our land mines for roadblocks. There was not much of a fight because the Germans were pretty much startled because we were dropped in different areas due to the planes getting lost and the Germans didn’t know where we were. By daylight, we had more troopers join us. There was a counterattack by the Germans where we also received heavy artillery and mortar fire. During the early morning hours, we repulsed several German infantry attacks and received mortar and artillery fire throughout the day. The night of June the 6th was a hectic night because the Germans continued to attack at different points, firing artillery and mortar shells at our position. During June 6th we lost quite a few men. I was hit by a piece of shrapnel on the arm, but it did not penetrate. We were supposed to have been relieved at noon of D- Day, but the ground troops had a tough time at Omaha Beach getting a foothold. The next day (June 7th) planes tried to re-supply us with ammunition and food because we were running short of ammunition. They drew anti-aircraft fire and dropped most of the supplies beyond our lines. June 7th was a day of continuous fighting. We were running low on ammunition and it seems like the people from the beach landings could not break through to get to us. Fortunately we had a Navy man with regimental headquarters that had contact with battleships. By him calling in fire from the 16-inch guns, they knocked out several tanks and had several of them turn and return to their cover, which probably saved our butts. On the eve of June 7th, five American tanks finally broke through to us with ammunition, which was distributed as fast as possible. I was down to three rounds. After dark, the infantry came in and took up our positions and we moved out on attack and engaged the enemy at different points throughout the night. The next day we were relieved again for a little bit of a break, as we had not slept much for two nights and two days. We were assigned to take the town of St-Sauveur. There was a river on the outskirts of town that had a large bridge. The American dive-bombers were supposed to dive bomb this bridge at 3:00 p.m. We waited until 4:00 p.m. and started to go without the bridge being knocked out. Just as we got on the bridge, here came the American bombers. We put out our identification panels, but they still made a run. Fortunately they missed. We had very few people hurt. We moved in and took the town of St-Sauveur. After dark, we were assigned another project, going down a highway toward Cherbourg. As we were moving down the highway single-file on the right side, there was a German column coming down on the left side. We were across from each other before we realized they were Germans. We had a hell of a scrimmage there for a few minutes. The Germans withdrew. We held our own for the rest of the night. Early next morning, we captured two Germans. There’s a railroad parallel to the highway. We went down the highway/railroad. The German prisoners were put in a wire

enclosure, which was along the railroad. Off in the distance, we could see a German column coming down the railroad track. Quickly we set up machine guns on either side of the railroad, waiting for the column to get closer. The German prisoner that was enclosed in the wire enclosure also saw what was happening. He made the mistake at hollering at the German column, warning them. As he did, he drew six shots. That ended his war days. With the warning, the Germans retreated. We continued on down the railroad and engaged the enemy off and on for the next few hours. Then we moved to the Carenta area, set up defensive positions, and patrolled in front of our lines almost every night. On several occasions, we captured Germans and brought them back to our lines for interrogation. We held this position until around July 11, 1944; then we pulled out. Our company of 120 men going in was down to 54. We went to the beach, loaded on some boats and went back to England to the same camp where we had departed from. Here we were re-equipped. Replacements were added. I was also promoted to Buck Sgt. One of our replacements was a 1st Lt that was an instructor in jump school in Ft Benning, Georgia. He was a loud mouth type. When he came in as a replacement, he said, "well we are going to get the war over with now beings I'm here." (After the jump in Holland and three days of shelling, he turned himself in Company CP. He said I don't give a damn what they do to me, I can't stand anymore of that.) We had a couple of false alarms, that is we went to the airfields with full equipment, expecting to jump somewhere, but they were called off before we got on the plane. This was the first couple of weeks in September 1944. Then the 15th of September, again we were trucked to the airport with full equipment. On the morning of the 17th we loaded the airplane and flew across the channel to Holland, where we picked up fighter plane escorts. This was really appreciated because as we crossed the coastline into Holland, we started picking up a lot of flack. I was jumping #2 man in the stick, consequently I could see out the door as we were standing up and hooking up. I could see the anti-aircraft guns on the ground and the fighter planes diving into them with their 50 caliber machine guns wide open, which I thought at the time, and still do, it was real gutsy of the fighter pilots to dive into that anti-aircraft fire. This was my fourth combat jump. With all my equipment I weighed well over 200 pounds, in fact probably 250 or more. I thought well, maybe this time I would break a leg or something and get out of combat real soon, but I landed in a soft field and it was one of the easiest landings I ever made. (FOURTH COMBAT JUMP) Our objective was the town of Groesbeek, Holland. There was a German garrison stationed at Groesbeek. Some Germans ran to the Germany border, which was just several miles. Most of them surrendered. We captured numerous amounts of equipment and ammunicions which we later used on our front lines. This was the most successful jump for the first day as it was a daylight jump and the Air Force could pretty well see where they were going and consequently dropped us where they were supposed to. We set up positions on the outskirts of Groesbeek. The next day we were being attacked by small units, which we repulsed quite easily. In the first few days we set up a solid defense, using some of the German equipment and a 50-caliber machine gun we acquired from the glider troops that came in the next day. Consequently, we had six machine guns plus a 50-caliber machine gun in our company. We were attacked with artillery and rocket-fire, which is what we called screaming meemies. It consisted of a unit that had six barrels that would fire one round after another and would make a real screeching sound. You could hear it for miles. For the first three days, we were shelled heavily. We set up outposts, as we knew the Germans were planning an attack at our front. These outposts that were wired with telephones would alert the main body, cut the telephone wires, and pull back to the main body, which was at approximately 12:00 a.m. So we knew the Germans were coming, let them get within 100 or so yards, fired flares to light

up the area, and opened up with every thing we had. Consequently, the battle lasted less than 10 minutes. The next morning the German medics raised the white flag and wanted permission to pick up their wounded and dead. This was granted. We were continuously, off and on, hit with artillery fire and the screaming meemies. I recall one instance where our First Sgt was going out to check on the men, was hit directly with a mortar shell, and it just blew him all to pieces. For some reason or another, I had the job to gather the remains. I borrowed a wheel barrel from a Holland family to gather the remains. Our Second Battalion of the 505 had the assignment with British tanks to take the bridge over the Waal River, which was heavily defended. It was known that the detonator was on the north side of the bridge, on the opposite side of the bridge of the American and British attack. It was decided to go down the river a mile and cross in rubber boats, which was successfully done, although the casualties were heavy. With the crossing, the paratroopers attacked from the north side of the bridge and eliminated or captured the enemy. At the same time the Americans and British attacked from the south, driving the Germans across the bridge, right into the fire of the 2nd Battalion, which had set up defenses on the north side. German casualties were heavy and the bridge was kept in tact. We got British tanks across the bridge, but they had orders not to go up to Arnhen, Holland where the British paratroopers were being annihilated. Several days later, we were relieved by British troops and we set up defenses along the Waal River for most part of the next four weeks. While there we were on British rations, which was not too good. The best part of it was the weekly ration of rum, which was not enough to go around. So each platoon would get it one week and the next week the next platoon would get it. Consequently each platoon had enough to have one drink. About the 17th of November 1944 we pulled out and made several stops on the way to France. We were quartered in old barracks, with stables used by the French in World War I. It was called Camp Suippes, which was close to Reims, France. After being re-supplied, some were giving passes to Reims, which had quite a few non-combat soldiers stationed there. The first night there, the paratroopers caused quite a bit of trouble, which caused the Regimental Commander, Col Ekman, to restrict the men to the barracks for a week. After that, the Reims mayor told the Regimental Commander, he'd just as soon have the Germans back there as the paratroopers. After a week's restriction, there were smaller amounts of passes issued with the paratroopers patrolling the streets as Military Police, which I was assigned to. We'd patrol until 1:00 a.m., then go back to base. Consequently, we did not have duty the next day. Thanksgiving was celebrated at Camp Suippes. For a change the cooks did a good job on the turkey. My job as patrolman went on. While on patrol on December 15th at 10:00 p.m., we received word to get all personnel back to their respective bases. It was a practical joke for the men in my platoon to wake me up when they went out for duty. On December 16th, they did the same thing and I ignored them as I usually did. Finally they kept after me and I woke up to see that they were all packing and it was just 3:00 in the morning. They finally explained to me that we were moving out. Pack your gear and put on long johns as wherever we are going is going to be cold. We were to be ready to load trucks at 8:00 a.m. and as usual, the trucks didn't get there until 10:00 a.m. They were 18-wheelers, open-air trucks. They loaded us on these trucks and we started moving up to the front line. In the meantime, we had heard the Germans had broken through in the Ardennes Forest, which was called the Battle of the Bulge. We road on these trucks until well after dark, I mean dark. You couldn't see anything. We unloaded and were told to move out down this particular road, which nobody seemed to know where we were or what we were doing. It was muddy with light drizzle and we were slipping and sliding. You couldn't fall out because it was so dark you would have to stay in contact with the man in front of you. After

several miles, carrying my full load, which included the 40- pound radio, I got extremely warm so I opened my fly and got out my jump knife and cut out my long johns on the march. That was the last time I wore long johns. The next morning we contacted some Americans that were retreating. They didn't know where anybody was or anything so we kept on moving trying to find out where we were at, and what was going on. Late afternoon we were told to move to a certain area. As we were moving up to our designated area, it became dark. As we were going down the road single file, again we met Germans coming the other way and before we realized we were enemies we were side-by-side and a fire fight broke out. The Germans retreated. We went forward and set up an all around defense. The next morning we were on the move again. We attacked the German positions, relieved some American troops and set up a defense in the Trois Ponts area. We set up a defense on a river where we were attacked numerous times, which we repulsed each time. We happened to have some engineers with us that put explosives on the bridge and waited until a German tank and motorcycle got on the bridge and blew it. Consequently that kept us from being attacked by the tanks. While there, we were attacked several times by smaller units. Two or three days before Christmas, on the 20th or 21st, we got orders to pull back to shorten our lines because we were spread real thin. We felt like we could hold and so did our Commanders (Gavin and Ridgway), but that side of the Bulge was put under the command of British Montgomery, which ordered the withdrawal. This cost us dearly a few days later. During this time we had a heavy snowstorm. Christmas Day was white. Somehow they got cold turkey to us on the day after Christmas. I don't recall who fixed it. Anyway we had cold turkey. While in this position we were attacked numerous times and shelled heavily. We had one man break under the stress, but we talked him back into going to the front because of the consequences if he didn't. Around the 1st of January 1945, we were ordered to attack and take the small town of Fosse, Belgium. We were told there was just a couple of squads defending this town. We jumped off the attack about daylight and were immediately hit with heavy artillery fire and the approach to this town was open fields. We attempted all morning and into the afternoon to try to take this town, but were always turned back because of the heavy machine gun fire and we had no cover. Finally mid afternoon we had a couple of tanks come up. We got behind the tanks and got into the edge of town and then there was heavy street fighting. A little before dusk, we got control of the town and had captured 125 Germans. I don't know how many were dead, but that's how many were captured alive. I was put in for the Bronze Star, (above average bravery) but never did get it. We got orders to move out to a certain wooded area. It began to snow as we moved out about dusk. It got extremely cold. Our equipment did not catch up with us and we had orders of no campfires. I had secured a blanket off one of the Germans. One of my buddies and I got under it and tried to get warm, but it got damp from the snow. There was no way of staying reasonably warm so about 2:00 a.m. he and I decided to see if we couldn't start a fire of some kind, thinking it would be better to be shot by Germans than freeze to death. So we scraped up enough wood and cut it up into small shavings to get it started, as it was damp. After considerable effort, we got it going and as the flames began to light up the area, more troopers came in with more wood. Consequently by 4:00 a.m. we had a big fire going. We drew no enemy fire and were not reprimanded for the fire as Officers gathered around it just like we did. But this night, we had quite a few men get frostbite on their fingers, ears, and hands. Luckily I had a couple of changes of socks with me, which I changed to keep my feet dry. The next morning we again moved out, continuously attacking, and captured numerous Germans. Some were old, some were young teenagers. This went on until approximately the 15th of January 1945. We were pulled back in a small Belgium village called

Theux, where the townspeople furnished us with a hot bath and we were able to clean up for we hadn't had a bath or shave since December 16th. Somewhere in my picture scrapbook are pictures of these fine people that took care of four or five of us. After a week's time, we again went back to the front and moved through the Ardennes Forest to the Roer River. We continued attacking day and night without any rest. One night while we were on the move, I fell asleep and walked into a bar ditch. Falling flat on my face woke me up. We were trucked back to a rear area a few people at a time for makeshift showers. They had rigged four poles with four-foot canvas wrapped around three sides of it. There was a big boiler heating the water, but it was so cold the water that drained off froze. That gives you an idea of how cold it was trying to get your clothes off and back on. We held there till approximately mid February and then we were relieved and were sent back to Camp Suippes, where we were re-supplied and replacements came in. While there the war moved across the Rhine River and was moving rapidly across Germany. We were assigned the duty to follow through these small towns, confiscate all weapons, and appoint new mayors. Being I spoke a little bit of German, the First Sgt and I were front echelon on these escapades. On one particular one we went to the mayor's house and the lady said he was not at home so we searched the entire house for weapons. One upstairs room was locked and she said she didn't have the key. Her husband had the key. So the First Sgt started to shoot the lock off and she said no, no, no. She went downstairs and got the key, opened it up and we found 69 quarts of champagne and corn whiskey. With her help we loaded it up on our jeep. As the company approached to occupy the town, somehow the Company Commander found out what we had. He made us give him the champagne and let us keep the whiskey. This particular town had caged hens, so for the next few days we had fresh eggs and good whiskey. We kept up this procedure until we hit the Elbe River. Again we were attached to the British Army. While waiting in this small town this side of the Elbe River, out in the cow lot, I happened to find two fifths of Canadian Club imported 1934. Consequently six of us crossed the river flying high the next morning. After crossing, we run into heavy fire. As we got control of this attack we moved on to a small village that was supposedly heavily fortified. In the meantime we were gathering our forces and one of my replacements was up on the bank of the Elbe River. What he was doing up there I don't know, but he was hit by a sniper which was coming from our left. He was screaming and going on so I took off my equipment and crawled up the embankment to get him. As sniper bullets popped all around me, I dragged him down to a safe area and checked his wound. It was just a flesh wound in his arm. I came unglued. I told him that he damn near got me killed and that he could have crawled off that embankment. He didn't have any business there to start off with. With that, we got organized and attacked this small town, which didn't have any soldiers in it at all, set up our defense and waited for the Russians to take Berlin, as it was a political move for them to take Berlin. As we were in a holding position, a whole German Army surrendered to our Division, getting away from the Russians coming from the Berlin area. It was at this time I was promoted to Staff Sergeant. The Commanding General of this German Division was riding in a sidecar of a motorcycle, which I confiscated, and learned how to ride. We put these soldiers and civilians in an open field with a walking guard all the way around them until we could find some place to put them. This went on into May 1945 and then finally on May 8th the Germans surrendered. Again we were sent back to Camp Suippes. There we were split up. The 82nd was going to go on to Berlin to police Berlin. The old troopers that had enough points to get out had the option of staying with it or transferring to 507, which was to stay there at camp. I opted to transfer to 507 as I felt like I had all the overseas duty that I wanted. I had enough points to get out of the service, but supposedly

they were using all the transportation to try to end the Pacific War. Consequently, we pulled close order drills, went on hikes, and played softball until around the 1st of September. They moved us to the coast of France. There we were paid up in full and in three days time we got on ships and in a convoy to head back to the States. While on board, my billfold was stolen, my money and a lot of dates and information. Consequently I had to borrow money to get home on. We arrived at Massachusetts around the 15th of September. In a day or two we got on trains to our departure destination. Mine was Fort Sam Houston. Arriving in Fort Sam Houston around the 21st of September, I got my discharge the 25th of September 1945 with 19 training, practice, and combat jumps under my belt and 320 days in combat. After receiving my discharge, I thought my older sister still lived in Dallas so I went to Dallas to see her. They had already moved so I went on to Rowena and home.

The following is taken from the book, *READY*, By Allen L. Langdon. “ On June 21st the parting ceremony took place. About 1,000 veterans were leaving the 505, and they formed into one group, while those staying formed in another. Then Colonel Ekman and his staff led the latter in review past the veterans, and the veterans, in turn, marched in review past the remaining regiment. Even the most callous could not help feel a surge of emotion as the veterans marched by as it was not only goodbye, but the end of an epic. Among those veterans were the remnants of the only parachute regiment in the world to make four combat jumps. They had trained in the blistering heat of Africa, and made the first regimental combat jump in Sicily. They had jumped at Salerno, Italy, when disaster threatened the American landing there. They had spearheaded the Normandy invasion, learning to outfight the Nazis on terrain in which the latter were already trained to fight. They had landed in Holland in the daytime, and together with the 504 captured the big bridge at Nijmegen. With no equipment or training for a bitter winter, they had withstood the best of the SS Panzer Divisions, and then counterattacked successfully. They had guarded the Rhine River and smashed across the Elbe River to help capture an entire German Army. In one war their feats and courage became a legend, and there wasn't a single commander in the European Theatre of Operations who wouldn't have welcomed them to his command....After nearly 30 months overseas, spent on two continents, involving six campaigns, and seven river crossings, the remnants of one of the greatest fighting units ever assembled were on their way back home.”