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CHAPTER
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Perspectives
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From the Editor

I was on an out of town trip the first time I had the pleasure of reading oral history. The piece was in a local history journal, and it discussed the life of a prominent mayor. It was the stimulating highlight of an otherwise uneventful visit. When I returned to Cincinnati, I conducted research on the mayor and discovered that not only were the man's personal accounts interesting, but his role in national and international issues were noteworthy.

In oral history I found a personal and unusually sensitive observation of the world. What makes oral history unique is the delightfully offbeat approach to serious subjects such as war. This issue includes the personal experiences of several veterans in the area of northern Kentucky and Cincinnati. There is an important message behind the accounts. The message is that in addition to the facts of an event, there is a human side of the story.

I express appreciation to Christopher P. Burns, whose efforts made the oral history feature possible, and to John P. DeMarcus, Jr., Harold A. Stephens, and Betty R. Letscher, all of whom made fine contributions to the journal. Special thanks go to H. Lew Wallace for the extra time and energy he put into the project. We are grateful to everyone who contributed to this issue.

Kenneth Eric Hughes

Foreword

The following articles evolved out of work done in my Oral History Research class, Fall, 1985. My contribution was only in providing a theme, a context and a schedule for the oral memoirs on which the articles are based. The decision for the style and method of presentation was that of each student. Some articles are written as narratives. In some the narration of the interviewers, although edited and condensed by the author/interviewer, forms the shape and flow of the material. Some of the articles are combinations of the above two approaches. I have kept my touch as light as possible. Had I done otherwise, the work then would not have been that of the students, and I would have negated my original purpose. I am quite pleased with the efforts of the authors, quite proud of the work they did in taking raw research through its various stages to polished, publishable articles.

A word about the genesis of the course is perhaps in order. I received an advance copy of the Prichard Committee Report, *In Pursuit of Excellence*. Many people have heard of the report. It has been much talked about. What most people have heard, and what has been most talked about, is the report's suggestion that there are too many law schools in Kentucky, and its implicit suggestion that the law school to be closed was Chase School of Law. The report was discussed much more than read. Since I had an advance copy, I did read the report, and I read it before it became a matter of controversial and somewhat emotional focus. In other words, I saw the movie before I read the reviews. The Chase "controversy" aside, the report contains some excellent ideas. One of them, not a new idea by any means, but one worth remembering from time to time, was that students learn most when they are deeply and personally involved in their material, through independent research and independent study.

An Oral History seminar, I felt, was one way of carrying through some of the positive aspects of the Prichard report. In large lecture classes, or even small lecture classes for that matter, it is easy for students to drift through a course, relying on osmosis for whatever dangerous little knowledge they absorb. But it is difficult to drift through a course where they are, in fact, creating the materials of the course, as they are doing in conducting interviews, and in working that material through all those painful, by necessary steps that precede the final, written paper. And that was the process and method I wanted - something that would tie them closely and personally to subject and material, and something that would net them publication.

The context (and theme) on which the interviews were to be set originally was to be World War II. As is obvious, this context was broadened to take in the Korean War and, then, service experience in general. Originally, too, given the brief time we had to do interviews, a most time absorbing process, I had planned only to interview a random sample of people on campus whose lives, in ways both obvious and subtle, were forever altered by World War II, which was among other things, a monumental social revolution. Although, with one exception, the subjects of the following articles are teachers, former teachers, or students at Northern, we conducted more interviews than appear in written form, many of them women veterans from World War II, Korea, Vietnam and after. Those interviews will be subjects for another project, at another time. For the project at hand, the following series of articles, we returned to the more restricted premise - the selected memoirs, focusing on service years, of some of those people we pass in the halls at Northern daily.

Lastly, at the suggestion of James Ramage, faculty advisor to Phi Alpha Theta, and Chris Burns, assistant editor of the society's journal, I submitted an article, which I co-authored with William Burns, former teacher at Northern and survivor of the Dresden fire-bombing. Burns was one of our interviewees in class, and the article is based partly on those interviews and a series of interviews conducted with Burns on earlier occasions by James C. Claypool, University Archivist.

H. Lew Wallace

From the "Bulge" to Dresden: A Soldier's Odyssey

by *H. Lew Wallace and William R. Burns*

William Burns was eighteen years old in the summer of 1942. Fresh out of high school, he was working as sports announcer for his hometown radio station, WKNY, Kingston, New York. It was an exciting summer. He made \$16.00 a week working in the field that was to become his career, and he met the famous or the soon-to-be-famous figures of baseball. Kingston was a Brooklyn Dodger farm club. Playing often against Kingston were black players, then barred from the all-white major leagues, among them the great Satchell Paige.

In the fall of 1942 Burns left his broadcasting job to enroll in Columbia University. He had had a young man's summer -- first job, a brush with famous figures, acceptance in college, bright future dreams. But overriding personal hopes and personal dreams for young men in 1942 was the central, moving, shaping event of the world of the early forties -- World War II. College students had to fit their expectation of some commitment to service into their curriculum. They could apply for a number of service programs that allowed them, if qualified, to don uniforms, but stay at universities and finish all or some part of college. Or they could allow themselves to register for the draft. Burns opted to register. He entered the army in February, 1943, serving at Ft. Meyer, Virginia, in a special branch of the Military Police. Meanwhile, the army introduced a new program called the Army Specialized Training Program, or the ASTP. If qualified for the program, an inductee was sent to some university around the country. Burns qualified and was sent to Clarkson College of Technology in Potsdam, New York.

While at Clarkson, Burns and another man did off-the-record intelligence work for the Commandant, who one day called them in and said: "Now you guys have done a little something for me, and now I'm going to do a little something for you. And that is to tell you the ASTP is going to fold, but don't say a word about it. Probably everybody will wind up in the infantry or ground forces somewhere." He also told them, "you cannot apply for Officer's Candidate School, because that is considered beneath ASTP, but you may apply for aviation cadets. Would you care to?" It took both men only a moment to decide against the infantry. They were sent to Stuttgart, Arkansas, where they passed the tests and were put into pre-flight training.

They were quickly grounded. One bright morning the pre-flight cadets were read a message from General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold: "We thank you so much for your interest in and dedication to the Air Corps, but at this stage of the war we don't need any more flight crews so you will all be reassigned to the ground forces. Thank you very much."

It had been a long, circuitous trek, but Burns was an infantryman. He was sent to Camp Atterbury, Indiana. After advanced infantry training, Burns, now a member of the 106th Division went to New York, joining there about 15,000 men aboard the *Queen Elizabeth*, the great English liner now converted to a troop carrier. After landing in Glasgow Harbor, the troops were sent to Cheltenham, England.

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William R. Burns is a former teacher in the Communications Department at Northern Kentucky University.

Burns spent a month in Cheltenham. It was not an unpleasant time. The English were friendly. There were weekend passes to London. And there was a general feeling that the war was about over, a sentiment expressed in a popular song of the time, "I'll be Home for Christmas." The front in Europe was quiet. But English days were soon to be but memory. Burns' 106th Division, along with other divisions, received orders to move out. They were sent to Southampton and by channel steamer to France, and across France by truck into Saint Vith, Belgium. There the 106th relieved the celebrated, hard-fighting 2nd Division. Members of the 2nd had some encouraging words for their replacements: "Hey, you guys got it made. No action, things are quiet. The Jerries lob a few artillery shells a day, we lob a few back. They send out a patrol. We send out a patrol. But hey, it's all over." This was on December 11, 1944.

The 106th spread out over a 25-mile front. The men were green. None had been combat-tested. But the general assumption was that the war would be over by Christmas, that all the 106th had to do was hold the line and wait. On the night of December 15th, there occurred some rather disquieting threats to general assumptions. The American and German lines were so close, recalls Burns, "that we saw them going to chow and they could see us."

The night of the 15th proved extraordinarily noisy. All through the night hours the men of the 106th heard a steady chatter, a rumble and churning of tanks and motorized equipment. There was little sleep for the Americans, but little worry either. It was assumed the Germans were strengthening their defenses.

On the morning of December 16th the Germans struck the American line. They opened with artillery, then tanks, including Panzers and the new "Tigers," followed by infantry, and cut through the thin wall of the 106th. In all five German divisions hurtled through, spearheading the drive through Burns' regiment, the 423rd. The green American troops did just what the Germans expected they would do -- they panicked. The men of the 423rd split into small groups, the groups forming not by forethought and design, but by men who assembled together like lost sheep.

The division was in a state of total confusion. Compounding the confusion, Burns believes, was the hand of Otto Skorzeny, who had won earlier fame by his dramatic rescue of Mussolini in 1944. Skorzeny had been commissioned by Hitler to organize a group of German soldiers who had lived in the U.S., put them in American uniforms and American vehicles, then infiltrate into positions where they could mislead and misdirect American troops. Skorzeny's commandos did just that. The Germans turned signs around, and, meeting straggling groups, directed them to avenues of escape which were actually leading directly into German lines. Says Burns: "So it was chaotic. And the Allied air forces could not yet get up. The Germans knew the weather was going to be in their favor. During the day of December 19th, we ran out of ammunition, out of food, except for a few chocolate bars. Our communications were utterly chaotic. In the afternoon we ran into, again, maybe more of Skorzeny's people, who said that there is a narrow avenue of escape, west to Belgium. And we were directed to take that."

Following their directions, Burns and his group, with seven escorted vehicles, set off. They crossed a wide plain, hit a dip in the terrain, then headed up a rise. The first vehicle hitting the rise was a jeep. It immediately disintegrated, torn apart by tank shells. The Germans continued to fire, knocking out all vehicles, including a mounted anti-tank gun. The Americans, with only small-arms, peered over the crest of the rise, there to see four German tanks. Says Burns, "They probably had their eyes on us for a number of miles and just let us run into them." The Americans fired back at the tanks with their small arms. Someone called out, "Hey, we got to surrender. We got to give up. We can't handle this." The Americans pulled out handkerchiefs and waved them as signs of surrender. That is, all but one man. He was on a disabled jeep, firing a machine gun, spraying the tanks. The Americans realized suddenly that he was frozen at the

gun. Some men tried to wrestle him down. They could not. So one of the Americans shot him. When he was dead, the Germans held their fire.

A hatch raised on one of the Tigers. A head popped out, and Burns and his comrades heard a voice: "All right, Yanks, so you've had enough?" The tone and inflection were impeccably British. For a moment the Americans thought that things had become so hopelessly confused that they *were* surrendering to a British outfit. They were not. The tank commander had been educated in England, and many of the other Germans were fluent in English.

There was a certain bonhomie about the surrender. The Germans allowed the Americans to tend to the wounded. They gave the Americans cigarettes, asked what part of the U.S. they were from, and the Americans learned that some Germans had cousins or sisters or other relatives in America.

Though Burns did not know it at the time, he was in luck by the chances of war. At Malmedy, where other Americans had made a similar surrender, the Germans backed trucks around herded prisoners, opened the flaps, behind which were machine-gun crews and proceeded to cut down the prisoners, row on row.

Burn's fate was less immediately dramatic. He and his fellow Americans were herded into a barn on the night of their surrender, marched the next day some thirty-five miles to a field for the night, and on December 21st, were loaded into boxcars, sixty men to a car.

On December 23rd the train was on a siding at Limburg when it was hit by an Allied bombing raid. One car was split open and eight men were killed. The train remained in Limburg until Christmas Eve. The GIs sang carols and had short prayer services. The Germans fed them a bit of bread and sorghum. They were being treated properly by the Germans, even though food rations were extremely short.

Because of the damage to the train and tracks, the boxcar confinement dragged on. But finally, after repairs, the train inched on, arriving at Stalag 4B, a large, permanent detention camp. The Americans were deloused, searched, and registered, then placed in barracks with British troops. The British were old hands at the prisoner-of-war game. Some of them had been captured in North Africa by Rommel's troops. They had been receiving food parcels and packages from home, and they had made a life and order out of their state. When the Americans arrived, the British fed them snacks of crackers and hot tea. In his journal, Burns noted that this was the "Best food I ever tasted." On New Year's Eve the British put on a show for their American "guests." Although a permanent camp, Stalag 4B proved but a stopover for the Americans. On January 10th, they were again loaded into boxcars. On January 12th they arrived in Dresden.

In Dresden the Americans were used as work crews. There had been small air attacks on Dresden, and Burns and his fellow prisoners were put to work cleaning up street debris. Citizens of Dresden were not unduly worried about bombing raids, however. Their impression was that Dresden, Germany's "fairytale" city, a center of art, music and culture, was safe from savage bombing. Although citizens were not supposed to talk or fraternize with the the prisoners, they did to some extent, conveying to them the impression that Dresden was a fortunate assignment, a bit of a haven in these last horrific convulsions of world war.

The young, American enlisted men fell into the routine of days. They worked in the railroad yards, in the streets, doing whatever manual labor was needed. They worked in small gangs, and the men became close, sometimes as friends, sometimes as antagonists. They got to know the guards, some of whom were friendly, some of whom reveled in the power they had over enemy lives. The prisoner's main concern was food, or rather the lack of it. Malnutrition was a constant problem. To fight it, they would go to whatever lengths they had to get food. Stealing it was an offense punishable by death. They stole food.

The German guards were a mixed lot. Some, older men, had been in World War I. Others had served on the Eastern Front in World War II and had been badly chopped up. These men no longer believed that Germany was going to win the war, and they more or less took each day as it came, their attitude toward their prisoners a benign indifference. Other, younger guards, were less indifferent. One, whom the men called Junior, a former Hitler Youth member, was a comic figure for the prisoners, although a slightly menacing one. Junior spoke English of sorts and was for that reason in charge of the guard detail. He was an ardent Nazi, a true believer who felt that some one or another secret weapon of the Fuhrer would yet win the war. There was always the fear among the prisoners that some future disillusionment of Junior would turn his character from comic to dangerous. Nazi fanaticism prevailed in some quarters to the bitter end. One party spokesman — representative of others in other camps — tried to recruit prisoners into a Free American Corps to fight “the Slavic-Russian hordes.” No one joined. Most thought the pleas and harangues funny -- although their feelings were underlaid with the fear that a twist of events would cause the Nazis to take revenge on the prisoners.

That fear mounted as major bombing raids came nearer and nearer to Dresden. Often the sirens would sound; but the planes would veer off to another city. Usually the guards would not even bother to take the prisoners into a place of supposed safety. Nothing happened; Dresden, citizens, army and prisoners alike hoped and seemed to believe, was safe, although again there were always the doubts, the fears beneath the surface.

And then that surface of belief was ripped asunder. On the night of February 13, 1945, the sirens went off again. But this time everyone sensed that something was going to happen to Dresden. The guards herded the prisoners to a slaughterhouse in the heart of the city, down by the Elbe, which divided the old from the new city. The prisoners were taken two floors below ground level. Between 10:00 P.M. and 10:30 P.M. British Royal Air Force planes, which did night bombing raids, appeared over Dresden. This time there would be no veering off. Bombs started falling. It was a ferocious attack. Deep in the slaughterhouse, prisoners and guards huddled in fear and trembling. Later they would learn that this wave of planes dropped incendiaries to light up Dresden, prelude to a second wave of high explosive bombs. The second raid, again by the British, began around 1:00 A.M., the morning of the 14th. The men could both hear and feel the blasts. The bombing continued interminably; the utter shock and weariness of unabated fear continued apace. Among the men near Burns was a young man who would later immortalize the fear, the hopelessness, the absurdity, and the very site itself. The young man was Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., author of *Slaughterhouse-Five*. For that long moment in time, however, Vonnegut was not an author; *Slaughterhouse-Five* was not a metaphor. He was just another young man quaking in a very real slaughterhouse.

After the second wave ended, the Americans and their guards made their way to the streets. Dresden, the Dresden they knew was gone. The city was in flames — a gigantic bonfire. The compound where they had been housed was gone, as was nearly everything in the heart of Dresden. They were marched to the outskirts of the city, to Gorlitz, a suburb which was on a rise. From there they could look down on Dresden, now a city of fire. In Gorlitz was another P.O.W. compound, housing English and South Africans. At daylight the Americans were marched into this compound.

Around noon Dresden was bombed again, this time by American planes, the raiders by day.

The American prisoners had mixed reactions to the bombings. They were stunned and frightened, but also hoped the raids signaled the closing of the war. They also feared that they would be shot by the guards or ripped apart by citizens when the Germans recovered from the shock of the bombings. This fear increased the first time they were marched from the compound. But nothing happened. The Germans treated them more-

or-less as fellow victims. The prisoners were again assigned to work crews and to the grisly task of ridding Dresden of its dead.

Day-after-day for four weeks the prisoners went into what remained of air raid shelters or bunkers or wherever civilians had gone when the sirens had first sounded. The men formed a "body" brigade, one man on each side of a pathway leading to the street. They would grab the bodies by the legs and drag them to the street. There the bodies would be covered with lime powder, then taken to Alte Market, the town square in Dresden, where a huge grate had been erected. The bodies were thrown on the grate, soaked with benzine, and set on fire.

The task was formidable. The Americans heard rumors about the number who had been killed. The estimates ranged from 30,000 to 150,000. The figures to this day remain in dispute, as do the reasons for the raids. Were the raids "terrorist" bombings, revenge by the British for German attacks on English cities? Were they carried out to support the Russians, or to impress them? The debate lingers. All the Americans knew was that the roll of dead seemed endless. The smells of death were everywhere, smells of fire, smoke, brimstone, charred -- and, as time passed -- rotting bodies. And yet, in the presence of such death, the will to live and endure competed with the horror of the senses. German civilians carried rucksacks with them to the shelters. When Americans broke into where the bodies were, they would help themselves to whatever food was in the rucksacks. This was a dangerous thing to do, for punishment for stealing food was still execution. At least one prisoner paid this high price. He took a jar of preserves back to the compound, was caught, shot by a firing squad, and buried by his fellow prisoners. The warning was clear and explicit. But hunger won over fear, and the Americans continued to steal and eat -- and live.

At night the men would listen to BBC news over a receiver assembled by the English and South Africans from stolen parts. In his journal Burns noted: "April 6th. War news good. Heard that the Russians and the Yanks on the move." The Russians indeed were moving, were near Dresden. The prisoners began to think that a few hours might bring rescue. But on April 14th, Burns wrote: "At 4:00 o'clock, evacuated from Dresden with Tommies, French, Poles, Serbs and Russians." The prisoners were on the move, toward, it seemed, no particular destination. With Burns and his group went the Dresden guards, including Junior. They would move by day and put up in barns by night, there to be fed potatoes and lard.

Burns recalls the incongruities of the strange, aimless trek: it was spring, the buds were out, and the green world, so in contrast with Dantesque Dresden, lifted the spirits of young, impressionable, and still idealistic prisoners. They thought the war was almost over, that they would soon be set free. Yet, not knowing where they were, where they were going, what exactly was going on, they were plagued by rumors. The grapevine said that they would be liberated the next day. They heard they were all going to be shot. Rumors circulated that Hitler had a cache of secret weapons that would turn the war. Since they had once seen and been awed by one of the German's jet planes streaking overhead, the last rumor was a particularly nagging one.

One positive note in their plight was the attitude of the guards. They had never been particularly hostile, but now they began to be extremely friendly. They worked hard at rounding up food for the prisoners, at assuring them they would be released to the Americans. The prisoners even began to know where they were, which was down near the Czechoslovakian border. Then the guards began vanishing, Junior being one of the first to disappear. On May 6th Burns noted: "Western front still quiet, we heard, and Luft soldiers tell us that the war is officially over between the Americans and the Germans. Can't dope out the situation in regard to Russia." On May 7th: "Russians closing in, artillery seems near. We were informed at 5:00 P.M. today that we were to begin our march to the American lines and liberation tomorrow at 7:00 A.M. Everyone

in best spirits." May 8th: "Started out a 7:00 A.M. for Hellendorf," down near the Czechoslovakian border "heading for the American lines. Eight hundred of us in all, British, Yanks, and South Africans. We raided a potatoe patch and received a bread ration from remaining German guards. The column was disorganized and fellows were taking out in groups of twos and threes and fives." And on the 8th guards threw away their weapons and took off. Things were beginning to break down. The prisoners were not sure where to go or what to do. Some decided to gather more food and went back to the potato patch. While there, they were strafed by Russian planes. It was a strange war, recalls Burns: "We got strafed by the Russians, bombed by the Americans and the British, and hardly ever shot at by the Germans."

The Americans began drifting toward Hellendorf. Some entered the city, then left again, not sure where the American lines were. Burns made a further note for May 8th: "Banded together with Tom Jones, Dick Coyle, Kurt Vonnegut, Jim Dinenny, Dale Watson, Dick Crews and Bernie O'Hare." The eight young men returned to Hellendorf. Some German soldiers drunk, disorganized, were having a blowout in one of the bars. The Americans joined them. Recalls Burns: "We sat at tables with them; many of them spoke English, and they were getting rid of their uniforms. As a matter of fact we all got drunk, and it was patting on the back, 'buddy, buddy,' and 'the war is over.' It was just something you just wouldn't believe could happen a few days ago." It was surrealistic; not grand Wagnerian, but a comic-opera version of "The Twilight of the Gods." The war was not quite over. Outside the bar German motorized detachments were still clattering on, still officially "fighting." And inside the party went on, the Americans and the soldiers of the Wehrmacht joined by SS men who shed their uniforms, got into civilian clothes and joined the merriment.

On the morning of May 9th, Burns noted in his journal, we "got up around 6:00 o'clock in the morning, cooked up a breakfast of 'millet.' Got some bread, found an abandoned Jerry truck and proceeded to do a first-class looting of it. Found cigarettes and plenty of schnapps. All along the road people were telling us that the war was all over, but we didn't know. As we continued on our way, more Jerry soldiers and civilians told us the war in fact was over. There was no Russian activity anywhere, no aircraft up, and German vehicles and equipment was strewn all along the roadsides. We stopped in a farmhouse, had a bite to eat, killed a bottle of schnapps. Started on our way again and came to Petersvalda, on the German-Czech border."

In Petersvalda were large groups of French, English and Poles, taking life easy. Burns and his seven friends heard that the war *was* over, that it had ended, according to popular wisdom, at 10:55 A.M., May 9th. The Americans decided to stay in Petersvalda, where they hoped the Americans would liberate them. They wandered to a farm and started to fix a noon meal. Suddenly there was a flurry of activity on the road. People seemed in a hurry to get away from something or somebody. A Russian soldier came walking up the road with a submachine gun slung across his shoulder. Behind him were other Russians, mounted on horses or riding in vehicles. Burns ran to the road and waved, telling them he was "Americanish." The Russians seemed overjoyed to see Americans. Burns noted in his journal: "Shook hands, a lot of smiles. The Russians had accordions and concertinas. We all got drunk. Singing and drinking were the main interests. The Russians looted everything, stole eggs, chickens, cows, horses, oxen, food, cars, jewelry, everything they wanted." The Russians found a house that wisely had been abandoned by the German inhabitants. They built a fire right in the middle of the living room, invited the Americans in, and held a 1945-style barbecue with plenty of schnapps. Burns and his friends joined in the spirit. When the party was over, the Americans started to put out the fire. "No, come on," said the Russians. So they left the house -- and watched it burn down.

There were a few of sour notes amid the festivities, as the Americans found out in

the succeeding days.

The Russian soldiers were uniformly friendly, their officers polite. The political commissars traveling with the troops, however, were neither friendly nor polite. One, in broken, bastard German, which was the only way the two groups could communicate, said: "Hitler's kaput, America next." The Americans, young, politically naive, found such sentiment hard to comprehend. But the main fact for the Americans was that they were going home. The Russians told them to head back to Dresden, where they would be exchanged for Russian prisoners-of-war freed by the American forces.

Burns and his friends found two old field horses and a German infantry wagon, and loaded on a good supply of food. Burns had acquired a small German box camera and two reels of film. Vonnegut, Jones, Coyle, and the others posed on their "freedom wagon" while Burns snapped pictures. Then they were off to Dresden.

There were a few hitches. Some of the political commissars encountered were reluctant to let them proceed; but a Russian Army major, overhearing them arguing with the commissars, intervened. He wrote them a pass, which was honored as they made their way through Russian lines. Back at last in Dresden, Burns tried to take pictures of the ruined city. But a Russian army woman, handsome and tall, saw him. She confiscated the camera (but not the film). Other than this brief disquieting moment, the Americans were well-treated. They were put up in the barracks, where there were showers and plenty of food. Burns noted: "So we spent some days in Dresden, went through the chow line, ate like crazy. And on the nights we were there, there would be a band, a Russian band, outside of our window, down on the ground, and it seems the only tune they knew was 'Rose Marie,' the one we know as 'Rose Marie.' And they played that over and over and over."

Burns himself made good use of his time in Dresden. He got pen and ink and a small notebook and wrote a journal of his days of battle and capture and Dresden and after, while the impressions and events were fresh in mind. Occasionally, he was off a day or two on dates, but his recall was extremely accurate and vivid. It was a young man's journal, the journal of one for whom war was not grand strategy or complete pictures, but a record of individual or small group experiences, experiences of the moment burned forever in the mind. Burns and the others did not know that the December, 1944 battle they were in was the famous -- and later named -- "Battle of the Bulge." They did not know of the German atrocities, of policies of genocide, of Dachau and Buchenwald. They were not aware for years, of the implications of the needless bombing of Dresden. Burns' journal, written in slang phrases and jargon of the time, records the details and vignettes of a profound personal experience of young men pulled into and up against forces they had no control over, ones they understood imperfectly.

"When we were in the slaughterhouse during the raids, we were deathly afraid and thought with the bombardment going on upstairs that the next bomb will be ours. And the thought went through each person's mind, 'Why me?' What in the hell am I doing here? Why am I over in a town, a city, 13th century city? I can't even speak the language of the inhabitants, and here I am in a slaughterhouse having the hell bombed out of me by supposedly my friends and allies upstairs: What am I doing here?" This reaction, Burns recalls, was how the eight men reconstructed Dresden when they talked about it in the immediate days following the raids.

After a few days in "Russian" Dresden, clean, well-fed and utterly tired of 'Rose Marie,' the Americans were herded out, placed on trucks, and taken to a field outside the city, where there were huge pictures of Truman and Stalin. There was also a band. The men got off the truck. After about two hours American trucks arrived. The band began to play. It was a ceremony for the Russians, less so for the Americans. The ex-prisoners-of-war were taken to Halle, Germany. There were no amenities, no bands, no high tones. There was only a young second lieutenant waiting for them saying, "All

Interview with Louis R. Thomas: World War II Veteran in Europe

by Christopher P. Burns

Dr. Louis R. Thomas is Professor of History at Northern Kentucky University, where he has taught since 1965. He graduated from the University of Cincinnati and earned masters degrees from the University of Cincinnati and Xavier University. He earned a Ph.D. in history at the University of Cincinnati.

"I did not want to join."

World War II veteran Lou Thomas was "less than thrilled" about joining the army or for that matter any branch of the armed service.

In December of 1941 Thomas was a college student and reluctant to exchange the comfort of civilian life for the unknown rigors of army life, consequently, he spent the early months of 1942 as an inspector of parachute flares in a Connersville, Indiana war plant, in effect to delay being drafted. But on his twenty first birthday, September 13, 1942 Thomas was processed at Ft. Thomas, Ky. and sent to Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland.

Thomas points out that "it was an advantage to have college training because you would not have to be a grunt." He continued, "I didn't make a good soldier because I didn't like the disciplining at all." He resented the system of always being told what to do and where to go.

After taking basic training Thomas was asked to stay on as an instructor at Aberdeen. As an instructor he remembers that one time they were marching the men along as a group and "this good looking gal was walking along the curb so I just said eyes right at this point and of course all the trainees turned their heads to face her. These times" Thomas says, "broke up the monotony from the everyday military life."

At Aberdeen Thomas says, "Much time was spent wondering where you were going to be sent. No one really wanted to go to the Pacific including myself." The Far East was generally unknown to the U.S. population in early 1942. It was taught in elementary school or high school. "So it seemed," Thomas says, "like another existence."

"Most of us wanted to go to Europe if anywhere because it was closer, you knew the geography and some of the language."

"I remember then wanting to get into O.C.S." (Officers Candidate School). The chances for getting into the officers program looked pretty good for Thomas at the time. He had some college training and was training men for non-com duty.

Thomas was placed before the O.C.S. review board and was asked if he had any psychology background. He answered "No, I always thought psychology was an application of common sense." He says that it was this statement that cost him acceptance into O.C.S. because he later learned that the officer conducting the interview was a psychology major.

At this time Thomas again was moved when his services were needed in other areas. So he left Aberdeen and was put into a Quartermaster Truck Company as an automotive parts clerk.

After being sent to various other camps Thomas was offered a chance to apply for the ASTP program. The Army Specialized Training Program was for military personnel to continue their education while still serving in the army. Thomas says by coincidence he was sent to Ohio State. The program counted for college credit on top of being taken

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right, come on you guys, move your butts. Come on, move it, move it." They moved it. But for Burns there was one nice little moment of G.I. revenge. He noticed the trucks had the insignia of the 104th Division. "Sir....," said Burns, "Is Colonel DeGraff still Chief-of Staff here?" Said the second lieutenant, "Yeah, why?" Burns answered, "We're cousins." Said the second lieutenant, "Oh, yes sir, yes sir." So Burns had the last "sir." The next day he met with his cousin for the first time in eight years.

From Halle, Burns and his Dresden friends were taken to LeHavre, France, to camp Lucky Strike (the camps, really ports of embarkation, were named after cigarettes by the Americans). The camp was to be nearly the last bond for the survivors of Dresden. There were goodbyes, keep-in-touches. Then they were off, in different ships, for the United States, for home. Burns came back (to Boston) on the *Admiral Mayo*, a new Coast Guard vessel making the return trip of it's maiden voyage. A few of his Dresden friends were on board, although Burns can no longer recall which ones.

He does recall that they were all given 77-day furloughs, convalescent furloughs, and that the men were told they might expect to go into combat again in the Pacific. And he remembers that they were all quite angry about the possibility, believing that one war was quite enough.

They did not fight again. Burns was home in Kingston, New York, when atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and when the war ended, finally, for everyone. He was mustered out of the army on December 7, 1945.

The eight young men who shared the fire storms of Dresden kept in touch for a couple of years or so, then drifted out of each other's lives. Burns finished college, continued to work in radio at various places in the country and taught communications in universities, eventually settling in the northern Kentucky area, a place he now considers home. He and Vonnegut have talked by phone occasionally, and indirectly he has heard of the whereabouts of Bernie O'Hare, who went back to Dresden with Vonnegut, who was refreshing his memories of Dresden for *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Of the others -- Tom Jones, Dick Coyle, Jim Dinenny, Dick Crews, Dale Watson -- he has heard nothing, although he sometimes thinks about trying to track them down, and often wonders how life turned out for them. And sometimes he wonders about the German guards, about Junior and the old ones, about the handsome Russian woman soldier, the Russian major, and about the polyglot group of German soldiers who drank to their swansong in a bar in Hellendorf, wonders what twists and turns of fate lie in store for all of them. History records the big events; it seldom follows through on the ordinary men and women who are shaped or crushed or strewn about by these events. One is in a certain place at a certain time, touching briefly, if sometimes deeply, the lives of others, sharing some moment of experience, some bubble of time. Then the bubble breaks into smaller bubbles, and the smaller bubbles are swept into the stream of history and humanity, fated at last to burst and disappear forever.

And so it goes, to borrow a last line from Vonnegut.



"out of the ranks." Again however Thomas says his youth took precedence over common sense. He would sneak out at night and make the rounds at the local pubs. One night he overstayed his leave. About 1:00 A.M. he decided it was time to go back to the dorms. "As I'm entering the building an old army man, a Sgt. Major, was making his rounds...I tried to slip by but he saw me. I run and go up the stairs and get in my room safe! ...I found out the day or so later that we were to have an inspection to single out the offender...he spotted me, I guess he had seen enough of me to know I was the one. Thomas was promptly kicked out of the ASTP program and sent back "into the Ranks again."

Finally Thomas, much to his dismay, was sent to Boston to get ready for an overseas assignment. One good point, he admitted, was that he was going to Europe and not to the Pacific. He was assigned as a truck driver in a Gas Supply Company.

In November 1944 Thomas landed in Britain. It was after D-Day but before the Bulge offensive. He was taught how to drive a deuce-and-a-half with a 750 gallon tank on the back for carrying fuel to the front lines. "Most of us didn't even know how to drive these trucks...they had to be double clutched."

By December, 1944, Thomas was still in England wondering if was ever going to see any fighting. In London, Thomas says, "The city was blacked out...completely dark and always on semi-alertness because of the V-2 rockets. About the devastation in downtown London Thomas said: "You could see the ruins, it wasn't just piled up on the streets anymore...you could see the shells of buildings and the big holes "where buildings had once been.

In January, 1945, Thomas was finally sent across the channel to LaHavre, France. He describes the beach he landed on as "a port where all around you was smashed up German gun emplacements...everywhere was large scale destruction" still left from the Allied bombings.

When his unit first arrived they had to obtain their gas from Antwerp every time they needed to reload. As the line continued to advance toward Germany the fuel depots also had to advance to keep the front supplied. Thomas says there was one particular stretch where his unit moved fuel day and night for two solid weeks. The work was a monotonous "unending day and night type thing where you were super tired from not getting enough rest."

Driving at night was always done, during this time, with blackout lights on. Without headlights, the roads were very difficult to see and they were damaged from skirmishes only a week before. "You watched the taillight of the truck in front of you."

In Bastogne he saw the rubble and devastation where "all around there were burned out tanks, turned over jeeps and shot down planes" that were left from the German counter-attack. He states, "I'm glad that at no time did I see any dead bodies or take part in firing at the enemy personally...I didn't kill anybody." His unit travelled about a week behind the advancing lines so both sides had time to bury their dead but he says little else was cleaned up.

Belgium's weather in the winter is little better than in Russia. Thomas said, "It was terribly cold, I know that." He explains that "the trucks I drove had metal doors but no heater...It was uncomfortable but not unbearable." Thomas remembers "sleeping on the ground, fully dressed with our caps down over our heads...but the hardest part was getting up while it was dark."

Thomas talks about the one chance that he had to view dead bodies. In western Germany "there was an isolated pocket that must have been overlooked when the Germans were retreating." The pocket contained the remains of several bodies and "out of curiosity I just wanted to dash in, but my good sense won out this time and I didn't go." He continues, "I'm thinking 'I'm going to get through the war safely and get my legs blown off from a mine just to look at some dead bodies,' I didn't do it."

Thomas remembers seeing the German army "totally collapse" as his unit travelled farther into Germany. He saw Germans "surrendering right and left...all I can remember seeing as we drove...are these long lines of marching German soldiers coming toward us with their hands above their heads...so many you couldn't keep the convoy moving."

Thomas says his unit was warned, as were all American units, against fraternizing with the Germans, regardless of their age or gender. "That was a strange never-never existence...many people very hungry...wandering all through the countryside...people uprooted, people from prison camps but they were not Germans because they were free like us. Do you not out of generosity give them something from your bag?" He says the non-fraternization rule, as he saw it, was rarely enforced or conformed to. "People just lived from day to day...it touched you."

Thomas never felt that the German people had any real feeling of hatred toward the American soldiers. He says, "They made the most out of what they had."

On VE Day, May 8, 1945, Thomas was in Compiegne, France by coincidence. He was treated by the French to a night on the town. Every bar gave him and his companions free drinks. "We represented the liberators, the victors."

"The sad part of the war was, your living through a real important period in history, but being too young, too self centered to realize the importance of it and then when you grow to maturity you don't get a second chance."

In June of 1945 Thomas received orders to report to a quaint little village in southern Germany called Frielendorf. The town was being used by the Allied governments for it's coal. Thomas was in charge of keeping records for the coal being shipped out. "That was good living. This town had not been bombed or destroyed at all." He became friends with a mining engineer who was married to a Jewish woman. Thomas often had dinner with the couple and soon got to know them fairly well. The wife was a nurse and because of her occupation was kept out of concentration camps to help the wounded German soldiers. Hearing all this caused Thomas to look at the war from a very different and frightening perspective. Through these people he first learned of the concentration camps and some of the crimes that had been ordered by the German high command.

Thomas remembers giving some of the workers a hard time about being former Nazis, which they tremblingly denied. He says, "Things stick out in your mind...good and bad...plus and minus." He seems to remember the very good times and some of the decisions made by youth and not common sense.

He says while still in Frielendorf, "I was just beginning to enjoy myself...when I got word from the American Red Cross that my father had a bad heart attack, and I was to be returned home on emergency leave. The timing was bad because I really didn't want to leave Germany...I was just beginning to enjoy it all and now it was going to end just like that."

This in deep contrast to what he felt the entire war. He says, "All along we were counting the days until we got out of the army...This would have been my golden opportunity for an early return...but at this time I really didn't want to leave."

Thomas missed by about a week a chance to fly home. Up until his departure many of the soldiers were being flown back to the states. Thomas however would have to take a ship back. He said of the army's choice: "What kind of emergency leave is this, in a week he (his father) might be dead."

Thomas stopped in Paris on his way to the coast and enjoyed very much his stay in the French capital.

Once in the states Thomas went home and was called back to Ft. Meade for his discharge. He said that the army felt "once I was home, the cheapest thing was to discharge me."

Thomas reminisced about his opportunity to see other cultures forced to co-exist in post-war Europe. "It really opened my eyes about other people and other cultures...I

saw new sites.” It gave him “a desire from that point to travel and see as much as I could.” He saw that the Germans, so feared before the war, “had the same hopes and fears as us.”

“I never had any out and out hatred against the Germans as a nation...no desire to kill them. I guess the great will to survive was all that kept them going” after the war.

He says that he was “filled with a desire to learn about the German people and their culture. After the war he studied German language and became a member of a German choir organization which wanted him to be its choral director, but he turned it down. That was a chance he always wondered about: “what if I would have taken that job?”



World War II Experiences of W. Frank Steely

by John P. DeMarcus, Jr.

Dr. W. Frank Steely was born and grew up in the small rural environment of Murray, Kentucky in Calloway County. As a boy maturing in this environment he realized that while rural life was pleasant it was also very hard work and usually not very profitable. In these early years Steely developed an admiration for the professional fields of law, medicine, the clergy and, most notably, the teaching profession. World War II and Frank Steely's involvement in the military would greatly influence the course of his professional career.

Steely was drafted into the navy at age eighteen, immediately following his high school graduation. He recalled that he, as well as most of the other young men, were eager to serve in the military service. This ardent will to participate in the war effort can be attributed to many factors on both the individual and social levels. Patriotic actions and beliefs were much more prevalent during World War II than since. The atmosphere regarding civilian support for the country's actions was vastly different from what was encountered in Korea or Vietnam. These factors, along with the fact that World War II seemed a clear cut picture in relation to good-bad, right-wrong associations, can be seen as responsible for the civilian mobilization and will to be a part of the war effort. Steely felt that in addition to these factors, he and his classmates were eager to join because the idea of the military had been romanticized in their minds; compared to farm life in rural Kentucky, life in the military seemed exciting and rewarding.

Steely recalled the particular hot Monday in June, 1943 that he and his group of recruits departed from Murray, Kentucky destined by train for the Great Lakes Naval Training Station in Chicago, Illinois. While en route they were rerouted to the Naval Air Station in Corpus Christi, Texas. The journey ended up taking from Monday until late Friday. Upon arrival at the Naval Air Station the group was divided and assigned to a thirteen week boot camp. The boot camp consisted mainly of long periods of drilling, marching and signal instruction. It seemed to Steely that the purpose of boot camp was basically to familiarize the men to the routine of military life, to instill within them a sense of discipline and basically prepare them for more advance training. One thing which struck Steely about boot camp was basically prepare them for more advanced training. One thing which struck Steely about boot camp and the military bureaucracy in general was the amount of time which was wasted. While the constant marching served to discipline the men, it truly was a great waste of time. In the view of many, the time could have been used more efficiently training the troops' useful skills.

Upon completion of boot camp the men were sent to different locations to receive further training or to start working directly, if possible. Steely was assigned to the educational office where he administered tests required for promotions. He worked in this position for about a year during which time he applied for and was accepted into the naval R.O.T.C. program.

Upon acceptance he was transferred to the University of South Carolina where he was enrolled in essentially an undergraduate course of study. In addition to the standard course of study, the Navy scheduled the ROTC cadets with extra duties, classes and inspections. The students in the ROTC program were expected to complete not only the basic requirements for an undergraduate degree, but also to strive to achieve excellence in fields such as advanced mathematics, physics, or anything which could

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possibly be of value to the war effort. Steely recalled that the standards expected of the ROTC students were quite high, that every semester while he was attending the university several of his classmates did not make their grades and were shipped directly into the combat navy. While the standards were very high, Steely felt that they were made more obtainable by the severe amount of structure which was placed upon the navy students. Literally, every waking hour of their school schedule was filled with either class or navy instruction. The added structure, implemented by added navy responsibilities, was responsible for the failure of several men; however, at the same time encouraged success for those who were able to master the system and make efficient use of their time.

Looking back on his experiences in the navy Steely felt inclined to laugh a bit in response to the memory of the navy's regulation concerning all night watches. Every night it was one of the cadet's responsibility to stay up all night guarding the "U.S.S. University of South Carolina" and every morning the same entry would be placed in the navy ledger: "U.S.S. University of South Carolina moored as before" - as if it could lift anchor and sail in the middle of the night!

When asked to speculate on how his career and life in general might have differed had he not been drafted and become active in the war effort, Steely responded by pointing out that without the military's help, he probably would not have left the fairly isolated rural Kentucky environment in which he was raised. He probably would have remained in Murray and attended Murray State University where he probably would have become a lawyer and remained in that small community. The obligation to serve one's country in the military, while being dangerous and generally undesirable at the same time, was an opportunity to expand one's horizons and to become exposed to various academic and scholarly pursuits.

Following his graduation Steely transferred to the University of Kentucky for pursuit of his masters degree. He valued the opportunity to return to Kentucky as he had never really experienced higher education in his home state. Steely enjoyed the system of education he encountered in Kentucky and it was with the urgings of his colleagues that he decided to pursue the doctoral degree. Steely received a scholarship for his doctoral work at the University of Rochester with the help of his colleagues at the University of Kentucky.

A pattern seemed to run through the experiences of Steely. While there was evident a respect for the military and its discipline, there was also a true belief that in order for the bureaucracy of military to run smoothly, its path should be kept clean of too much red tape. The secret to American success in the military was a base our ability to push aside the unnecessary where the situation calls for it. The system of midnight requisitioning is essential in this system. "Midnight requisitioning" was the term used for the act of ignoring the needed red tape. For example if there was a part needed for repair of a jeep, in order to get the part several forms would need to be filled out, processed and returned prior to delivery of the needed part. In a situation where it was essential for the repair to be completed quickly, it was much better to simply ignore much of the unnecessary paperwork and steal the part. In the view of Steely, this was one of the beauties of the American military system; when we really get in a pinch we know how to cut our way through the red tape. This is the only way a democratic system can truly function effectively in time of crisis.

Steely's military career ended in the summer of 1946 when was given the choice of further training or resumption of a civilian career. He chose to return to civilian life; not because of a distaste for the military but rather because of an eagerness to continue his pursuit of an education and finally a professional career. Steely pointed out that Americans have traditionally had a distaste towards the military and that in his view

this was almost completely unjustified. He pointed out that never in American history has American militarism led to military abuse of power. In summarization Dr. Steely felt that the military was instrumental in the development and success of his professional career. He would strongly recommend the service to anyone seeking further opportunities, either economic or educational.



N. Edd Miller and World War II

by John P. DeMarcus, Jr.

Dr. N. Edd Miller recalled his experiences as a civilian during World War II following several attempts to join several different branches of the armed forces. Miller discovered that he was not able to join the military due to a heart condition. He described again the mood of the day as quite different than that of Korea or Vietnam. It was a national mood of all-out support for what the country was doing. It was a clear cut picture of good/evil. There was no squabbling about that -- the Japanese, Germans and Italians were the bad guys -- the Americans and Allies were good. Miller recalled how young people actively sought out ways to serve their country. All of these caused a great amount of social as well as internal pressure to fall on someone who was not able to serve their country. However, because one was not able to serve in a military role did not mean they discontinued in the war effort. On the contrary, the civilian mobilization and support for what the country was doing was essential to success. Miller suffered from these pressures but he was still able to contribute through education.

Miller was born and grew up in Houston, Texas. He was a student at the University of Texas at Austin. There he received his bachelors and masters degrees. Following completion of his education, he started his teaching career at the University of Texas where he taught for six years. Miller applied for and was accepted to the doctorate program at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He received his doctorate from Michigan. His main area of concentration was communications. He taught at Michigan for seventeen years then moved to the University of Nevada at Reno where he was President of the University for nine years. From there Miller moved to the University of Maine at Portland where he was President for a five year term. Then he accepted a position as Chairman of the Communication Department at Northern, a position he has held now for seven years. Miller has devoted his adult career to education.

As stated earlier, due to a heart condition Miller was unable to serve his country in a direct military sense; however, the contributions he made through added teaching responsibilities were equally vital to the country's objectives.

Miller was teaching speech at the University of Texas in 1941 when America became directly involved in World War II. Miller vividly remembered hearing with disbelief the news of the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. He recalled that that very week the Japanese had sent ambassadors to Washington. He felt, probably like most people did, that we would resolve our differences peacefully. Miller's primary responsibility during the war years was to educate potential navy officers in a basic eight week course focusing on written and oral communication. This was in addition to his regular class schedule. These added teaching responsibilities inflicted by the national crisis of full scale involvement in the War were actually quite beneficial to Dr. Miller's teaching style. He felt that the added pressure these responsibilities place upon him greatly improved his ability to make the most of his time and this in turn made him a better instructor.

Miller drew light to some of the social ramifications of World War II. With the vast majority of young men being drawn into the military, their departure created a drain on many domestic industries and services. To compensate for this absence, women and blacks for the first time were being brought into the work force in large numbers. No longer were they forced only to contribute through volunteer work but they were able to enter the work force and gain wages, even if they were usually paid less than the white man. These necessary actions to preserve the work force created changes in the structure of society. Women, blacks and others who had been denied rights prior to the War had contributed much to the war effort and they were not about to return to their designated place of inferiority following the end of the War and the return of the surviving troops.

Interview with William C. Stoll

by Christopher P. Burns

"I remember one time when we Marines were bathing on Guadalcanal and heard gunfire. As we started to scatter, we looked up and here comes this big Rising Sun (Zero) right above us. We were just standing there, open targets. We could see the Japanese pilot's face as he leaned out and waved to us. I suppose he was out of ammunition."

Retired Marine Lieutenant William C. Stoll recalled this incident, which occurred when his amphibian tractor battalion was pinned down attempting to secure a landing on the island of Guadalcanal. This was one of many tense situations that Stoll experienced.

The war was far removed from San Diego, California, the home of his youth. But like many young men his age, he wanted to join the armed forces even before the United States entered World War II. His ambition was to attend West Point. He passed the entrance examination, but did not receive an appointment. He says: "I was going for a presidential appointment and there were only fifteen or twenty available and there were about 500 or 600 competing." Stoll enrolled at California State University, San Diego, where he earned the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1941.

In the summer of 1940, while still in school, Stoll learned about a Marine Corps program for training future officers in leadership positions. Stoll's father, a retired army officer, informed him of the program and recommended that he apply. Stoll entered the program and was commissioned a 2nd lieutenant in the Marine Reserves in 1941. He received his orders for active duty about a week after Pearl Harbor.

Stoll reported to the Philadelphia Navy Yard for basic training. Then he was assigned to the First Amphibian Tractor Battalion at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. The unit was designed to carry supplies and ammunition to the beaches to keep the front lines supplied.

From Camp Lejeune, the battalion reported to New Zealand for regrouping and setting up operations. On August 7, 1942 the battalion landed on Guadalcanal, in the Solomon Islands, in the first American offensive in the Pacific theater. Stoll said: "The first day we hit the beach I was very surprised because we went in after the combat waves and I expected to see a lot of shooting, but most of our men were climbing coconut trees and eating coconuts and lounging around on the beach." After that, for a period of about three or four nights, the naval battle occurred. On the island, after five or six nights, the Japanese land forces attacked. Stoll said the "hardest and longest time" was waiting on the beach under fire from the battleships. "It's a pretty strange feeling. You are out on the beach and everyone is shooting at you, so you have to stay dug in." As for the shells exploding all around, Stoll said: "You are just as dead if a tree falls on you as you are getting hit by gunfire."

The battalion's assignment on Guadalcanal was to transport supplies and troops inland and along rivers. The base of operations for the amphibian tractor battalion was originally at Henderson Field, but the bombing was so heavy they moved the headquarters to the beach.

During the prolonged and bloody battle for Guadalcanal, Stoll contracted malaria and was transferred to the United States to recover. In February, 1943, the Japanese evacuated Guadalcanal and when Stoll returned to the war in 1944, he was promoted to captain. "We had a casualty rate of about sixty percent, most of it due to malaria on Guadalcanal. However, patrols were still being completely wiped out, and battle casualties were about ten percent. I was one of the few officers with experience to make the landing on Saipan with the 2nd Marine Division.

On Saipan, in the Mariana Islands, Stoll was sent in with the artillery. He said: "The

Japanese counterattacked and we took very heavy fire. We lost many of the vehicles. It was part of my job to find out where the vehicles were and have the maintenance people repair them. We received heavy incoming fire and spent a good deal of time in fox holes."

Stoll remembers the pressure of fighting day after day: "I had men freeze, I have had to hit people, when a man freezes you have to unfreeze him or he will get himself killed. I pressed charges against two men who ran. If you have to defend a position, you have to defend it. If you have to run, you must run by the numbers, with everyone running in the right direction and at the right speed under control of a leader."

"Iwo Jima was different. There the Japanese were waiting for us and they had set up aiming sticks -- large poles made of wood used for directing artillery and ship fire. I remember leaning against an aiming stick and saying 'What's this doing here?' The battalion commander replied, 'You better get away from there, that's the aiming stick the observers are using to shoot in on.'"

"On Iwo Jima, we took a pretty good beating because there was no place to go. I was asked if I would take a team with flame throwers and mop up some of the caves. We would send in a dog and if the dog didn't come out, we would put the flame thrower in." This is where Stoll was during the famous raising of the American flag. "We were on the flank, too busy cleaning our caves to see the flag being raised."

"We had an interpreter and a loud speaker, and he would order the Japanese soldiers to come out. But there was no response. Apparently they were in the caves to die. Surrender was a disgrace in Japanese society; in death, honor and dignity were assured. It was so hard for us to figure that out. For us it was perfectly honorable to live to fight back another day."

After the war, Stoll returned to active duty and served at various positions, from commander of a Mess Supply Battalion to commander of an Officer's Club. Then in 1953 he was assigned to the First Armored Amphibian Tractor Battalion in Korea. "We were dug in, the vehicles and the artillery, and we were able to survey the area and achieve very accurate artillery fire. We were right on the 38th parallel. The North Koreans were looking at us and we were looking at them. The truce was signed while I was in transit so by the time I arrived there was not much fighting. I served there until we pulled out."

After Korea, Stoll served at Camp Pendleton, California as commander of an infantry training battalion. Explaining the training of officers, he commented: "The main thing to remember is that you are training people for leadership and that most of the time on the battlefield, communication will break down and young officers will have to make decisions. So you have to give them the opportunity to learn decision-making and develop leadership skills during training."

Comparing today's Marines and those of World War II and Korea, he said: "I think today's Marines are better educated. However, training isn't as tough. They get a more humane treatment and boot camp is not as strenuous. I imagine there is an advantage and disadvantage. The advantage of a strict boot camp is that it will save lives in combat. You teach people to be rough and tough and not to be sensitive to the social needs and dignity of others. If you are to fight a ferocious enemy, it is not going to help to worry about personal needs -- you must kill the enemy before he kills you. The man that is trained the roughest will survive, given equal situations, and that is why we survived."

Stoll was not seriously wounded, but he was very close to many fatal incidents. He recalled one in particular: "I was in a LVT when the company commander had his head severed. The platoon sergeant caught it in his hands, just a reaction." Stoll knew as most soldiers do, that this was the reality of war. These were the horrors that were never told to to public back home.

Stoll left the Marine Corps in 1962 and returned to college. Since he had learned to deal with men in war, he decided to study psychology. In 1963 he earned an M.A. at Florida State University and in 1972 an Ed.D. at the University of Kentucky. Stoll came to Northern Kentucky University in 1974 and he is now Emeritus Professor of Psychology.



An Account of the Military Experiences of Harold A. Stephens: United States Marine Corps, January, 1942 to January, 1946.

by Harold A. Stephens

The eyes of every man on board the *USS Zeilin* were straining to identify specific features of the shoreline as they materialized in the pale light of dawn. It had been a tension filled night, and now the day was dawning in "travel poster" fashion. The sea was calm and the breeze was everything we had been told to expect in the south seas. In the earliest light a silhouette of land could be discerned. And despite the lack of sleep on the part of all aboard, every person not assigned to duty below decks was topside to see the shores of Guadalcanal.

Time dims my memories of the specific details of the day and the events then unfolding. It was November 11, 1942, Armistice Day. What irony that this day had been set aside by our nation to remember and reflect on the fact that the war to "Make the world safe for Democracy" had ended on this day in 1918, exactly twenty-four years earlier. And for me, although I couldn't have known at that early hour how dramatically, World War II was just beginning. And what a beginning!

As the day brightened, the shoreline of Guadalcanal became more distinct. Coconut trees, various smaller trees, and vegetation seemed to cover everything, with small patches of cultivated lands interspersed. A low mountain range seemed to take up most of the interior of the island, as far as we could see. The shoreline, with the light surf was gently beautiful. The serenity of the scene made one wonder if the stories of this place were really true - or were we the victims of some giant hoax.

The *Zeilin* was closing to the island, heading into the harbor, such as it was, to unload us, and a load of critical supplies for the ground troops then struggling to maintain the foothold they had gained in heavy fighting with the Japanese. We had left Noumea, New Caledonia the day before. I can remember quite clearly, however, the sense of awe that almost overwhelmed me and, I believe, those surrounding me. All men fear the unknown, and particularly the unknown preceding a battle. This was intensified by the conditions then existing.

We had left the United States some two months before with the news fresh in our minds of the Marine Corps invasion of Guadalcanal, the first offensive by the Allies in the Pacific Theater. And the news was dramatic. The fanatical Japanese fighting men, the vicious treatment of prisoners, the war at sea, the jungle, the malaria, and all of this resulting in casualties in such numbers that men were being buried in trenches dug by bulldozers. Such stories filled our time while in temporary quarters at New Caledonia awaiting shipment to Guadalcanal as replacement forces. And they were supported and emphasized by "Tokyo Rose," actually the only radio news that we could hear in English.

I can recall, the sense of unbelief -- can it really be true that I, a nineteen year old country boy from Independence, Kentucky am here with this weight of gear on my back, carrying this fearsome rifle, here on this massive ship stealing through the dawn, trying to get close enough to shore to unload others and me? And the prospect of climbing down a net over the side, into a small boat that was to take me ashore to a situation that included almost certain injury or death, injected an even greater sense of disbelief. Surely this is a bad dream! Just a few months before, I was a student at Simon Kenton High School and didn't know that these parts of the world even existed - certainly I

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never dreamed that I would be in them and in this situation. How can this be? Was I scared? Absolutely!

Military leaders know that at times such as these men must be trained to do the things they have to do automatically, since their judgement may be impaired. I can recall that I was prepared to do whatever had to be done - after all, there were a number of us "in this mess together," and if the others can handle it, then so can I. And so, all I have to do is do as I'm told, and hope for the best. I can recall the tense comments, and ridiculous answers, as we awaited developments. I can recall the memories that flooded my mind of home and family. I was single and had no serious romantic involvement at the time, and so was spare the agony of those who had wives and families. Meanwhile, the ship sliced the calm waters toward our destination.

On two or three occasions we were ordered below decks, then back topside, and below decks again, as threats of submarines, aircraft, enemy ships, and other dangers were suspected. Wherever we went, however, we had our entire world with us. A full pack, a rifle, and a full belt of ammunition weighed about thirty pounds. Our entire being depended on it, so there was no alternative but to keep in with us throughout the constant confusion and activity. In the course of this uncertainty, about fifteen of us were in the galley below decks. There was no food, but one could sit down. All of a sudden, all hell seemed to break loose. Crew members closed all watertight doors, sealing us in the galley. Through "general quarters" announcements we learned that enemy aircraft were approaching. Soon gunfire erupted, from the ship's antiaircraft guns, as well as from guns ashore and the enemy aircraft. We could not see anything, of course, and heard only spotty announcements over the ship's public loudspeaker as to what was going on. It seemed that the enemy was not particularly interested in our ship, but was attacking the shore line and the adjoining airfield the American forces had recently captured from the Japanese. Since our ship was so close to shore, however, the bombing patterns of some high-level bombers, as well as bombs and strafing fire from some dive-bombers, straddled our position. One large bomb, thought to have been dropped by a dive-bomber, hit so close to the *Zeilin* that it ruptured the hull, flooding one of the compartments full of medical supplies. The pressure and shock waves from this near-miss were so intense that those of us in the galley were temporarily deafened, and frightened, as one can imagine, our of our wits.

Almost immediately, as the firing subsided, we were ordered topside and instructed to go over the side on a cargo net being used as a ladder. This was a result of the fear, we learned later, that the ship was damaged more seriously than she actually was. Meanwhile, the ship's crew and others pressed into service were throwing the materials from the leaking compartment overboard, with the hope that they would float ashore and reach American forces. We learned that the crew had sustained some injuries during the attack from enemy strafing fire.

The situation was critical. The ship was damaged, limiting her ability to get underway. She was only a few hundred yards from shore, but could get no closer. Submarines were thought to be in the area and enemy air forces were known to be massing for another attack. Disembarking under any conditions is a major undertaking. Given the loads we were carrying, the rush to finish the job, and the tension of the situation, it seemed impossible. Some fell over the side, some had to be forced to climb down the cargo nets, and others swore and complained, but did as they were told. In what must have been record time we were all in small "Higgins Boats," ready for the short trip to shore.

About this time, we were alerted that another air attack was imminent. With this, the driver of the small boat I was on, took out for the open sea, reasoning that the enemy would not be interested in a little boat hauling only about twenty persons. He was right, and we had a "ringside" seat for the action which ensued. Enemy high-level bombers,

dive-bombers, and fighter aircraft attacked, but were engaged by the American forces in the air and by anti-aircraft ground fire. In this particular action, in addition to the damage to the *Zeilin* and some damages on shore, the Marine Corps lost seven planes and five pilots, while the Japanese lost eleven planes and crews.

After the activity subsided our driver took us to shore. Total confusion reigned. After a while, however, my commanding officer, who had been on Guadalcanal for several days, came by in a recently captured Japanese truck and took us to our living area. It was everything we had come to expect -- a few tents erected in a swampy area in thick underbrush, with mud everywhere.

This is Guadalcanal! My personal participation in World War II is underway!

Actually, it had all started for me on January 16, 1942. The news of Pearl Harbor had shocked me, as it had all Americans, although I didn't know where it was or what was involved. Very soon thousands of young men across the country were enlisting in the armed forces and I felt the urge. The feeling was intensified by letters from my closest friend in high school who had enlisted in the Marine Corps the previous summer, and was now in paratrooper training. Accordingly, along with another close friend, I took the oath of private in the United States Marine Corps at the Post Office Building in Cincinnati, Ohio. We were assigned to boot camp at San Diego, California.

It didn't take long for the disappointment to set in. These "far away places" were not all I had imagined, and the dream of that beautiful dress uniform was soon killed (there is a war on, we were told, and no time to dress up and parade around). Boot camp was all that it had promised to be, very rigid and demanding, but a common ground for discussion and comparison for the days ahead.

Following the sixteen weeks of boot camp, my friend and I were separated by assignment to the Aviation arm of the Marine Corps, at the Naval Air Station, North Island, San Diego. This turned out to be only a staging assignment, and after a few weeks I was assigned to attend radio school at the Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, Florida. Following sixteen weeks of training I was transferred back to California to a new airfield at Camp Kearney. I was assigned as a radio operator in DC-3 aircraft. After only a few weeks at Camp Kearney I was assigned overseas. I cannot recall what we were told about our assignment, but it was very little. We took winter flight gear and uniforms, presumably to confuse anyone who was trying to determine our destination. We found ourselves at Noumea, New Caledonia, after stopping at several exotic ports along the way.

We did not leave the ship, however, or experience any of the joys of a south sea cruise. In fact, the ship was grossly overcrowded, with salt-water showers, rationed water to drink, too little food, and other negatives. One wonders if travelling on such ships under such conditions was good military planning -- the troops were so grateful to get off that any conditions on land were preferred, and they would fight to the last man rather than go back to sea.

After a brief stay at New Caledonia we were transferred to Guadalcanal. At this point I was still considered a radio operator in transport planes, which were playing such a vital part in the Pacific war effort. Conditions were such, however, that my classification was about to be changed. Dive-bombers were playing the key role in the bombing work of the Marine Corps. They were vulnerable to the point that many were being lost in combat, operational crashes, etc., and replacing crews were required. As a result, my classification was changed to "radio-gunner" on the dive-bomber, a two-man aircraft. Our role, and particularly in the squadrons to which I was assigned, was principally scouting. I operated the radio and manned a thirty caliber machine gun from the back seat. My actual combat experiences in the air were very limited, although I retained the radio-gunner classification throughout my service tour.

In my assignments on Guadalcanal, offensive actions were of a limited nature. Being on the receiving end of Japanese offensives, however, was a daily occurrence. At

Guadalcanal particularly, we experienced frequent shellings and aerial bombings. Fortunately, with only rare occurrences, I was spared attacks of ground forces, although they were always being contained just a short distance away, often near enough that we could hear the rifle fire. My quarters were adjacent to Henderson Field, the object of most Japanese shellings and bombings. Therefore I spent many nights in foxholes, with accompanying loss of sleep. On only one occasion did I know the "near miss" of personal injury from such enemy action, when a jagged chunk of red hot steel from an enemy shell lodged in the sidewall of a foxhole I was sharing with another man. Ultimately, as Allied Forces began to take command of the air and seas in the Pacific, the shellings and bombings eased.

As was true of so many of our forces, I was stricken with malaria, and turned in to a field hospital on Guadalcanal on Christmas Day, 1942. I was subsequently hospitalized on four occasions with this disease, which puts a person completely out of action for a few days at the least and sometimes indefinitely.

In April, 1943, I was transferred to Auckland, New Zealand for a period of leave. Although I spent twenty-six days of the leave in a Navy hospital with malaria, the entire stay in New Zealand was extraordinarily pleasant.

In August, 1943 I returned to the "the islands," with assignments on Munda, Ondonga, and surrounding islands. The war by this time had moved to the north, and my assignments were relatively uneventful.

In March, 1944 I was returned to the United States and assigned to the Marine Corps Air Station at Santa Ana, California for further training.

In June, 1945 I was assigned again to the Pacific Theater. I never learned precisely where we were to go, but it was to a location yet to be taken, from which we would strike the Japanese mainland in dive-bomber attacks. The war was in a state of change, however, and our orders were change several times, with our final destination being Majuro Island. By this time, some fifty-four days since we left the United States, the war was over. Accordingly, we flew patrols and conducted training, mainly to remain until conditions stabilized.

In November, 1945 I was returned to the United States for discharge which occurred at Cherry Point, North Carolina, on January 30, 1946. Upon discharge I held the rank of Technical Sergeant, and was awarded the Good Conduct Medal and four Battle Stars.

Following military service I enrolled at the University of Kentucky, in Engineering College. My life was quite disoriented, however, with no clear goals and very limited motivation for education, and I soon withdrew. Through an association with a friend from military service I secured a job with the Western Electric Company, the first of several companies with which I have been employed in the communications industry for nearly forty years.

Over the years my wife and I have reared five children, all of whom we helped with their educations, while we studied in various night classes. In 1983, as a result of major changes in the Bell System, I had the opportunity to retire, at sixty years of age, from a middle-management position with Cincinnati Bell. Being relatively young, for retirement, in good health, interested in another view of life, and having learned so forcefully, through our children and others, the values and beauty of education, I decided to return to school -- thus my involvement at Northern Kentucky University, with my graduation planned for Spring of 1986. My plans following that are very uncertain.

The question is sometimes raised, less frequently now than immediately following recent wars, regarding my views of military service. At this stage of my life I cannot reconstruct the views of my youth, but conditions were then quite different. We didn't dream of the tensions in the world today or the destruction possible with today's weapons. Certain factors and conditions do not change, however. War is a horrible experience; it brings out the base natures of man; it distorts reality on the part of all involved; it

interrupts all of the experiences that give meaning to life; and it settles nothing for the so-called “winners” or “losers.” There may be situations where war is justified, and thus a military force is essential. Citizens should be proud to serve in such a force, and should be a source of pride for the nation and all of its people. Maintaining a military force, however, should never lead a nation to a war for any selfish ends. Although my mind is clear on the above, these views do not say much regarding military service. I can state, however, that as a father and grandfather of men and women who would bear the brunt of any war, I will do everything I can do as one citizen of the United States to live in such a way that war will never be necessary.



Jack Klein In World War II

by Harold A. Stephens

Few aircraft pilots in history, and particularly few today, can attest that they flew wingtip-to-wingtip with Charles A. Lindbergh, or that they received a citation for meritorious military service while Orville Wright witnessed the ceremony from the reviewing stand. Jack Klein, formerly Major Jack Klein, however, can make these claims.

Klein recalls the day, during Army Air Corps (later Air Force) service at New Guinea during World War II, when he flew for a brief period alongside Charles A. Lindbergh. He was concentrating on the instrument readings and related actions of his A-20 airplane when he sensed that he had been joined by another plane flying on his starboard wing. As the plane pulled closer alongside he recognized it as a P-38 being flown by Charles A. Lindbergh. They greeted with the normal dip-wing salute after which Lindbergh peeled off and out of sight. Klein says that only the knowledge that Lindbergh was in the area as a consultant to the Air Corps regarding airplane characteristics prevented him from "losing his cool" completely.

Some years later, when Klein was assigned to Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio, he was honored to receive an Award of Certificate for Meritorious Service from General Twining, head of the Air Force at the time, while Orville Wright and a number of Air Force officials observed from the reviewing stand. Klein remembers this as being a very impressive occasion, since Orville Wright was in his later years, and was the world's most noteworthy individual in matters of aviation.

In many respects, Jack Klein has lived an unusual and exciting life. As he explains it, he was one of the "old men" of World War II, having entered the military service at twenty-four years of age. It was 1939; the military draft was underway; and Klein knew that he would be a candidate. He had been pondering this for a while and trying to decide, as he puts it, whether "he wanted to fight in the mud, swim, or fly." About this time he learned about an air show to be held at Lunken Air Field in Cincinnati, Ohio, and he attended. Some Air Corps flyers participated. After the show Klein observed that the Air Corps flyers were bright, handsome, sharp young men, who left very good impressions. This answered his question as to where he thought he would want to serve, and decided on the spot, "That's for me!" He set out immediately to see what he needed to do to apply for aviation cadet training.

As a first step Klein applied and was summoned to Lexington, Kentucky for physical and related examinations, which he passed. He was instructed to await a call, but advised to return for another series of examinations if he did not receive a call within six months. Six months later, when he had not received a call, he was instructed to report to Cincinnati for another examination. This time he was the only applicant from fifteen men to pass the physical examination. However, since he had fewer academic credits than required, he was assigned to Woodward High School in Cincinnati where professors from the University of Cincinnati taught him and several others a series of concentrated college courses. He recalls this as one of the most pressure packed, but intellectually challenging, periods of his life. Classes were held five days a week, and testing was the same as if the students had taken the work on campus for normal terms. He completed the work, however, with an average grade of 87.5, after which he was told to expect a call in September, 1941. September came and went, and no call. Pearl Harbor came, however, and the call soon followed, with Jack entering the Army Air Corps as an aviation cadet in December, 1941.

Klein's reporting station was Kelly Field, San Antonio, Texas, where a constant fear of "washing out" set in. In the first two weeks of training the cadet group was reduced by half and shipped to Mentor Field, Pine Bluff, Arkansas. Klein recalls that he soon

grasped the "feel" of flying, due in considerable measure, he believes, to his relative maturity compared to most of his colleagues. At one time he was the only cadet of a group of five to solo and continue his training. Over a period of time he gained the skills and confidence that were to stand him in good stead in further training, and more importantly, in combat situations in his future. After "soloing" at Mentor Field, Pine Bluff, he was transferred to Randolph Field at San Antonio, Texas for further training.

Upon completion of th training at San Antonio, Klein was transferred to Victoria, Texas, where, in September, 1942 he was awarded his "Wings" and commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Army Air Corps.

Lieutenant Klein's first assignment was as the Gunnery Officer of an air group, on the Commanding Colonel's Staff, at an Air Corps base at Savannah, Georgia. This was the only location in the Air Corps that was assigned to train pilots and crews in dive-bombing techniques, especially for support of ground troops. Klein was to train about 100 pilots and an equal number of crewmen in such activities. As a first step he was assigned to Tampa, Florida where he was instructed and trained by a United States Navy pilot who had experience in the Pacific Theater of operations and a British Royal Air Force pilot with experience in the Battle of Britain. Upon completion of this specialized training he returned to Savannah and set up training programs for the pilots and crewmen indicated above. This involved a great deal of bombing and gunnery practice in several types of planes, including the famed Douglas Dauntless, the Navy SBD, then being used so effectively by the Navy and Marine Corps in the Pacific Theater of operations.

Meanwhile, the combat experiences of Allied Forces in the African Campaign showed that they needed additional training in desert-type warfare. As a result, Klein's air group was transferred to the deserts in California for specialized training. He recalls an experience that demonstrates human nature perfectly. It seems that his group was the first one to become proficient in the art of dive-bombing, and Air Corps brass wanted to see a demonstration. Klein was designated to simulate bombing a target, using a bag of flour as the bomb. Following an elaborate preparation he made a run on the target, with all of the brass observing from a safe distance. He maneuvered his aircraft into perfect position (he thought), set everything up perfectly, and at the right time dropped the bag of flour - and missed by a mile. "Things never change," muses Klein, "Just like a kid showing off, everything turns sour! Murphy's law in action!"

Upon completion of his training Klein was ordered to New Guinea with his group, where, on December 27, 1943, he experienced his first taste of combat. As he relates, "That first experience of someone trying to shoot you down is a sobering one, and I've never forgotten it." He was flying a P-40, with several others on a "sweep" around the area, just getting acquainted. All of a sudden they realized that they were near an isolated cloud formation, a dangerous place to be. Klein explains that "The enemy on the ground can estimate your attitude, speed, direction, and related data quite accurately in relation to the cloud formation, and place their anti-aircraft fire accordingly." About the time the Americans recognized their perilous situation the ack-ack bursts surrounded them. Fortunately, they escaped, somewhat the wiser for the experience.

Klein describes flying conditions in the area as anything but optimum. Their airfield could only be reached by air, and thus there was a shortage of every type of supplies. The airstrip was of dirt construction, which meant that it became a mud-strip when it rained, a good part of time. Taking off and landing in mud is hazardous, to say the least, and doesn't do anything for the spirits of the flyers either, according to Klein.

The primary mission of the flyers was to provide ground support for Australian ground forces fighting the Japanese in the area. As such, they flew much of the time on low-level missions, strafing and bombing the Japanese, who hid in tunnels, caves, and various other ways. This type of flying was quite hazardous since a slight miscalculation could result in crashes into trees, mountains, or other aircraft, and there was always danger from ground fire.

On one occasion Klein and his associates were attacking an enemy airfield at Kaimana Bay, New Guinea, by strafing and bombing aircraft parked along a runway. He had completed a run on the aircraft and pulled around to attack an enemy ship he had observed lying at anchor in a nearby harbor. As he proceeded, however, enemy ground gunners hit his aircraft, forcing him to ditch in the ocean. Actually, he was one of four pilots to be shot down on that strike, two of whom did not survive. Upon seeing that Klein was ditching in the ocean, Klein's wingman sought out a Navy PBY in the area on a rescue mission and directed him to Klein. The pickup was uneventful, and the Navy crew set out to take him back to his base. They were new in the area, however, and started to land, by mistake, at a Japanese airfield, and would have succeeded if Klein had not noted their mistake. Klein was nude at the time, trying to dry his clothing, and wonders what the Japanese might have thought of these American flyers, one of whom was "sans clothing," stopping by their airfield.

As indicated above, Klein's missions were generally low-level, primarily for ground support. This meant that quite often there was aerial action overhead. He recounts, for example, that it was not unusual to participate in a coordinated attack where American heavy bombers would be attacking at 10,000 feet. Beneath them would be a layer of Japanese zeros trying to get to the bombers. Beneath or mixed up with the zeros would be a layer of American fighter planes trying to get to the zeros. Meanwhile, Klein and his associates would be at a low level strafing or dive-bombing, while attempting to avoid ground fire. Klein says that "If you think this sounds confusing, believe me, it was!" On one attack of this nature Klein had his only direct encounter with a Japanese zero. He had made a strafing and bombing run, and as he pulled out he found himself almost nose-to-nose with the zero, also pulling out from a run. Fortunately, the zero had other objectives - Klein's A-20 would have been no match for him if he would have attacked, particularly since Klein had run out of machine gun ammunition.

Klein recalls that he and his colleagues had very little "survival" training. Basically, they were advised to comply with the enemy's instructions and questions, if captured. They were not to attempt to learn more than they needed to know regarding organization of their squadrons, groups, etc., since the less they knew, the less they might divulge. Experience had taught American forces that if they lasted through the first three minutes of interrogation their chances for eventual safety improved. Accordingly, they were advised to give information, in a cooperative manner, including, as Klein says, "The size of bathtubs in America and other important information."

Everything was not simple danger and drudgery. They generally observed "happy hour" before having dinner, of dehydrated foods, and quite often enjoyed playing cards and similar activities when they couldn't fly. Among their most pleasant duties were "rest and relaxation" periods in Sydney, Australia. Klein was "ordered" to take such tours on three occasions, "Lots of fun," he says, "But I won't go into detail."

"We were good flyers," Klein states quite positively, "We had been thoroughly trained, and we had the confidence to apply our skills with excellent results. As the war progressed, however, replacing pilots did not have the skills necessary to get the job done effectively. They were rushed through training, and had no practice. It made a difference, and we more experienced ones spent a lot of our time developing the younger men." Klein was promoted to captain and placed in charge of various administrative operations, as well as attack missions. He had completed seventy-six missions, been shot down twice, had won a number of citations -- it was time to go home. Only three pilots, out of twenty-four originally, remained. Accordingly, in February, 1945 he was assigned to report to Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio.

At Wright Field Klein was appointed as Chief, Aircraft Movement Branch, Control Section, Flight Test Division, of the Air Force. His duties included coordination of various phases of work on experimental aircraft and certain flight testing. In the course of this

work he worked closely with much of the Air Force "brass," including such names as Edwards, Gentile, Feathers, Wagner, Bong, Gabreski, and others, all readily recognized by flyers of that time.

It was 1946, and the war was over. As Klein, now a Major, was flying an experimental airplane one day, on a testing flight, he was cold and tired, and asked himself the question, "Now why am I doing this? I have a wife and two children, and this isn't really much fun anymore." Very soon, Major Klein became Mr. Klein. "I was very fortunate," he states emphatically, "One of those experiences that a person would not trade for anything, but one that I would not want to go through again." And he has never flown a plane since.

Klein's awards include the Air Medal with three clusters, the Purple Heart, an Award of Certificate for Meritorious Service, and certain letters of commendation.

Since completion of his military service Klein has held a number of management positions in various types of business, including data processing training schools, land development, and sales of petroleum products. This culminated in his becoming president of a corporation involved with exploration and development of oil and gas wells in Texas. The corporation was sold in 1982, after which Klein entered semi-retirement.

In the course of his busy life, Klein has been involved in community life in many ways, including Chairmanship of the Bellevue, Kentucky Board of Education, and Presidency of the Bellevue Veterans' Club and Kentucky Association of Realtors. He remains extremely active today in such activities, certain business commitments, attendance in classes having to do with world affairs at Northern Kentucky University, and heavy involvement with his wife and their five children, their mates, seven grandchildren, and one great grandchild.



Memories of World War II: An Interview of Merle Nickell

by *Betty R. Letscher*

Dr. Merle Nickell is an associate professor of history at Northern Kentucky University. He holds degrees from Morehead State University (A.B. and M.A.) and the University of Kentucky (M.A. and Ph.D.). In his thirty-four years as an educator, he has served as a high school teacher and coach and an assistant principal. He has been teaching in college since 1969.

Letscher: To begin, Dr. Nickell, would you like to tell me about your background: for example, where your hometown is and where you grew up?

Nickell: I grew up in a little town in eastern Kentucky called West Liberty. When I was growing up in the 1930s, the storm clouds of World War II were always on the horizon, but we didn't pay too much attention to them as children. In 1939, when World War II started, I was still in junior high school. At that age, we knew who Mussolini and Hitler were but we weren't much concerned. We did not realize that in a few years we might be in it ourselves.

Two years later when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, I was a sophomore in high school. I might tell you a little bit about how I heard the news that day. People don't realize today that most teenagers knew very little about some places in the world that later became famous as a result of World War II. I was on the high school basketball team, and on Sunday afternoons a lot of the boys would get the keys to the gym and play basketball. We locked ourselves in the gym because the coach didn't want people running in and out. While we were in there playing basketball, the news came into this country that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. By the time we came out of the gym, there was much excitement. People were shouting back and forth to each other and there was a lot of scurrying around. It seems hard to believe, now that the event is so well known, but when someone told us that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor, there was not a one of us who knew where Pearl Harbor was. Later that evening the news began to filter through that we had suffered heavy losses of lives, ships and property.

Letscher: As a teenager, how did you feel about the incident at that time?

Nickell: Looking back, I remember how angry everyone was. You see, that is one reason why we had very few problems with unity in World War II. When the Japanese chose to bomb Pearl Harbor without warning, they found themselves at war with a country that was almost one hundred per cent united against them. I remember going to school the next day where we all were assembled so that we could listen to President Roosevelt's war message and the declaration of war by Congress. At that time, I felt that I might get into the war because most everybody thought we were in for a fairly long fight. One must remember also that Germany was very strong at that time and in control of a great part of Europe and North Africa.

Letscher: Was there a great percentage of young men from your home town who volunteered?

Nickell: Oh yes, Morgan County was full of young men who were eager to get into the action. I do not have any statistics on volunteers, but I remember a good many who

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did not wait to be drafted and left as soon as possible. Most young men in my county seemed to wind up in the infantry, and, as a result, we had a very high casualty rate.

Letscher: So you knew fairly early that you would be involved in it personally.

Nickell: Yes, eighteen year old boys were being drafted, and some of them were even drafted right out of high school. However, if a boy was in the last semester of his senior year, he might be deferred until he graduated. There were two boys I played basketball with in my junior year who were later killed in action -- two of the five! One of them was a little older than the rest of us and was drafted before the year was over because he was still a junior in high school.

Letscher: Had you planned on going to college prior to entering the service, and, if so, how did the war change these plans?

Nickell: I was a high school athlete and my dream was to play sports in college. I had a real opportunity to do that even before I went into the navy because I graduated when I was seventeen and I would not have been drafted for a few more months. Naturally, with the young boys all flocking into the armed services, it would have been a lot easier to have played college sports then. I got an offer or two, but I was kind of gung-ho at that time and when I got out of high school I just joined the navy. I did not go to college until I came back from the service.

Letscher: For you personally, your plans were changed somewhat in that you decided to delay college until after the war. Dr. Nickell, can you tell me something about your experiences during World War II, starting with where you were stationed?

Nickell: I joined the navy in Lexington, Kentucky. I thought that I was going to be sent home for a few days after I took the physical examination. Was I in for a surprise! The new recruits were sent to Louisville to be examined, and then all the boys who passed the physical were taken into a big room and sworn in the navy. Then a recruiting officer said, "Boys, you are on your way to Samson, New York. You don't need a toothbrush or anything else. You will be taken care of when you get there." I remember calling my parents and telling them that I had already been sworn in and that I was on my way to New York.

Letscher: Had your parents some indication, at this point, that you were going to enlist or was this a total surprise?

Nickell: Seventeen year olds had to have their parents' consent to enter the service, so I had already had my enlistment papers signed before I went to Lexington. It was interesting how the timing of World War I hit my father and World War II hit me. He joined the navy when he was seventeen in World War I and about 27 years later, at seventeen, I joined the navy during World War II.

Samson Naval Training Station was a surprise to me because all the boys that I knew from my area had been sent to the Great Lakes station for their initial naval training. Samson was a fairly new training station, and I had no idea what was in store for me when they put us on a train and sent us there. In the navy the initial training is called "boot camp," and that is where we spent our first ten weeks.

Perhaps the most important lesson that I learned in the service was discipline. We did a lot of things that didn't seem to make much sense at the time, but I discovered later that this kind of training is absolutely necessary. For example, we stayed on a very tight schedule; we got up at a certain time, and had just a very few minutes to make up our bunks, fall out for exercise, go back to shave, and then fall out for the march to chow. The rest of the day was also strictly regimented except maybe for a little while after chow in the evening. We were learning discipline so that later when we were aboard a ship we would be able to respond immediately to an order and to be able to live and work together in a small area. I think all of the services realize just

how important discipline is, and they really start throwing it at you in the early days -- just as soon as you go in.

Letscher: What were your initial impressions about the service?

Nickell: To be honest about it, I never really liked that type of life, but I also felt very proud that I was a part of all of it. I was doing what millions of other young people, boys and girls, were doing, and I think most all of us thought then, as we do now, that it was a very worthy cause.

Letscher: What was the attitude of the American public about the war at that particular time?

Nickell: It was almost indescribable. The support was just tremendous. There were big rallies, bond drives, scrap drives, and many other signs of patriotism all over the country. Critical shortages of food, gasoline, tires, and other articles required a rationing program that, as far as I know, ran rather smoothly. Of course, there was a black market, but the great majority of the people were very understanding and cooperative. The USO (United Service Organization) did a tremendous job in entertaining the servicemen both in the states and overseas. Places like the Hollywood Canteen were run by volunteer workers, many of whom were the most popular entertainment personalities of the day.

Letscher: What were some of your experiences during your time in the navy? Were there any special events that come to mind; for example, were you involved in any particular battles?

Nickell: I was assigned to a ship that was a seaplane tender, the *USS Norton Sound*. Our job was to maintain a squadron of PBM Mariners. They were used mainly for air reconnaissance but did some light bombing against enemy installations. They would take off and land in the water, and then they needed to be serviced or repaired, our large cranes hoisted them aboard our seaplane deck. Fortunately, the war had turned in our favor out in the Pacific before we got there, but we always assumed that we would be involved in some action sooner or later.

The first taste we got of war, except for a few submarines scares, was at the Battle of Okinawa. Our ship was in a group of six seaplane tenders that operated as a base for Fleet Air Wing One. By this time the Japanese were using the kamikaze planes that flew suicide missions. Of the six ships in our group, three were hit by kamikaze planes, but fortunately our ship was not one of them. My battle station was on a 40 MM anti-aircraft gun. It was what they called a "quad 40" because it had four barrels. There were twelve of us on the gun crew, and we spent many hours on that gun at Okinawa.

Letscher: What exactly was your job while you were on board ship?

Nickell: I was a seaman assigned to a deck force in what was called Division 1. We had certain duties that we did most every day, some just menial tasks that were required to keep the ship clean and orderly. However, we had other duties such as standing watch and assisting in working parties that took on board such things as food and ammunition.

Letscher: It must have been very exciting to be in the center of things and to have an eyewitness view of a bit of history in the making.

Nickell: Yes, it certainly was. Sometimes it seems like it was all a dream. We were so young. As I look back, it doesn't seem possible that all of that happened over forty years ago. I didn't have it nearly as rough as a lot of those boys who went out there earlier or those boys who were fighting on the beaches and in the jungles, but just seeing ships explode right near us and knowing that men were killed by the dozens, was certainly not a pleasant experience.

Letscher: Were there any other experiences that stand out in your mind?

Nickell: Yes, a good many, but I might mention the day we heard about the use of the atomic bomb against Japan. After the battle of Okinawa ended, everybody anticipated a big invasion of Japan. We already had some members of the army, of all things, working on our ship. We didn't know for sure what they were doing, but we assumed it had something to do with an upcoming invasion of the Japanese homeland. The only news we got from home at that time, except the mail we looked forward to so much, was a periodic news sheet that was printed by our communications people in the "radio shack." It contained the headline news, baseball scores, and other items of interest to servicemen stationed overseas. Copies of the news sheets were run off on a mimeograph machine and then placed in stacks around the ship so that they could easily be picked up. At any rate, on this particular day I was on my way to the compartment where we slept and kept our personal belongings. On the way to the compartment I met one of my shipmates who had just picked up some freshly run off sheets. He said, "Did you hear about the big bomb that was just dropped?" I told him that I had not, all the time thinking about the bigger conventional bombs popularly called "blockbusters."

When I read that it was an atomic bomb and was many more times powerful than the conventional bombs, I immediately thought of heading for some mess hall where we had recently been allowed to listen to the Japanese broadcasts. There was a radio by the cooks' galley that picked up news broadcasts from Tokyo. The announcers spoke excellent English, and one of them by the name of Tokyo Rose had become a very interesting personality to us. Up to this point, the Japanese announcers had never admitted that they were losing the war. If a B-29 raid over Tokyo had occurred the night before a broadcast, they would give us some inflated number of how many B-29's had been shot down and declare that very little damage had been done by the bombs. This time it was different. When we heard the announcer say that Hiroshima had been wiped out, we knew it must have been an awesome explosion. Still Japan did not surrender. As you know, three days later Nagasaki was the target for another atomic bomb, and the Japanese surrendered shortly after that. I might add that our ship was only about 450 miles from Kyushu, the southernmost island of Japan, where Nagasaki is located.

Letscher: When you returned to this country, how were you welcomed back?

Nickell: I did not get back to this country until about eight months after the war ended. The big celebrations were over, but one could still feel a great sense of joy and appreciation for the returning servicemen. As for me personally, I had a wonderful reunion with my family and friends in the little hometown that I had been dreaming about since the day I left.



Interview with George Burns: Veteran of the Pacific Theater, World War II

by Christopher P. Burns

In June, 1944 George Burns had just graduated from high school. With his 18th birthday only two months away he decided to join the Navy. The decision to go to sea became an experience Burns would never forget.

Burns reported to Great Lakes Naval Center for basic training and then was sent to Radio Tech school in Chicago. He discussed Navy regulations saying: "While I was in Chicago, one of the students was an electrical engineer. He was married, had children and was a seaman. In those days if you wore glasses you couldn't pass the Navy eye test to be an officer no matter what your other qualifications were. I remember this fellow sitting in the back of class working on crossword puzzles and always cursing about Navy regulations. He always had the highest grades on tests and if anyone asked the teacher a question he couldn't answer, the teacher would always ask him."

"From Chicago we returned to Great Lakes where I met a seaman named Shelley. Shelley had a bachelors degree in chemistry and a masters degree in physics. At one time he worked on the Manhattan Project and when it moved from Columbia University he was drafted in the Navy. Since he wore glasses he could not be an officer. Shelley and I became friends and after the war I visited him at Columbia where he was a professor of physics." The eye test left many people out of officer rank who were highly qualified but the regulation was not changed until later.

From Great Lakes Burns went to San Diego, to Camp Elliot and from Camp Elliot sailed to Pearl Harbor. "Our first morning at Pearl Harbor, Shelley and I received assignments to scrape paint off the walls in the heads (bathroom) so they could be repainted. After an hour of scraping Shelley was fed up and went to the Chief complaining. He was then made an assistant clerk and one of his jobs was to make up the work and liberty list every day. From that point on I was on liberty every day for the two weeks I was there and toured the beautiful places including Honolulu and Waikiki."

On the next trip, from Pearl Harbor, Burns was stationed on an A.H.S. (Army Hospital Ship). He said about the trip: "We were supposed to go to Samar (an island in the Philippines) but for some reason we were re-directed at sea to Cavite (also in the Philippines) and our records got lost. Because of the re-direction I never received any mail until a few months before I was discharged. One problem we had was that since our records were lost we never got paid. We existed by selling our clothes to the Filipino people.

"At Cavite we waited day after day for our permanent assignments. Every morning they would yell names for assignments and when they yelled your name you went. This went on for five hours a day, every day until your name was called."

Burns traded and bargained with the other sailors. "I remember once when a beer ship came in and everyone was given rations of only two beers. We (George and Shelley) went around and traded other sailors for their beers and ended up with a case of beer.

"The worst part about it was the bugs eating you up and when it rained everything got wet, you, your bags and all your gear. I hated the bugs and the hot climate.

"It was nothing like Pearl; the happiest time was when I finally left the islands and got on a ship that had cold water to drink and no bugs. I think the worst job of the war was to be stuck on an island where there was nothing to do, where the climate was rainy and steamy, and you were usually sick with malaria and or dysentery. Some sailors were stuck like that for two and three years."

It was here that Burns received his permanent ship assignment. It was not by orders but by determination that Burns got this assignment. He reported to the *Raymon W.*

Herndon, an APD, (Amphibious Personnel Destroyer) for permanent assignment. The *Herndon* was a 348 foot ship built in 1943 with a top speed of 33 knots. The ship contained underwater demolition teams (UDT) and other troops. It also carried four LCVP's (landing craft vehicle personnel).

Burns first applied for radio technician (RT), but another sailor whose last name started with an "A" was chosen. Burns disliked the climate on the island so bad that he asked what other jobs were open on board and he was told: "The only opening we have is for deck people. To this Burns replied: "That's what I want to be." Then he was told he would have to start out as a mess cook, to which he replied rather enthusiastically: "That's my favorite job. That's exactly what I want to do." Now he recalls: "whatever they had open was what I wanted...anything to get off that island."

As for destination, "on ship we usually knew where we were going but it didn't make any difference because no one could have heard of these places (Islands in the South Pacific) anyway. You could look it up but there was nothing you had ever heard of even near there that you could compare it to.

"Prior to the initial attack on Okinawa, the *Herndon* had taken its UDT's offshore of the landing area and dispatched them on the LCVP's. The LCVP carried the demolition teams into swimming distance to the beach where the divers went in and destroyed underwater landing obstacles such as barbed wire and hidden explosives. They also marked large underwater obstacles that could not be destroyed." On this mission the *Herndon* suffered heavy losses of her UDT men.

The *Herndon* also was assigned to escort convoys of amphibious ships from place to place and protect them from Japanese submarines and floating mines. Burns said: "Since we were much faster we would be in front of the convoys in two columns, sweeping back and forth, searching the water the convoy would pass over. As the convoy's speed was usually six knots we could search a wide area in front of them. While doing this we saw no subs but did destroy fifteen mines."

The *Herndon* was a part of the outer screen for defense in the invasion of Okinawa, in May of 1945. Burns said he witnessed some of the Kamikaze planes flying over but he said: "They weren't worried about a little ship on the outer screen. We shot at a few of them and were credited with two planes shot down." He calls the ship's assignment "lucky" as compared to those ships on the Radar Picket Line.

Outside the "outer screen," where the *Herndon* was stationed, was yet another screen called the Radar Picket Line. These ships were 200 to 250 miles outside the main fleet. The task was to relay information to the main fleet on incoming enemy planes. Burns said: "The Japanese thought that this was a dangerous line so they would always attack them and do serious damage to those ships."

When the *Herndon* went to battle stations Burns was a PA operator outside the Combat Information Center. This was the communications center for the ship where orders were sent out. He was chosen he said because of his midwest accent, "it was easy to understand." His second place in battle stations was to operate a "rear twenty," a twenty millimeter cannon on the rear deck.

One problem for Burns, throughout the war, was that his ship changed destinations while it was still at sea. Because of this he never received anything that was sent from his mother or anyone in the U.S. He said his mother always wondered why he never thanked her for all the things she sent him. One time he received a package but it was for another George Burns out of Chicago. Burns ate the food because "I figured this guy had been getting all mine so I figured I might as well eat what I got."

The *Herndon*, along with many other ships, became involved in the worst typhoon in the history of U.S. Naval Operations. On October 9,10 of 1945, typhoon "Louise" disabled, grounded or sank 266 ships. Wind speeds were recorded up to 120 knots. Samuel E. Morrison says in his *History of United States Naval Operations in World War*

II: "The storm began near Formosa and ended in the South China Sea. During this time the *Herndon* was in the South China Sea."

Burns described the storm. "You couldn't walk. The waves would throw you around. It lasted for about 48 hours and you would get thrown right out of your bed, so you had to chain yourself in bed at night. You couldn't get food at the chow hall, so we ate cold Spam sandwiches for two days.

"The waves were breaking way over the top of the mast and since we were top-heavy the captain had to keep the nose right into the waves or we would have flipped. During that time I was in charge of making sure one of the doors below deck was shut after anyone came through it. This was to keep each compartment sealed and waterproof." After typhoon "Louise" the *Herndon* sailed to Jinsen, Korea (now Inchon). Burns said: "I always thought that one of the most unbelievable incidents was when MacArthur landed at Inchon. The ship had to anchor 25 or 30 miles off shore as did MacArthur's ships and high tide is only about four hours long. He accomplished the feat successfully in that time period."

After Inchon the *Herndon* sailed to Fusan (now Pusan) as port director. "At this time the allies were rehabilitating the Japanese in Korea and sending them back to Japan and we directed the port traffic. The town was not yet secured so we had to wear 45's (45 caliber pistols) as a standard part of our uniform whenever we went on liberty and we traveled in numbers. We never had any trouble. One day I walked down in the town and saw the Japanese prison camp. It was nothing more than tents and it smelled awful. It had no sanitary facilities. It was fenced in and armed with guards.

At Fusan Burns became an SP (shore patrol). The SP's and Military Police rode around in jeeps and policed American military personnel. Soldiers who were caught by the SP's for various reasons were turned over to the MP's. Burns said: "The Army did the same thing so whenever an MP turned a prisoner over to us, instead of turning him, in we would drive him to wherever he wanted to go and drop him off. After about a month the captain wanted to know how many arrests we had made. It turned out that we'd made no arrests and all we did was tear around in jeeps and have fun. I also found out there was no record of any Army arrests of Navy personnel."

After Fusan the *Herndon* was scheduled to stop at Shanghai headquarters of the Seventh Fleet, but the ship had to stop at Tsingtao, China to refuel.

On liberty Burns went into town with some friends and decided to tour a church overlooking the town. Behind the church was an orphanage. "As we were wandering around I talked to a person I thought was a priest. The next day at mass I saw the same man only I found out he was the bishop. He took up a collection at mass and we all had a lot of money from being at sea. I noticed a lot of people throwing in fives and tens. Apparently the bishop had never seen that kind of money and he thanked us profusely. Eventually he came to Cincinnati and was then Cardinal Tien, the first Cardinal of China. I went down to see him and he actually remembered who we (the sailors from the ship) were.

"We had Chinese men doing the work on ship that we were supposed to be doing, cleaning the deck, etc. For their pay, we gave them a pack of cigarettes which was actually worth a lot in those days in China.

"This went on until one day I was cleaning up in the kitchen and I sent the Chinese workers outside to burn the garbage. A little later the boatswain's mate came in wondering who had the Chinese burn the stuff. What happened was these people had set the fire right next to the depth bomb racks and if it continued it could have blown the ship and half the harbor apart."

After two weeks in the Tsingtao the *Herndon* received orders to take two hundred marines down to Shanghai. The ship arrived on New Year's Eve in 1945. "We were then made flagship to the commodore in charge of American LST's (Landing Ship

Transport). "Our job (the task group) was to deliver supplies to the Nationalist Chinese Army in northern China where they were fighting the Chinese Communist Army."

At the mouth of the Yangtze River, "I remember being achored for a short time and taking rifle and handgun practice on the fantail. Everything went well until one of the other ships signaled that our bullets were bouncing off the side of their ship. That was the end of our target practice."

Early in 1946 the *Herndon* sailed up the Yangtze to the Hwang Pu River where it anchored for three months. There the Seventh Fleet was anchored with "700 to a 1000 ships all in the river" because the harbor did have enough docks.

Burns discussed the mode of transportation in Shanghai: "Travel was done by rickshaw (a two wheeled carriage pulled by a person on foot) or pedicab" (a two wheeled, two seat carriage pulled by a person on a bicycle).

"The city was very modern and well-kept with fabulous hotels. It was here that I lived as well as I've ever lived. We sold cigarettes that we bought for 50 cents a carton and we'd sell them on the beach for \$10 a carton. We could carry up to five cartons off the ship at any one time so you could make fifty dollars every time you went on shore. A haircut in Shanghai in those days cost only 75 cents. That was really living. You made more money than you could possibly spend."

"I also witnessed the Nationalist government go to pieces. I always thought that as much as the communists, the thing that hurt the Nationalists was their inflation.

"The government just began printing money without backing for it. When I arrived in China the rate of exchange was 1,200 CNC (Chinese Nationalist Dollar) to one American dollar and when I left three months later the rate was 55,000 CNC to one American dollar. So no one in China wanted to hold onto Chinese money. I think that's why they bought so many cigarettes."

After an incident between the American supply task force and a Chinese Communist force, which the Americans won, Chiang Kai-shek went to Shanghai to award the task force with a unit medal. "Since we were on the flagship we were personally decorated by Chaing Kai-shek himself."

Seeing the government collapse was not the only excitement Burns witnessed "I remember one night looking out over the harbor and seeing one of our ships blow up. The ship was loading ammunition and food from an LST with cranes and the ammo was mixed up with the food so when the crane dropped the load, a carton of grenades went right up. The explosion blew up the deck and killed about 25 Chinese and wounded some Americans. This was not an isolated incident; it happened from time to time."

After Shanghai Burns's tour in the Navy ended. He said he was "lucky" when it came time to leave because some ships were sailing all the way to Norfolk which could take three months. The ship he took, however, had a general on board. This meant that the ship would sail straight to the West Coast of America. Burns said: "The festivities when we left were fantastic. The bands were playing a series of songs as we pulled away. We took the northern route home to Seattle and made it in about 14 days. When we arrived in Seattle a band was there playing all the hits of the day. USO girls were giving out candy and little gifts to all the returning servicemen. It was a very moving experience."

From Seattle Burns went to Great Lakes Naval Base to be discharged, then returned to Cincinnati.

He summed up his tour in the Navy by saying: "It was an experience I'm glad I was involved in, but I would never want to experience it a second time."

After Burns was discharged from the Navy he graduated from the University of Cincinnati. Since then he has worked at General Electric, served as a councilman in a Cincinnati suburb and coached both basketball and baseball Little League teams. Today, George Burns is a salesman and the father of seven children. He lives in Cincinnati with his wife Dorothy.

Military Experiences of Robert Mullen

by John P. DeMarcus, Jr.

Dr. Robert Mullen, a member of the Army Reserve in the period prior to the Vietnam War, witnessed the Vietnam protest movement while working toward his doctoral degree at the Ohio State University. Mullen was not directly involved in combat, but his encounters with other people and their reactions to the War were of great value in his later work.

Mullen was born in 1937 in Melrose, Massachusetts. He was reared in Newton, Massachusetts, a community about five miles from Boston. He led an active, athletic life in his youth, particularly focusing on tennis and running. In the fall of 1955 he enrolled at Emerson College in Boston. He received his bachelors degree in 1960 and his masters degree in 1962 from Emerson. During the summers he worked in a part-time position for the John Hancock Insurance Company and taught tennis on weekends.

At this time in his life (age 20-22) Mullen started to think about the military. It seemed to him that he had better get his obligation to his country out of the way while he was still young and in good physical shape. After some discussion with friends and tennis associates he decided that the Army Reserve was his best alternative. He was told that in the Army Reserve one only had to have six months active duty and then only one meeting a week or one weekend a month plus a two week training period in the summer. Upon further consideration Mullen decided that the Army Reserve sounded like a great option for service so he drove to the Boston Army base, which was essentially a huge administrative center for the Army, and joined a reserve unit which was made up almost exclusively of other employees of the John Hancock Insurance Company. Mullen joined the Army Reserve in June of 1962; however, he arranged not to commence his term of service until September in order that he could continue his job of teaching tennis and working for the insurance company that summer.

In September of 1962 Mullen was placed on active duty and was sent to Fort Dix, New Jersey. He remained there on active duty until March, 1963. Upon arrival at Fort Dix the men were placed in an eight week basic training camp which was designed to prepare them physically and train them in weapons. There was a strong emphasis on distance running and rifle training. Mullen recalled how he enjoyed the running and physical workouts. He felt that because he had stayed in shape through playing tennis, he was better prepared to deal with some of the rigors of military life. The other main focus of the eight week basic training period was preparing the men in the use of a rifle. He remembered that while he had never before fired a rifle, he learned quickly how to operate one and soon mastered the techniques needed to become a marksman. Upon completion of basic training he was sent to typing school and from there to a five week "Quartermasters school" which basically taught him how to manage a supply store or the equivalent of the army's general store. After he completed the quartermasters course Mullen was placed in charge of one of the base's supply stores. There they sold basically replacement clothing to the other men on the base; his job, in addition to selling the clothing, was to keep track of inventory, to reorder and generally take care of the red tape involved in such an operation. He continued this work until March, 1963 at which time his term of active duty was over. Mullen returned to Boston and completed his obligation to the Reserves one night a week and on one two week training camp during the summer.

While Mullen's term in the military does not seem very crucial or exciting from the surface, upon further discussion he revealed some of the events of the day which he felt had a dramatic effect upon himself and probably most other Americans. He was serving his term of active duty during the time of the Cuban missile crisis; he recalled

that they were very tense times indeed, that no one really knew what was going on and that everyone feared that this could be the end. He remembered vividly President John F. Kennedy's speech regarding the missiles and his stand that we would go to any length to have the missiles removed. Truly everyone felt as if we were on the brink of nuclear war. Fortunately, the Russians backed down and the situation cooled off somewhat.

Throughout Mullen's career he felt that he had been very lucky. He discovered that had war broken out and the Reserves been called in, his unit would have never seen combat. This was because his unit was designed as a "garrison unit"; that is, they were made up of various specialties which would be required to keep the fort running. For example, they had dentists, cooks, typists and quartermasters, in addition to many other specialists; everything which was essential for the fort's operation. While not apparent at the time, looking back on it Mullen speculated that this might have been a gearing up process for Vietnam.

While he was in the military Mullen did not observe very much civilian protest to the military. This was probably because Vietnam was still an unknown part of the world to most Americans. However, following his term of service when he moved to Columbus, Ohio to pursue his doctorate degree at the Ohio State University, he recalled that the protest movement was in full swing. This was the period of 1968-71. Mullen recalled clearly the day of the Kent State shooting:

"I walked out from class about 1:30 in the afternoon on a beautiful spring day. The first thing I remember seeing was a young girl holding a hand scribbled sign which read "4 shot at Kent." The protests became so heated that it was nearly impossible to hold classes that week. Finally, the University cancelled classes and the National Guard was called in. Thankfully, everything there was resolved peacefully."

The encounter with these mass protests and classroom discussions regarding the War awoke within Mullen an idea which was later to become his dissertation topic. This was "What were Black Americans thinking about the Vietnam War?" This was originally a topic for a research paper; however, with the urgings of his professor, it became the dissertation topic on which he researched and wrote over four hundred pages.

Several other events also had a profound effect on Mullen's later career. These included the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King. In addition, there were protest movements and mass civilian disapproval of the war effort. These events served to create writing material for Mullen. The late 1960's were a time for an end of innocence. People were learning about what the War in Vietnam meant and the protest movements they held were the way in which they expressed their feelings. Mullen's discovery of his topic of "What were Black Americans thinking about the Vietnam War" exemplifies the thinking of the country. It was a subject that had been given little consideration but was of primary importance since the American black made up the majority of the troops as well as most of the casualties experienced in Vietnam.



The Right to Choose: Richard Dedman's Four Years in Today's Army

by Betty R. Letscher

It was a bright, sunny, clear day when Richard Dedman arrived at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri to start army life. He had traveled widely with his family, which may have had some influence in his decision to go into military service rather than going on to college. But mostly, he was tired of school and of people insisting that he should go to college. He wanted to take charge of his own life, to make his own decisions.

In June of 1978, he was inducted into the army infantry; his thoughts at that point, tended toward the glory, the glamour and the romantic view of military life. These thoughts were short-lived. After a decent first week of meeting friendly people, receiving some instructions and getting an overview of the service, the men went through the harrowing and dehumanizing experience of being loaded into "cattle cars" and shipped "out" for a "no choice" destination. However, in the army there were no choices. For example, they did have a choice of haircut didn't they? The barber actually asked, quite seriously, whether Dedman had wanted his hair short, medium length or long. After asking, he then proceeded to cut it army-style, which meant that his haircut was exactly like the haircut received by all of the other inductees.

Even so, there were positive aspects of army life. A private entering the service received approximately \$400 per month army pay; and Dedman would be receiving about \$1,000 per month sergeant's pay at his time of departure in four years. Some of his civilian friends weren't making that much. Perhaps he could prove himself to be an outstanding soldier and rise to even greater heights.

Then Dedman encountered the drill sergeants. He learned early that the leaders in the military do not want decision makers; a soldier is expected to be obedient, to show little of his own individuality. And, there was the problem of ridicule. Everyone, it seemed, was subject to ridicule. Lieutenants were ridiculed (somewhat of a deterrent to those who aspired to becoming officers hoping for better treatment), and men who were inarticulate or who had accents were ridiculed. Race and color were grounds for ridicule. The somewhat hesitant, but at the same time easy friendliness of early encounters with fellow inductees during the first week in the service disappeared. Groups formed, and there was little social mixing of races or colors. A soldier tended to travel with "his own kind." It appeared that sociological and cultural values were lagging far behind legal rights. A new and unfamiliar distance between individuals was born and great care was taken to address men according to their rank.

Rumors floated freely and stories were heard of physical violence and man-handling by those in charge which may or may not have been true. It certainly was true that drill sergeants were not permitted to hit anyone, but there were rumors that put fear into the hearts of the men because such tales had some hint of truth about them. Some of the soldiers believed that this was a psychological tactic to keep them in line. Maybe so. But who actually knew for certain. It was also generally acknowledged that there was more physical violence (if indeed it truly existed) in the Army and Marines (as part of their value system) than in the Air Force or Navy.

A topic for discussion among the men was what to say in the event that they were captured in battle. In the past, men were only permitted to give their name, rank and serial number. Now, it was learned, they were also permitted to give their birthdate. It seems that, after Korea, the realization took hold that military personnel needed more training to cope with the psychological brainwashing tactics they encountered when they were captured.

Dedman observed that certain jobs had "class" values. For example, if one was part of the paratroopers, but was not airborne and held a desk job, he was looked down upon. There were definite classes, social levels, and social pressures in the modern "action" army.

He noticed much red tape and hierarchical scapegoating. Soldiers would get upset and take out their anger on the individual with the next lowest rank. Officers seemingly got along well with each other but even in this hierarchy different classes and groups existed. Infantry officers tended to gravitate toward infantry officers. There was a tendency to forget that everyone was a part of the whole and ideally should be working together for a common cause.

As a result of his new insight into army life, Dedman began to feel that in today's army there is more ambiguity than in the past. In World War II for example, assumptions were firmer. In some ways times were then simpler, more clear-cut, and one tended not to make judgements. Today, he decided, adjustments were more difficult because people are more worldly and generally better educated, which makes it more difficult to intensely dislike your enemy when you feel that you understand his viewpoints and realize that the ordinary soldier in the field is not the one who initiates the conflict. Such heady decisions are made "at the top." But those at the bottom are no longer quite content to blindly accept such decisions.

Another enlightening experience occurred during a "health and welfare" inspection of the barracks. This inspection is often referred to by military personnel as a "search and seizure" process because the searchers are looking for contraband. On one occasion a copy of the "Communist Manifesto" was discovered. The owner, an avid reader, insisted that he was reading it simply to get another outlook on life, to learn; but because the book was in his possession he was intensely grilled about his "loyalty." The scope and intensity of the questioning and probing bothered Dedman and brought to mind many questions regarding individual rights.

As an infantryman with the 101st Airborne Division, better known as the Screaming Eagles, Dedman was given anti-tank and weapons maintenance training and was the company gunsmith or armorer. He went to infantry and jungle warfare schools, dispensed arms, was involved in selecting landing zones for helicopters, choosing pick-up sites, directing helicopters in, calling on ships for ground support and using medivacs for evacuation of the wounded. He discovered that there is much paperwork in the army and that some of the weaponry and equipment, while it looked fine in theory or on paper, was less than ideal in practice. In actual exercise soldiers all too often experienced great difficulty using these innovations because of field conditions, noise, errors in manufacturing the weapon, problems with its range, difficulty because the equipment was too heavy to hold and use properly or had a backlash. In some instances, its proper use exposed the soldier to the enemy. Some of the weapons only worked when conditions were perfect; with others, the men could easily lose control or the weapon would blow up or cause secondary explosions. Occasionally, especially with the more modern technical equipment, the user was not properly knowledgeable, or the weapon itself was far too sophisticated for the person assigned to use it. Another major problem was that the men were not given enough practice with the equipment before time to use it. Soldiers consoled themselves with believing that the Russian soldiers faced similar difficulties, and that they too felt their technology to be something of a myth.

As an American soldier Dedman learned very quickly that America is not the only place in the world that American views are not always right in every situation. He decided that the way Americans perceive the world has value, but others could have views that are just as "final" for them. As a result of these new perspectives, Dedman began to feel a greater interest in what was going on in the world.

He was also beginning to believe that the goals of life for today's soldier, after the conclusion of military service, are different from those of yesterday's soldiers. He felt there is more doubt as to what one's goals in life really are or should be and there has to be more questioning about such goals for which there are no easy answers. For yesterday's soldiers, life seemed fairly straightforward after the service: marriage, children, career and suburbia. Now soldiers and ex-soldiers were asking themselves whether or not that was what they truly wanted. Some seemed to have a very difficult time adjusting to civilian life after four years of military life, often floundering because they had no definite goals. Because the Puritan work ethic is often so deeply ingrained, many had to convince themselves that they were not derelict because they chose to return to school as opposed to finding a job and working toward a future career.

Upon returning to civilian life some soldiers deeply resented any kind of regimentation. Some, after a period of time, mellowed as individuals and no longer permitted such things to bother them, although the service days continued to mold them. The service, it appeared, could act as a catalytic force to speed up or slow down one's lifestyle. This is brought about because of people met, experiences shared, and through an introduction to other cultures and aspects of life. In that respect, much can be learned from military life.

To Dedman the world looked dramatically different as a military man than as a civilian. Prior to serving in the army he thought the United States was always right, always unerring in its decisions. He went in with a very patriotic attitude and came out somewhat bitter and sarcastic, with little trust in government. This change in viewpoint came about because he realized that men are, as soldiers, taught to hate their enemies, the enemies being whomever they were fighting at the time. Soldiers are taught to believe that their enemies are always evil. Ultimately, he realized that probably these same people are no better or worse than himself and that they had been taught to hate him with equal passion.

Dedman now believes that a general feeling among returning soldiers is that they don't want to go through the experience again, but also that they wouldn't want to trade their experiences either. Such experiences are a valuable tool to the individual in losing insular qualities, experiencing a broadening of viewpoint and an opportunity to experience history. Sometimes, it seems, people are only able to realize the narrowness of their particular set of beliefs after they have been through an encounter that allows them to step aside, and with a sort of macrocosmic outlook, become objective.

With his illusions destroyed and thoughts of the glory and glamour of military life gone, Dedman returned to civilian life. He now had a broader perspective of life due to the experiences of the past four years. He also gained a heightened interest in world events and a new-found appreciation for education. Because Dedman still desired to take charge of his own life, to make his own decisions, he returned to the classroom as a college student. Richard Dedman is now an honor student at Northern Kentucky University majoring in European History. He is a member of the Phi Alpha Theta.



Letter From The President

Alpha Beta Phi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta has been in existence for eleven months, and in these eleven months we have accomplished a great deal. The latest accomplishment is completion of the second issue of the journal.

Alpha Beta Phi chapter members are very dedicated and hard working people. They have demonstrated that history is important and worth the time and effort necessary to publish a scholarly journal.

I congratulate the members on the successful used book sale. Not only did we establish the credit of the chapter, the sale was a time of fellowship in the fourth floor of Landrum Hall, fellowship around books.

The new Alpha Beta Phi chapter officers will be elected on April 1, 1986. The initiation and banquet will be on April 15, 1986, and will include installation of the new officers.

*Scott K. Fowler
President
Alpha Beta Phi Chapter*

The Historian's Report

Alpha Beta Phi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta has enjoyed, in the Spring semester of 1986, a productive and enriching experience. The chapter's journal, *Perspectives in History* was well received within the university community. A memorandum from the office of the provost praised the chapter's ability to stimulate thought through the written word. Moreover, the administration found the material presented to be quite pleasing.

More success was gained financially. A book sale on February 19th and 20th provided the chapter with needed revenue of \$128.50; funds which will be used to purchase frames for the charter and symbol. Both will be placed in the chapter office in Landrum Hall, Room 421. The remaining sum will remain in the chapter's account on campus.

During the month of April, the chapter participated in three stimulating events. On April 2 and 3, several members assisted in hosting William S. McFreely, author of the Pulitzer Prize winning biography, *Grant: A Biography*. On the 26th of April, a chapter representative served as a judge at History Day, the annual regional competition for students in history classes in middle school and secondary school in the northern Kentucky area. Finally, on April 25-27, the chapter had six members participating in the Fifth Annual Mid-West Civil War Round Table Conference at the Clarion Hotel in Cincinnati. Scholarly papers were delivered by Thomas L. Connelly, Richard M. McMurtry, and others.

Although these activities were meaningful, the highlight of the year was the Second Annual Banquet. The initiation ceremony was held in the University Center of Northern Kentucky University. Thirteen new members were installed. Scott K. Fowler presided at the banquet, which followed immediately in the ballroom. Dr. John D. Wright, Professor of History at Transylvania University, presented the paper, "Lexington's 1920 Will Lockett Riot: Martial Law in a Southern City," a paper which he delivered at the Southern Historical Association in Louisville in 1984.

Kenneth Eric Hughes



***Officers
of
Alpha Beta Phi
Chapter
1986-1987***

PresidentLinda M. Ruh
Vice-PresidentRichard T. Dedman
Secretary-TreasurerElaine M. Richardson
Historian and EditorChristopher P. Burns
Faculty AdvisorJames A. Ramage





Charter Student Members

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Ann C. Cahill
John P. DeMarcus, Jr.
Scott K. Fowler
Matthew W. Hornsby
Kenneth E. Hughes
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Douglas K. Meyer, Jr.
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Daniel M. Driscoll
Mark K. Gilvin
Todd P. Huff
Jeffrey Junto
Andrew O. Lutes
S. Wayne Moreland
Elaine M. Richardson
Rudiger F. Wolfe

New Members

April 15, 1986

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Richard T. Dedman
James R. Eilers
Michael P. Holliday
Betty R. Letscher
Darlene S. Miller
Linda M. Ruh

Joseph T. Shields
Harold A. Stephens
Shelley L. Stephenson
Deborah S. Trego
Edwin L. Vardiman
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Faculty

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J. Merle Nickell
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