



### The 79<sup>th</sup> division landing at Cherbourg

After being processed at the 315 regiment I was asked why I was still carrying the 1903 Springfield rifle. I stated that while assigned to the first division company D, 16 infantry the 1903 Springfield rifle with power variable scope. It was then that Col Holden shook my hand and said you might be called on later. The company then later was briefed by company commander John Potts. Our mission was to cut across France from Cherbourg. The northern position to rest in the southwest. The landings of Omaha beach and Utah beach were east of Cherbourg and most of the western part cut off which gave us problems with having the enemy to our rear. The landing came off on 0600, June 16, 1944. We were receiving direct fire from the high cliffs on the south part of town which had been heavily bombed earlier. After one hour making no headway, the Canadian bombers were again called in. My? Again began ringing in my ear. Why are they not pulling us back away? We are too close to the cliffs. At this time I could hear the bombers coming. A front bomber came in first dropping a green streamer to make the target which dropped in the middle of the troops. There was no time to run lay down and say your prayers. I looked up and all I could see were little black dots coming down after that. The ground started shaking and I could feel my body being lifted and then I was in a hole filled with smoke. It only lasted about 8 minutes then the bombers made a circle and headed back to where they came from. I stayed in the hole for about another 5 minutes and then decided to check myself out. I had a little blood coming out of my nose and felt a little dizzy, but a little later it cleared up so I guess the? took care of me again. I was told later that the regiment commander got relieved of his command. The loss of troops killed and wounded was about 300 not to be exact. At this time we had a ship about 3 miles out receiving wounded. That afternoon I could see a large ship in the distance. It was a battleship which was to support us taking the fortified hill. Normally an attack starts at daybreak each morning. Not this time, it started about an hour before sundown. The big battleship started firing. It sounded like wash tubs coming though the air. We started to advance, praying that the big shells didn't fall short again. After the barrage lifted we had very little resistance and found a long tunnel underground that a small car of jeep could travel in. Where it went I did not know. A lot of soldiers claimed they found a lot of money in it.

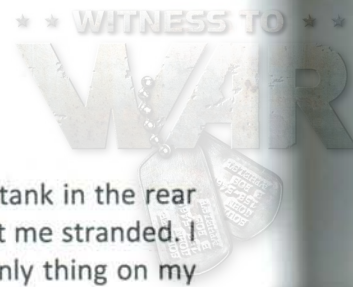


### Cleaning up Cherbourg and off to St Lo

At this time it was getting dusk and we still getting sniper fire from someplace behind. Col Holden, our battalion commander, told me to get the 03 rifle and take a look around, being we are on a high hill and you can get a good view of the background especially the Catholic Church. I found a good rock where I could get a good view of the background in which we had just come from and focused my scope on the church top window which had blinds. The distance was short, about 700 yards. I looked through the scope about 5 minutes in which the window shades started to open. I could see a figure in the center. I immediately took aim at it and fired. After waiting about a minute I could no longer see a figure in the window. I told two of my men to check out the church. When they returned they said all they could see was a dead priest. They also told me he had a German uniform on under the robe. That night Captain Potts called our company together and said the battalion commander informed me we would depart Cherbourg in the morning as soon as rear echelon troops took over. He said our regiment is headed for St-Lo. The 90<sup>th</sup> division had just been 80% wiped out. He said, Sergeant Tesch thanks to the 03 rifle and smiled.

That night after posting guard, getting our 1 blanket, we rolled in the shelter half and got our 3 rations K for the next day. The men dug their fox holes and started talking about the next day. They were talking about the 90<sup>th</sup> division. The Texas-Oklahoma division what did they do wrong at St-Lo. Well I guess we will find out when we get there. From Cherbourg south we were in the hedge rows. Instead of only building fences for their property they built a large dome about 12 feet wide at the bottom. 8' to 10' high slanted on top. Then put a fence of barb wire on top. This was designed to stop tanks and other offenders. We are going through Basse-normandie, same country through northwest France to the coast at Brest. Otherwise this was the battle of machine guns and mortars. We loaded trucks at 0600 the 18 of June heading for St-Lo. A distance of about 80 kilometers. The roads were narrow. One vehicle would have to stop to let the other get by. Our tanks are still in Cherbourg but are no use to use because of the one way in and the one way out. We have a small piper cub an artillery spot plane to let us know if any opposition or what is on our way if it doesn't get shot down. We passed through Valognes and Caranten with little opposition but you could see where the tanks had been.

We were about 13 miles from St-Lo when our spotter plane started to receive machine gun fire and reported spotting a large object. They said it looked like a camouflage tank meanwhile Col Holden received a radio message from our regiment headquarters that the 90<sup>th</sup> division had informed them of the many trenches behind the hedge rows. They stated that the trenches were approximately 200 yards in length and many yards apart and opened at each end. It was stated that these trenches were dug while the war was going on in North Africa. It was estimated that about 50 of these made in a row and 2 machine guns in each trench. The 90<sup>th</sup> division made the one and only mistake of trying to take the defense position head on. The first thing that was ordered was to send a patrol at dusk dark to find out where the German tank was located. After the tank was located, Col Holden looked at me and said I need a bazooka man. I stated I would get it for him. He looked at me again and said didn't you see where I pointed my finger? We had to travel about 3 miles to locate the tank. The tank crew of



4 were eating and telling jokes when I fired the only round I had which hit the tank in the rear close to the turret setting it on fire. I ran like hell. The colonel ran so hard he left me stranded. I finally gave out and took a rest. He finally came back and said I'm sorry. The only thing on my mind was to get the hell out of there. I later received the Silver Star and he received the distinguish service cross. The attack was to start at 0615 on the morning of June 20<sup>th</sup> as follows: A dummy attack from the front firing machine guns and mortars. On company from the right flank and another company from the left flank, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion working their way around the flanks to the rear to stop the Germans while they decided to retreat. When it was all over one of my men said give me back my bar Browning automatic rifle and you can have the contraption back. My O3. The next three days when the graves administration took the dog tags off the dead, how many? As far as you could see and high. Most of the Germans decided it was better to go forward than backwards. The battle of St-lo cost the 315<sup>th</sup> about 150 dead and 300 wounded. Our next destination of the 315 regiment was to head south to Laval An Lemans about 175 miles. On our way south 3<sup>rd</sup> of July 1944 we entered a small village called Flers where we had started to receive mortar fire and small arm fire from a high hill in front of us. There was a German command car and a motorcycle going up a steep hill. I think it was an outpost that got caught a little late. It couldn't make it. After this was over Captain Potts came over to me and shook my hand with the O3. Then looked at me and said that one was close. Your cheek is bloody. I didn't even feel it. That was my first purple heart.



### The? Strikes again. Now about St Mare Aglise

This small village had a lot of factor in it and had completely skipped my mind. It started on a narrow road when one of our trucks hit a land mine. No one was killed. Two men received shrapnel in the legs. At this time we started to receive small arms fire. It was a harassing fire to slow up our advances. There were thousands of shoe mines along the road inside entrances to vacant houses. That evening our platoon leader, Lt Ramsey said he was going to make his quarters inside a little house. He said to call him first before going thru the gate because he had a hand grenade with a trip wire across the entrance, Meanwhile, I told him that the guards were posted and everyone knew the counter sign and password. I told him I was going to the barn where a 500 gallon tank of cider was. I thought it was kind of funny because the door was closed before I entered. It was pretty dark in there. When I entered inside I first leaned my rifle beside the door. I then took my bucket and headed towards the barrel. There was a man already there filling his bucket. I thought it was one of our men so I put my hand on his shoulder and said hurry up I'm thirsty. He didn't answer. When I started to fill my bucket, he fired at me and shot a bullet in my canteen and then disappeared. Then on the way to my cp a mortar shell hit it. Lt Ramsey heard the noise and ran thru the gate with the grenade and was killed. What a day. Early the next morning the company commander called us in for a meeting. We all bowed our head in prayer that he was giving for Lt Ramsey. He then briefed us on St Mare Aglise. He said it was a slow down factor for allies. It didn't make much sense but everything goes in wartime. At this time we were at a holding factor before going south to LaVal. While we were waiting our departure someone had a small battery radio and on the armed forces news it said field marshal Rommel had been killed.

We entered the town of Laval on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July 1944. We had no resistance before entering the town, but when we go into the center of the town it was a different story. I guess this was a big mistake not sending the patrol before and to check out what resistance problems we would engage. The town of Laval was situated in a low area with high spots in the right and left flanks. There were machine guns firing at us from each flank and small arms fire from the town as well. Then the? Hit my mind saying you cannot make a withdrawal. That would be suicide. I guess colonel Holden was reading my mind. He gave orders to fight our way through town. At this time we had 20 of our 81mm mortars go to work. After two hours things started to look our way. I later was awarded the Bronze Star for making enemy machine gun nest disappear. The company commander captain Potts briefed the company and said that this was a small enemy group to slow us down.

Next we took the town of Le Mans France. This town was much larger than La Val. We sent our patrol this time 2 hours ahead watching the town and they reported back that something funny was going on. A bunch of naked bald headed women and Germans were running around in the hedgerow. We took the town and didn't even fire a shot. That was an interesting situation.



### The battle of Forest De Parow at Luneville

From July 22<sup>nd</sup> to September 24<sup>th</sup> we were more or less in a holding situation getting our tanks and artillery to catch up with us for the first time, because we were moving out of hedgerow country and heading for more of a hilly forest terrain. On September 26 we received orders to engage an enemy force 3 miles east of Luneville called Forest De Parow, a large thick wooded area about 10 miles deep.

While checking out the town, there were only a few German soldiers walking around and they soon disappeared. This was a situation to be well studied. There were 3 miles of open country to cross and 2 German mark 6 tanks staring us in the face. It would be suicide crossing the open space. The orders came down and it reminded me of the situation at St Lo. We called in the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion of the 315<sup>th</sup> infantry to come from the left flank and the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion from the right flank. Our battalion, the 1<sup>st</sup> came in from the center. There was a set time for each battalion to start forward. On the morning of September 26<sup>th</sup> at 0545 the artillery started firing. The barrage lasted until it was light enough for the P51's and P47's to try to knock out the 2 German tanks that were spotted at the entrance of the forest. The two battalions from the left and right flanks started merging to the center of the forest and was on hold. The first battalion which was in the center was to hold in place. I guess that most of the German army though we were attacking from the front and pulled most of their reserves from the rear. Meanwhile our 2 battalions from each flank started firing small arms and mortars making the Germans think that they were surrounded. Well the plan worked pretty good when they realized that they had been out smarted and decided to make a fast retreat to the rear. As soon as the Germans were spotted we had two machine guns in position, 2 81mm mortars and 2 60mm mortars. For a while all hell broke loose. They were receiving fire from both sides and from the middle. After about 30 minutes the German fire started to slow down and Germans running here and there not knowing which way to go. After it was over Captain Potts came over and said we were lucky that we didn't have to face the 2 German tanks because the planes had knocked them out. Then he looked at me and asked me if I did any shooting with my 03 and I told him no I was out of ammunition. He departed and said good job well done and by the way you have blood on your right leg. I had gotten two pieces of shrapnel over my right knee and didn't even know I was hit. A while later I was given my 2<sup>nd</sup> bronze star and 2<sup>nd</sup> purple heart.



### The battle at Maginot Line

In the last part of September after leaving Luneville we received orders to proceed to the Maginot line at Ritterhoffen France. The old Maginot line consisted of 8 pill boxes about 150 yards apart which were built before WW I. These pill boxes were built for snipers only and not for tanks. It was mostly a suicide trap for the machine gunners and snipers because there was no way to escape. There were no German tanks to defend the pill boxes so our tanks had it made. After we shot through them we received no resistance. The explosive tank shells inside the concrete bunkers killed anyone inside. After checking out all the boxes we found out that all the German soldiers at the battle were average from 14 to 18 years of age.

The next day we got a big surprise when we were replaced or relived by the 42<sup>nd</sup> rainbow division from California. I never saw such a thing in my life. They had duffle bags, bugles, flags and were dressed for a parade instead of fighting a war. I passed a bird colonel and he had a shiny glass which you could see for a mile. The colonel called me down and said don't you know an officer when you see one. I told him I thought he was advertising for a sniper to shoot him with that shiny glass. He looked at me kind of funny and said I see what you mean.



### Taking the Town of Strasbourg France

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of October 1944 we pulled back to a town called Hatten. It was about 14 miles northwest of Ritterhoffen towards Strasbourg. The battalion commander stated that we would stay here until the next day. All the people started clapping when we came into town. There were two men motioning me to come over and stay in their barn over night. But first they wanted me to take a drink of their snaps which was a good grape whiskey. They people of the tow spoke Flemish which was a language of half French and half German. I speak German coming from a German family so I could only understand about every 4 words they said. I understood that 2 brother had married 2 sisters so I started calling them Mr. and Mrs. Snapsy. After a drink I told one of the brothers I was going up to the barn to take a nap. He didn't say anything but shrugged his shoulders and said bosch. That meant that Germans were up stairs in the barn. So the old? Went off in my head. I said so why don't you go to the barn with me and we can drink some more snaps. At this time I pointed my 03 at the barn entrance just in case. I didn't expect anyone to come down. In a couple of minutes a German officer stood in the door and said nicht scheesen. That meant don't shoot in German. One of the men with me searched him and he had no weapons. He said he had a young bunch of soldiers which had gotten scared and deserted him. I ordered him to take off his uniform and told Snapsy to get him some civilian clothes. After he changed he looked at me still not understanding. I told him in German to have a drink and to get lost. He said thanks and left.

The next morning on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October, we were about 7 miles from Strassboug expecting to hit a lot of resistance and we certainly received a lot. The 42<sup>nd</sup> rainbow division from the Maganol line was attacked by the Germans and they were retreating fast. Blowing horns and trying to run over everyone. They were shouting this is not a training exercise. This is the real thing. The Germans are playing for keeps. At this time I had 24 men in my squad instead of 12. About an hour later we were instructed to stop the Germans before they arrived at the mix up we had with the 42<sup>nd</sup> division. We called in the fighter planes which knocked out about 3 tanks and stopped the oncoming Germans. And what happened next you won't believe but the 42<sup>nd</sup> soldiers stayed right alongside of us while the battle lasted. I could hear them saying it's a good feeling being in a good outfit. It wasn't long before they started trying to find their units. They were sent to Nancy France for further training.

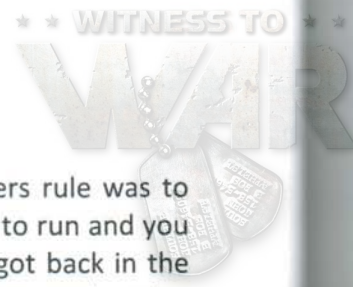
The sun was getting low when we hit the town of Strasbourg and all hell broke loose. The 1<sup>st</sup> French armored division started shooting the whole town up and the Germans started to run our way. A lot of them jumped in the Rhine River and started to swim across to Germany and some of them were still in town trying to fight their way out. During this battle I lost two of my men who had taken refuge in a dry creek bed which you do not do because they always would zero in on those places. One just about had his leg blown off. He was a young school teacher. He told me to finish cutting off his leg. I took off his rifle sling and wrapped it around his leg above the knee and told him I had to find my squad. When it was over I would send some men back to pick them up. After we arrived in town I finally found the D company CP. He said he would send medics to pick up those two men. He also said don't talk to loud there are Germans across the street. He said find a place to rest and we will have further orders in the morning. After a while of looking we finally found an empty brick building with empty rooms. My men



knew they had to post a guard wherever we slept. I took a room by myself and immediately fell asleep. The next morning I got the surprise of my life. There were 3 Germans in the same room still sleeping. I started to look for my 1903 rifle. Well the? Started me thinking maybe I should wake them up and offer them a cigarette and see what happens. By then maybe my men would start checking on me. So I told them in German too get up and have a smoke with me. They looked at me and my cigarettes and then at their guns in the corner. They were surprised that I spoke German. They did not know that my family was of German heritage and my grandparent were from Germany and taught me the language. They asked me what would happen if they surrendered. I said you might be sent to the United States. I took their weapons and they walked ahead of me to where my company was. Captain Potts looked at me and said where the hell did you get there from? I told him my story but he didn't believe me. After a while things started settle down. The 1<sup>st</sup> French armored division was to remain in the town and hold. The entire 79<sup>th</sup> were to depart for Nancy France for further orders. I got orders from my Captain to report to the battalion company. Col Holden the only building still standing is the Catholic Church. Let's go upstairs a take a look. That's when a sniper shot my steel helmet off and put a gash in my head. I guess I was knocked out for a while. When I came to our medic already had my head cleaned and bandaged. The next morning I was having a bad headache and Col. Holden asked the padre of the church if he knew of a civilian doctor. Well not only did he get a doctor but he got a doctor and a nurse. The bullet indented my skull about ¼ inch but not all the way through. I received 35 stitches and a half shaved head. After about 3 days Captain Potts said that the first battalion would have to go back to the Maganol line and meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion until the 45<sup>th</sup> division got there from Italy. There they would receive us. Col Holden then look at me and said, by the way you can stay with battalion headquarters until your head gets a little better and you can get your steel helmet back on. The doctor and nurse checked me every day without asking. I enjoyed the nice toilet and bathroom in the church. One evening when I was in there a big German officer stepped in. I guess he had seen my scarred face and quickly put up his hands and said he was a prisoner of war and had an urge. The 45<sup>th</sup> division from Italy arrived on November 17 and the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion arrives back in Strasbourg. I thanked the doctor and nurse before I left.

After my company D arrived back in Strasbourg Captain Potts checked me out. He said I could still stay with the battalion headquarters until we reached Nancy France and have the army field hospital check out my head. As soon as we arrived he contacted the LT Colonel that was in charge of the field hospital. The Col wanted to know who did the work on my head. It was explained and the doctor said he did a really good job which made me feel better. The doctor made some kind of bandage with a hole and told me only to wear the helmet when needed. I went back to my company and all the men were laughing. I said what's so funny and they said I told you that C3 would get you in trouble. We got word that evening that we would get a hot cooked meal for the first time in six months. We would also get a shower and some clean clothes. That made all of us forget the war for a while. I had just started to get in the chow line when the? Started to ring again. Why is the soldier in the line letting his steel helmet chin straps hanging down on each side? I quickly got my pistol and approached him from the rear and said "Gooten Aprateet" which means good appetite. I knew he was German. He said he was stupid and would gladly surrender. I took the German to battalion headquarters and told Col. Holden that I had a present for him. He wanted to know the circumstances of how I knew that this was





a German soldier in the chow line. I told him that one of the American soldiers rule was to always put the chin strap buckled in the back of the helmet because if you have to run and you fall you could break your neck. Well I guess you learn something every day. I got back in the chow line and had to eat what was left. Well when I was sitting down to eat we started getting direct fire from tanks. The 5th Calvary division thought we were Germans. After shooting up 3 green streamers in the air they finally stopped firing. Their comment was that they didn't get the word that there were still American troops left in France. After everything settled down again we got a chance for a shower and clean underwear. The shower consisted of 3 50 gallon barrels of water with a faucet and sprinkler at the end. The soldier next to me said hey look at that old man over there. He surely is not in the army. I looked at him again after the soldier had left and recognized him. It was our division commander general Mirah D. Weishe. I went up to him and told him I recognized him and that he had decorated me with the Silver Star. He asked me what my job was and I told him I had a squad of men and carried 3 rifles.



### Departing France for Holland (Amsterdam)

During the late days of November 1944 we received replacements to bring the division up to strength. I received two men from Leavenworth who was told that if they made it through the war alive they would be reinstated. We departed Nancy France on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December 1944 for Amsterdam. Our route took us through Luxemburg then through Liege Belgium and then to our destination in Holland. We had one tank for each company of the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion. Although our route to us north by northwest and this route had been breached from west to east prior. We still ran into small groups of Germans in small towns that had been missed. After about 5 days of riding in tanks or trucks we made it to the out skirts of the Netherlands. We were put in another holding position until further notice. The first Canadian armies were complaining that we were in their territory. Our reply was to see Eisenhower. That evening we got permission to go into a small town. As we walked in we noticed 3 German soldiers were drinking beer. I heard one of them say "those are American soldier and we better get out fast". That's when the? Went off again saying we better get out fast. We received word late that evening that we were to give bridge company support while putting in a thread way bridge near the Rhine River at Denlarkin Germany.



### Crossing the Bailey bridge at DenSlarkin

The bridge crew motioned for us to try out the bridge. There was one staff sergeant who hollered at me when I stepped on the bridge and said I hope the bridge sinks. Later at Ft Sill Oklahoma that same sergeant patted me on the back and said I see the bridge over the Rhine didn't sink on you. After we got acquainted we served many years together. I will explain that later. After crossing the bridge the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion headed south along the German side of the Rhine River, tanks leading. Our first opposition was at a town called Wesel which lasted about 1 ½ hours. The next town was Essen which lasted about the same time. We had captured a lot of Germans soldiers from about 14 to 17 years of age. In the middle of April we got into a defensive battle on the Ruhr River below Bochom Germany which lasted about 3 hours. This is where we lost our platoon leader LT Floyd Teabeaux who was killed. The war ended the next day. We set up our defensive line in Bocom, a town which was heavily bombed. I told my platoon that I saw a warehouse and I wanted to check it out. As I entered the door I saw a German soldier taking off his uniform. I started to shoot him and he said in German that the war was over. At this time I heard soldiers clapping and hollering the war was over. This is when the? Entered my mind again wanting to know what to do. Well before I could get an answer the German told me his name was Fritz Kessner and he was AWOL and he lived about 2 blocks from there. He wanted to know if I would like to go to his home and drink some snap. I told him my name and said Fritz you are a lucky person. If I hadn't known how to speak a little German we wouldn't be having the conversation. Went to Fritz home and knocked about 5 times. Finally his sister opened the door a little and Fritz said this is your brother. Then she let us in and called the whole family. She told them you are not going to believe this. After Fritz told them the whole story they started shaking my hand and hugging my neck. They wanted to know where I lived in the states and why I was in the Army. I told them that my grandparent were from Germany and went to the states. Then I told them I had to leave and would see them later.



### Visiting my brother in Bremen Germany

As I was walking out of Fritz house there were a bunch of jeeps and tanks in a line waiting for the other to move. I noticed that the jeep in front of me had 821<sup>st</sup> tank destroyer on the bumper. Somehow the old? Started ringing again and I thought that's the unit my brother is in. I asked if they knew a Melvin Tesch. They said he was the cook in their unit. I asked if I could ride with them to Bremen and they said welcome aboard. I had to get permission from Captain Potts and he said go ahead as long as you are back here in 7 days because we are leaving on April 27<sup>th</sup> for Czechoslovakia. It took us about 5 hours to get to Bremen just in time for supper. I got in line behind 2 other soldier and when my brother started to serve me a pork chop, I said come on cheap scape give me another one. He said you are no better than anyone else. Then he looked up and saw it was me. He motioned for me to go to the back where we could have supper together. After we ate I met his girlfriend. She looked about 6'8" and could pack him around like a baby. After spending about 2 days with him he decided to go back to Bochum where I introduced him to Fritz and his family. They told him all about how I save Fritz from being shot.

We departed Bochum April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1945 on our way to relieve the 1<sup>st</sup> infantry division in Czech because they were the oldest division fighting in Africa, Tunisia and Europe. They were scheduled to go back to the states first. I got the job of putting out American flags in each town to show the convoy the right way to go. We were about 9 km from the check border when the jeep I was riding in the driving was hollering I can't stop this jeep. The steering wheel goes round and round. We crashed and I sailed though the air and wrapped around a tree backwards. When I came to I was in the 1<sup>st</sup> division hospital which was already set up in Marinbad Czech. I asked the army nurse what was the damage? She said my back was not broke but was badly bruised also both kidneys bruised and swollen. I then told the nurse I guess I am in my old outfit that I served with in Africa. I told her I was in company D, 1<sup>st</sup> battalion 16<sup>th</sup> regiment under Col George Taylor. She said she would check it out. Meanwhile, Captain Potts and Colonel Holden paid me a visit and said to hurry and get well because I was a high point man with 168 points and due to fly back to the states. The doctor check my x-rays and said they still look pretty cloudy and that I was to stay in the hospital another week. When I got ready to leave I heard someone say "Good luck 03". It was Colonel George Taylor. Small world.