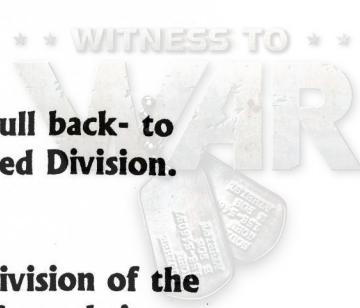


I left Sandersville with 34 fellow Washington Countians for Fort McPherson, Georgia in late April 1943. Five of us-(not having the vaguest idea of where we were headed) went to Fort Bragg, N. C, and were in the same unit (Battery "A"-Field Artillery Replacement Training Center) An incident at the Close Combat and Assault Course at Ft. Bragg.sent me to hospital and separated me from these Washington Countians, or any other previously known individual for the rest of my military career.

I arrived in England in early 1944 and trained intensively near Shakespeare's Stratford on Avon-until June, 1944. The training included nine trips to sheep ranches in Wales-the only place in the UK where we could fire our M-7, 105 self- propelled guns without endangering human lives. On one of these trips to Wales, a 2nd Lieutenant led us into a street (about the same width as the tank treads of our vehicles) which intersected a one-way street at a very sharp angle. When we were finally ordered to move on and enter the one-way street for the proper direction, the projection of the 50 cal. machine gun turret on my lead tank (M-7) took approximately three feet out of the corner of a three story building in this town, with bricks crashing around my feet thus making a hole through which the following five M-7's could pass making this almost impossible turn. Uncle Sam most likely paid dearly for this damage.

We departed Southampton for Normandy (Utah Beach) and were landed at dusk by an LST into rather shallow surf. Very tired from cleaning up all new equipment preserved in cosmolene, we dug in with very shallow foxholes. When it was just getting dark, we were bombed and strafed by two German Folke-Wolfe 190's. Shortly after the attack, you could hear the sounds of shovels hitting gravel--soldiers digging in. This was one of three times during the course of our participation in the war that we did not have constant and overwhelming air superiority in Europe.

After a short while of being bottled up in the hedgerow country of Normandy, my unit was assigned to the Fourth Armored Division in General Patton's U. S. Third Army and participated in the breakthrough at Avranches and began racing across the Brittany Peninsula, circling the city of Rennes and attempting to capture the French port of Lorient. Our small Task Force, part of a Combat Command of the Fourth Armored Division fired hollow shells with timed fuses for air bursts over Lorient. The shells contained leaflets demanding the surrender of the port city with a twelve hour deadline. We received no response from the German defenders; so the next day we started into the suburbs of the city and into the gates of Hades. Our force got shot up pretty badly with the first fatalities occurring. Battery "A"'s kitchen crew was completely wiped out-personnel and equipment. We fired at targets both direct and indirect encompassing a sector of approximately 270 degrees; stopped a train of flatcars, loaded with earth-moving equipment, in turn loaded with German infantrymen (about to split our position) with a direct shell hit on the locomotive at the far end of the train. An unforgettable scene of white phosphorus shells exploding with a one/tenth second time burn -providing air bursts and showering German soldiers with streamers of burning white phosphorous, which burns thru cloth, metal, flesh , etc.until chemically treated. The shrieking sounds, explosive sounds, the smoke and smells are still vivid after 55 years.



We were forced to retreat--rapidly using leapfrog tactics to cover each other's pull back- to avoid annihilation. We were eventually relieved by elements of the 6th Armored Division. The Germans still held Lorient until after the surrender on VE Day.

Operating with the Fourth Armored Division and the Seventh Armored Division of the Third Army in typical Patton style spearheading, my unit raced across France. Several times our small Task Force of maybe 800 to 900 troops would take thousands of prisoners, due to the breakdown of communications and the confusion inflicted upon German units by the penetration of several of these small similar Task Forces moving rapidly along separate, pre-determined courses, by-passing determined resistance, to meeting points planned to break communications of German units from their command. We crossed the Seine at Melun, not far south of Paris. We visited the WWI site of Verdun-while waiting for gasoline, which General Eisenhower had ordered to be held to restrain General Patton in favor of Montgomery. We operated several days on captured German gasoline, but soon had to halt, since the M-7's got about 0.6 of a mile on a gallon of 100 octane aviation-type gasoline. These delays supposedly allowed the Germans to move back into the fortress of Metz that they had previously abandoned. We had one helluva fight to take this area later. My unit supported four forced crossings of the Moselle River in this area, as well as fighting mud knee deep at times. We operated with other Divisions, including the 90th Infantry Division in this area.

In a suburb of Metz, before daylight one morning , we discovered we had moved through the advanced line of the US 90th Infantry Division and a German Panzer Division. Hot breakfast was on all the tables, but no people were around. They had fled across the Moselle River into the city of Metz. We spent nine memorable days in this location-stopping counter attacks with the last rounds of ammunition until service units with tank escort reached us with renewal. In this location we lost the largest number of casualties of any during our combat experience. We received a Distinguished Unit Badge for performance here and several personal citations.

From the Saar River basin in the edge of the Siegfried Line, we were ordered to march north with the Fourth Armored of the Third U. S. Army to counter the German Bulge. The Fourth Armored eventually relieved the 101st Airborne Division in Bastogne, but our unit was pulled away to support the U. S. 5th Infantry in the attack crossing of the Sure River in northeastern Luxembourg/Belgium/Germany corner.

After the crossing into Germany again-this time at Diekirch, we were suddenly transferred to the Ninth U. S. Army under the command of General Simpson and the overall command of British Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery to cross the Roer River. It was here that we first saw the first operational jet plane attacking the Roer bridgehead unsuccessfully. Operating now with the US 5th Armored Division, we would cross the Rhine River on pontoon barges and under heavy smoke screen to take portions of the industrial Rhur and race across Germany to the Elbe River, only about sixty miles from Berlin, where we were ordered to hold more than two weeks for a meeting with the Russians at the Elbe.



My unit occupied an area of what was later to become East Germany (Erfurt) before moving to Fulda, near Frankfurt on the Main. After guarding prisoners of war near Marseilles in southern France, I sailed for the USA. aboard a Liberty Class Transport (The USS Henry Ward Beecher) that was scheduled to land in Hampton Roads, Virginia in twelve days. We were in some of the worst hurricanes ever recorded in the North Atlantic and made no progress toward the US in one twenty-four hour period. Eventually , in a bad storm, while trying to make up some of the lost time, the ship rose up on a great swell and sheared the drive shaft ,losing the screw and all means of propulsion and steerage. One rescue attempt failed and after being adrift for a total of four and a half days, we were towed to Bermuda, where we boarded the USS Saturnia (formerly the USS Frances M. Slanger- a hospital ship & former Italian luxury liner) and re-routed to New York and an accelerated processing and trip thru Camp Kilmer, N. J. and to Camp Gordon, Georgia for discharge and return home, arriving just before Christmas 1945. The time at sea was 27 days instead of the projected 12 days.



SUMMARY

I was sworn into the Army of the United States on April 30, 1943 at Fort McPherson, Atlanta, Georgia Trained in artillery at Fort Bragg, N. C. and at Fort Jackson, S. C., where I joined Battery "A" of the 695th Armored Field Artillery Battalion and became an M-7-105mm self propelled gun crew member. After a few days in Camp Kilmer, N. J, we were loaded onto a troop transport on Staten Island-New York and sailed in a huge convoy for Gourock, Scotland, landing there in February, 1944.

Trained in England and Wales, we then departed for Christ Church on the English Channel coast, where we drew brand new equipment for our trip across the channel. We sailed from Southampton to land on Utah Beach in Normandy.

I participated in five major campaigns (Battle Stars) in the European Theater of Operations. with the US Third and Ninth Armies.

- 1. Normandy**
- 2. Northern France**
- 3. Ardennes**
- 4. Rhineland**
- 5. Central Europe**

I slept in a foxhole or on top of the frozen ground (Luxembourg) all but two nights of my approximately 11 months in combat. (One night in a house in Germany--one night in a factory in The Netherlands)

I personally participated in the shooting down of a German Messerschmidt 109 and a Folke Wolfe 190.

I went on a Rest & Rehabilitation leave to the city of Nice on the French Riviera immediately after VE Day.

Returning to my unit in what was later to become known as East Germany, I served in occupying this area and later in the city of Fulda.

I returned to Washington County, after guarding POW's near Marseilles in southern France and a memorable 27 day trip home (involving two ships) on a hurricane beset Atlantic Ocean, arriving home on 18th of December, 1945.

(See Attached copy of Discharge)