

PAYNE COUNTY

Historical Review

WORLD WAR II



VOLUME XI

FALL 1992

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Dear Payne County Historical Society Member:

This issue marks the return to the publication of the *Payne County Historical Review* since Vol. X, 1 & 2 of the Summer and Fall, 1989. Our long departure from publication is due partially to the lack of an Editor for the *Review* and partially to the tremendous increase in publication and mailing costs.

However the Officers and Directors of the Board of the PCHS feel that the *Review* is one of our most important projects and we are committed to a renewed effort to its publication. Fortunately we have a new and very capable editor in Helen Matoy and with the assistance of her husband Ray we are expecting great things for the *Payne County Historical Review* in the future.

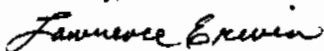
One of the problems of publishing such a periodical is the availability of written material. If you have materials or suggestions for articles to be included in the *Payne County Historical Review* please contact our editor.

We have mentioned, above, that cost is a factor in the publication of the *Review*. Therefore, we are requesting, if possible, that you make a one-time, tax deductible contribution, of any amount you can, to the Payne County Historical Society to replenish our funds for publication of the *Review*.

This issue of the *PCH REVIEW* is being sent to everyone on our mailing list. However, if your 1992-93 membership dues, which were due and payable as of June 1992, have not been paid, this will be the last issue you will receive.

We are looking forward to a great year and hope you are too.

Sincerely,



Lawrence Erwin
President

YES, I want to be a member of the Payne County Historical Society. Enclosed is my check for

- \$ 10.00 for Individual Membership
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- \$ 20.00 for Institutional Membership
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Payne County Historical Society, P.O. Box 2262, Stillwater, OK 74076

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Payne County Historical Society is organized in order to bring together people interested in history and especially the history of Payne County, Oklahoma. The Society's major function is to discover and collect any materials that may help to establish or illustrate the history of the area.

Membership in the Payne County Historical Society is open to anyone interested in the collection and preservation of Payne County history. Membership dues are: annual individual, \$ 10.00; annual family, \$15.00; annual contribution, \$ 25.00; institutional, \$ 20.00; sustaining, \$ 50.00; life \$ 100.00 paid in one year. Membership applications and dues should be sent to the treasurer.

All members receive copies of the *Review* Free. In addition the Society sponsors informative meetings and historical outings several times a year.

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Miner Culley Hall, Soldier

Miner Hall was drafted in 1944. At that time he was already well into his career as an accountant. He attended school in Yale and graduated from the School of Commerce of Oklahoma A. & M. College in 1935. He is a member of the Oklahoma Society of Certified Public Accountants, a member of the First Christian Church and a member of the Stillwater Rotary Club. Not only has he served his country with pride, but also his community.

By Leland Ray

MINER CULLEY HALL, SOLDIER

In World War Two, Miner Hall was not the average private soldier. He had graduated from the Oklahoma Agricultural & Mechanical College School of Commerce in 1935 with a Marketing degree. When he was drafted in 1944, he was twenty-nine years old, and he and wife Virginia had an infant son. One thing he had in common with a majority of the men who saw duty in World War Two, though, was his belief that war with the Axis was justified; he took part simply because "it was the right thing to do," a straightforward philosophy which he does not offer to explain or expand. For him, it says enough; explanations are unnecessary.

He had registered with Selective Service in Oklahoma City before he moved to Stillwater, Oklahoma, and they contacted him in May 1944 with an order to report for duty at Ft. Sill. He spent seventeen weeks at Ft. McLelland, Alabama, receiving the training which would make him an infantryman, and, because of his accountant's background, a clerk-typist. But Miner found that an army at war does not operate like a corporation; specialist training was cancelled while he recovered from a broken toe. After basic training he was shipped to Ft. Meade, Maryland, then to Ft. Miles Standish, near Boston, in preparation for deployment to the European Theater of Operations. Private Hall had learned a little about how the army worked, and when an officer told an assembly of soldiers that those with college degrees could go to an Army language school, Miner kept silent, honoring the ages-old military rule of "never volunteer," or, as he would add, "I wanted to know why." Hall's ability to speak—or remain silent—as the situation warranted, would earn him the respect of his German captors a few months later. Besides, he was proud of having completed his infantry training and saw no reason to do something else.

On December 9, 1944, Miner and ten thousand other soldiers departed for England aboard the *U.S.S. Washington* sailing at full speed and without convoy protection. The *Washington* was a fast ship, but not a gigantic one.

The troops were crowded into bunks stacked four high; still, for Miner the transatlantic voyage was essentially uneventful and comfortable. He followed the advice of someone who said that a full stomach was insurance against being sick, and Miner followed the prescription. He'd seen how ill some of the men had become, and he was taking no chances. In any event, seasickness wasn't a problem for him, and the *Washington* reached Liverpool on December 16.

The private soldier is seldom privy to news about theater strategy or the movements of armies. Even at the front, the infantryman's perception of a battle is determined by the action he sees, making a small-unit action appear to be global, while he may instead be in a quiet sector surrounded by divisions, corps, and armies locked in mortal combat. The men who reached England on the *Washington* had no idea that on December 16 the German army had launched a massive counterattack along an eighty-five-mile front in the Ardennes Forest. The German forces, under Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, numbered 300,000 men, 1,900 artillery pieces, and 970 tanks and armored assault guns. The juggernaut slammed headlong into only 83,000 Americans from the 99th, 106th, 28th, and 4th divisions, along with the 9th Armored Division. Miner expected to stay in England for further training, but instead, he was sent by train to Southampton for immediate transport across the Channel.

In France, the replacements were rushed by boxcar north toward what would be known by week's end as The Battle of the Bulge. They received rifles when they arrived at the French-Belgian border several days later. Miner passed through Aachen, Germany, and on to Stohlberg, where he saw *Gaslight*. The movie was a sobering introduction to war for Miner; he watched the film while holding a loaded M1 Garand¹ rifle between his knees. He had seen the effects of war in Aachen, though: this was the first major German city taken by the Allies, and the city showed the scars of an eight-day battle two months earlier. Probably few of the men passing through there realized that the city had been the seat of the Holy Roman Empire for more than five hundred years; Aachen was the birthplace of Charlemagne, the city where thirty-two emperors and kings had been crowned. An American

intelligence report made when the city fell on October 21 had called it "as dead as a Roman ruin." The Germans had fought hard for the city.

Miner spent Christmas Day in France, and five days later he was assigned to a rifle company in the 9th Infantry Division. During that five days he had been in Belgium, France, and Germany. The 9th was in reserve two miles from the front lines. Miner's function as a replacement was to fill ranks thinned by the Battle of the Hurtgen Forest two weeks earlier: of 120,000 Americans engaged, over 33,000 were listed as casualties—killed, wounded, missing, captured, sick, battle fatigued. It was one of these men whose place Miner took.

He didn't stay long in his first foxhole; in fact, he was moved out before it was finished. His unit was moved again. The heavily forested terrain was rugged by normal standards, but rain and snow, along with extreme cold, had frozen the ground rock-solid. Added to the difficult terrain was the fact that the Germans were present as well, and Miner heard his first shots fired in anger. He fired his rifle at a treeline, laying down "harrassing" fire while a tank attempted a breakthrough. He still speaks with subdued respect about the Germans' famous 88mm multipurpose cannons and their gunners; he watched as the tank took a direct hit and burned.

He says that his officers constantly warned the men about bunching together. A group of two or more would often draw fire from the German artillery, and Miner had an early initiation which made him a believer. While answering a call of nature a few yards from his foxhole, he "had a feeling" and dove for the protection of his hole an instant before an 88 round landed nearly on top of where he had been.

Men were told to cover their foxholes with logs. As a practical consideration, this construction feature had two purposes: the overhead cover helped keep the soldiers warm, but also served to protect them from the dreaded tree-bursts of artillery and mortars. An artillery shell exploding on the ground was bad enough, but one going off twenty feet above in overhanging branches was infinitely worse, showering the ground below with jagged steel, and wood splinters as well.

Private Hall was assigned to outpost duty, where his job was to watch and listen for probes by German scouts teams. He and the other two men in his hole had telephone communication to the command post behind them, and they were under orders only to fire on Germans when there was no alternative. The usual tactic was to call in mortar fire on the position where the Germans appeared to be, and in calling in fire, Miner once told his company commander that he "could do more good with my rifle." In any other situation, such talk would be insubordinate, but there is an understanding shared by men in combat. By the next day the captain had forgotten Private Hall's pique.

The army has a way of conditioning men for the experience of war, Miner says, and he believes his training was a primary factor contributing to his survival. He is a modest man, unwilling to claim for himself any special quality of courage; instead he gives credit to the army for turning him into a soldier and a man who could simply do what had to be done, whatever that might be, whether spending a long cold night underground in the no-man's-land between friendly and enemy lines, or undergoing an interrogation by a German army officer.

Miner Hall's career as an infantryman was short-lived. The German army still had not been completely pushed out of the Bulge by January 7. The Germans kept probing the American lines, and Hall was confronted finally by an enemy soldier just a few feet away. His squad was surrounding an outpost which had been overrun earlier, and Miner Hall saw the German before he himself was seen. Miner remembers that the German was wearing a white camouflage snow parka, and the young American exposed himself long enough to fire, then ducked back down. He kept hearing movement, though, and he raised up again to throw a grenade at the sound. He thinks the man who shot him had seen him dive down after shooting at the other German and had waited with his rifle trained on the spot. When Miner rose, the bullet struck him in the right side of his chest, breaking the sternum and travelling through at an angle, exiting the right side and continuing through the fleshy part of his upper arm. Miner says that he was wounded in a sector where combat reports might have been written by German author Erich Maria Remarque—"all quiet," though his personal war was anything but.

He was apparently unconscious for a time, because his next memory is of a German soldier standing above him checking for life with the heel of a boot. Private Miner Hall, serial number 38699072, became a prisoner of the Third Reich. The American could walk, and he was marched back to the German lines. His wound was serious, but he thought for hours that the only injury was to his arm: he was unaware of the hole in his chest.

When the Germans got him back well within their lines, Hall met two of his friends who had been captured at the same time. One told him that another friend, a man from Edmond, Oklahoma, had been hit in the leg, and the Germans who found him killed him because he couldn't walk. Miner is glad now that he was ambulatory, though the incident is the only one for which he criticizes the Germans. In fact, he says that the *Wehrmacht* troops were much like American GIs, though on his way back to the German lines with his captor he was searched, and a German soldier took his wristwatch. Miner Hall's philosophy of life is that nothing is so bad you can't find something to laugh about, and the memory of his lost watch brings a chuckle.

During his interrogation, the Germans got only the required name, rank, and serial number. The officer who questioned him tried to trip him up by mentioning different divisions, and Miner found out later that the German probably respected him for his ability to verbally spar with his interrogator. Hall was treated at a German aid station, and later on in the day surgery was performed by a German doctor. Miner remembers little about the operation other than the ether cone coming down over his face and counting backwards from one hundred to ninety-eight. His next recollection is of gentle slaps to his face as he was awakened.

In the ambulance on the way to the hospital he rode with several German soldiers, and he says the treatment he received was no less professional than that given the German wounded. He remembers that the Germans were treated first, but he understands.² He is completely without bitterness, for he says that his treatment was always humane, though he knows that others had different experiences.³ Perhaps the Germans knew the war was coming to a close and they wanted to be remembered for their compassion and fairness; perhaps those soldiers Miner encountered were simply average men

being asked to do the extraordinary for their country. Miner says with a smile that World War Two was the most extraordinary experience of his life.

In Europe, Miner travelled in boxcars. First he was transported from Le Havre, France, to Aachen, Germany, in a boxcar, then the Germans used converted boxcars for transporting wounded; in one of these he was moved from Prum, Belgium, to a POW hospital at Stalag VI F in Haitmannsdorf, Germany. Unlike Billy Pilgrim's prisoner of war journey in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Miner Hall's trip was relatively comfortable. The cars were fitted with racks to hold stretchers, and besides the relative comfort, the trip was also uneventful, except for a confrontation with a German who thought a can of GI boot waterproofing compound was condensed soup. Miner's sense of humor—or of the absurd—is sharp, and he says the incident raised his spirits. After "two or three" days on the converted boxcar, he was transported to a hospital coach for the final leg of the trip to what a wounded German told him was the best medical facility available for prisoners. He rode under a light guard, and he remembers that a German orderly chastised him for getting out of bed; it was the orderly's job to take care of the wounded, and Miner could have opened his wounds by moving around. Miner was impressed by the humanity of a young German who translated for him; he is a man who seems to care about people in a simple, unaffected way.

When he describes his life in the POW hospital, Miner's story shifts from narrative to a series of anecdotes. The doctor in the hospital was a Frenchman captured early on in the war, Miner speaks of Dr. Duval in nearly reverential tones. The doctor worked with a minimum of equipment and supplies, but Miner says that Ed Glover, also from Stillwater, still has two legs due to Duval's medical expertise: German doctors wanted to amputate his wounded leg, but Duval insisted it could be saved. Miner remembers Duval as a bright spot of the prison experience. When the private felt strong enough to leave the hospital and go to work with other ambulatory prisoners, Duval held him back. According to the doctor, Miner had nearly died from his wounds. All through his captivity and even after he had been liberated, Miner was never aware how seriously he had been hurt. After he was released from captivity he was deployed to England instead of the United States because

American Army doctors didn't think he would survive the ocean voyage.

The hospital was not completely isolated from the war, though. The Frenchman who ran Duval's x-Ray equipment kept a radio hidden in a cabinet among the equipment, and the prisoners were able to listen to news from England about the progress of the war. Towards the end of their captivity, the radio's batteries were so weak that they could only listen for one hour each night. There was also the evidence they could see: the Stalag was located south of Dresden, and on the night of February 13, 1945, the prisoners watched the city burn after raids by the U.S. Eighth Air Force; the raids killed over 135,000 Germans, mostly civilians. The prisoners didn't know what was happening, but the glow in the north showed them that the war against the Axis was continuing.

After the 4th Division of Patton's Third Army reached the hospital on April 16, 1945, Miner acquired a German camera and film and snapped a photograph of the building which housed the hospital. The picture is slightly out of focus, showing a quaint building which in another time had probably been a small, comfortable inn; there is no evidence of combat or struggle in the photo except for a tall fence separating the building from the street. Not showing in the scene is the small cemetery nearby; even the hardworking Dr. Duval couldn't save all the sick and wounded men. But he tried. Duval was one more example of the ordinary man making the best of an extraordinary situation.

Miner received and sent mail from the hospital; these letters are now dried and brittle, but the ink has not faded so much that the sentiments are not clear. The letters with the German postmarks to his wife Virginia speak of loneliness and separation, but his words are hopeful.

The prisoners survived on food from the hospital kitchen and Red Cross packages (about half the allotment they should have received, unlike the fanciful 500 parcels a month sent to the fifty British prisoners in *Slaughterhouse-Five*); these were supplemented by fresh vegetables, especially potatoes, which the prisoners bought from the Germans⁴. And, as in the stereotypical scenario of men in prison, the currency of exchange was American cigarettes from the Red Cross parcels. The men did not starve,

but they did think of food. Miner wanted cold water while on the train to the camp, and he missed fresh milk in the hospital. Mostly, though, he missed home.

Miner Hall admits to an innate curiosity, and it manifested itself at odd times. When asked about going to foreign language school, he waited for more information and didn't receive it, so he remained an infantryman; he raised up from cover to look for the source of a sound and confronted a German soldier at close range. When the inhabitants of the hospital heard the crash of American guns nearing the hospital, all the prisoners and staff were herded into a shelter outside because of fears that the town would be shelled. Miner didn't stay long. Instead, he got out and went back into the building, climbing to the second floor so he would have a better vantage point. He was rewarded by the sight of two Americans in a jeep who stopped only long enough to replace the German flag at the front of the building with the Stars and Stripes. It was at that point he knew his optimism had been warranted. The Germans pulled out, leaving Duval in charge of the prisoners. American forces soon secured the town, and their first act was to leave a truckload of food and other supplies with the prisoners: Miner Hall got to distribute them to the others as evenly as he could.

When Miner got back to England he wanted to go home, and on June 16, 1945, he entered New York Harbor. He stood by the rail and watched fireboats spraying water into the air in celebration and listened to their sirens. From New York he went to Wichita, Kansas, where his wife and son visited him. Their visit was the best thing that had ever happened to him. The German prisoners who worked in the hospital catered to the three-year-old, but Miner says there was one German who wouldn't believe the war was over; he accused the American newspapers of lying about the end. But Miner Hall knew, and he was ready to return to his life as an accountant, husband, and father. He took a leave from the hospital to visit Stillwater and ended up going back to his old job while still officially an American soldier. He had looked forward to Virginia's chocolate cake for months, and she provided. As he had slipped in and out of consciousness after being wounded, that chocolate cake

was in his dreams. And it is the small, common things he appreciated most: cold milk, chocolate cake, family.

For Miner Hall, the Second World War was an extraordinary interlude in a basically ordinary life. In November of 1945 he took up where he had left off eighteen months earlier. In the intervening forty-seven years his philosophy hasn't changed. He still tries to find the humor in bad situations or good ones. He still goes to his office in Stillwater five or six days a week and puts in a full week's work; for many years he has had his own accounting firm, though he has long refused new accounts. He wants to retire "someday." He received his college degree during the darkest days of the Great Depression, and he appreciates the rewards of hard work and doing simply "what needs to be done." The war is a series of memories—sometimes good, sometimes bad, but the memories are always with him. He became a soldier with the same quiet confidence he exhibits today. In 1944, fighting for his country was the right thing to do, and the passage of time has only reinforced that belief.

END NOTES

1.

The .30 caliber M1 Garand was the first semiautomatic rifle adopted for service by the United States military. Developed by John C. Garand in the 1930s, the M1 replaced the highly accurate M1903 and M1903A3 Springfields of WWI; the Springfield bolt-action required that a fresh round be chambered manually each time the weapon was fired.

2.

Miner might be surprised to learn that the Germans did not segregate the dead, either. After The Battle of the Bulge, American Graves Registration teams found that the Germans had buried American and German battle dead side-by-side in one Ardennes cemetery; both American and German graves were carefully marked with crosses inscribed with name, rank, serial number, and date of death Goolrick, William K. and Ogden Tanner. *The Battle of the Bulge*. Alexandria, VA: Time-Life, 1979.

3.

At Malmedy on December 17, Germans commanded by SS Lieutenant Colonel Joachim Pieper machine-gunned eighty-six members of the 291st Engineer Combat Battalion being held as prisoners; in Honsfeld on the same day, no less than forty-one Americans were shot to death after surrendering. At least thirty other Americans were murdered by Pieper's SS troops in the same area. (56-7).

4.

During one inspection Miner worried that the Germans would find the sack of potatoes he had hidden under his bed, but he was lucky—the guard conducting the search had sold him the potatoes in the first place. For Miner Hall, this is just one more instance of the humor he tries to discover in trying times. He says the memory is as funny now as the incident was then.



Col. (ret.) LeRoy S. Stanley

LeRoy Stanley was raised in Sapulpa and finished high school there. He attended Oklahoma Military Academy at Claremore, then finished his degree at Oklahoma A. & M. College and was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant. He served as a combat officer in Europe, Korea, and Vietnam. After a successful career with the Army he has been a management professor in OSU. As a retiree from OSU he is an Emeritus Professor and still keeps his office there and makes himself available to advise students.

By Patricia S. Webster

A Walk in the Morning

One Man's Story
Col. (ret.) LeRoy S. Stanley

Each morning, LeRoy Stanley wakes up, plugs a hearing aid into his left ear and adjusts the batteries, pulls on some comfortable clothes and heads out onto the highway near his home at the northeast edge of Stillwater to walk for a couple of miles. It has been 50 years since he got off a ship and marched into France and on to Germany, but he likes to keep himself trim and fit. After the early-morning walk, he showers, buttons down a crisp shirt and straightens his tie, climbs into his sporty little red two-seater, and drives to his office at Oklahoma State University.

The sign down the hall lists him as Emeritus Professor, retired, but LeRoy just smiles. He had already had a long and successful career with the Army and retired in 1972 before he had begun his second career as a management professor in OSU's College of Business, and now he's retired from that one. But he still keeps his office there and goes to it daily, making himself available to advise the students who come to him with questions, or reading current journals, or writing letters. When he goes home at the end of the day, he stops at the mailbox.

It was one of those mailbox-stops in the summer of 1991 that started him on another trip back through time to the years in Europe during the war. Not that he needed any reminders: The hearing aid reminds him daily of how the deafening explosions of the battlefield can wreck a man's hearing. And the hike up the road early each morning reminds him that although he's had to give up his favorite pastime—tennis—the injuries to his legs and back that he sustained through that war in Europe, and two more after it, must not stop him completely. The walking keeps him limber.

There was a letter in the mail that July day. It was from Jack Baxter, who lives in California. Baxter's brother, Herman, had been in LeRoy's unit in Germany, and had been killed in action. Now, nearly 48 years later, Baxter had tracked down the captain of that unit, and he wanted to know how it had happened. LeRoy told him. Young Herman, himself only twenty-two years old, had taken the full force of a mortar round exploding directly at his feet. He died instantly. Baxter and LeRoy corresponded for several months, in the course of which LeRoy learned that when the Baxter family received that black-bordered telegram in 1944, the message indicated that he had died of "wounds in the back." The implications of such a statement, of course, were devastating to the family. LeRoy assured Baxter that nothing could have been farther from the truth, that Herman would never have—could never have—run away in battle, and that he was one of the most popular and loved men in the unit.

In fact, after Herman Baxter's death, LeRoy had written a letter to his family. The letter was not only read at the memorial service, but also was included in a book tracing the Baxter family history. As the infantry company's commanding officer, LeRoy had written:

"I should like you to know that never have I seen an officer regarded so highly by his men as was 'Bax', as we called him. He was calm and cool, efficient and a highly competent officer, yet very human. Bax always thought of his men first, himself last. He never asked any man to do anything he wouldn't do himself."

As he continued to communicate with young Herman's brother through long telephone conversations, LeRoy gave Baxter as much detailed information as he could about the terrain of the cold German countryside that winter, to help him find the exact spot where the fighting had taken place and where Herman had died. Baxter later traveled to Germany on a family pilgrimage to find the place, but the depth of their discussions had started LeRoy on a search of his own. Granted, when a man comes home from a war,

any war, the routines of daily life that must be taken on create a sense of putting pieces back together and rebuilding. But it never quite erases the experience from memory. And now LeRoy was remembering.

Being a soldier was nothing new in the Stanley family. His father, Sammie Stanley, had served with the Army Expedition Forces in World War I. But he and LeRoy's mother were divorced shortly after LeRoy was born and there was never much contact between father and son. After he was ten, LeRoy never saw his father again.

"I only know that, like thousands of his contemporaries, he was drafted into the Army in 1917 and was assigned to a Field Artillery unit and was sent to France with the AEF. I don't know whether he was ever in combat or not." LeRoy says. "I have been told that while he was stationed at Camp Robinson (Arkansas) he made corporal, went AWOL to marry my mother, and got busted to private for it."

LeRoy was raised in Sapulpa and finished high school there. He had been thinking about the Army while he was in high school, and so began his college education at Oklahoma Military Academy at Claremore. It was there, he says, that if he had had any doubts about the Army before, they were resolved for him. He went on from OMA to finish his degree at Oklahoma A&M—now OSU—commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant. During the next two years, he served at Ft. Benning, Camp Walters in Texas, and Camp Gruber, and in the fall of 1944, was among those assigned as "replacements" to the European Theater. That's what they were called in the official lingo; what it meant was the new troops would take over for men killed or wounded in fighting.

His ship landed at Omaha Beach on September 1, 1944. He had been assigned to the 29th Infantry division, which D-Day had left in urgent need of replacements. LeRoy, Herman Baxter and another very close friend, Bill Cashion, had been in England together before this, and were assigned by

coincidence now to this unit, winding up in the same company. The division was part of the 175th Infantry Regiment, which was converging in the Brest area. The three buddies had a good chuckle over a unit newspaper headline which appeared shortly after the capture of this city. It still ticks in LeRoy's mind, which reflects the sense of humor that he says held the men of the unit together: "After Groping for Several Days, Forces Get Firm Hold on Brest."

Humor may well be the one thread that kept LeRoy and the thousands of others like him who survived the war, from losing their minds. There's nothing funny about a war. It's days that run into nights that run into weeks of cold, constant, sleepless fear. War is explosions and rockets and blood and pain and men screaming until they can only moan and finally they can make only a gurgling sound and then they are silent. It means walking over the bodies—and parts of the bodies—of people you've been shooting at and the people who only a moment ago were standing beside you and shooting with you, just as terrified as you were, as you still are. War is shooting at people and trying to kill them and knowing if you don't it'll be you lying in the courtyard with a blanket over your face, waiting to go home.

War does something to a man out there on the field. Some can't hold up. Others clam up. Everyone is changed forever. Some just do their jobs, hope to live through it, and then pick up and go on with life when the hell finally ends. That's how it was for LeRoy Stanley. The humor helped.

I remember I had a 1st sergeant one time when we were holed up in some barnyard in Germany. We were on the Elbe River, and the war was winding down. There was this regimental commander who came down and looked around at the chickens walking around and said, 'Stanley, do we have any fresh eggs?' 'Well, of course we did,' I said, and I went to the 1st sergeant, his name was Buck Barbee, and I told him to go get the colonel some fresh eggs. He looked at me like oh no, and said we didn't have any. 'Well, go get some!' I told him. So he went out and got some quartermaster eggs that had been shipped from the United States, threw some water on the barnyard floor and rolled

didn't. The noise was so great from our guns and the bullets hitting ours, that I didn't realize immediately what had happened. Before going aboard ship, I had never seen one of those guns before, but for the remainder of this trip I was both gunner and loader. I learned to take them apart, clean them, and to put them back together.

One thing I would like to mention before leaving this subject is that I never saw any rejoicing after an enemy plane was shot down, as they sometimes depict in Hollywood movies. The reality is that after an action, there is an awfully big mess to clean up, shell casings lying all over, barrels to change in order to get the gun ready again, and terrific pain in the ears because of the sharp report of the 20mm guns, in particular. After a combat action, our main desire was to be grateful we were alive, get things cleaned up, and get to a place where we could relax.

After unloading our cargo, we returned to the U.S. at Seattle. There we changed part of the crew including our Commanding Officer, repaired and reloaded the ship and returned to New Guinea, unloaded and loaded cargo and towed a LCT (Landing Craft Tank) behind, in a strong convoy to the Philippines, arriving soon after the Leyte landings. After unloading we returned to Seattle via New Guinea and Hawaii.

A funny incident happened in Honolulu. There was a military courtesy campaign going on. An officer would be stationed in a doorway of a store with MP's or SP's stationed on the sidewalk. When a soldier or sailor would walk by, he wouldn't be looking for the officer in the doorway and he would be stopped and given a ticket for not saluting the officer. As this was obviously being done to harass the enlisted personnel in Honolulu, we decided to deliberately not salute officers. On returning to our ship, we had to walk across the Pearl Harbor Naval Base. While we were doing so, a Vice-Admiral stepped out of a building and headed toward us. We had never even seen an admiral before and decided to make an exception in his case and salute him, even though he may have been the one responsible for this nonsense. We waited until he was too close before we saluted him. He stopped us and said "I'm glad you men finally decided to do that," upon which the sailor with me said, "We wanted to be sure we did it just right for you sir." The admiral just

them around a little and brought them in for the colonel to take back to regimental headquarters to his mess sergeant. I asked the colonel later how he had enjoyed the eggs, and he said they were they were the best eggs he'd had in his life.

Another tension-breaker happened when the Commander in Chief himself, Dwight D. Eisenhower, came to the camp where then Captain Stanley and his troops were quartered, awaiting the next and major attack. The men were assembled on the hillside that cold and grey November afternoon. It was on the German-Dutch border, on the northern shoulder of what would a few weeks later be the Battle of the Bulge. While one incident is reported in Eisenhower's book, *Crusade in Europe*, there were really two events that got a good laugh on that day, LeRoy says. "We had been pulled off the front lines into a reserve area before going in for another major attack. Then we got the order to assemble, so I went about rounding up the troops. The whole battalion was gathered there when several Jeeps pulled up behind an MP escort, and we recognized Eisenhower right away. An awed hush fell over the men as their supreme commander, followed by an entourage of three-and four-star generals climbed out of the Jeeps. As the officers approached, one young fellow's whisper was carried like a booming echo over the silence: 'Christ, what a payroll!'" LeRoy still chuckles about that scene when he thinks about it.

The incident reported in Eisenhower's book took place a few moments later, after Eisenhower had addressed the men. "He said he hoped this would be the big one, that we were doing a great job, all those things the chiefs say to the men to get morale back up," LeRoy explains. "And the men loved it. They needed to hear those words, and they needed to hear it from Ike. Ike made his speech, and then turned around—remember, we were on the side of a hill—and he slid and fell on his backside. There he was, sprawled in the mud. What did the men do? They laughed, just like he says in the book. But he also said that it was the most effective visit he ever had with the troops. He loved it. Here was a five-star general pulling himself up off the ground, laughing at himself. Ike said it couldn't have been better if he had staged it."

The next day, the troops moved on up to the front line and engaged in four or five days of extremely bitter fighting with heavy losses. LeRoy only saw the first day of it. It was here, outside a small village called Siersdorf that the unit was supposed to capture, that he stepped on a mine and was badly injured. "I went out early," he says, "stepping on that damned mine. My executive officer took over for me. He got hit, and another one took over for him. He got hit and they sent another officer down from Battalion Headquarters. We took a beating. Actually, I think this was a case of one of the Intelligence officers getting the Volkssturm and the Volksgrenadier mixed up. He always said one of them was a bunch of old farmers and they'd give up when you get within 1,000 yards of them. Well, he was wrong about this bunch we were up against. They were the Volksgrenadier, and they were the good ones. We were still trying to get within 1,000 yards!" The terrain was very flat and both sides had visibility. LeRoy had gone up along a road to try to get a better look, and tripped the wire on a mine. It exploded nearby, knocking him eight feet to the side and sending so many shrapnel fragments into his arms and legs that the doctors told him they didn't take them out because it would have meant literally cutting him up. He picked them out one at a time over the next five or six years.

What's the most powerful impression that the war left on him? The friends he made, LeRoy says, and the deep sadness as he watched them die. Many of the men under his command died in those bitter days, and among them were two of LeRoy's best friends. Of the trio that had been together in England and who wound up in the same unit in Germany still chuckling about that silly headline—Bill Cashion, Herman Baxter and LeRoy Stanley—only one remained. Baxter had been hit by the mortar round. And later, after another battle, LeRoy found Cashion among the casualties, lying in the courtyard and covered with a blanket, waiting for the Graves Registration people to come and get them. Cashion had taken a direct hit in the forehead. "That's been almost fifty years ago, and there is never a month goes by that I don't think of them," he says.

Some battles left humorous memories as well as bitter. For example, a raid his unit staged on a small village. "We were supposed to go in there and

shoot it up. It was a night raid, in flat country, and we got caught by dawn. We were engaged in the fighting and couldn't get out, but we had wounded men lying out there. We had this sergeant who could speak German, and when it got light we made up a white flag and he went out and talked to the German lieutenant. We just want to get our dead and wounded, he told the man. 'Go ahead,' the German said. But the sergeant was a sharp soldier and while he was out there getting the men, he also was looking around him to see where their placements were. The German lieutenant told him to just take the men and go. He understood, and he'd have done the same thing. They were real pros."

The sergeant was awarded a Silver Star for his bravery in bringing the wounded back behind the lines, but something he hadn't thought of in all the years struck LeRoy as he recalled the incident. "Come to think of it," he says, "I don't remember where we got the white flag. We didn't have anything white. Underwear was mostly green then. We probably took a bedsheet out of some German house somewhere."

Images like these are indelible. The funny ones make the others more bearable. But they never go away, and certainly they have an effect on the lives of the men who come home. "You talk about impressions. Marching through France is one. It was a society almost virtually destroyed. People were walking through the country, hungry, trying to run somewhere. It was just like in the newsreels. The roads were clogged with people, especially there around St. Lo. That area was really destroyed, flat leveled. The livestock was all out in the fields, dead and bloated. It was like a landscape from Mars. You had to begin to wonder, where is this all going to end? Are we going to blow this place off the face of the earth? But the thing that was so oppressive was the constant fear. We never knew what would happen next."

Or when it would happen to me, one might assume. That's part of the psychological war each soldier has to fight. LeRoy says there was a study done by Walter Reed Army Hospital that showed there are "protective layers" that a man takes with him into battle. The first layer: "I'm doing it for my country," he says. "Then the flag. Then for Mom. The wife. All those are part of a system of protective devices, and they work in various degrees. This

came from a study of people who had combat fatigue. The last thing to go is when he looks around and sees that there's no one around him who has been there as long as he has. It's a sense of 'sooner or later...' but it's not a question of If. It's a question of When."

Did he ever get to that point? "No," he says. "But I came close. I got hit before I reached that point. And besides, being a company commander, I had responsibilities that kept me going. I had people I had to worry about. I couldn't afford to think about it."

Even the memories of tripping that mine and being carted off on a stretcher have their funny side. "The aid man got there very quickly and hit me with a morphine shot. He was so busy, though, that he didn't tag me like they always do. So when they dragged me back to the aid station I got another shot. I was as happy as a sailor on shore leave. I remember they put us on a Jeep litter, and there were three tiers, like bunk beds. I was on the top. It was snowing, but there I was just singing away on the top of that Jeep, bumping down the road away from the front lines."

He was taken to Liege for immediate care, then transferred to a hospital outside of Paris, and finally to a hospital in England. Once the morphine wore off and he didn't feel quite so happy, he remembers that he felt a sense of relief, that he had been hurt badly enough to be out of the fighting for a while. Then the guilt struck. He was getting out in one piece, while his friends—his buddies—were still up there. He spent the rest of December, and then January, and then until mid-February in the hospital in England. At last, he says, he was sent to the review board who determined he could return to his unit. He was so glad when he rejoined the unit, but by then the war was all but over. The Germans were looking for someone to give up to, he says.

"They'd come out with their hands up, but we had so many we would just point to the rear and tell them to get in line. They seemed to be relieved; for them, it was all over. In fact, at the end, you could almost feel this sigh of relief on both sides. The damned thing was over. No more scurrying around into foxholes. No more incoming rounds. No one was going to shoot at you any more, try to kill you."

LeRoy stayed on in Germany several months after the end of the war,

helping set up the reconstruction work and coordinating the records that would go into history detailing the end of the war. His ship docked in New York in January 1946, after a 10-day voyage over heaving seas that seemed like a year to the men on board. They had heaved with seasickness the entire time. But once they saw the shoreline and the beautiful Statue of Liberty, all the miseries of the trip were forgotten.

LeRoy had written the Baxter family a letter shortly after Herman's death, expressing his sympathy and telling them of the respect and love their son had earned in his unit. Later, he would learn that after Herman's body had been exhumed and brought home for burial, the priest had read the letter at the funeral.

When his ship docked, LeRoy took a chance and called a number under the name of Bill Cashion, knowing the man had lived in Flushing, N. Y. By luck, he got the right number and found himself talking to Cashion's widow. "I took her to dinner. She wanted to know the details, and I told her how Bill had died. She cried, of course, and after that we kept in contact for several years. The last I heard from her, she still had not remarried."

LeRoy last heard from Mrs. Cashion shortly before he shipped out to Korea. He was not wounded in Korea, but later served as senior advisor for the Airborne Division in Vietnam; he was wounded again in that war. By that time, his career in the Army had set even more of a family tradition, and his daughter was an Army nurse. Sharon Stanley, now Sharon Stanley Alden—he calls her Sam—served in Vietnam at about the same time LeRoy did, though they missed each other by only a few days. She also has made the Army her life work, and is in 1992 stationed at the Pentagon with the rank of Lt. Colonel.

"Sam was truly born into the army," LeRoy says. Her mother Ruth Ann, was a nurse in an Army hospital near Paris during the war, and she and LeRoy met when he was being treated for his wounds before being shipped back to England. Ruth Ann was one of LeRoy's ward nurses and a mutual attraction developed between the two. In the ensuing months, they corresponded and later, when Ruth Ann's medical unit was located not far from his company in Germany during the final days of the War in Europe, they decided

to get married.

"We had to round up a car and a driver, and then we made a dash to Gronigen, Holland, for a civil ceremony. Remember, there was no government left in Germany, so we couldn't find a German official! And then in Gronigen, we had to chase around to find a judge!" It was a wild day, but a memorable one. Later, the couple had a church ceremony in Feudenheim, Germany, performed by an Army chaplain and attended by members of LeRoy's regiment and Ruth Ann's nurse friends. A few months later, Ruth Ann returned to the States for honorable discharge from the Army, and to await LeRoy's return.

When he did return, he was assigned initially to Camp Robinson, Arkansas, and then to Ft. Benning, Georgia. On 29 August 1946, Sam was born at the Ft. Benning Station Hospital. In the following years, Sam lived with the family at Ft. Benning (while her dad was in Korea), Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas (Command and Staff College), Arlington, Virginia (where LeRoy was stationed on the Army General Staff in the Pentagon), the Presidio of Monterrey (Language School), Madrid, Spain (Military Assistance Group), Carlisle, Pennsylvania (Army War College), and finally at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina.

While at Ft. Bragg, Sam entered Duke University and graduated with a degree in nursing. It was LeRoy's great pleasure to swear her into the Army at Durham, North Carolina. During her early life as an "Army brat" (an endearing term for Army kids who move frequently with their parents), she reached the conclusion that this was the career she wanted for herself. She has never regretted her decision. In a nationwide program on CNN focusing on women in the military, she stated that she wanted her children to have the same kind of childhood and experiences she had had.

During her tour of duty in Vietnam, Sam met a pilot, Capt. Michael Anderson, at a nearby Air Force base. In 1971, after both had returned to the States, where they were both assigned to units in New Jersey, Sam and Michael were married in a Special Warfare Center's Chapel at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina. It was a "joint" military ceremony, with Mike's Air Force friends and Sam's nurse friends from Vietnam and Fort Sam Houston, Texas,

attending. Mike was subsequently assigned to the Air Force Academy in Colorado. It was there that Michael Jr. was born at the Academy Hospital in November of 1972.

And so the family tradition goes on. Michael, now Pfc. Michael Alden, joined the Army in the summer of 1991, and graduated from parachute training, "jump school," at Ft. Benning, Georgia, a few months later. LeRoy and Sam shared in the duties of swearing young Michael in, and after the nostalgia-filled events were over, LeRoy returned to Stillwater and his quiet condominium at the northeast edge of town.

And now each morning, he wakes up, plugs a hearing aid into his ear and adjusts the batteries, pulls on some comfortable clothes and heads out on to the highway to walk for a couple of miles.



John R. Adams

John Adams entered the Navy as soon as his age permitted in late fall in 1942, and was discharged from the U. S. Navy in May of 1946. He moved to Tulsa after graduating from College in 1946. He became a Payne County resident when he moved to Cushing in 1954. In addition to serving his country well, he has been a business man in Cushing since 1965.

By: John R. Adams, RM1C(T) USNR

THE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE: My Source Memoirs, 1943-1946

Oklahoma was not the state of my birth. I adopted Oklahoma as my home in 1949 when I accepted a position in Tulsa. The original job wasn't satisfactory, but Tulsa was great, so I stayed, later moving to Cushing, fifty-five miles to the west.

My home was originally in Iowa where, in the fall of 1942, I had one semester of college experience at Parsons College, in Fairfield, Iowa. Parsons was a Presbyterian liberal arts college with an enrollment of about seven hundred students. The campus was pretty, with a slightly rolling wooded terrain. One of the main features of the campus was the Chapel, which we attended every day for thirty minutes before the noon hour. An important feature of the campus, while I was there, was the predominately female population, caused by the fact that most male students had already entered the service, there being virtually no student exemptions in that war.

My principal goal that semester was to survive with passing grades, which was not easy considering the social temptations, and become old enough to get into the service myself. Before the semester was over, I had passed my Navy physical and entered the Navy at the end of the semester.

The semester at college didn't do much to prepare me for what was to come when I really went away from home to Navy recruit training. However, I had heard horror stories about the rigors of Navy boot camp, and decided at the outset to enjoy the experience as much as possible, and not take personally any insults thrown at me by training petty officers, and to get along the easiest way possible. This worked well for me; I had no bad personal experiences in boot camp or in adjusting to Navy life. Some others in my company didn't have as good an experience, however.

One incident I well remember happened during a train ride to the Great Lakes Naval Training Center. We were sidetracked in the railroad yards of Chicago and being fed fried chicken in the dining car. Suddenly, the train lurched and the fellow sitting opposite me swallowed a small chicken bone. He reported this again and again for the next few days, and the Navy—even some doctors—thought he was "gold-bricking" (shirking duty) and ignored his problem. Finally, when his throat became infected and swollen so badly that he almost choked to death, they took him to the hospital and surgically removed the bone of contention. So much for an introduction to Navy bureaucracy!

Boot camp taught us to do things the Navy way. We were told that there were three ways things could be done, the right way, the wrong way, and the Navy way. We were to do things the Navy way. One of the things the Navy does best, is to keep things clean and painted. There was a saying, "if it moves, salute it, if it doesn't move, paint it." Cleanliness was important to us as well as to the Navy. We lived in close quarters, the entire company in one room, sleeping head to foot on double bunks. Most of these people did seem to know what bathing was; however the ignorant ones found out after three or four of them received "GI baths" with brushes, steel wool, and soap. This activity was strictly unlawful, but it was never reported. The boot camp activity that impressed most indelibly on my memory, is that of attending explicit films depicting the effects of venereal diseases. I feel certain that the cost of these films was one of the best expenditures the Navy ever made.

All activity was on a very tight schedule and there was absolutely no liberty off the base until we finished boot training and graduated as Second Class Seamen. After Saturday morning inspection of barracks and personnel, we had time to ourselves until Sunday night at lights out (bed time). We couldn't leave the base, but we could go to "Ships Service" (called Post Exchange by the Army), and there meet visitors if we had any. The only visitor I ever had was an aunt who lived in nearby Highland Park, Illinois.

The married men who had wives visit them were the ones with a problem. One time, while I was quietly visiting with my aunt, there was quite a ruckus in a nearby room. It seems that a sailor and his wife were found in

a conjugal embrace in a telephone booth. I don't know who turned them in; I had seen them about five minutes earlier, but thought fast enough to know that it was none of my business, and exited the area. The next day, our training CPO (Chief Petty Officer in charge of our training company) instructed us "for God's sake, stay out of the telephone booths. Go out into the parking lot and use the back seat of a car. If the owner returns too soon, he will understand."

During the war, most of the training CPO's were not hardened old Chiefs with twenty or more years in the Navy; most of them were high school and college coaches who were brought into the Navy, made Chief right away, had a little indoctrination, and were assigned as boot company training commanders. We saluted them as if they were officers; in fact we saluted all petty officers while in boot camp. We seldomly saw Commissioned Officers except on special occasions such as reviews or formal inspections. These training CPO's were, as far as I could tell, well selected by the Navy, for they seemed to do a very good job.

After boot camp, we were given some leave—I believe about 10 days. During this time I returned to my parents' home in Des Moines, and as soon as I could, bee-lined it to Fairfield, Iowa where Parsons College was—it no longer exists—to check on my old friends who were still there—one in particular—Ann Thompson, from Canton, Missouri. She kept up a steady correspondence with me, but we gradually grew apart and I never saw her again. I have often wondered what became of her, but it is very difficult to trace women if they marry and lose their name identity. To be honest I probably could have traced her through the college, but I never tried.

Upon returning to Great Lakes, I reported to what was known as the Outgoing Unit, OGU for short. There we reported each day for work details (assignments) until we were shipped out to other duty assignments. During this time I received the assignment I had requested, which was radio school. I was delayed for a few more days in OGU because the Navy had mixed up my serial number with that of another sailor. After the serial number delay, I was sent to the University of Wisconsin to learn to become a radio operator. Another taste of Navy bureaucracy.

The University of Wisconsin campus is absolutely beautiful; it is a very hilly campus, with well-spaced buildings and many trees. Our dormitory was on the south edge of a lake that borders the north side of the campus. The civilian male student body was very small, but the military presence on the campus probably more than made up for the male students that were elsewhere in the services. In addition to the radio school, the Navy also had in place what was called the V-12 program, which was for the purpose of training officers. These students mingled with the regular student body, taking regular college courses, and could be easily identified by the slide-rules that they all had dangling from their waists. I can't remember how they were fastened, but it should be remembered that Navy uniforms didn't have belts.

Life there was rigorous but good. We had a tight schedule of classes and physical training all day, but with liberty from Saturday noon until Sunday lights out time. During that time I obtained the best physical condition of my life.

In order to be a Navy radio operator, a person had to be able to pass a perfect five minute typing test at thirty-five words per minute and be able to receive Morse code at a minimum rate of eighteen words per minute. Because I already had typing and code skills, I only stayed in those two classes long enough to increase my speed. The other classes were mathematics, communication procedure, and radio and electronic theory.

Life while at the University of Wisconsin was great, especially at the student union. Dances were held on some of the upper floors, while in the basement was the "Rathskellar," my first experience with 3.2% beer-on campus or off. At strictly Presbyterian Parsons College, alcoholic beverages were strictly forbidden, and anyone caught using them would be expelled. Naive me, I thought the whole world was like that, so being liberated at the U of Wisconsin student union was quite an experience. I might also add that there seemed to be an ample amount of female companionship available. It would have been nice to have stayed there forever, but they graduated us, promoted us to Petty Officer Third Class and sent us on to duties in the real Navy where people were getting hurt.

I was sent to the Armed Guard Center at Brooklyn, N. Y. Early in the

war, naval guns and gun crews were installed on merchant ships to ward off submarines and attacking airplanes. Before this was done, German U-Boats could surface, and sink a merchant ship with gunfire, rather than to use an expensive torpedo. With the advent of the armed guard units, the U-Boats had, for the most part, to stay under the water and fire their torpedoes. Also, Merchant Marine radio operators were in short supply, so Navy operators were sometimes attached to armed guard crews. Navy signalmen were also added in order to do visual communication between ships in convoy.

A Commissioned Navy Officer was in charge. He had to be good. This was detached duty, away from close Navy control, so he had to be competent to make important decisions concerning his crew without any advice. Many of these officers were ex-school teachers. All whom I knew had had a lot of prior experience supervising people. My first had been an assistant warden of a New York State prison. They were also usually older than other officers of equal rank. Most were in their mid-thirties, a little on the aged side for the usual lieutenant junior-grade. Some were lieutenants.

Because of the high alphabet rating of my name (Adams), I was the first one of our group assigned to a ship. After spending the day getting shots for this and that, and having paperwork processed, I finally made it to the ship after dark. It was anchored out in the middle of New York harbor, waiting for me because they had to have another radioman before they could sail. I was escorted to my quarters, which were better than the rest of the crew's, because they wanted me to be close to the radio shack. I went straight to bed and woke up the next morning out at sea. This was a new experience for me because, although I was now a Navy man, I had never been on a ship at sea before! A slight nausea was experienced the first day, but after that I was never bothered with sea sickness. After dark on the third night out, when we were preparing to rendezvous with our convoy, we were struck by a torpedo on the starboard side, deep in the water. I was on watch in the radio shack on the port side of the superstructure. General quarters was sounded, but there was nothing to do except help to get the injured out of the engine room. The engine room and the after adjacent hold flooded uncontrollably and it was soon apparent that we would have to abandon ship. The crew was able to launch all four life-boats

and all four life rafts, and all hands survived though those who had been in the engine room had burns and some broken bones. The torpedo struck the old riveted hull at the bulkhead separating the engine room from the hold immediately after, and there was no way the ship could possibly be saved. When a similar incident happened in the Hollywood movie *In Harm's Way*, starring John Wayne, the crew managed to save their ship by stuffing mattresses in the breach while the incoming water seemed to miraculously drain away.

We were brought to Boston on a British destroyer, one of the old World War One "four-stackers" that we traded to Britain earlier, for bases in the Atlantic. She was having engine problems and was coming into Boston for repair, anyway. At the time I didn't think too much about this episode, but looking back, I realize it was quite an experience for a country kid from Iowa.

After a couple of leisure weeks in Boston, the Navy finally decided I should return to Brooklyn, where I was further processed and assigned to another ship, this time destined for the South Pacific. Even so, I was re-issued the same kind of foul weather clothing previously issued for the North Atlantic.

We were escorted to the Panama Canal, because-up until that time—German U—Boats were having a field day sinking unescorted ships. On the other side of the canal we sailed alone. We maintained around-the-clock watch, copying the Morse BAMS messages continually. BAMS means "Broadcast to All Merchant Ships." BAMS were divided into areas and broadcast on different frequencies. So, if we were in the BAMS6 area, we tuned to the BAMS6 frequency, whatever that was, because any message intended for us would be broadcast there. We stood these watches on a four hours on and eight hours off basis, day in and day out. I had never had any training in merchant marine radio procedure, I had to learn it on the job with people who didn't know any more than I did about it. Training was available at Brooklyn, but I was in and out of there so fast both times, that I didn't have any.

Each hour started off with message headings of various kinds, then the messages followed encoded in five letter groups. We copied them all but did

not decode unless addressed to us. The messages usually ended before the end of the hour and we had a little break before the next batch.

We used earphones and recorded the messages with a typewriter. When a message came for our ship, it was decoded with the use of a printed code book. This couldn't have been a very secure code, but it was probably good enough for merchant ships. Navy ships used a coding machine with a typewriter keyboard and wired coding wheels inside, without which the message could not be decoded in any reasonable time. Receiving the code and typing seemed to become almost automatic, going directly from our ears to our fingers. We sometimes split our earphones, which is to rewire them so as to be able to receive the code in one ear and big band music in the other. Hearing the music of the big dance bands of the time was a great moral booster; it brought back memories of friends and good times in the past. We became so proficient in copying the Morse code that we could also carry on a conversation at the same time if necessary. We didn't make a practice of this, but we could do it, if necessary. I could hear Morse code in my head for years after the war, especially at night, but I never tried to read the messages, and they gradually faded away.

After leaving the Panama Canal, we headed west toward Hawaii, and then toward the Solomon Islands and New Guinea. We practiced with the guns, firing at oil drums dropped overboard, and also at balloons. My job during these exercises was that of loader on one of the 20mm anti-aircraft guns. We were in this area after the bloody battles for Guadalcanal Island were over, but there were still battles going on for other islands in the Solomon group as well as on New Guinea.

Our first call to "General Quarters" occurred late one evening near Guadalcanal Island. We were strafed and bombed, but they missed with their bombs. As far as I know, we didn't hit any planes with our guns that evening, but we lost two men. One was the gunner that I was loading for, and the other was a merchant seaman. The 20mm anti-aircraft gun has steel shields on either side of the barrel, but there is an open area in between the shields to allow for the barrel and the gunsights, leaving the gunner vulnerable. I was standing behind the shield so I had that much protection which the gunner

didn't. The noise was so great from our guns and the bullets hitting ours, that I didn't realize immediately what had happened. Before going aboard ship, I had never seen one of those guns before, but for the remainder of this trip I was both gunner and loader. I learned to take them apart, clean them, and to put them back together.

One thing I would like to mention before leaving this subject is that I never saw any rejoicing after an enemy plane was shot down, as they sometimes depict in Hollywood movies. The reality is that after an action, there is an awfully big mess to clean up, shell casings lying all over, barrels to change in order to get the gun ready again, and terrific pain in the ears because of the sharp report of the 20mm guns, in particular. After a combat action, our main desire was to be grateful we were alive, get things cleaned up, and get to a place where we could relax.

After unloading our cargo, we returned to the U.S. at Seattle. There we changed part of the crew including our Commanding Officer, repaired and reloaded the ship and returned to New Guinea, unloaded and loaded cargo and towed a LCT (Landing Craft Tank) behind, in a strong convoy to the Philippines, arriving soon after the Leyte landings. After unloading we returned to Seattle via New Guinea and Hawaii.

A funny incident happened in Honolulu. There was a military courtesy campaign going on. An officer would be stationed in a doorway of a store with MP's or SP's stationed on the sidewalk. When a soldier or sailor would walk by, he wouldn't be looking for the officer in the doorway and he would be stopped and given a ticket for not saluting the officer. As this was obviously being done to harass the enlisted personnel in Honolulu, we decided to deliberately not salute officers. On returning to our ship, we had to walk across the Pearl Harbor Naval Base. While we were doing so, a Vice-Admiral stepped out of a building and headed toward us. We had never even seen an admiral before and decided to make an exception in his case and salute him, even though he may have been the one responsible for this nonsense. We waited until he was too close before we saluted him. He stopped us and said "I'm glad you men finally decided to do that," upon which the sailor with me said, "We wanted to be sure we did it just right for you sir." The admiral just

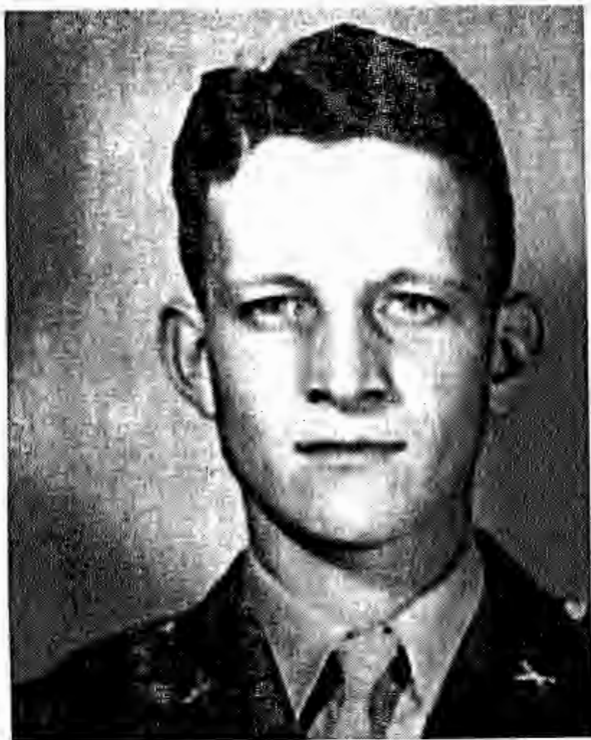
walked off. (*Reader's Digest*, paid me \$25 for this story some years after the war.)

After reloading at Seattle, we returned again to New Guinea, then on to Leyte, then around through the Suriago Strait to Subic Bay, which had just been liberated. After partially unloading there, we joined the first convoy into Manila Bay. It was quite a thrill to go by Corregidor, remembering the heroic stand that was taken there only three years previously, and to be one of the first ones there after it was free again. Manila harbor was full of sunken ships, their masts sticking out of the water in the dock area. We had to unload in the harbor. I often wondered how long it took to clean that mess up, and what they did with all of the sunken ships.

On the way back to New Guinea, empty, we were attacked by a submarine and aircraft at the same time. We escaped the submarine but one of the airplanes flew right into the fantail-rudder area of the ship and we had to be towed the remainder of the way to New Guinea.

After returning to the States, I had a hernia fixed in the Naval Hospital at St. Albans, New York. Following that, I did temporary Shore Patrol duty, then was assigned to the USS Griffin, a submarine tender, but never again left the west coast until I was discharged in May of 1946.

At the beginning of the war I, as was true of most young men my age, was eager to get into the service as the overwhelming majority of the population of the country was committed to the cause of the war. I was just as eager to get out at its end, but with fond memories and extreme gratitude that I had the opportunity to serve.



Walter E. Price

Walter Price is a native Oklahoman. He was born in Tulsa and attended schools in Tulsa and Oklahoma Military Academy. He was an enlisted man in WW II. and graduated from West Point in 1950. After retirement from the Army Walter served several years in state government, then became a vice president of a Stillwater Bank. Now retired, he has served as a City Commissioner and remains active in church, civic and political affairs in Stillwater.

By Roger Price

WALTER E. PRICE

In the late afternoon or early evening of December 7, 1941, the Price Family was driving back to Tulsa from their farm near Pryor, Oklahoma. They were on Route 33 heading back to Tulsa, and stopped at a filling station for gas where the news of Pearl Harbor was coming over the radio. In those days not all cars had radios, so they first heard the news at that filling station. As they got back in the car and headed toward Tulsa, Walter Price remembers:

I was a fifteen year old high school junior. I immediately thought of the war and wondered if it would last long enough for me to get in it. I hoped that it would. My brother was seventeen and planned to immediately run down and enlist.

Walter was not really sure of what his parents were thinking. Now, as a parent, he wonders: "My father was a veteran of World War One so I'm sure he must have had some thoughts."

That night there were lots of phone calls back and forth to people. There was a cousin at Pearl Harbor on the *USS Detroit*. It was one of the first ships to get out that morning and there was concern for his safety.

The next day everybody at school was racing down trying to enlist. At that time I believe you could enlist if you were seven-teen or older. It was pretty much a mass display of patriotism. Of course the newspapers were full of page after page on Pearl Harbor.

The war was soon to transform the country and the lives of its citizens. Everything was directed towards the war effort.

Oklahoma had been hard hit by the Depression. Prior to the war, the economy was still slow. The war provided a boost for Tulsa. Oil production increased. Local companies began to get contracts for war production. Tulsa's aeronautics industry really took off during the war. The Spartan School of Aeronautics had been training flyers even before the war began. In early 1942, construction was started on the Douglas Aircraft Company bomber assembly plant. War had come to Tulsa in the form of war production, rationing, and an increased sense of patriotism. Soon Tulsa's young men would go off to war. Some would never return.

We never had a feeling of fear. There would be reports of submarines off the Atlantic or Pacific coast, things like that, but I don't remember any real fear. We knew there were some tough days ahead. We knew we had a job to do, but I do not remember any concern over our ultimate victory. We knew it was something we had to do and we would eventually get it done. We were all enthusiastic.

Walter's father took a job at the big new Douglas bomber plant in Tulsa. He had been in the lumber business and became a materials estimator at the Tulsa Douglas plant. The family owned rental property and there began to be a lot of shortages. Rationing was one way they felt the war.

There was some debate over rationing in Tulsa. There were two local oil refineries and yet they rationed gasoline. Rationing books were issued. Meat was rationed, as was sugar, gasoline, and tires. People had to be very careful about using their cars, as they were trying to preserve the life of their tires, and save gasoline. When servicemen came home on leave, they went to the rationing board or draft board and got a furlough allowance of gasoline coupons.

Tulsa became totally involved with the war effort. Everything else was put on hold. Things like highway construction and street repair were put off until the war was over. Only the necessary maintenance was done. Politicians would say, "we're waiting for the boys to come home." That was

always the answer if there was a decision to be made. Every thing was going into the war effort.

The government asked for donations of guns, such as shotguns, 22 caliber rifles. These weapons were never used by the military, but by civil defense. In Tulsa civil defense was looked upon as sort of a joke. The civil defense people had some white helmets, etc. There was a whole lot of stuff that was brought into Tulsa that was never used—canned food, ladders, and all sorts of things you would have expected to see in London during the Blitz of 1942.

There were prisoners-of-war in Oklahoma. Some were used down around Bixby, from a PW camp at Camp Gruber. They were brought out on trucks and put to work on the farms. The early ones were from the Afrika Corps, big, tall, blonde Germans.

Parents were either waiting for their kids to go into the service or return from the service. People who had someone in the service would put flags with blue stars on them in their windows. If someone lost a son, there would be a gold star in the window. In those days they did not bring bodies home like they would in later wars. Parents and wives just got notification.

Walter was a little younger than the other kids in his class because he had skipped a grade. He finished that year (1942) at Tulsa Central. There was a big rush among some of the eighteen year olds to get in as much college as possible before being drafted. No one was drafted out of high school, and later on you could graduate a semester early. Many schools stayed in session all year-round. Walter chose to go to Oklahoma Military Academy for his senior year of high school.

Oklahoma Military Academy was a cavalry R.O.T.C. school. It was established in 1919 by an act of the State Legislature as a secondary school. O.M.A. no longer exists: it is now Rogers State College. Life there was somewhat similar to basic training. The cadets wore uniforms, got up to reveille and went to bed with taps. There were military training and academics.

Many of the cadets were there because their parents wanted them to get some military training before they went into the service. Walter went to O.M.A. in the summer of 1942, and remained there as a cadet through 1943. When he graduated from high school he was not yet seventeen, and was able to go right in to the junior college division. (In 1923 a Junior College of two years had been added to the curriculum.) In 1942 only those sophomores who could complete high school in two years were admitted to the Academy, and beginning in 1943 only juniors and seniors were admitted in the high school division. Walter received his first year of college at O.M.A.

Visits by parents, even those only a short distance away, had to be carefully planned due to gas rationing. Walter's folks would come up occasionally to take him for a family dinner.

Since it was a cavalry school, O.M.A. had plenty of horses. The cadets were trained in cavalry tactics, which Walter enjoyed as he was an experienced horseman from his days on the farm:

We had some really great experiences up there riding those horses, especially in military maneuvers. Those tactics, at least with horses, were never used in World War II, but many of the O.M.A. boys ended up as officers in the tank corps or mechanized cavalry. Both of these branches were merged into what we now call Armor.

Former cadets, who were now in the service, would come back to visit while on leave. Walter remembers one returning second lieutenant named Resler whose father was a physics instructor. The cadets were very impressed with this young officer who spoke to their classes. He was later killed in action in Europe.

A pilot who was flying B-17's secretly told his brother, Ben Boyd, a cadet, that he would be flying over Claremore at a certain time and that he would fly real low over the school. All the cadets were watching and he flew so low they could actually see the machine guns in the turrets. The B-17 was the super plane of that era, known as "the Flying Fortress," and the fly by was

a treat for the young cadets.

They had Springfield Rifles at O.M.A., the old bolt action model, but once the war began, the Springfields were picked up and delivered to the active forces. Walter thought that the services did not yet have enough of the new M-1 (Garand) rifles. He thinks that two divisions in the Pacific started the war with the Springfield Rifle:

They issued us wooded replicas of the Springfield. I can remember the inspections with those rifles. We had one M-1 sent to us by the government, and the entire corps was taught assembly and disassembly with that one rifle. Still, there were plenty of machine guns, both light and water cooled, for us to train on.

The draft started to take its toll at Oklahoma Military Academy as the older students were called to service. Usually they were permitted to finish the semester they were in and then leave for the war. The draft was run by local boards that followed certain general guidelines, but it was a hometown decision.

By 1944, thousands of Tulsans were employed in war production, many of them women. The shortage of manpower caused by the war had brought women into the workforce in large numbers. The war had also brought many people from the rural areas into the city. Society was changing.

In the Pacific, the war against Japan continued. In Europe, the Italians had surrendered and declared war on Hitler's Reich.

As Walter finished his second semester of college, he was six months away from his eighteenth birthday, and military service. There was no question that he would go in the service:

In January of 1944 I came back to Tulsa and enrolled at the University of Tulsa. I think my parents were happy with this decision, as they wanted me home for a few months before I

went away to the war. My brother was already in the service. There were all sorts of jobs available because of the shortage of manpower. After I finished that semester at Tulsa, and was waiting to go into the service, I worked for a county highway crew. I got what I thought was a tremendous salary, one hundred and sixty dollars a month. I had all kinds of money for the six or eight weeks I was out there. In June I turned eighteen and signed up for voluntary induction.

Voluntary induction was basically the same as enlisting, but the classification and draft process was bypassed. Young men, in effect said, "I'm ready" and went directly into the service. Under this system every few weeks a large group would be sent to the induction station in Oklahoma City. Walter went to Oklahoma City with a bunch of friends from Tulsa. With a bit of bravado, they decided they were going to ask for the Marine Corps. The Tulsa group included Billy Max Munder, Gordon Patten, Paul Thieman, and an older fellow named Cox. The "older fellow" was in his thirties!

Induction center is a little hard to describe. A bunch of naked men with little canvas sacks around their necks moving from examination station to examination station, feet, ears, heart etc.. The canvas sacks were for valuables. In my sack I had a pencil, an eraser, and a fountain pen. The reason for that was if you thought you had failed at a particular station you could change the entry on the examination papers you carried around with you. None of us wanted to be 4-F (not physically fit). Nobody in those days, at least in my group, wanted to be rejected. It was something to be embarrassed about. As some point after they said you passed, you were assigned to a particular service based on choice or convenience of the service.

Walter and all of his buddies passed and were given the Marine Corps. They boarded a train for the infamous Parris Island, South Carolina, recruit

depot. Like everything else in those days, travel was affected by the way. People were encouraged to do as little traveling as possible. With gasoline and tires rationed, people tried to avoid the use of their automobiles. This left the trains, which were all crowded. It was not unusual to be on a train and have the entire aisle full of people sitting on their luggage. Soldiers got priority on reservations and that sort of thing, but not necessarily on seats.

One of the mistakes made by the Tulsa boys was not bringing enough clothes. They were told not to bring a lot of stuff to boot camp. Even though it was August, they ran into some cool weather:

The biggest mistake we made was buying Marine Corps t-shirts. You do not arrive at Parris Island in a Marine t-shirt! We, to put it politely, caught some verbal abuse from the Drill Instructors for that. Boot camp was tough. We called it the American Foreign Legion. The training was very, very hard, and there was an awful lot of pressure.

Walter felt he had it easy in boot camp, in spite of all its rigors. He was in good shape, was no novice to the military, and the Tulsa bunch was a support group of sorts. Walter still sees Patten and Thieman, both Tulsa attorneys, but has lost contact with Munder and "old Cox."

There was an interesting cross-section of people in boot camp. Walter's platoon could have been in a movie, it included a prize fighter, a car thief, and one kid who was so retarded that he probably should not have been there. There were illiterates puffing along next to boys with several years of college.

After boot camp there was a ten-day leave to go home. They were all "heroes" in their uniforms, and were not exactly modest about being tough Marines. After leave it was Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, for advanced infantry training. They were now Marines instead of "you people" or "boots." The Tulsa group was still together at Lejeune, but soon were to be separated. All of Walter's buddies were accepted for Sea School. This was the "fancy pants" Marines that were assigned to ships as guards and enforcer of

discipline. Walter was left behind as he was too short for Sea School:

I was pretty much alone at this time. I remember feeling really depressed, then something unexpected happened. The unexpected was an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point.

Walter was discharged from the Marine Corps and enlisted directly into the Army to attend the United States Military Academy Preparatory School. He had only a third alternate appointment, and did not get in that year. He went instead to Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia:

Going to West Point had been a goal of mine that predated the war. I didn't get in the year I was first appointed, 1945. After meeting all the requirements I received a principal appointment for entrance the following year. The war ended while I was still at Fort Benning waiting to go to West Point.

With the end of World War II, people started returning to the States, getting mustered out of the services, and returning to their civilian pursuits. For Walter it was being discharged from the Army and boarding a train for West Point. There was a big paradox here. On the one hand, there were all these young people coming home from the last war we were ever supposed to fight, yet he was off to become a career officer.

Walter entered West Point in June of 1946. World War II had a significant effect on West Point. Virtually every officer there was an experienced combat veteran. The Superintendent was Major General Maxwell Taylor who would later distinguish himself as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and our Ambassador to the Republic of South Vietnam. Even the students were veterans—some sixty percent of Walter's class. Entrance to the Academy was possible between the ages of seventeen and twenty-three. There were seventeen or eighteen year old kids, people like Walter with some military experience, and hardened combat veterans from the Pacific or

Europe. A number of the class had been commissioned officers. There were probably more veterans in the Cadet Corps than at any other time.

Those at West Point at that time were not looking towards future wars. They were looking to completion of the courses, a career in the service and whatever that entailed. To some degree there was discouragement, in that the cadets felt they did not have a lot of excitement in store for them:

I remember President Truman came up and spoke to us at the Academy. He commended us for being there and stressed the need for maintaining the force structure. I always respected him for that. It is interesting to note that while I was at the Academy 'the Cold War' began, and before our graduation leave was over, we were being called off of leave to go to Korea. At our 40th reunion a Class of '50 classmate, Frank Borman the astronaut spoke. Frank pointed out that now that we were all retired, it was interesting to note that our class had been on a wartime footing for our entire careers.

Like others of his generation, the World War II had a dominate influence on Walter Price. It determined the choices that were available and the choices that were made. The war experience also changed the country. America emerged from World War II as the single greatest world power. Unlike the countries of Europe and the Pacific, American cities had not been destroyed. For a brief period America was the only nuclear power. The war revitalized our industry and led to an era of great prosperity. The war also gave us a renewed sense of pride and confidence which reminds us of our global responsibilities. America had come out of the economic troubles of the Thirties and helped to save the world from totalitarianism.

Another effect the war had was to totally end any isolationism by the government. The war and the technology it had produced had made the world a smaller place. America was no longer protected from foreign threats by the two oceans. With the threat from Germany and Japan over, a new threat took its place, International Communism. The United States had become a super-

power. It had also inherited the responsibilities that go with being a super-power.

Walter Price's World War II experiences were part of the foundation upon which he built a career in the Regular Army, including combat service in both Korea and Vietnam.

WORLD WAR II: REMEMBERING WHEN OUR NEIGHBORS WENT TO WAR

By

Peter C. Rollins
Regents Professor of English
Oklahoma State University

The essays in this collection tell the story of local and regional boys who went to war and then came back to become our neighbors. They understood the high-minded principles for which America and its allies fought, but that is not the story told here. These are narratives about young men called by their country to defend our land and our way of life against immediate military challenges. They did not need a civics lesson to persuade them to do their duty. They went downtown to volunteer or reported for duty when the draft told them it was their turn. Some, like LeRoy Stanley and Walter Price, received helpful, pre-military exposure at the Oklahoma Military Academy (Claremore, Oklahoma) where academics were taught along with marksmanship, and tactics. The cavalry maneuvers may have seemed like horse-and-buggy responses to an age of tanks, aircraft, and nuclear fission, but the demands of horsemanship encouraged poise and the habit of command—essential qualities which would help these two future officers in Europe, Korea, and Vietnam.

John Adams and Miner Hall, were pointing toward civilian careers. When the draft called, Miner was already a family man with wife and child. Adopting the Oklahoma "can-do" attitude, Miner shouldered his M-1 rifle and went off to battle, ignoring the opportunity to attend language school—which his high intelligence quotient (IQ) made possible. John Adams was a beardless freshman Thespian having a good time at college when the Japanese attack brought down the curtain—temporarily. News of the attack on Pearl Harbor interrupted a rehearsal for a light comedy; since there was little the

kids could do right away, rehearsal resumed after a few minutes of conversation. Later, John would leave the boards to serve his country in vital supply convoys across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Years after the war, one of his experiences would even make the *Reader's Digest's* "Humor in Uniform" section.

English 6253: WORLD WAR II AS FILM, LITERATURE, AND HISTORY was the magnet which brought us all together. While I had conducted many research projects in the Vietnam Studies area, I felt a bit out of step with the many commemorative specials, articles on WWII which began to appear in 1991. What better way to get back into step than to offer a course on the subject? My very first publication was about *Victory at Sea* (the famous television NBC documentary series about US naval operations during WWII) and I had tried to keep up with the World War II films and books, but teaching a class is the best way to force a scholar to devote hours to a subject. After producing a flyer, I paid a visit to Craig Chappell of OSU's Public Information Office. He wrote a brief story for Oklahoma papers, but it was enough to bring me twenty telephone calls and the veterans represented in this collection. They became a living inspiration for the teacher and the graduate students, adding emotion and human focus to texts of the past.

Looking back on their wartime service experiences, these Mid-America veterans of World War II understand that their effort was for a just cause. Hitler and his Nazis in Europe and Japan's militarists in Asia were truly a scourge. Through the late 1930s, England and France looked on passively as Hitler absorbed more and more "liebensraum" (living room) adjacent to Germany's borders. In 1938, a desperate agreement to give Hitler more land was made by Neville Chamberlain in an effort to keep "peace in our time." Not until Hitler attacked Poland on the first day of September, 1939, did England and France formally declare war. And even then, the battle was not joined until Germany initiated its attack on France in May of 1940. Using blitzkrieg ("lightning war") tactics which stressed the use of fast tanks and mobile troop carriers, the Germans achieved almost instant victories over a French army entrenched in World War I-style static defense. The Germans had attained their objectives in Northern France by the end of May. By the

end of June, 1940, they brought their advance to a halt under an armistice on German terms. In the meantime, the British army had been evacuated from Dunkirk in early June after a resounding defeat by the seemingly invincible German advance. Britain began to suffer from German bombs in July.

Further north, German troops occupied Denmark and invaded Norway in late Spring. The battle of Norway was over by May, fulfilling Hitler's dream of making Europe his Nazi "Fortress." Throughout the military campaign, Hitler's suppression of rights, and his exploitation of our friends in Europe shocked many Americans. Yet majority of the nation held back because Americans—especially Americans living in the Mid-America heartland—remembered the disillusioning results of their involvement in World War I. Books like Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) and movies like Lewis Milestone's screen rendering of *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930) taught powerful lessons about the futility of European confrontations. Had not the failure of "the war to end all wars" and the Versailles Treaty to follow proved that each new struggle merely set the conditions for the next confrontation?

Japanese expansion in Asia had begun long before Hitler's blitzkrieg. By the time Franklin Delano Roosevelt took the oath of office in January, 1933, the Empire of the Rising Sun had occupied Manchuria and Korea with a brutality for which the Japanese, as part of their own recent retrospection, officially apologized in the last months of 1991. Between 1937 and the memorable day of December 7, 1941, the Japanese expanded their control to include Northern China. After their surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese annexed the Philippine Islands, French Indo-China, and most of the island territories in between. While the acquisitions were described as a "New Order" of liberation from Western imperialism, the real goal of Japan's own brand of imperialism was to become self-sufficient in raw materials and energy. The Japanese form of domination looked suspiciously like the Nazi system; a series of "Axis" treaties between the European and Asian dictatorships formalized the partnership.

When Pearl Harbor was bombed on that "Day of Infamy" in December, 1941, the scene was set for conflict. Disillusionment with the tragic

outcome of our last venture into a European war and lack of interest in distant Asian lands gave way to action. America's youth—and some of its older folk—responded.

Walter Price was riding along Route 33 from Pryor to Tulsa with his family when Pearl Harbor was bombed. The family did not have a radio in the automobile and so did not learn of the disaster until the car reached a filling station. Walter remembers that the nation came together as one to answer the call. Men in uniform and pilots were people to look up to; it was neat to have a brother in the service. Back home, places like Tulsa were employing more and more men—and women—to build the complicated machines of land and air warfare. Many of the skilled trades and businesses which make Tulsa an aircraft and machine-tools center, today, were fostered during the war, changing the lives of Oklahomans who moved away from the land to live near their new city jobs. The Marines would be an adventure for Walter—with the war something far away. Parris Island was a place for young Tulsans to work together under the tough supervision of the DI's. For Walter, given his (at that time) tender age, the war brought the opportunity to attend West Point. Although he never saw combat during World War II, the mobilization launched him into a military career. Korea and Vietnam would await the young Tulsan who tried to go to war.

Miner Hall's experience was entirely different. Miner was—and is—an accountant in Stillwater, Oklahoma, home of his alma mater, Oklahoma State University. Age twenty-nine and father of one child, Miner boarded a fast ship to Europe right after D-Day. No sooner had this Sooner arrived in Europe, he was placed in the right place at the wrong time. Shot through the chest during the Battle of the Bulge (also called the Battle of Ardennes Forest), Miner went through the kinds of experiences described by Kurt Vonnegut in his combination of autobiography and fantasy entitled *Slaughterhouse Five* (1968). Like Billy Pilgrim of the novel (and film by George Roy Hill), Miner marched back into the German-held forest to be transported by train South to a town near Dresden, Germany. Unlike Billy Pilgrim, Miner was hospitalized outside the city far enough away to be unhurt by the massive bombing which destroyed that historic city along with 40,000 inhabitants in

mid-February, 1945. Miner had been shot through the chest at the Ardenees; still, he made it home to his family and his job. Now one of the most respected citizens of Stillwater, Miner—like the other veterans here represented—knew that he and his country did the right thing.

LeRoy Stanley served his country as a combat officer in Europe, Korea, and Vietnam. As a graduate of Oklahoma Military Academy and OSU, LeRoy went to war as a junior officer with an infantry specialty. The photograph of LeRoy as he listens to the Supreme Commander, General Eisenhower, says it all: he is tough, poised, a real man standing up for his country when it needed help. Yet, like so many of the veterans from World War II, LeRoy is a humble person who is proud of his friends and compassionate to those who suffered—either at the front or at home as part of families "wounded" by the war. I first met LeRoy on the tennis courts of Oklahoma State University where—before his legs began to give him trouble—he was one of the top three senior players. During our class on World War II in the spring, 1992, I learned to respect his judgment, his scholarly interests, and the breadth of his experience as a career officer in the Army. Pat Webster's profile of LeRoy should give every American in this region—and beyond—a sense of pride in the kind of person who has served the country in uniform. While Miner was aboard ship headed for England and young Walter Price was doing pushups somewhere in the swamps of South Carolina, LeRoy Stanley was moving forward toward a German strong point. Intent on his objective, he tripped a mine and suffered wounds that would end his combat experiences—for this war. Like Walter, LeRoy would go on to serve in Korea and Vietnam. Later, he would return to Stillwater as a professor of management at Oklahoma State.

John Adams today owns an auto supply store in Cushing, Oklahoma. John reads two or three books a week and enrolled in the World War II class for credit, performing well on the oral and written assignments. Back in his younger days, John Adams was a little more relaxed about academics; in fact, he almost flunked out of college his first year. World War II pulled John Adams away from the tightly knit local and college communities of his childhood and youth, exposing him to new life styles. When his first ship was

shot out from under him in the North Atlantic, he decided that there really was something useful in the notion of discipline. Later experiences as a gunner, a radioman, and an MP on the streets of San Francisco showed him aspects of life not contemplated by his mid-America upbringing. When he returned to the heartland, John was a new person—ready to learn and succeed in college and ready to make something out of his life. Even today, he has delighted in his academic work and plans to go on to creative writing classes at Oklahoma State University. Hopefully, he will expand upon the fascinating narrative he has supplied us.

When English 6253: WORLD WAR II AS FILM, LITERATURE, AND HISTORY came to a close in May, 1992, it was almost as if a curtain were dropping at the end of a drama. The oral history studies produced by the graduate students seemed too valuable to merely grade and return; they were worth sharing with others. This collection is a record of human experience which gives flesh to the abstractions of history. For these veterans—and, through them, for the students involved—World War II was more than an epic conflict: it was the time when our neighbors went to war.

And not just neighbors. I remember when my father came home from World War II. Mother and I got into our black, 1941 Ford coupe and drove from Brookline, Massachusetts (a suburb) to Back Bay Station in Boston—near what is now the John Hancock/Copley Square area. There we parked on a bridge over the tracks and waited for my father's train to arrive. I don't remember every step and every action, but I do remember a man in a green uniform stepped down from the train with a large seabag and a valpack. He was thirty-five years old and returning from a tour with the Third Marine Division in the Pacific (with service in Guam, Tinian, and Siapan). He looked so noble to a lad of three. We carried the bags up to the car and drove back to suburban living. Dad's homecoming was a happy time, full of quiet lessons which the veterans reporting have renewed for me in this issue of the *Payne County Historical Review*. From Pearl Harbor to the Chosin Reservoir and Pork Chop Hill (Korea) to the A Shau Valley and Khe Sanh (Vietnam) and Kuwait, America has found men who would fulfill the duties of citizenship for the commonweal—both in battle and in public service. Where do we

find such people? The answer is simple: they are our fathers, brothers, and neighbors. The commemoration of World War II provides us with an occasion to listen to their stories.

We urge that readers conduct their own oral history projects, recording the World War II experiences of their friends and loved ones—and thereby adding more heft to our small effort to preserve a human record. Payne County went to war in more ways than we have begun to record. We await your manuscripts and videotapes with their stories of how our neighbors went to war.

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