

Questions and Answers for the WWII Presentation today

What did I learn by being in the Army?

In basic training I learned to be responsible and to obey orders. I had to do my own laundry by hand and keep my quarters neat and clean and in strict military fashion. I learned to fire many dangerous weapons, and I gained confidence in myself and proud of being a foot soldier in the Infantry. *In combat* I learned how everyone works together and helps each other stay alive. I gained many friends this way and keep in contact with them to this day.

What is the infantry?

The Infantrymen are the ones on the most forward lines out in front with rifles and hand grenades and bayonets facing the enemy who has the same weapons. Soldiers go “up front”.

What is Artillery?

Artillerymen fire large caliber 105 and 155 cannons from several hundred yards back.

What are the Mortars?

Mortars are small cannons and are just back of the riflemen. These are 60 and 81 mm.

What are the Machine Gunners?

Machine gunners support the riflemen with very rapid fire 30 and 50 cal. weapons.

What are the medics?

Medics tend to the wounded in battle and are with riflemen.

What are Forward Observers?

Forward observers are up front to watch the battle and direct where the shells are to fall for artillery and mortars. These needs are requested by rifle company Officers.

What does a rifle company mean?

A rifle company is a group of men consisting of squads and platoons. A squad has 12 men, three squads make a platoon and three platoons make a company of about 150 men. The commanding officer is a Captain. Each squad has a squad leader. Each Platoon is directed by a Sargent. Size and numbers change with special units.

Was I scared in combat?

Yes on Okinawa I was scared a lot of times. **What is a foxhole?**

A foxhole is a deep hole dug by an infantrymen for protection. Every front line man carries a shovel and learns to use it fast to save his life. They are dug below ground level.

How the wounded are cared for?

Severely wounded soldiers on the front line may lay there screaming, calling for help and may bleed to death because a medic cannot get to them. They are often carried back to the first aid station on a litter by 4 men, and then carried by ambulance to a safer and local hospital.

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What are the tanks?

Tanks are heavy tracked vehicles and the men inside are protected by very thick metal. A tank has a cannon that fires shells and is used with infantrymen to advance.

What are the flame throwers?

Flame throwers are used to kill the enemy that are entrenched in their foxholes or caves. A flame thrower uses thick gasoline that is projected and ignited and often used by a rifleman.

What is shrapnel?

Shrapnel is jagged chunks of metal that spreads when the artillery or mortar shell explodes and rips into bodies.

Does an infantryman get any rest?

Riflemen often fight at night and so they take turns sleeping in the foxholes. Each soldier carries food rations and water with him.

What is a convoy and how and why is it used?

When troops move from one island to another they need protection from enemy submarines who try to sink their ship with torpedoes. In order to accomplish this several Navy ships continually circle around the central troop ship and tries to sink any enemy submarines they find. This whole group of ships is called a convoy.

They often set their path in a zig-zag pattern to confuse the enemy. They often use flags and intense lights to communicate with each other so they will not be detected by the enemy who is listening to any sounds.

What about the packs seen on the back of soldiers?

It depends on what they are doing. If they are in combat the packs carry only the least. A shovel, maybe a few c-rations, dry socks, etc. The straps hold hand grenades and the cartridge belt holds lots of ammunition for their weapons. Some packs also have bayonets on the side.

The larger packs carry a lot more and in WWII they were called Full Field packs. They have room for extra shoes, a blanket, and mess gear, a small tent with poles, soap, toilet paper, several rations, and underwear. Soldiers also carry first-aid kits and like the small packs, they carry hand grenades and extra bullets in the cartridge belt along with a bayonet.

Miscellaneous

Soldiers eat in a mess hall. They eat chow. These words are interchangeable.