

# **My Deadeye Story**

**by  
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**Grand Coulee, Washington**

## **STATESIDE**

**My name is Fred R. Long and I was born November 6<sup>th</sup>, 1922 near Oroville, Washington not far from the Canadian border. I remember in the late 1920's, my father had a shoe repair shop and when the depression hit in October 1929, he continued repairing shoes, but very few people were paying him. He finally ran out of money and materials and was unable to make the payments on what he owed.**

**One day in 1930 a truck backed up in front of his shop and loaded his equipment and drove away. There we were with no income, so my dad and his brother loaded their families into their cars and headed for Canada. We homesteaded 197 acres within walking distance of MauriceTown, B.C., a very small village. We were there for only about a year and returned to the good old USA. In October 1932 we moved to Seattle and then to Renton, Washington where I did some of my growing up. It was there in Renton where they were recruiting for the National Guard, and two of my older brothers and I signed up in June or July, 1940.**

**To lay a little ground work about my time in the US Army, I started out in Service Company, 116<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Regiment, 41<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, a national guard outfit. We were inducted into Federal Service, Sept., 16, 1940, supposedly for one year of training and then release, to be called if and when we were needed. The draft was instituted before our year of service was up, so we did not get out as planned.**

**When we first went into the Guard, we were examined at the Armory in Seattle Washington. I stretched my age. I was seventeen, but told them I was eighteen, supposedly born in November 1921. Remember that two of my older brothers joined at the same time. Bob, having been born in March 1921, was nineteen, and when my birthday came in November, he and I were both nineteen years old at the same time and we were not twins.**

**To give you an idea of how anxious they were to get recruits in those days, when we were having our physical exams, I weighed only 116 pounds. The Doctor said, "We are going to take a break for lunch and I want you to eat all the bananas you can eat and drink as much**

water as you can drink and don't go to the bath room. I want you first in line after the break". I was there promptly after lunch and when the Doctor weighed me again, he said, "You are still underweight". Suddenly he threw up his hands and said, "OH, PASS"! I don't know what the weight restrictions were at the time, but my records show that he put me down as weighing 123 pounds.

We were sent to Camp Murry, north of Fort Lewis. We lived in tents with wooden floors and side walls, with small Sibley stoves to ward off the chill. Six men to a tent. We were given an I.Q. test and other tests and training.

The Company had only three trucks and they were 1936 Chevrolet 1 ½ ton jobs. I, at seventeen, signed up to be a truck driver and to this day I do not understand why, but I got one of the trucks and my two older brothers that had also signed on to be truck drivers, did not get the job. I had driven only a Model "A" Ford one ton truck in my life. That was the old farm truck. Most of my driving had been on back roads and into Renton or Kent, which were very small towns at the time. I had not even had the time to get accustomed to the vehicle when I was handed a dispatch slip and told to take a load of men to Fort Lewis. That meant that I had to go onto a four lane Highway with a load of live human beings. I was so scared, I can still remember it. After waiting for the traffic to clear, I finally ventured out onto the highway and I can still picture myself weaving that truck down the road toward the Fort. I managed to get them there and back but, I believe, only by the Grace of God.

After my brothers and I had gone into the service, my father bought a dairy farm. It was about seven miles east of Kent, Washington. His thinking was that his three sons would put in one year of training and be back home again to help on the farm. Of course the draft was started and we did not get out. Dad worked it as long as he could, but the shortage of help forced him to sell out. He and my mother went to work in the shipyard at Houghton, near Kirkland. The dairy farm was only about thirty five miles from where we were stationed at the time, Camp Murry.

Some interesting things happened in those early days at the farm, With three of us in the service and all three of us bringing a

friend or two home for the week-end, sometimes we had a houseful. Mom would be up at five AM, rattling pots and pans in the kitchen, I believe deliberately, to arouse the crowd. It gave my mother great joy to be able to cook for, and feed us. She cooked on an old wood burning cook stove and served up a great breakfast of ham and eggs or whatever was available. She treated the “boys” as her own, and they loved it. I walked into the kitchen one morning as one of our friends was talking with Mom, when I heard her say to him. “Joe, go get me some firewood from the shed”. He jumped to his feet and went out the door and returned with an arm load of wood.

She had a good laugh one morning when she went upstairs to count heads to see how many to cook breakfast for. We had two double beds in that upstairs room and she had found four or five of us crosswise on each bed.

It got to where, at camp, the guys were vying to see who would get to go home for the week-end with the Long brothers. A couple of our friends that came home with us married local girls and stayed in the area.

Some time along the way, we went to the Hunter Liggett Reservation in California for maneuvers. This was before the war started.

I well remember the day Pearl harbor was hit. I was on a week-end pass in Seattle when I heard that Pearl Harbor had been struck. All service men were instructed to immediately go to Eighth and Stewart streets to the Greyhound Bus depot and we would be transported back to our base, which for me, at the time, was North Fort Lewis. As I proceeded toward the bus depot, I saw that many store keepers had radios out where they could be heard by the public. By the time I got to the bus depot, it was very crowded. I squeezed onto a bus with standing room only. You could not have fallen to the floor had you passed out from the heat in there. Many bodies, small area.

Some time in 1942, Army Divisions were reduced in size from what they called Square Divisions to Triangular Divisions. A Square Division had four Infantry Regiments and four Artillery outfits. A

Triangular Division had three and three. That meant the whole Division was reduced in size, which left quite a few of us out of the loop. From the excess of men, new organizations were formed. My two brothers and I, having joined up at the same time, were in the same outfit and were put into the 186<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Depot Co., and sent to Pasco, Washington to guard Navy supplies prior to a new Navy base being built in that area.

I had been in an automobile accident while on leave in 1941 and was still not up to par when the 186<sup>th</sup> received orders for overseas. (They went to Persia, now called Iran). I was transferred out and sent to Fort Lewis, Washington. I was put on limited service for a few months at Fort Lewis. Then I was sent with a group of about twenty five men to open the new Camp White in Oregon.

Eventually I was deemed fit for full service again and in Feb., 1943 was put on a troop train and sent to Camp Butner, North Carolina to the 78<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division which, at the time, was a training and replacement Division. I was at Butner for about two weeks taking Infantry training, and was then put on a troop train and sent back across the country to Camp Adair, Oregon, two hundred miles north of Camp White, to join the 96<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, all in the month of February, 1943.

This may not be the place for this next segment, but I think it should be said. Another soldier and I received a week-end pass and went into one of the nearby towns in North Carolina. We were having difficulty locating a certain building and I saw two elderly black men walking toward us and when I approached them to make an inquiry, they removed their hats and held them to their chest and started bowing and backing away from me. I paced along with them and they stepped off the curb, so I stepped down with them. Finally I was able to ask where we would find this building and they answered me as quickly and politely as they could. When I stepped back onto the sidewalk, my buddy said, "Are you crazy? Down here, a black man does not talk to a white man and if the right person saw that, those men will be dead tonight!". Living in the Northwest, I had heard about prejudice, but this gave me a lesson on what prejudice is. I had seen some against the American Indian, but nothing like that.

On the troop train back to Oregon we played a lot of two-bit limit poker. I enjoyed a good poker game back in those days. We had a black Porter on our car that was quiet and pleasant. We would ask him almost every day to get a blanket from an upper berth to put on the table to play poker on. Depending on my winnings, I would tip him a quarter or two each time. Keep in mind that a quarter in those days would buy about what three dollars or more will buy today. Many times on that trip, I heard men refer to him with the "N" word, and I would come unglued. I usually got the question, "Would you want one to marry your sister?" My response was, "That is up to my sister". I was called an "N" lover and a few other things. One day, in the rest room on the train, I struck up a conversation with the Porter. He was reluctant to talk at first, but soon warmed up to me. As we parted, he said, "You are the whitest white man I have ever met." That may have meant something different in his culture, but I took it as one of the greatest compliments I have ever received.

For some reason, unknown to me at the time, I was winning every time we played poker. I got on the troop train with seven dollars in my pocket and when we got off the train in Oregon, I had about seventy dollars on me and I had loaned out nearly two hundred to men that I never expected to see again. Strangely, every one of them that had gone to different outfits, looked me up and payed me. I lost only ten dollars from all the money I had loaned and that was from a man that joined me in the 96<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Co..

I think I now understand why I was winning all the time. In September 1962, I received The Lord Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and as a result, I read the bible regularly. I have found one of God's principles that works, as do all of them. "Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again". (Luke 6:38).

While at Camp White, I had been promoted to corporal, as a driver for Major Forsythe (one of my all time favorite officers), but when I connected with the 96<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Co., 96<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, they had no need for another corporal and so made me a T/5

(technician 5<sup>th</sup> grade). Still two stripes and same pay scale. I had been a truck driver with the 41<sup>st</sup> Division, and here I was, a truck driver again.

I don't remember details as far as dates are concerned, but we went to Fort Lewis, Washington and then to eastern Oregon on maneuvers. From there we went to Camp White, Oregon and on to Camp Callen, California for amphibious training. Camp Callen was my favorite Army Camp.

While the troops were taking amphibious training, they made beach head landings and brought the ammunition boxes (loaded with gravel) and other supplies ashore. Our job was to drive to the beach area and load our trucks and trailers with the ammo pallets and whatever was brought ashore. We drove as fast as our trucks would allow (they were governed at 45 MPH) to get the stuff back to San Diego and loaded onto another ship for another practice landing. We did the same routine day after monotonous day. One hot sweltering day on a run toward San Diego with a load of gravel laden ammunition boxes, I became sleepy and Cpl. Dick Dunbar who was riding with me, took over. In the army, a person with a "Trip ticket" was the only one allowed to drive a vehicle. Each driver was issued a military drivers license, but a trip ticket was issued for each trip with an assigned vehicle with destination to and from.

I was the only one ticketed that day to drive that truck and Cpl. Dunbar was not supposed to be behind the wheel. As we drove down a four lane boulevard, an older couple in a 1936 Buick decided to make a left "U" turn from the curb to our right in front of us. I was dozing on the passenger side in the truck cab when suddenly it seemed like everything broke loose. A screeching of brakes and maneuvering to avoid the car. We had a truck and trailer loaded with boxes and pallets of gravel. That made for a very heavy load to slow quickly.

We skidded kind of sideways and struck the back of the car with the right side of our truck bed. I looked through the windshield in time to see the terrain tipping in front of us as we rolled onto the right side. I quickly braced myself with my hands on either side of the passenger side window to keep from falling through it. We slid on the side with

the windshield headed for a large tree. Fortunately the truck stopped about fifteen feet from the tree. As soon as we stopped sliding, Cpl. Dunbar went up through the driver side window and I was still in the truck. I had earlier laid my helmet liner in the floor of the truck and as we had picked up a lot of sand on our feet at the beach, the liner accumulated sand in the spill. I picked it up and put it on my head and got a lot of sand in my hair. As I sat there shaking my head and trying to brush the stuff from my hair, my buddy Robert Hogan, who was driving the truck behind us, appeared outside the windshield. As I was shaking my head, I heard him say, "Hey, Long is hurt, let's get him out of there". The next thing I knew, two men reached down through the upper door window and grabbed me by the shoulders of my blouse (That's what they called them in the army. Heavier than a shirt, lighter than a jacket). They hoisted me up and out and gently let me down to the ground. I had gained a little limp from twisting my right hip.

Some of the men had already gone to the aid of the couple in the car. When I got there, I saw that the back of their car was pushed forward off the frame and the back of the front seat had them penned in. He was pushed tightly against the steering wheel and when we got them out, we found that he had a bad gash on his left leg. I don't know what other injuries they may have had, but they were pretty badly shaken.

The lieutenant in charge showed up and asked who was driving. When Cpl. Dunbar told him that he was, he asked Dunbar if he had a trip ticket. When he learned that the corporal did not have one, he said, "Don't talk to anyone! Don't talk to police officers! Don't talk to MP's or anyone until I get back"! He rushed off in his jeep and when he came back, he had a trip ticket for the corporal. That may not seem like such a big thing, but it saved us an awful lot of trouble.

## **OVERSEAS**

Finally to Camp Stoneman, and then we embarked some time in July or August of 1944, to Hawaii. At Honolulu, we were put on narrow gauge rail cars and transported through cane fields and pineapple groves to Schofield barracks. We were billeted in brick



barracks that still had holes in the screens where they had been strafed by Japanese planes during the infamous raid on Pearl Harbor.

While in Hawaii we, the 96<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Company, were busy hauling supplies to load the ships while the other outfits were completing their amphibious training. Mostly, I hauled explosives such as mortar and artillery shells, dynamite, TNT and whatever else we needed.

At Schofield barracks, I was ordered to go to the motor pool and check out a five ton Diamond "T" truck. The truck I normally drove was a two and a half ton Jimmy (GMC) with hydraulic brakes with a vacuum booster. At the motor pool, the sergeant asked if I had ever driven a truck with air brakes, and being a young smarty, I did not want to sound ignorant so I said, "sure"! He told me to "Get in the truck and drive out of the motor pool and go straight ahead for one block, then turn right and go another block and turn right again, and go another block, right turn again and another block, then turn left through the gate and stop right here". I got in the truck and drove straight ahead for one block and applied the brakes as I approached the intersection. I quickly learned what "air brakes" are. Pushing on the brake pedal gives no resistance . It just opens a valve and allows air pressure to do the work of applying the brakes. As I touched the brake pedal, I locked up all six wheels and skidded to a stop. I was thrown forward with my chest against the steering wheel and couldn't get off the brake until the truck had completely stopped.

I got the thing going again and after I had turned the first corner, out of the sergeant's sight, I played around with the brakes to get a feel for it. I pulled into the motor pool and spewed the brakes a couple times as I had heard others do. As I hopped out of the truck the sergeant said, "Now young man, you have driven a truck with air brakes! Go ahead and take off". One of my embarrassing moments.

Some time in September, 1944, we set sail and after we were out to sea, we were told that we were going to hit Yap Island. But soon the orders were changed and all of our maps were picked up and we were informed that we would hit Leyte Island in the Philippines instead.

As we traveled across the Pacific Ocean we made a stop at Eniwetok, and then on to Manus Island in the Admiralty Group. At sunrise our first morning at Manus, there were so many ships, it looked as though you could walk out to the horizon stepping from one ship to the next.

At Manus I saw my first casualty of the war. There were many ships staging there for the push to the Philippines and the LST (Landing Ship Tank) that I was on was tied side-by-side to other ships and someone had laid a plank between our ship and another LST to cross back and forth from one ship to the other.

Well, a few men had musical instruments and were jamming (music improvisations) when one of the G.I.'s decided to go back to his ship to get his guitar. I did not see this happen, but as he tried to traverse the plank, he fell between the ships. I was aware of the incident, and got an unwelcome taste of it about three days later. As I was inching my way forward in the chow line, I looked over the side of the ship and saw his body floating face down. I became a little nauseas and did not eat for the rest of the day.

That was the first of many bodies I would see before returning to the States. Some of what I saw was too gruesome to describe so I'll not take that any further.

## LEYTE

We moved on to the Philippines for the invasion of Leyte, and got a taste of what the enemy had waiting for us. There has been a lot said about the Kamikazis at Okinawa, and it is all true. They hit us at Leyte as well. I really wish I could learn the designation number of the LST (Landing Ship Tank) that I was on, but have not been able to come up with it. A Kamikazi was coming right at us as I was standing on deck. I saw the thing at the last moment, do a twist upward and over us and hit the side of a troop transport beyond us. I looked right up his wing span above us and thought he was going to take some of the ships rigging with him.

**Before going ashore, we saw a Japanese plane come in low over the Island and drop down to just above water level. With what seemed like every gun on every ship firing at it, it flew right on through the barrage and dropped a torpedo into the side of the USS Honolulu. With all that ammo in the air, the plane flew right on through and away. It looked as if it hadn't been hit at all. I don't know if we suffered any casualties from friendly fire that day, but with bullets flying in every direction, I'd be amazed if we did not. Keep in mind that the Japanese plane was flying just above water level and with what seemed like a jillion guns firing at him Surely some ships would have to have been hit by our own guns.**

**As a Quartermaster Company, we were not supposed to make our landing until the beachhead was secure, but for one reason or another, the LST I was on ran ashore and we started offloading our vehicles at Blue Beach II, in the shadow of Catmon Hill. It seems the Japanese had artillery and mortars up there that they wanted to put to good use, so we were on the receiving end of the shelling.**

**I had been on maneuvers with the 41<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division in California in 1941 and again with the 96<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in Eastern Oregon in 1943. During those times, we heard a lot of our own artillery firing and I had become accustomed to the sound. It was not frightening at all because we knew it was our own guns and we had nothing to fear. Well, because of my familiarity with the sounds of mock war, it took a while for it to sink in that we were on the receiving end in a real war.**

**Let me back up a little in my story. While we were in Hawaii, we processed our vehicles, that is, we prepared them for an amphibious landing. I mean by that, that we waterproofed our trucks by enclosing the distributor with some waterproofing material and installed snorkels for the thing to breathe under water. The preparation was more detailed than that, but I won't go into the details any more than I have.**

**The beachhead landing was kind of a comedy of errors. A platoon leader rode ashore with me. Now I have to say that the sergeant frightened me more than the thought of the enemy. He had a 30 caliber carbine slung over one shoulder, a 45 caliber pistol strapped**

to his side along with a bayonet and a brass knuckled trench knife. He had in his hands with the safety off, a fully loaded, 45 caliber Thompson Sub Machine gun pointed upward at my 50 caliber machine gun ring mount overhead. My greatest fear at that point was that he might trigger the Thompson and ricochet some hot lead off that mount and back down on us. As I drove down the ramp of the LST, the front of my truck went down in the water and as it left the ramp and made contact with the sand, it began to climb upward to about the point where the truck was level again, and the engine died. The water was over the running boards and in the floor of the truck and there we sat. About that time, I heard a man with an amphibious tank, holler at me to pull my winch cable out and he would pull us ashore.

My next move wasn't too bright. I stepped out onto the running board, and not giving a thought to how deep the water was under my truck, I stepped off into nothing but high water. I dog paddled myself toward the front of the truck and managed to get the winch cable pulled out and hooked onto the tank. By this time, I had become a little wiser and waded back to the truck and climbed onto the front bumper and over the fender to get behind the wheel. The tank pulled us up into the tree line, and that is when things really began to happen.

As I sat on the right front fender of the truck, trying to get the waterproofing (so-called) off the distributor, the sergeant walked past me and around the front of the vehicle saying, as he put a cigarette to his mouth, "I'm going to see if I can find some dry matches".

Suddenly I was hearing all kinds of artillery fire, but having become accustomed to the sound, I didn't pay much attention to it until I saw a soldier about 30 or 40 feet away that was hit in the left chest and bleeding badly. A couple of his buddies ran out and pulled him into a hole for cover.

About this time, it began to dawn on me that we were in a real war. I climbed off the fender, and as I was putting on my helmet, thinking the sergeant was just on the other side, I said, "You'd better put your helmet on Sarge, it looks like we have some action". Then I heard a loud whistle and saw him with a couple other G.I.'s in a hole

about sixty feet from me. All three of them were flagging me and hollering for me to take cover. All of a sudden the full impact of war hit me. I grabbed my M-1 rifle from the truck and ran to where they were and jumped in the hole. It was a rather large hole, like a bulldozer blade had dropped into the sand and scooped out a nice place to take cover.

While there, a young Second Lieutenant came walking along and stopped near us and just stood there shaking. We were shouting at him to take cover and he just stood there. Two men at that end of our retreat grabbed him and pulled him in with us. He had the shakes so bad, and he seemed to be, "out of it". One of the guys slapped him across the face a couple times, good and hard and said, "straighten out, man". He suddenly began crying like a child.

The ship that I had debarked from was hit two or three times by mortar fire. One of the rounds hit the front gun turret. We saw 40mm rounds flying through the air, some still attached to the clips. I got a real scare then, thinking some of those things might land in the hole with us. Fortunately they did not.

Someone shouted, "the Japs broke through, they are coming back to the beach"! That turned out not to be the case, but I didn't know it at the time and there I was with my trusty rifle with only eight rounds of ammo in it. I handed my rifle to the sergeant and ran as fast as I could to the truck and grabbed two bandoleers of ammunition and headed back for cover.

As I approached the hole, I was thinking, "I can live without my feet, but I can't without my head", so I dove head first as a shell went off behind me. The concussion flipped me in mid air and I landed in the hole on my backside with my feet in the sergeant's face.

As things settled down, I left the sergeant and returned to my truck to get on with what I had been doing. I don't know when he left the hole.

About 40 years later a corporal, a squad leader in our outfit, came to our home for a visit and to reminisce. As we talked of the war, he mentioned that when they offloaded from his ship, he was

supposed to meet up with the Sergeant and he had walked up and down the beach and finally found him in a hole.

Having told this story to my wife, she was familiar with what we were talking about and said, "Chapter Two".

From here on, I don't remember the sequence of events, so I will throw in, here and there, little tidbits as they come to mind.

About a week after hitting the Island, we were watching the beach area. When being shelled, we dove for our holes for protection and all came through OK. One of the fellows that had been lying on the sand with his head on his bedroll for a pillow, was very fortunate that he did not delay when it was necessary to move quickly. He found that a good sized piece of shrapnel had pierced his bedroll and gone all the way through. When he unrolled his shelter half and blanket, there were holes the length of them, a foot or so apart.

The reason we were watching the beach area, was because the Japanese were trying to come in behind us, and had they done so, it would have been a mess. Thanks to the US Navy, they were stopped before they got to us.

It was in the same time period that I was sitting on a pile of sand where one of the men had dug his slit trench. Looking down the tree line , I saw a massive explosion. My first thought was, "Flame thrower", because of the dark flame and very black smoke. The explosion was very much greater than that. I had hardly had the thought, "Flame thrower", when concussion hit me and dumped me over backwards into the hole. It seems that the enemy had pulled a surprise on the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and got their ammo and gas dumps. One of our men was in the area with his truck when this took place. He managed to escape, but was very badly shaken.

One night a typhoon blew in that was strong enough to move my 2 ½ ton Jimmy truck sideways across a muddy road and into a ditch. In this area, we had six man, pyramid tents set up. The wind took care of that. I had tried to sleep on an army cot in a tent when it was shredded and torn to pieces. I used a section of canvas from the tent to tie down over my cot which did not do a bit of good. The wind

billowed that piece up and rain and wind pelted me for a good part of the night. In the morning, I could not find a dry spot anywhere on my bed or bedding. Our kitchen crew had set up a large tent to do their cooking and the wind destroyed their tent too. They cooked in the open that day.

On Leyte. My truck and I, with other trucks and drivers, were loaned to the Engineers to haul material to try to keep a road open across a rice paddy to the front lines. We were given top priority on the roads and when the M.P.'s saw us coming, they would even stop convoys to flag us across single-lane bridges. We tried not to let anything slow us down or interfere with what we had to do. A convoy had been stopped as I approached a bridge and the M.P.'s flagged me through. In the Philippines, we had to drive on the left side of the road and as I came to the end of the convoy, suddenly, without warning, a jeep driver pulled out from behind the last truck, directly into my path. To avoid hitting him I went into the ditch on my left. Now, this was no ordinary ditch. It was about 8 feet deep and about that wide with slimy mud at the bottom. Somehow, as the truck began to bog down, I managed to shift down through the lower gears and into front wheel drive without tearing out the transmission. I managed to keep the truck moving and was able to pull up the embankment and onto the road again. I did leave a lot of mud down the road as it came from between the dual wheels of the truck.

One day while driving through a village, I hit a dog with my truck and broke its back. I took my rifle and was going to put it out of its misery, but the locals would not let me do it. What I saw afterward, made me appreciate the humane way we treat animals in our country. They thought it great sport to jab at the dog with sticks, all the while laughing and having a great time.

It was during this loan out time to the Engineers that I got the worst scare of the war, no, of my life!

To get across a swampy area to where they were blasting and loading our trucks with rock and dirt, a causeway of heavy timbers had been built. During a break, as they did some blasting, I was held up on the causeway with my truck. During that time, I had to relieve myself and took my rifle and sauntered off into the bush. I leaned my

rifle against a tree and found a clear spot to do what I had to do. I unbuckled my belt, unbuttoned my trousers and had my pants down around my knees and as I started to squat, I froze in a half squat position looking dead center down the barrel of a rifle protruding from under a tree. I was looking down the bore of the rifle and saw a Japanese soldier with his helmet with a little red star on it and I knew I was dead. I froze momentarily and I alternately got extremely hot and then cold. The waves of heat and cold went over me about three times, expecting the rifle to explode. I came to my senses and quickly pulled up my trousers and ran over and grabbed my rifle and ran out to the side and came in on him. He was dead in a "U" shaped hole around the base of the tree. Fortunately for me, a front-line infantry man had gotten him before he could get me.

Another time, we were shelled by our own Navy and I dove for a slit trench ( an elongated hole in the ground that you could lie down in). Schwartz beat me to it and I landed on top of him. I said, "Schwartz, is that you shaking or is it me". He said, "It's me. I'm sure glad you said that, I thought I was the only one scared".

In our parlance, we had slit trenches to lie down in, fox holes that two men usually sat in back to back for protection, and straddle trenches to do what I was attempting to do when I looked down the barrel of a Japanese rifle. And, Oh Yes! We had garbage pits.

In the rear areas, we either dug 8x8x8 foot pits by hand or in some areas, large pits were dug by bulldozers where different outfits hauled their garbage to. At the larger ones, 52 gallon drums of diesel oil were supposed to be on hand to burn burnables such as wooden boxes, cardboard and anything we could burn to reduce size. Our kitchen crew would cut out both ends of cans and flatten them with a mallet.

One day, I had the garbage detail and proceeded to the dump with my load. I had quite a few burnables and tried to find some diesel to get the fire going. All the drums were empty, so I took a 5 gallon can of 100 Octane gas from my truck (we always carried two of them) and I dumped the whole 5 gallons on the trash in the pit. I stood back a ways from the edge of the pit and struck a gopher match (gopher matches are book matches. When you light one and it goes out, you



**GO FER another) and tossed it, but it went out before it got there. I moved a little closer and tossed another match. No luck, so I moved a little closer, still no fire. I moved closer still and struck a match and tossed it and when that 100 octane gas in the warm tropics ignited, the flame shot up over the edge of the pit and sent me reeling backward. While I was trying to set the stuff afire, the gas was dripping down through the garbage and under the flattened cans and I don't know how high some of them went, but it was spectacular. I was fortunate that only my hair and eyebrows were singed. I learned something that day about handling gasoline carelessly.**

**Another fellow and I were walking in the jungle one day, when we spotted a very large snake in a tree. We both shot at it and it fell to the ground. I pulled it, by the tail, back to our bivouac area and some of the guys strung it up on a pole. We had measured it at 11 ft. in length. Nobody knew what kind it was, not even the natives. I told this story to my niece some time ago, and she suggested I look for pictures of it on the web. The only thing that fit the description was a King Cobra, but they are not indigenous to the Philippines. It was suggested that it could have come in from another land on a shipment when it was small.**

**Later, I was walking through the jungle with a young native when he tapped me on the shoulder and motioned for me to be quiet. He slowly slipped my rifle from my shoulder and took aim into a tree, I thought, "SNIPER", but when he pulled the trigger, a large lizard fell from the tree. He handed my rifle back to me and picked up the creature and threw it over his shoulder. I asked, "What are you going to do with that thing"? He said, "Eat it! You eat chicken, we eat lizard". When we arrived at his place, he cut the head off and I took it back to camp and told the men that it was a snake head. It looked very much like one, but when I tried to tell them it was not a snake, they wouldn't believe me.**

**One morning they asked for volunteers to haul water to a company of black soldiers. I was the only one that volunteered. I picked up a truck load of 5 gallon cans, filled with water, from the water distillation unit and proceeded with my task. When I arrived at the delivery point, I asked where they wanted the water offloaded. I was told to take it to the mess haul. In the middle of the jungle, in the**

midst of the war, they had carved out of nothing, tables and benches. They had a large tent and a very good set-up, a regular mess hall.

They sent some men to help unload and as we were doing our job, the mess sergeant came out to the truck and asked if I liked pineapple upside down cake. I had never heard of pineapple upside down cake before, but the word "cake" sounded good, so I said, "I sure do". He then told me to come into the mess hall when we were finished. He seated me at a table and put a plate with a very large piece of cake in front of me. Before I finished it, he put another large piece on my plate. I left feeling like I had slightly over eaten, but it was goood. I believe that you can guess who hauled water to them from then on.

Okinawa was a bloody campaign, but I had more close calls on Leyte than I did on Okinawa.

When a shell fell fairly near, my truck was struck by shrapnel on the frame behind the left front wheel. I was standing beside the truck and got a very small piece in my left elbow. I doctored it myself and put a patch over it. A few days after, as the convoy stopped, I was having such terrific pain in my left chest that I could hardly move. When the convoy moved on, I could do nothing but collapse against the steering wheel. A sergeant and another driver came to see what was wrong. I managed to say, "My heart". They pulled me from the truck and took me to the medics. The doctor pulled the patch from my arm and stuck it under my nose and said, "Gangrene, another day and you might have lost your life or at the very least, your arm". He told the sergeant that I was off duty for a week. The sergeant said, "We can't spare him", and the doctor re-iterated, "He is off duty for one week"!

They were going to put me in for a purple heart. But because another man in my outfit had taken a similar wound on his back and had been recommended for a purple heart and had been razzed by the crew so much that all I could think of was, I don't want that razzing and asked them not to proceed with the recommendation. Mistake! When the war ended that would have given me enough points to be one of the first to be sent home. Also, now that the years have crept up on me, I would be about two levels higher in the VA medical system.

**I tried to get my records to see if I could get the Medal, but was informed that my records had been burned in a fire.**

## **OKINAWA**

**Sometime in March, 1945, we loaded onto ships again and headed for Okinawa. Landing day was the first of April, Easter Sunday. Probably because of the eventful landing on Leyte, they held the support troops until the 2nd, on Monday. The landing was nothing like Leyte and we could have gone ashore right away with no problem. Our troops did not come onto the Japanese main force for about a week. They were dug-in and in caves near the south end of the Island. With the Kamikazis hitting our ships, I would have felt much safer had we gone in on the first day.**

**As I said before, I do not recall dates or the sequence of events.**

**As a Quartermaster Company truck driver, I had the opportunity to confiscate supplies. I would take the large cans of fruit cocktail, peaches and pears and put them in my tool box, behind the seat and wherever I could find a place to stash them.**

**Once in awhile I was assigned the job, along with others, to drive up near the front lines to haul out the spent troops. As soon as we got beyond the range of enemy artillery fire, I would stop the truck and dig out my stash of canned fruit and toss them into the back of the truck.**

**Those men had been on the front lines for around 30 days, as I remember and had not had an opportunity to even wash their hands, let alone bathe. They would cut the cans open with bayonets and with bare hands, grab the fruit and devour it.**

**I did not steal the fruit, but redirected it to where most needed.**

**I remember the rain and MUD, MUD, MUD! I saw enough mud to last a life-time.**

After we had been on the Island awhile, the rains set in. Trying to move a truck around in that stuff was no easy task. Many times we had to winch our way through to get anywhere. Sometimes, bulldozers were attempting to help, but they were bogging down too.

Having learned from my father a few things about camping, I would pick a slight rise in the ground or a low mound to dig in. My buddy, Hogan and I dug in in one area where we were going to be for some time. A hole large enough to place two folding army cots side-by-side with a little leg room between. We fastened our two shelter halves together and placed our "Pup Tent" over the hole and trenched around it so when it did rain, we remained dry and cozy. On the other hand, some of the men placed there holes in low areas and in ditches so when it rained, they were washed out. Some holes filling to the top with muddy rain water.

Shortly after we bivouaced in this area, an artillery outfit moved in behind us and started firing over our heads. The enemy did not like that too well and started firing back at them. The problem was, the shells were falling a little short and into our area.

We were pinned down for a few days and nights and during that time I learned to whistle like the sound of a shell coming in. One day during a lull in the shelling, we emerged from our diggings. I don't remember where we were going, but four of us were walking single file through an area that had been shelled and was pock marked with shell holes. We had had much rain and the holes had filled with water. I was last in line and without thinking, let out a whistle like a shell coming in. Suddenly the man ahead of me jumped into a shell hole filled with muddy water up to his neck and started screaming for us to take cover. I did not realize that my whistle was the cause of this until, as we pulled him out of the hole, he said, "didn't you guys hear that shell come in? It must have been a dud".

It dawned on me that I was at fault and with this big Polish guy standing there soaking wet, I was not about to tell him or anyone else that I had whistled.

I felt that I and Whitehead, from Joplin, Missouri, were the two

best drivers in the company. We could get through mud and whatever when others could not. As a result, we were occasionally called on for a special assignment. One day, I was sent with a sergeant from headquarters to find a cave near the front lines that had Japanese radio equipment in it. We were to bring the equipment back with us for evaluation, I suppose.

We pulled into an area and got out of the truck. We walked up behind some men that were lying on the ground peering around some large rocks. The sergeant asked one of the men how far we were from the front lines. The guy looked around at us and said, "You're in it fella, you're in it"! About that time, a bullet snapped over my right shoulder and the sergeant swore it went over his left shoulder. Anyhow, we hit the ground fast and crawled back to the truck and got out of there. We never did find the cave with the radio equipment, but did get back with ourselves and the truck intact.

We were in a gas dump on the island with hundreds of drums of gasoline when some Kamikazis came in. When that happens, every gun on every ship is firing at it. I think one sailor on one of the ships wanted to see how large an explosion he could cause. He was not shooting up at the enemy planes, but had his 20mm anti-aircraft gun trained on that gas dump. I don't know what the other men did, but I sure know what I did, and it wasn't too smart a move. I bailed into my truck and took off down hill and before I realized it, I was in a marked mine field. I skidded to a halt and jumped out and laid down in a ditch. When it was over, I cautiously stepped back to my truck and backed out in the tracks I had made going into the minefield.

I later saw that had the dump blown up, flaming gasoline would have come down the ditch I was in and that could have caused me not to write this story.

We had many duties to perform and one day a convoy of trucks was sent to the beach to offload some supplies. While on the ship, I struck up a conversation with with a sailor. I told him that I had watched the Kamikazis hit those ships and I had thanked God many times that I was on the Island rather than one of these ships.

**His response was, "I have stood on the deck of this ship seeing the bombing and shelling that was hitting the Island, and I thanked God many times that I was on this ship rather than that Island".**

**I guess it's where you are standing when you are looking that makes the difference.**

**I got around the Island quite a bit. In my travels I picked a pair of Japanese style sandals as a souvenir and had them on the seat of my truck as I backed onto an LST to haul supplies. A sailor saw them and offered me ten dollars for them. Having no use for money over there, I declined his offer. Another sailor stepped up on my runningboard and asked what I would take for them. I told him they were not for sale. Then he asked me, "What can you think of right now that you would most like to have"? I thought for a moment and said, "A fresh loaf of bread". He left without a word and soon returned with three loaves of fresh bread. He claimed the sandals and I was satisfied.**

**But the first sailor was not. He gave me a bad time and asked why I had not told him what I wanted. The fact is, they were not for sale, but three loaves of fresh bread was a great price for them.**

**I believe it was an infantry outfit of the 27th Infantry Division that was hiking up a hill in the mud on Okinawa. As a truck driver, I with others were grinding our way slowly past them when a Lieutenant stepped up on my running board. I had a field jacket hanging on my gun rack to the left side of my seat and it being a cold wet day, he offered to buy my jacket from me. My first thought was, "I do not deal in black market", and refused him.**

**A little farther on, I saw a skinny little G.I., shivering in the cold. I eased over near him and handed him the jacket. In a moment, I had a very angry Lieutenant on my truck again and chewing me, but good.**

**Had he asked for the jacket and not offered money, I would have given it to him.**

**I want to say up front that the scrapes we got into were nothing compared to what the front line infantry man went through.**

**We always tried to get back to our bivouac area before dark and spend the night "dug in".**

**One day, as dusk was coming on, we (A convoy of trucks and drivers) were going through the rubble called Naha. As we drove along a road leading out of town, we came upon a Marine outfit with their machine guns rat-tat-tatting and tracers going across the road in front of us. As each truck approached a gunner, he would stop firing until we got past, and start firing again until the next truck came along. We saw tracer bullets about six or eight inches above the road and, great credit to the Marines, not a single truck was hit.**

**I have often thought that the Marine guys must have turned the air blue that night with the language they may have used toward us.**

**Driving a truck during the Leyte and Okinawa campaigns was the best possible job I could have had. As a driver, I had my good days and I had some bad.**

**They had set up a tent as a portable kitchen at the beach on Okinawa. We were preparing to load some ships to move part of our outfit back to the Philippines. The beach was lined with LST's and we had parked our trucks to "chow down".**

**Our mess sergeant and cooks were nice guys, but I have never known anyone that could take a few cans of perfectly good "C" ration, mix them together, and make the most awful tasting food I have ever encountered.**

**A buddy and I decided to go onto one of the LST's to see if we could find some better chow. We had just gotten onto the upper deck when we realized the ship was backing off the beach. We started hollering, "Let us off of here, let us off". An officer calmed us down and explained they had a storm warning and had to get off the beach to ride it out at sea.**

**You may have heard of the typhoon that hit that area in June or July of 1945. Well, that was it. I upchucked until I had the dry heaves for three days. When they finally beached in the same place we had**

left, I was one sick dude. The men that had ridden it out on the Island had a good laugh as I had turned green from seasickness.

I knew right then that I was a better truck driver for the army than I would have ever been anything for the navy.

## **BACK TO THE PHILIPPINES**

In July 1945, part of the 96th Infantry Division embarked from Okinawa on some LST's for the Philippines to rest up and prepare for the invasion of Japan. Being with the 96th Quartermaster Company, my truck and I were in that group.

On July 24, 1945 as we were between Formosa (Taiwan) and the Philippines, the convoy was attacked by enemy submarines. As I was standing on the deck of the LST, I looked back and saw a destroyer escort moving rapidly forward. I looked forward to see what they were after and when I looked back, I saw a column of smoke , flame and debris about 400 hundred feet in the air where that ship had been. They were rammed by a submarine with the loss of the ship and about 118 men. A couple of smaller vessels picked up survivors and deposited about 55 of them on LST 739, the ship I was on.

Of the men that we had aboard, two of them were buried at sea the next day and many of them were wounded. They used the galley as an operating room and I was posted at one entry to keep unnecessary people out. I saw one man with fingers severed at the hand and watched them treat the man. One fellow lost a leg and later on deck, he was joking with us and said something like, "I got my ticket home". I heard him tell a man, "Scratch my toe, it's itching".

He was in good spirits and I am sure he did fine after being released from the service.

A story that I heard but cannot verify, a sailor had his lungs burned in the explosion of his ship. I understand that he had the same thing happen to him before and had lost all will to live. He was sure they would patch him up and put him on another ship. He didn't look forward to that and, supposedly, lost his will to live. I'm not sure if



there is a basis for this story, rumors have a tendency to fly hot and heavy.

My hat is off to the navy and particularly to the men of the USS Underhill. Thank You!

We dropped the men of the USS Underhill off at Leyte Island, I believe. We then proceeded on to Mindoro Island in the Philippines. This was to be a time of rest and preparation for the invasion of Japan in November. While on the Island, someone came up with the idea that the 96th Infantry Division should have a pin-up girl. It was a lot of fun and there was a lot of campaigning for different young Ladies. Actress Yvonne DeCarlo was coming on strong until a truck with a band on it and campaign signs hanging from it made the rounds. They were pushing for Marjorie Main, one of the stars of the movie, "The Egg And I". The slogan was, " A ROUGH WOMAN FOR A ROUGH OUTFIT". She won overwhelmingly.

While on Mindoro, we got the news of the dropping of the atomic bomb. We knew then that the end of the war was near, but the reaction was quiet contemplation.

When the war finally ended, we heard of other outfits going crazy over the news, but I did not see that. It seemed to me as a quiet relief.

"Mail Call"! I did not receive a lot of mail from my family when I was in the service. Some men hardly went to mail call at all because they expected very little and got very little. That could have been true for me except for an incident that happened before we went abroad.

On a convoy run in Oregon before freeways, I had an accident that could have been fatal. I went into a curve too fast while approaching a narrow bridge. I was in the wrong lane and had come up on the truck ahead of me and slightly overtook it. The front of my truck was beside the trailer of the truck ahead of me when I saw a very large semi truck and trailer coming headlong at me with smoke coming from the tires as it skidded to try to keep from hitting me head on. I locked my brakes and as the truck ahead moved forward, I skidded across behind his trailer and hit the curb of the bridge railing

with my right duals. At that moment, the semi shot past me and I bounced back to the left and hit the side of his truck and trailer. I got knocked around a bit but no injury. After taking care of accident reports and exchanging information with the semi driver, we drove on a ways and stopped at a roadside inn to get a cup of coffee and let the nerves settle down a bit.

I sat at the counter beside a young lady and after getting somewhat acquainted, we exchanged addresses to write to each other. I never saw the girl again, but we did write and thanks to this young woman and her mother, they wrote often and sent boxes of cookies, fruitcakes and many treats while I was overseas.

I don't know how many times I heard this when something came for me, "HEY, LONG GOT ANOTHER PACKAGE"! Usually a few of the guys joined me as I opened the package. I would take some for myself and then it seemed like a dozen hands diving in to finish it off.

I do not remember the girls first name and it seems like her last name was either Goodyear or Goodrich. Anyhow I associated her name with a tire company. If she ever reads this, I hope she will undestand how much she and her mother did for me during those many months.

## **HEADING HOME**

After the war was over, I was shipped with quite a number of other men, to Mindanao to join the 31st Infantry Division. (The Dixie Division) to await shipping home. We sat on that Island for nearly a month before our transport finally arrived. To keep us occupied, we did close order drill, exercises, policing the area (picking up cigarette butts and other trash) and whatever they could think of. When we could, we sat on the beach watching the horizen for a ship to appear. It was a long month.

Finally our transportation arrived and we were off for the good old USA. It took about a week of being crowded like sardines in that ship and we finally arrived at Los Angeles. We debarked and were fed a steak dinner, the toughest steak I had ever encountered.

**I was soon put on another ship and sent north to Tacoma Washington. We debarked and loaded onto trucks for transport to Fort Lewis, Washington. At that point, I was only about 50 miles from home and it was Christmas Eve. I did not think I would make it home for Christmas, but the office crew pushed us through very rapidly and I arrived home unexpectedly in the afternoon of Christmas Day 1945. The best Christmas present I could possibly have received.**

**I mentioned earlier that my folks had sold the dairy farm and went to work in the shipyards at Houghton, near Kirkland Washington and that is where I found home.**

**One week after I was discharged, New Years day 1946, I walked into "Walts Bakery and Fountain", in Kirkland and there behind the counter was the most beautiful young lady I had ever seen.**

**I was not looking for a wife and thought that I would never get married, but I thought, "If I ever do, I want a dark haired girl, shorter than I am that does not smoke or drink. I would like to have two children, a boy first and then a girl.**

**Back to the the beautiful young lady. The moment I saw her, I knew she was my wife. Within an hour, I had pointed her out to one of my brothers, and a friend, and told them that I was going to marry that girl. I didn't know her name yet. We dated and nine days after we first met, I asked her to marry me. She looked at me incredulously and said, "I don't even know you". We married on April 2nd, 1946 and will celebrate our 60th wedding anniversary on April 2nd, 2006.**

**Remember, I said That I wanted a dark haired girl, Etc., Etc.. Well, I got a dark haired girl, shorter than I am, that did not smoke or drink and we had two children, a boy first and then a girl. David came along nearly seven years after we married and Cathy came along about five and one half years later.**

**I am probably one of the most contented married persons alive. She was not only a very attractive young lady, but she is a very pleasant person with a sweet demeanor. Never demanding, and easy to please. I try to buy things for her and she insists that she does not**

**need anything. I did not think I could love her any more than I did when we first met, but I do. She has grown on me.**

**We are getting up in years and will soon depart this world. It will be a great loss to whichever one remains, But we know where we are going and have the assurance that we will see each other again.**