

excellent. That afternoon I met "Red" and we tried to go bowling but the alley was closed so we settled for a peaceful rest in a park. In the evening Jim and I were back at the U.S.O. and we have never played so many games of ping-pong as we did that night. After leaving the U.S.O. Jim and I were walking down the street when a car pulled up and some of the girls, who had been at the dance, asked us if we wanted to ride around and see some of the city. Naturally we accepted. They dropped us off at the Henderson's where we had been invited to spend the night. In the morning we had breakfast, said, "Good-bye" and went back to the swimming pool. After a short swim we did a little shopping and took the 1400 bus back to camp.

While in Raleigh I weighed myself - I had gained fifteen pounds since joining the army but, at the same time, have lost a couple of inches around my waist.

Late in July I began to think how nice it would be to have my own radio in camp and mentioned the desire in letters to home, but did not actually ask Mom or Dad to send it. The radio was a portable, such as portables were at that time, and the batteries were large, heavy and expensive. During wartime the batteries were usually unavailable so I asked that a bottle of Valentine Hair Tonic be placed in the battery compartment instead of a battery. Anything to help me look beautiful!

Meanwhile, back at camp, I had another jeep driving session over an obstacle course. This course had mud holes to drive through, ditches to cross, sand to plow through, logs to dodge, trees to thread between and water to drive through. They also tried to teach me how to double-clutch a 2 1/2 ton truck - they must have failed that mission because I never became a truck driver.

The battalion just got back from a seven mile "conditioning march" but I was a road guide and only covered about two miles. My job was to stand at an intersection and direct portions of the battalion as they arrived at this point. I hardly worked up a sweat.

In the latter part of July we got a new battery commander by the name of Lt. Vogel who replaced Lt. Harding. In my opinion I felt that Lt. Vogel was too strict right from day one, rather self centered and therefore not very well liked. I noted that the other officers only associated with him while on duty or for official business and appeared to avoid him on other occasions. Early in August an incident occurred when, for a just reason, Vogel, now Cpt. Vogel, busted a corporal. Because of this action a second corporal, Stanfill, turned his stripes in. The captain then marked the service record of both men as inefficient. Stanfill was one of the older men in the battery and did not want to go to jump school so he was shipped out to another outfit. After he is assigned to another outfit the poor record will make it difficult for him to earn any stripes again.

Sgt. Schneider and Cpt. Vogel had a run in on the 24th of August. While out in the field Sgt. Schneider had removed his shirt and Cpt. Vogel ordered him to put it back on. Schneider answered, "Yes sir" in no uncertain terms and put his shirt on. The following day Schneider was called into Vogel's office where the captain told him that he did not like Schneider or any of the other non-coms. Schneider invited Vogel to remove his bars and step outside. With that Vogel busted him, put him under arrest and now Schneider is in the guardhouse. All of C battery is in a bad mood because of the incident. In a test, given on the howitzer the following day, Lt. Payne added one final question which read, "Who is the most chicken-shit officer in the battery?". There was no contest, Vogel won the honor hands down. In contrast when Lt. Harding left the battery he complimented the non-coms by saying that they were the best he had ever worked with.

During the first week of August we went to Fort Bragg to fire our howitzers for the first time. I was the number two man on a gun crew and ended up with a sore hand. The

number two man loads the eighteen pound, 75mm shell into the breach then doubles up his fist and slams the shell home. The breach was then closed, the shell fired, then the breach was opened by other crew members and I had to grab the shell casing and toss it back and out of the way. It was hard, fast work and my right hand was pretty sore after loading and removing the shells even though we fired only ten rounds, plus several hours spent before hand doing dry runs. Each shell cost \$18.75, or the price of one war bond. When the gun was fired it jumped into the air about six inches, the concussion snaps your head and the sound makes your ears ring.

Life on the artillery range was not always easy. There was one day when we started hiking toward Fort Bragg but only got twelve miles down the road before the trucks came along and picked us up. I suppose I should be thankful for the ride though, without it we would have had a forty mile hike. In spite of the lift it was after dark when we arrived at Fort Bragg and we had to pitch our tents in the dark. That in itself was a chore, but to make matters worse Ping and I chose a very poor location; we found this out when we tried to sleep, the tent had a ditch running through it. To make the night more miserable a battery of 155mm rifles opened up behind us at about midnight and those big shells made a tremendous noise as they roared overhead.

When morning came after that long and uncomfortable night Ping and I went up to the top of a hill to watch the shells land and explode. My thought was that it was much better to be on the firing end than on the receiving end.

This is getting a little ahead of the story but as the months passed and fall came we still made trips to the range and things only got worse for me. As a private I was always the one who had to go for the wood for the bonfire. The higher ranks enjoyed the warmth of the fire while I gathered still more wood. You would think that I was the only private in C battery.

Back to August. By the second week of August I had decided against asking that my radio be sent, at least until after we got back from jump school, which would be late in September.

On the 13th of August we went out to the rifle range to fire for record. I did not do very well although I qualified and earned a marksman medal. Only about half of the battery qualified, that is shot a score of 135, and there was only one who earned an expert medal. Those who did not qualify had to go back again (and maybe more than once) until they did qualify. Shooting, and trying to qualify, was much better than "pulling targets" where you had to be in a pit below and ahead of the target. When someone shoots at the target it is your job to mark where his round hit. This was done by holding a three or four inch disk, attached to a stick, over the hole in the target so the shooter could see, and adjust for, his next shot. If there was a complete miss you waved a red flag, known as "Maggie's drawers" to indicate such. After each person fires his required number of rounds in the three required positions - prone, sitting and standing - the target was lowered and patches pasted over the holes. This was to prevent any mix-up between the shots of different men. To say the least it was very hard work and under poor conditions.

The term "lunch" was an insult. It consisted of a sandwich made early that morning, had dried out and was curled up by lunch time. To go with the stale sandwich we were allowed one canteen of water, a quart which had to last us the whole day - a day spent in the hot sun. After one of the days on the range we were given the choice of riding back to the battery area or marching. As usual marching meant double-timing. Those who chose to march, of which I was one, were offered a week-end pass when we reached the battery area. If I recall correctly it was after marching back (on the double) that I went into the

latrine and drank over a gallon of water within five minutes. Four times I filled my canteen and then a little more and even the warm tap water tasted good!

During August we were issued our jump helmet liner, which looked like the regular G.I. helmet liner except that it had a chin saddle to secure it during a jump.

With tongue in cheek I wrote to Dad and complained about the nomenclature used in the army to identify any and everything. As an example I used a rain whistle and, by sketching a cross section of it, I identified, named and assigned a number to each part.

At the same time I both praised and criticized our M1-A1 carbine. I did like the semi-automatic capability of the gun but did not like the low fire power or the sights. It was accurate up to about 200 yards but not very good beyond that range. The sights could not be adjusted for the 150 and 300 yard range and there was no way to adjust for the wind. It was no match for the German .31 caliber Mouser or our .30 caliber Garand. In its favor was the light weight and folding stock which made it easy to jump with and carry. Late in the war the carbine was to come with a larger clip - thirty rather than fifteen shells and a fully automatic feature, but this was only on the solid stock model.

My next assignment was with the instrument section. A rather easy job when it came to moving because you did not have to pull the howitzer. In this capacity I ran surveys and sat by a drafting board where I plotted the positions of the gun and target. This was done on an overlay on a map, then I decided the settings for the gun to get the desired effect. The first round could be anywhere but short just so you could see the impact. A short round spelled danger for your own troops so you always made sure that it was long enough. This served as a base round or marker and adjustments were made from that point. Commands were then telephoned or radioed back to the gun crew.

Tumbling was an important part of our training and as a part of this training we learned how to do the high fall. To do it you place your right foot about a foot ahead of your left one, then bring your arms, with your elbows straight and your hands locked together, up to the right of your head. Now, at the same time, whip your hands down and kick your feet up and you flip over without touching the ground and land on your left side. Better than fifty years later I am still trying to evaluate just how valuable this maneuver has been in civilian life.

There was another side to military life, that of making up new words to popular songs of the day so as to adapt them to the military. There was an outstanding example in the paratroops and that was "The Paratroopers' Hymn" or as it is often called, "Blood Upon The Risers" which was sung to the tune of the "Battle Hymn Of The Republic" It must have been outstanding because it is still sung at paratrooper reunions. Another example was the song "Long Ago And Far Away" in which the words "----Chills run up and down my spine, Aladdin's lamp is mine----" became "-----Shells run up and down my spine, a Purple Heart is mine ---" Of course there were others with words not suitable for print here or anywhere else.

As August slipped by there was talk of going to Fort Benning for jump school and furloughs which would follow.

We had a chance to go swimming on August 27th but it was not much fun because the lake had turned muddy, so on the following day, when I had another chance to go swimming I decided against it. We had spent the morning out in the field tumbling and studying the aiming circle which by now was old stuff, heard over and over again, but the mud in the lake did not appeal to me. Those who stayed behind had a good time playing ball. Later in the evening I went to a movie with another fellow and when we returned to the battery area at about 2230 we found a pillow fight in progress. D battery, was going at it with nearly a hundred men but when Headquarters battery joined in D battery forgot the infighting.

joined forces and went after Headquarters. C battery pitched in to help D battery, members of A and B batteries joined in until nearly four hundred men were pounding away at each other. After about twenty minutes the Officer of the Guard, the guards and the M.P.s came upon the scene to break up the battle. They did not have to work very hard to stop the fight - about three seconds after the M.P.s arrived the area cleared as if by magic.

At one time during this period at Camp Mackall we were in formation out in Area A and I had a T-shirt on with paratrooper wings across the front and Lt. Roberts informed me that I was not to wear it until I had qualified. Naturally I took the message to heart and put the T-shirt away until after jump school.

On August 30th at 1500 hours we left Camp Mackall for jump school at Fort Benning, Georgia. We traveled by train, a real antique train of which the speed matched the appearance. The railroad cars looked like they were out of the 1860's and we figured that the termites had moved out in about 1903 to search for happier hunting grounds but we still rode in those cars. And the seats, if you could call them seats, looked like they had been woven from old, used straw brooms. What's more they felt like brick pikes with sticks in them. As for the speed of the train, it was on the slow side. It took us twenty-two hours to travel the four hundred miles from Rockingham, North Carolina to Fort Benning, Georgia.



## FORT BENNING, GEORGIA

Fort Benning was beautiful. The grass was green, well kept and the fort looked more like a city than a military installation. There was even a narrow gauge railroad running through Benning for delivering supplies, and as we got off the train, we could see some foreign looking locomotives on display.

We had about an hour to unpack our stuff and get organized, then we fell out at 1200. We then went down to the training area, past the 250 foot steel training towers from which trainees were being dropped, then we returned to our tents and finally, at 2100 hours we got something to eat.

The area in which our tents were located was a dry, dusty location known as the "Frying-pan". Our tents were squad tents, semi-permanent tents with a wood floor and walls of canvas and mosquito netting and a door or flap centered on one side. In case of rain canvas curtains could be rolled down to cover the netting but this cut off the ventilation. Each tent measured 16 X 16 feet, had a pyramid style canvas roof and there was room to sleep sixteen to twenty men in double bunks.

On September the first we started our training at Fort Benning. The first morning we had a class on the nomenclature of the parachute. We received a small book about the parachute which gave the name and location of each part - I could not help but wonder just what good it would do you to know the names of the parts if the parachute should fail to open and you were plunging toward the earth. That afternoon we went out to the mock-up towers and made a few jumps from the good, old mock-ups. Then we tried the suspended harness, the landing trainer and finally a mock-up of the C-47 plane.

While at parachute school we only had our bunk area and the only place we had to write letters was on our bunk, which made writing a long, drawn out chore. However, I saw my first amphibious jeep while there and mentioned in a letter home.

Two days later we were in full swing with our training. In the morning there was training on how to pack our chutes. That afternoon we went on the "Plumber's Nightmare", a maze of pipes which was well named. If there was one pipe in that muddle of pipes there were a million. They formed ladders, tunnels, runways and other unnamed configurations. To get through it you had to climb, twist, turn, squirm, squeeze and slide - guess that is where the nightmare comes in. We also learned to do the "Paratrooper's Shuffle" which was a the step used by the paratroops when moving toward the door of the plane when they make a mass jump.

In those days a long distance telephone call to home was a chore under normal conditions, but at jump school such a call was impossible since it took from five to twelve hours to get the call through. We simply did not have that much free time.

We went down to the towers on the morning of September fifth and had our first ride on the "buddy seat". This was from a two hundred fifty foot tower and a copy of a ride at the 1939 New York World Fair. Two of us sat in a seat, tandem fashion, and were hoisted to the top of the tower with a parachute above us which was held open by a ring it was attached to. When released the parachute, guided by guy wires, lowered us at a safe rate and when we hit the bottom coil springs softened our landing. I remember the view from the tower. The whole earth seemed to unfold as we were pulled up to the top and I likened it to being inside of a huge oatmeal bowl where the horizon covered the entire 360 degrees and seemed to curve up from the bottom in a gentle slope. The color was beautiful, much better than a Technicolor movie could offer, with grass so green and a neat pattern of streets and buildings spread out before you. Benning's towers were twice the height of those at the

World Fair and the ride at the fair cost thirty cents so our ride must have been worth at least sixty cents.

The following day we went on a ride similar to the "buddy seat" except that you were strapped into a parachute harness and rode alone. The chute was held open by the same type of ring and guided by wires but, in this case, you landed on your feet. What a fun ride that was!

We spent time learning how to control the parachute just after landing, when the wind could drag you along the ground, before you were able to free yourself from the harness. For this exercise they had a Ford chassis with a V-8 engine that drove an airplane propeller, thereby creating a strong ground wind. You had to lie on the ground in front of the propeller with a parachute on, then the instructor would rev the engine up, the wind would inflate the canopy and pull you along the ground. You were then ordered to collapse the canopy and stand up on your feet. This exercise was carried out on a normally dry, dusty field which proved to be uncomfortable for the instructors so they would water it down to control the dust. This would create a mud puddle where you were pulled along behind the chute and after chow you had to turn out in a clean set of fatigues. Not only did the changing take time but you had to wash you fatigues every night.

The classes about the parachute itself and parachute packing went on along with continued exercises in landing, tumbling and anything they could think of to occupy your time. While at Benning there was no mention of going to a movie or the P.X. in the letters written home because there just was not enough time, or energy, for those extra activities. It is doubtful that I could have stayed awake through a movie even if we had been able to go to one.

Normally parachute school would last four weeks and be divided into A Stage, B Stage and C and D Stages with A Stage used as physical training period used to toughen up those who had been in regular outfits before their transfer. In our case we skipped A Stage because we had been doing that type of training for three or four months before we got to Benning. We started with B Stage and went on to C Stage at the beginning of our second week which concentrated on training on the towers. The closest thing to a real jump was a ride from the free-fall tower. The chute, with a man in the harness, was attached to a ring and hoisted to the top of the tower. At the top the chute was released from the ring, it inflated with air and you got a ride down. On the way down you were ordered to, "Slip to the right" or "Slip to the left" by an instructor on the ground with a bull horn. Upon landing you were required to tumble, and if necessary, collapse your chute. Each tower had four arms at the top and if there was no wind all four arms were used. If there was a wind, up to fifteen miles per hour, only three men jumped and the arm on the up wind direction was not used. In the event that the ground wind was above fifteen miles per hour the towers were not used until the wind died down. The first drop of the day was always made by an officer to test the wind condition. In C Stage we almost lost one officer. He had been pulled up and released when the wind caught his chute and collapsed it. He managed to maneuver the shroud lines and open the chute. It was such a close call that many of us turned pale and asked ourselves why we were there and wondered if we really wanted to go through with the training. We did not go up on the towers that day.

Finally we completed our first and second weeks, B and C Stages, and were ready to jump. But first, there were some details to be taken care of, such as packing the chute that we would actually jump. For the first five jumps we packed our main chutes plus our reserve. The name of the game was to avoid opening the reserve because, if you did open it, you would have two chutes to pack that night. For the first jump we spent a great deal of time

and care in packing the chute but, as the number of jumps increased, less and less care went into packing process.

Packing a parachute was a big operation at Benning. Except for the first jump it really started in the field immediately after a jump when we had to pick up our parachute and bring it to the packing shed. The packing shed had an area where the apex of the chute was attached to a rope and pulley and pulled up to the ceiling to enable the jumper to shake out any debris. Any and everything came out - rabbits, field mice, grass, sticks and always grasshoppers. The parachute, after it had been shaken, was then taken to the packing room and laid out on a long table where the twisted lines and the canopy were untangled. After the lines and canopy were in order the packing process began. First the canopy was folded, according the book and by the numbers, in a plaited fashion. Then the lines had been folded back and forth and a rubber band was slipped over the end of each fold to hold the lines in place. The folded lines were laid across the canopy then the pack was folded over the canopy and lines and secured with a lace, much the same as a boot is laced up. The static line was then attached to the apex of the parachute by means of a string which was strong enough to pull the canopy out of the pack but would break away after you fell the length of the static line. After the parachute had been packed the final step was to sign the card - the operation was complete and the parachute ready to be jumped. It was to our personal advantage to do the packing quickly because the last few men to complete their packing got the detail of sweeping the packing shed floor. And it was a huge floor!

Unfortunately I did not write down many details about the five jumps made during D Stage. The reason probably was the lack of both time and energy. I did manage to send a postcard home after each jump to keep the family informed about the jumps and to let them know that I had not been hurt. After the fifth jump I did put some of my feelings down on paper that evening while they were fresh in my mind. There was a feeling of relief that it was all over and a sense of satisfaction concerning my accomplishment.

Our five qualifying jumps were made in one week starting on Monday, September the 26th and ending on Friday of the same week. The weather was cooperative with no heavy rain or ground wind over 15 miles per hour.

My first jump and my first airplane ride were one in the same thing and took place on September 13, 1943. We were up at 0530, had our breakfast then climbed aboard the huge, huge by the standards of those days, C-47 and took my place in the cabin. There were about twenty four jumpers who formed into two sticks; I was in the second stick. The plane climbed to 1200 feet and made its first pass over the drop zone. The first stick disappeared through the door and out into space and as the plane banked for the second pass I could see the chutes floating down. I would be jumping on the second pass in the number nine position. This gave me time to see the reaction of the first stick and to sweat the jump out a little longer.

Then the commands started, "Get ready" which alerted us that it was almost time to jump. Then, "Stand up" and the entire second stick stood up. Another command followed quickly, "Hook up" and each man snapped his static line on to the cable which ran the length of the cabin near the ceiling, and made sure the hook was closed and secure. Then the jump master shouted, "Sound off for equipment check". At that point the last man in the stick turned so his parachute could be seen by the second to last man. This man would visually check the pack of the last man and give him a tap on the shoulder to signal that everything was O.K. Then the second to last man, in this case the number eight man, would turn again, this time facing the front of the plane, so the last man could check his chute. The second to last man got double duty and had to check the number seven man's chute. From

there on the check the O.K. and the pat worked its way up to the number one man. There were no doors on the plane used for jumping. The C-47s were cargo planes with a large cargo door which had a personnel door within the large door. For jumps the personnel door was left on the ground. For this reason the jump master had to sound off loud enough to be heard over over the roar of the engines. Then we heard, "Stand in the door" and the first man took his position in the open door with the palms of his hands on the outside of the door opening. On the first jump when it came time to jump the jump master yelled, "Go" and gave the first man a slap on the butt - out he went. The rest of the stick then started the "paratrooper's shuffle" toward the door. One by one each man moved forward, the line became shorter and shorter, and soon it was my turn. I pivoted and stood in the door until I heard "Go" and felt the slap, which seemed to come simultaneously. Out I went with 1200 feet of only air between me and the ground. Everything happened so fast that I did not have time to think about what I was doing. Once clear of the plane I started counting, "One thousand, two thousand, three thousand". No sooner had I finished the count than I heard the sharp crack of the canopy as it opened above me. Even though the opening shock was rather severe it was welcome, as was the big, white canopy when it blossomed out. I started to float, rather than fall, toward the earth. I checked the canopy to see if there were any blown out or otherwise damaged panels; they were all there and in good condition, so I relaxed and enjoyed the ride down. I was impressed as to how quiet it was up there. You could talk to another jumper a hundred feet away in a normal tone of voice and he could easily hear you. At first everything looked so small but at that time I was still a 1000 feet above the ground. Even the airport which had been designated as our drop zone looked to be about the size of a postage stamp. At first the ground looked harmless but as it got closer I began to worry about the landing. The landing seemed quite normal but later in the evening one knee did not feel too good. Never the less, I considered it a good landing even though my knee was still sore the next day.

I did carry a small, cheap camera on my first jump which was against the law. Security was the reason, especially during the war. I had the camera up the sleeve of my uniform and had sewn the sleeve closed instead of depending on the button. After my parachute opened I ripped the stitches out, recovered the cameras and tried to take a pictures while still in the air. Then I dropped the camera down the neck of my uniform and made the landing. After all, I did not want to arrested and spend twenty years in jail as a spy. Unfortunately the film jammed and I accidentally opened the camera while trying to clear it which spoiled the film.

For some reason I recorded the number of the chute which I used for my first five jumps - it was TM-1 number 42-54591.

The second jump was also from 1200 feet but without the individual command to go from the jumpmaster. I landed like a feather but I could feel the knee which I had injured on the first jump. It was a real thrill to float down and be so detached from the earth.

In my opinion the third jump was the most difficult. By that time the whole procedure was fairly automatic so I did not have to worry about the technicalities. Instead I had time to wonder what I was doing jumping from airplanes and time to worry about what could go wrong. On this jump I could feel the static line break free, the folds in the canopy unravel and even see the suspension lines as the rubber bands flipped off the end of each fold. Then came the opening shock and after the shock I felt myself being tossed helplessly around in the air. Then the canopy inflated and I started my ride to earth.

Jump four was also from 1200 feet and by this time we were trying to see how fast the whole stick could get out of the plane. I landed pretty hard on one foot and it was sore for the rest of the day. During the first four of the five qualifying jumps you you did not



want report any knee or foot injuries for fear of being kicked out of jump school, so you lived with them.

Our fifth jump, the jump which earned our wings for us, was a night jump. We took off from Fort Benning, flew over the Chattahoochee River and jumped into Alabama. The jump was from 800 feet and in a very light rain. Jumping at night was different from jumping in daylight and I was surprised to find how well you can see in the dark. What was difficult was the ability to judge distances, especially to judge the height of an object. It was nearly impossible to determine whether a pole was a fence post or a telephone pole. Your sense of direction is not as keen in daylight either, you do not have the sun by which to orient yourself and at night the limit of vision is restricted. Upon landing in Alabama we were supposed to assemble in a nearby wooded area - I never did find the woods or the sergeant. A few of us joined together and finally found our way back.

I now had made five jumps and was considered a qualified jumper, as were the rest on the men in the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team, but we did not get our wings until a few days later.



## BACK AT CAMP MACKALL

We returned to Camp Mackall on September 19, 1943 and, during the first week after our return, we were ordered to turn in our leggings which had been replaced by the jump boots issued at Benning. From then on we wore our pants bloused over our boots, paratrooper style, even when in class A uniform. On the opposite side of the street which lead from our barracks to the supply room were the quarters of the 625th Glider Artillery. So, on the way to the supply room, we tossed our leggings into the 625th glider barracks to advertise that we were now paratroopers and would no longer be wearing leggings. This act resulted in everybody being restricted to the battery area for the week-end and the threat of a statement of charges for those who could not produce and turn in a pair of leggings - a threat that was never carried out.

Radio commentator Walter Winchell devoted part of his September 18th broadcast to the men of Camp Mackall and even mentioned the camp by name. The text of the commentary was far from flattering, he said that we worked harder and longer, had less recreation and had more A.W.O.L.s than any other camp in the United States.

We were awarded our wings on the 20th of September. My plan was to take the G.I. issued wings home on my next furlough and save them. It was almost a sin to polish or shine a pair of wings since this made them look new and fresh thereby leading people to think the wearer is a rookie. This is the last thing a paratrooper wants to be thought as. Much the same goes for the boots. The boots, of course, always wore a high shine but at the same time should have a well used look. To achieve this goal most of the fellows put alcohol or lighter fluid on their boots, then lit the fluid on fire, to produce a darker, older and a more used appearance.

The only bright part of the day was when we got our wings. It had started to rain before we got up in the morning and the rain was still coming down pretty hard as I wrote a letter home at 2130. I had a math class that evening and the rain continued throughout the night. The next two evenings I had two more math sessions so by now I was tired of both rain and math. It seems that the army was having a problem pumping their math into me but I guess it worked out all right - I was not dropped from the course.

I was still looking forward to getting my radio and to a furlough. While I waited the second battalion of the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment took a different approach to the furlough problem. When they did not get their furloughs when they thought they should the entire battalion went A.W.O.L. As soon as they left camp the commanding officer cut orders giving every man a furlough. This covered the commanding officer as well as the men. We were issued steel helmets on September 27th. At jump school we wore steel helmets but they were not our own. In fact we were the first complete outfit to make our qualifying jumps while wearing the regulation airborne helmet, some individuals had worn the helmets but not an entire unit. Those before us who did not wear the steel helmets wore standard leather football helmets.

On September 28th we went to Fort Bragg to fire our howitzers. The gun crews faced the threat of having to pull the howitzers by hand, about forty miles. I was fortunate, I only had to carry an aiming circle which, along with my personal things, made about a thirty-two pound load. As luck would have it we only had to walk a few miles before trucks came along and picked us up. The same was true of the return trip to Mackall.

At Bragg we bivouacked so it was difficult to write. It was at this time that I discovered why jeeps have flat hoods - it is so the hood can be used as a desk. This may not

be the true reason but the hoods do make excellent desks or tables while out in the field. At times they even served as an altar for Mass.

I closed the month by working K.P. until 2215 cleaning field stoves. It seemed as though I got gigged for not having my flags for a visual signaling class. You can bet your life that I will have them next time, and every time thereafter!

We were issued "clothes lines" on the first day of October. The "clothes lines" were thirty foot pieces of rope which looked like an ordinary clothes line but was about three times the diameter of the regular line. Its purpose was to be used to lower yourself to the ground if you should be unfortunate enough to land high in a tree. With this rope you could easily lower yourself down from a sixty foot tree by spilling out your reserve which is about thirty feet, sliding down it and tying your clothes line on to the reserve then sliding down it.

On October 1, 1943 I became \$50.00 richer each month - that was the first time we drew our jump pay.

On the first Sunday of October I tried to catch up on some rest and on a few letters. Most of the battery was in town and A.W.O.L. They had forged passes and that Sunday morning they were reported to be "In church".

Karl, Andersen, Ping and Fritz had returned from Fort Fisher where they spent several weeks taking anti-aircraft training with the .50 caliber machine-guns. They fired out over the ocean at targets towed by planes. Our guys did clash with the anti-aircraft men because the anti-aircraft men insisted on calling our men "Bloomer boys".

We still have Vogel as our commanding officer but there seems to be a change in his attitude. He may have been afraid that he would be replaced by Lt. Roberts or Lt. Cooper if things remained unchanged. With the morale as low as it was emotions were running too high and something had to change before it was too late.

Most of the men tried to follow college football when they could and listened to the games which were broadcast on the radio each Saturday during the college football season. On October 2nd I heard part of the Minnesota-Northwestern game but it started to fade out so we switched to the Notre Dame game. I did hear later that the Gophers had won. One particular week-end Lt. Cooper borrowed my camera to take to a local football game - if Vogel had asked I would have refused him.

In North Carolina radio stations gave the time in two forms, military and civilian, and a time check may sound like this, "2:30 P.M., E.W.T., 1430 hours. The civilian time was in Eastern War Time which was the same as daylight saving time except that it continued throughout the entire year rather than just during the summer months. Of course military time was on a twenty-four hour basis.

We took our A.B.C. tests. These tests are the Airborne Command tests and are similar to those taken at the end of a quarter in college. They are given to determine what you had learned, if anything, during basic training. As far as I know everyone passed.

We went to the movie "Phantom Of The Opera" for the second time. There was an argument in the barracks as to where the chandelier fell, on the audience or into the orchestra pit so two of us "volunteered" to go the second time to find out for sure.

I had planned to write home one Saturday night in October so packed up my stuff and headed for the service club in an attempt to avoid distractions or even an unexpected detail. But, again my plans went astray. Just as I began to write the letter the lights were turned off and they began to show the movie "Look Whose Laughing". I did not stay because it was a 16mm film which is usually of a poor quality and I had seen the movie in Minneapolis. I never did finish my letter writing that evening.

My sixth jump, the first after leaving jump school, was made at Mackall on Friday the sixth of October and most of the fellows, including myself, were air sick. Many were vomiting during the flight and the one and only bucket was not large enough to do the job. The situation was so bad that I was actually glad to jump when my turn came. It had been a forty minute ride to the airfield then we were in the air for twenty minutes before we were back over our own camp and the drop zone, which was nine and a half miles from our barracks. We jumped from 625 feet and marched the 9 1/2 miles to our "objective". The objective was filled with booby traps and the plan was to crawl through the "mine field" without tripping the mines, but again the plan failed. As we approached the "mine field" and with only about two hundred to go, we saw a dog run through the field and set off most of the booby traps. This made it easy for us.

This was the first time we had jumped with full equipment and it went well except that I ended up with a stiff neck from the helmet. The helmet must not have been tight enough because, at the time of the opening shock, the three pound helmet jarred my neck. The landing was very soft. I was oscillating and at the very top of a forward swing, while in a nearly parallel position with the ground and I landed flat on my back rather than on my feet. It was the softest landing I ever made.

This was the jump on which Ernie Rutherford, the fellow who slept above me at Benning, nearly met his doom. Ernie's chute did not open fully, it was a streamer, so he pulled his reserve which opened so late, that it was still breathing. That is, when a parachute first opens, it inflates with air then partially collapses, then fills again until the pressure finally keeps the canopy fully inflated. Ernie's chute was still "breathing" when he hit the ground. The impact was hard enough to cause him to sink into the soft earth to a depth just above his ankles. It shook him up but he suffered no serious injuries. On this jump Ernie and I had both jumped in the same stick.

Only on one occasion did I make more than one jump on the same day, and this was the day. Both jumps were made in daylight and I did not make any comments about the seventh jump at the time but, to this day, I can remember the ease with which the second jump was made. It was as easy as walking out of the door of the barracks.

On the second jump I wrote about watching a steel helmet pass me on the way down. As the helmet headed toward the ground I felt sorry for the G.I. who had lost it. I guess it was the thought of the three dollar statement of charges he would have to pay for the missing helmet. When I landed I felt even sorrier, for it was then that I realized that it was my helmet. It must have been my lucky day though, the helmet had landed on the canopy of the man who had jumped just ahead of me and he returned it soon after we landed. I stopped writing the letter just after describing the jumps because we were out in the field and in a four-man tent, trying to use a candle for light but the wind was so strong that it was difficult to keep the candle burning. This was in spite of the fact that we had the end flaps buttoned up.

Here is one of the exercises we did one morning in October. While flat on our backs, with our legs extended and our arms straight out to the sides, we then balanced our right foot on the toes of the left foot, then by the numbers blinked our eyes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 1, 2, 3, 4. Army life can be really tough at times.

On the second Tuesday of October I was trying to write a letter at the service club but had difficulty because of the surrounding activity. Behind me someone was playing some good records, across the room there were two fast games of ping-pong going on and, to top it off, there was a girl who reminded me of Ginny. All of these things combined to make it difficult to concentrate on letter writing.

It was in October that I made my first trip to town except for the three day pass that I had received for working on the bridge last July. I don't remember which town I went to but it was either Southern Pines or Rockingham. Southern Pines was by far the largest and most interesting. The railroad tracks cut right through town on a slice of land almost a block wide. They separated the main street into two one way streets with the tracks between them. The railroad station was located between the tracks which placed it in the center of town. It was a pretty little town with more places to shop than Rockingham. Rockingham had a bowling alley with about four lanes but the lanes looked like waves on a lake. The main reason for going to either town was to shop and shoe dye topped my list.

We had been out on a bivouac and were supposed to make a twenty-five mile hike back to camp but we were unexpectedly saved by an unknown sergeant in the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment. We were to honor him at a formation at Camp Mackall because, while overseas, he had invented a table which could be set up in the field and used to pack parachutes on. This was a canvas top table with light-weight metal legs which could be set up much the same as a tent, using ropes and pegs as tie-downs. Its advantage was that it was light, could be easily be moved, could be set up quickly and was easy to store.

Some of the guys decided to test the guards one night while we were out in the field so they turned into unofficial commandos and stole the breech block from one of the howitzers. The ninety pound breech block was stored in the tent of one of the culprits, then stolen by another fellow - all this made for a complicated night.

For some reason there was a period of three weeks, between October 17th and November 5th, during which there were no letters or explanation as to the long silence. Some letters may have been lost but it was not normal that I would have gone so long without writing or explaining such a delay.

On November the 6th we were on duty until 2200 so had no time to write that day. The following day we left in the early afternoon to go out in the field.

By November 7th I had been counting the days until I got a furlough, hopeful of getting one in the next week or two. But it was not to be - my furlough had been moved up to the thirteenth. This was welcome, but not good news to me, since it meant I would have to be back at Mackall on Thanksgiving Day. I had been looking forward to spending it at home. Not all furloughs were the same length of time. Consideration was given for travel time, therefore those who lived the farthest from Mackall were given the greatest amount of time.

At this time we got some replacements from the P.T.R. (Parachute Training Regiment) and as soon as they reported to C battery they were sorry. Their first day was a day when anybody not on duty could have had a pass but the battery was restricted to the area instead. The reason was that a firing section did not fall out fast enough for a formation and had to make a second, and faster, attempt. On the second attempt the men "forgot" to open the screen doors as they went out and as a result were restricted. Since the restriction was on the whole battery it included the new guys. The barrack's doors were double doors at each end of the barracks with screen doors outside of the regular doors. At the time the regular doors were open but when the guys had to fall out for the second time they failed to open the screen doors and ran right through them. After several practice attempts they were excused but not without punishment - all were restricted.

Our last bivouac was a miserable mess. We got up Monday morning, November the 8th at 0100 and pulled out at 0200. They trucked us to Fort Bragg where we laid out our disassembled howitzers, then we found and assembled them in the dark and started off down the road. When the second battalion of the 517th called for fire support we had to pull



off the road and dig in, then simulate a firing problem. During this time the survey section, which included me, ran a survey from the gun position to the forward observation post, a distance of two miles. To make matters more miserable it was raining, we were cold and wet and did not have any dry clothes to change into, so we pitched a masterpiece of a four-man tent. It would seem as if I would at last be dry, with such a tent, but not so, one quarter of the tent leaked - my quarter. As a result I only got wetter. Then I went on guard duty, with the rain still coming down, so by time my tour was over I was soaked. The only redeeming feature of the night was the feast we had of K-rations and the last can of Spam I had which had been sent from home. The Spam had arrived before I left for Benning but the key had been lost so I had to wait until I came upon another key to open the can. This was the time, with a key salvaged from another can, I opened the Spam and had a treat. The army's K-ration is all right if you are really hungry but ordinarily I would not wish them on my worse enemy. Tuesday morning we ran another survey, then folded up and went back to the barracks.

We had two field rations of note, the K-ration and the C-ration. The K-ration was especially designed for the paratroops and provided high energy value in a small package. This ration did not offer much variety but they were only supposed to be used from one to three days after a jump, then we should be on regular rations. This was not always the case and often they were used for extended periods as emergency rations. There was a breakfast package with a fruit bar, Nescafe (an instant coffee), crackers and a can of ham and cheese. Packed in the same box was a small package of toilet paper and a package of four cigarettes, usually some off brand such as Wings. There was also a lunch and dinner version which contained a can of potted meat or cheese, crackers, lemonade powder, sugar, a chocolate bar and chewing gum. The lemonade must have been sweetened with saccharin because the last swallow left a bitter aftertaste. To avoid the bitterness we usually drank the canteen cupful in one long, interrupted drink in order to limit the number of "last swallows". The chocolate bar was small but with high energy value, however by the time we opened the package the bar had already turned to a white color. The chocolate could withstand fairly high temperatures before it melted which made it ideal for field rations.

The C-rations came in ten different varieties. Each meal was packaged in a can, O.D. color and the can was packaged in an O.D. color box. The selections were chicken and vegetables, frankfurts and beans, meat and noodles, pork and beans, meat and rice, vegetable stew and meat and spaghetti. Also provided was cereal, crackers, jam, powdered drinks and sugar. The rations could be eaten either hot or cold but they always tasted better when hot. One way to heat the rations was to leave them in the can and place the can on a hot or running engine of a jeep or truck then, when heated, try to figure a way to open the hot can without burning your fingers. A small can opener was supplied with the rations - it was a small, folding unit which could be conveniently and safely carried in the pocket.

On one bivouac there were "cloverleaf" containers all over the area. The containers were called cloverleaves because they looked like a three leaf clover when viewed from the end. Their purpose was to carry three 75mm shells in but in this particular incident the cloverleaves were filled with sand to simulate the weight of shells. Some of the B battery men were busy throwing the cloverleaves across the road and emptying the sand until they discovered two live 75s in one cloverleaf instead of sand. From then on each and every cloverleaf was checked before it was thrown.

Armistice Day of 1943 was spent in a specialist's class until 2100, then we had to scrub the floor of the barracks.

My furlough finally came through, I left camp on the afternoon of November 22



thirteenth and I expected to be home by the following Tuesday. The furlough came and went all too fast and soon I had to leave to get back to Mackall by Thanksgiving. I left Minneapolis on a train, I believe it was the Hiawatha, and by time I got to St. Paul I had met a woman marine corporal who soon left me for an officer. She tried to talk me out of my wings but when I got to Chicago I still had them.

While on furlough I was walking down Hennepin Avenue with my sister, Marion, on one arm and Bobbie on the other when I heard one sailor remark to another sailor, "The paratroopers get all of the girls".

By accident I met Karl in Washington, D.C. on my way back to Camp Mackall so we went sightseeing together and saw a small portion of the city before returning to camp. We got back to camp at about 2200 hours on Thanksgiving Day but did not report in immediately. Instead we went to a movie, saw 'Thousands Cheer' and took a little walk before checking in at about midnight. The battery was heading out on a problem at 0130 but we were too late to join them. We were sorry to miss out on the problem but more sorry to have missed the Thanksgiving Day dinner of turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy, corn, cranberry sauce, peas, ice cream, nuts, four kinds of pie and two kinds of cake plus a few other things thrown in. So be it.

While at home I ran into a love triangle, Bobbie, Bob Lucian and myself. It so happened that Bob came home on leave from the navy at the same time and had planned to give Bobbie and engagement ring. Neither she or her dad went for the idea and I heard from Bob later. On December 8th I got a hot letter from him. It was a three page handwritten manuscript on 8 1/2 X 11 typing paper, filled on both sides, and not one kind word in it. I, naturally shared the letter with the rest of the men in the barracks, and we all had a good laugh.

But let's go back to the fifth of December. We were supposed to go out into the field but it was postponed. Bud and I went to confession instead then to the service club to write a few letters. Then we went out into the field for six days with the third battalion of the 517th. I did not mind sleeping outside, in fact it was rather nice sleeping in the pine forests in North Carolina. A bed of pine needles was at least as comfortable as the army cots in the barracks. It never seemed as cold out in the woods as it did in the drafty barracks, and if I had a cold, all I had to do was spend a couple of nights out in the open air and the cold seemed to disappear.

During the night of December 8th - 9th it rained so hard that we were flooded out. When it rains in North Carolina the water doesn't run off or soak in, it just sits on the bog ground and sits and sits. The roads turn to mud, mud so deep that even the 6 X 6s, with power to all wheels, sink in so deep that only the top of the tires can be seen. This is even with dual wheels on the front and chains on all wheels! They do have a system for pulling stuck trucks out of the mud - most of the trucks have a wench on the front so this is used. They attach a chain to the back of a second truck, wrap and anchor the chain around a sturdy tree, then string a block and tackle between the tow truck and the stuck truck. By using the wench, along with the block and tackle arrangement, the truck can usually be pulled out of the mud.

The little jeeps do not fare so well, their axles hang up on the mud and their wheels just spin as if in mid-air.

The big news of December 12th was the loss of my fountain pen. We had been practicing infantry tactics and probably lost it when diving for a foxhole. After jumps from 625 to 1200 feet why should I lose it on a three foot dive into a hole?

Our jump-knives have been recalled - it appears that the Air Corps took exception to them. The jump knives were issued mainly to cut your way down from trees if your chute

hung up in one and for defense in a combat area. They were actually switch blade knives and our jump suit had a special pocket built into the lapel which may be overlooked in the event you were captured.

On the thirteenth of December we went out on our first problem with the howitzers where we fired live ammunition. Letters that followed made no mention of the event but I do remember how exciting it was to see the guns firing in the pitch black of night.

Snow fell at Camp Mackall on the 15th of December. By the next day it was pretty dirty, and within the next couple of days it had melted. But it was cold! The ground had frozen solid and it was almost as cold inside of the barracks as it was outside. There were two coal burning, pot belly stoves in each barracks and they got hot, very hot when stoked up, but in the barracks it was still cold only a few feet from the stove. It was too hot next to the stove, too cold ten feet away from them and there was no in between, no comfort zone. It seems that there were more holes in our barracks than our battery commander has enemies. During the night our boots froze into a solid mass and the water in our canteens turned into ice.

Coal for the stoves was stored in a large coal-box outside of the barracks, along side of the company street, and had to be carried into the barracks in buckets. You can guess who did the carrying.

On about the 17th of December we piled into trucks at 1100 and headed for Maxton Field at Fort Bragg for a jump. The ride was a cold one, so the first thing we did when we got there was to look for a warm place. We found one, it was the pilots orderly room which was nice and warm, so we marched in and made ourselves comfortable. No sooner had we warmed up when the O.D. came in and kicked us out. A short time later we loaded onto the planes only to find out that the jump had been called off because of the frozen ground which was too hard for a safe landing.

In order to keep as warm as possible I boarded a C-47 and went as far forward as possible, right up to the door leading to the cockpit. I would have gone further had it not been for the sign on the cockpit door which read, "Crew members only" so I sat on the floor near the door and rested against the bulkhead. I must have had a longing look on my face because, when a second lieutenant came out from the cockpit he he asked, "Haven't you ever been up in a cockpit, trooper?". So, there I was, up in the cockpit of a C-47. The lieutenant told me to sit in the pilot's seat and make myself comfortable while he explained the controls and what they did. He explained the magnetic compass and the landing procedure. My tour ended with a sergeant taking a picture of me hanging out of the cockpit window. After the jump was called off the plane took off without us but with our equipment which was dropped on a field. We tried to recover the loads but many of the containers were missing. We did find enough of the container containing one howitzer to assemble it, but for the other three guns we only found enough parts to assemble a second gun. One gun section lost a tube, the rear trail section and cradle with the recoil mechanism because the loads jammed and could not be released from the racks beneath the plane. In the drop zone there were many colored equipment chutes, red, yellow, blue, green and orange either on the ground or draped from the trees. The color of the chute designated the type of equipment it carried such as howitzer parts, ammunition, a machine gun, radio etc. This is the story of what would have been my eighth jump, a jump which will be made at a later date.

I have been trying to get to town to buy some Christmas presents but have not been able to get away. It is tough to have a few dollars in your pocket and not enough time to spend them.

Monday, the 20th of December. I was fire or barracks guard while some of the guys made a jump. I was scheduled to make a jump on the following day but that jump was called off. This was great by me because I did not feel very well so, after the jump was canceled, reported for sick call. There was nothing really wrong but my stomach ached so I just took it easy. By Wednesday morning I felt good enough to go out and practice infantry training with the rest of the guys. For this exercise each man had a string tied around his forearm, then we teamed up in pairs and tried to remove the string from the arm of our opponent. It was a mild hand-to-hand combat exercise. When your string had been removed you were considered "killed" and went where all dead men go - off to the side to watch. I was only killed twice.

Most of the men went for a glider ride on December 21st but I was in a survey class and missed out. Instead I ended up with homework, or should I say barrackswork, that night while the others had the evening free.

This is how things went on my first Christmas in the army. On Christmas Eve Bud and I went to a movie - "Happy Land" which was very sad, then we went to midnight Mass. Mass was said in the service club and was very plain and simple. There were no Christmas decorations, only a few decorations left over from an earlier dance, it was the first time I have ever gone to a Mass where the ceiling of the church was decorated with parachutes. It was nice to see about eight times as many men at Mass as there were at the movie, and three out of every four went to Communion.

After Mass we went back to the barracks and started to open our presents but found it to be a little too dark at 0100, so we went to bed. Bright and early Christmas morning, well 1000 is early for Christmas, especially in the army, we started in where we left off with the presents the preceding night. I lost track of what I got from who but it was just as perfect of a Christmas as one could have and, at the same time, be so far away from home. December 26th was a Sunday and where do you think I was? On K.P. of course. I kept telling them that they couldn't do this to me and all they would say was, "Oh no?". About all I could do is go on K.P. then go to the chaplain's office and have my I.S. slip punched.

My eighth jump was made three days after Christmas. This was one of my easiest jumps. The pilot was an ex-paratrooper, who still wore his wings, and did a beautiful job of cutting the power as we left the plane which resulted in very little opening shock. On this jump I carried my new checker board and took some pictures.

I had lost my fountain pen on December 12th but had another one by the second of January. The new one was a Shaeffer and not bad looking but I did not like it as well as the lost Eversharp.

Through Nat Schoenberg I had started writing to a girl by the name of Peggy who lived in Connecticut and had an invitation to visit her. I must not have taken the matter too seriously because when I did get a pass I went to see Edith instead in New Jersey. In 1951 I did stop to visit Peggy, who was married by then, and feel that I had made a good choice back in 1943.

Back to Nat. At one time while at Mackail we had to go through the infiltration course, which dictated that we creep and crawl under low slung barbed wire, while machine-guns fired live ammunition over our heads. Actually it was rather safe. The machine-guns had a fixed bar under the firing end of the barrel to prevent them from firing too low and after a number of men had gone through the course they wore a groove in the ground - this added even a greater distance between you and the bullets. Nat did not recognize how safe it really was, nor did he go for such nonsense so, since he was on the extreme left lane of the course, he proceeded to go outside of the course, make his way to the other end then return

to the course to make it look as he had gone through the exercise. However, he was caught and spent the next two days crawling through the infiltration course until he could barely drag himself over the ground.

On the second of January we went out for a week on a maneuver. We loaded on to trucks, rode thirty-six miles to Maxton Air Base, only to have the jump called off so we returned to Camp Mackall. The weather was too bad for jumping. Monday morning we had reveille and roll call in bed - now that's something new for the army. Then it was back into the trucks and off to Florence, North Carolina where we bivouacked at the airport. That night was a dull one for me but not for most of the battery - they took off for town in their jump suits and steel helmets.

Tuesday morning was when my trouble started. Bud and I took off to look for a latrine with hot water, where we could wash and shave at the airport. On the way we happened upon some planes that looked interesting so we stopped to investigate them. At this point two pilots came out and the four of us became engaged in conversation. Soon the pilots invited us to take a ride with them, Bud in a B-25 and I in an A-20.

After we were aloft I found out the true mission of my pilot; it was to practice strafing. His target was a small building, about the size of a single car garage, in the center of the field. It only took one dive and pull-out to get my stomach going and by the second or third pass I was using my helmet as a bucket in which to vomit. You can't imagine how hard it is to keep a half full helmet level through dives and pull-outs when your head is spinning at the same time. I must not have been successful with my balancing act because after we had landed I had a little cleaning up to do in the plane before I could go back to the battery area. When I got back to our area I was charged with going R.W.O.L. First we had to go out after hours and double time around a circle, with a sergeant stationed at the center, who did not want to be there in the first place. This did not make the sergeant very happy and so he took it out on us.

Wednesday morning, although I was trying to be a model soldier, things did not go too well. Ten of us did not fall out fast enough so again we found ourselves out in the field double timing, but only for twenty minutes this time. In the afternoon we fitted our chutes, and in the evening hiked out to the planes, loaded them then word came down that the jump had been canceled.

Thursday morning, January 3th we stood reveille, took our C-rations back to camp, pulled the stove out of our pocket and heated the hash. That was our breakfast. Following breakfast we took our tents down and sat around until lunch time when we had more hash. After lunch we loaded the equipment on the planes, climbed aboard and flew around for three hours, then jumped. This was my ninth jump. For some reason I was really scared - so scared that my knees were weak to the point that I had to use both hands to get myself up to the door. We jumped at 2330 and by this time a night jump was no more scary than a day one. The landing was not good but it was an easy one - I landed in a tree. Fortunately my back hit the branches rather than my face and I came to rest my feet were dangling a foot or two off the ground. By the time we had assembled and gathered the equipment, then marched four miles it was 0400. We pulled into a woods and picked up four hours of sleep. Friday was a dull day until evening when we started out on a twenty mile march. At the end of the hike we pulled into firing position and pitched our tents.

Saturday, the tenth of January, three of us were sent out on patrol. It was a wet, snowy day so we went a reasonable distance from the battery and proceeded to set our tents up in the woods, then we declared a rest period and took it easy. When we did finally return we could not find the battery; it had moved out. A short time later we met three



headquarters battery men with a 150 pound .50 caliber machine-gun so we joined up with them. Since we were both of the 'Red Army' it was only logical that we should unite and try to get back to our unit. We knew we were in luck when two more of our men came along in a jeep full of Sterno which they had found. It was not until the next morning that we realized that the jeep belonged to the 'Red Army', not the 'Blue Army'. It was a cold night so we piled into the jeep and headed off for the U.S.O. in Aberdeen. We got there at 0300 only to be notified that the war, or maneuvers, had been over for three hours. It was hard to tell though, there were men with .50 caliber machines-guns set up on every corner, shooting blanks at anything that moved. Meanwhile, back in our area, a 517th man proceeded to shoot a mess sergeant with an '03 rifle. He blew the sergeant's brains out and killed him.

The jump, made on January 8th, was a bad one with two 517th men killed and an unusually large number of broken bones. The medics and meat-wagons were busy for most of the night.

I mailed one of the "ashtrays" to Dad. The ashtray was a window port from a C-47, a plastic plug three inches in diameter and .800 of an inch thick. When in place in the plane the inside surface has a depression 2.7 inches in diameter and .700 of an inch deep with a one-quarter inch wide web on the center-line which stands one inch high and tapers off as it goes from side to side like a bridge. Crosswise in the bridge is a hole through which a strong string is tied to hold the plug when it is not in place in the window. The plug looks like an ashtray but, since it is made of plastic, does not stand up very well to cigarettes and must be replaced often. As we leave the plane when making a jump we grab the plug and our momentum breaks the string then, low and behold, we have an ashtray. I still have the ashtray I sent to Dad on a shelf in our basement.

On January tenth I wrote to Dad and told him that we were going to Tennessee in the early part of February and asked him to hold off on their trip to Mackall for a while.

I did not get court-martialled for the plane ride I took on the sixth of January but I won't be going anywhere for the next week, instead I will be restricted to the battery area. I figure that I got off easy but that probably was because there were so many others that did the same thing along with Bud and myself. Luck was with me in another way in that I had already had my furlough. With Bud it was a different story, he missed out on his furlough when he had expected to go because that date fell during his week long restriction. It is safe to say that Bud is not a happy camper.

Between the seventeenth and twenty-third we were out in the field and on the nineteenth I made my tenth jump. For the first few nights we had it easy with fires and four blankets per man but for the last night they told us there would be no fires and had us turn in all but one blanket per man. It was explained to us that it would be good for our health to use only one blanket, now almost everyone in the battery has a cold.

As I put it in a letter to Dad on January 23rd, "The battery commander got permission from the first sergeant to speak to me so I asked him for a three day pass and I am pretty sure of getting one for the next weekend". The real facts are that I asked the first sergeant to speak to the battery commander and asked for a pass, but more of the pass later.

My first pair of boots, we had two pair, were worn out by the end of January so I had to turn them in for a new pair. This means that a pair of boots lasted less than five months.

On January 24th we had our first chance to fire a bazooka. It looks like a stovepipe and fires a 2.36 inch rocket. We fired practice rockets at a moving tank and I was able to bounce two out of three off the tank.

I received a three day pass on the 29th of January and I headed north. Another fellow and I left Mackall by train and traveled together until he got off at Camden, New Jersey,



then I continued on to Westfield where Edee lived. Something must have gotten mixed up because I told Peggy that I was coming to see her and had not told Edee that I was coming. Regardless, I arrived at the house where Edee was renting a room at 1900 only to find that she had left work with a girl friend and was staying in Newark for the night. The people that Edee rented from had an extra room and invited me to stay for the night. The next morning the woman called the plant where Edee worked and found out that it would be all right for me to go to the lab and meet her. Since it was Saturday and she was scheduled to work until 1230 I made it a point to arrive at 1200, this gave me a chance to look around. When I arrived she was boiling something on a small burner, just like a chemist in the movies.

From her work we got a ride to Westfield which was about twelve miles from the lab with a girl that Edee worked with. On the way we stopped to shop for some groceries which we dropped off at her apartment, then we started off for Newark. Our plans changed however and we never did make it, instead we got off the bus in a small town and took the train to New York City. In New York we rode the ferry across the Hudson River and saw the Statue of Liberty, Times Square, the Empire State Building, Radio City Music Hall and walked in Central Park. We had dinner in New York, rode ferries, subways and double-deck busses, ate at an Automat and got back to Westfield at 2300. We then had a malted and went back to her apartment. After leaving Edee I went back to my \$1.00 per night room in the only hotel in town, and slept for a while. At 0730 the next morning I was back at Edee's. We took the bus from Westfield to Plainsfield where we caught a train for Philadelphia. We only had about twenty minutes before my train pulled out so we barely had time to say good-bye, then I was on my way back to Mackall. That is how my three day pass went - very well, thank you.

While in New York City I saw an unusual billboard. It was a picture of a soldier smoking a Camel cigarette and he was blowing smoke rings.

Back at Mackall on February the 1st four of us had a water fight with the fire extinguishers and as a result spent the evening scrubbing the floor in a squad tent. This type of tent measures only sixteen by sixteen feet so it only took about twenty minutes to finish the task.

My eleventh jump was made on February the third, but I only recorded the date. It must have been a routine jump otherwise I would have made some remark in a letter home. It was a happy moment on the fourth of February when I found the pen I had lost about two months earlier. One of the fellows in the barracks had it; someone had left it on his shelf at about that time, which put it in the right time frame. What probably happened is that I left it on the shelf, someone borrowed it and returned it to the wrong shelf. I was so glad to get the Eversharp back that I traded the new Shaeffer. What it adds up to is that I traded my pen for my pen and walked away happy.

In letters at that time the planned trip of Mom and Dad to come down to Mackall were discussed. It was my opinion that they should wait until after the Tennessee maneuvers were over and we were back at Camp Mackall.

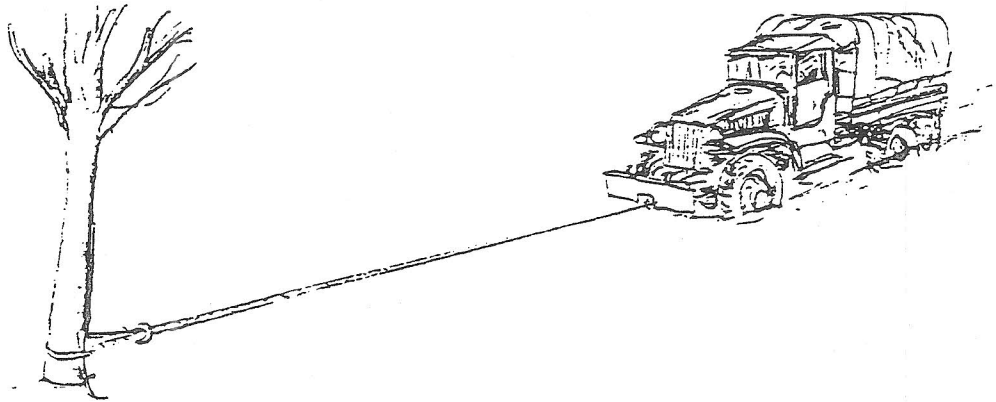
Our battery commander, Vogel, caught two sergeants and a corporal gambling with some privates and told them, "If you want to gamble with privates remind me to reduce you to the grade of private". That same night at retreat the order came out that reduced all three to privates and removed them from jump status at the same time.

Early in the first week of February we were all packed and ready to go to Tennessee.

## TENNESSEE MANEUVERS

On February 6th I wrote to my sister Marion and complained that the "maneuver weather" had beat us to Tennessee. It was raining when we got off the train and it rained through the night. With tongue in cheek I described our barracks; only two men to a room, no floors to sweep, no fires or stoves to attend - in fact, "no nothing" because we were in tents. During the night someone had tripped over the rope holding the front of our tent so, to make sure it would not happen again, we dug two holes, one on each side of the rope and about a yard away. That should stop any accidents which would cause us to rebuild our tent.

The mud in Tennessee was terrible. Trucks and jeeps were having a hard time, even on the roads. Today we filled in about 150 yards of mud with branches of trees to give the trucks some traction and keep them from sinking too deep. And they call these mud-holes roads? One tactic used to get vehicles out of the mud was to reel the wench out and wrap



the cable around a sturdy tree then wind the cable in while trying to drive the truck out of the mud. Usually it works, that is if there is a sturdy tree close enough to attach the cable.

Our little tent city may have to go soon. Such a shame too, since it had almost everything. Just across the street are signs that read, "LITTLE LEADENWORTH", "THE BRASS BAR - OPEN ALL NIGHT" and "U.S.O. UPSTAIRS ^". There are signs pointing to Minnesota, Texas, California and even No. 10 Downing Street. Still another sign notifies us that "Prill's Grill is now open under new management" and will be known as "Hess' Mess".

On February 13th, a Friday, we were in another area but still in Tennessee. It was better because the mud froze at night and was firm at least part of the morning of the following day. One reason that I was warm at night is that I discovered that four blankets were not enough but sixteen proved to be adequate.

The following Sunday I spent much of the day chopping wood. The meals were good that day - breakfast consisted of three fried eggs and bacon. At noon we had chicken but the best meal was in the evening and featured rice with gravy, beef, string beans, bread and butter, cocoa and blueberry pie without a crust - just the filling. It was a great meal in spite of the lack of pie crust.

"It doesn't look as if we will be jumping while on maneuvers", I wrote in a letter

home. I was writing that letter while sitting in the cab of a truck while the battery commander and a second lieutenant stood outside eating their dinner. Each was using a fender of the truck for a table. Shortly afterward darkness set in and I had to give up the writing for that day.

I heard from Peg - she was sorry that my three day pass had been canceled. I just let the matter go at that.

The first phase of our maneuvers was over and it was pretty rugged. Not only did I lose my pen again but I wore out two pair of socks and a pair of feet. On the ninth, Monday, we left Portland in the evening and moved to a position near Statesville the following morning. We had a wonderful breakfast, before starting out from Portland, which consisted of ham, eggs and bread. Lunch was pretty sad - two sandwiches, an apple and half of a cup of coffee. Monday evening we had nothing. Tuesday morning things got better and we had three fried eggs, bread and jelly. However, the lunch was a carbon copy of Monday's lunch and supper was identical to the lunch except that the apple was replaced by an orange.

At 2000 hours on the tenth of February we started out on a hike which ended fifty miles down the road and on the other side of the mountain. The first nine hours of the march was slow going and we only covered 9.3 miles over mountain trails. We had to wrestle the 1,365 pound gun over rocky trails where, at times, we had to lift the gun over rocks on several occasions. Most of the trail was over flat rocks like slate which were slippery from the rain. Where there were no rocks there was mud, mud just as slick as the wet rocks. The remaining 40.7 miles were not as rough and we made the distance in thirteen hours. The entire distance required twenty-two continuous hours of walking, with the five minute break every hour, and discounting the forty-five minute wait at noon on Wednesday for an armored anti-aircraft unit to join us. Not only was the hike hard on us but again I wore out two pair of socks, fresh new socks at that. I learned some things about Tennessee during the hike. I learned of the mountains of stone and that some roads forge streams and rivers rather than pass over them by means of a bridge. I learned that most of the fences were made of stone and I even saw a humpback cow. It may be said that we took the G.I. shortcut which is always the most indirect route between two points. It could be compared to following the shoreline of Lake Of The Isles rather than taking a canoe straight across. But that is S.O.P. in the army.

Wednesday morning I was a wreck - it was raining, we only had about an hour of sleep Tuesday night, and we didn't get anything to eat until 1945 after which we tried to get some sleep on a hill so steep that it was like standing upright.

Our first problem was complete by February 22nd and we went to a rest camp. It was a rest camp in name only. We lived in pup tents pitched in a field, stood reveille and retreat, had inspections and did every thing but sleep.

The weather in Tennessee seemed to have a pattern, rain two days, clear one day, rain two more days etc. I didn't care for the weather but the country was as beautiful as any place, save our own Minnesota.

The people of Tennessee are really great - they come out and invite you in for coffee or a meal, offer you a room in their home in which to sleep or the hay loft, porch or garage - anything to get you in out of the rain. Last night it was raining hard and a farmer opened up his house to us and when that was full he offered the barn. After all of that there were some G.I.s left over so he moved his car out of the garage to make room for the rest of us.

There was a tank-destroyer outfit next to us so I had a chance to look over some of their equipment. Those guys have it nice, they ride all of the time and when they want to write a letter at night they simply go inside the tank, close the hatch and turn on the

electric light. When they fire their gun, a 105mm rifle, it makes our little 75mm sound rather puny. As the 105s were fired they left a perfect smoke ring about six feet in diameter which floated nearly one hundred yards before dissipating.

I will have to conserve film, the supply is getting short and I have not been able buy any at Mackall since September. According to Edee the 620 size can be used in a 120 size camera. The difference is in the diameter of the spool on which the film is wound. For this reason the film from the 120 will not fit in the 620.

It seems that poor Bud has been captured by the "enemy" and may be doing K.P. in their camp at this very moment. We left him behind, with three others, to pick up some wire yesterday morning and we have not seen or heard from him since. Our mail (disorderly, Cameron Gauthier, was with Bud and probably has been captured too. At the time I could not imagine how that would make any difference in the mail delivery.

Somehow the subject of fur coats came up in the letters from home. I commented that it was not cold enough for such a coat in Tennessee and that I had not seen a family wealthy enough to buy such a coat. The part of the state that we were in may not have been typical of how people lived in all of the state but it appeared to be a very low income area.

We went to a "rest camp" on February 26th with our sore feet. For once it did not rain in the morning so we got a long ride in open trucks. For the first time I saw the beauty of Tennessee and feel that it is the most beautiful state I have been in since joining the army. At that time we were only a few miles from Rome, Tennessee but, at that time I did not know where Rome was located in the state.

We only had one week more of week of maneuvers then, rumor had it, we would be going back to Mackall.

Sometime while in the service, possibly on maneuvers, I recall a truck ride on a cold night. While riding in the back of an enclosed 2 1/2 ton truck we decided that it would be more comfortable if we created a little heat by burning "Dubbing". Dubbing was a paste product that came in a can and, and when applied to boots or shoes, waterproofed them. We lit a can of the wax-like substance, placed it on the floor and huddled over the small fire - little did we realize that a black soot was produced. When we emerged from the truck the next morning we looked like part of a minstrel show with our black faces.

Bud had returned from his captivity with some interesting and humorous tales to tell. When we left him behind the "enemy" must have been right behind us because Bud and the other three had only enough time to roll about a mile of wire before they stopped at a farmhouse for a chicken dinner. By the time they had finished eating the enemy had occupied all the surrounding area as far as a town about two miles down the road. Since the four C battery men had not been detected by the enemy, the four decided to get out of the house and sleep in the barn before trying to make their way back to the rest of the battery. When they woke up the following morning they discovered that a tank battalion had parked in the farmer's yard which made their getaway all the more difficult. After a successful escape they started down the road and the fun began. They found some of the enemy's telephone lines so hooked their test phones to it. An officer of a field artillery outfit was sending firing commands back to the gun position and every time the officer tried to give the coordinates our men would rub two bare wires together and create so much static that the commands could not be understood. After tiring of this they stuck a pin through the wires to short them out. Then they moved on and, as they moved along, cut the wires at about one hundred yard intervals. After cutting wires for most of the day the four men were captured by the enemy, this is when they began to harass the field artillery captain.

About twenty-five 517th men and ten 460th men had been captured and, first thing off, the captain informed them that he knew they would try to escape, but it would do them on good. This was a challenge that could not be passed up and before long most of the men had escaped. After escaping our men spent most of the night jumping guards before making their way back to our area. Bud even brought back some prisoners.

B battery had a grand time - they got tired of walking so set out to find some transportation. It was not long before they had everything from jeeps to four ton trucks and even a 105mm gun. Things went well until they began to run out of gas and finally became desperate. They were lucky to find an Air Corps tanker and filled up from it. As they explained it, the tanker had red flags on it so they "captured" some enemy gas, that is gas from a red army truck. It made no difference that all trucks carrying gasoline or ammunition displayed red warning flags. The men claimed that the jeeps demonstrated unusual pick-up when running on aviation gas.

I'm tired of walking. Last week it was a fifty mile hike and this week we have had two twenty-five mile hikes and a thirty mile one. I have had enough!

Our final problem on maneuvers was one which was supposed to teach us how to cope with the environment of a mosquito infested area. It seemed rather silly to wear mosquito nets over our face all day long, then have a mosquito net in place on our tent while we wore overshoes and almost froze at the same time.

Three of the guys thought there was not enough action during maneuvers so they created some. They walked into the headquarters of a red army infantry regiment and "shot" a colonel, two majors and a captain, then they tried to leave the headquarters area. They got to the edge of the camp and were captured. When asked how they had penetrated the defense they answered that they had just walked in and nobody had challenged them or tried to stop them.

Wouldn't you know - leap year. What rotten luck. When they threw in an extra day this year and it had to be a year that I was in the army. As I see it that will extend my army career by an extra day.

On the first day of March we were near Hartsville but I had no idea how far from the town or in which direction. I did get the Star-Journal, published by Donaldsons, from Bets. It was a miniature of the Minneapolis Star-Journal. As I recall it was about 6 1/4 X 7 3/4 inches, and was an abbreviated edition probably put out weekly. The paper looked like the actual paper and was sort of a digest of the week's news. It did have pictures but no advertising.

We had a tent city made up of the 460th field artillery, three 517th infantry regiments and the 596th engineer company which reached as far as you could see, well almost.

If you got sick or were injured in the field it wasn't too bad, help was close by. First your medic took care of you at the first aid station where there were two medics per battery, then if necessary, you were sent to the battalion aid station and after that there was the division aid station. If more help was necessary you were sent to an embarkation point, then on to a hospital. This sounds like a long way around but it often takes less than an hour. In serious cases you may skip one or more stops and go directly to the hospital. When in a rest camp you would probably go directly to the battalion aid station and on to the hospital. Actually the system worked pretty well.

During our rest periods our kitchen was right with us but when we were in the field on a problem the mess-truck was never near on a march or in daylight hours. It does come up close under cover of darkness but leaves before daybreak. The mess-truck is a 2 1/2 ton 6X6



and pretty well equipped but it is crowded. There were six men who manned the kitchen who worked in a 8 X 12 space in the back of the truck. In those cramped quarters they prepared meals for 130 men. It was considered dangerous to have the truck with the battalion because trucks make noise, leave tracks and often create smoke while cooking. Often the men gathered around the truck which made a good target for artillery.

We filled a jeep to more than capacity on the last day of maneuvers, maybe even set some kind of unofficial record. We were on a march when the problem suddenly ended so we climbed aboard the nearest jeep. The one I boarded already had the back filled with equipment to the level of the top of the backs of the front seats but we managed to get three men in the front and four in the back. It was crowded, especially with the top up. In spite of the crowded conditions we got cold so hung some blankets up on the sides. I don't know if it really made it any warmer but we thought it did. Added to this load was a half ton trailer loaded to capacity - you can plainly see that the jeep was overloaded.

Maneuvers were a thing of the past by the middle of the first week of March so we started back to Mackall. We had to hike about two miles back to our bivouac area and to the train at Cooksville. We arrived at about 1800 and left our equipment on the baseball field of the Tennessee Technical School. Then Lt. Col. Anderson announced that half of the battery could go into town until 2000 hours, then the other half could go until 2200. Bud and I were in the first group so we went directly to the U.S.O. to get something to eat.

We returned at 2000 hours and went over to the gym where there was a girls' basketball game in progress, which we watched. This was followed by the mens' team which was playing for the county championship so we watched most of that game. One team was from York, a school in the hometown of Sgt. York, and was named after him. It was a fun night and left us with good memories of Tennessee.

We rode in military style Pullman cars back to Camp Mackall. These cars are more like boxcars with regular army bunks mounted crosswise in them. In the morning the porter woke us up at 0900 by putting candy bars and cigarettes on our pillow. We did have to get up for breakfast though. We went through Ashville, North Carolina and made good time getting back to Mackall.