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THE EUROPEAN CAMPAIGN

How Grundy County Helped Win the War



Pivotal battles etched in GI's memory

By PETE RESLER
Herald Managing Editor

Norman Ziegler still has a Silver Star waiting for him, 50 years after he fought in the D-Day invasion and the Battle of the Bulge, but he's not very interested.

Ziegler was more interested in getting on with his life in the United States when the war ended than in collecting accolades for his bravery in some of the most pivotal battles of World War II.

He returned to Effingham County in November 1945, more than three years after enlisting, to find the family farm had been sold. He took a job in a stove factory, but work was not steady.

He moved to Grundy County in 1951, taking a job at the DuPont plant near Seneca making dynamite.

Here he and his wife raised their children and retired.

But the memories of battle do not fade easily, and certain remembrances stand out for various reasons.

Ziegler joined up in July 1942 at 22 years old, and headed to Fort McClelland for basic training. He then went to Memphis for Military Police and Ranger training.

Eleven months after he signed up, he was a combat policeman leaving Newport News, Va., aboard the

World War II veterans Mike Fowler (left) and Norman Ziegler reminisce about their roles in the pivotal Normandy invasion. (Herald Photo/Jo Ann Hustis)

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You need not look beyond area towns for U.S. patriots

When you think of American war heroes, you may think of John Wayne, Henry Fonda and other Hollywood stars who portrayed the fighting patriots who fought the battles to preserve our freedoms.

Few of us know who the true heroes really are: your neighbor who brings over those great tomatoes every summer, the local grocer who always had a smile on his face, the husband and wife who sit in front of you at church each Sunday.

They celebrated 50 years ago when the Axis forces surrendered to America and the other Allied nations, not only because the war for democracy was won, but because they were finally going to go home to their families and friends, home to Grundy County.

The Daily Herald has compiled the stories of many of these local service people, as well as those who stayed home and did their best to be sure our men and women overseas had everything they needed.

Those memories have been preserved on these pages, memories of how Grundy County fought for

your freedoms.

Today, we feature the war in Europe, featuring are men who fought in all the major confrontations stemming the tide of Nazi and fascist aggression.

Thursday, Aug. 31, we will concentrate on the heroic campaign in the Pacific Theater.

We will tell the stories of fighter pilots, naval gunners, infantrymen and others who survived brutal assaults by our enemies on the way

to victory.

And on Friday, Sept. 1, we will focus on the home-front, the men, women and children who did all they could to support the war effort, from working long hours in the Seneca Shipyard to organizing drives for critical materials to selling and buying war bonds.

The result of all their efforts and sacrifices was victory on all fronts.

The staff of the Daily Herald hopes the following stories will help bring those great victories a half-century ago a little closer to home.



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Gonnam took fate into own hands to escape

Mazon native able to escape from Nazis on second attempt after being shot down over German prison camp

By Leigh Ann Johnson
Herald Writer

Few words could describe the plight of Jesse Gonnam, when at the age of 22 he entered a world of war that would mark the world with visions instilled from generation to generation.

"I don't mean to be blowing my own horn," he said, when asked about his endeavors during World War II.

Still very humble about the efforts he contributed to the war he was also very intent on including his wife. "This is really a story about both of us," said Jesse. He never forgot how she was stuck home to wonder and worry when he was over in Europe and rarely had con-

tact with her. But never the less the story of Jesse Gonnam truly proves to be a brave and powerful one. In 1941 he entered the Army Air Corps.

Rather than attending college he wrote an exam to qualify him to fly fighter jets and received training. After his training, he was stationed in Victoria, Texas, where he also married his wife, Gwen.

Nineteen forty-two marked his station assignment overseas, where he was transferred to England via the luxury cruise ship Queen Mary, which was converted into a transport ship for the troops during the war.

Jesse was one of 16,000 people who were transferred to England on that ship.

In the fall of 1943 Jesse was stationed at Metfield Military Base in East Anglia where he received more gunnery training. From there he logged his first 57 combat missions.

It was the 58th combat mission that ignited, literally, a story of more than just a war participant.

In January and February 1944, the war was intensifying toward its climax and the U.S. was sending 800-1,000 bombers a day over Berlin. The rest of Germany and some of Holland.

While on a search and destroy mission, during that crucial period, Gonnam's plane was fired upon and a bullet entered the gas tank near his seat.

Forced to parachute out of the plane, Gonnam was injured with burns on his face and wrist, and his arms and cloths were charred.

This was only the beginning of his troubles, as Gonnam landed in the barracks of a German military base.

Taken immediately into custody, Gonnam was treated by a German doctor at the base. He remarked that the German doctors were very good, very smart, and today the scars of that unfortunate mission are barely, if at all, visible.

Though the treatment in the hospital was helpful, Gonnam was still a prisoner of war. He spent 10 days

in Frankfurt under interrogation, and it was unsettling to Gonnam that the Germans knew more about the Army Air Corps than he himself knew.

He was then transferred to a camp in Sagan, Poland, where he stayed for another 10 months.

He was forced to take part in The Great Camp March in January of 1945, in which POWs walked from Sagan to Nuernberg, Germany.

During a second march, Gonnam and three others escaped, hiding in the woods. Being in the heart of Germany made it difficult for them to escape easily. They spent their days sleeping and their nights running.

One evening the men were caught in a barn after a girl and her dog had entered. Knowing they were caught they waited for the Germans to arrive and they confessed to being POWs and were sent to jail.

crossing Gonnam ran out into the night once again.

By this time there were only two men. Gonnam and another, left together and the two found themselves in a barn. Only this time, they were surrounded by 25 German

soldiers. They spent the night talking the Germans into surrendering, and in the morning they marched the men across a field where the two

See "Gonnam..." on page 3B



JESSE GONNAM

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Ziegler...

From page 1B

U.S.S. Thomas S. Berry, an overcrowded ocean liner headed for England as part of a huge convoy.

Hardly a luxury cruise for which the vessel was designed, Ziegler recalls the military crammed 5,000 men on the boat designed for 300 for the 10-day trip.

They landed in Southampton, England, and settled in for more training.

Over the next 11 months he and the other members of the 1st Army's 318th MP Division moved around England awaiting the call to battle.

Those months passed slowly, with nightly inviting bombardment by German planes. "While we were

But the rules changed when the prisoners included Nazi SS troopers, who were hard-core, seasoned warriors.

This added danger called for a ration of one MP to every two SS POWs.

After their work was done in France, Ziegler's division moved toward Belgium, and eventually Berlin, Germany.

Along the way, they witnessed the final stage of the Battle of the Bulge, Germany's last victory of the war.

Ziegler recalls the scene as a "regular massacre," with his outfit escaping the slaughter just ahead of the German claws closing in on both sides.

The division moved toward Berlin



NORMAN ZIEGLER

"We didn't know a thing," Ziegler said. "But once we got on that LST we knew that was it."



there we got bombed about every night," recalled Ziegler.

While most others enjoy the splendor of fireworks, he is often reminded of the constant explosions over England.

As the soldiers waited for their call to battle, they were often called upon to help dig out the rubble of local homes and buildings.

The GIs were not told when they would be called upon to fight; they were only expected to do what they were told.

"We didn't know a thing," Ziegler said. "But once we got on that LST we knew that was it."

The door dropped down and the green soldiers looked out onto Omaha Beach littered with American and German bodies, casualties of the previous day, D-Day, June 6, 1944.

"You got a quick education," noted Ziegler, recalling the troops storming out of the landing craft into the deep water.

The soldiers held their rifles high and made their way to the blood stained beach.

"There were bodies all over. You had to either step over a GI or walk around them."

Although Ziegler's job was directing traffic, including troops, equipment and supplies, he was expected to fight alongside the others during battles.

"The first 24 hours I was over there I dug seven foxholes," he said. They advanced slowly, taking cover by digging shallow holes with whatever they had, usually their helmets.

Often you dug a hole less than 100 feet from where you dug the last one, he said.

The Allied forces pushed on into France, liberating villages on the road to Paris, which was occupied by Hitler's Nazis.

The troops often stayed with families in these villages. He recalled they were quite friendly. But the scars left behind by the retreating Germans are hard to forget.

"One thing that got me, after you got in there a ways, every time you saw a church the steeple was blown off of it."

Resistance snipers often hid in the steeples. So the Germans destroyed them.

When the fighting subsided, Ziegler was called on to direct traffic and to walk prisoners of war well behind the front lines.

The walks, often up to three miles, involved one MP for every 12 to 15 regular prisoners.

for the final assault on the German militia.

But they were stopped 35 miles away as the Russians were allowed to take the city and end the horrific slaughter instigated by Hitler's warped Aryan dream.

As Americans back home celebrated victory in Europe, Ziegler felt fortunate to still have one piece of gear given to him and his fellow GIs before they got to Omaha Beach.

They called it a "mattress cover." It was actually a body bag. When a soldier was killed, he was placed in his own body bag.

"Fortunately I didn't need mine," Ziegler said.

There are other images still etched in his mind, including the Siegfried Line, several rows of 5-foot tall concrete pyramids stretched for miles along the Belgium-Germany border designed to keep tanks out.

Ziegler recalls the Allies simply buried them under mounds of dirt and drove over them. They also made a good place to dry clothes.

And he'll never forget "Bedecked Annie," a single German pilot who flew over their positions every night hoping to draw fire. This would

have helped the Germans pinpoint their position to launch a full attack.

Fortunately, he said, they never fired.

After Germany surrendered, Ziegler went back to his MP duties, awaiting his turn for discharge. Soldiers compiled points for taking part in battles and other operations. The more points you had, the sooner you went home.

In November 1945, he arrived back on American soil at Newport News, and was treated to a steak dinner.

Ironically, the meal was served by German POWs.

"It didn't bother me too much, but it got to some of those guys."

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MISKAS WINES & LIQUORS

Fowler visited hell on Earth at Omaha Beach

By JO ANN HUSTIS
Herald Writer

SENECA - Four tiny bronze arrowheads on the European Invasion Forces Medal on the wall in Mike Fowler's home represent four days of hell for the former World War II infantryman.

Fowler was among the thousands of Allied troops who took part in the world's greatest military conquest, the invasion of Europe on D-Day, June 6, 1944.

"Oh, it was bad, it was bad," he reflected. "If I had any inkling I could have swum the English Channel, I would have gone back."

Fowler went in to the beach on the first wave.

"It was hard to believe it was me there in the middle of all that. You really didn't have much time to think about yourself, though. We were so sure that we were fighting for our country," he said.

"But you weren't fighting for that, you were fighting to save your butt. That's what you were doing."

At 21, Fowler was the oldest enlistee in his Army outfit, the 756th Airborne Ordnance, Medium Automotive Maintenance. His father served overseas in the same division during World War I.

There were 22 enlistees and one officer in Fowler's outfit. They rode to within 12 miles of the Normandy shore from their base in England aboard a Landing Ship, Tank - LSTs such as those produced at the Frigate Shipyard in Seneca - and then transferred to other smaller landing barges.

I looked up from the barge at Life Magazine photographer Robert Capa on the LST, and he took my picture. Then I lost the magazine. I'd give anything for another copy," Fowler said.

The Germans fortified the Omaha Beach area where the outfit landed with explosive mines fastened to blockades similar in shape and size to crisscrossed telephone poles.

The mines would blow the bow off of any ship that ran into the block, Fowler said.

Behind the blockades the Germans wore tangles of concertina wire up and down the beach. Back of that was the Spider, a Navy configuration with steel barrier gates similar to floodgates on concrete rollers. The Germans rolled the gates in and out with the tide.

"Our job was to help eliminate all that so the troops could get in. But everything didn't go as planned and we didn't go in on the beach where we were supposed to. We came in on the upper end instead," he said.

"And we got hung up on a mine on our way in. So this 6-foot, 4-inch tall guy from New York City slid off the front end of our landing barge and went down into the water, clear out of sight. I ran to the front and jumped off, too."

"This guy came back up and we went in on the beach together. We started digging a trench in the sand. The concertina wire was ahead of us and the enemy planes were coming in low strafing the

beach.

"Was I scared? O-o-o-h-h, you was definitely scared. You thought about everything you'd ever done wrong or everything you just about did wrong."

Fowler was almost sure he would be killed.

"When my outfit left for Europe, my dad told me, 'Don't go over there with the idea you're not coming back,' he said."

But there were times I thought I wouldn't make it. I hope that no one in my family or anybody else's family ever has to go through anything like that again."

The outfit's mission was to drag out of the water those vehicles that were sunk while unloading troops and equipment on the beach.

The men did with PD-18 tractors, whose engines ran as long as the exhaust stacks stuck up above the waves.

To look onto a swamped vehicle, the drivers were forced to approach

so close to their tractors to avoid the enemy, who was firing at them from the shore with 50-caliber machine guns.

"You had to stay on the outside of the swamped vehicles so the Germans couldn't pack you off," he said.

Among the disabled vehicles were amphibious "ducks" loaded with ammunition. The ducks armlessly circled offshore after their drivers were killed.

A lieutenant ashore needed more ammunition so his troops could overcome the Germans dug into the hillsides facing the beach. Fowler said.

"He ordered me to go get a duck and bring it in. I swam out to one. The driver was dead, so I broke his grip loose from the wheel, climbed in behind it and brought the duck to shore."

"The lieutenant took over. He got in behind the wheel and drove the load of shells up over the hill. I don't know what ever happened to him after that. But I still can hear him say, just like it was yesterday, 'We've got to have ammunition if we're going to hold them.'"

The LCPV vessels used in the invasion were driven with twin propellers.

"I saw one LCPV that was stalled with bodies wrapped around the prop," Fowler said.

The bodies of troops killed during the battle lay on the beach where they were killed, he said.

"It's hard to say what was the most awful part of the battle. When you see some close to blown up by a shell, it's quite a shock, though."

"I saw a regiment from the First Division and another from the 29th

Division that didn't make it. They were strangers to me. But when you saw them all laying there dead."

After the Allies established a foothold on the beach, the troops bulldozed a large trench and laid the dead inside. Fowler said.

"This was the first cemetery. Then the Allies had German prisoners-of-war dig it all up later and move the cemetery back onto the hill," he said.

Fowler considers himself pretty lucky in not being wounded during the fighting.

"You got knocked out several times from the artillery, though. The artillery would go off and the concussion knocked you over."

The night of June 6 was an experience in itself, Fowler said.

"The Allies had tied barrage balloons onto the ships out in the water in a maneuver designed to prevent enemy planes from flying overhead and strafing the vessels with gunfire."

"A plane would come in and hit a barrage balloon and it was just one puff - a fireball," he said.

"They fired tracer bullets at the incoming planes and you could see the dogfights taking place in the sky. You saw planes get hit and go down. It was the 'prettiest' Fourth of July of my life."

Fowler sought a few hours' sleep curled up in the sand in a pot underneath a bulldozer. The driver had dug the hole in the beach earlier that day.

"It was an OK place at first. Then I got to thinking that if someone came and got on the tank and moved it, I'd be a goner," he said.

Fowler spent the rest of the night out on the open beach.

The Allies, after taking the area, stashed large piles of K-rations on the sandy coast. The German troops utilized the cover of night to steal from their caves on the hillside overlooking the beach and slip through the Allied lines to raid the food stores, Fowler said.

"When the Germans surrendered, you'd find a box of K-rations on top of the ammunition in the caves," he said.

The Germans shot V-2 rockets - the infamous buzz bombs developed by Hitler to decimate England - at the Allies from the security of those caves.

"So we burned off the hillside with flame throwers. Still the Germans came out of the caves and

took potshots at us. They were as desperate to win as we were."

Fowler said a division of American Rangers was attempting to scale the cliff where a fortress was located at the far end of the beach.

"And the Germans were just slaughtering the Rangers. Their bodies were piling up at the base of the cliff where they were killed. But once the Rangers finally got over the top, it was a horse of a different color because then they made head way."

Fowler and his cousin, George Turner of Seneca, met on the beach two days after the invasion began.

"We were unloading troops at the time when I saw this guy walk across the sand. I thought, 'There's only one guy in the world that could be.' And it was. He made it through the war, then got killed in a car accident a few years ago."

The outfit's commanding officer was killed in the invasion and Fowler was appointed driver for the lieutenant who took over.

"I don't mind telling you I had no use for the lieutenant then, and I'd probably try to whip him yet if I saw him again today," said Fowler.

The call went out for reinforcements. The lieutenant posted the names of those who would go. Fowler's name was not there.

"I told the lieutenant I wanted to stay with the guys I came here with. He said, 'You don't want to go where they are going.' But my name went on the list the next day," he said.

"They made me first gunner on a light 50mm machine gun and was sent straight to the front lines. I hadn't fired more than 50 rounds before going to the front."

Fowler's division fought its way through France and up the Ruhr River toward Berlin. Famed war

correspondent Ernie Pyle was with the troops at that time.

"This one day, our planes were to drop their bombs on the target pinpointed by smoke bombs. Well, the wind changed and blew the smoke our way, and the planes bombed the heck out of us."

"We had under a cart with Pyle. He said, 'What the bloody hell are they trying to do to us?' He was a regular GI."

Fowler served in the military three years, three months and 17 days. Two years, eight months and 17 days were spent overseas.

"You can only take so much," he said. "You're only human. And everyone has a breaking point. When I was first home, it was kind of hard, the reaction kept building up in you like a balloon."

"You think about how lucky you are that you're here when so many didn't come back. I'm tickled to death I'm able to sit here today. But

it's bad when you think about some of the guys who didn't come back. That still bothers me."


Sometimes Fowler could talk about the war without a problem after he came home. Other times he would cry. And sometimes he still does.

"There's no way you could ever forget the war," he said. "No way. That's the reason I wouldn't want my kids or your kids or anybody else's kids to ever have to go through anything like that again. It was just slaughter."

Of the 16,353,650 troops in all branches of service in World War II, 292,131 were killed in battle and another 670,846 were injured.

Fowler revisited Omaha Beach last year on the 50th anniversary of D-Day. The gun emplacements were still there with the barrels sticking out, but the firing mechanisms were gone. He sat on a gun barrel for his picture.

"We were taught that we were fighting for our country. But you weren't fighting for that; you were fighting to save your butt. That's what you were doing."



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Gonnam...

From page 2B

Americans knew that U.S. troops were in the hands of his own countrymen, one year and one day after first being captured.

While trying to get back to his military base in England, Jesse stowed away on a plane that landed in Orleans, France. While in France he was issued a new uniform, money and food. Jesse and other men were placed on a ship leaving France that sailed for 15 days to Staten Island, New York.

After paperwork and processing at Fort Dix, New Jersey, the army sent the soldiers home on two trains that traveled across the country.

Jesse arrived in Chicago at Fort Sheridan and was held a few days before he could go home.

Anxious to arrive back at Mazon to see his wife Gwen, Jesse had telegraphed her that he was safe in the states and was headed home soon.

The couple had not been together since 1943 and had only spent nine months as a married couple before Jesse was stationed overseas.

The evening that he arrived in Chicago, Jesse skipped the processing and took a bus to Mazon. When he arrived, the only light he could see in town was on the porch of Dr. Breisch.

He went to the doctor's home and the doctor took Jesse to his wife at the home of her parents. At 1:30 a.m. Gwen was surprised, but relieved and delighted.

For the past 49 years, Jesse has been a farmer, raised three children

with his wife, owned a plane for a while, and now is retired and travels to Arizona for the winters.

Medals that symbolize the plight of war are preserved in a frame above the fireplace. They include a purple heart, for his burn injuries, four air medals, a POW medal, three Defense Flying Crosses and a Silver Star (the third highest award issued) for the brave and courageous duty

of shooting down three planes during one combat mission.

The real war relic remains in the Gonnam kitchen, a small knife that was the only weapon that Jesse was capable of maintaining as a prisoner.

"I kept it in the lining of my coat," he said, and to this day it remains as sharp as the soldier himself.

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Robinson bucked odds to make it home alive

By **BOB MISUREWICZ**,
Herald Correspondent

GARDNER — Lewis Robinson was well aware of the odds as he prepared for a combat mission from the Shipdham Air Base near Normidge, England.

On the average, one in three bombers didn't make it back to base, adding the names of the doomed flight crew to the ranks of dead or missing.

It was 1944 and Robinson was 21 years old.

Two years prior, after graduating

from Gardner-South Wilmington High School, he received a scholarship to the University of Illinois where he studied electrical engineering.

He recalls Dec. 7, 1941, when, just after dinner, the radio program that he and his school mates were

listening to was interrupted by the grim announcement that Pearl Harbor had been attacked by the Japanese.

His father, the clerk of the Grundy County Draft Board, had served in World War I and the young Robinson was, as he put it,

"gung ho" to go to war.

Putting his studies on hold and volunteering for active duty in February 1943, Robinson embarked on an adventure that would take him from the serene countryside of Gardner, Illinois, to the war filled skies of Europe as he made a personal contribution to the World War II history books.

With aspiration of becoming a pilot foiled during cadet training, Robinson was assigned to a B-24 combat flight crew, and was trained as a tail gunner.

He became a member of the 506th Squadron, 44th Bomb Group, 2nd Air Division of the 8th Air Force, also known as "The Flying Eighth Balls."

On his first combat mission, Robinson and the crew flew to Hanover, West Germany. During the bombing run, the aircraft lost two engines and the hydraulic system which kept the landing gear from being lowered.

After barely missing the Cliffs of Dover, the pilot managed to make a crash landing at a nearby B-24 air field.

The base commander and future movie star, Jimmy Stewart, rushed out as the dust settled and helped rescue the crew.

No one was injured by the aircraft was a wreck. In all, the crew lost three airplanes during its six-month tour.

The tail gunner's turret was cramped and Robinson was just a little too tall.

With 50 caliber cannons, an ammunition rack and other apparatus cluttering the compartment, the life of a tail gunner was not glamorous or comfortable.

It was not uncommon for flack from exploding anti-aircraft shells to rip through the metal skin of the plane and inflict damage on people and equipment, Robinson recalls.

He keeps pieces of the shrapnel

material that struck his helmet and lodged itself into his seat as a reminder of his perilous job.

Robinson flew 35 combat missions between August 1944 and February 1945 which included the battle of Amberg, which was later chronicled in the Cornelius Ryan novel, "A Bridge Too Far."

His bomb group also supported the allied effort at the Battle of the Bulge. Railroads, industrial sites and military installations were the primary bombing targets for the B-24 squadrons.

Robinson came home in the spring of 1945 and, thanks to the GI Bill, was able to continue his education which led to a doctorate degree and a career in teaching.

He taught U.S. History and world affairs at Joliet Junior College for 27 years and is now retired.

For the last 15 years, Robinson has been actively involved in the 44th Bomb Group reunions that are held around the country.

He has also returned to England with his wife Beverly to share memories of his experiences with her.

Ironically, Robinson said, "Had it not been for a 1986 visit to the United States Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio, I would never have known about the 44th Bomb Group Heritage Memorial that was constructed or the log book that was archived."

The memorial celebrates the brotherhood of the pilots and crew members of the bomb squadrons and the contributions that were made in the effort to defeat the Germans in World War II.

Lewis Robinson is a survivor and a teacher. As an aviator and combat veteran, he hopes to keep the memories of his brave comrades, both allies and enemies, alive.

As a teacher, sharing and recording his experiences will allow future generations a deeper understanding of the pain and glory of war.



GARDNER'S LEWIS ROBINSON (rear, far right) posed with the crew of the B-24 Liberator in Topeka, Kansas, prior to heading for England and 35 bombing missions against the Germans. Robinson was a tail gunner.

With little combat time under his belt, Marshall spent rest of time in German prison camp

By **KEVIN WOODWARD**,
Herald Writer

Four months of William E. Marshall's 22-month enlistment in the U.S. Army during World War II was spent behind enemy lines.

He would have liked to be fighting the enemy, but instead he was a prisoner of war in a camp about 30-40 miles from Frankfurt, Germany.

Marshall, of Morris, and 344 of his division were captured by the Germans in the Battle of the Bulge.

Marshall was posted along the Siegfried Line in Belgium, right where the Germans knew the troops were green.

In that battle, the German army surprised Allied forces with a strong attack along portions of the Allied line. The Germans were thought to be in retreat and resting.

Wakened by the vigorous advance since D-Day by Allied forces, the German army was looking for a way to gain time and maintain their territory.

By this time in the war, Allied forces were assured of readily available food and gas, something the Germans were forced to almost give up. It was the German lack of supplies and the fighting strength of Allied troops that prevented the Battle of the Bulge from thwarting

the Allied advance into Germany. Marshall enlisted in the army in February 1944 and went to basic training camp in Alabama. He left for Europe on Oct. 19 that year.

After landing in Scotland, he stayed in England from Oct. 31 to Nov. 29.

Got on a box car. On Christmas Day an allied plane strafed us. Thought it was an ammunition train. Some of the guys ran out of the train, but the guards shot them. Some soldiers were hit by fire. I stayed in."

"Once they arrived in Frankfurt, they were marched to a POW camp

racks. Airmen, infantrymen and sailors were separated. Russians were sequestered to themselves, as were the English and American troops.

As Marshall describes it, life in the POW camp was nothing to write home about.

He said they ate potato soup every day, with a one inch-square piece of meat and bread. "We drank chichory tea. It was barely enough to get by on."

"After 120 days of it you get pretty weak. I had one shower while I was there. We had a lot of lice."

Some of the men participated in black market activities. "A pack of cigarettes was worth \$20," Marshall recounted. He traded his watch for a pack.

Marshall asserts he was probably on the verge of becoming sick when they were liberated by a unit of Patton's army. "The Germans were going to march us to Switzerland," he added.

The Red Cross sent parcels about every couple weeks, Marshall said. "I never did get but one."

When he joined the line in Belgium, Marshall found a small silver cross.

He held onto it while a prisoner. "I think it brought me through the POW camp. I prayed a lot." He was liberated March 2, 1945.

"We walked 30 miles to a camp. Got on a box car. On Christmas Day an allied plane strafed us. Thought it was an ammunition train. Some of the guys ran out of the train, but the guards shot them. Some soldiers were hit by fire. I stayed in."



His unit crossed the English Channel, landing in France Dec. 4. They arrived in Belgium Dec. 8.

Eleven days later he was captured.

"We walked 30 miles to a camp

about 30-40 miles from the German city.

There the troops were separated by nationality, rank and branch of service. Officers and enlisted personnel were put in separate bar-

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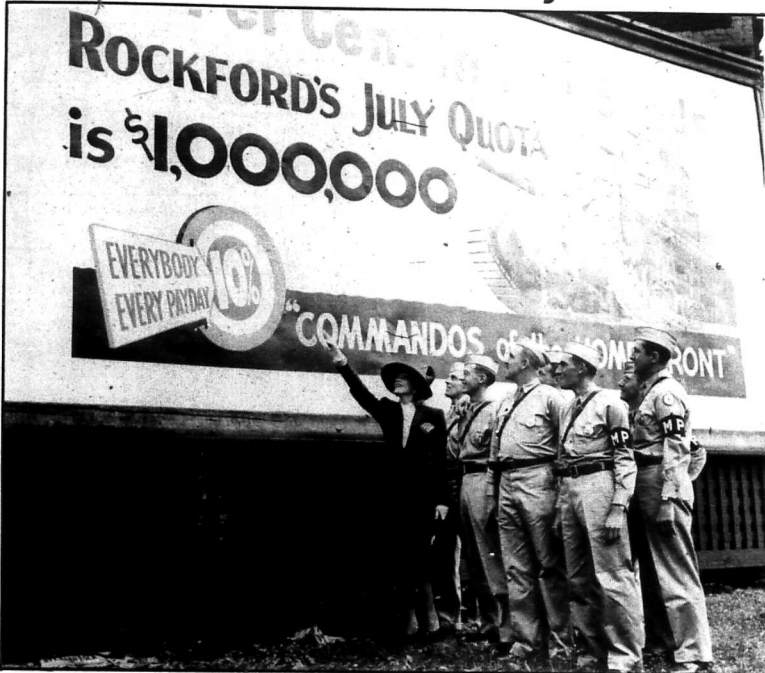
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Just ask Patton! Bradley was a tough traffic cop



PFC HOMER BRADLEY (third from left) had the honor of posing with movie star Marlene Dietrich for a U.S. war bond promotional

photo. Bradley also had brushes with other famous World War II era characters, like General George Patton.

Morris veteran received citation after stopping official vehicle of famous general for speeding

By KEVIN WOODWARD
Herald Writer

When 75-year-old Homer Bradley was in the U.S. Army during World War II he didn't take any bull. Just like General George Patton didn't take any bull, either.

Pvt. Bradley found that out one day in 1945 while serving as a military policeman (MP) in Patton's Third Army in Europe.

Bradley, who entered the army on November 1940, saw Patton's car speeding along, two-star flags snapping in the wind. Patton had set the speed limit in his command area at 40 miles per hour. Anyone going over that could be ticketed.

Bradley could tell the general's car was speeding. He tore off in his jeep and clocked Patton's car at 60 mph. About 1 1/2 miles after he attempted to stop the car, the general's driver finally pulled over.

"I walked up and saluted Patton in the back seat and stepped up to the sergeant driving the car," Bradley recounts. "I asked him how fast he thought he was going. I told him the speed limit in the Third Army area was 40 mph. I wrote him a ticket."

As he walked back to his jeep Bradley stopped to salute Patton

again. Patton stopped him. He wanted to know his name, rank and serial number. Before they exchanged salutes and went on their ways, Patton told Bradley that for the next hour the speed limit in the Third Army area was 60 mph.

When Bradley returned to his unit and told his commander how the day went, the CO became enraged and said he wouldn't have done that.

Word got around camp that Bradley gave General George S. Patton a speeding ticket in his own command area. Bradley had no idea what might happen.



THIS PHOTOGRAPH of Adolf Hitler at Gottingen Airport in 1943 is one of the precious relics Homer Bradley keeps to remind him of his World War II days.

Would Patton transfer him? How many months of KP could he get? What was the worse duty station in Europe?

Nothing happened until a few days later when a packet arrived. It was from Patton's office. Anything could have been in there — transfer orders, court martial documents, a nasty letter, anything.

It was a citation. Patton rewarded Bradley for doing his job when all the other MPs had let his car speed by.

That pretty much shut up all the naysayers. Bradley said this happened just a few months before Patton died from injuries sustained

in a car accident. Then there was the time Bradley was court-martialed for falling asleep on duty, a violation of the 86th Article of War.

At 4:15 a.m. Dec. 10, 1944, I fell

asleep on post," Bradley recounts. "I was a PFC in Troop B, 88th Cavalary, Recon Squad, Mechanized."

The presiding officer at the summary court martial gave Bradley a special court martial sentence, six months in the stockade. Bradley told him he couldn't do that because this court martial was only a summary one, with a maximum sentence of 30 days.

The verdict went up to Bradley's commanding general, Major General William Devine, for review.

Devine canceled the whole affair since the presiding officer "was out of line" with the sentence. But, Bradley made a real name for himself when he wrote a letter to Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

That one letter resulted in some officers being busted down in ranks and a lot of heat on those responsible.

Bradley, who was discharged

from the army on Nov. 12, 1945, was transferred to Camp Hood in Texas and shared housing with fresh recruits.

The barrack sergeant ordered Bradley to clean the sergeant's room.

Defiantly, he said he wouldn't do it and the sergeant couldn't make him.

So he was put on KP for three weeks. After that he wrote the letter to FDR telling him what happened.

When Bradley received the reply from the White House he was surprised. Steve Early, FDR's secretary, said something would be done. That's when the heads began rolling.

Bradley kept in touch with his cohorts after the war by attending 8th Army reunions.

In 1966, as president of the 8th Armored Division, he and Devine were invited to the White House for a special certificate of recognition for the division's achievements.

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Opa no laz, just a German soldier

"Kreig ist nicht ein 'hell'; es ist sehr, sehr schlecht über alles..."
— Johan Kroeckel, to his 13-year-old grandson

By BILL SCHEIBE
Herald Assistant Sports Editor

My grandfather never grew tired of facing a barrage of questions, nor did I of his answers. I was getting ready to be a freshman in high school, way back in August 1983, when my mother and I took a late summer vacation — after the baseball All-Star season was over — to the Kroeckel farm in Bamberg, West Germany.

This was where my mother grew up, a beautiful place like no other I have seen since, called Oberfranken Bayern. Or, as Americans more popularly know it today, Bavaria.

I loved history, so I would often grill my grandfather for World War II stories. My parents had taught me English and German from a very young age, a fact that made it easier to communicate during vacations, but nonetheless challenging.

On my birthday, we were sitting in the backyard. I had always called my grandfather "Opa," the German for grandpa, and this was a particularly inquisitive afternoon on my part.

"Opa," I recall saying, "Where did you fight in World War II?"

"I was on the Russian front," my grandfather said, beginning a yarn that would last for hours.

Unfortunately, youth is wasted on the young. Now, years later, I do not remember most of the conversation.

However, this I will never forget: "Opa," I asked, "Is war really hell?"

"War is not hell," my grandfather answered in a hushed, serious tone of voice he rarely ever used. "It is much, much worse."

At that, he stopped speaking, and we stared into the peaceful, serene surroundings of one of the nicest, blue-skied, laid back days in memory.

In my short lifetime, I have been lucky enough to be able to take my grandfather's word for what war is like.

I registered with Selective Service, according to law, when I graduated from high school in 1986. Coincidentally, the U.S. was bombing Libya at the time.

I was never called to service, and I don't expect to be called in the near future either.

While I have the utmost and heartfelt respect for any soldier, I am an American patriot who is relieved that moments in time like Korea, Vietnam and Desert Storm have passed me by. I would have fought, if called upon, but fortunate to not have needed to.

Especially since I'm relatively speaking, war has never been kind to my family.

My mother's uncle was a pilot who died in World War I. My mother's father, the aforementioned Johan Kroeckel, fought (sort of) in the next great war and, miraculously, lived to tell about it. He was shot in the back five times.

More on that later.

My father's father also took part in World War II and disappeared thereafter, his whereabouts unknown until an inheritance check was sent to my dad upon his father's death approximately six or seven years ago.

Before coming over to the United States, my dad worked various jobs and on several farms from around the age of 10. He was the oldest child in his family, which featured numerous brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles, and sent almost all of his money

home every week. His childhood, in effect, never existed. That is why, I believe, my dad did not open that envelope from his father's estate. He mailed it back to West Germany, sealed, that very same day. Later, my dad told me, "In my opinion, he had died many years earlier."

Another casualty of war. My father's most vivid memory of the war was when the U.S. Army rolled through his town, approximately 20 miles from Frankfurt. He remembers the town lunatic running around with a rifle and a new-fangled German bazooka, taking pot shots at the invading force.

The crew of a Sherman tank spotted this guy, and blew him away.

By the time I reached Germany, World War II was something seemingly stashed away in the past.

My grandfather would take me places, though, that provided subtle and sometimes stark reminders of what once was and what could not be erased.

Opa would take me on walks through the forest and past the family's farm land, which was located several miles away from the barn and our house. This was in Gaustadt, a suburb of Bamberg, and the street leading home went past the graveyard.

In a twist of irony I can only see now, the town's bomb shelter was located on the far end of the cemetery. Where the bomb shelter ended began the graves of our relatives. It was my mom who showed me the door to the bomb shelter one day, almost 40 years later.

She still cringed at the sight of it.

My grandfather would show me the resting places of his friends, some of whom died next to him in battle. Opa would always joke around about his own wounds, saying he was shot in the back so often "because I forgot where the front was."

He didn't want to be fighting, anyway. Gaustadt was a small farmer's town, a place remote enough that Germany could have changed to disco at that time and no one would have noticed.

My grandfather and his peers were recruited for the Russian front toward the end of 1943 and early 1944, when the Gestapo and SS, the Nazi's secret police, put the women and children of the town up against the wall at gunpoint and asked if the men wanted to join the cause of the Third Reich.

Even the most unhappily married agreed. Late in 1944 and into 1945, when the Russians were pushing back the Germans to their own borders and the lines were collapsing, my grandfather managed to make a retreat of his own, all the way back to Gaustadt.

It was an incredible journey by a remarkable man who had almost an unremarkable existence thereafter.

I can look back at my grandfather and certainly see a man who stood not for fascism, communism, democracy or any ism whatsoever.

Wars, unfortunately, are created by foolhardy individuals with an agenda that has to be met out by the common man.

My grandfather, although on the wrong side, was that kind of regular guy, and all he really wanted to do was survive and go home to his wife and two daughters. He did, happily, only to pass away of a heart attack in that last summer I visited.

Coincidentally, my grandma recently turned 90 years old.

That she has managed to go on years after Opa died should not surprise me because she's a survivor of World War II, too. And those who made it through that can endure anything.

Even a little bit of hell.

As Mariners and Russians frantically scrambled to transfer the cargo from ship to shore, they were subjected to constant air attack by the German Luftwaffe.

The Luftwaffe was in Norway, training their pilots on Junkers, 87s, dive bombers and Heinkel HE-111s, a twin engine bomber," he said.

"The first attack by one bomb was a lucky hit, Bruckelmeyer said. The third attack killed 18 men.

Then everything suddenly froze in and everybody forgot who we were allowed ashore only twice. The Russians were very hostile," he said.

"The RAF parachuted supplies, ammunition and food for us. But the Russians would come out with their dog sled teams and pick up all of the provisions and food. And all the supplies we would end up with were English speaking books the Russians couldn't read."

"Eight months later, when the ice thawed, the Merchant Marine vessels headed for Murmansk."

"After we got there, we waited another three weeks for a return convoy to Scotland. We were gone almost a year."

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THE CREW OF THE U.S.S. Benson posed for a photograph prior to heading out into the Atlantic Ocean. Bob Duket, of Morris, served as a sonar operator on the Benson.

At war with U.S. Navy 'greatest time' for Duket

By ELLIE ANDERSON
Herald Community Editor

"Seeing the world, even during the war, was the most exciting time of my life," said Robert Duket, a Morris resident.

"Being a geography buff, it was the chance of a lifetime to see it all the places I had read about, such as Algiers, Casablanca and many more areas in Europe," he added.

When he arrived in North Africa, he said to himself, "They are not even charging me to see this — I would have paid for this trip."

If it hadn't been for the war, Duket said he might have spent all of his life in some small town, never having seen the world.

A printer from Oconomowoc, Wis., Duket had wanted to join the Navy before the war started, but he was needed at home to help his mother provide for the family after the war began, he joined the Navy and became a "sonar man."

Following school in Key West, Fla., he was assigned to the U.S.S. Benson in the Mediterranean. There were 19 sonar men on board whose job it was to detect any underwater sound, in particular the presence of enemy submarines.

Duket remembers that one day there were five sonar men on duty when the ship was suddenly under fire. He said he was sitting in the middle with two guys on each side of him. There were four purple hearts given that day and he was never got one.

One incident he cannot forget was when the U.S.S. Benson was off the coast of Italy and the captain called over to the beach, "Tomorrow is Christmas and I don't want anyone killed on that day." Consequently, there was no gun fire that Christmas day.

Another episode Duket remembers happened in April 1945 after he had been home on leave following two years of sea duty, and was returning to the East Coast for reassignment to a new destroyer.

A friend who was a WAVE and he went to the dining car and the steward seated them at a table across from two young soldiers about 19 years of age.

Duket related, "We had hardly said hello when the water brought

their meals. In a low voice he said to them, "Your plate is like a clock, the potato is at one o'clock, your meat is cut and at six o'clock, the vegetable is at nine and a roll is at eight." Yes, they were blind."

The "big" war was over for them, but their own personal war would never be over. "I don't know how we could have gotten through the meal if they hadn't been so cheerful and upbeat. It is very difficult to eat with a big lump in your throat," said Duket.

In conclusion, Duket said, "When I came home from the service with both arms and both legs, I definitely felt that being in the Navy was the greatest experience of my life."

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A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF A U.S. NAVY WAR VETERAN

When Jim Vaughan joined the Navy in 1942, he started a diary of day-to-day happenings and continued this faithfully until his discharge at the end of the war.

The records he kept relating to life and times of the U.S.S. Benson were often written on scraps of paper, or anything at hand.

At the end of the war he organized all his bits and pieces and completed his diary.

This is the ship Robert Duket of Morris was assigned to.

The following information is taken from his journal and is a day-by-day accounting of his experiences during the war.

JULY 8, 1943
Washed our clothes and had an hour's sleep. Entered

See "Week..." on page 7B

Bruckelmeyer and Lost Convoy suffered through North Russia winter

By JO ANN HUSTIS
Herald Writer

SENECA — Icebergs and frozen seas were the mortal enemy as much as the Nazis when Kenneth Bruckelmeyer and the Lost Convoy shivered through the bitter Arctic cold of north Russia the winter of 1943.

Fifty years afterward, Russian President Boris Yeltsin and his government presented awards to Bruckelmeyer and 1,040 other Merchant Marines of the Lost Convoy of World War II.

They received the bronze Commemorative Medal of the 40th Anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War. The award commended the Marines who supplied the Russians with fuel, food and ammunition during the conflict.

The medal is engraved with the images of a peasant, soldier and worker, the star, hammer and sickle and the now defunct Communist Party, and the ribbon of the Order of Glory — the old Imperial Order of St. George.

Russian Ambassador Vladimir Lukin, Washington, D.C., mailed the medals to the Marines in late 1992.

"In recognition of your outstanding courage and personal contribution to the Allied support of my country which fought for freedom against Nazi Germany," he wrote.

The United States Embassy in Murmansk, Russia, also certified the Marines as members of The Society of the Forgotten Convoy of North Russia.

The (Mariners) did suffer eight months confinement in north Russia and did undergo all privations connected therewith, that they did shiver through the Arctic and bask in the rays of the midnight sun," the

certificates noted.

For some time Bruckelmeyer was quite bitter about the treatment dished out to the ice-bound Marines by the Russians.

And, too, he was disappointed at the United States' failure to recognize the Merchant Marines' contribution to the war effort by providing the Corps with military status and benefits.

The Merchant Marines was a civilian corps finally recognized by Congress as a branch of the military in 1988.

And although they ferried eight million troops to all combat zones around the world during World War II, the Marines were civilian sailors. There were 284,000 Marines involved in the war.

Bruckelmeyer served aboard the Merchant Marine vessel USS Loch Putnam, which steamed out of Israel Ness, Scotland, in an 85-ship convoy on Sept. 3, 1942.

Twenty-two vessels in the convoy were sunk en route by enemy fire. The Merchant Marine ships then left the convoy and tied up offshore at the port of Molotofski, Russia. The port was 40 miles south of Murmansk where the rest of the convoy was headed.

"When we got there, we found the German military had blown out all the shore installations. So we had to roll the supplies over the side with our jump boats. The Russians came out to our ships with barges to load up the cargo," he said.

The supplies included two narrow gauge locomotive engines on deck on top of the cargo hatches, and munitions and other war armaments, Bruckelmeyer said.

As Mariners and Russians frantically

scrambled to transfer the cargo from ship to shore, they were subjected to constant air attack by the German Luftwaffe.

The Luftwaffe was in Norway, training their pilots on Junkers, 87s, dive bombers and Heinkel HE-111s, a twin engine bomber," he said.

"The first attack by one bomb was a lucky hit, Bruckelmeyer said. The third attack killed 18 men.

Then everything suddenly froze in and everybody forgot who we were allowed ashore only twice. The Russians were very hostile," he said.

"The RAF parachuted supplies, ammunition and food for us. But the Russians would come out with their dog sled teams and pick up all of the provisions and food. And all the supplies we would end up with were English speaking books the Russians couldn't read."

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a separate entity strictly for training of merchant seamen."

Most of the people Bruckelmeyer joined up with were comparatively young. Some were 15 years old.

"I felt young when I went in, but I sure as hell was an old man when I came out eight years later," he said.

Still in all, Bruckelmeyer would join the Merchant Marines again given the same set of circumstances because "a person has tendency to forget the bad aspects of things and remember only the good," he said.

"World War II would not have been won without the Merchant Marines. We ferried eight million troops to all combat theaters around the world."

"Merchant Marine ships were involved in every invasion. Normandy, southern France, Iwo Jima and all the other islands in the South Pacific. We were right in there with the Navy and Marine Corps. We were civilians with the military."

In the beginning, Bruckelmeyer accepted the lack of military status. After his discharge from the Corps, however, he became very disappointed about the lack of recognition.

"We couldn't join the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars or any other veterans groups. It was very, very humiliating after the very terrific high sacrifice that the Merchant Marines made to the war effort," he said.

When Congress finally accorded veterans status to the Merchant Marines, it was too late for most benefits for those from World War II.

After leaving the Corps, Bruckelmeyer spent 45 years as chief hydraulic engineer for two Chicago corporations. Of Madison, Wis., he moved to Seneca in 1993.

By JO ANN HUSTIS
Herald Writer

SENECA — Icebergs and frozen seas were the mortal enemy as much as the Nazis when Kenneth Bruckelmeyer and the Lost Convoy shivered through the bitter Arctic cold of north Russia the winter of 1943.

Fifty years afterward, Russian President Boris Yeltsin and his government presented awards to Bruckelmeyer and 1,040 other Merchant Marines of the Lost Convoy of World War II.

They received the bronze Commemorative Medal of the 40th Anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War. The award commended the Marines who supplied the Russians with fuel, food and ammunition during the conflict.

The medal is engraved with the images of a peasant,

Week...

From page 6B

Bizerte, swept channel which is 60 miles long.

JULY 9

Bombers and fighter planes are passing overhead and going for Sicily to soften it up for the paratroopers.

We are off Tunis at 0900 and headed for Tripoli Island. Over 400 planes flew over us tonight headed for Sicily.

There must be quite a show going on over there tonight.

JULY 10

At 0640 this morning we picked up four U.S. Army Air Corps men from two floats. They were hit while over Sicily last night on a mid.

They say Sicily is in flames and the opposition is very weak. They were a troop transport crew, C-47.

One fellow said he sure is glad he saw this ship. He worked on it while they were building it in Massachusetts in 1940.

Had a sub contact at 1400 and dropped some charges with no results. We circled around all day to delay our arrival at Gela, Sicily invasion beach tomorrow.

JULY 11

Passed the island of Malta. Arrived Gela, Sicily at 0700 on Sunday, July 11.

Cruisers and cans are bombarding the beaches and bombers are flying over the harbor trying to get us all day.

Laid the minefield around Gela all afternoon and was damed near blown to Hades by a JU88 at 1500.

He was about 20,000 feet up and although he was identified as friendly by the Army pilot, he sure did come close to the minelayers that were just crammed with mines.

It would have blown up half the harbor had he made a hit. We fired back at him, but couldn't reach him, that puts us in the invasion now.

They blew up the USS Ancon and a

Liberty Ship that was loaded with ammo. That one rocked the entire bay and it sure made some fourth of July celebration for the boys. Cruisers are still bombarding the beaches.

JULY 12

There has been a continuous air raid on since 0000 and it is now 0330.

We were lying low near the minelayers for the night and planes came down on our starboard quarter and dropped a stick of bombs near a ship 500 yards away.

The next time they came down they missed us by about 50 feet. During the two dives, the entire harbor was firing except us, we were waiting for something or other I still don't know why we waited until this day and never will I guess.

The whole harbor was lit up with flares dropped from the planes and the minelayers on either side of us were cutting them loose from the parachutes with 20mm fire, which is really shooting.

They formed a protected screen of fire over us and the planes must have thought they had something bit down under this heavy fire so he came down again for his second try at us.

He came just as close to us on the starboard side once again.

We got underway after this and laid a smoke screen as other ships started to do also.

The second time the plane came down, which was the first time he actually dove on us, five of us dove into a pile to get out of the way of shrapnel that was flying around.

The three bottom men of the pile were hit by shrapnel and another fellow and I got up off the top of the pile without a scratch.

The bombing started a fire in the emergency radio shack amidship and knocked out the starboard 20mm gun crew on the starboard quarter of the ship.

Another fellow and I put our phongs in our jackets and manned the gun to try and get a crack at the plane when he dived.

The orders from the bridge were to wait

until we could see the plane before firing, but that wasn't possible as it was too dark.

The bridge talker was trying to get in touch with me at my station which was secondary com, but I had the phongs in my jacket and couldn't answer him because of being strapped in the 20mm machine gun saddle at the time.

Half hour later I got around to answering him and the bridge wanted to know what had happened to me, so I told them I was too busy to answer at that time.

The ship has 52 holes and 102 hits on it from these attacks and about 20 men were injured besides the fire in the radio shack.

We were the only ship in the harbor that was hit, so he was after us without a doubt. Sure is one helluva fight going on here. The soldiers are having their troubles too. They have been on the beaches for two days now and haven't moved a foot, and we are planning on taking landing parties ashore to help them out.

We can't take them off as the transports have gone back after more troops in Africa.

JULY 13

Saw gunfire and bombs dropping over the horizon all night as we are standing by a transport that is broken down.

She got underway for Algiers and we are going with her, speed is 5 knots. Today's reports over the radio report an allied battleship being bombed and hit in Gela, Sicily invasion.

There weren't any allied battleships in the harbor, so we figured they were referring to us as an allied battleship. We received a well done on the radio from the squadron commodore, General Eisenhower and Admiral Hewitt.

JULY 14

Field day cleaning up the mess on the ship.

We sighted Tunisia at 1100 and entered the Bizerte swept channel at 1800. At 2000 we met 30 LST's loaded with trucks, tanks and men headed for Sicily.

This journal began on July 17, 1942, and continued through December, 1945.

Don't Worry!

If you miss any of these three commemorative World War II editions, you can pick them up at the Daily Herald office. And if you don't already subscribe, call 942-3221, Ext. 12, today to have all the news of Grundy County delivered to your home every weekday!



In Commemoration... The 50th Anniversary Of the End of World War II.

Fifty years ago, newspapers across the globe celebrated "Peace On Earth" when W.W.II came to an end on August 25, 1945. In commemoration of this anniversary, Ebesco artist Karen Hahn has designed this very special limited edition ornament, *Good Will Toward Men*, limited to 19,450 pieces.



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Be sure to get a keepsake copy of each day. Pick up extras and mail to friends and family members.

Extra copies are available at the Daily Herald office.

Harry Brown's journal holds D-Day details

By Jo Ann Hustis
Herald Writer

SENECA — Navy Radarman 2/C Harry Brown, father to Lorn Brown of Brookfield Township, was aboard the destroyer USS Bates during the Normandy Invasion on June 6, 1944.

Brown, retired salesman for a major plumbing manufacturer in Chicago, died in 1987.

The Normandy Invasion, or D-Day, was the largest military action of its kind that the world has ever known.

The journals Brown kept on the war include a copy of the Allies' official D-Day advisory alerting the Western Naval Task Force the invasion was about to commence, plus two letters he wrote on Operation Overlord, the military code for the conquest.

The advisory was posted on the Bates on May 27, 1944. It said the task force would land the American Army in France on D-Day.

"We are getting into a fight," it read.

"From battleships to landing craft, our is in the main, an American Force. Beside us will be a mainly British Force, landing the British and Canadian troops. Overhead will fly the Allied Expeditionary Air Force.

"In this task force are battleships, cruisers and destroyers, hundreds of landing ships and craft, scores of patrol and escort vessels, and dozens of special assault craft to land and support, supply and reinforce the finest Army ever sent to battle by the United States.

"We all have the same mission, to smash our way onto the beaches and through the coastal defenses into the heart of the enemy's fortress."

The message warned that strong currents and 24-foot tides were expected in the English Channel. The troops also would face prepared positions "manned by Germans who learned from past failures."

Brown wrote in a letter home that his ship covered the landing of 125 Rangers on one of the two St. Marcouf Islands three miles off the Cherbourg Peninsula.

"An old French fort stood inside the 20-foot granite wall that encircled the island. The Rangers were to land two hours before the first troops hit the mainland at 6 a.m., he wrote.

"Our biggest danger would be from the shore batteries — our miles



YOUNG LORN BROWN, now of Brookfield Township, poses in U.S. Navy garb with father Harry Brown (left) and his cousin Lorne.

away, and from the mines. We were in unswampy waters and in easy range of shore batteries," he noted.

"The word 'expedient,' came to mind. I soon banished the thought. Why worry about it? If it happens, it happens. Worry won't protect us."

Brown wrote that the Bates probably had the most dangerous mission of any destroyer escort.

"When day broke, we were closer to the beach than any other ship except one personnel carrier," he added.

"Enemy shells whizzed by us right and left. One cleared our front. Had it been forward about 60 feet, it would have ripped the bridge clean off the good old Bates.

"We had a ringside seat. There

ship and submarine attacks," he said.

"At daybreak, the shore batteries started popping at us and boy, they came close. The battleships and cruisers weren't to open up until 5:50 a.m., but they started banging away at 5:45 a.m. and did a lot of dirt."

The ships all along the Allies' 15-mile sector commenced firing their large guns at the enemy placements along the shore, his letter said.

"The USS Quincey and Tuscaloosa, the HMS Enterprise and HMS Hawkins (the latter two English vessels) were literally tearing up the beach. Between them and the destroyers, plus a squadron of bombers that came over at 6 a.m., the big shore (gun) emplacements were soon silenced," he wrote.

"A formation of bombers flew down the Cherbourg Peninsula and seemed to lay one (bomb) about every 15 feet. The sky was filled with our planes.

"A (German pilot) tried to strafe us and was getting set for another run when a Spitfire caught him broadside and disintegrated the plane."

The Bates and her crew then became lookers because the vessel's assignment was to screen the USS Nevada from enemy submarine and air attack.

"But that attack just didn't materialize on any large scale. On (June 7), the enemy became foxy and started laying drifting mines. Quite a few of our ships were hit by them and we had plenty to worry about," he wrote.

The letter says the Bates remained at Normandy until June 12, then returned to the United States.

He concluded by noting that Civil War Gen. William Sherman was "right when he stated, 'War is hell.'"

Brown received his honorable discharge and returned to civilian life after the war ended.



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MORRIS DAILY HERALD



These chronicles of the men and women of Grundy County who served the United States during World War II are the result of months of planning, interviewing, writing, photography and production by the Daily Herald staff, particularly:

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And special thanks to those who shared their remembrances of World War II to make this historical compilation a reality!

Younger proud to have served

By ELMO RAY YOUNGER

My first visit to Morris was very impressive on the Illinois River and with beautiful elm trees everywhere and the people very friendly.

I had a good friend that was a cook in Weitz Cafe from my home town of Grambling, La. He told Herb Weitz that I would be a good worker after he got his notice to report for Army duty.

I received a letter from Herb Weitz that he would send me a bus ticket to Morris if I was interested in working in a restaurant. I immediately notified Herb to send me a ticket and I would be there as soon as school was out. I went back home to school that September.

I returned to Morris in 1942 and was told that I had to give my Morris address to the local draft board. I felt I had a deep sense of family tradition to assist in the war effort.

I was accepted at the Elmwood Ordnance Ammunition Plant to work in group #27 warehouse.

In October 1942 I was notified by Shirley Heap that I had to report to the Grundy County Selective Service Board to go to Chicago for a physical examination and preliminary induction considerations.

They said, "OK, you got about 60 days to get your affairs in order and we will give you a ticket to Grambling, La., and you report for induction on Dec. 12, 1942."

After training in Texas we were transferred to the Reno army base near Reno, Nevada. I was the drill sergeant and I was in charge of the chemical department with 27 soldiers.

In September 1943 we received orders to go overseas and I was put in a troop train for Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. We arrived in Chicago the third night.

When we arrived in Chicago a guard was assigned to watch me because my wife-to-be was a student at the Cook County school of Nursing and the word went out that I planned to jump off the train to keep from going overseas (it never crossed my mind).

From that point Elmo Younger went on through missions in the United States and in Ireland, England and Belgium that led him to believe the following as he expresses his military and national loyalty.

A veteran is a man of peace. He is the first one up and the first one down, as the American flag passes by. He is a friend to all races of men, begrudging none.

He carried with him the knowledge that it is not the man who is the enemy but enslavement and false ideologies.



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He carried with him the knowledge that it is not the man who is the

enemy but enslavement and false ideologies.

A veteran is a man who understands the awesome price of freedom, justice and democracy. Because above all, the veteran is proud to be an American.

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--- Franklin D. Roosevelt

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