

**My Life in the Military**

**March 10, 1943**

**To**

**December 19, 1945**

**By**

**Vincent E. Adametz**

## Introduction

This is the story of my life in the Military from 10 March 1943 until 19 December 1945. I'm doing this to put the WWII out of my mind. There have been many moments of stress, close encounters and sometimes fun. I have been telling many stories and am now tired for repeating them. This will be from the start, induction, until the end. Upon returning, I was married in about 3-4 weeks and went on with my life. Many happy and sad moments had kept my mind clear of the ordeals that I had gone through. After the Dedication of the WWII Memorial in May of 2004, my mind was filled with nothing but my experiences during the war. I have been through many tough times getting medals, corrections etc, and now this will put it all behind and out of my mind.

After the Dedication, I decided to get a copy of my Military record. I sent a letter to St. Louis and the reply was "my records were destroyed in a 1973 fire" but they sent me a copy of a scorched discharge. They also sent me what was on the back. I replied, through my Congressman, with some of the corrections. I was not a Clerk Typist, as it said, but a Rifleman in the Infantry. They returned with the Campaign Medal with stars and arrowhead (for invasions), Victory Medal, Rifleman as a sharpshooter, the French Croix de Guerre (rope with the colors). I then questioned about the Combat Man Infantryman Badge. I sent copies of documents from the History book. They then recognized the error and sent me the badge, 2 more silver stars for the Campaign ribbon (I was in seven battles not five as the Discharge said) and the Bronze Star medal, which goes with the badge and the Presidential Citation Ribbon. Still missing was the Good Conduct Metal. They claim that I had gone AWOL for 3 days and I claim this a serious mistake, I never went AWOL. I did come home with the medal and ribbon. As of now, Oct. 2006, it is still pending. A picture of the shadow box with all displayed is at the end of this book.

Many things had happened to me during my tour of duty and I will endeavor to put them in the proper order. Some of the dates are not accurate but the happenings were there. I will use my History Book of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division to get some kind of accuracy.

1941

It was Sunday, December 7, 1941. A usual Sunday, attended church in the morning. I had lunch and then during the afternoon, I had the radio on (no TV then) and was listening to the New York Giants and the Washington Redskins professional football game. There was an interruption and the news bulletin came on with the Japanese Bombing of Pearl Harbor. It was shocking. Then the President, later in the day, came on with the announcement of declaration of War with Japan. Declaration of war with Germany came shortly afterwards..

The rest of the year was just shock. Christmas was not as usual. The family tried to enjoy Jesus' Birthday and we did the best we could. We were ready for tough times ahead. When New Year's Day came there wasn't much to celebrate. New York City did the usual with the clock but very little enthusiasm was put into it.

1942

This year, I knew, would be a tough time. It was now a time of War. The Government enacted the Selective Service (induction into the Military) in which I was compelled to sign up. When I turned 19 on May 12<sup>th</sup>, I did registered and was classified as A. The country started to switch over to War conditions.

I was working at Forstman Woolen Mill. The Company started to switch over to Military material. We were producing, Khaki for the Army, Blue for Navy, material. We did put in a lot of overtime, as the demand was great.

As the year progressed, my Brother, John, did enlist, my Uncle Mac was inducted. Uncle Mac was older than John but was not married and was free. He was put in the Air Force Engineers. He took Basic training in Biloxi, Mississippi. John, who thought he could chose a branch of service, was put in the 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and took Basic training some place in New York state.

I was now alone at home. I was too young to be called up yet. I joined the newly organized Air Raid Wardens. As time progressed, I became a District Leader. During the summer, my friend George Kurak, who lived a few houses away, and I did many things together such as sports. We were the same age. One day we decided to date some girls. He chose Mary and I chose Marge. We took them to a double header baseball game in New York City. It was between the Yankees and Athletics. George broke up with Mary but I stuck with Marge and she joined the Air Raid Wardens Organization. Rules were strict. During a practice blackout, all lights were to be put out. A couple of guys were sitting in a car and were smoking. Marge told them to put the cigarettes out but they refused. She called me and we issued one of them a summons. We went to court and he was fined for breaking the rules.



Air Raid Wardens Arm Band  
District Leader

1943

Being registered and classified as A, I got my greeting. I received the letter, dated February 20, 1943. I was ordered to report for induction on March 3, 1943. I was to be at School #8 at 8 AM. I then boarded the bus and went to Newark for my physical. I did pass and now had to report for duty on March 10, 1943. I was given 7 days to get my private life in order.




My call to Duty

App. not Req.

Prepare in Duplicate

Local Board No. 9      2  
 Bergen County      003  
**FEB 19 1943**      009  
 School #8, Cedar Street  
 Garfield, New Jersey

(LOCAL BOARD DATE STAMP WITH CODE)



February 20, 1943  
(Date of mailing)

**ORDER TO REPORT FOR INDUCTION**

The President of the United States,

To Vincent Edward Adametz  
(First name) (Middle name) (Last name)

Order No. 11,215

**GREETING:**

Having submitted yourself to a local board composed of your neighbors for the purpose of determining your availability for training and service in the land or naval forces of the United States, you are hereby notified that you have now been selected for training and service therein.

You will, therefore, report to the local board named above at School #8, Cedar Street  
(Place of reporting)

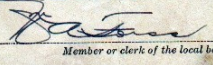
at 8:15 a. m., on the 3rd day of March, 19 43  
(Hour of reporting)

This local board will furnish transportation to an induction station. You will there be examined, and, if accepted for training and service, you will then be inducted into the land or naval forces.

Persons reporting to the induction station in some instances may be rejected for physical or other reasons. It is well to keep this in mind in arranging your affairs, to prevent any undue hardship if you are rejected at the induction station. If you are employed, you should advise your employer of this notice and of the possibility that you may not be accepted at the induction station. Your employer can then be prepared to replace you if you are accepted, or to continue your employment if you are rejected.

Willful failure to report promptly to this local board at the hour and on the day named in this notice is a violation of the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, as amended, and subjects the violator to fine and imprisonment.

If you are so far removed from your own local board that reporting in compliance with this order will be a serious hardship and you desire to report to a local board in the area of which you are now located, go immediately to that local board and make written request for transfer of your delivery for induction, taking this order with you.

  
 Member or clerk of the local board.

D. S. S. FORM 150  
 (Revised 1-15-43)

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 16-52271-6

Official Notification

March 10, 1943, I reported and was put on a bus. My Mom, Sister and Bob (my nephew) came to watch me leave. We all had tears in our eyes. I was then transported to Newark and then by train to Fort Dix. What an ordeal, get in line and move along, getting shots in both arms. Then came the Army clothing. Some fit and some didn't. You take it and change from Civilian to Soldier. All of my Civilian clothes were packed and shipped back home.

After a few days, I was again put on a train and finally got to Fort Jackson, SC (never heard of that place). I arrived and was assigned to "I" Company of the 423<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment in the 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. This Division was just activated with a lot of 19 year olds. This was my home for the next several months



106th Infantry Division



Induction Photo

Basic training was gruesome. Get up early, eat, and then just about anything that was scheduled. There were obstacle courses, running, M1 Rifle training etc. Too many things to mention. One course was crawling on my back under barbwire with machine guns firing over my head. Forced hikes with full pack. I think that was 5 miles in 55 minutes with a 5-minute break. Running, climbing walls, you name it, I done it. Rifle practice was interesting. I did like that. I did have a rifle at home and went hunting with Uncle Mac several times. I was taught that the rifle was my best friend. You take care of it and keep it clean. I was trained to take it apart and put it back with my eyes blindfolded. I was also taught "you kill or get killed", horrible thought but that was Infantry life. Lecture classes under the pine trees. One time I sort of dozed off and the Sergeant yelled at me "Adametz, run to that tree and back on the double". When I got back, I was wide-awake. There was one time that we got fully packed and went on a long hike. It took all day with a stop for lunch. The food was brought out on trucks and we got it and just sat around.

Something that was interesting was going out at night on a hike. We would do problems using the compass and going to different objectives.

There were times for recreation. Anything to relax. I had time to send letters home, to John and Uncle Mac. John was now in England. Uncle Mac was on his way to Africa and then on to Italy. Sending and receiving mail was always a happy time. Margaret was always sending me mail..

One time we did get riot training. There was some problem in Columbia with some religious group. We were trained to use our rifle with bayonets mounted and shown how to break up crowds. We would form a straight line and have our rifles down and pointed at the crowd and move toward them. We were on alert for a week-end but were never called upon..

Finally Basic training was completed in late May, early June. I was promoted to PFC and given a 2-week furlough. I, along another soldier from NJ, left Columbia and took the local train to Newark. That was some ride. Took all night and they stopped at almost every city on the way. When we got to Newark, we needed to get cleaned up from all of the soot that got into the cars. I did clean up and took the bus to Passaic and then to Garfield and down the hill to home. It was nice to see the family and Marge. It was a nice 2 weeks and also getting engaged to Marge. My future wife.



Engagement Photo

When I arrived in Newark (two weeks ago), I changed my return trip to the Silver Meteor, a fast express train from Newark to Columbia. It was tough leaving the family again but I was in the Army now. That trip back was a blessing. Air conditioning and a nice clean ride.

It was late June that I was back in training. The next events are not too clear. I don't know when I left for shipment. We did have some time for extensive Infantry training. I think this was for about 2 months. It was some time in late August that I was pulled out as a replacement for overseas. I was shipped out to Ft. Meade, MD. This was the processing center for replacements. When the processing was done in about a few weeks, I was ready. While I was there, I called home and my Mother and Marge came down to visit me. It was now that Marge wanted to get married. I replied, no, I don't know where I am going or when I will be back, if I got back, or how I would be when I did.

In packing there were 2 duffel bags with numerous items. "A" Bag was the one that I would carry. "B" Bag was the one that went ahead and put on the boat. I don't recall what was in each bag. I think "B" Bag had things that were used for stock when I arrived at my destination. At this point I didn't know where I was going. Now was the time to leave. We were loaded onto trucks and taken to the train Depot. The train would go to the shipping port. When we got to the train depot, I was about to get on and had one foot on the step when my name was called out. I stepped down and said "here Sir". The officer came to me and checked my identity and said "you ain't going, get on that truck". I obeyed him and I was returned to Ft. Meade. This was late at night.

After a nights sleep, I went to Headquarters and inquired as to what was wrong. All I was told was that my records were not in order. Because of this delay, which turned out to be till late November, I

was free to do some things. One was getting weekend passes to go home. It was a pleasure getting to see the family and Marge for a few months.

During this delay, things were moving. Once more I was ready and in checking my bags, I was asked where my other pair of glasses were. I remarked that they were in the "B" Bag that was gone. This led to a longer delay. I had to have two pair of glasses and now had to wait for the second pair.

Finally, I was loaded onto the USS General A. E. Anderson, a troop ship. This was a new ship and fresh off a "shake down cruise" and had repairs done and ready to sail. The trip took from November 22 till December 2. It was a nice voyage, it felt more like a cruise, sitting in the sun and relaxing. It was a zig zag trip and took longer. This was because of German U-boats that were lurking in the Atlantic. Now I knew I was going to Europe.

It took 12 days to cross the Atlantic Ocean. The boat docked in Casablanca on December 4<sup>th</sup>. The next stop was to a camp for a few days. I repacked all of my belongings and got ready to load into the 40 and 8 railroad cars. That is for 40 humans or 8 cattle. Very small and crowded. I think it took about 1-½ days to get to Oran. There I was in Camp Lion. There were some mountains called Lion's Mountains, there by getting its name. I was there until after Christmas.

This was my first Christmas away from home and I really missed the family. I think Christmas Day was on Monday. I went to Mass on Sunday morning, Midnight Mass and then Mass on Monday. Three Masses in two days. I really needed that. After all I was an Infantryman and was almost certain to be in Combat and I prayed for God's guidance.

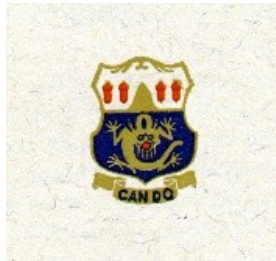
Christmas Day was not good. When we got up in the morning and there was a dense fog. There was an Air Force base nearby and the planes would fly over the camp. One flew over and then I heard a noise like oil drums rolling down the road. I looked out and the fog started to lift and there it was. The plane didn't make it. They crashed into the mountain and you could see the path the plane took. A streak of burning parts going down the side. A couple of us took a walk up to see the wreckage. We couldn't get too close as the MP's had the area roped off. There were 8 people that died in that crash. They were on their way back home for the Holidays.

This made me wake up to reality now. What was I getting into now. I prayed to God to protect me from harm. Soon after Christmas we had to pack up again and load into boats again. Now we docked in Naples, Italy. Now I was assigned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division. The time was about early January 1944

1944



3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division



15th Infantry Regiment

When I arrived, I was assigned to K Company, 15<sup>th</sup> Regiment. I was supplied with new Clothes, a new riffle etc. Being a new replacement, I was made a scout. That was right up front to guide my platoon into combat. I had to admit that I was confused and somewhat scared but I could not object. Our first time out was for a practice landing. We moved to the dock and boarded a British boat. We sailed to an area for the practice landing. The weather was very bad, stormy, windy, rough water etc. We loaded into the landing craft and the water was so rough, most of the men were throwing up over the top of the craft. I was all hunched underneath hugging my rifle. I was seasick, but held on. The landing failed and we returned to the boat. I heard that we had lost some men and equipment due to the stormy weather. They gave us some hot chocolate and we returned to Naples.

Upon arrival back at camp, we were told to “saddle up” as we going to leave. The time was about January 20<sup>th</sup>. When fully loaded, we sailed to the Anzio area. This was our area of attack. It was January 22<sup>nd</sup> at 2 am when we loaded into the landing craft and did the landing. Being a scout, I was the first off the craft. I did not get my feet wet, the water was receding, and I ran in and headed for our objective. I was walking around with my rifle, with bayonet fixed, and probing haystacks and just looking. There was no opposition in our area. I did get my feet wet from walking around till daybreak.

After getting to our objectives, we went into reserve. This didn't last too long. The allies attacked the German positions that were there. We did make some progress but when the Rangers attacked, they were ambushed and literally wiped out. With this we were moved to the front line. As we were moving up in the canals I saw all those dead Rangers. I got really scared. As we were moving, we stopped and I remember getting some water from the canal. We had special tablets to put in to kind of purify the water. Later I realized that I was drinking water that contained all of those dead Rangers.

We attacked and tried to take the town of Cisterna. This failed and we just held what we had gotten in our push. This went on for some time and then we halted. We dug in and held there. We then prepared for the German counter attacks. We were shelled, shot at, you name it they did that. We finally settled down during the early part of February. There were lots of gun battles. Being a “dough boy” I just followed the orders. It was a come and go but finally settled down. The Germans, we were told, would make a major push to get us back to the sea.

It was the end February that it happened. We were hit hard. We held our positions. They pushed some of the other troops back but we were bypassed. At one time I stuck my head out of my foxhole and looked around. The shelling was really heavy. I just got my head down. Shells were falling all around and it was scary. We had lots of mud in our holes and I was just smoking cigarettes one after another. My eyes were burning from the smoke. It was my buddy, in the hole next to mine, that looked out and he told me that he saw one shell hit my hole. It just sunk in the mud and did not go off. It was a DUD. I thanked God for that one. If it went off I would have been killed for sure. I got covered with plenty of mud.

After a while, I was wondering why we were not getting supplies. This was for three days. When the German troops stopped and pulled back to the original lines, things got quiet. It was during this time that I was told that we were surrounded and they just by-passed us and moved on. The Allies then pushed them back and now the line was set for a long time.

Now things were settled down again. We never did anything during the daylight. All activity took place after it got dark. Gun battles were on and off. Both sides were just feeling each other out. I was coming back from Battalion Headquarters one night and I was told to stop. It was another soldier who was on guard duty. He was aiming his rifle at me and asked the password. Ooops, I didn’t get the latest password. He fired one shot and it landed by my foot. I got scared and started to plead with him and told him who I was. He then said “Advance to be recognized”! I moved forward with my hands up and when he saw who I was he was more scared than me. He said “Gee Vince, I am sorry but glad I missed”. Talk about close calls.

As time went on, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry was pulled off the front line for a rest in early March. We were sent back on the beach. Showers, shave, clean clothes hot food and rest (?). Things at the beach were worse than up front. The Germans used lots of artillery and were shelling the beachhead constantly. While on this rest, I got all of my back mail. Nice to get all of those letters from home, including letters dated every day from Marge. The packages were great. My whole platoon enjoyed them. I did have to go to the Aid Station because of some sort of diarrhea. Well what a surprise, I was evacuated from the beachhead and sent back to the Hospital in Naples. I think it was a case of dysentery, which I found out from reading books after I was back home. While at the Hospital, I got new glasses, good meals etc. I then thought of my Uncle Mac. He was located at Foggia Valley with the Air Force. I went to the Red Cross and gave them his address. While sitting on my cot one day I heard a familiar whistle. I looked up and there was Uncle Mac. We just hugged and were so happy. He told me that when he got the message from the Red Cross, he went to his Commander and wanted a three-day pass and a Jeep so he could come to see me. His Commander said, hey Mac, I can’t just do that. Uncle Mac then said he would go AWOL and steal a Jeep. His Commander then gave him a Jeep and three-day pass and here he was. We had a great time for three days. When the folks back home found this out they put an article in the Herald News about the reunion.



At Evacuation Hospital in Naples

Well my time at the Hospital was over. I was feeling better and was sent back to my outfit. When I got back, I was sort of glad to see my buddies again. While there we were listening to the radio and to Axis Sally. She was an American and would spread propaganda. She told us that she knew we were in the Pine Grove at rest. She said they would leave the 3<sup>rd</sup> alone for the rest and get us when we are back on the front line. We laughed. The 3<sup>rd</sup> had a reputation of a tough outfit and the Germans hated us.

Once again, we were back up front. Not much action except for the usual patrols and gun fights. The enemy sort of feeling us out as to what we would do. This went on into the month of May. On the 12<sup>th</sup>, I celebrated my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. What a place to be. Now came the time to break out of the beachhead.

It was on May 23<sup>rd</sup> that the beachhead was to move. All assault Troops moved out and we were to attack Cisterna. We were starting to move up when we had to stop. There were snipers in the area and we had to drop all of our equipment, except our rifle, ammo, rations and crawl on our bellies to our next objective. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion attacked at H-Hour May 23<sup>rd</sup> on the left of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion in reserve. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion attacked in line of companies, L, K and I. L Company lead the jump off from a drainage ditch located 1,000 yards to the east of Isola Bella. L Company immediately ran into stiff resistance from two houses, tank destroyers moved up and reduced the home. However, L Company had been reduced from 150 effectives to roughly only 30 or 40 effectives. It hurt them so that the attack lagged for three hours. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion then changed sides and attacked on the right rear with the remnants of L Company on the southern edge of the attack. However, the rest of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion then began to receive fire from the "Chateau Woods" 1,000 yards east of their objective a junction east of Isola Bella.

Here is something I received from a young lady in the mid-west college. She was doing a book on the Anzio Beachhead. She interviewed me for about 2 hours. When she was done with the book, she sent me a copy. In one of the stories was one from someone else and it was called "A Soldiers Prayer". It was found on a body of a soldier that was killed in the attack on Cisterna.

#### A SOLDIER'S PRAYER

"Look, God, I have never spoken to you, but now I want to say, "How do you do."  
 You see, God, they told me you didn't exist, and like a fool, I believed all this.  
 Last night from a shell hole I saw you sky, I figured right then they had told me a lie

Had I taken time to see things you made, I'd have known they weren't calling a spade a spade.

I wonder, God, if you'd shake my hand, somehow, I feel that you will understand.

Funny I had to come to this hellish place before I had time to see your face.  
Well, I guess there isn't much more to say, but I'm sure glad, God, I met you today  
I guess the "zero-hour will be here, but I'm not afraid since I know you're near.

The signal! Well, God, I'll have to go, I like you lots, this I want you to know.  
Look now, this will be a horrible fight, who knows, I may come to your house'  
tonight.

Though I wasn't friendly to you before, I wonder God, if you'd wait at your door.  
Look, I'm crying! Me! Shedding tears! I wish I had known you these many years.  
Well, I have to go now, God, good-bye! Strange, since I met you, I'm not afraid to  
die."

Again nobody knows who wrote this only that it was found on his body. Think about this!

It was at this time that the battle sleds were deployed and sent into action. The tanks hauling them moved up the north-south road to the junction and then turned right on the east-west road. At about 200 yards east of the junction the tanks ran into drainage ditches too wide to cross so the infantry left the sleds and moved on foot to two houses 200 yards away. This move was coordinated with the rest of the battalion.

L Company's commander was wounded at this time and the remainder of the company stayed at the first objective to reorganize, which it was later attached to I Company.

K Company moved up a drainage ditch and ran into anti-personnel mines which they lost roughly ten men. The rest of the day was spent clearing the "Kraut Woods" and adjacent houses. The ammunition and pioneering platoon built a road from near the line of departure to their area so that the tank destroyers could move over non-mine filled areas.

On the morning of the 24th the 3rd Battalion was alerted to move North up the Fosso Feminamorta, following the 2nd Battalion, to pass through the 2nd Battalion north of Cisterna and capture objectives 1,000 yards northeast of the town. The battalion moved out at 1630 following the 2nd Battalion north to the railroad tracks and then southeast to La Villa. L Company following 2nd Battalion from a large ditch (200 to 300 yards from smaller ditches) ran into a strong concentration of friendly artillery fire just after passing La Villa and drew back to the protection of one of the smaller ditches.

When the column moved forward again they crossed Highway 7 just north of the cemetery. At the same time the 7th Infantry began an attack on Cisterna itself from the northwest. Although the Germans had no observation the 3rd Battalion suffered several casualties. The battalion drew back west of Highway 7 reorganized and then moved several hundred yards north, crossed the highway and then proceeded east towards their objectives on a compass bearing. I Company was then leading.

The 3rd Battalion reached their objective the cross roads two miles northeast of Cisterna and the high ground immediately northwest of the crossroad. The battalion put up defensive positions prior to daylight on May 25th. The battalion had orders to attack at 0630 that morning toward Cori, with the 1st battalion on its right between it and the Cori-Cisterna Road. However, the attack couldn't be coordinated by that time due to supply problems and the battalion remained in position.

The attack jumped off at 1600 with no opposition encountered. At 1700 however, the the troops were caught in the same air attack that hit 2nd Battalion which wounded the 2nd Battalion commander, LTC Bennett. Maj. Neddersen assumed command of the 2nd Battalion. The battalion had a series of objectives on its way to Cori, which they achieved with no difficulty. The battalion reached the road junction just west of Cori at 2030, then moved due north to the Cori-Giuglianello road closing and completing organization for defense by 2300.

During the evening of the 24th, the 3rd Battalion was relieved by the 1st Battalion and moved a

short distance north to be a part of a coordinated attack on the town of Cori itself. The 3rd Battalion would be on the 1st Battalion's left during the assault. Before the jump off 1st Battalion drew some sporadic enemy artillery fire probably due to the tank destroyers assembled just to the north of their position. 1st Battalion suffered light casualties.

We finally reached the foot of the Mountains. The enemy moved out and headed back to Rome. When we got to the top, there was a German kitchen truck smoldering by the crossroad. We raided it and got some pumpernickel bread, cans of sardines in mustard and found some bottles of Johnny Walker whiskey. After looking back at the beach, we were amazed by what the Germans saw. They could see us when we went to the latrine. A bunch of us were so glad to be out of there, we all got drunk. Now when there was a pause in action and we were in reserve, we were to "dig in". I took my shovel and scratched the ground. There was sentry on guard, he was drunk also, he said "halt" and was aiming his rifle at me. I finally got him to put his rifle down and we just laughed. The next day we were on the march, moving up toward Rome. Well we paid for getting drunk. This was the first time for me and I was really sweating now. While were walking, we were strafed by our own Air Force. Fortunately no one was hurt.

The next objective for us was to take Artena and then on to Valmontone. Somewhere we had gone into a house. Our objective was to occupy it. When we got there and set in, I was inside and the other troops were walking around when there was some machine guns firing. The Germans were all around the house. I think I emptied a couple of clips through the window. Some one yelled to get out. They had an opening in which we all evacuated the house and got out safely.

We did have some pretty good gun fights but we did make progress. During a brief break, I noticed some signs for the 441<sup>st</sup> Anti-Aircraft units. I went looking for a friend. I found his group and asked for John Berkowitz. They said he was under a half-track sleeping. I just went in and woke him up.

So here was another reunion with someone from back home. John's girl friend Ollie was back in NJ. She and Marge were very good friends. We enjoyed our visit. The 441<sup>st</sup> was attached to our Battalion for the duration of the war.

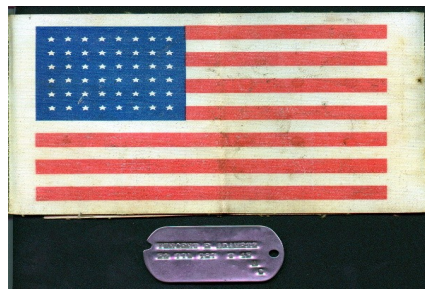
We continued our journey on to Rome. We got to Rome on June 4 and were set up in a camp near the Coliseum. It was really great to get a break from all of the fighting. We now got new clothes, showered and shaved. Before we did that, an Italian Photographer came by and took our pictures. After clean-up he came back for more pictures. We were now told that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division would Garrison Rome.



June 4, 1944 in Rome

It was on June 6<sup>th</sup>, we got the news of the Normandy invasion. Boy were we happy. We felt like the war would be over soon. How wrong that was. During our stay in Rome, we were running patrols in and around the main railroad station. Things were nice and quiet again. With the announcement of the Normandy landing, the entire campaign in Italy was just about forgotten.

Our stay in Rome did not last very long. We were finally told to pack up. We were heading back to Naples. Who knew what was next. It was another invasion scheduled. We did make one practice landing and then boarded the ships. We did not have any idea where we were going. The time came when we knew that we were headed for the Riviera in Southern France. We were all given armbands, with the USA Flag, to identify us as Americans. The Free French were also fighting in the area at this time. Once again I was in the first wave for the landing. I was trained to use a Bangalore Torpedo. This was dynamite taped to a long stick. I was to hit the beach and blow out the barbed wire so as to let the other troops get through.



Arm Band worn for invasion of Southern France

Prior to landing we could hear the Battleships shelling the shore. We then climbed down the cargo nets and loaded into the landing craft. The Battleships stopped and then the Air Force started to strafe and bomb. We then broke out of our circling and formed a single horizontal line and headed for the shore. As we closed in, the Air Force stopped and it got very quiet. As we neared the shore, the sailor that was operating our boat told us "ok you dough boys, get your heads down, we are going in, way in". At this point there were 50 caliber machine guns on the back of the boat and they just opened up and kept firing at the shore line. When we landed, he dropped the ramp and I ran in and blew out the barbed wire and I looked back and saw that the boat was stuck in the sand.

As we moved in to our objective, we ran in to a minefield. They were called shoe mines and were used to blow off your heel and put you out of action. After we found the pattern, we moved on and we (just as on Anzio) found no opposition. We got our objective and watched all of the boats unloading all of the tanks, trucks, artillery, jeeps and all of personnel for setting up the beachhead. Being there was no opposition, the troops that took up the battle from us, were put on any kind of transportation and tried to catch the enemy. As a result of this, we had to walk, walk, walk and walk some more. I think we walked about 40 miles. It was very enduring with the heat and even some of the men started to throw things away. Some of them even threw their rifles away. That was a no, no. I was taught that my rifle was your best friend.

I guess with all of the walking, we passed through many small towns and we were chasing the Germans. We bypassed Trets and then past Aix and on to Avignon. The first big city that was taken was Montelimar. That was some battle. When we went through, we had to avoid a stretch of highway because of the slaughter. This was where the Air Force caught the Germans and litterly slaughtered them. The stretch from dead bodies, horses, etc was overwhelming. It was good to get past that area

The next march was around Valence and on to Chambery and then to Lyon. The next big objective was Besancon. We by-passed many small villages again. We were west of Geneva in Switzerland. The next was Vesoul. In these fast moves, I don't recall any real battles. It was just move forward. The Germans were starting their retreat back to Germany. It was like the end of war was near.

From the landings we have covered over 400 miles to the foothills of the Vosges Mountains. There were some gun battles and we were being shelled and a couple of men got wounded. Another GI and I were ordered to take them back to the Aid Station. On returning, we got lost and couldn't find our Company. We wandered into the woods (no man's land) and were getting shelled. We then retreated back to the main road. With the fast moving, we finally found the Company. We were exhausted. When we reported they said we were listed as MIA. At that time there was a call for volunteers to go back to Division HQ for training with flame-throwers. It was recommended that we take that opportunity. We did and we got hot meals and training. This was in anticipation of approaching combat in the Maginot and Siegfried (concrete bunkers) lines. We were now assigned to Battalion Headquarters.

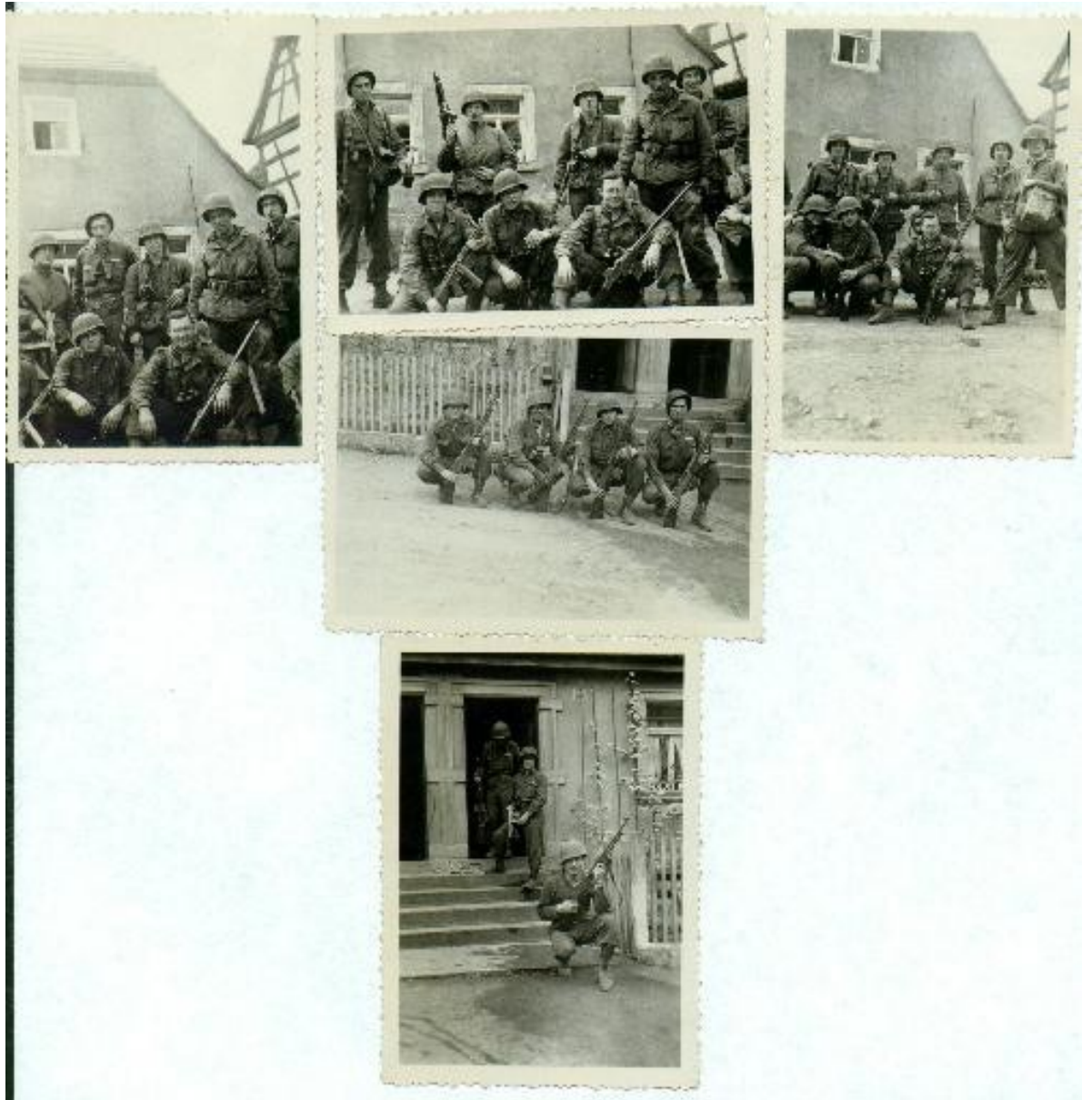
While in the Mountains it was bitter cold. I was on Guard duty one night, at Battalion Headquarters, I was letting out breath, and it was frost. You could see the stars and could see in the distance the German patrols. Nobody made any attempts to fight. A General came to consult with the Officers about conditions and he remarked "I have to get these men the hell out of here". After a few days we were relieved and sent to the rear.

From the Vosges Mountains, we advanced on to Strasbourgh. While we were there, things were quiet. I had met a nice French family and I was invited to spend Christmas Eve with them. They had a very nice Daughter, Germaine, who I sort of liked. I was planning on a nice Christmas, but what happened was the "Battle of the Bulge". This was a big drive of the Germans to pierce our lines. After the war, I learned that the 423<sup>rd</sup> Regiment of the 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (my basic training outfit) had bore the bulk of the battle. My son-in law's Father was a member but he did escape and found refuge with a German family until returning back to allied line. As a result of this setback, we were called upon to pack up and move out.

1945

What happened, the Germans created a pocket in the Colmar region. We were called back to combat to help eliminate this. There was one attack that I remember was the use of huge searchlights during a night attack. It was sort of odd but very capable to fight in. One occasion we were called upon (flame-throwers) to go and try to "burn" out a holdout of Germans. After seizing the situation, I recommended using rifles with phorous grenades. This did work. This was the only time we were close to using them.

Now the flame-throwers were disbanded and Battle Patrol groups were formed. Our job was to patrol areas for movement for opposition. It was sort of easy, but it was only for observance and not to draw fire from the enemy. We were sort of in reserve and called on many times and had to report back to Battalion of our findings. It was sort of easy but at times was dangerous.



Battle Patrol



Battle Patrol Transportation  
Bottom photo is of me

From the Colmar pocket we moved north and got ready to cross the Rhine River. This was in the Worms's area. The Engineers were building a platoon bridge for the tanks and supplies to move across. We used landing craft to cross, oh hum, back to landing craft again. This makes 3 times I have been moved in them. When we got to the other side we attacked south of Frankfort and headed toward Nurnberg. We went through and the city was just about leveled by Air Raids. We went through the city house by house to clear it. It was a tedious job and tough but we succeeded. I did find a German camera and some film. I was taking pictures how much rubble there was. After taking the City, we were camped at the Airport.



Nurnberg Destruction



Top left, Battalion Chaplain. Top right, two of my Buddies of Battle Patrol

Bottom is myself in window of my room  
while on patrol in Nurnberg  
Notice all of the Destruction

After a few days rest we moved out. My Brother, John, was in the area with the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry. He saw our signs and recognized them. He then got in a jeep and tried to locate me. He was too late. He got there in the afternoon but we had moved out in the morning. I sure would like to have seen him.

From Nurnberg we moved on toward Augsburg. Being in the Battle Patrol, we were told to enter the city to check it out. We came back with their surrender. The troops then moved into the city. I had left all of my equipment behind to take the surrender and never got back to get it. That is where I lost most of those rolls of film that I was taking of the sights. I lost some good pictures and other items I wanted to take home.

When we moved out of the City, we got held up on the road. We got a notice to be on the alert for a new German explosive. They were using miniature tanks loaded with dynamite and were remote controlled. We heard an explosion and we just halted. I was on a half-track. We were ordered to reconnoiter the road going to a small town and check it out. On the way up, there was a German soldier running up and all guns opened up firing and trying to get him. He was going up in a ditch and made it to the top. When we went up, there were no signs he had been wounded. We did find what looked like some raw meat along the road. I later realized it was the remains of a couple of my buddies, they were blown up while looking at the miniature tank. That made me feel sick.

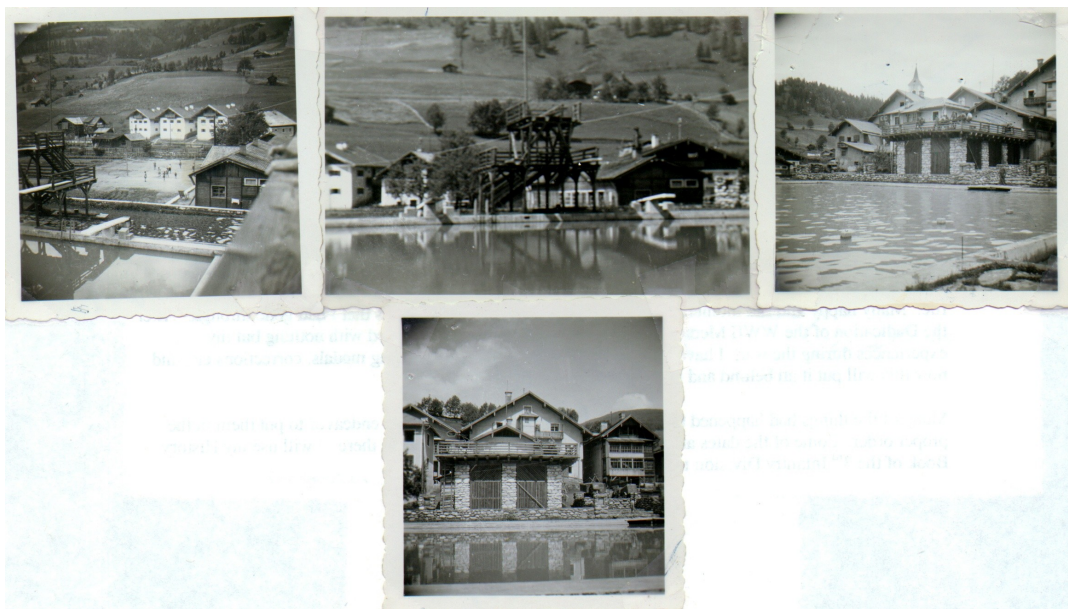
We now were on the march again. Things were happening very fast. The Germans were retreating and we had a hard time keeping up with them. We made it to Munich and then headed for Austria. Out of Augsburg, we were running a patrol between a couple of small towns. Things were going well but one patrol didn't return on time. We took another jeep and went out. We found them and they were ambushed and all shot up. We got the wounded out and then went up into the woods. We did lose Smitty who was shot up. We later learned he was paralyzed. We did capture 5 men and the machine-gun. We took them back to Headquarters and one of our men got mad. At this time, in real anger, he told the prisoners that they were free to go. They got scared and started to run. The soldier just opened up with his Tommy gun and shot them all. He then took his 45 revolver and shot each one in the head to make sure they were all dead. We could not stop him and I noticed that the Battalion Commander was standing in a window and saw the whole thing. He didn't say nor do anything, as he understood what had happened. As they say "War is Hell"!

We finally got to move again. We were on our way to Salzburg. While we were heading south east on the Autobahn things looked scary. It was near the end of the war and there were hundreds of German soldiers (with their guns, etc) going the opposite way. They were running from the Russians, so we were told. Now all of us "old" veterans got scared. What if there was a die-hard soldier aiming at me I got killed? After all some guys have been with the 3<sup>rd</sup> since Africa and they got scared also. I was considered an old one and it had me worried. We went past Salzburg and stopped in Radstadt to regroup. The war was over but we had to establish the line with the Russians.

While in Radstadt, I found a photo shop run by a young Austrian girl. We both worked in the dark room and developed and printed whatever film I had. Too bad I lost most of the good ones back in Augsburg. I did come home with a lot.

Things were quiet somewhat but we (battle patrol group) got a call. We had to grab a jeep and head to a small town in the mountains. Word got back that Herman Goering was there and being guarded by some SS troops. A citizen came out and told our officers he would be back later at night with more details. We took the jeep and it was amazing how the Germans just tore down fences and made room for us to get through. The area was full of German troops, with their arms, but to them (also) the war was over. When we got to the area to meet this person, we waited for hours. We finally gave up. Nobody ever came to meet us.

Now we had to move again, this time in late June. This time to Wagrain, deeper in Austria, to set the line with the Russians. We never did have any contact with them and we settled down in a nice resort and called this home for a while. To us the war was over, thank God.



Wagrain Austria 1945  
Our home at Resort



Scenes from Wagrain, Austria

Being called “this is home” we had taken over a nice resort. Nice rooms, swimming pool, etc. The pool was drained for cleaning and there was many weapons (preserved) taken out and confiscated. When the pool was cleaned and refilled, the water used was from the springs and creeks in the mountains. The water was ice cold. Even being late June, it was refreshing to take a dip. We did get plenty of rest. I was now a clerk working in the office. We took care of all records and reports etc.



Lt. Col. Connell, Commander  
Sgt. Jack Noel, Patrol Leader, myself by the Pool

The war was still going in the Pacific with the Japanese. Being a regular Army division, we (us old vets) were wondering if we would be called upon to move to some place in the Pacific. There was finally a decision and it was printed in the Division newspaper, “The Front Line” , and it clarified the situation. Anyone who had seen front line action back in Italy would NOT go to the Pacific. What a relief that was.

In early July, it was announced that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division would serve as occupation troops in Germany. Now we were packed up and headed back to Germany. We were stationed in the resort town of Waldeck. We took over the occupation duty and occupied a local Hotel. I had my own room, clean clothes, just a nice comfortable situation. Nice but nothing like home, which I missed a lot.



Our home in Waldeck, Germany, note my room

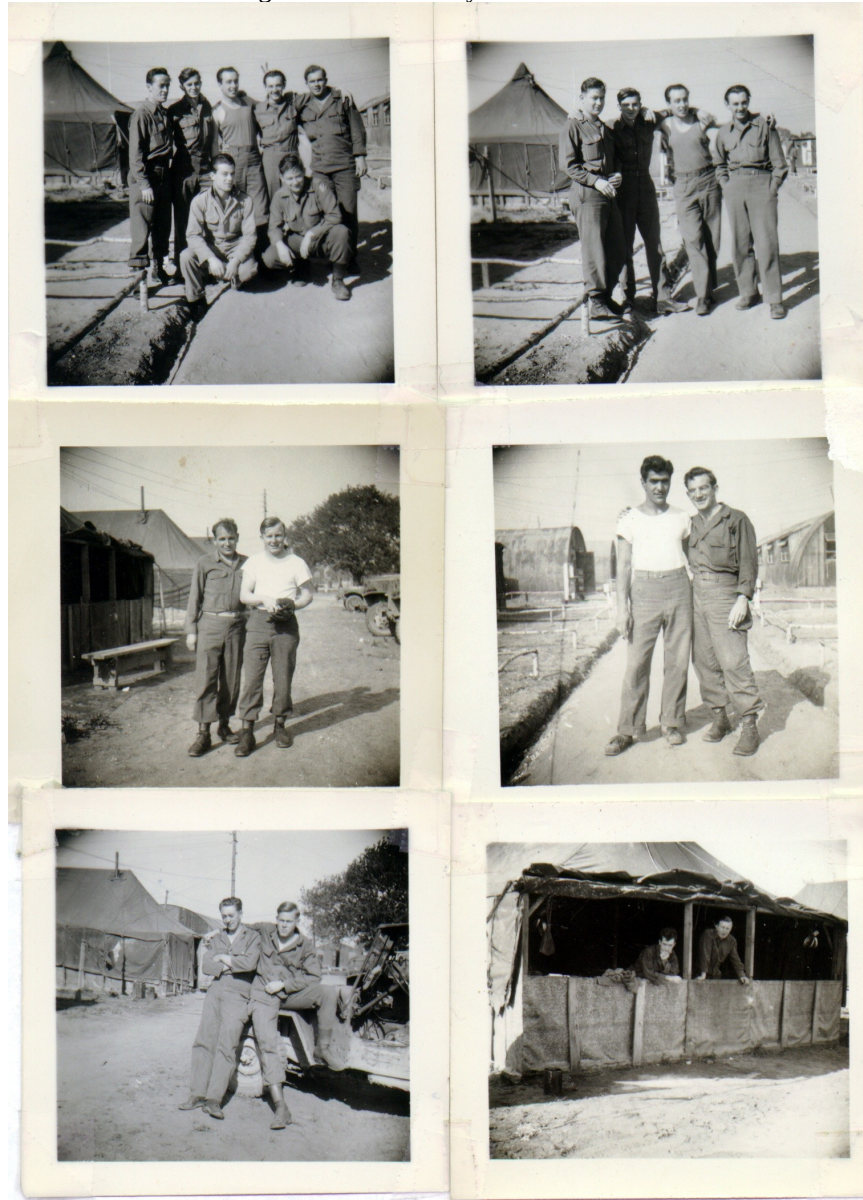


Post war Photo

Now we settled down for, hopefully, a short time. I wondered when I would be sent home. Most of us were at the “critical score” stage. A system was set up by points. This was determined by time of duty, time spent in combat, etc. I had a total of 76 points. This was considered high and I should be going home very soon. Meanwhile, I was enjoying things as they were. We got to know the people in Waldeck. They were all very nice and willing to cooperate to get things back to normal for us and them. I had met several nice German families. I was even invited to their home for dinners.

Now we were going into August. We should be going soon. Time finally arrived and we were sorted out and now I had to get ready to leave. It was sad to leave Waldeck. Most of all we would leave some of our new found buddies. But we really wanted to get home and get on with our lives. Before I left, I was approached about re-enlisting. They wanted me to re-enlist, I would be promoted to Staff Sergeant and I would get a 3 month leave of absence. I was almost ready to say yes but I was thinking of getting home as I had my Fiance waiting for me. I declined the offer and then left.

I don't recall how many, but there were quite a few when we left. We were transferred into some other groups. I was put into an outfit, Artillery, and we would bring their "Colors, Flags, Insignia etc." back to the USA. We were shipped to Camp Chicago, which was located outside of Paris, France. We were living in Tents and among plenty of troops going home. It was now going into September and October. We just kept waiting, waiting but nothing was happening. We did get to see a lot of Paris. I saw some of the great sites. The Eiffel Tower, Arch of Triumph, the Notre Dame Cathedral and many more. I could not go up the Eiffel Tower as it was closed. It was still a sight to see. I just tried to enjoy myself as best as I could. I did see some of the famous shows in Paris. I even got a 3 day pass and gone to Brussels, Belgium. The main sight to see there was the little statue of a boy peeing. He was the son of a famous leader and got lost. His Father said he would put up a statue of him where ever he was found and what he was doing. That is what he was doing. The statue is very small and hard to find.



Just a bunch of GI's waiting to go home.  
Camp Chicago outside of Paris, France

I didn't get to see too many sights there as I had an ingrown toenail, which I had taken care of on my return to camp, and had a tough time walking. I did get to see many things. I just figured that this was a time of my life to see some of the sights in Europe. I sure covered many miles. Starting back in Africa, going to Italy, landing in Southern France and moving over 400 miles and into Germany and ending up in Austria. Looking at a map, it seems like I almost made a circle and wound up back in Italy.

Since nothing seemed to be happening about leaving, the whole group of men staged protest. We all marched to Headquarters and complained about not leaving for home yet. The only satisfaction we got was that transportation was a problem. We finally packed up (again) and instead of going home they sent us to England.

Now we were going into late October and early November. We got to England and just started to wait again. We were there for several weeks and we once again marched and protested about not leaving. Most of us have well over the necessary points to return. We heard that they were shipping troops home that had much less points than us. All our protest got us was more waiting.

Finally we got our orders to leave. During the start of the war, US had a lend-lease program that gave war equipment to England. We were not involved in the war until Dec 7 1941. There were some Liberty boats given to England and they were converted into small aircraft carriers. They were used to escort convoys across the Atlantic. There were 2 boats, The HMS Hunter and The HMS Stalker that were being convoys back to the US. I was put on the HMS Stalker and finally I was going home. It was Dec 2, 1945

When we left Port, we got into the North Atlantic and it was bad during these months. There were some bad storms and rough water. I would go on the Flight Deck and lean against the wind. We were just going up and down with the waves. It was very rough and many of the men did get seasick. I did ok, I guess I should be with making 2 landings while in combat. When we got into the South Atlantic, the weather improved and the voyage was more pleasant. Almost like the trip I made when going over in December 1943 to Africa.



HMS Stalker in the North Atlantic Ocean



Rough waters in North Atlantic



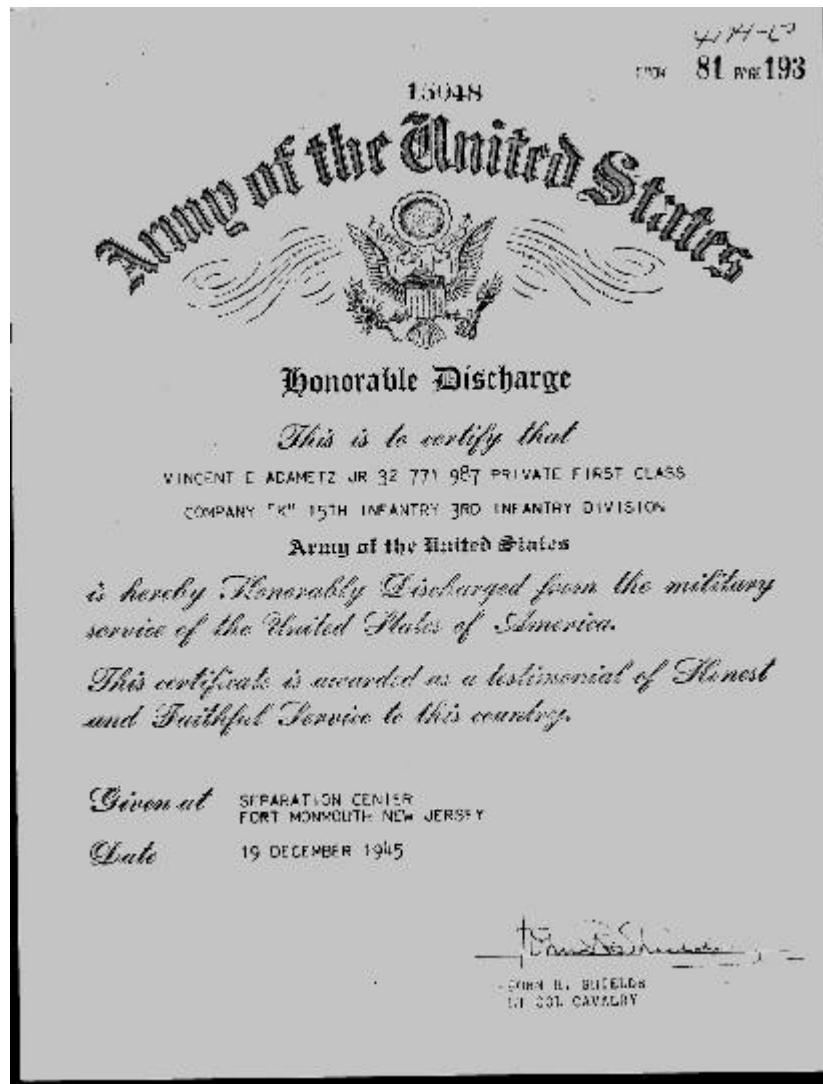
Homeward bound finally

Well we finally got back to the good old USA. We landed in Hampton Roads, Virginia. The date was Dec 13, 1945. The most amazing thing was that I came back to the same Port and Pier that I had left from. That was unusual and almost unbelievable. I recognized the Pier as though it was just yesterday. The Red Cross was there giving out coffee and dough nuts along with music, hugs and shouts of "Welcome Back Home". It sure was a good feeling and a lot of happy people.

From the Pier we were put on trucks and taken to Fort Patrick Henry, a welcome area for returning troops. There we got whatever we wanted. The first thing I wanted was Fresh Milk. I think I drank about a gallon. It sure tasted great. I then had a full course Turkey Dinner. For a change, I was very happy.

The next day, I was all packed up and got on a train and headed to Fort Mammoth, NJ. I was now homeward bound. I was now in the process of being discharged. I arrived on 15<sup>th</sup> of December 1945. It took about 4.5 days to be processed out. While there, I called home and Marge and her friend Ruth came to visit me. They were the first ones that I saw (of my family/friends) on arrival in the US. We spent a few hours in the Boiler room (the warmest place) and just talked and we were all happy to see each other after almost 3 years being away. It was late at night when they left and went back to Garfield.

One December 19, 1945 I was officially discharged. I was given all of my papers, money due, packed my duffel bag and headed to the RR station in Red Bank, got on the train and made it to the Newark Station. There was nobody to greet me there. Why? There was a snowstorm in process. What a welcome! Oh well, at least I was heading home. I knew my way (never forgot) and got on a bus for Passaic. In Passaic, I got on a bus to Garfield.



Final Document

I got off on Belmont Avenue and took my duffel bag over my shoulder and started to walk home. It was a few blocks only. Walking in the snow and just looking around the old neighborhood was a pleasure. Things looked pretty much as I left them. When I got to the house, my Brother John was shoveling snow in the driveway. I just stopped and looked and said "Hello John". He dropped the shovel and grabbed me and hugged the life out of me. Boy what a welcome. We went inside and the whole family was there. I looked around and asked, "where is Marge"? They said she had taken a bus and was going to meet me in Newark. I was sort of disappointed but I had already seen her in Fort Mammoth. While waiting, I just was so happy to see my family.

Marge finally came home and we were now together. We just got to the couch and were in each other's arms and we fell asleep. That was it for the night. Tomorrow was going to be a new day and a start of a new life. We made plans and got married on January 12, 1946 and finally together forever.



Shadow box with Awards

## GOD

That single word “GOD” means nothing to many people. All I can say is I prayed many times during my tour of duty and I didn’t realize how my prayers were answered. After returning home and getting married and getting on with my life, I continued my prayers. As for the War, it was past. In 2004 there was the Memorial Dedicated to WWII. Up to the time that I lost my loving wife, I didn’t think about the War. Now in watching the dedication, it all came back to me. My mind was now going back. My honest opinion is that I was protected. I look back to the war, married life etc and realized that GOD was with me all during those times. What else could have gotten me through the ordeal of War. GOD has wiped my mind of the many things that I was not meant to remember. What I have written is what HE wanted me to remember. Many close encounters that I do remember have been written above. From January 22, 1944 to the end of the War, I had been on the front line many times. Was I “lucky”? I don’t believe in luck. GOD has and still is with me. HE will be with me till the end of my life and then for eternity.

THANK YOU GOD