

War Era Story Project 2012

Submitted by: Milt Okum

Current home town: Cincinnati

Age: 86

My name is, Milton J. Okum. I served with the 324th reg. of the 44th inf. div. in 1944. I had six weeks of a 12-week training course due to the demand of replacements at that time. I got a two-day leave and shipped to Fort Dix. We were in a 52-boat convoy in 50 ft. high seas; all were seasick. We landed at Camp Lucky Strike and were put on 40-and-8 cars, packed like sardines. We had to urinate and stuff from the car door with guys holding onto us, so we wouldn't fall out.

We were heading to Brussels, but a bridge got blown away. So, our train reversed thru Luxemburg to Manheim and worms Germany. In my first encounter with enemy, I was put in a medical unit sewing up and giving sulfur and pain medicine to wounded soldiers – that was after eight hours of training. Later, I was put in infantry as a dog face. I went through Heidelberg on a tank after crossing water on a pontoon bridge. We mopped up in Ulm and Stuttgart; the only thing not destroyed was the church.

We went south to Landeck, Austria. On the way, we stopped at a town called Oy in Bavaria and I stayed a couple of days at the summer home of the General Emil Rommel. I brought some photos from his family album home to my family. I had his Walther P-38 pistol, which I sent home, but it was stolen? While I was there, I saw a deer one day and shot at it with the M-1. I missed, so I took the pistol, which had adjustable sight on top, and nailed the deer. We skinned it and cooked it for fresh meat. Also, there was a cow there, and we enjoyed some of its milk.

From there, we went south to near the Brenner Pass, to Landeck. I was the interpreter for the commander there because I spoke some Yiddish, which sounded a lot like German. I got by and didn't have to do guard duty or K. P. I got a pass for a 3-day visit to Paris.

The 44th Div. was then sent to South Hampton to board the Queen Elizabeth; all 17,000 were on the crowded ship. We got home for 30 days recuperation leave before going to Japan. The war ended and I was sent San Antonio to await discharge. Gen Eisenhower noticed me doing final orientation that was done before by officers, and I was awarded a Commendation Award by President Truman.

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SPECIAL POEM FOR OLD ARMY GUYS

A row of bottles on my shelf
Caused me to analyze myself
One yellow pill I have to pop
Goes to my heart so it won't stop.
A Little white one that I take
Goes to my hands so they won't shake.
The blue ones that I use a lot
Tells me I'm happy when I'm not.
The purple pill goes to my brain
And tells me that I have no pain.
The capsules tell me not to wheeze
Or cough or choke or even sneeze.
The red ones, smallest of them all
Go to my blood so I won't fall.
The orange ones, very big and bright
Prevent my leg cramps in the night.
Such an array of brilliant pills
Helping to cure all kinds of ills.
But what I'd really like to know
Is what tells each one where to go!