

PAYNE COUNTY

Historical Review

**WORLD WAR II
REMEMBERING**

VOLUME XII

SPRING 1993

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PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

June 13, 1993

The 1992-93 officers of the Payne County Historical Society.

President: Lawrence H. Erwin

Vice President: Mary Jane Warde (also served as the PCHS representative to the Pleasant Valley School Board)

Secretary: Heather Lloyd

Treasurer: Frances Escue

Past President: Bill Bryans

Directors: Virginia Thomas 1995

Julie Couch 1995

Carol Bormann 1994

Mahlon Erickson 1994

Doris Dellinger 1993

The Fall Quarterly Meeting occurred September 20, 1992 and was attended by members as well as others from the community. It was held at the Sheerar Center. Glenn Shirley briefed us on the outlaw gun battle at Ingalls. Bill Bryans discussed the Twin Mounds Battle Field site. Then we took a caravan trip east of Stillwater to these sites where particulars pertaining to them were highlighted.

The Winter Quarterly Meeting, December 6, 1993, was in conjunction with the Sheerar Center Museum in its opening of a special exhibit "With A Name Like Stillwater...." The subject was a history of water in Stillwater. A panel, moderated by Steve Stadler, of the Oklahoma State University Geography Department and Specialist in climatology, discussed the history of water supply, conservation and usage in the Stillwater area. Others on the panel were William Rae, Larry Poindexter, and Winfrey Houston.

The Spring Quarterly Meeting was on April 18, 1993 with a trip to Perry, Oklahoma to the Cherokee Strip Museum. This was in keeping with the Centennial observance of the Cherokee Outlet Run of 1893. We had a sack lunch picnic.

The Annual Meeting was held at the Berry Mansion, south of Stillwater, which is the corporate offices of the Thomas N. Berry Drilling Company. Charles Lieder, of the Oklahoma State University Landscape Architecture Department brought the program on the history of this landmark of Payne County. The meeting was on June 13, 1993.

The 1993 Stillwater Hall of Fame was held March 18, 1993 at the Sheerar Center. Our Historical Category Nominations Committee was chaired by Bill Bryans and serving with him were Carol Bormann and Mahlon Erickson. Our nominations were: Edward C. Burris 1906-1977, (former OSU professor of Economics, business man, community leader and city commissioner), and James Buchanan Murphy, 1856-1924, (pioneer physician in Stillwater, mayor, assistant postmaster, city clerk and assessor).

The Payne County Historical Society annual awards for outstanding contributions to local history went to Edna Jungers and Edwin E. Glover. Edna Jungers has done the "lion's share" of the teaching and overseeing of the teaching program at the Pleasant Valley School for several years. This has been a monumental task that she has unselfishly undertaken and all on strictly a volunteer basis. A program which has imparted a sense of the history of what school was like in territorial and early statehood days to thousands of grade school students in Stillwater and surrounding communities.

Edwin E. "Ed" Glover has been treasurer of the Pleasant Valley School Board and Foundation since its inception. This has been a work of love for Ed because he grew up in the Pleasant Valley School District and attended school there through the 8th grade. He is the School's greatest advocate and most knowledgeable of its history.

The Board of Directors of the Payne County Historical Society voted to contribute \$200.00 to the Pleasant Valley School Foundation. This is some of your membership dues at work.

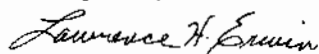
Probably the two biggest achievements of the year is the revival of a viable membership and the resuming of the publication of the *Payne County Historical Review*. At present we have eighty-nine paid up and life members.

The Payne County Historical Review resumed publication with the Summer - Fall issue of 1992, Volume XI. This is the first issue to be printed in two years. This was because of lack of funds for publication and the lack of an editor for the *Review*. As a Society we owe a tremendous appreciation to Helen and Ray Matoy for stepping forward and taking the job of editors of the *Review* and showing us how it can be published more economically. Thanks for all your diligent and hard work, Helen and Ray!

Not all was accomplished that we hoped for or intended. But, if this was the case we did not set our goals high enough. We would hope for a greater participation of the membership in the scheduled activities of the Society. We hope to organize and institute more active committees. If you would be willing to serve on a committee please come forward and let us know. With all of us working we can accomplish much more.

All in all it has been a good year for the Payne County Historical Society.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lawrence H. Erwin, President

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**MORE THAN JUST HISTORY:
ROLE MODELS FROM WORLD WAR II**

By

**PETER C. ROLLINS
REGENTS PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH
OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY**

This is a second set of essays for the *Payne County Historical Review* telling the story of local boys (and one girl) who went to war and then came back to be our neighbors. The narratives in this collection focus on personal stories, the human events of behind service to principle and country. Still for those of us who look back at World War II during the fiftieth anniversary, these are living lessons in what it means to be a citizen—lessons which some of us may have forgotten in our race to self-fulfillment.

Woodrow Peery went to sea, leaving behind him a growing family which he would not see for two years. True to his Oklahoma roots, Woodrow was almost constantly sick aboard ship; nevertheless, he performed all duties with diligence. While in the Pacific, he caught glimpses of the horrors which can be inflicted even in a just war. Yet, on his return, he was still empathetic enough to by-pass an invitation to return to his old job if going back to work meant displacing another family man.

Known today as a world-famous scholar of British literature in the 18th century, Jud Milburn served bravely during the war aboard merchant marine ships on the infamous "Murmansk Run." In the process, he found new depths of strength and resilience within himself; his naval gun crews referred to him respectfully as "the old man" despite the fact that he was not much older than his sailors. While the "run" gave Jud an insider's perspective on American/Soviet relations, he was first and foremost concerned about the welfare of his men—the mark of a fine officer.

On the other side of the world, Ted Best was busy taking part in the

"island hopping" campaigns of the Pacific. His LSD was responsible for moving wounded from the hotly-contested islands back to quieter areas for healing. Along the way, Ted and his fellow crewmen managed to shoot down two-and-one-half planes. (How could that be?)

For the Navy to plan its maneuvers in the Pacific, reliable weather information was needed—especially during typhoon season. Oklahomans, today, are accustomed to a variety of storm-tracking radars. During the war, Bob Fite had to fly through storms to assay them first-hand. (Often, the planes carried bombs aboard in case they flew over a lucrative target.) Now a leader in the many civic activities, Bob Fite returned from "the eye of the storm." His is a fascinating case of Oklahoma supplying timely expertise to win the war.

In the Mediterranean, Walter Crane served with Oklahoma's proud 179th infantry in Sicily, Italy, France, and Germany. Legend and lore have surrounded the feats of this infantry unit which arrived in Northern Sicily not only before General Montgomery, but even before the showboating General Patton. Their efforts at Anzio are proud moments in the history of American infantry. After seeing the dead and walking dead at Dachau, one of Germany's most notorious concentration camps, Walter knows the justness of our cause in WWII.

Ponca City contributed the energy, beauty, and humor of Mabel Ruth ("Mike") Stephanic, nurse extraordinaire. In London, she watched the first V-1 raids. On Omaha Beach a few hours after D-Day, she managed to jump into a trench in time to avoid German strafing. A similar scrape with a German plane punched deadly holes in her tent, but never awakened a tired nurse from her beauty sleep! In the end, "Mike" Stephanic says that she believes in miracles—it is indeed a miracle that she is still with us.

Citizens must rise to support their community in times of need. These stories for the *Review* tell us that those who do will discover within themselves all kinds of new energy, resourcefulness, and empathy. In giving up the self to a higher cause, they will discover, perhaps for the first time in their lives, a deeper and better self. These are our neighbors. Let us honor their accomplishments not only as history, but as guides for future living.



Robert Carl Fite

Robert Carl Fite became a Naval Officer on 26 February 1943. He reported for training at Quonset Point, Rhode Island, on 28 June. Since he excelled in math and physics, the Navy assigned him to Los Angeles, California, for training as a meteorologist. At the end of the war Bob opted to stay in the Naval Reserve and stayed in the Reserve until 1966, when he retired with the rank of Lieutenant Commander.

By Leland Ray

IN THE EYE OF THE STORM WITH BOB FITE

Robert Carl Fite would never have gotten into the Navy if it wasn't for the fact that he was ineligible for the draft. Bob Fite was Classified 2-B, engaged in essential government work as an electrical systems instructor for the military in Nebraska, and the path he took to the geographical center of the country from his home in Southern Oklahoma was as circuitous as the road he took once he entered the Navy.

Bob began his military career as a civilian instructor, teaching Army technicians how to repair and troubleshoot electrical systems on aircraft. It was a job well suited to his background. He had worked his way through college as a janitor and fireman during the Depression, as well as taking odd jobs to supplement his income. He was and is a man unafraid of hard work. In college he was often only half awake during classes because of the long and uneven hours he spent at his various jobs. When the war started, he was teaching mathematics, and was principal of the high school in Paoli, Oklahoma, a small town south of Oklahoma City and just west of the north-south Acheson, Topeka, and Santa Fe railroad tracks. He liked teaching; he liked being an administrator; but, because of his military service, he would never teach at the secondary level again. Instead, he became a professor of geography and meteorology at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (later to become Oklahoma State University); instead of supervising teachers in a small town, he finished his career as a teacher supervising and teaching graduate students; instead of ending his education, he continued it, receiving his Ph.D. in the early 1950s. After he left Paoli in 1942, he never went back.

As an instructor at the Airplane Mechanics School in Lincoln, Nebraska. Bob and the other Airplane Mechanics induced malfunctions in aircraft

instruments for the students to repair; this was work for an educator, and Bob's work was of critical importance to the war effort. The men he trained would become responsible for keeping the massive fleets of American warplanes flying from bases all across the globe. Paradoxically, he would become a naval officer, flying land-based aircraft and seaplanes over the vastness of the Pacific. A carpool with other instructors was the catalyst for his induction into the military.

Several of the instructors heard that a Navy recruiter was seeking officer candidates and because Bob rode to and from work with other instructors, he literally went along for the ride. When he reached the recruiting center, he immediately stripped for the physical. The Navy was taking no chances; it wasn't until after he'd been declared fit for duty that he got to speak to the recruiters, and he was delighted to be offered a commission as an Ensign. He felt a certain amount of guilt that he was not in uniform, but he still had to petition the government to change his draft status to 1-A, or "eligible for service." While his former 2-B classification had allowed him to work for his country, Bob Fite wanted to serve in a more direct combat capacity. On 26 February 1943, he became a Naval officer, and he reported on 28 June for training at Quonset Point, Rhode Island. His next duty assignment would be the most important divergence from his life as a secondary school teacher.

Bob Fite always enjoyed studying the sciences. He excelled in math and physics, and the Navy assigned him where they thought he would be most effective. The subsequent years have proved beyond a reasonable doubt that government bureaucracy is not always inefficient, sometimes placing the right person in the right position; Bob Fite was sent to Los Angeles, California, for training as a Meteorologist.

While at UCLA as a student of Meteorology, Bob and his wife Lucy lived a rather spartan existence. The economic boom which came with the war had made Los Angeles a manufacturing capital; rent took over half of Bob's salary, but they made do. They lived with another officer and his wife in an apartment, sharing the costs. After nine months, Bob was detached to La Jolla, California, for further training.

Meteorology has always been an inexact science. Nature does not act at the behest of mankind, but the whims of nature can often determine human actions. There were no weather satellites in 1943, no supercomputers, no Doppler radar; Meteorology was a science of careful observation and extrapolation of what might happen next. The instructors at La Jolla were Norwegians; the descendants of the Vikings had studied weather in greater depth than any other people, and the Nazi occupation of their homeland (in the spring of 1940) gave them an incentive to put their special skills to work elsewhere. A massive storm had given the English their victory against the Spanish Armada; the go-ahead for Operation Overlord, the Allied invasion of occupied Europe, hinged on a weather forecast, proving definitively what all military men knew: having accurate forecasts of the weather in operational areas could make the difference between victory or defeat. The scale of operations in World War II surpassed anything the world had ever seen. The lives of tens of thousands, and the outcome of major battles could depend on the forecasts of specialists like Bob Fite. At La Jolla, Bob first studied sea and swell forecasting because much of what meteorology could predict about the weather came from observation of oceanic conditions. This information was essential, especially when planning for amphibious operations which required data on both tides and weather.

After six weeks at La Jolla, Bob Fite reported on August 13, 1944 to the Commander of the 12th Naval district in San Francisco, the first step on his journey to the 7th Fleet Navy Weather Central. The bay city was his final stateside landfall; for nearly a year and a half Bob would not see the United States, but he also would not be far away. The Pacific Ocean was fast becoming an American lake, and Bob would traverse much of it in that time. The Pacific was as unlike Bob's Oklahoma as anything could be. On his journey to Australia, he didn't see land for over a week, though he understood how the waving grasslands of the American West could be metaphorized as "seas." He wasn't troubled with seasickness, but the sameness of the Pacific and the ability of the navigators to find their destinations in the midst of the emptiness impressed him.

While Bob's original orders in 1943 specified Australia as his destination, he still hasn't been there. His ship stopped at Manus Island, and there he found out that he was being ordered off the ship to work locally. In the twenty-one days since the *USS Calamares* sailed from California, the situation had changed in the Pacific, and U.S. Navy Weather Central felt he could be of more use closer to the action.

Bob worked out of Manus Island first and, then later aboard the *USS Currituck*, a seaplane tender stationed in Leyte Gulf off the Philippines. The Philippines weren't secure yet, and land action was still taking place in Manila when Bob arrived in October. The Japanese had made Leyte Gulf a prime target of their swarms of Kamikaze planes, and Bob's ship took a near miss from one of the suicide attacks. Perhaps his most hazardous duty came when he was detached to Weather Central flight operations in February of 1945. During the time he was aboard the *Currituck*, he took part in a mission that proved that not all U.S. operations were based in the American zone of influence.

During the war, a primary strategic importance was placed on the destruction of the Japanese infrastructure and manufacturing operation on the home islands. Information from returning pilots and weather reconnaissance were crucial to this mission.

And nothing was better than real-time intelligence, and the Allies had an agent on the ground in Tokyo who relayed information about weather near the Japanese capital city. Bob still doesn't know who this person was; whether Occidental or Oriental, male or female, agent WODUB's identity was still a mystery. Bob Fite only knew that someone sent coded messages to Weather Central from Tokyo, and he often saw the reports. WODUB's information was so top secret that only one copy of the WODUB code book existed, and when Bob got to the Philippines the book stayed behind at Manus Island. Bob was detached in November of 1944 with orders to go to Manus, copy the code book, and return. He did, but the return trip proved more exciting than the mission. On the way, back Bob hitched a ride aboard a planeload of beer bound for Peleliu Island, the scene of desperate fighting earlier that year

between firmly entrenched Japanese and amphibious attackers of the 1st Marine Division. When the plane arrived, the weather was hot, and the Marines on the island were characteristically ready to receive their long-awaited beer ration. Bob quickly found that no amount of money could separate a thirsty groundpounder from his ration, but enemy souvenirs could. These soldiers had seen nothing but heat, insects, Japanese equipment, dead Japanese soldiers, and the tangled jungles of the island. They had never seen Japanese occupation money from the Philippines, and Bob discovered that twenty dollars in worthless currency was worth more towards quenching his own thirst than any amount of American greenbacks. A half-dozen cold bottles made his return trip much more pleasant.

In the Philippines, Bob entered the last phase of his active career during the war. A "typhoon" is the Pacific equivalent of the deadly hurricanes which plague the eastern and Gulf coasts of the United States, and those violent storms made the "Pacific" often anything but "peaceful." These storms are swirling masses of wind and low pressure which reach a diameter of hundreds of miles; the winds can exceed 200 miles per hour, and are often accompanied by driving rains. Waves can reach twenty-five or thirty feet, hurling gigantic military vessels like toys in a bathtub. The storms' potential for destruction is nearly limitless in the best of times, and during wartime this potential is increased exponentially by the number of ships operating within the combat zone, putting at peril not only the lives of the men and their weapons, but threatening the success of operations as well. Bob Fite and the other men of Weather Central were given the responsibility of tracking these storms and then making recommendations about operations based on their findings.

Without the technology which has become ubiquitous in the late twentieth century, typhoon tracking, along with everyday weather forecasting, boiled down to a combination of observation and "Kentucky Windage." Where typhoons were concerned, another element came into play, one which could go under the general term "guts." There were no high-tech C-130 stormchasing planes like those used by today's Air Force. Instead, Weather

Central relied upon modified Army Air Corps bombers, especially the big four-engine B-24 "Liberators." These planes and their crews flew at altitudes as low as 2,000 feet directly into storm walls and then through the eye of a typhoon, taking measurements and photographs of conditions aloft and at sea level.

The work was hazardous, but a wild card was also thrown into the equation of man and machine versus nature: Each plane carried a complete complement of 500-pound high explosive bombs and defensive .50 caliber Browning machine guns. Any American aircraft was fair game for sea and landbased Japanese anti-aircraft fire, along with the deadly Mitsubishi Zero fighter planes, which could outmaneuver the slower-moving bombers. The bombs carried by the stormtracking planes were to be used against targets of opportunity, especially Japanese shipping. Any plane out on a weather run might be rerouted to a target and they often were. Storm tracking was a legitimate and important strategic objective; the planes were fully armed, but only for their secondary role. On more than one occasion, Weather Central planes returned to base riddled with bullet holes from Japanese ground installations.

Bob Fite's closest call, however, came from the weather; on one mission his plane was damaged by the storm and made such a heavy landing that once it came to a stop, the aircraft was condemned as scrap for parts and never flew again.

The big Liberators flew searches outwards for hundreds of miles from their base, taking measurements along the way. Bob Fite was the weather observer, often flying with inexperienced pilots who were being broken in for combat on "easy" weather missions. A unit history compiled at the end of the war shows the pictures: Wave crests blown apart by gale-force winds; the dark wall inside a typhoon; logs of storm tracks; notes on wind speed, dates, latitude, and longitude. Evidently the storms were not given names; the military designation for each storm is much more to the point, listing only a number for the storm and its dates.

On occasion military authorities did not take the advice of their

weather experts, and this led to problems—all serious. In one instance, an shipment of plywood in barges had to be cut loose in order to save the tow ship during a typhoon, and bombers spent days breaking up the floating shipping obstacles left behind. Barges are unsinkable when filled with the lumber, and tens of thousands of dollars went to waste to prevent the tragedy of a ship colliding with the floating mass. "We told you so," Bob would have liked to say.

This was his war, not against a direct human enemy, but a war of wits against nature in support of the larger American effort, and the end of the war against the Japanese did not mean the end of his war with weather. The war ended before the end of the typhoon season, and Bob stayed in the Pacific until December, 1945. He broke in a replacement just before he stopped flying missions. On the day after Bob flew for the last time, his replacement's plane went down in the ocean, never to be seen again. In WWII, this was how close the distance could be between survival and destruction, a matter of hours, or days, or minutes.

Bob returned to the States at loose ends. He opted to stay in the Naval Reserve, but civilian job prospects never had a chance to become a problem. On the day before New Year's Eve, 1945, Bob arrived in Memphis, Tennessee, to be mustered out of the Navy. While there, a twist of fate sent him back to Oklahoma. A flyer for Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College promised housing for veterans, and, after consultation with his wife, they moved to Stillwater, where Bob began graduate work in geography. The college needed someone to teach a course in meteorology, and Bob's wartime naval career became his life's work as well. Except for a period in the 1950s when he worked on his Ph.D. in geography at Northwestern University, and sabbaticals to such institutions as the National Science Foundation, Bob has remained in Stillwater, not all that far from where he taught high school math and supervised teachers in the 1930s. The military sent his life in directions he never could have foreseen, and he does not regret his decision to continue his education, or the decision to "go along for the ride" while some friends went to visit a Navy recruiter. It was a ride which detoured through a large part

of the Pacific Ocean, but one which, like any successful voyage, ended where it began.

In fact, Bob Fite stayed on in the Naval Reserve until 1966, when he opted to retire with the rank of Lieutenant Commander. As he's grown older, he's become philosophical about war, about the military, and about humanity. He wonders why people still fight wars; he wonders why men have not suppressed the throat-grappling instinct of less civilized times; but he has arrived at no answers. He is a career military man turned pacifist, but given a set of circumstances such as those presented to him in the 1940s, he wouldn't change his reaction. He would volunteer again and serve with pride, but he still regrets that any wars have to be fought. And as one who survived the eye of the storm, perhaps he is a man who has the right to ponder and to question.



Walter C. Crane

Pictured (left to right) is Walter C. Crane and his brother Edward. In 1939 Walter joined the National Guard. It was in December 1941 while at Camp Barkley, Texas he learned of the Japanese attack of Pearl Harbor. During World War II Walter was in I Company 179 Infantry 45th Division. He saw action in Sicily, Italy, France, and Germany. By the time he was discharged he had made (E5).

By Yoon Sik Kim

SURVIVING THE WORLD WAR II: THE STORY OF WALTER C. CRANE

" World War II was a long, hard fight. I didn't like it. Nobody likes war. In the battlefield, you had to figure out how to survive one day to the next. You might be lucky one day or not so the next," remembers Mr. Walter C. Crane of Stillwater, Oklahoma. As an enlisted man, he fought the World War II, mostly as a cook, in I Company 179 Infantry 45th Division. His two brothers also fought on the European front from 1941 to 1945.

When the Korean War broke out in June 25, 1950, Walter recalls, he again decided to help. As a seasoned veteran, he reasoned that he could save the lives of many green troops. In particular, he remembered, during the World War II, seeing many soldiers who had not been able to take the pressure of battle; in fact, the war so wore them down psychologically that some even attempted suicide. These tragic memories sent him off to the Army recruiter where he signed the necessary papers to "re-up" for Korea.

But his noble effort failed to withstand the vociferous opposition of his family. His employer, a rancher who had heard about his resolution, talked him out of the noble gesture by promising the veteran a steady job. Nevertheless, Walter still declares that he will go to any war "that fights for freedom and democracy."

As early as 1939, exactly two years before American involvement in the armed conflict, the veteran had already been inducted into the National Guard: Some of his buddies who were already in the Guard persuaded him to join them. They told Walter that it would be an adventure to go off to Summer Camps together. Walter agreed. "The basic training was pretty tough," he recalls. It lasted as long as six months at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. It consisted of rifle range, bayonet training, machine gun training, plus hours of onerous (and notorious) close-order drills. After "basic," his company shipped for infantry training to Camp Barkley, Texas.

One night in December, 1941, Walter and his buddies went to see the movie *Sergeant York*, a recent Frank Capra film, starring Jimmie Stewart. The patriotic film about World War I made their chests swell with pride. The timing was right, for when they got out, they saw an MP standing outside the base theater, who announced: "You boys are going to be shipped overseas tomorrow. The Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor." That was how Walter first heard about the war. That bucket of water drenched the fiery Hollywood enthusiasm, remembers Walter. He did not know what to make of the news. Although the whole nation had been anticipating an event like this for quite some time, the news was a shock—from an unexpected direction.

Congress quickly mobilized the National Guard while extending its period of service into the next six months. Almost immediately, the Forty-Fifth Division, Walter's unit, moved to Pine Camp, New York, for winter warfare training—in three feet of snow and blizzard. Winter training required a visit to Virginia for mountain school, which had, in effect, little to do with rock climbing despite the name. Instead, "mountain training" consisted largely of battle exercises on rugged Virginian mountainous terrains in cold weather, probably in anticipation of battles in the European theater. After this advanced training, Walter was transported east where he got on board a ship at Newport, Virginia to join the "largest convoy that ever crossed the Atlantic."

The crowded sea voyage took at least seventeen days. As a native "Okie," he had never been out on the ocean; yet, he did not suffer seasickness, which plagued his companions. With his troops, Walter finally crossed the Atlantic and landed on Oran, an African city of northwest Algeria, where the Forty-Fifth Division underwent additional semi-training, lasting two weeks. He admits that it was not an official training, but since the soldiers had been at sea for as long as seventeen days, they needed a good stretching, recuperation, and lots of fresh air in their lungs.

Then the Division got on board the ship once again to join the invasion of Sicily, in which he stayed from July to September. Italy was no "sunshine state" as many thought and talked of, recalls Walter. While he was there, he

remembers, he did not see the sun very often. Sicily was hot and wet in July, 1942. On July 9, two days after his 25th birthday, however, he managed to commandeer a jeep to ride downtown for a small birthday party. Not long after the party was over, Walter's unit hit Salerno, Italy, followed by yet another amphibious assault at Venafro, a nearby stronghold.

It was near Salerno that Walter experienced one of the scariest moments of the war, a moment in which he felt that he was going to die. His battalion was cut off by the Germans for three days. Ammunition and food ran low as each day passed, and the Germans were pressing closer and closer. As the tactical noose tightened, Walter flashed back to his mock POW experience during National Guards training, an experience that had taught him a lesson—that he would never be captured again in a real war. In fact, all along he had been saving a single bullet to kill himself if capture seemed imminent. In the end, however, an artillery division rescued his stranded battalion by smashing through German lines.

Now with two invasion experiences under his belt, he took part yet in a third, the invasion of Anzio, Italy, during Winter of 1943. The invasion took five months, from January to May, and he had to live through mid-winter in holes and pup tents. It was nippy, wet, and muddy at Anzio. Walter had to wear every layer of clothes available. The American soldiers had to live in a "slit trench below the hill," bailing out knee-high water with their helmets. Despite all these discomforts, however, the veteran sarcastically comments, "you will manage to sleep if you've been there long enough. You can almost sleep with one eye open!"

Battle fatigue, the omnipresent spiritual disease of war, made him feel hungry, cold, and above all, tired. Resting, as he recalls, was invariably the number-one priority on everyone's mind. In fact, one guy had such a difficult time waking up that they accidentally abandoned him behind enemy lines. When the somnolent GI awoke, he was shocked to find a rifle in his face. He had been captured. But the Germans soon found out that their prisoner was of little value to them; anyone who could sleep that soundly on a patrol probably had slept through the briefing! At that point, the Germans could not

afford prisoners; however, Walter's German guard did not follow orders to execute Rip Van Winkle. Sick and tired of the war, the captor handed over his rifle to the surprised captive and surrendered himself, instead! So, in the end, the Allies added a quick-thinking German prisoner of war rather than losing a nodding GI. The German captive preferred the comfort of an American concentration camp to the cold, damp battlefield, where life was nasty, brutish, short—and wet.

At one point, there was one "ole boy" who was reluctant to dig in. He asked his Sergeant, "Do we have to dig, Sarge?" The sergeant answered, "Well, I advise you to." Soon, 88mm German artillery shells started finding their way toward them, landing and exploding nearby. The bombardment wrought a conversion: the boy was still digging at three o'clock next morning! The Allies casualties were high at Anzio; in fact, they had to turn Anzio over as many as five times. "People were everywhere dead like dogs and animals killed on highways around here," remembers Walter. Casualties, scattered around the roadside, were from both sides. While looking at the dead, Walter asked himself the big question: "Is he lucky or am I lucky?" It was kill or be killed in one of the hardest battles of the European theater. The Italians, however, who had been coerced to fight by the Germans, started to crumble: the Italians in general disliked the war. Then Italy surrendered.

As a cook, Walter sometimes had to prepare meals for 200 troops. There were thirty-five cooks. He cooked from C-rations to hot meals (usually for dinner), anything they could requisition—legally or otherwise. Occasionally he was able to serve steaks shipped from home. In Anzio, "There were lots of chickens," recalls Mr. Crane. And at one point, "an ole boy got out there and caught some, saying 'we're gonna have fried chickens for dinner'." The old boy caught a handful but was pursued by a loud-mouthed Italian woman. He and Walter exited the perennial scene by hitting the jeep gas pedal to the floor. Unfortunately for the chicken thieves, almost at the same time, the Germans started shelling, providing excellent cover for the local chickens to make their own "Great Escape."

Also, Walter recalls that the Italians did not seem to have any salt at

all so that they were allowed to bring their buckets to get it from the Americans. The GIs customarily gave away leftovers to the hungry Italians, too. At one point, an infuriated Italian woman whipped the Mess Sergeant, who was supervising the distribution process, an event recorded in "The 45th Division News:"

Ordinarily, Mess Sergeant Lawrence Kleisen, Stillwater, Oklahoma, didn't mind handing out the leftovers from his evening meals to the local gentry. It was practically SOP and more humane than tossing it in a garbage pit. But Kleisen had other things to say about it when one Signora started helping herself even before the company had been served. "Hey," yelled Kleisen at the elderly belle. Then he began starting her on her way. When Kleisen became more insistent, she took off her shoe and beat the hell out of him. ("The 45th Division News," July 8, 1944)

In Naples, a favorite seaport often used for regrouping, a GI, his Sarge, and Walter had their R and R, during which he visited a "vino" shop, where an Italian girl sold a low-grade wine made of cherries and other fruits. "This little gal spoke a little English and when the GIs got on the good side of her, she dug up a pizza-like Italian dish and served the GIs," the veteran recalls. Walter was shocked to observe that Italians did not drink water at all during a meal—they drank "vino." Furthermore, Italian farmers ate their meal from one large pot, which gave him yet another case of culture shock.

Among the war-torn Italians, however, there were some who tried their market skills, capitalist style. Some tried to sell meat by yelling at GIs, "Hey, Joe, you want a beef steak?" Others tried to sell their own sisters by coaxing GIs, "Hey, Joe, My sister, she's good looking." In the "cat house," Italian belles would charge GIs anywhere from a chocolate bar to fifty-cents for their embraces. They particularly liked Invasion Ration Chocolate, which was thick and very concentrated to provide energy. "The chocolate bar," Mr.

Crane remembers, "Was very filling, indeed. You could have gone on days without any meal after eating one." Women were strewn all over the frontiers, but GIs had little time to think about sex: the war and its challenges were on their minds. Letters from home, from their girl friends, however, would rekindle desire and tenderness.

In Germany, the GIs were not allowed to near local women: The penalty for illegal fraternization was one month's pay. Germany was a nation the Allies had conquered—instead of liberated like Italy—and that, technically, made a world of difference. By the time Walter was honorably discharged at the end of the war, he had made buck sergeant [E-5] and was paid all of \$68 a month. During the war, he managed to live on about seven bucks a month simply because there was no place to spend money. The rest he sent home. In fact, when the soldiers came home after the war, many people wanted to borrow money from them, having heard that GIs were rolling in accumulated pay checks.

After the Battle of Anzio, Walter's company moved up to Rome, Italy, where he stayed a week or so. "Rome was a nice town," he remembers. Then he was pulled back and started training again with newly arrived equipment and personnel. The next objective was the south of France. He spent the winter in the mountains, south side of Sol, Italy. That winter, the temperature invariably dipped down to twenty below. At night, in particular, it was bone cold. Then he went up to Germany, by way of Paris, another nice town, and eventually he ended up in Munich, Germany. The Forty-fifth Division, where Walter belonged, was not the first American unit to arrive at the infamous Dachau concentration camp. The rumor was that the Jews were so weak in the concentration camps that the German police dogs often overpowered them, killing "lots of them." He later saw many Polish Jews at Dachau. He also saw "bodies racked up there like cordwood two or three hundred feet long, to be incinerated, and on railroad cars, bodies were scattered everywhere." "You couldn't hardly stand the stink," he remembers, "It was the smell of burning flesh we find around here in a car wreck." He says, "Most of them [Jews] were so poor [bone-skinny] that there wasn't anything to 'em." He

emphatically adds that "You don't have to believe this. I understand some don't believe this had actually happened. But I was there. I SAW them with my own eyes." That was in Spring, 1945, two weeks before the V-E day.

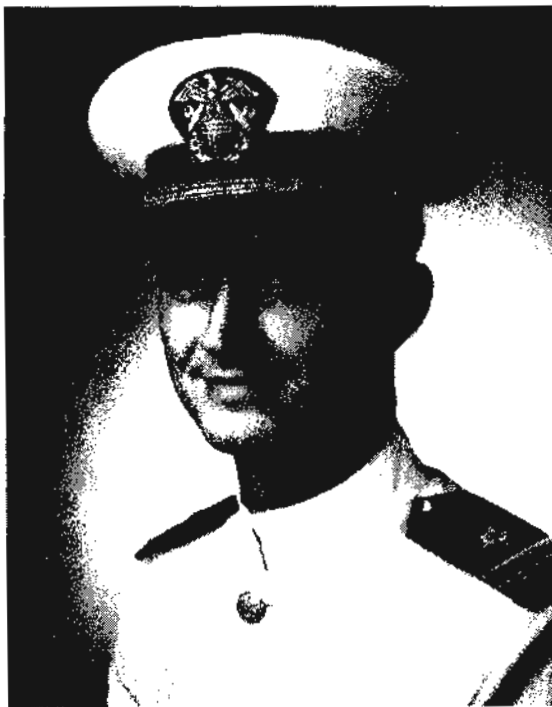
He does not know whether he actually killed a German during the war although he saw several of them falling, simultaneously hit by the GIs' guns, his among them. But, one on one, he does not believe he did—he does not want to believe that he killed any. At one point, he fired a machine gun at an incoming aircraft. The plane took hits and crashed although he could not ascertain whether it had been his bullets that "knocked it out of the air" or other machines gunners nearby, who were also part of the air defense. Nonetheless, he experienced mixed feelings at the sight: he was glad that he had helped stop a strafing. On the other hand, however, the thought that he might have killed a man scared him. But he soon forgot the incident: he had to resume the business of war—which, at the rifleman's level, means to fire when fired upon.

In the battlefield, the only thing he had wished was "Stop the war. Stop the killing." In particular, when he saw dead bodies of adolescent Germans, ranging from fourteen to seventeen, near the end of the war, he could not stomach the atrocity. One of the most difficult things, however, was that these German kids would not give up: they would fight as long as they could and as best they could. It was "awful," recalls the veteran. Fortunately Germany finally surrendered on May 7, 1945.

During the war, Walter had accumulated a high total of "rotation points." As a result, Walter was able to return to Continental U.S. as soon as the war was over. He crossed the Atlantic aboard a Merchant Marine ship on which he discovered that no two soldiers wore the same outfit: there were all kinds of troops from all kinds of divisions. It took fifteen days from France to New York. "I never did feel any anxiety about homecoming," he remembers. He used to dream about the sequence of his siblings returning home: he first and then his brothers. The dream turned out to be true. He discovered that his folks were older. "People were glad to see us come back," Walter remembers. But in only four days, he had to go to work although he had been

entertaining himself with the thought of taking a year off, as a man of leisure. The necessity was not the worst imaginable: many of Oklahoma soldiers never came back.

"The shell shock lasts long," Mr. Crane confesses. One of his brothers, at one point, was at a gas station when someone let lose the air from the tire. Upon hearing the hiss, his brother hit the deck in no time. "In the war, you hear a noise and you don't wait to identify the source. You first had to hit the ground as fast as you could otherwise you were dead," warns the veteran. A similar shell shock response happened to him, too. At one point, no sooner Walter heard a low flying airplane right over his head than he hit the ground: it sounded to him just like a shell coming in. Walter still jumps out of the bed when he hears thunder. He still avoids photographs or stories that might remind him of his World War II. The nightmarish experience carved in his mind a deep, indelible mark.



D. Judson Milburn

D. Judson Milburn entered Officers Candidate Training in the summer of 1944. After his training at Hollywood Beach, Florida he emerged as Lieutenant Junior Grade, USNR. He served as gunnery officer and commander of a crew in the U. S. Navy Armed Guard. After his second round trip to Murmansk he was assigned to the separation center in Norman, Oklahoma and promoted to Lieutenant. He was Honorably Discharged in April of 1946.

By John R. Adams

D. JUDSON MILBURN: CONVOY DUTY on the MURMANSK RUN

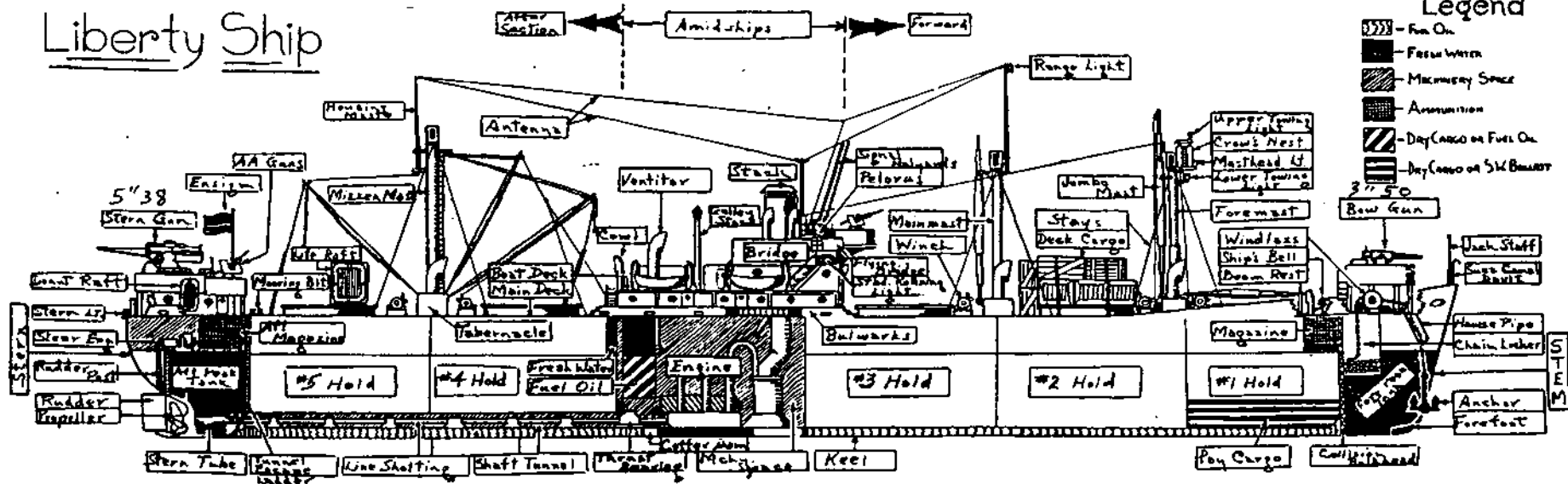
At the time of the Pearl Harbor attack on December 7, 1941, D. Judson Milburn (known as "Jud" to his friends and acquaintances) was a twenty-eight-year-old instructor of English at Oklahoma A & M College in Stillwater, Oklahoma. Stillwater at that time was a quiet county seat with a local population of some six-thousand students. The war had been already underway in Europe for over two years and it was generally expected that, sooner or later, the United States would become directly involved. On the other hand, no one expected that the precipitating event for the United States would come in the Far East.

On December 8th, the entire student body and faculty was invited to Gallagher Hall to hear President Franklin D. Roosevelt deliver a radio address before a joint session of Congress. The President asked for a Declaration of War against the Empire of Japan. The German Dictator, Adolph Hitler, backed the Japanese action with a war declaration of his own; as a result, within days the United States was fully engaged in a global conflict which was to last approximately another forty-five months.

The drafting of able bodied young American men into the U. S. Armed Services had already begun the previous year with the passage of the Selective Service Act. Jud, a young married man without children, knew that he would be called. After learning that a fellow faculty member, a professor of medieval languages, was drafted and now digging ditches for the army, Jud contacted the Navy Recruiter on campus and volunteered for Officer Candidate School. He was informed that enlisted men—not officers—were needed, so he departed seeking a more productive way to serve the war effort.

The Dupont Company built an ordinance manufacturing plant at Pryor, Oklahoma. In early 1942 Jud and his wife, Vera, became associated

Liberty Ship



The General Liberty Ship Design & Organization.

S.S. Townsend Harris[⊕] had 2 holds forward.

It also had 8 20mm. Orlicon A.A. gun tubs elevated, 4 on a side.

[⊕] (The ship was named for U.S. Consul General Townsend Harris, who arrived in Japan in 1856, presented his credentials to the Shogun at Edo, and completed the first treaty of trade between Japan and a foreign country, thereby opening its ports to foreign trade for the first time.)

with that endeavor, which was essential war production, and he obtained a temporary deferment from induction into the armed services. These deferments had a life of a few months, and, after a few renewals, Jud again applied to the Navy in the summer of 1944 for Officer Candidate Training. This application was made at the Navy's Oklahoma City office, with the difference that this time Jud was welcomed with open arms.

Upon his acceptance as an officer candidate, Jud completed a grueling training program at Hollywood Beach, Florida, and emerged as Lieutenant Junior Grade, D. Judson Milburn, USNR. His first assignment was to gunnery school where he was trained to be a gunnery officer and commander of a crew in the U. S. Navy Armed Guard.

A word needs to be said here of the importance and of the honor involved in this assignment. Early in the war it became apparent that merchant ships needed more armed protection than could be afforded by the few naval vessels available. To this end, the Navy installed guns on merchant ships and trained crews to operate them. Armament varied and the crews consisted of barely enough men to man the weapons, plus specialists such as signalmen and radiomen. Merchant ships did not carry medical personnel, neither was such included in the armed guard crew, so the sole responsibility for the entire health and well-being of the men in the crew fell upon the shoulders of the Armed Guard Commander. If a man fell sick or was injured it was up to Lt. Milburn (in this case) to find a solution. Because of the responsibilities involved, much more than usual was expected of a new officer. As a result, the Navy carefully selected older officers with prior experience in the supervision of people. Many were former teachers.

Lt. Milburn's first assignment was to the Armed Guard headquarters at Brooklyn, New York where he was assigned as commander of the navy gun crew for the merchant ship *SS Townsend Harris*, a liberty ship destined for Murmansk, Russia. ("*Liberty*" was the designation of a certain design of cargo ships which were mass-produced in United States shipyards during the course of the war.)

The transAtlantic crossing from the United States to the British Isles

was very dangerous because the German U-Boat fleet inflicted severe losses upon Allied convoys supplying men and materials necessary to defeat the German war machine. Some ships continued on to Murmansk, Russia, to deliver cargo to the Soviet Russian forces which were also bitterly engaged in repelling German aggression. The route to Murmansk was without doubt the most dangerous of any in the entire war because German airpower based in occupied Norway was added to the ever-present U-Boat threat. Lt. Milburn had the option of choosing a safer assignment on his first trip but chose to accept the challenge and to take charge of his crew and proceed to the ship's destination, Murmansk.

Immediately after Christmas 1944, the convoy departed New York bound for the hazards of the Atlantic. Merchant ships were operated by civilian merchant marine officers and sailors under a rather lax disciplinary system. This contrasted with the navy system of strict order. One duty of the armed guard commander was to maintain the morale of his men, so the navy crew observed daily routines such as morning roll-calls, inspections of living spaces, and the observance of Sunday morning religious services. The navy enlisted men had their meals in a room separated by a galley from the room in which the merchant crew ate. These rooms were used for other purposes such as recreation at other times. One Sunday morning, while Jud was holding religious services for his men, some of the merchant crew were having a session in the other room (which was within earshot) telling dirty jokes, etc. Part of Lt. Milburn's duty was to maintain a higher standard of conduct for his crew in contrast to the undisciplined civilian merchant seamen—another reason for the selection of highly qualified officers to command armed guard crews. Even the lowest ranking of the merchant sailors were very highly paid, receiving extra bonuses when their ships entered specified danger areas such as the route to Murmansk. The navy men in contrast received comparatively low pay regardless of the duty involved. The armed guard crew had the pride of being in the Navy, were generally satisfied with the pay they did get, received some benefits that were unavailable to the merchant seamen, and so the pay differential did not become a point of contention.

Sometimes personality conflicts arose between the Navy commander and the merchant officers, and, in Lt. Milburn's case the merchant captain himself. The captain of the *Townsend Harris* did not appreciate the necessity for the navy gun crew aboard his vessel. Little things would occur: for example, the phone lines from the bridge to the gun stations were often deliberately disconnected so that Jud could not talk to his gunners. Fortunately, these tricks were not played when enemy activity was actually taking place.

The gun crews were called to battle stations regularly at sun-up and sun-down for those were the most likely times of a submarine attack. An actual attack did not occur on the first section of the voyage until the convoy reached the Irish Sea. At this point a German submarine struck two ships with torpedoes. These ships were not sunk but had to leave the convoy and seek repairs in nearby English ports, while the remainder of the convoy proceeded to Glasgow, Scotland. It was at this time that Lt. Milburn was confronted with his first medical emergency involving a crew member. While answering the call to battle stations during the attack, a gunner cut his scalp badly on an overhead obstruction. He remained at his station during the emergency and then was brought to Jud for help. The armed guard commander had first aid supplies and rudimentary training in their use, but this injury required more sophisticated treatment. Jud, knowing that the ship would shortly arrive in Glasgow where good medical help could be obtained, did what was necessary to prevent further damage or infection. Another sailor who had been seasick for the entire voyage was also transferred from the crew at this point.

It was now January, 1945, and during the several days stay in Glasgow, the crew enjoyed shore leave. Many of the crew sought female companionship, but not every story was the same. One crew member returned with a report that was quite British, really. He met a beautiful young woman at a service club dance and was invited to her home. Elated, he accompanied her; after a short interlude in her living room, she excused herself to go into the kitchen for refreshments—or so he thought. Shortly thereafter, she returned with her mother and father, whom she introduced with the statement

that they had wanted to meet a genuine American serviceman. Thereupon they engaged him in conversation about America for the next hour or so. He really thought that he had found a sailor's dream and ended up talking the whole time about America! It was somehow like being a migratory bird at a British birdwatching society meeting!

The second phase of the journey to Murmansk began when the newly formed convoy left Glasgow later in January 1945. The British navy escorted this convoy consisting of the usual surface ships plus two aircraft carriers to help fend off enemy airplanes and submarines. The convoy passed around the northern coast of Scotland, past the giant British naval base at Scappa Flow with the impressive ships anchored there, and onward into the North Sea toward the coast of Norway. As mentioned before, the convoy was now entering the most perilous part of the voyage because, in addition to the submarine threat, there was the added danger from land-based aircraft flying from German airfields along the coast of Norway. The convoy was suddenly attacked by German JU-88 bombers during a routine abandon ship drill. Battle stations were immediately manned and all of the ships in the convoy fired at the attacking aircraft, several of which were shot down, but none by Jud's ship—as far as he knew. He called for a cease fire just in time to keep his zealous gunners from shooting down a wounded British plane limping back to its carrier. His gunners mate said "But sir, I have him in my sights," whereupon Lt. Milburn explained, "It's a British plane." Jud talked with the British pilot a few days later at an officers meeting in Murmansk, where the pilot good-naturedly expressed his dismay as well as his gratitude. One sad occurrence was the inability to rescue a downed German aviator in the heat of the attack upon the convoy. Ships could not risk stopping or slowing at sea when under attack or even under the threat of attack, for slowing down could be the first step in disaster.

The arrival at Murmansk ushered in the whole new set of experiences for the crew of the *SS Townsend Harris*, comparable to a transition from daylight to darkness—the introduction to the closed society of the Communist police state self-described as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Circumspect behavior was of paramount importance because the Soviet authorities might, on a whim, arrest visiting sailors who would then simply disappear. Due to Jud's quick thinking and sound judgment, an occurrence of this kind did not happen to any of Jud's charges.

The cargo of an American ship arriving in a Russian (or any other) port remained the property of the United States until it left the ship and was set onto the off-loading facility. The actual labor was done by Russian stevedores who came aboard, entered the hold, manned the winches, and removed the cargo. While this work was being done, entrance to the hold to anyone else was forbidden and enforced by four armed US Navy sailors at each of the corners of the hold. When Jud returned to the ship one evening after a trip into the city, the sentry guarding the gangplank greeted him with the announcement: "Lieutenant, we are in trouble." In reply to the question of the nature of the trouble the sailor said "some shoes are missing from the number one hold and the Russians say that American sailors stole them." Lt. Milburn said, "well we'll see about that," and proceeded on to his cabin for the night.

The following morning about 9:30 a big burly Russian appeared at Jud's door and announced that he had come to pick up the American sailors who had stolen the shoes. Lt. Milburn informed the Russian that American sailors each had two pairs of shoes and could buy all that they wanted very cheaply from the navy stores and therefore had no motive for theft. When it was implied that the Russian workers had themselves probably taken the shoes, the Soviet official was insulted and said, "Do you mean to say that Russian citizens would steal from the soldiers at the front?" Jud refused to allow any compromise in this matter and the Russian departed the ship in a huff. As a safety precaution, no shore leave was allowed for a few days in case the Russians might decide to kidnap someone. The empty hold was later searched; worn out Russian shoes and sandals were found concealed behind beams and in crevices. The Russians had simply broken into crates and taken the shoes off the ship on their feet while leaving the old ones behind. So much for solidarity!

The Russian communists were paranoid about allowing foreigners to

have contact with the Soviet citizens. Before the United States entered the war, the convoys arriving in Murmansk were mostly British. The British were denied shore leave for their crews and they seemed to accept it as a fact of life and let it go at that. Not so the Americans. An American officer told Jud of this occurrence when the United States ships came. The Russian crews came aboard as usual to perform the laborious task of unloading the ship. A Russian operating the winch but the winch was powered by steam furnished from an American engine below. While a large loaded cargo net was emerging from the hold the American Armed Guard officer asked the Russian in charge about shore leave. The Russian replied, "Nyet, no shore leave." Whereupon the American officer replied, "Do you mean we have risked our lives to come all this way, and we get no shore leave?" The Soviet replied, "Da, no shore leave." At this point the American called the engine room through the bridge voice tube and ordered the engineer to shut off the deck steam, leaving the cargo-laden net suspended in mid-air. He then informed the Russian that if there were to be no shore leave there would be no delivery of cargo. The astounded Russians had nothing to do so they departed the ship. The phone lines between Murmansk and Moscow must have been burning that night because shore leave was suddenly permitted the next day and continued from that point for all ships.

Jud became acquainted with a Russian-speaking American Naval officer stationed at Murmansk. When this officer married a Russian woman, Jud and all of the other American and Allied officers attended the reception. Later, after Jud returned later on his second trip to Murmansk, he learned that the officer had been transferred from Russia but his wife was forced to remain and was removed to parts unknown. Whether this officer ever found his wife or not, Jud does not know, but the incident seemed to be another example of the extreme paranoia which infected the thinking of the Soviet officials—they were terrified that their subjects might learn about freedom.

The Russians were accustomed to setting the same time for all convoys to depart Murmansk Harbor. This mechanical approach invited the German U-Boat commanders to lie in ambush for they knew exactly when

outbound convoys would pass by. Many ships were sunk as a result; in fact, Jud's ship took aboard survivors from the preceding convoy which departed shortly before the *SS Townsend Harris* arrived in February 1945, and these survivors were still on board as passengers. However, at the convoy conference (which was held before a convoy departed) the British Admiral in charge announced that a different departure time would be used; as a result, Jud's convoy reached the open sea unscathed.

While en route back to Glasgow in April 1945, a radio message was received announcing the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Germany was nearing defeat but was still fighting, so the vigil against the U-Boat menace continued for the remainder of the trip back to America.

May 8, 1945 marked the cessation of hostilities in Europe, but the *SS Townsend Harris* and her armed guard contingent, now back in America, were destined for another trip to Murmansk. The U-Boat menace had ended but there was still danger which now existed in the form of floating mines. When Jud's ship sailed in June of 1945, a lookout was maintained at the bow of the ship to watch for these mines, many of which were sighted and destroyed by gunfire. Discipline was less stringent on this last run but morale among the crew was worse. Some on the ship were making their third trip to Murmansk and thought that they were to be relieved after the second voyage. Others wanted to be out of the navy and on with their lives now that the war in Europe was over. In June 1945 the war in the Pacific continued but that was far removed from the minds of Jud's crew.

The second round trip to Murmansk and back was made safely, and upon his return to the United States, Jud was assigned to the separation center in Norman, Oklahoma, promoted to Lieutenant. Among other duties, he administered the discharge of Naval personnel and counseled discharges in matters relating to career and educational opportunities. This work was an early version of what we now call "outplacement services."

Jud himself was Honorably Discharged in April of 1946 and returned to his classroom at Oklahoma A & M College, in Stillwater, Oklahoma. He summed up his service by saying that he wouldn't take a million dollars for

the experience but wouldn't want to do it over again for a million. He was proud to have served as an officer in the Navy; he was especially proud that he had been selected to be a commander of an Armed Guard Unit, and grateful that he had the respect of the men who served under him. One incident he recalls is the time that some of his men who were returning from shore leave were heard to say "Sssh be quiet The old man is asleep." The respect was mutual. Lt. D. Judson Milburn was and still is firm in the belief that the American participation in the Second World War served a just cause in freeing the world from the evils of Fascism. Communist tyranny would have to be dealt with for many years to come.

It may seem paradoxical that we risked American lives to bring help to a Soviet Union which was led by one Joseph Stalin, one of the worst dictators the world has ever known. But, because we had a common enemy, the Germany of Adolph Hitler, and the fact that the full extent of the atrocities committed by both Hitler and Stalin still were not generally known, Jud Milburn and others like him risked their lives to serve the cause for the greater good of our country.

When Jud Milburn returned to the Stillwater campus he discovered a student body swollen by returning veterans, matured and serious about the educational opportunities they earned for their service to their country, commonly known as the "G.I. Bill of Rights." These educational benefits included paid tuition, books, and a living allowance. Jud himself was able to avail himself of this benefit when he later sought and earned his doctorate in English at the University of Oklahoma, and became Professor of English at Oklahoma State University.

Dr. D. Judson Milburn has accomplished much in his life since his service as a Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy, but the memories he has of that service remain indelibly engraved in his mind, especially a pleasant one, a feeling of satisfaction that he was able to serve his country and that he did it very well.



Ted Best

Ted Best received his draft notice just as he graduated from High School in June, 1942. He was an Electricians Mate 1st Class, U.S. Navy. He was assigned to *USS LST 353* for duty. After the *LST 353* sank in Pearl Harbor on May 21, 1944, he served at the Amphibious Training Base in Norfolk, Virginia, and was discharged on January 6, 1946, after forty-two months of service.

By Wantae Lim

TED BEST' S MEMOIR OF WORLD WAR II ***USS LST 353 in the PACIFIC***

Ted Best was born the ninth of eleven children of a family in Walters, Oklahoma. In July 1951, after fifty-nine months of study at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (now Oklahoma State University in Stillwater), he received an MA degree in Vocational Distributive Education. Upon graduating from the College, he was hired by Broken Arrow High School in Tulsa County, where he taught for five years. He then became a state employee in Stillwater for thirty-one years in the Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education. He retired in 1985 as the assistant state supervisor of distributive education. Somewhere in between, Ted Best served his country in WWII.

Ted Best received his draft notice from Uncle Sam just as he graduated from high school in June, 1942. Of the five brothers in his family, four joined the armed forces; the eldest was too old for military duty, and one joined the army and was accidentally killed in Eritrea, Africa, in June, 1943. He was buried in Tunis, Tunisia, one of the landing sites for Operation Torch in 1942. Ted Best, and the other two, one of whom is his identical twin, volunteered in 1942 to serve in the Navy. They all survived the war. Ted and his twin brother, Troy, were sent to the Naval training station in San Diego. After the training, Troy was transferred to the University of Idaho to be a radio man while Ted was sent to the US Naval Reserve Armory in St. Louis, Missouri for electrical school. Though the twin brothers wanted to serve in the same place, they had to be separated because of a famous tragedy at Guadalcanal. On the 13th of November 1942, the cruiser *USS Vincennes* was sunk by the Japanese. Aboard were the five Sullivan brothers. Since that time, brothers or relatives have been prohibited from serving on the same ship or military unit.

Once he finished electrical school, Ted was assigned to *USS LST 353*

for duty. (LST stands for Landing Ship Tank.) It was a vessel 327 feet long with a spacious cargo deck which could accommodate about forty tanks. LSTs were also used for carrying troops and supplies in an amphibious assault. He remembers that out of the 120-man crew of the ship, only ten to twelve had experience at sea. Most of them were rookies, and they had a hard time adapting themselves to seasickness, especially on a flat-bottomed ship noted for its lumbering motion on the high seas. When a flotilla of twelve LSTs, one of which was Ted's ship, left New York harbor, he did not know if it was heading for the European or the Pacific theater. When they fixed a course for the Panama Canal, he knew the die was cast for the warmer choice.

When they arrived at New Caledonia after sixty-six days at sea, a wonderful present greeted them. They received mail from home for the first time since leaving New York. Ted Best recalls reading the mail as the second happiest moment of his life—with an additional remark, "No kidding." (Readers may easily guess what could be the happiest moment. Those who cannot will be informed later.) They unloaded supplies and, on-loaded a naval Construction Battalion (CB), set out for an island named Guadalcanal. Just as they were in sight of the island, fifty-seven Japanese airplanes appeared to halt their landing. Ted and his shipmates had their first engagement with the enemy that day. Japanese dive bombers and torpedo planes strafed the flotilla; naturally, the LSTs fired back at their aerial attackers. In quiet times, Ted assisted in maintenance of all the electrical parts of the ship, but during battle he was the gunner of a 40-mm anti-aircraft gun. Luckily, the Japanese were distracted from success at their deadly mission by American airplanes. After about three hours, the battle was a great victory for the Americans. Only three Japanese airplanes departed for their base. The flotilla lost one of its ships, *LST 342*, but this loss was minor compared to the damage inflicted on the enemy. When it was all over Ted's vessel was credited with shooting down two and one-half airplanes.

At that time, American troops were driving Japanese off the islands of the South Pacific by a tactic called "Island Hopping." The main duty of Ted's vessel was to unload supplies and troops to the occupied islands; the

ship would then load up with casualties and bring them to hospital ships anchored off Guadalcanal. With each loading there were more than 150 casualties, mostly on stretchers. In many instances this ship was subjected to severe bombing attacks on the way to her destination island with troops, supplies, and equipment. But the crew always brought their craft through and beached her on the island. There despite vicious hostile bombing and withering strafing fire they successfully unloaded their cargo.

Ted never forgets one very memorable morning. That morning he was relieved from his duty according to sailors' routine, which was two hours of off-duty after a shift of four hours. During the rest period, sailors were expected to sleep or write letters. But when there were casualties aboard, they would visit the wounded with cigarettes and candy, trying to be company. As usual, Ted went down to the cargo deck where casualties were lying. Looking down the deck, he was attracted by something shining very brightly. He went to the spot and found that the shining thing was a well-cleaned belt buckle worn by a marine on a stretcher. He had a severe wound on his leg; the Marine's face registered real pain. To Ted's great surprise, the shining orange and black buckle read "A & M College, Stillwater, Oklahoma." Delighted to see an Oklahoman, Ted greeted the soldier saying "How are you getting along, Aggie?" The foot soldier was so thrilled to have a visit from a fellow "Okie" that, for a brief respite, he forgot his pain. He told Ted that he had graduated from Oklahoma A & M College in Stillwater, and Ted told the wounded marine that he was going to attend the school after the war. It was quite a nice visit for both of them.

Ted recalls something he did once but never again. It was his participation in "requisition work." Once in New Caledonia, he was assigned to pick up supplies at a local depot. He and the truck driver got the supplies and headed back to their ship. But all at once, the driver suddenly left the main road toward an unannounced destination. The driver at last stopped the vehicle and set the brakes in an alley behind a small hut. (Later, Ted realized that it was a hen house.) Some minutes later the driver came back to the truck with his white navy cap full of eggs and ordered Ted to be sure to take good

care of them because they were destined be the driver's breakfast. Ted did not actually participate in the thievery; he was an unwitting accomplice. Soldiers used the term "midnight requisitioning" for such raids. As they sped off in the dust, an angry native woman ran out of her house and chased after them screaming "Yankee, Yankee..."

During the war, security was very important; all letters were censored. Military personnel were not allowed to tell their family precise information about troop locations and movements. Yet the folks back home were intensely curious about where their loved ones were fighting. That is why Ted's brother devised a code system using girls' names. When Ted came back home on leave, he was given a copy of the code. Saipan was "Beth," China "Clara," Philippines "Ann," Australia "Martha," New Zealand "Beatrice," and etc. When Ted wrote home "I'd like to see "Beth," his folks at home knew he was in Saipan. And they would write to the other sons that Ted wanted to see Beth, which was a way of telling them that Ted was now in Saipan. So, whenever any of Ted's brothers moved from one place to another, he would write a letter concerning these fictional ladies. People at home also respected security. Perhaps for the sake of morale, families at home did not tell their children at war about shortages of consumer goods. It was only when Ted visited home on leave that he realized people on the homefront were making sacrifices, too. Aboard ship, he had all the basic necessities including three meals a day, clothing and medical care. But at home everything was rationed—from rubber, fuel, and clothes to sugar and citrus fruits. Due to the respectful silence on the homefront, many of the service men overseas did not understand that civilians were sacrificing for the war effort.

In the name of security, even the media were controlled. When something tragic happened, reporters tried their best to minimize the impact of the tragedy. For example, one day when Ted's LST was anchored at Pearl Harbor, there was a tremendous explosion on his vessel. The explosion occurred while ammunition was being unloaded. There was a chain reaction which caused fire on other LSTs moored nearby. As a result, many ships burned and sank. The fire and explosion could be heard in Waikiki, fifteen

miles from the Pearl Harbor navy yard. But Ted never got a reading on how many troops and ships were lost in the accident. The *New York Times* on May 25, 1944, reported on the occasion vaguely: "... several 'small' vessels were destroyed with some loss of life and a number of injuries." But the actual damage was far more dramatic. One of Ted's shipmates had a close high school friend stationed in Washington, D.C., in navy documents. According to what she told him 889 sailors were killed and seven ships were sunk as a result of the accident. (The ships and men were loading up for the invasion of Saipan.) In part because the accident was not due to enemy action the details of the disaster were suppressed.

Propaganda seems to be necessary in any war. Ted Best does not remember any particular propaganda during the World War II except Uncle Sam posters and the posters on military security and war bonds. Indeed, the "Buy War Bonds" propaganda helped him to save a lot of money. Having no particular need to spend money, sailors aboard *LST 353* usually let their paychecks ride when they were at sea. When they got back to Pearl Harbor, they drew out their money and spent some of it. But they kept most of their money stowed aboard ship—in lockers, seabags, or special hiding places in their work areas. Unlike them, Ted, under the influence of the "Buy War Bonds" posters, invested his loose cash in bonds and sent them home. His patriotic investment decision proved to be very wise after his ship sank due to the ammunition explosion. If he had hidden the cash like his shipmates, he would have lost it all and thereby hangs a lesson: not all propaganda misleads!

The real war propaganda Ted remembers is "Tokyo Rose." Tokyo Rose first was mentioned publicly in the spring of 1943 when newspapers carried a story about a Japanese woman broadcaster attempting to hurt American morale in the Pacific. But government investigative agencies concluded that there was no one named "Tokyo Rose;" the name—if not the voice and the program on which she appeared—was strictly a G.E. invention. Whoever she might have been, the girlish voice from Japanese-controlled Far Eastern radio told American soldiers and sailors that their wives had found new lovers and that their families had deserted them. Tokyo Rose thought she

tearing the soldiers down with such stories, but American soldiers laughed off the propaganda instead and learned to enjoy the stilted dialogue between cuts of great beebop music. Ironically, the navy rated Tokyo Rose as a moral booster! After the war, she was arrested. Some wanted her to be prosecuted; instead, she was rehabilitated and went back on the air to help her own people accept American occupation.

After *LST* 353 sank at Pearl Harbor in May 21, 1944, Ted served at the Amphibious Training Base in Norfolk, Virginia, and was finally discharged on January 6, 1946, after forty-two months of service. Here, indeed, was the very happiest moment of his life. He came back to his hometown, Walters, Oklahoma, by hitchhiking and some time later—went up to Oklahoma A & M College in Stillwater. His decades of service to distributive education followed.

Ted Best expects that the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the war will be honorably recognized by all the Armed Forces and American people. He has something to say to the youth of the future:

"I think young people need to do a lot of listening to the older generation who fought the war. They should also study what has made the United States of America as great as it is today. My war experience has made me appreciate my country more. It really hurts to see someone who takes our flag down and stamp on it. I cannot see some young people burn the emblem of our country. The younger generation must take a more positive attitude toward their country if they want to carry on the great tradition given to them and, in turn, pass it on to their children and other generations yet to come."

Since his retirement on July 1, 1985, Ted has enjoyed his family, especially his two grand-daughters who live only one mile from him. He has recently been honored as one of the leading volunteers in Stillwater, assisting in a number of community organizations such as the Stillwater Christmas

Store (helping over 300 families have a brighter Christmas), the City of Stillwater Community Relations Committee, the Payne County Sheltered Workshop for the disabled, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), and the Payne County Retired Educators Association. His support for his church, First Christian Church, and the Community Action Program for lower income families has also occupied a lot of his time. A final statement from Ted concerns what he learned a long time ago from a respected friend, "No man should expect to receive any services or material item unless he has first given much to others during his lifetime."

By Mary F. Bishop

WOODROW PEERY: "FIRE CONTROL" IN THE PACIFIC THEATER

Valentine's Day, 1944 must have been a real heartbreaker for Oleta Peery. Her husband Woodrow was unable to get a deferment until the couple's next child was born, and reported for duty in the U. S. Navy that same day. Oleta and their four-year-old son Don were left at home in Holdenville, a small town about forty miles Southeast of Shawnee, Oklahoma. Three days later, Oleta gave birth to a second son, who was named, Larry.

The situation was hard on Woodrow Peery too. While serving in World War II, he did not see his youngest son, or the rest of his family for two years. Letters from home had to suffice for news of his children's growth: In one such letter, Oleta enclosed a scribbled outline of little Larry's hand. He had moved while she traced it, making lines jerky and disjointed. Peery jokingly recalls that he really did not know until the war was over whether or not his son had webbed fingers!

While Peery was away, Oleta and the children lived with her father on his ranch near Mill Creek. As was the case with many servicemen's children, little Larry knew his father only through photographs and stories told by his mother and other family and friends. It took Larry some time to adjust when his veteran-father arrived back from the Pacific Theater.

When the war ended, and the family was finally reunited in January of 1946, Oleta took Larry to meet his father at the Jordan bus station in Sulphur, Oklahoma. The two-year-old had not said a word until, after a stop at a local ice cream parlor, the family returned to the car. Oleta, trying to make up for two years lost time, sat affectionately close to Peery, who was sitting behind the wheel. Larry, also in the front seat, tugged on his mother's sleeve and said, "Mamma, scoot over and give Daddy room to drive!" It was the first thing Peery heard his son say.

Peery was twenty-eight when he was drafted—older, he says, than

many of the other servicemen. (The average age of soldiers in World War II was twenty-six.) Already a family man, he was employed as a telephone installer and repairman by Southwestern Bell. When he returned home after the war, the telephone company offered him a choice of jobs. He could have his old position back in Holdenville, or he could relocate to Oklahoma City or Ada.

If he chose the old job in Holdenville, a friend with whom he previously worked with would be moved by the company to another town. Not wanting to uproot his friend, Peery moved his family to Ada, where he has lived ever since. He retired in 1980 after a successful career of forty-three years with Southwestern Bell.

With the rank of third class petty officer as a Navy Fire Controlman Peery found his electronics background helpful. His knowledge of telephone circuitry was enhanced by advanced Navy training specific to the job at hand, which, Peery explains was misunderstood. Many people, he says, assume a Fire Controlman is one who fights or prevents fires, but, in actuality, his job was to control the complex, electronic firing mechanisms of his ship's weapons.

Advanced mathematics, including geometry and trigonometry, were vital in determining trajectories for the guns. Peery acquired his specialized instruction at the Seattle Naval Base after Basic Training in Spokane, Washington.

After nearly Fifty years, Peery's memories of basic-training are still vivid. He recalls the time he and his buddies helped another recruit pass the swimming test; for the navy men, swimming was a requirement, but one young man seemed more liable to sink than swim. Peery and gang promised him that they would help him pass. During the mass test, with dozens of men in the water at once, the supportive bunch took turns driving underneath the man, swimming below him to ensure that he stayed afloat. The man passed the test along with his buddies.

Retrospectively, Peery wonders if they might not have done more harm than good for their friend; it occurs to him now that there was a valid

reason behind the swimming requirement: the man's ship might have sunk and he might have drowned as a result.

Peery also recalls how different the winter weather was in Spokane, Washington, as opposed to in Oklahoma. Temperatures there might drop below zero, but Peery describes it as a "dry cold." Though he now realizes that exposure to those conditions could have been life threatening, he recalls how he and his friends used to play football outside in their shirtsleeves.

Once his training was completed, Peery was shipped out for duty from the port of San Diego. He arrived at Hollandia, a large island in the Pacific Ocean, and was assigned to the *U.S.S. Walton*, a destroyer escort, a ship on which he served for the remainder of the war.

Peery soon found out that he was not suited for the seafaring life. Ironically, he says the only time he wasn't seasick was when his ship was caught in a typhoon. Perhaps the rocking and rolling of the vessel which practically hit the ocean floor, counteracted the churning of his stomach. Much to his amazement, the well built ship held together. In the meantime, he survived on a spartan diet of crackers and water during the typhoon.

The *Walton's* crew did not see much combat, but the men did have their share of excitement. One of Peery's main day-to-day duties was to stand watch, and constantly look out for signs of enemy ships, or mines. He recalls a time when the *Walton* sailed through mine-infested waters near Korea's Gimsin Harbor. It seemed everyone on board, was issued a pistol or rifle—whatever was available—with which to shoot the mines.

Apparently the mines, which Peery describes as various sizes and with appendages "like a porcupine," were not as delicate as had been expected; he recalls that it took something of a sharpshooter to hit the mostly submerged mines, in just the right location for them to detonate. Although the men "were probably in more danger than than at any other time," Peery says the crew seemed to have more fun than at any other time, actually making a game out of the mine situation to relieve the tension of it all. He also recalls a time when a mine scraped the side of the *Walton* as the ship sailed through the night. No one joked then, afraid to breathe for fear of setting off an explosion. Peery

describes the eerie feeling of hearing that scraping noise, knowing that at any moment the mine could catch on something and blow a hole in the ship's side. Once the ship had cleared the mine, the crew dropped anchor to ensure that a similar episode would not occur again that night.

For a seasick sailor, liberties on shore must have come as a relief, but Peery still has photographs and memories of the dead bodies that littered the shorelines of some of the islands where the crew was expected to relax. Although Fifty years have wiped clean the details of dates and locations, Peery does remember the bombing and strafing of the islands that occurred sometimes just before the *Walton* arrived.

The crew usually watched the action through binoculars from the deck of their ship, which was just out of range on the horizon. When the bombing stopped, the *Walton* escorted supply ships into harbor.

What he saw on shore was not likely something he wrote home about either. Island natives, he says, were offered a pig as payment for each Japanese head they brought to the Allied forces. (The head was proof that they had killed an enemy soldier.) Sometimes, he and his buddies would see natives carrying "a string of heads" between them; previously, he says, the pigs had been offered in exchange for Japanese ears. But the natives got wise, and would bring in one ear one day, and the other ear the next, thereby obtaining two pigs in exchange for one dead soldier. These are gruesome memories which Peery shares with reluctance.

Getting news to and from home was not easy for someone aboard a Navy ship during World War II. Letters servicemen sent out were screened and censored to ensure that no news of locations or activities were leaked to the enemy; of course, dispatches from sea were not regular. Sometimes outgoing letters sat in holding areas for weeks.

Similarly, incoming mail was also erratic. Besides letters from home, Peery says the only news the sailors received was provided by the military. He does not remember any outside news sources being available.

When the war ended and Peery arrived back in Oklahoma, his perception was that life on the homefront really had not changed much since

he had shipped out two years earlier.

Having lived as a civilian through other wars and military conflicts since that time, Peery sees dramatic differences in public perceptions. People saw the need for military action during World War II, he says, while support for the Korean and Vietnam conflicts was greatly lacking.

Although he wishes that there were no need for war, Peery says he would proudly serve his country again if needed.

The tradition of service continued into the next generation of Peerys. Both his sons have worn uniforms—Larry serving in Army special forces in Germany during the Cold War, and Don serving in the National Guard and Army reserves stateside. Peery's youngest child, Janet, saw her husband Anthony Jordan through his service in the Vietnam War, during which he was a Marine helicopter pilot.

Now seventy-six, Woodrow Peery remains active with grandchildren, and works around the house in Ada; he also participates in gun club and union activities, keeps a cabin on Lake Texoma, and has remarried. Peery has outlived two wives, Oleta and Evelyn; rather recently, he married Fern Bishop on July 11, 1992. They enjoy retirement, and their grand total of ten grandchildren.

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By Dan Felsenthal

TEARDROPS IN THE RAIN 'MIKE' STEPHANIC REMEMBERS

Some say our memories are like teardrops in the rain; that they exist only as long as we do. For their owners, they are unique realities; yet, if shared, they become wondrous imaginings for the audience. Ironically, such windows on yesteryear are no longer found in the temple of a sage; instead, they lie as close as your neighborhood repair shop. It was in just such a place that I discovered a treasure-trove of wonderful imaginings: the memories that define the WWII life of Mabel Ruth Stephanic.

Looking back on her twenty-three months as an Army surgical nurse in war-torn Europe, "Mike" (as she is referred to by family and friends) fondly recalls an era which defined, and justified her existence: "I learned that I had a reason to live. The war was my fulfillment," she says sternly; "You see, when I was a child, I always thought I would die at the age of twenty-six. Naively, I thought I could do just about everything I wanted by then. But when twenty-six rolled around, I was caught up in the heat of the war and didn't have a minute to think about anything other than surviving. I remember thinking at the time how stupid I had been to ever want to die young."

"It's the crazy things you remember," Mike states with an emotive burst of laughter. Rising to the level of Lieutenant during her tour of duty overseas, Mike had plenty of opportunities to witness the chaos of life in the army, a chaos she calls "S.O.P.": standard operating procedure. Having gone through basic training and desert maneuvers with Oklahoma's 32nd in the summer of '43, the recent graduate from Oklahoma City University Hospital was awaiting departure for Europe in New Jersey when the odd events began. Two of the three ships which were to take the group to the British Isles never even made it to the harbor.

Because she was so sound asleep on her canvas cot, she was save; "I think I was born lucky," she said in retrospect.

A similar incident occurred on New Year's Eve of 1944, but her comrades were not so fortunate. Stationed in an old house in Sudan, France, the hospital unit's living quarters were strafed during the night. This time "Gerry" hit Stephanic's friends. Mike recalls, "We didn't lose anybody completely. But since we had been sleeping in a green house, there were many injuries from glass, as well as shrapnel. The interesting thing, though, is the pilot was shot down a week later." When interrogated about the incident, the pilot bragged of his achievement. Somebody even asked him if he had been aiming for the hospital, which was four city blocks away, and he said, "No, that was where the sick people already were." He knew the greenhouse was where the officers and corpsmen were staying. By knocking out the medical personnel, he was hoping to hurt the morale of the American army. Reflecting on the Nazi's strategy, Stephanic somberly reflects, "Sometimes I think they have a strange way of looking at things."

During the Battle of the Bulge, (December 16-27, 1944, two weeks prior to the incident at Sudan, the care-givers found themselves behind enemy lines for ten days. Stationed on a hill near the Ardennes Forest, they could see Nazi tanks advancing in their Westward push below. It was here in Bastogne that Stephanic witnessed "the prettiest sight she ever saw"—a flock of American P-38's peeling out of formation in order to strafe the rumbling tanks, providing her unit sufficient time to escape with the wounded. Afterwards, they set up a field hospital unit (the only one operating for five divisions) within the Duke of Luxembourg's Hunting Lodge.

The downstairs ballroom area was converted into a surgery ward wherein the beauty of "silver-toned silk walls and deep-rose velvet draperies" of aristocratic refinement contrasted with the medical necessities practiced in their midst:

"During the night, we were awakened with the news that the Germans were on the move again and we would have to leave everything

including our clothes. The first priority was to get the patients out and into trucks and ambulances. We did, but there was four to five feet of snow on the ground, which led to the recurrence of frost-bite for many of the patients. The scene was unforgettable as we passed through the streets of Luxembourg because soldiers, in windows above us, threw blankets into our open-air trucks so we could keep warm. We later learned that the Nazis had been only thirty minutes behind us—which explains why I got away with only a spare pair of socks and a lipstick case."

After writing home to tell her parents she needed more underclothes, Mike was astonished to learn that the Ponca City newspaper had added the loss to their listing of war "atrocities" at the hands of the Germans. She erupts in giddy laughter, recollecting that her father had informed the paper of the maneuver, which provoked the headline, "Nazis steal unmentionables!"

Though news from home was sparse, it sometimes had interesting twists. She fondly remembers the time her father sent over six "pony" (6 oz.) bottles of Coca-Cola. After sharing them with the unit, a nurse exclaimed: "And to think I used to ruin this stuff with alcohol." Her mother's Hermit cookies were another favorite memory because they arrived warm, after apparently having been kept next to a stove in the mail room. Regardless of the time of year, the arrival of such packages was like a breath of Christmas for Mike and her buddies overseas—a re-assurance that their families and homes in America still existed and, most importantly, had not forgotten their sons and daughters. "Sharing was the theme of the day," she recalls, acknowledging their common bond as Americans in the service of their homeland. Mike's fondest memory occurred while she was working in a field hospital in Mainz, Germany. Having received word that someone from Ponca City had just been admitted, she was anxious to meet the unknown patient. Much to her dismay, it was her brother's best friend. "I just touched his shoulders," she recalls, "and we each sat down, right there in a massive green field, and had a good cry," because they knew that they were a long way from the land of

Coca-Cola and returning there was not a certainty.

Once home, in the fall of 1945, Stephanic also remembers a flashback while attending a noisy Labor Day fireworks display: "I kept cringing, especially when 'the screamers' were fired. At that time, I was not aware of the effects of combat duty, but, as in nursing, time is the greatest healer of all," she states. "The war is not something I want to do again," she adds, "but by the same token, if I were asked, I would, without a doubt, say, 'Yes' again. I may have been cold and I may have been scared at times, but it's the positive things I remember—especially the chance to help people."

After the war, "Mike" Stephanic earned her second degree in Science Education and then taught Chemistry at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma for twenty-seven years. She also has taught Vocational Nursing in Woodward, Oklahoma, and has worked in the Stillwater Medical Center Emergency Room. Currently, "Mike" is retired and stays active by assisting her son with his electronic-repair business, *Single-Step Service*, in Stillwater. It is here that this unassuming, jovial personality—our sage around the corner—lives in anonymity, far from the land of her greatest adventures, but content to be back in the land of Coca-Cola. Her memories will live on the communal mind of Payne County, Oklahoma, and the United States as we reflect upon the heritage of World War II.

For the future children of the world, Mike leaves just one simple thought: "Believe, and the world is yours. Regardless of the situation, you can accomplish miracles." Miracles are the essence of life for Lt. Mike Stephanic.

Editorial Policy

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If anyone has any history of the 1893 Cherokee Strip Run, we would appreciate that information for our fall 1993 issue.

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