

Ray Bones' War Stories

Taped Sometime During 2000 - 2002

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Note that after Dad participated in the Nestucca Valley Middle School Heritage Project by being interviewed in a group of senior citizens in front of a class and after he had participated in The Gathering which included presentations of history gathered that school year he became very interested in remembering stories that he thought he should share.

He then purchased a small tape recorder that he could hold in his hand and put near his mouth to begin easily recording when he remembered a story he wanted to tell.

He had very rarely talked about his war experiences to his sons and daughters and had shared few stories, so it was a great surprise to find that he had recorded these recollections of his time during WWII.

Also he started writing down recollections. I've added a few of his written comments to the oral war history below.

I appreciate very much that Darleen Cole, who generously offered to transcribe Dad's tapes, typed words just as Dad said them. He wasn't a hick when he said "nothin'," "goin'," "guessin'," "lookin" and so may other words . . . but he was a tremendous story teller who used language and phrases in a way that made you want to listen. And usually there was humor tied into many of the stories.

As dad entered the last few years of his life he often shed tears and couldn't talk much when he remembered the horrors of some of his experiences in WWII. And yet he always treasured his memories of so many respected friends and comrades he met during wartime and of so many who were killed during the war. When you reach the end of this typed recollection of stories you'll know that he loved America and very much respected our nation and our nation's flag as he held in his heart the sacrifices given by so many to protect and honor our country. Dean Bones (db)

I along with Jack Kellow and Fred Rodhe (Rodke?) attempted to get into the Sea Bees in November 1942. Fred was the only one to make it. Jack needed some work done on his teeth. I did too, and when I went to Dr. Fredricks in Tillamook, he said, "I can't fill those teeth."

I said, "What can you do?"

He said, "Pull them."

I asked, "When?"

And he looked at his watch and said he had time. I said to get with it.

A short time later I emerged from his office with 16 teeth short of what I went in with, 14 down below and 2 wisdom teeth that had come in under my upper plate.

Then, of course, toothless they wouldn't accept me into the Sea Bees. Jack and I went to work at the blimp base on a government survey crew. In February 1943, Jack was drafted. My name was about to come up also, so I just went with Jack. They wanted us to stay with the survey crew and would get us deferred, but we didn't want that.

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One day in February 1942 we got on an Oregon Motors stage in Tillamook, and they took us to the train depot in Portland. From there we went to Fort Lewis, Washington, and that was the last I saw of Jack until the war was over. I think he went on an artillery crew to Germany. The next day I was on the train headed for Camp Roberts, California, and this is when I met some of my old friends that I have to this day, Frons (?), John Heffley, and, of course, John Gault. I took infantry training.

Clarice came to Roberts, and we were married on May 16, 1943, in Paso Robles, California.

I think some time in June they put me on a troop train headed east. A bunch of us got off in Shreveport, Louisiana, and went to Camp Polk where they put us on trucks and hauled us out where the 88th Infantry Division was on maneuvers and needing some replacements. They put us on trucks and hauled us around to the infantry regiments, and thank the Lord they didn't need any replacements. Next I went to the Headquarters & Service Company of the 313th Combat Engineers, and they needed replacements. I was awfully lucky. Company A, B & C were line companies laying and picking up mine fields, building roads and bridges and going with the infantry with flame throwers. Others went to the infantry and actually to all branches. I was trained in the study and operation of 13 infantry weapons, but the reason I went to the engineers was I could type and could operate heavy trucks.

They were next to the Combat Engineers, and they needed replacements.

(Written recollections:) I asked where the latrine was. Someone pointed. When I got there, I saw a shovel full of dirt coming out of a hole, and here was a master Sgt. pitching dirt out of that hole. I wondered how in the world a Master Sgt. got into that fix. I discovered he had gone AWOL (*Absent Without Official Leave*).

I was assigned to Headquarters & Service Company, 313th Combat Engineer Battalion of the 88th Infantry Division. Our line companies, A, B, and C, had it very tough working with mine detectors, building roads and bridges, and in some cases going with the infantry with flame throwers. I must say I was awfully lucky working in Headquarters & Service Company.

When the maneuvers ended they sent us to Fort Sam Houston at San Antonio, Texas. We then moved to Fort Sam Houston at San Antonio, Texas, and Clarice came down, got a job at Penny's and stayed until we were to go overseas. *Without us knowing* where we were going, they put us on a troop train, and we wound up at Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, near Norfolk.

They loaded us on a Liberty ship one evening. The next morning we got in a convoy of 87 ships. We had no idea where we were headed, but 17 days later we landed into Casablanca, North Africa, about Christmas time. I was seasick for 5 days, and it would have been longer, but my friends got me out of the hammock and took me top side.

We unloaded on the side of a sunken ship. The soldiers there wanted cigarettes, and, of course, we each got a ration each week. Everyone felt sorry for these blokes and gave them our cigs. We found out they were selling them. Camels in Italy brought \$35.00 per carton, and I can't remember what they were in Africa. We spent Christmas of 1943 at the base on the outskirts of the city.

Our line companies A, B and C picked up mine fields, laid mine fields, built roads (We had D7 & D4 cats.), built Bailey bridges and other types of bridges, also had the water paint, as we called it and

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Mr. and Mrs. Walter J. Bones
Beaver, Oregon
Dear Folks:
I received your letter today. Certainly glad to hear from you. I was glad to get that V-mail also. I sure like to hear from all the fellows.
I kind of hated to tell you before now and I wouldn't but I think I kind of sense it. I'm going overseas. I can't tell you when but it will be soon. Clarice is starting home Monday. I sure hate to have her go alone but that seems to be the only way. Now listen folks, I don't want you to worry about me. I'll be all right. I want to go so please don't worry about me. There are lots of fellows who have been overseas for over a year. They have given a lot. No furloughs or anything during that time. I don't think we have a kick coming. The more men we get over there — the faster this thing is going to end. I sure hate to leave Clarice. It's going to be tough for awhile and I'm not fooling a bit. I can take it though. If I can't I'll be terribly ashamed of myself.
How is Sis by now? Tell them all hello for me. I certainly hope she gets along all right. We think of her a lot. How is Loretta? Just fine I hope. Also how is Elton and Dad? Tell them all hello for me. I still wish Dad would write a few lines on your letters. Is he still working? Well folks, it's just about bed time and I must write a few lines to Mr. and Mrs. Jones. Now please, please, don't worry about me. I'll get along O.K. Write every day.
Lots and lots of love,
Ray
Pfc. Raymond E. Bones
c/o Postmaster
New York, N. Y.

furnished water to the whole division. You were not allowed to drink water unless it was chlorinated, and that is what the water paint did. We also had showers set up for the whole division. They would bring in truck loads of personnel from all units. Anyway, on maneuvers I hauled lots of supplies including assault boats and pontoon boats, drove lots of jeeps, especially at night, hauling officers here and there.

We spent New Year's of '44 in North Africa. Our troops trained there for a couple of months. A short time later they loaded us on a train, a 40 and 8 so called - 40 men and 8 horses (World War I). Let me tell you in all seriousness that it wouldn't work. We had 20 men and a 35 gallon Lyster bag (a large canvas container about 24 inches in diameter and three feet tall filled with water). We could sit up but not lay down. What a train - no regular potty stops, so when you had to go you jumped off, did your thing, then ran to catch the train. I think we only lost a couple of guys.

The train went to Oran where we got off and got on 6 X 6 trucks (The 2 1/2-ton, 6x6 truck was a standard class of medium duty trucks, designed during the beginning of World War II for the US Armed Forces), and they hauled us up in the hills for more maneuvers. We spent New Year's at a place in then Atlas Mountains. The Arabs stole one of our what we called Diamond tents - 24' X 24'. We were set up in block-like areas with several tents on each side. We always had guards on patrol, but they stole it anyway.

Arabs would ride either horses or camels, and their wives would walk behind carrying all the goos on their heads or backs. If the Arabs had to go to the bathroom they got off whatever they were riding, always had a big black coat, full length, pulled it up, squatted and did their thing. I remember going on pass to Casablanca, and the only thing I really remember was the cafés outside along the sidewalk.

We went to an outpost of the Senegalese who are supposed to be the world's greatest fighters. They had bayonets on their rifles about 24" long and about the size of your little fingers.

Then we went on 40 and 8 railway cars to Oran, North Africa, and put us on an old English cattle boat across the Mediterranean Sea to Naples, Italy. We got out on the sea and hit a really bad storm. I was down below on the deck below top side. There was a windbreak on the stairs going down about 6 feet wide. I was sitting along the wall across from this when we took water over the side. It came down the stairwell and took the wind break out. Water was about 1 1/2 - 2 feet deep. I was so sick I just raised my feet up and let it go. Some fellows were afraid it (the boat) was going to sink, and I was afraid it wasn't. Shortly the man in charge, an English Colonel, came around (he had 6 or 8 henchmen with him) and said, "Top side soldier, boat drill!"

I said, "Sir, I don't believe I'll participate."

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I allowed as how I didn't think I would participate, and he got all bent out of shape. I was terribly sea sick. He then ordered me, "TOP SIDE!", and, of course, I had to go. I talked to him all the way up and back, and, of course, he couldn't hear me.

We unloaded on the sides of sunken ships in Naples as we had done at Casablanca.

I was walkin' down the street in Naples one day when I met Miss Seavy, who taught here at Nestucca High School. She taught typing, and in the war she was a personal secretary to the commanding general of the European theater there. She was a really nice lady who was tall, slim - real slim and blondheaded. And boy, she got me in a USO there, and that's where I learned that women can talk! And what a nice lady. When I got home, why, at a school reunion one time, she was there, and we went over all this again. She outranked me, was the bad thing. I know I wasn't even a corporal then. I don't remember her rank, but she was just an enlisted gal in the WACs.

I can't remember how long we were in the area but long enough to get to Pompeii. I can't remember who was with me, but as we were about to head back to camp a trolley came along with people hanging all over it. It was going to stop, but before it did a fellow fell off and landed under the wheels. It cut him in two before our eyes.

We moved north near a place called Cassino. This is where the Monte Cassino Abbey was. The Germans had an outpost in it so they called for bombers. It was on May 11th, 1944. We were not too far away and watched squadron after squadron drop their bombs on the Abbey. I saw it later, and it was as flat as a plate. This was the 5th or 6th time it had been destroyed, and they always rebuilt it. This was our first introduction to war. I saw my 1st POWs. They were in a stockade, and the guards told them to dig their graves. They had them almost dug, very slowly so the guards told us, and then just before we left they told them to fill the holes. You should have seen the dirt fly.

We had walked from our camp area to the stockade and on our way back to camp we were introduced to the famed German "88" (The German 88 was a versatile 88-millimeter multirole artillery piece. It was used as a field-artillery piece and as an anti-aircraft and anti-tank gun.). When you heard it, it was too late to move. Of course we moved anyway.

Our division fought all the way to the Austrian border where the war ended in 1945. And here I must say that if every American could see the sacrifices made by our men you would really love our flag and what it represents.

I met a lot of fine people while in the army and have lots of them as friends to this day. John Gault and I were in the same unit at Roberts in February 1943 when he and I met for the first time.

When we were at Cassino (Italy), that's where I had, probably, my worst experience in the war. They had just come around and asked for two volunteers to go with two officers up to see General Kendall, who was our assistant division commander. Anyway, a sergeant who was a staff sergeant, and I had volunteered. NEVER volunteer in the army, especially after reading this. These 2 officers from Division Headquarters had a message for General Maurice Wesley Kendall, our assistant division commander who was with the infantry. I was a corporal at the time. The other volunteer guard was a staff sergeant with 4 stripes. His name was McConlogue. We left the area about midnight and walked for a couple of hours before we found him.

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A jeep came along sometime or other and picked McConlog and I up, and one of them was drivin'. I don't know how in the world they ever knew where to go. I just never did figure this out, because we had just made the push off on May 11th of 1944. Hundreds of thousands of rounds of ammo was fired to soften the Germans up, and you could never imagine. When I say hundreds of thousands . . . I wanted to find out exactly before I stated this, but I'd have to go downstairs and go through a lot of stuff to find it out... but you could never imagine what it was like.

If there was even any roads or anything left, I don't know, but we traveled for a little while, and finally we pulled off the road. This has always been a mystery to me (indistinguishable), and I don't know who was in the lead . . . maybe McConlog or one of the officers was. Anyway, I was the last one in this line as a guard there, and we took off up this trail probably fifty to a hundred yards apart. This was about as spooky a thing as I have ever experienced in my life. Anyway, we got up . . . and I don't know how long, and, of course, I was at the end of the line by myself. There was a little building on the left, and I could hear voices in that thing. I didn't know what it was, and I didn't go too far until I saw a man step out on the trail. I don't know to this day what nationality he was, but I think maybe he was a Gherka although he had a rifle. Gherkas didn't carry rifles, they just used knives. But, anyway, he said, "Halt! Americano!"

And I said, "Yes."

And so he said, "Okay." And he flat disappeared like. I don't know where he went. I never saw him again, or even saw where he went. But anyway, we just walked and walked and walked for hours up there. I don't know how many hours. I'd guess we probably got there maybe two or three in the morning, and me being the last one of the bunch. We got up there, and here was a group of men around the general. He was there! General Kendall was there, and the thing that really got to me was on the ground laying there was a man with no legs. His clothes were all blown off of him, and he was . . . he was still alive. That was the thing that really got to me. I . . . I just . . . to this day can't believe . . . I don't know what he was, American or German, but nobody was giving him any help. and that really bothered me . . . I just was REALLY ripped up about that, but, what could I do? And then there was another little building there with . . . I found out that those were POWs, German prisoners down there that I'd passed in the night, and the one here was filled with German prisoners.

The thing that got me, of course . . . I know a lot about infantry actions and whatnot, but there were patrols coming in and going out with their faces painted just as black as coal. And of course, I knew all this, you know. But, this . . . this, mind you, was probably two or three in the morning, and there was just lots of GIs there. And that kinda' got to me, and, anyway this general was talking about the next town that we were gonna' take. I wish I could remember the names of these towns, but my mind has slipped, and I can't. Anyway, what the general said was, "I wonder if we can get tanks in there."

And old Sergeant McConlog says, "Yes, sir!"

And the general said, "Well, sergeant, what do you know about this?"

And McConlog said, "Well, I was up there today."

"What in the hell were you doing up there?"

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And he said well, he was just out lookin' around, and all he saw, he said, was German soldiers. The general asked him if he would mind going in a lead tank.

Knowing old McConlog, he said, "Why, no sir." He would just eat that up. 'Cause he had no fear; he just really didn't. Anyway, they talked that over, all these officers there, you know - they talked that over and finally decided that they wouldn't use tanks. The general decided they'd take it with infantry, so that's what they did.

We must have been there thirty minutes or maybe a little longer, I don't know. You know . . . that was 1944. How do you remember things that long? But anyway we started back down that trail, and that guy laying there just, just bugged me to no end. I just couldn't believe they would allow a human being to lay there with the blood running out of him, and no legs and he was in terrible shape. He was . . . well, he was probably dyin' right there. I don't know, but that just always REALLY got to me. We got back down to that crazy jeep, I'm guessin', at maybe five in the morning or between four and five, I'd guess. But what an experience that was! That was terrible! That was probably my worst experience of the war, and you think about this stuff . . .

Look at all those GIs that were there. I mean, these were . . . a lot of these were just city kids, you know, probably 18 to 25 years old. Look at me! I was just about 20 then. Why did the Lord save me? I mean . . . I just seen so many of those guys, you know, and it just tears me up when I see people with no respect for the flag. I know what that flag represents.

On the hill above where we were bivouacked was a small town called Minturno. At night we could hear our machine guns and the German burp guns. When we moved up through the town there were 3 Sherman tanks along the road about 3 or 4 hundred feet apart. Each one had a hole through the front. We stopped and looked at one. The insides were just scrap iron. I don't know how many men were in each, but no one survived.

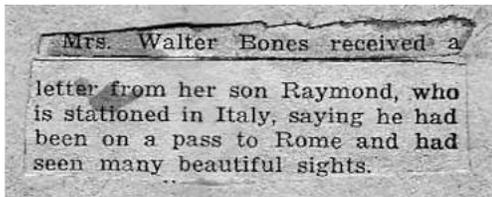
We were always on the move. Once we got in the line there, we were always movin'. We moved just about almost every day, and we had some experiences, I'll tell ya'. But we moved on up to . . . well, I went to Florence and then Rome. Our troops were some of the first troops in Rome. "A" company had a jeep with two lieutenants in it got killed right there in Rome right there that first day . . . picked off by snipers. We lost a lot . . . quite a few men. I can't tell ya' how many, but it was quite a bunch of men . . . not generally with snipers, but some of 'em were with snipers. And getting into that town was the ultimate for General Clark who was the commander of the fifth army there, and we were one of the first ones. Those people were really happy to see Americans, I'll tell ya' that.

But, what I should say, before we got there they had the Anzio Beachhead. And we were not in the Beachhead, but we were just a ways out. In fact, one night we got in an old building there that the Germans had just got run out of. I was corporal of the guard that night, and I'll never forget this . . . we heard airplanes. And I was laying on a blanket on the floor. I was still dressed because I was to go out with the guards once in a while, and anyway, these planes made a pass just down the hill from us. There had been a bunch of artillery guns in there, big guns, our guns, and so they dropped flares. I mean, they lit that country up there, and then they went around and made a pass, and here they come. They dropped bombs on that sucker. Well, the bad part of it was was our ordinance company was there. A lot of those guys had jumped in a big ditch that the Germans had dug about four to six

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feet deep. They got in that thing, but somehow they dropped an egg right in that ditch and killed a whole bunch of those guys.

I went down there the next morning, and boy, you talk about a mess . . . now, that was a mess. I don't know how many trucks and how many guys they killed, but they sure tore up a pile of trucks. And, I just don't remember, twenty, thirty some men . . .

just lost 'em right there. That was the edge of the Anzio Beachhead. And that's where Ray Geisert was. (*Ray Geisert was Sharon BONES Geisert's father-in-law who also lived in South Tillamook County for a short while. db*) He was out there on a landing craft, and down in the engine room when all this was goin' on.

But, we went right from there into Rome. Rome was quite a place, and I went through St. Peter's, not at this time I didn't, but later I did. I went through St. Peter's Cathedral with a Catholic fellow and was in an audience with Pope Pious who I always said was Pope Pious 11th, but now I just heard he was Pope Pious the 12th. Swiss guards brought him in, they carried him, and let him down beside me. He went up on the podium. He could speak three languages, but he couldn't speak Polish, and there was a bunch of Polish guys there they said. I was very, very interesting. I just couldn't believe that I was seeing this.

I saw Michelangelo's works in the Sistine Chapel. My, my, that was really, really something. It was . . . well, that St. Peter's is REALLY something. And they were excavating down underneath that thing at that time, because, well, I guess people were buried there, and I don't know what else was down underneath of it. But they were sure workin' on it at that time, and to this day they might still be workin' on it, I don't know.

I got to see the leaning tower of Pisa in both 1945 and 1980. I also got to see Irving Berlin. I also saw the Colosseum.

South of Rome they had a summer place for the Pope. It's called Castle Gandolfo, and I see it in the paper once in a while . . . that's the only part of the St. Peter's that we ever stayed on.

(I have wanted to do this talking about the war for so long and to think that now I have a REALLY nice recorder, thanks to Susie I'm gettin' the job done. I may not sleep tonight.)

I should go back and tell you something about when I mentioned General Kendall. He was a one-star general. That's a brigadier general. General Clark was a four-star general. That's just general. The only other one I haven't mentioned would be a lieutenant general, who has three stars. And those guys are generally just fine people. Kendall was a guy that was a kinda' of a tough dude, you know. I mean, he'd get right in the thick of it. We had a commander, and I think it was of the 350th infantry, which was an infantry regiment. We had



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three regiments in our division of 18,000 men, and he was a bird colonel. General Kendall was a full colonel, and he later became a brigadier general. He was tougher than a boiled owl.

Another thing I should say, and I can't remember if I told the name of that town up there where those tanks were all shot right through the front end. It was at Minturno. My memory just don't serve me like it used to.

We got into a few scrapes on the way north. I was never hit by enemy shells, etc., but they scared the stuffin' out of me a few times. I have to tell you that we got up to a little town before we got to Florence, and we always, when we moved, we would go to farm houses, or whatever, to find somebody that would trade wine or vino for sugar or soap or whatever. We did this in this one little burg, and we became quite friendly with this old couple. She was 68, and I think he was about 72 or 73. We just knocked on their door one evening. He came to the door, and he wanted to know what we wanted. We told him, and he said fine, to come back that night. So we went back that night and got some vino and traded him whatever . . . sugar, soap or something. And they invited us to their home up in Florence, and what an experience that was!

We went, knocked on this door and stepped inside . . . There was a big steel medieval door there about twenty or thirty feet high made out of steel. When we rang the doorbell, a maid came down with a string of keys about a foot long and opened that door for us. There was another guy and I. Anyway, we went up there, and there was Mama Baldini. She was always glad to see us. She was friends to a lot of GIs. She sent the maid out, and here she come with some chicken. You know we ate fried chicken there like you could never imagine. And every time you left, old Papa Baldini had a . . . he was a wine exporter to the U.S., and he would go down in his basement. He would ask us what we wanted. He would give us a bottle of whatever we wanted . . . right there. And they were really nice people. In fact, we wrote to them for a long time. She had a sister there in town, and she wanted us to get acquainted with her.

And this sister had a daughter, just a REALLY good-lookin' gal, and she had a boyfriend. One night they asked us over. They said they were gonna' have a big feed. And this Don Singleton from Davenport, Iowa, he was just about as crazy as anybody could get. We went over there and got into the sauce a little bit. We were sittin' around this HUGE table, and I don't think all the guys who were there were from our outfit. I think they were from all different outfits. Pretty quick old Don jumped up and he hollered, "Viva Mussolini!" and that gal's boyfriend was sittin' there, and he just come completely apart. 'Course, they were mad at Mussolini at that time, and we just pertinear had a knock-down drag-out fight there. But we got out of there without gettin' skinned up. I don't know how. Old Don was always doin' something like that. It was kinda' neat that we met those people. And Don, like I say . . . he was always up to something. It didn't make any difference . . . Viva Mussolini! That was probably the worst thing you could think of, you know, for these people, because Mussolini was out of power, and he'd messed things up for a lot of people. But he did a lot of good things, too. He built lots of nice roads and whatnot. So... that was in Florence.

Mom (*Clarice db*), and Bill and Jo Balmer and I went over there in 1980, and I just know that we went to a restaurant right there by Mama Baldini's door. In fact, they owned a restaurant, and they owned a railroad station there, these Baldini's did. And I've always kicked myself that I didn't go in there, 'cause I KNOW that was the door. But I just didn't go see them. Well, of course, they were probably gone by that time, but, anyway, we went in this little place to get something to eat. It was a buffet-type

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. . . kinda' like North's Chuck Wagon, only a smaller version of it. And Bill and Joe were in front and went in, and there was macaroni in one spot. They had chicken. . . . they do fried chicken awfully good there.

But anyway, Bill and Joe got their plates of chicken and whatnot, and went in the dining room, and we heard the darnedest commotion you ever heard in your life in there. Come to find out that Bill and this waiter was nose-to-nose in there . . . Bill had taken his stuff off his tray and set it on the table, and you weren't supposed to do that! But old Bill was a givin' that guy the what for, I'll tell you. They were nose-to-nose, and I thought I was gonna' see some blood flyin' there. But they finally got over it. When we left there, old Bill . . . (chuckle) . . . Bill took all the chicken bones off his plate and laid 'em around on the table. That's how you win friends and influence people, you know. Mom and I come along there. We wanted to know what something was, and this little gal was just kinda' a smart aleck, and she said, "You people Americans, and you don't even speak English." Well, I was gettin' really upset at her, and of course that doesn't do any good, either. We finally got out of there without gettin' wiped out, and that was a plus, I guess.

But anyway, during the war, we went on up to the Po Valley. Like I told you, we moved about every day. Again, I was a company clerk, and we had to keep track of the service records and other things going on at Division Headquarters. It was a rat race, but we had everything under control. We had a warrant officer in charge and a Tech. Sgt. under him.

One time we pulled into this area where the Germans had just been. In fact, we were under observation, and probably if they'd known that, they wouldn't have stayed there. But we did, and boy, they started chuckin' those dang shells in, and I got under a jeep trailer and tried to dig a fox hole, but it was just like diggin' in black top. I couldn't get anything done, you know, and just made a little dust fly. That night I went over . . . there was a little creek that went down through there. I dug a hole in the back of that thing, and that's where I slept.



We had a guy by the name of . . . we called him Nifty. His name was Crandall, and he worked in the motor pool. He could get about as greasy as anybody you ever saw. But when he got cleaned up, that's where the name Nifty come from. He was a first class dude, I'll tell you. He was up in the back of a GI truck doing something there, and we tried to get him down because we was afraid he was gonna' get killed from shrapnel, you know.

We had a guy in the kitchen . . . His name was Stanley Lefco. He was a little Pollock guy, and he was a cook in the kitchen. Believe this or not, he crawled in one of

those big army ovens and stayed in there, because it was gettin' pretty hot around there, you know . . . But that's the area where Sgt. Gadzinsky and I found a little building of some sort. It had a bunch of mines in it . . . shoe mines. It was terrible. There were just empty boxes there, and I was

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glad they were all empty. We got a bunch of 'em out and decorated 'em and sent 'em home. I still have one here, and I think Keith has one. I don't know . . . we sent several of 'em home, and they were kind of neat. When you stepped on one, it would go off and just blow your foot and ankle right off . . . take your foot off right at the ankle. They were kind of a scary deal.

We had to be very careful when you took over a piece of equipment that the Jerries had. A lot of it was booby-trapped. Our 1st casualty was a West Point officer who saw a rifle leaning against a tree. He walked out there and picked the rifle up. That ended him right there.

Our line companies lost quite a few men to mines. We had one step on a mine, and it jumped about 3 or 4 feet and exploded. I can't remember, but I believe it killed one or two and wounded all the rest. If the Germans could wound someone, that was better than killing him because it took 5 - 6 people to take care of him.

They also had another mine that had three prongs on it. I'd never have seen one, but that's what my outfit did was pick up mine fields and lay mine fields. I mean, that was one of their jobs. One place they were working they were loading a truck with mines. It was a stalemate in the wintertime, and they were just gonna' lay a mine field. I can't remember whether there was five guys on that truck. Somebody screwed up, and that thing blew. They couldn't find two or three of them men. Finally . . . there was some tall buildings back away from it, and the blood started drippin' off the roof. And they found 'em up on top of those buildings. We lost quite a few men that way. One guy had just gotten a pass and they went out and told him that the guy that took his place was killed there, too. Course I got to know a lot of these men, not only in headquarters company, but in ABC company because being a company clerk I worked for the other clerks, and we got to know each other's people.

Lots of these names I just can't remember, and I don't know that I ever knew the names. However, each day on our morning report we had to put the name of the area where we were, but those names didn't stick with me. Before we got to the Po, we were up there in a stalemate in the wintertime, and one time we heard the ack-ack guns a-goin'. I didn't know there was any guns around us, but I want to tell you that country was alive with anti-aircraft guns. And here was this German plane, and he was flyin' over towards our side. He was duckin' and divin' around because those shells were not comin' real close to him, but they were gettin' fairly close. You could see the bursts of the shells up there, and those old ninety millimeter Bofors were right there just a poomp, poomp, poomp, you know. They never did get that plane, because one of the guys took a load of rations up forward, and he said that that thing was goin' back towards the German lines the last he saw.

There was stuff like that went on . . . and then we got up to the Po Valley. I could almost make a tape of that myself, because it was so . . . part of it was comical. The allies had blown all the bridges out, and so those Germans had no way of gettin' back across the river. So they left their HUGE busses, as big or bigger than our Greyhounds, and most of 'em six-wheelers . . . big old huge trucks . . . horses, motorcycles and everything. They had to leave them there, and every GI in the United States Army had something whether it was a motorcycle or a horse or . . . or you'd just look up and here'd come one of those huge busses down the road. It finally got so bad that they had to set up areas to get those rigs off the road, 'cause they had everything plugged up.

We had a fella' in our outfit. We called him Conklin. He liked to drink, and we called him Stoplight 'cause his nose was always red from drinkin' too much. He got on a horse there and went. He hit a

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shell hole. The horse came out, but he didn't. He just got banged up pretty good. I don't remember exactly what happened to him. Prior to this time they had given me a German truck to drive and haul all of my section on it. It was a little diesel. I can't remember what kind it was, but you just never saw anything like it. I loved to just get in that thing. It was just "bump that" starter, and it was rip and you was off and a-runnin' right now." I had that thing for a long time because we were short of trucks.

I remember crossing the Po River. That's one thing I'll never forget. They had a small barge that held four vehicles. It had a motor on the back of it about four feet high, an outboard engine. They backed me on there first right off in the left hand corner of that thing.. They backed me out there, and of course the front of that little ol' outfit come up. I thought, "Boy, here we go!" but it hung in there. It didn't fall off. It was actually a little ferry. But that little ol' truck would just go anywhere. What I mean is 'round the sharpest corners you ever saw . . . But they didn't make things near as good as ours for gettin' around or anything like that, you know. But that thing was the slickest runnin' little rig you ever saw.

I'm gonna' tell you about the second worst experience I had in the service. We moved up into a little town. The road kinda' went up on the left side of it, and we set up tents on the left hand side of the road. The main highway went right up by the corner of this building and right to the east side of our camp area, and we had tents set up in there, pup tents. A pile of trucks were in there. Well, they finally come over . . . the officers come over and said, "You guys, if you wanna' move up in the building . . ." so that was the first night we'd stayed in a house, you know, for a long time. We were playing cards. Lavern Barnett, clerk of A company, Howard Walker, the clerk of C company and I went over to this big house right on the corner, just right across from where all these tents and trucks were. We were in there playing cards when we heard a bomb drop. Everything, of course, was blacked out. We blew the candles out and stepped outside, and we could see where just down the road was where they dropped the bomb.

We went back in the building and went back upstairs to bed. It must have been a three story building. I'm not sure of that, but I kinda' think it was. We got into one of those HUGE Italian beds. They were so big, you couldn't believe it. Barnett got in one side, I got in on the other side, and Walker was on a cot down at the end of it. We no more than got in bed than we heard this dagone airplane. It just sounded like he was in a dive. He leveled off just as he got to our house, and let me tell you that thing was a-roarin'. He just went over this building, went up and turned around, and here he come. He had his machine guns just a-playin' a tune on the side of that old stone building . . . just really did, you know. And I was scared to death because there was a window right on the right hand side there that I thought, well, he'd get some bullets in there, but he didn't.

He went over, and when he did he cut his tail gun loose, and there was a command car just goin' around the corner on the road side. They shot his left rear fender, wheel, tire and everything off the left side of that command car. They jumped out of that rig, and run in the door. We had a 313th Combat Engineer sign on the side of the building about a foot square, and he put a hole right smack through the center of that one.

That was a BAD experience let me tell you. I got my feet under me, and I started runnin'. I run back to where I came to a ramp. It was blacker out than the inside of a cow . . . I don't know how I even knew

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where it was, but anyway, I got there and I went out this ramp to this hillside that this thing was built on. I started a-runnin' up there. When he came back again he went down across the road, and just shot holes in all of those tents. Just think, if our guys had been in 'em . . . In fact, I'd a been in 'em, too. He shot holes in those tents and in those trucks. It just REALLY saturated everything. But we didn't get hit, and that was lucky. We were told the next day or later that night that he went up the road and dropped a bomb on one of those big carriers that they haul tanks and big rigs on and just blew it all to pot. Anyway, that's war.

We were back in Rome, and we camped right in the north end of Rome. Barnett was the clerk of company A and Walker was clerk of company C. Walker had a friend who was flying English Bullfighters which were night fighters. They were a two engine plane. One day we heard this plane comin', and of course, you really got shook up when you heard them. This thing hopped over the hill and just dropped right down over the area. Here was old Lavern Barnett out behind the pilot, and there was only one seat in that plane. He was humped right over the pilot, and they were (chuckling) scoutin' our company. Barnett and Walker both belonged in our outfit, and the old colonel come a-runnin' out. It about blew his tent down (laughing). We thought that was awful funny. He wondered WHO IN THE HELL WAS IN THAT PLANE!, but he never did find out. We thought that was funnier, yet.

We moved up from there, and one day . . . I don't know why I was where I was, but I was near where this dump - we called 'em dumps where we'd unload supplies and cover it up with a camouflage net. We had done this. And pretty quick somehow that camouflage net caught on fire. We think somebody must have accidentally flipped a cigarette butt on it, and I was right there. So I grabbed an extinguisher out of a truck. I went over there and started pumpin' on it, and Sgt. Gadzinsky was with me. He was a master sergeant. And we started pumpin' that extinguisher on that fire when my boss, who was a warrant officer by the name of Fallon came along, and I hollered over to him said, "Is there anything in there that will blow?"

And he said, "Yes, there is." He said, "There's dynamite caps." Right there he should have run everybody off, but he didn't. Well, I turned around and laid my extinguisher on the ground. I have no idea why I did that, but I did and so did Gadzinsky,. We immediately took off. And let me tell you, it blew!

Forty-two guys got the purple heart from that and two guys were killed. I saw two guys get the Soldier's Medal right there. Well, it blew all the clothes off those two guys. They were both staff sergeants from the line companies in there for supplies. It was terrible seeing those two guys. The blast ABSOLUTELY blew every inch of clothing off of those two guys. Again, forty-two guys got the purple heart, and was I ever lucky that I didn't get one. And I'm thankful for that. I never saw so many ambulances in my life as I did right there. And there I saw two men earn the Soldier's Medal. I think it is the medium highest award given. (*The Soldier's Medal is awarded to any person of the Armed Forces of the United States or of a friendly foreign nation who, while serving in any capacity with the Army of the United States, including Reserve Component soldiers not serving in a duty status at the time of the heroic act, distinguished himself or herself by heroism not involving conflict with an enemy.* db)

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Those two guys that were killed - there wasn't a spot on their body that but what there was a hole at least an inch apart. I mean, you just couldn't believe where those caps had just blown that copper . . . all over those guys. It was just absolutely terrible.

I can't remember how many man lost eyes, but it was several. The officer whom I had asked about explosives lost an eye.

I should tell you that this Sergeant McConlog that was up there with General Kendal picked up that fire extinguisher that I threw down on the ground and was squirtin' it when that thing blew. He never got a mark on him. Sergeant Gadzinsky and I were just a few feet away from that explosion, and we just both got knocked flatter than pancakes there. I don't know how far, but it REALLY whomped us. The problem with the war is that men are expendable, equipment isn't. If you lose a jeep or a truck or something, they get all excited; if they lose men, they don't. That always made me really get upset.

Another thing is down on the Po River one evening about dusk we saw a German plane just hop over the hill. It was a fighter, and he was following the river down, I guess. You could sure see him, and he turned and went down the river. Right there the anti-aircraft got to shootin' at him. One of 'em shot his tail completely off. That always kinda' bugged me, because we never did hear that plane crash. I don't see how it could ever fly without a tail. Anyway, it got out of our sight.

Another thing that I thought of afterwards was when they bombed our ordinance there just off the Anzio Beachhead. When they started droppin' flares and whatnot, I jumped up and ran out of the end of the building or into . . . well, what are you gonna' say . . . it wasn't a tunnel, but they had dug a HUGE hole back in there. That's where all these, our guys, were. When I got there I didn't think there was room for me! But I finally squeezed in. It was a HUGE bomb shelter, I guess is what you'd call it.

Then old Don Singleton . . . this guy could get into more fracasas than anybody in the world, and how I ever got hooked up with him I don't know. But I liked him, and he was a real nice guy. But one night we had just moved into a new area, and we were off the beaten path there a little ways and how they ever picked that spot, I don't know, but they did. That night we started walkin' up in town. All their town . . . most of their towns in Italy are on hills . . . and so we walked up into town, got into the vino a little bit, and old Don, he got schnockered. It was time to get back to our unit. The road went right through the middle of town, and I saw a GI truck comin'. So I hollered at him. Of course everything was blackout. He stopped and I said, "Do you mind if I throw my friend here in the back of your truck, and when I want off, I'll bang on your cab?"

And he said, "Fine." So I picked old Don up and chucked him in the back of that truck. Anyway, down the road we went. Well, I got where I thought our road took off, and I banged on the cab. The fella' stopped, and I got old Don off there and took him off to the side of the road and just sat a bit, you know.

And we met a guy who had an eagle on his hat. Well, nobody needed to tell me that he was a bird colonel. He was just under a brigadier general. He had lots of authority. He was a nice guy. He was the fifth corps commander, as I remember. We got into camp there, and he said (chuckling) . . . "Well, you better take your friend and put him to bed, 'cause I think he needs it."

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And I said, "Well, sir, that's exactly what I plan on doin'", and that's what I did. Of course, there were some things that happened over there that I wasn't real proud of. One of 'em was when we were in the town of Brussia, and the war had just ended. We'd have somebody come into our area in a jeep looking for someplace, and we'd say, oh, just go up to the first German MP and turn left or right, or whatever just kiddin' 'em. Well, we saw this happen there . . . just before we got into Brussia when the war ended they had German MPs out there which was kinda' funny, and they took all our weapons away from us. Believe this or not, in the town of Brussia who had the weapons? The Germans. Don't ask me why, but this is the truth.

Anyway, we were in this old castle at Brussia, and they had a big lake near there called Lake Guarda. Every day they would send a truck and a load of pontoon boats and motors down there, and the guys would go swimmin' and just have a blast. I was doin' this, and got along fine until they changed . . . we had a warrant officer named Fallon . . . he was a junior grade and then they transferred him and gave us a chief warrant officer who just worked at bein' a knot head. He wouldn't let me go one day, and . . . 'course, he and I did not get along well. One day he told me, he said, "I want you to type up some papers for me."

And I typed 'em up. And when he got done, he said, "Bring them to me."

And I said, "I'm not in the habit of waitin' on you guys," which was not real nice, but anyway, I didn't like him. He felt the same about me. So he come over and got 'em, and he said, "Who taught you how to type?" I don't know, I gave him some smart aleck answer. But that day, he wouldn't let me go with the guys down to the lake. I got him by the arm. We were up in the upstairs on the second floor of this old building, and I took him down the stairs by the arm out into the courtyard where my company commander was who was by that time, I think, a captain. Don't make any difference, but anyway, Jones was his name. I walked up to him and saluted him, and I said, "Sir, I've got a problem, and I've got him right by the arm."

"Well, what's your problem?", he asked me. I said, "He won't let me go down to the lake with the guys, and my work is complete."

Well, I got along great with my company commander. He was a good man. He liked me, and I liked him. So he told this chief, he said, "I'm gonna' tell you somethin' right now. Don't ever give this man another order," he said, "He gets all his orders from me, so you just don't even talk to him."

Oh, I got all puffed up like an old toad. They eventually shipped him out, and when they did, the day they shipped him, he come over to me to where I had my card table set up and my chair, and he said, "Before I leave, I want you to know one thing. I got no use for you."

And I said, "Well, you know, the feeling is just kinda' mutual, you know, 'cause I think you're a knot head," and I explained that all to him (chuckling). He was kind of a somethin' else, so that ended that little party. But basically I had good, good people to work with.

We went back to that town of Brussia in 1980. 'Course, we didn't go to that old castle, and that would have been kind of an interesting thing. Brussia was just before you started up into the Brenner Pass.

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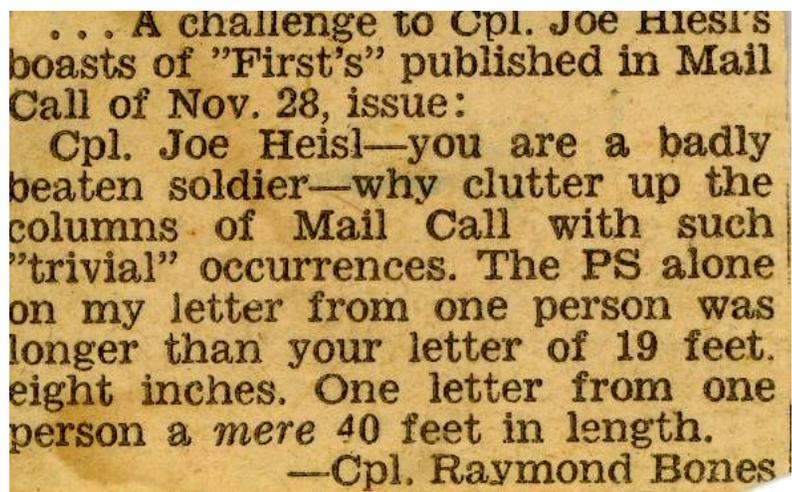
I must tell the rest of my story here. We stayed on the second floor of this old castle, and right out the back window was the alley way. Of course, everything they do there is stone walls, and this one wall was using one side of the building. Then on the other side they had built the stone wall. So there was an alley created. And you'd get about fifteen or twenty kids comin' down through there, and you'd throw out a handful of candy and watch 'em. I want to tell you, you've never seen such a thing in your life 'cause they'd get in there about six feet deep.

We got to where we waited until some dignified lookin' dude came down through there on his bike, and just as he got there we'd through out a handful of candy in front of that bike. Those kids (chuckle) would get several feet deep in there and upset the old boy, and that didn't go over big. The first thing you know, we had all the moms in town there. They would shake their fists at us, not that I'd a blamed 'em. It'd a been awful if somebody'd done that to my kids, but we thought that was funny for some reason.

I said before, I went in the army in February of 1943, and I got out in December of 1945 . . . so I spent about two years over there. I had never had a pass at all to get to see my family, my folks or my wife or anybody in all those two years that I was gone...

I have a little article in a paper that I cut out of the Yank, no, the "Stars and Stripes". Some guy had written in there and he'd gotten a long letter from some relative or his wife, or somebody, and he was braggin' about that. But I put him to shame with the one that Clarice had sent me, and maybe I can get that thing and prove my point here. My land, did I ever lay it on that old boy.

I just went and got this article, and it says, "A challenge to Corporal Joe Heisel's boast first published in mail call in the November 28th issue. Corporal Joe Heisel, you're a badly beaten soldier. Why clutter up the column of mail call with such trivial occurrences? The P.S. alone in my letter from one person was longer than your letter of nineteen feet, eight inches. One letter from one person was a mere forty feet in length. Corporal Raymond Bones." How's that for laying it on the line!



. . . A challenge to Cpl. Joe Heisel's boasts of "First's" published in Mail Call of Nov. 28, issue:
Cpl. Joe Heisl—you are a badly beaten soldier—why clutter up the columns of Mail Call with such "trivial" occurrences. The PS alone on my letter from one person was longer than your letter of 19 feet, eight inches. One letter from one person a mere 40 feet in length.
—Cpl. Raymond Bones

I don't need to imply that I was any sort of a hero at all, and far from it. I gotta' tell you that those fellas that are still over there are the heroes. And as far as I'm concerned, the medal of honor is the greatest medal you can get. Just about the thickness of this newspaper is the combat infantryman's badge and the combat medic's badge. If people only had any idea in this world what those guys did. They were just absolutely amazing. FLY YOUR FLAG!

We were in this town of Brussia, also, and things happened there. They had a curfew. I don't remember the hours, but it was nine or ten o'clock at night. A person couldn't be out after that, and if you were caught out there that was bad news.

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One night old Don Singleton, where he got his bicycle, I don't know, but he had a bike, and I didn't have one. We were out huntin' some vino, or somethin', and we discovered it was gettin' pretty darn late. So we thought we'd better head for home, and we were doin' pretty darn good heading there. But here come a bunch of MPs in a jeep. I don't know where Don went, but I went down over the hill and across a little railroad track. I got down to where I could see those MPs, and boy, they started shootin' at me! I never will forget that. Of course, I didn't get hit, and old Don, he made it back to camp fine.

Another thing happened there that I never will forget. Don, like I say, was a guy that you never knew what his next move was. One day he went up to the front just as the war ended. He ran into a German lieutenant there with a '39 Chevrolet two door. What a beautiful little car, and he gave that to Don. Don came back, and he drove that '39 Chev all over town. Of course, you know where the gas come from . . . it come out of the motor pool! Don also had a luger which I later bought from him.

We had a lot of fun with that car, but one day the allied military government came along and wanted that car for their use; so they took that from old Don. He got REAL upset about that, but there wasn't much he could do. Of course, they painted on the bumpers of that thing AMGOT (*Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories db*).

They had it for a couple of weeks, but one day Don was downtown, and he spotted it there. So he got in it, and he drove it off (chuckle) which he was capable of doin' all kinds of things. Of course, they came, found that sucker again and took it away from him. What a beautiful car. I guess the guy had bought that car in Germany. I hadn't realized, I guess, that they sold Chevrolets in Germany, but they did.

(tape gets a little garbled for a few seconds)...

. . . and how to run cats and heavy equipment, and he had a man on a D-7 cat there sitting on the side of the seat while Sergeant Pulling was running it. They run over what they figure was three Teller mines which were REALLY powerful mines especially with three of 'em together. They ran over them with that cat with the right hand track, and of course, it blew and killed . . . I don't remember whether it killed the guy he was training or not, but it killed Sergeant Pulling. I used to have a front page of a Yank magazine that showed him laying there on the ground, and it showed this D-7 cat laying on its left side and the right track where it had hit Pulling and killed him. I've always felt bad about it, because I knew Sergeant Pulling, and he was a nice guy.

Well, the day the war ended we were near a town called Brescia at the south end of the Brenner Pass. We rounded a corner, and there was a German MP directing traffic. What a laugh! This was really a fascist town. These people were really on the Jerries' side.

When we went through Milan I saw where Mussolini and his gal friend and others were hanged. It had been a service station with a zillion small windows all broken out. As I recall the ropes were still there. It had just taken place a day or 2 before.

We stayed in an old Italian castle near Lake Garda (*Castello Scaligero?*). I can't remember how long we were there, probably a month or two. Then they loaded us on trucks and hauled us south. I remember we stopped at the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Somewhere along the way they put us on a

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train. The good 'ol U.S. Government had rebuilt the railway better than it had ever been. This is where we passed the Monte Cassino Abbey and saw the ruins. They took us to Naples in an Army depot, and after being there for a week or so loaded us on a converted Italian luxury liner, and we headed for the U.S.

We crossed the Mediterranean in better style than we did the first time. I can still see the Rock of Gibraltar, and in about 7 days we docked in Norfolk, Virginia. The thing I really remember about this is they gave us milk and that was something I had never had in my 23 months overseas.

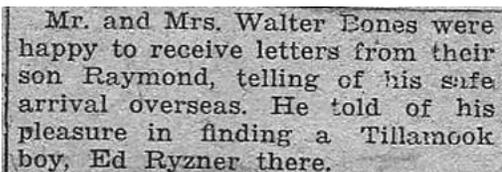
From here they put me on a train, a Pullman no less, and a few days later we were in Fort Lewis, Washington, where I was discharged having been in the service 33 months. In all my travels I saw a lot of important people including Irving Berlin, Joe Lewis, The Pope, my wife, and some very fine individuals of this fine country. I have seen a lot of dead Germans and just too many dead Americans ages 18 - 35. I have never killed anyone and have been scared half to death, but I survived.

The flag represents so much to me. I have seen hundreds of bodies loaded onto trucks and in trailers pulled by Jeeps. It has been 50 some odd years since this fracas ended, and those young men didn't have a chance.

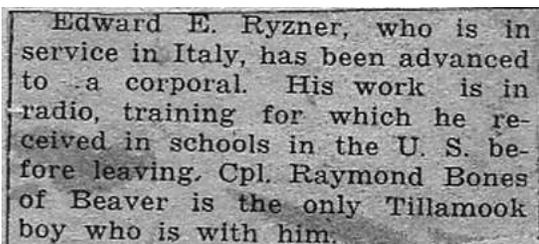
(Did I ever mention the fact that I'm REALLY proud of this recorder! My land, it does a good job!) I am so proud to be an American, but I gotta' tell you, that I am so ashamed of these Americans . . . protesters. I honestly believe that a good hitch in the army . . .

(Written recollections:) Ed Ryzner from Tillamook was in my unit from Louisiana until we got out of the Army. I drove up in front of Hi School Pharmacy in Tillamook and saw Ed standing there talking to someone, so I got out of the car and went over to him. I stuck my hand out and said, "Hi Ed."

He looked at me really strange and said, "Who are you?"



Mr. and Mrs. Walter Bones were happy to receive letters from their son Raymond, telling of his safe arrival overseas. He told of his pleasure in finding a Tillamook boy, Ed Ryzner there.



Edward E. Ryzner, who is in service in Italy, has been advanced to a corporal. His work is in radio, training for which he received in schools in the U. S. before leaving. Cpl. Raymond Bones of Beaver is the only Tillamook boy who is with him.



With the Fifth Army in Italy—Cpl. Raymond E. Bones, of Beaver, classification specialist, and Cpl. Edwin E. Ryzner, 906 E. 6th street, Tillamook, a switchboard operator are both members of the famed 313 Combat Engineer Battalion who has won two Legions of Merit, seven Silver Stars, 28 Bronze Stars, three soldier medals and three division commendations and were honored by the city of Muskogee, Oklahoma, for distinguished work during the Arkansas river floods of May 1943. They built roads, bridges in the mud and mountains from Cassino to the Po river since joining the Fifth Army in Italy early in 1944. They went overseas in December 1943. It's present commander is Major James H. Green of Pensacola, Florida.

I said, "We slept in the same pup tent for 2 years and, and you don't remember me?"

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Oh, yes, then it all came back. "You are Ray Bones."

A few months later I was in Hi School Pharmacy when I heard Ed talking loud like me. I looked him up, and he said, "I'm glad to see you as I'm trying to verify something. Remember when I was driving that truck, and I had a fellow with me. The truck upset, and we were pinned in it?"

"No, I don't," I said.

Ed said, "What has happened to your memory?"

Battle stars:
Rome - ARNO
N. Apennines
Po Valley

*Transcribed by
Darleen Cole
March 28, 2005*