

Ray Bones' War Stories

Taped Sometime During 2000-2001

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 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 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

(Written recollections:) In February of 1943, a friend of mine, Jack Kellow, received his draft notice from his friends and neighbors to join the service in the defense of his country. My name was about to come up also, so I just went with Jack.

We got on the train in Portland and wound up in Fort Lewis. That is the last I saw of my friend, Jack, until the war ended.

The next day I was on the train headed for Camp Roberts, California. I took infantry training.

In June, I was back on the train to Camp Polk, Louisiana. The 88th Infantry Division was on maneuvers, and they needed 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. They were next to the Combat Engineers, and they needed replacements.

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.

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I was assigned to Headquarters & Service Company. I must say I was awfully lucky. Company A, B, and C were line companies laying and picking up mine fields, building roads and bridges, and going with the infantry with flame throwers.

When the maneuvers ended they sent us to Fort Sam Houston at San Antonio, Texas. But one day they landed us on the train, and we wound up in Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia (next to Norfolk). They loaded us on a Liberty 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 in Casablanca, North Africa. We spent New Year's of '44 in North Africa. Our troops trained there for a couple of months. Then they hauled us to _____ and put us on an old English cattle boat across the Mediterranean Sea to Naples, Italy. We hit a bad storm. I was terribly sea sick. The old English colonial said, "Top side, Soldier."

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

Then he got all bent out of shape, and in his deepest voice said, "Boat drill!" And I talked to him all the way up to the top deck.

We unloaded on the sides of sunken ships in Casablanca and Naples.

(Oral recollections:) 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 by the name of Sergeant McConlog, who was a staff sergeant, and I had volunteered... NEVER volunteer in the army, especially after this thing... I, I would never have volunteered for nothin'!

But anyway, 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 it was just... you could never imagine what it was like.

Oh... if there was even any roads or anything left, I don't know... but we traveled for a little while, and finally they pulled off the road and 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... as a guard here, and we took off up this trail probably fifty to a hundred yards apart, and this was about as spooky a thing as I have ever experienced in my life... anyway, we got... I don't know how long, and... of course, by myself... and there was a little building on the left and I could hear voices in that thing, and didn't know what it was, and I didn't go too far until I... a man stepped out on the trail, and I don't know to this day what nationality he was, but I think maybe he was a Gherka... although he had a rifle, and 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

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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, 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 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 a... I found out that those were POWs... German prisoners down there that I'd passed in the night, and the one there 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... going... 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 said... he was talking about the next town that we were gonna' take... and I wish I could remember the names of these towns, but my mind has slipped and I can't... but anyway, Sergeant McConlog... what the general said... "I wonder if we can get tanks in there."

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

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

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

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

And he said well, he was just out lookin' around, and all he saw, he said, was German soldiers. Well, anyway, McConlog asked him if he would mind going in a lead tank. Old McConlog, knowing him, he said, "Why, no sir." He 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 infantry, and take it with infantry, so that's what they did.

But anyway, I don't know... we must have been there thirty minutes... of course... maybe a little longer, I don't know... time... you know, that's been... 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... 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... but anyway, we got back down there and got to that crazy jeep... I'm guessin' at maybe five in the morning... 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, it just tears me up when I see people with no respect for the flag... it just... I know what that flag represents...

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But anyway... we were always on the move, once we got in the line there, we were always movin'... 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 one 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 Beach Head. And we were not in the Beach Head, but we were just a ways out... in fact, one night, we got in an old... a bit old building there... that the Germans had just got run out of, and 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... go out with the guards once in a while and... anyway, these planes made a pass just down the hill from us, and 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 went around and made a pass and here they come and they dropped bombs on that sucker... well, the bad part of it 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 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. But anyway, that was the edge of the Anzio Beach Head. And that's where Ray Geisert was... (Ray Geisert is Sharon Bones Geisert's father-in-law who also lived in South Tillamook County for a short while.) he was out there on a... on the 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... not at this time I didn't... later I did... 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... but anyway, they set him... Swiss guards brought him in, in a deal... they carried him, and let him down beside me and he went up on the podium and he could speak three languages, but he couldn't speak Polish, and there was a bunch of Polish guys there they said... but it was very, very interesting. I just couldn't believe that I was seeing this... saw Michelangelo's works in the... sitting 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, they... they just had... I guess people buried and I don't know what else 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.

Anyway, 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, and that's the only part of the St. Peter's that we ever stayed on or that ever...

(I have wanted to do this 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... but... anyway...)

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I should go back and tell you something about when I said 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... and he has three stars. And those guys are generally just fine people. Kendall was a guy that just didn't... was a kinda' of a tough dude, you know... I mean, he... he'd get right in the thick of it. Anyway, we had a commander... I think it was of the 350th infantry, which was an infantry regiment... we had three regiments in our division of 18,000 men, and he was a bird colonel... he was a full colonel... and he later became a brigadier general... 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... was at Minturno... and I may have said that, but I... my memory just don't serve me like it used to. My memory has gotten pretty old, you know... it's 77 years old... so, anyway...

I have to tell you that we got up to... I was gonna' say Florence... but it was 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... and 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... and we just knocked on their door one evening, and he came to the door, and he wanted to know what we wanted, and 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... but anyway... they invited us to their home up in Florence, and what an experience that was! We... we went and knocked on this door and stepped inside of this... what would you call it... verandah... anyway... there was a big steel medieval door there... about twenty or thirty feet high... out of steel... anyway, 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, and she was always glad to see us... she was friends to a lot of GIs... anyway, she sent the maid out and here she come with some chicken... you know... anyway... 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 US... he would go down in his basement and he would ask us what we wanted... if we wanted vino, or... I can't remember... one of 'em was inset, or something like that... anyway, 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, and I don't remember now what the end story was, but... anyway, 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... and one night they asked us over... 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... anyway, got into the sauce a little bit... but, 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... anyway, 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 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... but that was just one of the things that happened... it was kinda' neat that we met those people... and Don, like I say... he was always up to something... he... it didn't make any difference... Viva Mussolini... that was probably the worst thing

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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 did a lot... built lots of nice roads and whatnot, but anyway... so... that was in Florence.

And we got back in... Mom 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 and... go and 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, and it's kinda' like a... well, it was a buffet type... kinda' like North's Chuck Wagon, only a smaller version of it... and Bill and Joe were in front and went in and they had some macaroni in one spot, and they had chickens... 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, and 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... but anyway, 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... well, anyway... Mom and I come along there, and 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... but 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 from... on up to the Po Valley... I guess that's where I wanna' say... anyway... we just... like I told you, we moved about every day, and we just... 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 make a little dust fly... but that night I went over... there was a little creek went down through there and I dug a hole in the back of that thing and that's where I slept... but, anyway, we had a guy by the name of... we called him Nifty... his name was Crandall, and he worked in the motor pool and 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, but... and 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... where Sgt.... uh... what's his name, Mom... I can't even say his name... Gadzinsky and

I found a little... kind of a little building of some sort... it had a bunch of mines in it.... uh... shoe mines... it was terrible... I... I can't even think of what I wanted to say... anyway... there were just empty boxes there, and I was glad they were all empty, but anyway... we got a bunch of 'em out and decorated 'em and sent 'em home, and 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... they were a shoe mine, but... when you

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stepped on it, it would go off and just blow your foot and ankle right off... take your foot off right at the ankle, I should say... it was... they were kind of a scary deal...

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... and one place they were working and they were loading a truck with mines for... 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... and they couldn't find two or three of them men, and 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... anyway, we lost quite a few men that way, but anyway... one guy had just gotten a pass and they went out and told him and the guy that took his place was killed there, too... but anyway... '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... so some of this was not too great... but anyway...

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 they don't... those names didn't stick with me... and anyway, we got up to the Po River... well, 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, and 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... and 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...

But, anyway, there was stuff like that went on... and then we got up to the Po Valley... now, that was... 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... most of 'em six-wheelers... big old huge trucks... horses, motorcycles and everything... they had to leave it 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... hit a shell hole... the horse came out, but he didn't... I don't remember... he just got banged up pretty good... I don't remember exactly what happened to him, but... 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... 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.

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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... anyway, they backed me on there first... right off in the right... in the left hand corner of that thing... 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 to... 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... just kinda'... 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... uh, pup tents... and our trucks... 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... in a house, you know, for a long time... but, anyway, we were playing cards... Lavern Barnett who was the... helped me clerk of A company and 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, and we were in there playing cards when we heard a bomb drop... so we... everything, of course, was black out... we blew the candles out and stepped outside and we could see where the... just down the road was where they dropped the bomb...

But, anyway, we went back in the building and went back upstairs to bed... and it must have been a three story building... I'm not sure of that, but I kinda' think it was... and we got into one of those HUGE Italian beds... they are so big, you couldn't believe it... anyway... Barnett got in one side and I got in the other, and Walker was on a cot down at the end of it... well, we no more than got in bed than we heard this dagone airplane... he was... it just sounded like he was in a dive... anyway, he leveled off just as he got to our house, and let me tell you that thing was a-roarin'... and he just went over this building... and went up and turned around and here he come... and 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...

But, anyway, 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, and they shot his left rear fender, wheel and tire and everything off the left side of that command car... well, they jumped out of that rig and run in the door, and 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...

But that was a BAD experience... let me tell you, I got my feet under me, and I started runnin'... and I run back to where I came to a ramp... and it was blacker than the inside of a cow... I don't know how I even knew where it was, but anyway, I got there and I went out this ramp to this hillside that this thing was built on, and I started a-runnin' up there... when he came back again, and 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 ... just REALLY saturated everything... but we didn't get hit, and that was lucky... but we were told the next day... or later that

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night, that he went up the road and dropped a bomb on a... one of those big carriers that they haul tanks and big rigs on and just blew it all to pot, I guess... but, anyway, that's war...

But now, now I'm gonna' tell you... (chuckling)... I get ahead of myself here... we were back in Rome and we camped right in the north end of Rome... and this Barnett, who was the clerk of company A and Walker was clerk of company C... Walker had a friend who was in... flying, and they were flying English Bullfighters... which were night fighters... they were a two engine plane... anyway, one day we heard this plane comin'... and of course, you really got shook up when you heard them... but anyway, this thing hopped over the hill and just dropped right down over the area, and here was old Lavern Barnett out behind the pilot, and there was only one seat in that plane, and he was humped right over the pilot... and they were (chuckling)... scoutin' our company... of course, Barnett and Walker both belonged in our outfit, and the old colonel, he 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, and we thought that was funnier, yet.

But 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... and 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... but you know what a... one of those old extinguishers were... anyway, 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... on that fire when my boss, who was a warrant officer by the name of Fallon came along, and I hollered over to him, and I 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, and we immediately took off... but... let me tell you, it blew!

Forty-two guys got the purple heart, 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, and they were both staff sergeants from the line companies in there for supplies, and that's what was goin' on... but, it was... it was terrible seeing those two guys... ABSOLUTELY blew every inch of clothing off of those two guys... forty-two guys got the purple heart and was I ever lucky that I didn't get one... you know, could have really got one! And I'm thankful for that. I never saw so many ambulances in my life as I did right there. Anyway, I'm gonna' quit for now.

Anyway, 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... and all over those guys... it was just absolutely terrible...

I should tell you that this Sergeant McConlog that was up there with General Kendall, that was one of the guards... picked up that fire extinguisher that I threw down on the ground and was squirtin' it when that thing blew, and 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, you know... that was a terrible experience... The problem with

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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.

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

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

Anyway, another thing that I thought of afterwards was when they bombed our ordinance there just off the Anzio beach head... 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 it was... they had dug a HUGE hole back in there, and 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... but anyway, I got out of that one...

Then old Don Singleton... this guy... how I... you know, he was a... he could get into more fracas than anybody in the world, and how I ever got hooked up with him... 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 schnoekered... well, it was time to get back to our unit, why, the town went right through... the road went right through the middle of town, and I saw a GI truck comin', so I hollered at him... and of course everything was blackout, and 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 (chuckling)... and I can still hear his old head a-bangin' on that steel or wooden bed... anyway, down the road we went... well, I got where I thought our road took off, I banged on the cab and the fella' stopped and I got old Don off there and took him off to the side of the road and just sat....

(end of first side of tape)

... a bit, you know...

Schnapps... anyway, he had a... he had an eagle on his hat... well, then nobody needed to tell me that he was a bird colonel... he was just under a brigadier general... he had lots of authority... but anyway, he was a nice guy... he was the fifth corps commander, as I remember, and we got into camp

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there and he said (chuckling)... "Well, you better take your friend and put him to bed, 'cause I think he needs it."

And I said, "Well, sir, that's exactly what I plan on doin'", and that's what I did... so that was just another little sidelight... and there were lots of 'em... and, of course, there were some things that happened over there that I wasn't real proud of... one of 'em was... we were in the town of Brussia, and the war had just ended... well, I better tell it... 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, and everyday they would send a truck and a load of pontoon boats down there and motors and the guys would go swimmin' and just have a blast... Well, I... I was doin' this, and got along fine, until they changed... we had a warrant officer named Fallon... he was a junior grade, then they transferred him and gave us a chief warrant officer, who just worked at bein' a knot head... well, 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, but anyway... so he come over and got 'em, and he said, "Who taught you how to type?" and I don't know, I gave him some smart aleck answer... but anyway, that day, he wouldn't let me go with that... with the guys down to the lake... I got him by the arm and I... and we were up in the upstairs, on the second floor of this old building... I took him down the stairs by the arm, and out into the courtyard where my company commander was... and by that time, I think he was a captain... don't make any difference... but anyway, Jones was his name... and I walked up to him and I 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?" 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, and so he told this chief, he said, "I'm gonna' tell you somethin' right now... don't never 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... and anyway, 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)... but anyway he was kind of a... somethin' else... so that ended that little party... but basically I had good, good people to work with.

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

I must tell the rest of my story here... out of the... we stayed on the second floor of this old castle, and right out the back window was the alley way, and of course, everything they do there is stone walls, and this thing was using one side of the building and then the other they had built the stone wall, so once they got in there, they were there... but anyway, what would happen was, those kids... you'd get about fifteen or twenty kids comin' down through there, and you'd throw out a handful of candy and watch 'em... and 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, and... then 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 throw out a handful of candy in front of that bike, and those kids (chuckle) would get several feet deep in there, and upset the old boy and that didn't go over big, either... and the first thing you know, we had all the moms in town there... they would shake their fists at us and... not that I'd blame 'em... I'd 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 and 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...

... thing that I was gonna' do this morning, and I didn't, I have a little article in a paper that I cut out of the Yank... no, the "Stars and Stripes"... anyway... some guy had written in there and he'd gotten a long letter from his... 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 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, a mere forty feet in length. Corporal Raymond Bones." How's that for laying it on the line?

I don't need to imply that I was any sort of a hero at all, and far from it, but I gotta' tell you, that those fella's 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. But just about the width of this newspaper is a... should be the combat infantryman's badge and the combat medic's badge... if people only had any idea in this world what those guys did... it's just absolutely amazing... FLY YOUR FLAG!

I should have said, thickness of a newspaper... that's what I meant to say... anyway... I want to tell a little bit about this town of Brussia... I don't know... I just can't quite get it through my head about the two different places and the old castle, but we were in this town of Brussia, also, and things happened there... they had a curfew... and they had us GIs... I don't remember the hours, but it was nine or ten o'clock at night... you couldn't be out after that, and if you were caught out there, that was bad news.

But anyway, one night old Don Singleton... where he got his bicycle, I don't know... he must have stolen it from some I.. but anyway, he had a bike and I didn't have one, and we were out huntin'

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some vino, or somethin'... anyway, we discovered it was gettin' pretty darn late, so we thought we better head for home, and we were doin' pretty darn good, but... funny, here come a bunch of MPs in a jeep... and I don't know where Don went, but I went down over the hill and across a little railroad track, and got down to where I could see those MPs, and boy, they started shootin' at me! I never will forget that, but, of course, I didn't get hit... old Don he made it back to camp fine...

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

Anyway, 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, and he got REAL upset about that, but there wasn't much he could do... and, of course, they painted on the bumpers of that thing AMG...

And anyway... and they had it for a couple of weeks, but funny, one day he was downtown and he spotted it there, so he got in it and he drove it off... (chuckle)... which he... he was capable of doin' all kinds of things... but anyway... and of course, they came and they found that sucker again and took it away from him... but that was quite a thing... what a beautiful car... I don't know how he... he had bought it I guess in Germany... but I didn't realize, I guess, that they sold Chevrolets there, but anyway they did, because he had it... but that was a Fascists town... it really was a Fascists town... Brussia was... all Fascists... our headquarters in town was in a beautiful building... it was awfully nice... almost all mirrored windows in it... it was really a neat place...

But, I guess that's gonna' be just about the end of it for now...

(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 this guy was running it, and they run over what they figure was three Teller mines, which were REALLY powerful mines, especially with three of 'em together... they ran over it with that damn 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... and 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 it's left side and the right track where it had hit Pulling and killed him... and I have lost that thing, and I've always felt bad about it, because I knew Sergeant Pulling and he was a nice guy.

(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 damned ashamed of us... of these Americans, that I can't stand it. Protesters... (oh, that isn't what I want)... back, a guy got up on the side of a building like that, they'd have picked him off there... these guys up in these trees... they'd a fell a tree into there and knocked them suckers out of there, right where they belong! I honestly believe that a good hitch in the army... and then they made a landing somewhere, put them guys in it!

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They'd be good landing material. Put them right in the bowels of that landing craft, that's where they needed to be... let 'em learn somethin'... they're not learnin' anything this way...

(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 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?"

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

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
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