

## War Era Story Project 2012

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The country was struggling to recover from the Great Depression when I began to acknowledge adulthood and realize the financial stress of the 1940s decade. I began my self-supporting responsibilities after my graduation from St. Nicholas Catholic High School in Zanesville, Ohio in 1942. In January, 1943 I enlisted in the U.S. Army even though I could have been draft-exempt because I worked on the family farm and that occupation was considered essential to the war effort. I knew it would be emotionally hard to leave, but my two older brothers were already overseas and I wanted to join up. Leaving my friends, family and the privileges of a good life was hard but the worst part was leaving my high school sweetheart as we had become very fond of each other.

We all knew that enlistment meant for the duration of the war but that did not deter us. I wanted to contribute to winning the war along with the many other young Americans who were also joining for the protection of the United States and elimination of the Axis adversaries. Going from everything I had ever known to joining up with strangers, in unfamiliar places, to a way of life totally different that included tough, but necessary, military training, was a huge change.

After induction in 1943 and completing basic training in infantry skills, our group of several companies was transported to New York where we boarded the troop ship, *Thomas H. Berry*. Assuming we were destined for the European theater was far from correct. On this 5,000-capacity ship we sailed down the Hudson River, through the Panama Canal and on to Australia. What took us thirty-one days to Australia would have taken only fourteen days to Europe.

And now begins my unbelievable course of events.

We landed in Brisbane, Australia (the city chosen for General MacArthur's operations headquarters) in May, 1943, and five of us were taken off the ship to a large converted post office building that housed all enlisted personnel. I had never seen the other four before and I never saw them again. Adjoining the building on the eighth floor was General MacArthur and his staff. On the seventh floor was General Akin, Chief Signal Officer of the entire Asian Pacific theater from Russia to Australia and from California to China. From May, 1943 to October, 1943 I was assigned to loading munitions and equipment from a warehouse to railroad cars. This was very hard and exhausting work. In October, 1943 I was transferred to duty in General Akin's office. I ended up with several different jobs including office clerk, interior guard, chauffeur and courier between satellite offices in Brisbane. Being a courier was the most exciting because I was carrying highly classified materials and was given a jeep for transporting and a loaded 45 pistol for security. Because of the classified materials, I fully understood the meaning of the 45.

We advanced north through Port Moresby and Hollandia in New Guinea, Leyte Gulf in the Philippines, the South China Sea, Lingayen Gulf, Tacloban and Manila in the Philippines and all the while I continued to work for General Akin and his staff. A small group of us were known as the "Advanced Echelon". We were usually the first of headquarters personnel to reach our "points of destination" to establish communications.

My final location was in Manila in 1945. From there, I was granted a forty-five day furlough back home, after being gone for 26 months, with the stipulation that I would return to my overseas station when my forty-five days were over. I had been through four campaigns and earned four bronze stars. While I was home, the Japanese surrendered, ending the war. For this reason I was able to get my travel orders changed and avoided the second overseas tour. If I had returned, I would have ended up with the occupation forces in Japan.

While on furlough I married my high school sweetheart Mary Catherine Davis. (We were married sixty-five happy years and have four great children.) When my forty-five days were over, I reported back to Camp Atterbury, Indiana for a temporary stay and then to Camp Crowder, Missouri and last to Fort Knox, Kentucky until my discharge in October, 1945.

My time in the military service was at times hard and lonesome but very educational. I say, why me? Why was I, an inexperienced eighteen year old, selected out of all the many millions in the service and assigned to Command Headquarters? Working there with such high-ranking generals and officers gave me unforgettable memories. All of these men were of the highest character with their only purpose to defeat our adversaries and preserve freedom.

After my discharge I returned to my pre-war job, which soon became less than satisfying. I went forward to employment in the consumer finance industry which filled my thirty- eight year career. In addition to my financial duties I held honorary positions of President of the Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky Loan Exchange, District Chairman of the Ohio Consumer Loan Public Relations Committee, Charter Member of the Assumption Federal Credit Union and President of the Glenco Civic Association.

The service taught us many things, but also offered veterans benefits with the G.I. Bill of Rights. Mary and I were able to purchase our first home with this benefit. I also received on-the-job training, which gave me a supplemental income.

After thirty-eight years I decided to retire to part time employment: Eight years as a city auditor and three years as business manager for a local Catholic parish. Life has been good to me. I am thankful and appreciative. And, I believe that it was only by Divine intervention that I was supported and safely blessed.