

War Era Story Project 2012

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Age: 85

I turned 18 on November 16, 1945, and was drafted into the Army of the United States on January 6, 1946. I went to Camp Atterbury, Indiana for indoctrination; then I was talked into being discharged from the involuntary Army of the U.S. and enlisting voluntarily to the U.S. Regular Army for a period of 18 months. When they talked with us, they implied if we signed up for the regular army, we would not have to serve as long as if we stayed in the drafted army. They said we would automatically get one stripe after six months (which didn't happen until I asked for it). I was sent to camp Lee, Virginia for six short weeks of basic training. After basic training, I went to four weeks of typing school, and then went home on furlough for 10 days.

I left by train to New York City, where I boarded a troop ship, and 10 days later we docked in Bremerhaven, Germany. I was assigned to a Quartermaster Depot in Rheims, France, about 40 miles from Paris. On arrival, I was again enrolled in an eight-week school to become an office clerk typist. Upon completion, I worked in the company office compiling schedules of personnel company activities, etc.

After about two months, I was assigned to a division of French Civilian Guards (wearing dyed U. S. Army uniforms) whose duties were to guard our army warehouse full of military equipment, supplies, etc. We had no problem working with the French; they were co-operative and they were fairly easy to get along with under the supervision of a French Army Major, U.S. Army personnel consisting of a 1st Sargent, me (a corporal) and a P.F.C. We had our own little house and were in charge of two German P.O.W.s: Hans and Fritz; their duties were to get provisions and food supplies for the French guards, as well as tidy up the working area and grounds. Hans and Fritz knew they had it real easy and did everything we told



them to do without question: made our beds, shined our army boots, cleaned our house and treated us like they were our personal butlers.

When we were not on duty, we would play baseball and other sports activities. Inside, we would play cards, like Pinochle, Hearts, Euchre, etc. When we got paid at the end of the month (always in cash) there would be poker games, Craps and other gambling going on. I would usually win at poker, but lose in craps because I didn't really know the game too well. We did get to go to Paris a few times and saw the Eiffel Tower, churches and other sights. Paris night life was like it is anywhere, hitting the bars, taverns and meeting girls. All in all, my perception of the French people was that at that time, they were not very clean people.

After remaining in Rheims for six months, the Depot was closed and I was sent to Darmstadt, Germany. I was assigned to a third clerk-typist school for eight weeks, making it the third time the Army had sent me to the same type of school. Upon completion, I was sent to Frankfort, Germany, on the River Main and assigned to the Army Historical Division, which was writing about the Occupation of Europe by the



U.S. Army. After attending three schools, I had become a fairly efficient typist (55 wpm), so my job was to type out hand written notes that would be used as master book pages. These were sent directly to the publisher for printing, so they had to be error free.

In Germany, there was a severe shortage of cigarettes, candy and sweets, and the Germans would do almost anything for these items. So we would use them as bartering tools and trade them for cameras, jewelry, musical instruments, radios, etc. For a pack of cigarettes and a couple of candy bars, we could get the women to do our laundry for us. Every week on a certain day, they would come to the perimeter fence of our camp, we would select a certain woman for the laundress, the same one every week. We would throw our bag of dirty clothes with cigarettes and candy over the fence and she would toss over the clean clothes. We never had a problem with this.

Our camp was within walking distance of Frankfort, so we would walk into town to see the sights. Frankfort was heavily bombed during the war, so there were piles of bricks, mortar and rubble in just about every city block. However, the Germans, being orderly people they are (compared to the French) had everything as neat and clean as possible. While I was in Germany, I was able to take several tours and see some old castles, beautiful mountains, rivers and scenic countryside. I remained in Frankfort for about four months and then returned to the U.S. to be discharged on July 9, 1947.