

## War Era Story Project 2012

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Current home town: Arcanum, Ohio

Age: 96

The Army did not take me at first because of a hernia and the fact that my wife Jennie was pregnant with Gloria, but then my classification went from 1-B to 1-A. I first went to Indianapolis to have my experience evaluated, but did my basic training in Little Rock, Arkansas, at Fort Robinson. At the end of my basic training, I applied for a furlough to come home before I was shipped overseas. I waited until they made the assignment for my company so I could get a longer furlough. During the time I was home in February 1943, my Dad died, so my leave was extended by a few days. My company had been shipped out to Fort Ord, so I had to go on to California by myself.

In California, at the morning roll call, they did not call my name, so I went back to the barracks. This went on about three days when a sergeant came through the barracks and kicked me through the bottom of the cot and wanted to know what I was doing there. I explained my situation and it turns out I was assigned to the B Company, but when I arrived, I reported to the A Company. At that time I was actually listed as AWOL. They took me to Captain Bell, who was in charge of the Battalion. Fortunately, he understood the problem, but he wasn't sure what to do with me. My company was out on field maneuvers quite a distance away. About that time, someone from the military police division came to the headquarters looking for someone to help a supply sergeant unload a truck. Captain Bell said, "Here, take Miller." They sent me to help and I did a good job, so he continued to use me.

There were a lot of supplies coming in as all the recruits needed to be outfitted before they were shipped to Australia. After a few days on the job, I knew about as much as the supply sergeant. The supply sergeant was over 35 and had the option of not going overseas. He chose to stay stateside, so Captain Bell asked me if I wanted to be a supply sergeant. He put through the orders and before I got off the boat in Australia, I had gone from private first class, to corporal, to sergeant to staff sergeant. Not too many people can claim to have been promoted in such a short time. That is how I ended up in the Military Police in US Army, Division 1, and Battalion 779 Company B.

We left from New York City and it took 30 days to get to Australia. We went by boat through the Panama Canal. Australia was very different and they drove on the other side of the street. The country was about 20 to 30 years behind where America was in modern conveniences. We were housed in tents we had to set up. The paddy wagon came around to change the buckets in the outside latrines. Most of the time, I was near Brisbane. We moved around, but we moved to a more permanent camp, which was on a racetrack. They had horse races every Saturday and also had greyhound races.

I worked under Lieutenant Reinhart as the supply officer for my company of about 200 men. We got all the supplies in and had to keep the men dressed in military police uniforms. They had to pass inspection.

Australia was where the soldiers came for R & R, so there were soldiers coming in and out all the time. The big ships came into the harbor and then the soldiers were taken to the islands in smaller ships because of the danger of submarines. The big hospital ships also came to Brisbane. We also got Japanese POW's who were bought back by plane to Australia. We had a prison camp for the Japanese-Americans and they were mixed together. The Japanese-Americans were able to get information that was valuable to the Army, like how many men there were, what kind of guns they had and other military information.

Near the end of the war, we were sent to Manila to prepare for the invasion of Japan. I was on the boat to Manila when I learned about the bomb being dropped on Japan. We took a small boat and it took several weeks to get there. On the way over, one of the ovens exploded and we had to pull into one of the islands to have it repaired. I was in charge of cleaning up the mess. We put it in a truck and headed to the dump. The boys with me were interested in seeing the island. I told the driver, "I don't know this island at all, so if we got lost on the way back, I wouldn't know it." He took us around the island and we passed through a couple of small towns. Later, back at headquarters, I saw a big map of where we had been. I asked the officer about the two small towns we had gone through. He asked how I knew about those villages. I told him we got lost coming home from the dump. He said, "Did you get shot at?" and I told him no. He said we were lucky because the Americans controlled just one end of the island and the rest was under Japanese control.

When we got to Manila, it looked like the Frigidaire parking lot with all kinds of boats in the harbor. It took about two days to get the tents set up. We were there about 6 months. We were sent home on a point system because they didn't have enough transportation for everyone. The Red Cross offered to fly me home. I had heard them taking off and they sounded like old junkers. I told them "No, I'll wait for a ship."

I came home by boat and took the train to Indianapolis. I saw my wife Jennie and my daughter, Gloria for the first time in almost three years so that was a happy day!



Marvin M. Miller, 96 years old, by his 1929 Chevrolet Roadster, recently restored. He is in front of the house he was born in, where he still lives with his son David.