

War Era Story Project 2012

Submitted by: Frank Bodnar, Jr.

Current home town: Youngstown, Ohio

Age: 93

I went into service in March 1941 (22 years old) in Columbus, Ohio. Was at Fort McClellan, Alabama, until Dec. 7, 1941. I trained out west at Irish 27th Division with 20,000 soldiers. My first stop was Needles, California; it took 2 ½ days to get there. Then I went to Camp McQuaid, California, west of Los Angeles; then to Watsonville, then the Mohave Desert. Guys there were passing out. We drank grapefruit juice in cans by the thousands, Gen. George Patton was having maneuvers in the desert with his red army and blue army. Men in tanks were burning up from the heat; we threw them in ice baths.

On Jan. 20, 1943, 11,000 of us soldiers went overseas aboard the *U.S.S. Monticello*. Our first stop was Wilmington New Zealand. It was a beautiful city; the houses and buildings were all white. We marched in groups to keep fit. We got back on our ships, but dozens of soldiers went AWOL. They didn't want to go. They were bad soldiers and were caught and sent to Guadalcanal to fight Japs in swamps.

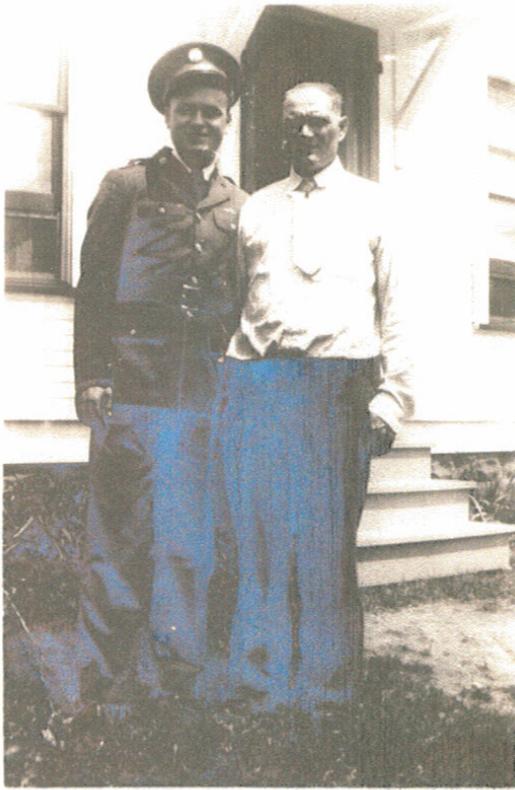
I went on ship to Perth, Australia and got supplies, then by ship to Freemantel, Australia. We then pulled out and went to Bombay, India. There were 11,000 soldiers, and it took 43 days to get there. On March 1, 1943, I got off the boat and got on a narrow gauge train across India to Asswan Province. We saw thousands of Indian people dead from starvation. Indian soldiers were putting people in piles and burning them.

There were 190 men in our company, and 55 of us were chosen to go over the Himalayan Mountains. I was one of them. Every day for five days, 11 of us started over the mountains. I was in the first group and remember the names of all the others: Joe Stivy, Thomas McKinney, Ray Mayers, Clarence Roswell, Peter Calabbia, Tilly Monstrosa and Mike Popovich (from Youngstown and my best friend). They gave Mike a Jeep to deliver a message down the road, and a landslide got him in the Jeep and swept him over a cliff a mile down. We couldn't see that far down. Monty Monticella died in an airplane crash.

It was a muddy trail, leeches, mosquitos, thousands of baboons and Jap bombers overhead. About halfway through the 110 miles, we saw a big wild boar with 15 little pigs. We carried 85 lb. packs on our backs and ate small cans of fish and British hard biscuits. We filled our canteens from creeks. We got to the outpost at Shimboyang in and stayed there (Oct. 1943). Then, we moved up to outpost Kingcocrsion in Burma.

An American missionary and 20 nurses were there helping sick Burmese people. I shook Dr. Seagrane's hand. Helicopters dropped food for us. Merrill's Marauders had 3,100 hand-picked men to fight Japs who were blocking Jumbubum Pass. I was in very bad fire with the 105th artillery. The Japs trapped 1/3 of Merrill's Marauders; the other 2/3 came to the rescue. The engineers built a road (Ledo Road) from India through Burma (Michinall).

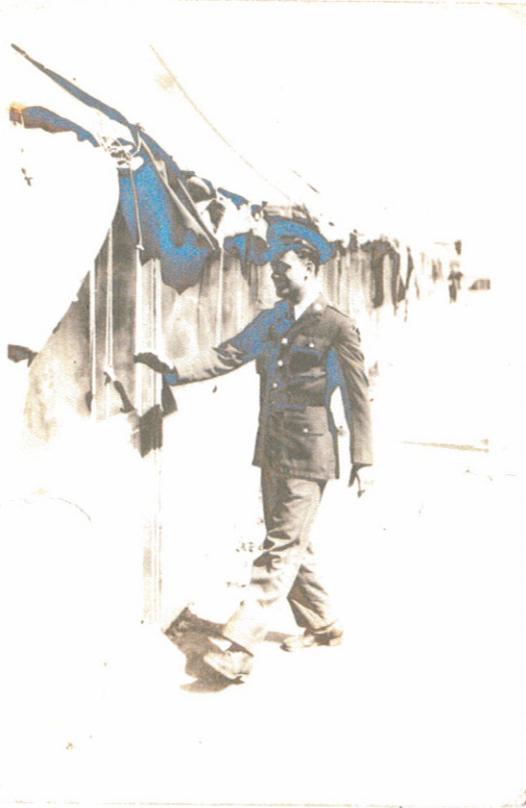
In 1944, we had our 1st good meal. They sent Thanksgiving replacements in 1945.



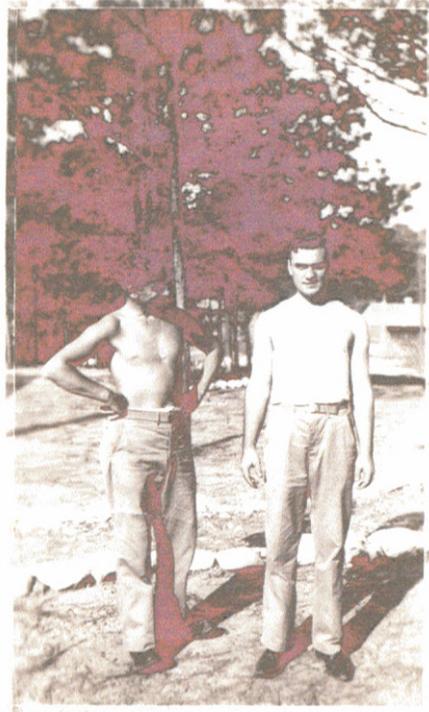
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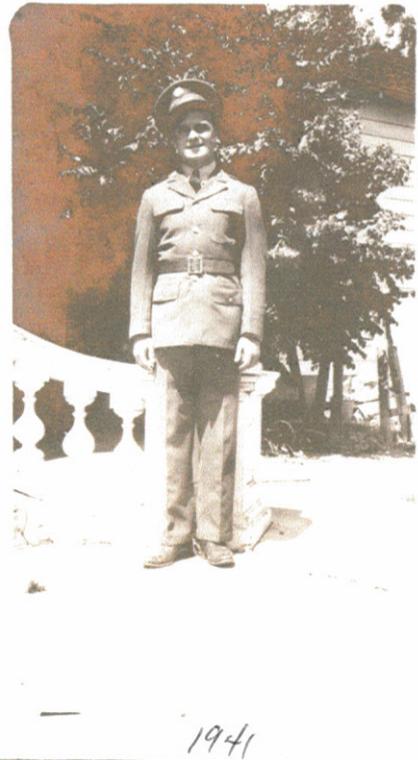
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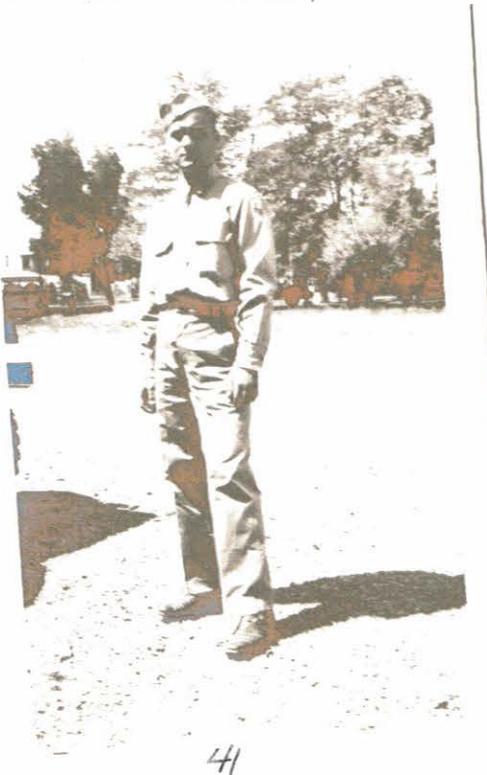
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1941



1941



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His Granddaughters H.S. Graduation

2005



PARADE VETERANS DAY IN NEWTON FALLS 2000