

MY MILITARY EXPERIENCE WW II

By Hubert L. Wallace (1923-2002)

(reprinted by Carl Langford nephew)

In June of 1943, I had just graduated from high school. I felt very proud of myself to know that I had at last accomplished a high school education. I was now to join the armed forces of the United States of America. I awoke early on the morning of July 14th, and started preparation to catch the nine o'clock bus to Lubbock, where I would be sworn into the Army. I watched as the sun as it rose above the eastern horizon and the distant hills. It was hard for me to realize that somewhere far beyond, the guns of battle were roaring. This was a beautiful day, and the air was filled with warm sunshine. Nine o'clock came to soon, and I hurried to bid fair well to my relations and friends. I arrived in Lubbock, and was sworn into the Army. After this, I was sent with a group of other men to a reception center in western Oklahoma, where I spent six days. During these six days, we had several exams; went to lectures; drew our uniforms, and filled out insurance papers. Once every afternoon, we made a formation in an open block in front of our barracks to receive orders. On the seventh day my name was called on an order between many others and we were told to get all of our equipment ready to move. Several buses drove up to carry us to the railroad station, Where, we would go from here, none of us knew. At last, we were on the train going north. On the second day, we traveled east to Kansas City. Here we pick up some more coaches. Our officer in charge told us that we going to the west coast, but would not tell us which state. On our fifth day, we were in Idaho. It was very hot, and we had all of the windows raised in our coach. The black smoke rolled inside through the windows, and we couldn't see to let the windows down, but finally did after a vigorous struggle. Then it suddenly became light again. We had just passed through a long tunnel that lead through a mountain. All of us were black with soot. We did our best to wash it off, but weren't very successful in doing so. The next day we arrived at Camp Abbot, Oregon, located high in the Cascade Mountains. It was indeed a beautiful place, surrounded by a forest of pines. To the north, above the pines, stood the beautiful snow capped Mt. Batchler. It gleamed with radiant beauty as it reflected the red sun set of the west. The air was fresh and cool. The enchantment of this magnificent evening will live in my memory forever.

I took five weeks of basic training here, I took long hikes through the forest, and climbed the steep hills, After, completing my basic training, I was sent to clerk school. I learned to fill out many different military forms, and studied administration. I also had a course in military correspondence. After graduating from clerk school, I was called to the 12th Engineering Group Headquarters for an interview. In this interview, I was asked if I would like to be stationed here in Camp Abbot. My answer was yes. I was assigned to the 12th Group Headquarters as the Adjutant's typist. I liked this work very well because now there was a thick blanket of snow that covered the ground, and the wind was bitter cold. The office was warm and comfortable; however, I usually had to go out, and get a bucket of coal when the fire burned low.

Although, the weather was bitter cold, I still could not deny the beauty of the pines, covered with snow and frost that glistened in the bright sun light. I stayed here about fourteen months. One day, three colonels came to make an inspection of the post. Soon after this, we were ordered to evacuate because the post was to be converted into a prisoner of war camp. I was put in charge of a small group of men, and transferred to Camp Beal, California. This was a replacement depot for men who were to go overseas. When I arrived at Camp Beal, I was put on special duty at the main post office, handling insured packages. After five weeks of this, my name, along with many others, was put on orders to be transferred to Europe; however, we didn't know where we were going. We boarded a big long train while the Army band played some of our favorite music to give us a send off. It was late in the evening, when we arrived in New York, City. I could see ferry boats going across

the harbor, and soon one came after us. It took us to pier ninety, where the Queen Mary was docked. As we went aboard, a British navel band played for us. Early the next morning, about daybreak, the huge ship was tugged out into the bay to sail for Scotland. We sailed for five days before reaching our destination at Glasgow. The ocean was calm, and the sun shown bright each day. At last, we interred the harbor at Glasgow.

The appearance of the houses amused me more than anything else I saw. We abandoned the ship in the middle of the afternoon, and boarded a crude train much different from those we were accustomed too here in the states. After traveling all night, and most of the next day, we reached Tedworth, which is a small town in southern England. We stayed here two months. During this time we took refresher courses of our previous military training. After completing this training, we received orders to move on into France. We landed on Normandy Beach. The invasion had already begun, and we saw many wrecked villages along the country side. For a week we slept in pup tents on the Normandy Beach. It rained almost every day, and it was very muddy. This was disgusting time, and I was glad when we left to continue our movement. At the end of the week, we boarded another crude train, but this time we rode in box cars with little more than standing room. For three days we moved slowly along bombed railroads that were only temporarily repaired. At last, we could go no farther by train. We climbed into a convoy of trucks to continue our journey into Germany. That night we could see flashes of light above the horizon. It appeared to be lighting and we could hear a rumbling that sounded like thunder, but the darkened sky was filled with glittering stars. There was not a cloud in sight that we could see. Suddenly, a sharp explosion came from a position approximately five hundred yards east of us. This was our introduction to the first enemy shell. No more came that night. It must have been a stray one that just happens to come our way, Early the next morning, there was a thick fog that filled the atmosphere. We were now so close to the German lines that it was no longer safe to ride in the trucks, so we began to walk. After we had walked about a mile and a half, we were entering a small German village that was captured the day before, when suddenly, shells began to shower upon us. I fell quickly into a bar ditch beside the road.

A shell hit near me, and I was showered by earth and gravel. When the shells ceased to fall less irregular, I ran into a large stone building about a hundred yards away. In a few minutes the shells ceased to fall, and we continued our march through the village into a dense forest. We left behind, in the village, many of our friends and buddies. As we pushed along in this dense forest, I couldn't shirk the thought of what had happened back in that little village. None of us had any combat experience, and our officers were new to us. All of these things were constantly going through my mind, as we walked in the darkness beneath the huge trees. Our formation was a long skirmish line. Soon, we came to a wide opening, and observed it from the edge of the forest. We expected to contact the Germans in this vicinity, but we could see nothing in the wide opening; however, there was a hill about a mile away. Suddenly, a hail of machine gun bullets started showering us. I fell quickly to the ground, and so did all the other men. Laying flat on the ground would offer a smaller target for the enemy. We quickly answered the challenge with our machine guns and rifles. During this battle, I was wounded in my left leg. After forty minutes had passed, the firing ceased only for a few bursts of machine gun fire occasionally. I was carried to a hospital in Paris, where I stayed three days. Then I flew to England, and finally back to the states. I spent a few months in the hospital at Palm Springs, California. Later, I was transferred to Texas for discharge. This completes my military experiences.

Pvt Hubert L. Wallace Purple Heart U.S. Army [FAG#73292934]

NOTES [by Carl Langford]: He was the only one left alive in this ambush. If the war had of gone on to much longer the Army would have called their bottom of the barrel enlisted men, and would have had to start calling the farmers and married men, (You know it's had gotten bad, when they start ordering up clerks with no

experience). Older Brother, Vellon Lee Wallace called up in 1944 and served one year and discharged. (Deceased). Buried Bangs Cemetery.



PHOTO: Ruby Blacklock (left) and Opal Langford (right) seeing their baby brother off to war. When he came back to states to recover from his wound, he stayed with us for two weeks and at some time later he went to Texas Univ. to study his passion for art and received a degree in that field. He had a long career (38 yrs) with Amerada-Hess Oil Company in far west Texas. He was well known in the Oil field circles for his large painting and in many of its offices. We have many of his doodle drawing that he drew on letters, while in the war. Also, a long time Scoutmaster and Son, Harry Lee, served on the "Kitty Hawk" aircraft carrier from 1970-74. (Deceased). There are still many descendents of William Jasper Wallace [FAG#16591708], in the Big County Area and over the USA.