

## My World War II Experience: Part III<sup>1</sup>

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### Hospitals and Recuperation

I don't know how long it was after I was operated on before I regained consciousness, but when I did, I noticed that the lower part of my body was in a plaster cast. The cast started just under my rib cage and continued down my left leg ending at my foot with only my toes visible. The right side of the cast continued down my right leg and ended at my right knee. Later in a letter home, I described the cast as like wearing a pair of pants with the right pant leg cut off at the knee. In addition, there was a bandage taped to the left side of my chest and a tube taped to my nose that was connected to an oxygen tank standing at the head of my bed. I later learned that my injuries had been caused by shrapnel with one piece piercing my left leg just above the knee, breaking my femur; one piece had struck me in the chest, passing through my third rib; one piece had lodged in my left elbow (that piece is still there); and other tiny pieces had penetrated the skin on my right arm and in my back. These particles eventually worked their way out of my skin, and were of no consequence.

The bed I was in was not a typical hospital bed but was the same type of bed that I had slept in when I was at Camp Carson. The hospital room was very large, and I remember it to be like a big auditorium or ballroom. I don't know if it had originally been a German hospital or rather was a very large building that had been converted into a field hospital by our Medical Corps. There were many beds in rows along the sides of the room and two rows of beds down the center of the room were all occupied by wounded men. I never got to know any of the men around me because we were not much interested in talking at this stage of recovery. This was a field hospital, and we would be kept here only until we were strong enough to be moved to a better facility.

In a letter home that I wrote later, I told Mom and Pop that I had slept for most of the first five days of my hospital stay, and I also described my injuries. I was certain that the description of the injuries would be censored out of the letter, but the censor must have been very tired or compassionate because the letter passed without being blacked out. I wanted Mom and Pop to know that I was still in one piece and was going to survive and to know that I was safe now.

I don't remember much about my treatment at the field hospital. Doctors came to check on me twice that I remember, and one doctor asked me if I could move my toes, and when I did he said "good." A chaplain came to talk to me once and said a prayer. I don't remember eating anything, but I'm sure that I was given liquids or maybe even soup. If I did eat anything, it was with the help of ward men because I could not sit up or move my left arm. I must have looked pretty scroungy because one day a ward man came to me with a basin of water. He washed my face and gave me a shave. I consider the care and treatment given to me at this facility to have been excellent.

One incident occurred while I was in this hospital that was so tragic and wasteful that I will always remember it. It demonstrated to me the total hate that some German soldiers had for us, their enemy. This day, there was a commotion going on about ten beds away from me. Ward men and nurses ran down the aisle to the bed. I was able to lift my head high enough to see that one of the patients was

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<sup>1</sup> This article is the third part of the author's memoir of his experience in World War II. Part 1 was published in Volume 2, Issue 1, and Part 2 was published in Volume 3, Issue 1.

struggling and throwing his arms around, and that the ward men and nurses were trying to hold him down. This went on for some time and finally stopped. As the ward men walked away from the soldier and passed me, I asked them what was going on and they said that the wounded man was a German soldier, and he kept ripping out the tubes in his arm that were keeping him alive, and that they could not stop him from fighting them, and eventually he passed out. Later that day the German was carried out, dead. He hated us so much that he preferred death rather than to be saved and become a prisoner of war. What a waste of life. I will never understand that kind of hate or the government that taught it.

On March 10, 1945, my journey started that eventually would bring me back to the United States, for on that day I was transported by ambulance to an evacuation hospital located in Aachen, Germany. I have one memory of that day that is as clear in my mind today as the day it happened. The trip began when I was put on a stretcher and placed in an ambulance that took me to a very big building not too far way. I was carried into the building, and my stretcher was placed on the floor, which might have been made of concrete. It was dark in the building, and there were many other wounded men there. I did not know what to expect because I had not been told anything other than that I was going to be moved. After some time, someone came to my stretcher and put a tag on it. Looking back, I realize now that my tag identified me, indicated the type of wound that I had, and specified where I was to be sent. It was some time before I was moved to the ambulance that would take me to the new location and I, with the others, were left lying on the floor in the semi-darkness to wait. It was very quiet in this room, but off in the distance I heard music playing. I don't remember what it was but only that it was beautiful. Hearing that music affected me so much that tears began to flow down my cheeks. The sound of that beautiful music was such a comfort to the noise of war that I heard for so long that my emotions were overcome, and I cried.

Arriving in Aachen, I was placed on a cot in a large tent. A nurse came to me and checked my tag and asked if I was OK. I must say it was great to see an American woman once again. She checked the bandage on my chest and saw that it needed to be replaced. After she change the bandage, she asked me if I wanted anything, and I asked her for a pen and some writing paper. It was from here that I wrote my first letter to Mom and Pop telling them what had happened to me. I am sure that I was given something to eat, and I stayed at this evacuation hospital overnight.

On March 11<sup>th</sup>, I was transported to another evacuation hospital located in Liege, Belgium, and on March 12<sup>th</sup> I was evacuated by airplane (a C47, which was the military version of the famous DC3) from Liege to an airfield in England. This was my first plane ride, but I didn't see very much. From there I was transported by train and ambulance to the general hospital located in Taunton, England, southwest of London. This was to be my home for the next several months.

I don't know how large the hospital was because I never got to see much of it. I was put into a ward room on the first floor of the building. The room was long and not too wide. Hospital beds were arranged in rows along the walls of two sides of the buildings. The center aisle between the rows of beds was wide and gave the doctors and nurses a lot of space to move beds and large pieces of equipment around in the ward, as required. Windows were in the wall across the room from my bed, and I could see the countryside through them. This was particularly welcome when the sun was shining outside. My bed was a typical hospital bed, and the foot section or the head section of the bed could be raised or lowered by a crank at the foot of the bed. There was a tubular frame attached to the bed, and I soon learned what it was used for. There were clean white sheets and pillow cases, and that was really a treat.

I spent the first night lying on the bed in my cast, but that all changed the next morning. Bright and early, two doctor's aides came to me and cut off my cast. Being free of the cast gave me a wonderful feeling. A nurse came to me and, to my embarrassment, gave me a sponge bath, and that too felt good. One of the nurses proceeded to give me a shot in the arm and told me that it was a mild sedative and that I was going to be put in traction. I didn't exactly know what that meant, but I soon found out.

About a half hour later, two doctors came to my bed and checked to see if the sedative had taken effect. I was conscious enough to see what they were doing but not alarmed. One doctor had a small hand operated drill that held a steel rod that I would call a drill bit. The other doctor held my leg and the doctor with the drill placed it at the side of my knee and started to turn the drill handle. In a matter

of minutes the drill was through my knee and about an inch of it was sticking out the other side. The doctor removed the drill, leaving the bit protruding about an inch on both sides of my knee. This operation did not hurt me thanks to the sedative previously given to me. Next, the doctors arranged a sling and cables to the tubular structure above my bed. They placed my leg in the sling. Then they hooked a steel clamp, shaped like a horse shoe, to the ends of the rod sticking out of the sides of my knee and connected a cable to it. They threaded the cable through several pulleys and connected it to a bag with weights at the foot of the bed. The weights hung free and placed my leg in tension. Now, I know what traction was, and the type of traction that had been applied to my leg, I learned, was called Pin Traction.

It did not take long to adjust to the routine of my ward. At about 6 A.M., we were waked up by music and announcements over the PA system in the ward. Shortly thereafter, the ward men brought hot water and towels to those of us who could wash ourselves. The ward men assisted those who could not take care of themselves. At 7 A.M. breakfast was served to us on trays. I don't remember what we were given to eat, but in letters home I commented that the food was good. At mid-morning the doctors made their rounds, the nurses gave shots when required, bandages were changed, and X-rays were taken using portable X-ray machines. On occasion, those who needed surgery were taken from the ward and later brought back to recuperate. At noontime, a lunch was served and during the afternoon we would sleep, read, write letters, and wait mail call. Our final meal of the day was served at 6 P.M.

Mail call was the most important time of the day and took on new significance as time passed. On one mail call I got 59 letters as the mail that had been sent to me before I was wounded began to catch up to me. Mail from home sure raised our spirits. Especially if it was from our girlfriends or to others from their wives. I would re-read the letters from Peg until the next one arrived. My desire to see her was always on my mind.

During the day, the PA system was on most of the time. We heard the BBC news broadcasts that kept us informed as to the progress of the war. Of course, that news was biased and gave most of the credit for the gains that were now taking place to the British Army, with some help from the Americans; this made us pretty mad. Recordings of the American big band music (Tommy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, Harry James, etc.) from home were played, and this really made us feel good. Often during the evening, transcriptions of live programs recorded at home were played for us. This was just like we were listening to the radio at home as we used to do. Some of the programs were Jack Benny, Fred Allen, Duffy's Tavern, Fibber McGee and Molly, George Burns and Gracie Allen, and many others. On occasion, a movie was shown in the ward. All in all, the hospital staff did their very best to keep up our morale and to make us feel that we were well on the road to recovery.

The day ended at 10 P.M. Just before lights out, the ward men brought each of us hot chocolate, which I suspected had something in it to help us sleep. Whatever it was, it seemed to work, and most of the time I slept well. My biggest problem was learning to sleep on my back. Being in traction prevented me from being in any other position, and after a few weeks I did adjust to that too.

The days did not vary much. The ward men and nurses were always pleasant and helpful. Occasionally, women from the village would bring a book mobile through the wards to give us books to read or to give us the latest copy of a newspaper. I was never depressed and knew that I would recover. I tried to emphasize this in my letters home. Time passed slowly, but it was never unpleasant.

On April 8<sup>th</sup>, I got a big surprise. A Red Cross worker told me that I was going to have a visitor and that his name was Corporal Uriah Dubell. This was Pop's brother, and I called him Uncle Lodge. Uncle Lodge was a radio operator in the Eighth Air Force. He was stationed north of London, and, after learning from Mom where I was, he contacted the Red Cross to make arrangements to visit me. It was great to see him, and we had a good visit. He stayed overnight and spent most of the next day with me, and then he returned to his home base. His visit really lifted my morale and was a completely unexpected surprise. Uncle Lodge visited me once again on May 1<sup>st</sup>. That was the day that I was transferred to a different hospital. He stayed with me, and when they put me in the ambulance he just climbed in with the driver and came along.

The war news was good. We listened to the BBC news broadcasts several times a day as it was played over our PA system. The city of Cologne had been captured by my division on March 7<sup>th</sup>. I had been wounded just nine miles from Cologne. Also on March 7<sup>th</sup>, the 9<sup>th</sup> Armored Division of the First

U.S. Army had found a railway bridge at Remagen partly destroyed but still usable. They crossed over the bridge and established a bridgehead on the other side, and in a very short time, four divisions had crossed and widened the bridgehead. The Rhine River, the last major barrier to invading the heartland of Germany, had been crossed without suffering major casualties. From this time on, the Allied armies raced across Germany, bringing the war to an end in Europe on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945. My division, the 104<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, had crossed the Remagen Bridge on March 24<sup>th</sup> and began riding on the backs of tanks of the Third Armored Division. When the war ended they were 60 miles from Berlin on the banks of the Mulde River near Halle, Germany. They met the Russian troops at Torgau, Germany on the Elbe River east of the Mulde River. I have always regretted not being with my buddies at the end of the war.

On April 13<sup>th</sup>, the BBC news program, playing through our PA system, announced that President Roosevelt had died on the previous day. This news shocked all of us, and I wondered how his death would affect the progress of the war. President Roosevelt was the only President that I had known. He became President in 1932, when I was only eight years old. Pop had campaigned for his election and re-election over the years. I thought that President Roosevelt was a great man, and I still think so today.

In the middle of April I began to wonder when I was going to be allowed to get out of bed. I was still in traction and would have to be released from that before I could get up. I felt good and had achieved a milestone when, after exercising my left arm, I was able to raise it high enough to touch the top of my head. I often looked at the pin through my knee and wondered how in the world the doctors were going to get that pin out. The answer came sooner than I expected.

On May 1<sup>st</sup>, before Uncle Lodge arrived, I was told that I was going to be taken out of traction and put in a plaster cast in preparation for my being transferred to a different hospital. Shortly thereafter, a doctor and a nurse came to my bed. The doctor had the nurse remove the clamp and weights providing the traction and then wash my knee where the pin protruded. The doctor then produced what looked like a pair of pliers, said to me that "This isn't going to hurt," and gripped the pin with the pliers, twisting and pulling it, like I do when you pull nails out of boards, and the pin came right out. The nurse taped small bandages over the spots where the pin had protruded from my knee and the procedure was over. The doctor, with the help of the nurse, lifted my leg out of the sling that had been supporting it and lowered my leg to the bed. It felt great to be free from traction even though I still could not move very much. At least my leg was not sticking up in the air. I was then carried on a stretcher to a room where two doctors or assistants wrapped me in a plaster cast, much as I had been in before being shipped to England. They told me the cast was required because I was soon to be sent back to the United States. This was really good news. That afternoon, I, along with Uncle Lodge, was transported to a different hospital where I would be processed for evacuation by ship to the United States. The date was May 2, 1945.

For the next few days the news being reported by the BBC clearly indicated that the end of the war was near. Reports of concentration camps being discovered by our advancing troops shocked all of us. Reports that Hitler had committed suicide were broadcast, and finally, on May 7<sup>th</sup>, Peg's Birthday, it was announced that the war in Europe had ended, and that the documents of Unconditional Surrender would be signed on May 8<sup>th</sup>. On May 8<sup>th</sup>, I wrote the following letter to Peg:

*May 8, 1945 (Tuesday) V-E Day, Europe*

*Peggy Darling,*

*Well, at last it has come. Peace has come once again to Europe. We just heard President Truman make his speech proclaiming victory.*

*From the news we hear of home, the people are really going wild. They deserve it though; they have held it in a long time.*

*The church bells are ringing in a little town near here, that is the only sign we have of celebration that is going on in the world around us. We celebrated here by having ice cream for supper. It sounds silly, doesn't it. I am saving my celebrating until the war with Japan is over. Maybe we will be together then.*

*I guess the ones who are the happiest are the parents who have sons overseas. They are always the ones who suffer more than anyone else in war.*

*Well darling, I guess this is all for tonight. I hope that you are going wild tonight with the rest of the world. You deserve it. Well until next time darling, pleasant dreams.*

This was the last letter that I wrote Peg from Europe. On May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1945 I was transported to a ship and started the journey back to the United States.

## Back to the U.S.A.

### My Military Career Ends

My journey back to the United States started on May 11, 1945. I was once again transported in a plaster cast that made it possible to be moved without jeopardizing the healing that had already taken place. I was placed on a stretcher, put in an ambulance with several other guys, and transported to a port on the southern coast of England. I do not know the name of the port or of the ship I was put aboard. I assume that it was a hospital ship.

The room that I shared with three other guys was small but cheerful. I was placed in the upper bunk of a double decker bed. No one was put in the lower bunk under me. There were three other single beds, one against each of the other three walls of the room. The guys that were assigned to these beds were all ambulatory and could get around with ease, and I never really saw them after the first day. I don't know where they went, but obviously, wherever it was, they thought that it was better than being in this small room. As the result of their absence, I had the room to myself for the whole trip back to the United States.

The trip was uneventful. The routine of each day was the same. In the morning, a nurse brought me a pan of water so that I could wash my face, brush my teeth, and shave. Next, a breakfast tray was brought in. I could not get up because of the cast, therefore a small table was placed over the cast so that I could eat. Sometime during the morning a doctor came in to make sure that I was OK. Lunch and supper were served in the same fashion. All of the time between these events was free, and I spent it by sleeping, reading, and playing solitaire. Sometimes a doctor or a nurse would drop in and talk to me for a while. The time was boring but passed quickly. The care that I received was excellent.

One day there was a great commotion in the corridors outside my room. Everyone was shouting that we were approaching the Statue of Liberty, and they were racing to get up on deck

To see that wonderful sight. Of course, I could not get out of bed, so I missed seeing the statue that indicated we were in New York harbor and were home. The date was May, 24<sup>th</sup> 1945. The crossing had taken 13 days. I do not know where we docked.

It must have been late afternoon when I was carried from the ship to an ambulance and transported to, what I learned later, was Camp Shanks, New York. There, I was carried into a very large auditorium, and my stretcher was placed on a frame designed to hold it. The room was bright with lights and was filled with other guys on stretchers like I was. There must have been several hundred of us. There was a lot of activity going on, and soon an attractive young woman came to me to make sure that I was alright. She must have been a volunteer worker or a Red Cross worker. She talked to me for a while, and then she really surprised me; she asked if I would like to call my home. I am sure that it took me several minutes before I realized what she was asking. She explained that all returning men were allowed to make one free phone call to anyone in the United States. Of course I said "yes," but I did not see how I could get to a phone. She relieved my mind and said that she would make the call for me. She left me for a short time and came back with a phone on a long cable. She dialed the number and, as luck would have it, Mom answered the phone. I remember that the lady told her that there was someone that wanted to talk to her, and she handed the phone to me. It did not seem possible that I was talking to my mother. I don't remember what either of us said. I guess that I told her that I was back in the United States, that I was fine, and that I would let her know where I would be after I was moved to a hospital. At this point in time, I did not know where I was or where I was going to be

sent; I didn't even know that I was at Camp Shanks.

I don't remember how I felt after talking to Mom, but I must have been in a happy daze. It took me quite a few days to realize that I was really home. The remainder of that day and night are a blank. The next day I was moved again by ambulance to what would be my last home while I was in the Army. I could not see out of the ambulance, and the trip took quite some time. I hoped that the ambulance was driving right down Broadway in New York City. That is something I will never know.

We finally reached our destination. I was carried from the ambulance by four German prisoners of war. I had been carried many times by German prisoners of war and always had the fear that they would drop me if given the chance. They carried me into a ward room, placed me in a bed, and I was quickly attended to by Army nurses. I learned that I was in the Halloran General Hospital located on Staten Island, New York, and that I was only about 40 miles from my home in Hightstown, N.J. and Peg's home in Cranbury, N.J. How lucky could I get.

After the doctors checked all of us new arrivals, my travel cast was removed. I was very happy about this because it gave me freedom to move my body again. Next, my leg was put back into traction, but this time it was not pin traction. The traction to my leg was obtained by wrapping my lower leg with a cloth tape that anchored another tape that held the weights hanging over the end of the bed. The end result was the same as that obtained with pin traction. I would be confined to bed until the traction was removed.

The daily routine at Halloran was the same as that of the other hospitals that I had been in. The doctor came around twice a week, the nurses in their white dresses and with the rank of Lieutenant, made sure the doctor's instructions were followed, but the hard work was done by the nurse assistants, who were all young women. There were also ward attendants who were men. The men did the heavy work like moving patients, helping serve the meals to those of us who were confined to beds, and setting up equipment in the ward when we were shown the latest movies.

The nurse assistants were the backbone of the operation. They would wake us each morning, bring us water and towels so that we could wash up. They gave us alcohol back rubs every day, brought all of the meal trays to us, and straightened up our beds, including, magically, changing the sheets several times a week without us getting out of bed. They were always with us. They were friendly, cheerful, and gave us much encouragement in our efforts to recover. The assistant that I had daily contact with was named Dorothy Bacon. She was a corporal in the 34<sup>th</sup> W.A.C. (Women's Army Corps), Hospital Company. She might have been two or three years older than I was, and I found it very easy to talk with her. Most of the other guys in the ward felt the same way about her. We could joke with her and flirt with her, and she would do the same to us. I think that it was her way of bringing us back to the civilized world: it worked!

As soon as I was able, I wrote a letter home telling Mom and Pop where I was, and that they could come visit me, that visiting hours were daily two to four P.M. I think that they came to see me right after reading the letter. We had an emotional reunion, and I felt especially good because Mom and Dad could now see that I was not horribly wounded, and that what I had been telling them in my letters was the truth.

On their second visit several days later, Mom and Pop brought me the greatest surprise that I have ever had. They brought Peg with them. They remained in the entrance to our ward room, and Peg came down the aisle alone. I could not believe my eyes. It was a dream come true. She was so beautiful. As I write this now, tears of happiness are filling my eyes, as they had done on that day. I don't remember what I said to her, but I hope that I gave her a hug and a big kiss.

Later during that visit, Dad asked me if I knew that my buddy, Bill, had been killed. I was really shocked and told him that I had not known. He told me that Bill's parents had written to them to learn if I had sent any information about Bill. They did not know that I had been wounded. I told Pop that I would write to my buddies to see if they could tell me what had happened to Bill. I wrote to Joe Lynch, Jack Sturm, and Wilbur Nero, hoping that they were still alive and with "G" Company.

Their response was quick. I got letters from Joe, Jack, Wilbur, and Bob Teasck. Joe Lynch, who was now a staff sergeant, told me that Bill had been killed by the same shell that had wounded me. Joe said that Bill died in his arms almost immediately after he had been hit. Joe also said that everyone in our machine gun section had been wounded except Bob Teasck, Jack Sturm, and himself. He also told

me that Sargeant Donald Kohanke, who had been my squad leader, had been killed and that Sgt. Hugh Campbell, our section leader, also had been killed. The letters were dated June 10<sup>th</sup> and “G” Company was now occupying a little town near Halle, Germany, about 100 miles from Berlin. They were waiting to be shipped back to the U.S., where they were to be retrained for participation in the invasion of Japan. They didn’t think too highly of that prospect.

It made me feel good to receive their letters, to learn that they were still alive, and that they remembered me. The bond that we had formed together would last a lifetime, and the memories I have of each of them are still vivid in my mind.

Sometime in July, I was told that I was going to be taken out of traction. The doctors had been X-raying my leg every week since I had arrived at Halloran. I had had so many X-rays that I thought that I probably glowed in the dark. Now the X-rays indicated that my leg was strong enough to be removed from traction and to be fitted for a brace. Getting the brace made specifically for me would take several weeks, but, in the meantime, I would be allowed to get out of bed, learn how to use a wheelchair, and to navigate using crutches. I was warned that my leg would be stiff and would not bend at the knee. This was because of the wound and because I had been in traction for so long. The doctor assured me that I would regain most of the knee motion after therapy treatments.

The day came, and I was set free from being confined to the bed. I was given a hospital jacket and pants, which was the standard uniform for ambulatory men. The nurse, with the help of Dorothy, got me into a wheelchair. They told me that I would be dizzy when I first got up, and I was. That soon passed, and they helped me to stand up. What a thrill. I soon had crutches and managed them very well. Once everyone thought that I had mastered the wheel chair and crutches, they let me go wherever I desired.

The first thing I did was wheel myself to the lavatory. I took off my clothes and, using the crutches, got into the shower room and took a long hot shower. This was not a three-minute shower, and I controlled the water. It was the first time I had taken a shower since some time in February, six months before. I had been in traction and confined to bed for five months. What a wonderful feeling it was to take that long hot shower. Afterward, I felt clean for the first time in months. It was also a wonderful feeling to know that I would never have to use the bedpan again.

The next thrill that my new freedom gave me was that I no longer had to eat my meals in bed. I now could get to the mess hall using the chair or crutches. I had made friends with some of the guys in my ward who were ambulatory, and many times they would push me to the mess hall where we all sat at tables and ate together.

Mother and Dad had been visiting me at least once a week, and Peg had driven to the hospital, alone, many times to see me. Now that I was out of traction, we all could look forward to the time when I would be able to go home. The doctor indicated that would be as soon as he felt confident that I could get around by myself without any difficulty after I learned to walk wearing the leg brace and using the crutches.

The new brace finally arrived and was fitted to my leg. It was a straight brace extending from my crotch to my foot. It did not bend at the knee, and there was a shoe attached to the bottom end of the brace. The brace was slightly longer than my leg so that when I stepped down on that leg, almost all of my weight was supported by the top of the brace and very little on my foot. It fit under my pant leg and, except when I walked, it was not obvious. It was uncomfortable but did protect the broken femur bone in my left leg. I soon demonstrated I had the strength to navigate using crutches together with the brace or only with the crutches. Eventually, I learned to walk short distances using only the brace.

The doctor must have gotten good reports from the nurses and from Dorothy as to the progress I had made in getting about. One day near the end of July, I was told that if I wanted a weekend pass to go home, the doctor would issue one. I jumped at the chance. I received the pass and a complete summer uniform. I called home and told Mom and Dad that if Dad could pick me up Saturday morning, I could come home for the weekend. I don’t remember the first time that I went home. I’ll bet it was some homecoming.

From that time on, I made rapid progress towards complete recovery. I went to therapy every day. The goal was to get my knee flexible enough so that I could bend it at least 90 degrees. The therapists, all women attached to the 34<sup>th</sup> W.A.C. Hospital Group, were very good. It took months until I finally

achieved the goal. As I made progress, I soon discarded the brace and resorted only to using the crutches. This made life a lot easier and more comfortable. Eventually I discarded the crutches.

I was getting weekend passes every weekend throughout the summer. Some passes were for two days but most for three days. I dated Peg every day that I could until she went back to Wilson College in the fall. My best friend Robert Byrne and his girl usually double dated with us. He never seemed to mind driving me wherever we went. These were very happy days for me.

By the spring of 1946, I had met all of the goals that the doctors had set for me before I could be discharged from the Army. My endurance was back to normal, and I could walk without assistance of any type. My chest wound had healed completely, and I was anxious to get out of the hospital. The war with Japan had ended on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1945, and the U.S. was struggling to return to a peaceful world. It seemed to me that I was just wasting time at Halloran. My doctor seemed to agree.

One day in the beginning of March, 1946, I was told to report to my doctor's office for an interview that could lead to my discharge. The doctor reviewed my record and asked me a number of questions. I don't remember the conversation, but it was probably designed to give the doctor information about my mental state so he could decide whether or not I could adjust to becoming a civilian again. At the conclusion of the visit, the doctor said he was going to recommend me for discharge. I guess that I had mixed emotions about his decision. I was happy that I was going to be discharged but apprehensive about making my own way in the world outside the army. The army had taken complete care of me for over two years now, and now I was going to have to do that for myself. It was a new life that awaited me.

Several days later I was notified that I would be discharged on Thursday, March 7, 1946, and that I should make arrangements to leave the hospital. I called home and asked Dad to come to the hospital in the morning of the 7<sup>th</sup> and told him that I was being discharged and would meet him at the main entrance to the hospital grounds. I didn't know the exact time that I would meet him there; I thought it would be late morning.

On the morning of March 7<sup>th</sup>, I was with 60 or 70 others who were also being discharged and went to a large tent on the hospital grounds. We all took seats. Our discharge papers were handed out. In the front of the tent, an officer called us to attention and asked us to listen carefully to what he had to say. He explained to us the discharge procedure. He outlined the benefits we were entitled to, referring to the GI Bill that Congress had enacted to help returning veterans. He told us we could reenlist in the Army Reserves (that got a big laugh) and gave us a lot of other valuable information, much of which because of our excitement at the thought of being discharged, we did not pay attention to. At the conclusion of his talk he indicated that there was a table in the back of the tent where an officer would sign up anyone who wants to reenlist in the Army Reserves, and then he shouted "DISMISSED", and with that I was a civilian once again.

I went back to my ward to gather up my clothes and other possessions. I had purchased a small canvas bag to carry things in. I said goodbye to some of the friends I had made and especially to Corporal Dorothy Bacon who had been so helpful and supportive during my recuperation. With that done, I went to the main gate and met Dad who was waiting for me. I had been in the army for two years, seven months, and five days. I was 21 years old. I had made many good friends who I treasure to this day; I had many experiences, some good, some bad; I would not want to repeat them, but I'm glad that I had them. At this point in time I felt very insecure, but with guidance from Mom and Dad, and Peg's love (we were married on August, 28, 1948), I found my way back to a normal life.

Finis

