

Chicken a la Ball and Fairman

By George D. Fairman, Jr.

Zane [Schlemmer] sent me a copy of a letter that he had sent to Ed Ott dealing with the night that Ott got hit in Holland. He had told him that he remembered this, and he remembered that, and he remembered something else, and then Zane said, "One other incident which I recall well, Ed, we sent a patrol to the farms down in no man's land to our front to find some food to supplement the meager rations which we had."

This brought a flood of memories back to my mind because Ball and I were the ones that got the chickens. I remembered that episode quite well. Let me fill you in on a few of the details.

The terrain was quite open as Ball and I were approaching our prey and we were sure the bad guys (Germans) were watching us as we maneuvered for a surprise attack on the white leghorn chickens because they made all kinds of noises. Ball's comment to me was, "This is the way you do it Fairman. We herd the chickens up against the wire fence and I'll jump on them." I had the gunny sack and what Ball meant was that he was going to throw his body, arms and legs extended, and land on as many chickens as he could, pinning them to the wire and ground. When he did this he had chickens and chicken parts sticking out every place. My job was to pull the chickens out from under Ball and put them in the sack as fast as I could so they wouldn't escape. You can imagine that they went flying every which way and screaming (or whatever chickens do) at the top of their lungs. I just knew that the bad guys had us dead to rights that night. You can imagine pulling chickens out from under Ball's big, lanky frame. He wouldn't move any because he was scared that some of the chickens would get away. Anyway, I got as many as I could, some of them I am sure a little worse for wear, and we took off for safer pastures pronto.

I can't remember where the vegetables came from, but I do remember chickens running around without their heads since Ball instructed anyone who would listen in the art of decapitation. As a farm boy he was quite proficient at the task. Meanwhile, back to the vegetables, someone took all the ingredients to a farmhouse and we ended up with a great chicken stew for the whole platoon.

George Fairman served as a Section Leader and Forward Observer with the 81mm Mortar Platoon in Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division during World War II. George parachuted into Normandy, France on June 6, 1944 (D-Day) and into Nijmegen, Holland on September 17, 1944. He also served with this unit in the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium during the winter of 1944-1945. Ivan Ball was also a member of the 81mm Mortar Platoon.