

Part 5 of 5: Occupation - Frankfort and Berlin

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Bill: Andy Rooney was a reporter attached to the paratroopers. He was right about one thing. They kept us in there too long. When we jumped we had rations and ammunition for three days. In Normandy, we went in June 6th and came out July 13th. In Holland we jumped in September 17th on a Sunday afternoon. We came out of there November 11th. We were under English command there. In the Battle of the Bulge we went in Dec. 17th and came out February 18th of '45. After we came out in February they were going to train us to jump into Tokyo.

John: The next thing you were involved with was the occupation. This must have been in May or June of 1945

Bill: June 10th we arrived in Frankfort, Germany. That's Frankfort-am-Main. That's what they called it. That's where Eisenhower had his headquarters. We were in the Honor Guard while in Frankfort. We were the occupying force there. Truman and Eisenhower came there. Eisenhower was the Allied Supreme Commander over there. In USFET headquarters.

John: What did you do as Honor Guard?

Bill: We paraded and guarded different places. It was mostly show.

John: Did you like it?

Bill: I wanted to come home. We didn't fight anymore. I was Sergeant of the Guard. They had that non-fraternization policy over there, and I was the Sergeant of the Guard. One night we got a call down at USFET Headquarters. A guy was out fraternizing and they hung him. So we had to cut him down. We didn't know who did it. You were not supposed to fraternize with the Germans. The guy got hot pants I guess and he paid for it with his life.

Once when I was CQ, charge of quarters, at night, Leroy Simerson, from Cincinnati, knew I was CQ so he took advantage of it. He got back about four or five o'clock in the morning. I don't know what he was doing. I had role call. Reveille went and I hollered at "E" Company to get up. These other companies yelled, "You loud mouth, shut up. We're trying to sleep." They were hollering at me.

Simerson came down he was in a raincoat. I thought, "Oh-oh. I'll fix that bastard." After we made our report, all present and accounted for, I said, "2nd Platoon, stay as you are." That was my platoon. We dismissed the 1st and 3rd.

I said, "2nd Platoon, ten-hut, right face, forward march, double time." We had a three mile course marked out. I did that.

Simerson came by and said, "You son of a bitch, you."

I told him, "The next time you won't go out like that old buddy. Take advantage of a good thing."

All he had on was that raincoat. Boy, you talk about a guy sweating, he was sweating. The guys were laughing. They knew what was going on. We were in good shape yet. We stayed in Frankfort for quite a while and then we went to Berlin. We occupied

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Berlin. I forget how long we were up there. I just got disgusted with it all. We were up there with those damn Russians. The war was over in Europe then.

But you know the Germans had some good pilots and they had good airplanes. They had jets, too. We saw them in Frankfort. There was a factory there, underground. It was loaded with jets but they didn't have any fuel. The English bombed them in the day and the United States bombed them at night.

I was in Cologne. The city was leveled but that big church was still there. It was the only thing left standing.

I didn't have any camera. I could have taken a lot of pictures. One time while we were still in Frankfort. Breakfast. They had barbed wire around the place. For breakfast we had oatmeal and that oatmeal wasn't worth a shit. You could hang wallpaper with it. Little kids over there with rusted cans and they wanted that stuff. These guys were just throwing it out. So I cut a little gate so they could get in. I had to go to Regiment. I told Colonel Roy E. Linquist, "You want to make friends with these people, this is where you would start." So they got their heads together and agreed. I think he's dead now. All these old guys out, I can't figure it out what the matter is with them. Me and Infanger are still alive.

They are going to retire the 508th. There will be a ceremony in Camp Blanding in Stark, Florida to do it. The next celebration is gonna be down in Tampa. There will be a museum in Camp Blanding because the 508th originated there.

The 82nd went home after Frankfort. They came on home. We didn't go with them. We went to Berlin. It was nice weather, maybe June or July. That's when they were getting us ready to jump in Japan. Hell, they had the planes there to fly us over to Japan. They could have flown there. Not much training needed really. They would have supplied us with troops, replacements. All we would have done was get our weapons and chutes and that and flew and jumped. There wasn't any special training. The training wasn't special. I ran the guys.

And believe the atrocities over there. Believe it. I didn't get to see the ones in Auschwitz and Dachau, but Buchenwald . . . we were going so fast we had to get the hell away. That was sinful. Terrible, terrible. They were terrible. I read about Auschwitz and Dachau and if they were anything like Buchenwald, that was bad enough. We went through there. Oh, God. They looked like a bunch of skeletons.

I looked in something like a window and I said, "Hey, Captain. One's still alive." He came over and looked and said, "No Sergeant. He's not alive. The heat causes the nerves and tendons to shrink up." Boy, I'll bet behind that place there were some seven hundred bodies stacked. They had lime over them. So I can imagine what Dachau, Auschwitz, and the others were like, even worse. It was not only Jews. The majority of them were Jews but there were a lot of other Nationalities in there, too. That son of a bitch Hitler tried to make a super human race with those babies. But you know a lot of those kids when they grew up committed suicide and everything. I read a story about that once. A lot of the girls were adopted by different people. He wanted to keep the boys and make them and breed them so they would become SS. That bastard.

We sat on the Rhine and let the Russians take Berlin. They leveled the place. We were up in Berlin on guard, outpost. In that main hub there were two tracks, one going and one coming back. They raped Berlin. The Russians did. That's what I say. They raped Berlin. They loaded up their trains with everything they could get their hands on and sent it back to Russia. In a way you can't blame them. I felt sorry for the kids.

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John: The Russians lost a lot of men during the war, too.

Bill: Boy, did they. But it proved one thing, the Germans couldn't handle that cold. They never paid the Russians the way they should have. As long as they were fighting, they paid them. When they got killed, that was the end of them. It wasn't like ours where we kept records of them. Imagine how those people felt. What they lost, mothers, fathers.

John: Well, war is never fun. General Lee said, "It's a good thing that war is so horrible, lest we should grow too fond of it."

So, as far back as Rheims, France, then Frankfort and Berlin, they were preparing you for Tokyo. And that's when the bomb was dropped.

Bill: Yeah. In Berlin we received notification for the drop into Tokyo. They talk about these rockets of the Germans and the secret weapons and that. When they said we dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese, so big deal. And then they dropped the one on Nagasaki and I said, "Well, I guess we got something." Then the war was over and boy, I was glad. Shit, we were getting ready to jump into Tokyo.

John: The second bomb was dropped and about a week after that Japan surrendered. What then?

Bill: We got to come home. The good buddies I had, they're over there yet: BJ, Bob Mathias, and many more. Boy, those are the guys I'll never forget. I hated to lose them. I still think of them all in my old age. Now we are leaving this world fast.

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