

June 9, 2011

Mr. Lucas C. Martin  
37800 Sally Way East  
Selbyville, DE19975

Dear Luke,

At one of the reunions I dictated a long narrative of some of my activities. I have just finished reviewing and making some corrections. I hope they are readable.

It just dawned on me that I had omitted an incident that occurred in March or April 1945. I'll relate it now, and you can see if it should be included.

We were moving through Bavarian farm country when we encountered stiff resistance. Air support was called in and P-47s dropped some 500-pound bombs and made a strafing run. The resistance disappeared and we moved forward.

As I approached the farm village I came across a group of farmers in a highly agitated state. I went over to them and saw that they were trying to remove a bomb that was blocking their access to a small bridge. They could not get to their fields.

I saw that they had tied a rope around the bomb's tail fins as it was half-buried next to the bridge. They had taken the other end of the rope and was about to tie it to a team of oxen.

I told them to leave the bomb alone and that our engineers would soon arrive and dispose of it properly.

At this one of the Germans, who spoke good English, asked me if I wanted to see an American. Thinking that he was probably referring to a wounded GI or a downed airman, I agreed to go with him. He took me to a nearby house which we entered. In the bedroom lay an elderly man who was obviously in the final stage of pulmonary tuberculosis. With practically every breath he coughed up sputum which he spit into a can next to his bed.

The most striking part of this scene was a large American flag mounted on the wall just above the old man's head. I asked if the flag had recently been placed in anticipation of the arrival of the Americans.

The German walked over to the wall and lifted a portion of the flag from the wall. It was clean under the flag while the rest of the wall was sooty and grimy. The flag obviously had been there a very long time. The German told me the old fellow was in the German army during the first World War and was taken prisoner by the Americans. He liked his treatment by the Americans and he applied for naturalization. That flag was given to him at his naturalization ceremony.

I have never seen a more perfect display of patriotism. This old German, who became an American, was about to die. But if he was going to die, it would happen beneath his cherished American flag.

The Germans, despite all their atrocities are a very sentimental people. They respected this man, even though their country was at war with America.

Francis B. (Frank) Dukes



Recorded Interview

San Antonio 2010

Francis B. (Frank) Dukes 410<sup>th</sup> Co A

I was Squad Leader of the First Squad of the Second Platoon.

I was born in 1923 in Decatur, Georgia. I was visiting a friend in Atlanta and listening to a radio broadcast of a Washington Redskins football game. The broadcast was interrupted to make an important announcement for all military personnel to return to their units immediately. That was on Dec. 7, 1941.

That was all that was said. The house where I was staying had rented a room to a sailor stationed at the Chamblee, Georgia Naval Air Station. A few minutes later that sailor came rushing into the house, picked up his belonging and said, "I have to get back to the base; I am sure we are at war." I was eighteen and that was a dramatic experience for me. I was out of high school at that time and had taken a competitive entrance exam for the U.S. Naval Academy. About two weeks later I received a notice that I had failed the exam and that they would notify my draft board. In another two or three weeks, another notice arrived saying that two sections of the exam, Ancient History and English Literature, had been eliminated. I had flunked the hell out of both of them. As it turned out, I had passed the exam and received a third alternate appointment, the lowest appointment you could get. At that time I was going to college at Georgia Tech. I was in a class with Jimmy Carter and any number of other people who were in the same boat. We had taken competitive exams for acceptance to Annapolis or West Point and were waiting to be told if we were accepted. I was at Georgia Tech for about a year and was studying Basic Engineering with the hope of getting

into electrical engineering. I finished that term at Tech while all of my friends were going into the Army. I expected to be called any day. I went to the draft board and they told me not to worry; they would call me when my number came up. When I was the only one left at home, I went back to the draft board. I told them that there is something wrong because everyone has been called and I have not been called. The person who was helping me left for a time. Another fellow had been hearing my concerns and asked me to explain my situation. I stated that I had a third alternate appointment to Annapolis and had not received any information. He thought he understood the situation. He walked over to a file cabinet, pulled my file and said I had been placed in 1-C which indicated that I was in the service. I would have stayed in that category for the rest of the war if I had not followed up on it. The same man said I should have been placed back in 1-A (available immediately for military service). The paperwork had come from Annapolis saying that the principal appointee had accepted and that took me off the waiting list but they made the mistake of not putting me back in 1-A. He told me I would get a notice.

Within a few days I did receive a notice; that was in July of '43. I went out to Fort McPherson in Atlanta, was inducted into the Army and rated General Duty eligible for Army, Navy or Coast Guard. A Marine Corps recruiter came by and asked all 1-As to stand out and volunteer for the Marine Corps. I didn't want to volunteer for the Marine Corps; I wanted the Air Corps. The Marine recruiter was about my size. He was wearing his dress blues and had stripes going all the way down his arm. He was a Master Sergeant with overseas stripes, wound stripes and more! He told me I looked like a Marine and should be a Marine. I still said, "No." I said I am

going into the Air Corps and he confidently said I was going to end up in the infantry. He was right.

At first, I did go into the Air Corps, Army Air Force at Miami Beach and I stayed in a hotel, Number 100 Ocean Drive. It was the first hotel in South Beach. Across the street was the largest mess hall in the Army at that time. They fed over two thousand people at a meal. I stayed in Miami Beach for thirteen weeks and underwent Basic Training, which was Basic Infantry Training. When that ended I found myself in the ASTP; I had not applied for that program. The first week in Miami Beach was spent taking the Army General Classification Test. I did very well on that test and that is what got me into ASTP. They seated all the privates around a big table with a Colonel at one end. The Colonel told us we were the future of the Air Force and would be the leaders of the Air Force. We all agreed with him. I was sent up to the town of Deland in Florida to attend John B. Stetson University. [Henry DeLand, founder and president of DeLand Academy from 1883 to 1885, personally selected John F. Forbes to be the first president of DeLand College, which became John B. Stetson University in 1889.] From there I went to Rollins College, which was a girl's school at that time. I stayed there for a week or two and hoped to get transferred into a university somewhere. We boarded a troop train, equipped with rifle racks and headed for Oklahoma A&M, Stillwater, OK. It took forever to get there. There were two army elements at Stillwater, the ASTP unit and a college training unit for the Air Force. The school had two thousand WAVES trainees for Yeoman Training for the Navy. Oklahoma A&M had almost no men except for the training units from the Air Force and the ASTP. The WAVES were "male hungry" and the men suffered from "over-treatment" not the WAVES. It was a fantastic thing; I was still in the Army and had

done nothing since I left Fort McPherson! I lived in a hotel in Miami Beach, I went to various colleges, and now I am in ASTP in Oklahoma A&M.

We went up to Tulsa for a weekend and the barracks that I stayed in on the campus became infected with scarlet fever. You could see the scarlet fever moving up the line in the barracks as people were dropping out and going to the campus infirmary where they were treated with sulfa drugs. Someone in a cot across from me had left with scarlet fever; I felt that I would be next, and I was. This was a very virulent form of scarlet fever. The school infirmary was full so they put me in a bed outside the main infirmary. They told me I was being transferred to the Air Force Base Hospital. I went up to Enid, OK and stayed in the base hospital for roughly two months to get my temperature down to normal. They would take my temperature several times daily and it was regularly above 100 degrees. My temperature finally returned to normal and they discharged me to the campus at Oklahoma A&M. It was March of '44 when I got there and everyone had been shipped out except the company clerk and a mail clerk. In March of '44 they gave me a meal ticket and a bus ticket to join the 103d Infantry Division at Camp Howze Texas. They took me and my duffle bag to the bus station at Gainesville, Texas. I arrive at about 10 PM and the only army I could see was a MP. I showed him my orders that said, "To Commanding General, 103d Infantry Division." He said, "Just call that man who is listed on the order." He told me where the pay phone was located. I called the 103d Infantry Division and they connected me with General Haffner. He was having a cocktail party and I could hear the glasses tinkling and sounds of people having fun. The General said, "Who in the Hell is this?" My reply was, "Private Dukes." He asked why I was calling. I said, "I am calling because I was given a bus ticket from Oklahoma A&M and the MP on duty

told me to call you.” When he asked me what I wanted I told him I wanted transportation to the 103d Infantry Division, Company A 410th; he said it would be provided. About midnight a 2-1/2 ton truck pulled up and confirmed that I was Private Dukes. I put my duffle bag in the back of the truck and we drove to the Headquarters, 410<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regt.

He unloaded me, told me I could sleep on the floor and said that I would be taken to A Company’s Headquarters the next day. I went over there the next morning and they assigned me to A Company. I got over to A Company and they gave me a bunk. They said they would put me on the roles; that was my “not so eventful” entry into the 103d. I never had another opportunity to speak to General Haffner again!

There were “new fellows and a few old timers” too at Camp Howze. They assigned me to a platoon and a squad and I joined them in infantry training. That went on for two or three months. We went on two-day or three-day exercises. Once we went over to Oklahoma on a three day exercise. I felt it was pretty good training, as I looked back on it. My Platoon Sergeant was Martin Jaklic, a tech sergeant and a fine man but he had no business being in the infantry. He was thirty-eight years old with a son in the Air Force. He could relate to us in that way, as if we were his children.

When we wrapped up training and shipped out we traveled to Camp Shanks by troop train. The train was really equipped for troops. It seemed like it took forever to get there but when we arrived I realized we were in Orangeburg, New York. My family is from Orangeburg, South Carolina; I thought what a small world we live in. After a few days at Camp Shanks we did some more training. They outfitted us with shoe-packs which made us think we were going to Iceland.

We boarded the troop ship, the USS General J. R. Brooke (AP-132). There were three tiers of bunks and I was in the most forward of the section. Both sides of the transport converged at the prow where I slept. It was like sleeping on a moving elevator. We were in the North Atlantic going toward Europe. When the swells hit, the plates would buckle in and out making a loud noise.

We would hear an announcement telling us when and where meals would be served. Once at that location you would pick up a tray and silverware. They told us to take what we wanted and eat what we took. Unfortunately, there were many men who were seasick trying to eat and then making a mess! Fortunately, during the two weeks or so, I never got seasick. We listened to the World Series over the loudspeaker system. That was in October. When we hit the Gulf Stream it was like we were in the tropics. We saw flying fish leap out of the water and fly for quite a distance before they returned to the water. You could get on the deck at any time. When we went through the Straits of Gibraltar they announced that on the right was Africa and on the left was Gibraltar. It was really an exciting time. Once in the Mediterranean we hugged the Coast of Africa to reach the town of Oran; then proceeded north to Marseilles. The port at Marseilles had been completely immobilized by the Germans; they sunk ships everywhere. We pulled up almost to the coast; LCIs (Landing Craft Infantry) came along side and we dropped landing nets off the side. We had to crawl down those landing nets with all our gear until you were close enough to drop to the floor of the LCI. When the LCI filled up with troops they took us to the shore, pulled up, dropped the front end of the ramp and we disembarked.

Shortly after we landed at Marseilles, and were on dry land, a German photographic plane dropped in to meet us. It dropped flares and took

photographs of our landing. Someone had a radio and we heard Axis Sally greeting us by playing "White Christmas." She said that we would see a white Christmas; those of us who survive. Everyone was interested in what she had to say. This was in late October of 1944. We started marching to Aix en Provence, loaded with our gear but soon realized we would not make it and began discarding items all along the way to lighten our load; I discarded my steel helmet. Fortunately, our gear was being picked up by the trucks that followed us. All that stuff was loaded back on trucks.

We ended up in a town where we pitched tents until we could board 2½ ton trucks and join the motor march up the Rhone River Valley. We passed through town after town that was utterly destroyed by our 7th Army which was fighting its way up from Italy. We saw the tops of trees completely sheared off by our artillery. It was reassuring to see our power displayed. The Germans dreaded our artillery. They unloaded us at a town outside the town of St. Die where we would be shelled daily in the morning, at chow time. The Germans had good intelligence and knew our routines. St. Die was the first time we were fired on by the enemy; we suffered some casualties from artillery and, though I hate to say it, there were some self-inflicted wounds.

We went on to a town outside of St. Die and on November 22, we were hit by machine gun and small arms fire and suffered heavy casualties. The casualties were mainly noncoms giving arm signals which pointed out their location to the Germans. The German snipers were good; they knew how to take out our men. That night Sgt. Jaklic, who had been wounded in the back of the neck by artillery came by me and said he appointed me staff sergeant, squad leader of the first squad of the second platoon and, "I am, as platoon sergeant, notifying headquarters of your appointment. So from this

time on you are going to be Staff Sergeant Francis B. Dukes.” I may have been but I didn’t wear any stripes until the end of the war. That was November 27 and I only had six or seven men left in my squad. The rest had been wounded.

We took off the next day for St. Die where we would cross the Meurthe River. The engineers had set up a pontoon foot bridge across the Meurthe River. The town had been pretty much destroyed by the Germans. We went on to another town that was defended by Germans. My Company Commander, Wilbur Mattison, who was a first Lieutenant at that time, gave the order to fix bayonets. We were going to charge the hillside where the Germans were emplaced. He led one of the last bayonet charges of WWII. When he yelled CHARGE!, we went up the mountain screaming and yelling. He was a Citadel graduate, so we gave the Rebel Yell. The Germans jumped up out of their holes and ran into the woods. These were Volksturm troops, mainly over-age recruits. We found a foxhole that one of these men had been in and it was like home, equipped with a box of cigars and a can of sardines (the Germans ate everything out of cans). The foxhole was big enough for two or three people; they knew how to make a foxhole! We loaded up with some of their goodies. My chief scout, Warren Ball, encouraged us to go after them into the woods and there was one of these over age Germans. We tried to get close to him, picked up a fallen branch, threw it at him, hit him in the back and he fell on the ground. He was about forty years old; he did not want to fight, so he came back. That was my first experience in combat other than being shot at, and that German was my first prisoner. My squad never achieved anything like full strength. We started out with about seven men; the assistant squad leader, pfc’s, privates, and myself. We were all riflemen.

We went on to various towns. Before we crossed into Germany my company was placed in Division reserve. My outfit ended up in the town of Niederbronn, on the Saar River. We were in Niederbronn for two or three days with nothing to do and Walter Sisson, my assistant squad leader, said, "Let's get an orchestra together from among the local men. Let's see if we can put together a dance with the local girls." We had a piano, a saxophone and a violin. The people were first class musicians. They were really good with Strauss Waltzes. There were several girls that wanted to dance. We were trying to dance with shoe packs on and that didn't work.

We had relieved the Third Division, Audie Murphy's Division. I might have relieved Audie Murphy for all I knew. When we relieved them we could *hear* the war: the sounds of burp guns and machine guns. The Third Division soldier that I relieved told me the machine gun that I was hearing was one of ours. He could tell by the rat-a-tat-tat. The German machine guns fired at two or three times the rate of ours. Every rifle squad in the German army had a machine gun. We had a BAR and that was a big difference. The Germans out "rifled" the hell out of us with those machine guns. Any time they stopped they would mount that machine gun and were able to stop us. We were calling in artillery constantly and our radios did not work worth a damn. We had a three hundred that had to be carried on a soldier's back. The walkie-talkies were almost worthless. I think each company had a three hundred. One man would carry the radio. There was someone always near that radio to call in artillery or a bomb from P-47's. It was fantastic, the ability that we had to bring fire power in against the Germans. We advanced up to the Rhine fighting along the way because the Germans would defend every town. They would defend if only with a sniper. Usually, they had the equivalent of a couple of squads defending.

The Germans were great soldiers. When we got up to the Rhine we crossed it at Worms. We went all the way over to the town of Eberbach on the Neckar River. Eberbach was a picturesque town, like a fairy book land, in beautiful mountain territory; we stayed there two or three days.

In Niederbronn, before we went to Eberbach, we were drinking watery beer, which was not very good; Sisson asked someone where we could find some brandy or wine. We were directed up to Saarguemines, about ten miles up the river. There was a cave at Saarguemines and a great amount of wine, brandy and other alcohol. Naturally, we headed up the river. My jeep driver's name was Fred Fischer and my assistant squad leader and BAR man was Walter Sisson.

Fred Fischer was a little fellow about my size with a very athletic build. Sisson was big; they gave the BAR to the biggest man. He knew the infantry and was a good man to have. We got up to Saarguemines, and just like the old fellow told us, there was a narrow gauge railroad going into a big opening into a cave. We drove into the cave and found ourselves in a tremendous room with little roomettes carved along the sides. The townspeople had gone into the cave and set up "housekeeping" while the town was under siege. Saarguemines had been bombarded by artillery and bombarded from the air. That town was a major target for us because it contained certain carbides that were needed for their armaments industry. We looked around and found some old brandy bottles on the floor; some of them had an inch or so of residue left in them. We picked up a few bottles, went back to Niederbronn and the old man shook his head and said, "You didn't go far enough in the cave." We went back in there all the while not realizing that the Germans were on the other side of the river and watching what we are doing. We went about 150 yards deeper into the cave and were

confronted with massive steel doors that were secured with a very heavy chain and padlock. This was typical heavy duty German equipment. Sisson took his BAR and blasted the padlock and it snapped open. We took the padlock off, pulled the chain down to open the door and could not believe what we saw inside. The Germans had taken all the alcohol that they had looted from stores all over German occupied Europe: Napoleon cognac, brandy, champagne, Scotch whiskey, American whiskey (Old Granddad). With typical German efficiency they had crated the liquor in wooden crates and had stenciled "Reserviert für die Wehrmacht" (Reserved for the Wehrmacht) on each crate. We only had the jeep plus the three of us which meant we could only take two crates. We put a crate of good wine and a crate of good brandy in the jeep; we returned to Niederbronn and told the people what we saw. The good news spread fast; everyone in the company found out about the alcohol. The company officers immediately got a 1½ ton truck. I asked if we could make another trip. We got a trailer for the jeep and filled it with goodies. The Germans had that road zeroed in and saw us leaving with a trailer load. They started lobbing mortars which landed ten or fifteen feet behind us. Fischer barreled out of there and after two or three miles we were home free. Using 2½ and 1½ ton trucks the Division eventually got all of the liquor out. The Division started making alcohol rations to enlisted men; probably the only such ration in the ETO.

We were unwinding in Innsbruck and the platoon sergeant came in and asked us what we would like in the way of alcohol. He said we could have anything we wanted and started listing the items we had taken from the cave. This was about the time that Roosevelt had died.

I arrived at Oberammergau from Landsberg and then to Mittenwald. We went down through mountain roads into Innsbruck. When we were

received in Innsbruck it was like the liberation of Paris. We were greeted with big signs along the road welcoming the American troops. I was not aware until the end of the war that they had those same signs up for the Germans when they came into town. The people in Innsbruck treated us royally. I was now on an M-18TD, probably the only one in the ETO with a 90mm rifle on it. Sisson had volunteered my squad to join an armored task force; I don't remember the name of the task force. They had originally outfitted the M18s with 70mm high velocity rifles, but they were no match for the German Panther tanks. The 90mm M18s took those panther tanks out with ease. The TD driver told us that his TD could do fifty mph on the open highway and he proved it. That was the fastest armored vehicle in Europe. The Bear Cat, M18 was a great weapon; it had an open turret and a fifty caliber machine gun. We felt like we were kings. Each of us had an M-1 and we were ready for anyone. And Sisson had his BAR. There were five of us on top of the M18TD.

From Innsbruck they told us to go down to the Brenner Pass so we got on a beautiful mountain road and went down a mountain pass. Up on the sides of the mountains were artillery emplacements. The Germans had them zeroed in on the highway; but the Germans had decided that it was all over. While I was in Innsbruck a large army group surrendered. About May 3 or May 4 they came down the mountain pass, armed to the teeth, but they were surrendering. The war actually ended on the 8th of May, VE day. On the 4th we went on into Brennero on the M18; the driver opened it up to 50mph just to show what it would do. When we got down the mountain we stopped at the town of Brennero, Italy. We stopped and he got out and went to the Commander of the troops.

He met the troops of the 88<sup>th</sup> Division (coming up from the south) and assured himself that everything was in order. That is all we were trying to do. We turned around and went back to Innsbruck. I told people we went into Italy. They didn't believe me because they said the 410th did not go into Italy. The M18TD that I was on certainly went in there. We turned around and went back into the Austrian Alps, where we heard that the war had ended. We were assigned to the Army of Occupation and stayed in Innsbruck for about two weeks, enforcing the curfew that was set at or around 4:30 PM.

I wrote letters mainly to my brother, Bobby, who was three years younger than I was. He was in the Air Force and passed away a couple of years ago. He was a tail gunner on B-29s out of Saipan. One of my letters was written on German Field Mail and he saved it for me. (The Germans had a system similar to ours; they wrote and received letters with the letters *FELDPOST* (English: FIELD MAIL – FP3) written across them. Before he went over to Saipan I wrote to him at Buckley which was outside of Denver. He was undergoing his gunnery training and his sergeant/trainer, Phil Grabbe, happened to be a neighbor of ours who lived two doors down the street. My brother saved the letter.

When we got into Germany we captured quite a few Germans; they were ready to give up at that time. The German soldiers would come over to us and asked for a cigarette and coffee. We would give them a whole pack of Lucky Strike cigarettes; they just could not believe it. They were smoking terrible stuff (appeared to be “fake” tobacco). They would say the war is over though technically it was only over for them. They knew it. They would say “Krieg is Kaputt” and Hitler is “Kaputt”. They seemed to be grateful to be alive and American prisoners and not Russian prisoners.

At the end of the war I had fifty-two points and it took sixty-five to get home. I spent a long time in the Army of Occupation. V-E Day came and we went into daily training for redeployment to the Pacific. We actually packed our rifles in Cosmolene to be shipped over. (Cosmolene is a thick heavy petroleum preservative which protects rifles from rusting.) We were ready to go when we heard the announcement about the A-Bomb. There wasn't a person alive overseas at that time that was not grateful for that A-Bomb. We knew the Japanese were fanatical soldiers. We had been fighting a fairly civilized war in Germany. The Germans were people very much like us; almost all of them had relatives in the States. They would ask us if we knew someone in this or that city or state. Texas, where we trained, was loaded with Germans. They immigrated to Texas in vast numbers and, in my opinion, became great citizens of Texas because they assimilated into our society. They retained their customs like the Oktoberfest. I came to appreciate the Germans who lived in Texas because I lived in Texas for awhile. They became Americans but they never lost their love of the Motherland. I honor them for that. The Japanese were another world entirely. They were prepared to resist to the last man and to die for the Motherland was a great honor. When they went into the army they went through a ceremony that was similar to a funeral because they never expected to return.

In 1946 I ended up in the Ninth Division because the 103d was being disbanded. The Ninth Division had been through hell. They landed in North Africa and fought all the way up to Italy. Many of them were transferred up to England and went across on D-Day. I went into the German town of Traunstein, where our new Pope served as a Bishop. In Traunstein I was a staff sergeant and I knew almost no one in the Ninth

Division. The Company Commander came out and held a meeting to tell us we were going to have an Enlisted Man's Club. We are going to vote to see who will be the manager of the Enlisted Man's Club. I thought, "This is incredible!" It was like a bomb shell exploding; I was going to be the manager of the Enlisted Man's Club. I did not know anything about managing a club or anything else. It was not the kind of responsibility that you would give the "new guy."

I was called in by the Company Commander and told that we had taken over a coffee shop, called the Kur Kaffe. The Kur Kaffe was owned and run by the Burgermeister, Herr Becker, who had agreed to turn it into the Enlisted Man's Club. The Commander told me that we paid the burgermeister for this and that he wanted me to go and tell this man that I am the new manager. Herr Becker turned out, in my estimation, to be a fine gentleman. I asked him if he was a Nazi and he said everyone was a Nazi and that you didn't have a choice. He spoke English pretty well. He said if you did not join you would be put on a work detail. "So, I joined the Nazis party, but I didn't believe in the Nazis." He said come with me and I will take you to the Kur Kaffe. He took me to what appeared to be the center of activity for the town. The Germans liked their coffee and liked to go to the coffee shop and sit down, drink coffee and talk about things. Afterwards, they would go to the beer hall and have beer. Germans had a very good philosophy. He showed me the tables out in the open and he showed me where more booths could be arranged on the sides of the building. The bar, in the back, would be overseen by a cocktail manager and staffed with waitresses serving beer as well as cocktails. He really was thinking ahead. He said to come back later, and by then most of the building would be converted. He changed that building into very fine Enlisted Man's Club in

two days. They ran out of cocktails almost immediately because the American Military government shut down all alcohol production. The Military government was a detested group, both by the Americans and by the Germans. The Military government representatives walked around with 45 automatics on the hip as if they were real combat soldiers. We needed alcohol. During the war the bartender was a lieutenant in the Wehrmacht at Cassino no less. He gave me a medal that he had received from the monks. Rudy Froelich was his name. I had great respect for everyone I ran into. He said the Club did not have any alcohol and regrettably had to serve lemonade. There was a distillery in Udine in northern Italy. He gave me the phone number for the distillery so I could call them. The American government had just taken over everything and everything was free. He made the call, said he wanted some distilled spirits and asked for an English speaking person. I told the person who came on the phone that I would be bringing a truck and would like to have two thousand dollars worth. I had to get a 6x6 truck and driver, who stated that all the passes into Italy were closed because of snow. I did have a road map that would take us down to Innsbruck and take us up the river to Klagenfurt, Austria, turn south to Tarvisio (a mountain pass), afterwards to Udine. The driver said he would put chains on his drive wheels and we would probably get through the snow. Sometimes we would have to back up and plow ahead several times to make five or six feet until we got to the top of the pass. Eventually we were free of the snow and went down into Italy, heading to Udine, a major city in northern Italy. On the way to Udine there was a little roadside store where we stopped to reload gasoline; we had several five gallon cans full of gas. We refilled the gas and stopped at a store to get some coffee. There were three Italians who were sitting by a potbelly stove trying to get warm. They

saw that we were GIs and were surprised. This was the British occupation zone. We told them we were from Traunstein and we had come by truck through the mountains using chains on the wheels. My driver came from Jersey City and could understand what was being said because he spoke Italian. The Italian said, “No wonder the Americans beat the Germans; these soldiers came across a closed mountain pass!” What they did not realize is that if the Americans needed some alcohol they would go through hell to get it.

It took about a day to get to Udine. We passed through a British checkpoint where I told them what our mission was and asked to see their finance officer. I needed to transfer German marks into Italian Lira. We cleaned the finance office out because I brought all the money from the club. He gave me the two thousand dollars worth of Lira and I drove into the distillery, which was a modern building in an open field.

The owner’s family lived in the distillery in very modern quarters. He made a list of what I wanted i.e., Spumonti Asti, Italian and peach brandy and more. When he found out that we did not yet have a place to stay he offered his master bedroom and extended an invitation to dine with his family. We saw his very handsome thirty-year-old son, who had been hit in the head by the Germans, affecting him mentally. The table was set with a series of plates, one on top of the other. We were served formally with various courses: salad, a rice dish, and meat courses. It was just great.

When we went over to Udine we did not pass far from Venice; we were in the province of Venezia Giulia, Italy. If I had time on my hands we might have done some great sightseeing. We had to get back because the troops were thirsting for something. We loaded up the next morning and the Italian family was just wonderful. They had great respect for American

soldiers and were genuinely pleased to deal with us. They despised the Germans. The Germans despised the Italians and they were supposed to be allies.

It looked like we had blazed a trail over Tarvisio because it looked like it had been traveled enough that chain equipped cars could manage it. We were pretty close to the Russian army at Klagenfurt; the Russians were not friendly. We saw one of their checkpoints and we told them that we did not desire to go in. We turned around.

We loaded the club up when we got back. We went into town because we needed more beer. The German towns have their own brewery. Theirs was called Wochinger and was established in 1587. We gave them an empty beer barrel. I learned that a beer barrel has a bunghole and a hammer is used to knock the bung into the barrel. They can then plug it up with a new bung. They fill the beer barrel which is under carbon dioxide pressure. When the barrel gets full they tap in a new bung and charge you around four or five marks, about fifty cents in American money. It was like four or five dollars to them. Rudy, the bartender, got it charged with carbon dioxide; Rudy knew how to tap it.

We had good fresh beer with all the “mixings” for mixed drinks, and Rudy was in heaven because he could mix real cocktails now. He posted the prices on the wall behind the bar. GIs were coming up to the bar and ordering cocktails for their tables. I would go around and sit at the tables. We had a couple of Hawaiians and Hawaiians cannot tolerate alcohol; just like American Indians. They like to drink but they go crazy under the influence. We had to restrict them to soft drinks because they literally went crazy. The rest of the place was orderly; the soldiers did not get “knee walking drunk.” They got happy. We had a first rate dance orchestra; GIs

danced with their Fräuleins. The town was really jumping. I managed the club for two to three months.

I had an apartment above the club, the details of which could make a wonderful movie. My quarters had two bedrooms and a living room. This apartment was fully equipped with the finest furniture. My shower had a tankless water heater made by Messerschmitt and it was mounted on the wall in the bathroom. I had never seen anything like that. The tank was a series of copper water pipes that are heated by gas heat that came on when you turned the hot water faucet on. A pilot light turned the gas heat on and within 15 seconds you had hot water. Currently, tankless water heaters are being sold all over the country but the Germans had them in WWII. It was especially valuable to the Germans because they had to conserve.

The first time I saw jet aircraft was toward the end of the war. There were planes parked under trees along the autobahn, and I thought the Germans had dismantled the engines from them because they had no propellers. They were ME 262s that had run out of fuel and the Germans had parked them. Those were jet planes.

After we closed at 11.30 pm I would walk through the club prior to the 7 a.m. opening to make sure everything was in order i.e. the floor were spotlessly clean etc. The waitresses and the char force would come in and clean that place up, stack the chairs on the tables and mop the floor. The Germans were great workers. I would greet Rudy and the girls and sit down with patrons. One of the patrons said this, "This is just like Rick's Café in *Casablanca*." I said, "This is better; there is no gambling here." We had good refreshments and entertainment. "A Traveling World Revue" had a female Hungarian entertainer, Madame Sixtus. There were many

Hungarians in Germany and the Germans and the Hungarians got along very well.

I finally earned enough points to come home; after I had those wonderful nights at the “Liberty Club.” I finally reached sixty-five points and I headed to LeHavre with a St. Bernard dog, Josephine that I latched onto in Landsburg. That dog stayed with me all the way to Traunstein. Every time I would go into the mess hall to eat, Josephine would respond to “sit” and she would not budge until I came back out. I might come out with something for her from the kitchen in the mess hall.

When we got to Traunstein they got us into a place at Le Havre. They placed me in a castle that had been converted into troop quarters. The castle was complete with moat and drawbridge. While I was waiting for my name to be called for a ship they took my dog. They said she would be shipped over to New York and placed in quarantine. I paid the cost to transport her. I put her on a truck that had a German Shepherd. Josephine did not want to go past the Shepherd. The GI that owned the war dog told me Josephine had to leave because his dog was not going to let her come over by me. Josephine came when I called her, the war dog jumped up and Josephine jumped up and grabbed that war dog by the throat. The war dog let out a howl like I had never heard. I jumped up and pulled Josephine off the other dog which took the opportunity to jump off the truck and run away. Josephine came over and sat beside me. I said I was sorry but that it was not Josephine’s fault. Your dog caused it by jumping. He went off to find his dog. I got Josephine on her boat.

While I was waiting shipment I got a cable from Traunstein ordering me to come back to Traunstein for a shortage of funds for the enlisted man’s club of \$2,300. That was the amount of the alcohol I bought. I had to take a

train back to Traunstein. I had a nice train ride back and found out that there was a brand new company commander fresh in from the states, no ribbons at all. I said I have a cable that says to come back because there is a shortage of funds. He knew that there was a shortage of \$2,300. I said it was entered into his books. We went to the club and looked at the ledger book. We saw the withdrawal of \$2,300 that I took down to Udine. He turned a few pages and the purchase of alcohol for \$2,300 was there.

He had asked to see my little passbook that showed all financial transactions. We kept a currency control book to show that we had not participated in the black market. He looked through mine and did not find any problems. He said, "If I can get you back to LeHavre right away and get you on the next thing out of there, will you not mention this to anybody?" He was afraid. I told him all I wanted to do was to get home. He said he would get me all the transportation requests that I would need and you will be out of here within an hour.

That was a terrible experience. He was looking at my ribbons and thinking I can make sure that you will not get a heavy penalty, etc. I was firm that I was not taking a penalty because I did not do anything wrong. He could verify that the liquor was paid for at the club.

The troop ship, *Wilson Victory*, brought me back to New York. It was not a bad trip; we knew that sooner or later we would see the Statue of Liberty. I arrived in New York in April of 1946 at Ft. Dix. It was a terrifying trip because I was on a 2 1/2 ton truck going about 40 to 50 mph. I had not gone more than 20 mph for the last eighteen months. That kind of speed was frightening. The camp had a liquor store right outside the gate as well as Army transportation that would take us anywhere we had to go.

I continued by train to Fort MacPherson in Atlanta. As I was waiting for my name to be called to have my discharge process, I heard, "Corporal Dukes, report to the reception area" be announced over the PA system. I assumed they made a mistake and meant Sergeant Dukes. When I got there I saw my brother Bobby, who was being discharged on the same day, April 16, 1946. He came from the Pacific, I came from Europe and we had not seen each other in two or three years. I went home first then he came home. Then our older brother, James, arrived from the Pacific. He had been a Commander of a Mine Sweeper. Within three days all three brothers were discharged. My sister had just married a Bataan Death March survivor. She was a nurse's aide in the VA hospital where she met him. He was undergoing treatment for mistreatment as a POW. He was grossly mistreated. They promoted him from Sergeant to First Lieutenant as a Bataan survivor.

I was discharged as a Staff Sergeant, one brother was discharged as a Corporal, and my other brother was discharged as a Lieutenant in the Navy. On my discharge a Separation Center Lieutenant came out and made a pitch for the people to join the Reserve. He said you could join any part of the Army you served in during the war. I said I served in the Army Air Forces in Miami Beach. The Lieutenant said I could join the Army Air Force Reserve and that is what I did, staying in for thirty eight years. That got me out of the infantry once and for all. I was retired with pay as a Lieutenant Colonel. I made many, many very valuable friends in the Air Force Reserve and never regretted joining. My Commander was a navigator on a B-17 in the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force. His landing gear had been shot down when he encountered intense flak. The flak destroyed his hydraulic system on his plane so the landing gear dropped down into landing position, but the crew

did not know this. The Germans accepted that as a distress signal and they would escort them down to a safe landing. This is why I said it was a civilized war. The German Luftwaffe pilots would try to help that pilot to make a safe landing. Their gunners fired on the Luftwaffe who were trying to help them because they thought the Luftwaffe were trying to shoot them down. Their bomb squadron insignia was painted on the tail of their B-17. The Germans recognized that. They called it the Bloody 199 (or whatever number their squadron was). They were lucky to get out of there alive. They had to make a crash landing in Allied territory. The navigator was my Commander in the Reserve, a fine fellow.

When I was placed in the Army Air Force Reserve there was a transfer of the Army Air Force to the U.S. Air Force. That occurred about a year or so later. I had been assigned to a very heavy bomb squadron at Dobbins Air Force Base outside of Atlanta. I went out there to see what my unit looked like. My unit was a paper unit only. There was in a big aircraft hanger that was empty. It had all the files at the back of the hanger. I got my file and looked at some of the entries in the file. My Reserve Unit relocated me to Washington, D.C. where I became Operations Officer for a Detached Training Site, a group of about twenty officers from the ranks of Lieutenant through Colonel. Our duties included photographic interpretation for aerial photography and writing up biographies on officers assigned. We saw the first aerial photography of the placement of missiles in Cuba. One Sunday morning they showed us the films taken by a U2 of a missile sight being prepared. The Soviet's originality is not one of their strong points. They made that missile site identical to everyone we had photographed to date. They said this is a Russian missile site being prepared down in Cuba and it will have the capability of hitting Oakridge, Tennessee. What they

were telling us was fantastic. They had F80s flying so low taking first hand shots of what was down there. You can see the workers scrambling to get away as if they thought they were going to be machine gunned. We were told that we were very close to hostilities with the Soviet Union if they did not get those missiles out of there. We were not going to allow that. I was working for NASA as a civilian at that time and a Reservist on the weekends.

I went to Auburn and put in a year of classes in about six months. All my classes were on the GI Bill. I continued to go to college at Tulane for another year or so. I graduated from Tulane in 1951 with a degree in psychology and relocated to Atlanta. When I was still in the Reserves, my best friend in Atlanta was undergoing pilot training out at the Atlanta airport which was known then as Candler Field. He encouraged me to do the same. I told him I used up my GI Bill with college and graduate school. I did everything but a thesis for a master's degree. I researched if the GI Bill was still available to me for pilot training and the VA said it was. I received pilot training in a Piper Cub. I had gone to school with my flight instructor. A Piper Cub lands at a fairly high speed and comes down at a fairly sharp glide angle. I mention that because I tried to do that in a Taylorcraft, another light plane that I flew. You have to fight to get that plane to come down. It has a great wingspan and a lot of wing surface. Therefore, you have to "fly" it down. I almost flew off the landing strip. I got my private pilot's license, again on the GI Bill. The Army ended up as a good experience for me. My Air Force experience was also very good. I have been retired from the Air Force since 1983 at age sixty. Since that time I have been receiving retired pay which I don't think is sustainable. I don't think the military can sustain these retirement benefits. They are going to have to do something about

reducing them. My retired pay now amounts to about \$1,325 a month. This has been going on since 1983. I am retired from the Civil Service. I receive something from the V.A. I am grateful for getting it. Someone needs to look at it from a sensible and sustainable approach. I work with other veterans who are retirees and they feel the same way. The middle class neighborhood that I grew up in was filled with people just like me. By today's standard it may have been considered a lower class neighborhood. One of the men that I grew up with became the outstanding medical doctor of the state of South Carolina. Another man from the neighborhood is a retired colonel in the Army, Field Artillery. Another one was Flight Officer in the Air Force which was similar to a Lieutenant. Another was a pilot of a B-25. Another was my brother's instructor with 50 caliber machine guns. We don't see that today. I visited Ft. Sam Houston yesterday and was overwhelmed with what I saw there. I do my grocery shopping in Northern Virginia at Fort Myer. That store is like a country store compared to Fort Sam Houston, which is a fantastic installation for retirees. I had a cousin who retired at Fort Sam Houston. I avail myself of the VA medical care; they handled a heart attack for me. I credit them with saving my life. I was medivacked via helicopter from their medical center to one in Washington, D.C. where they performed a catheterization and implantation of a stent. That was performed without cost to me. When I go to the VA I congratulate them on the work they did on me.