

Frederick Walker Cline's Military Career (self-reported)

In a sense, WWII started in part by the terms of WWI. Major conflict began September 1, 1939 when Germany invaded Poland. For 16 million Americans, it started December 7, 1941 with the attack on Pearl Harbor. At that time I was a high school senior-- Abingdon, Ill. The following day, President Roosevelt declared war on Germany & Japan. This was done as we were assembled in our high school gym. Within days, Lyle Dunlap was ordered to Cuba as a radio operator from the Navy Reserves.

I finished high school, worked at Galesburg for the Burlington Railroad that summer and started my freshman year at Blackburn college in Fall, 1942. Within a few weeks, it was just a matter of what branch one would join. I had hoped to be a veterinarian and assumed there would be more chances in the Army. So I joined the Army Reserve in October along with a bunch of other students. By the end of my freshman year in spring of 1943, we had orders to report to Camp Grant near Rockford, Illinois, May 24, 1943.

It helped some to see some familiar faces. After a few days we went by train to Camp Wheeler, Georgia near Macon for Infantry Basic Training. That is the beginning of a process to become a dog face or a grunt. In the following 13 weeks we marched over 400 miles, camped out a lot; learned the M1 Rifle along with hand to hand combat, machine gun training & mortars, hand grenade & bayonet experience. I was out of camp twice in 13 weeks for a short visit to Macon, Georgia which was crowded by GI's.

When we were processed at Camp Grant we took the Army Classification Test--ACT. In order to apply for Officer Candidate School it took a score of 110 or better. The Army had an Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) of additional college. The score of 115 or better was required. I jumped at the chance to return to college.

Hundreds of our Battalion were put on a train to Tuscaloosa, Alabama to the University of Alabama. We were put in a program of 24 hours credit class work in Engineering. If your grades weren't passing, you went back to the Infantry. If everything was AOK, you had free time from Saturday at 4 pm to Sunday evening at 6 pm curfew.

As the 8 million members of the Army set out on various needs, it became evident that ASTP and Air Force Cadets were needed otherwise, as infantry. 130,000 ASTP & 30,000 Air Cadets were dumped back into cannon fodder. A large number of our group was sent by train to Camp Atterberry, Indiana, south of Indianapolis to the 106th Infantry Division, which we renamed the Hungry & Sick. Morale was at a near low but the need for top physical condition is more than evident. The U.S. Army in North Africa was less than impressive, often using WWI tactics in a totally different situation. The British saved us from disaster. Sicily was better and Italy was about hopeless in terms of objectives reached. Guess what? With Russia providing the Eastern Front, the U.S. & allies need to create a Western Front. June 6, 1944 D Day... & the cost was awesome. Guess where the bulk of those 160,000 college boys are assigned? Either as replacements for units in combat or heavily involved with some of the last Divisions committed to combat in 1944.

The very unit that I was assigned to ...423 Infantry Regiment of 106th Division had a record that no one wants!!!

Four months after joining the 106th Division, I was one of 1500 dogfaces infantry riflemen. Military Occupational Services loaded 745 riflemen on a train to Fort Meade, Maryland and after processing, we took a train to Camp Miles Standish, just out of Boston, Massachusetts. On Sept. 10 we left the U.S. on a troop ship and Sept. 17 we landed at Liverpool, England. As we left the ship, we had a doughnut & coffee from the Red Cross and marched a short distance to a waiting train. We rode all night... saw the destruction at Coventry and the outskirts of London. In less than 24 hours we were at Southampton and loaded on a British ship. Next day... Omaha Beach by landing craft. The beach was secure but some areas were mined and some items still booby trapped. About half way across the channel there were gas masks floating in the water and other personal items that had been lost by the men making the landing. In a couple of days we were loaded on trucks called the Red Ball Express and taken to Le Mons, France. Here we were issued the rifle that we would use in combat. These weapons had belonged to other men who no longer could use them. We were taken to a rifle range and we fired these weapons to our satisfaction of windage or the nature of each gun for accuracy. We were then loaded on French box cars (40 x 8)..either 40 men or 8 horses per car). We went through Paris and finally to Verdun (a 3 day ride) where warfare resulted in 1 1/2 million casualties in 18 months in WWI. From the train we went to a replacement depot where healthy young men replaced casualties from the combat area. Four of us had buddied up from Indiana to our new unit. Earl Wheeler from Chesterfield, Illinois joined the 9th Division and was killed within a week. Harry Mote from Angola, Indiana was MIA (missing in action) from the 80th Division and is buried in Arlington Cemetery, Virginia. Rodney Ebersville from Fergus Falls, Minnesota was wounded and captured from the 35th Division. He was captured about 20 miles from where his grandfather lived before coming to the U.S.

The night before we were in combat we sewed our 4th Armored Division patch on our field jackets to let the Germans know who we were, contrary to all our training in the states.

A truck load of young men went to the 10th Armored Infantry Battalion for assignment. As various questions were asked, some went to Headquarters, some to Scouting I & R (Intelligence & Reconnaissance), Mortar Platoon, Assault Guns, Machine Gun Platoon. I was one of 20 sent to Machine Gun Platoon. Normal strength is 34 men in 3 half tracks. Imagine our shock and dismay to find 5 bearded, muddy, ornery looking soldiers. They were the Machine Gun Platoon!! My squad sergeant had been in France in WWI and was older than my 43 year old father back in the states. Of the 20 new men, 5 were wounded the first day and I figured I had 3 days to go.

I lasted 47 days and was taken out on a stretcher. Words are inadequate to describe the fear, the lack of sleep, the bond you have with fellow soldiers, the luck of moving a few feet, the shock of being knocked down with a shell and your ears ringing for days. A few days before I was taken out, I had taken off my right boot. My foot was swollen so badly that I couldn't get it back on my foot. There was a dead German soldier laying several feet away and he had on an overshoe that he may have taken from an American body. One of my buddies salvaged the overshoe and that was all I had until being loaded in an ambulance. As several stretchers were waiting to be loaded, a shell burst several feet away and some shrapnel rattled against the ambulance. "Let's get the hell out of here" sounded like good advice. We were taken to an aid station that looked like a schoolhouse. Both Americans and German prisoners were in the

same room. I still had 2 grenades in my jacket pocket but I might hurt some Americans. We were next moved to a tent hospital that adjoined an air strip. If the weather was good, we were to fly to England. That was not a choice so we were placed on a hospital train and moved to Paris. I was there Thanksgiving Day and had the traditional turkey, dressing, the works. That will be the best Thanksgiving meal that I will ever enjoy!!! A few days later we were flown to England and I was in a hospital in Manchester until early January, 1945

The Battle of the Bulge started mid December at Ardennes Forest. That 106th Division I had been in Indiana was just starting a combat assignment. Five German Tank Divisions hit this green rookie Division in Belgium and there were over 8000 men taken prisoner. My old regiment surrendered. I missed this disaster by 5 months and will ever be grateful. They never knew what hit them.

I left the hospital with 3 other men from our ward. We were the first 4 leaving, back to duty. Some of the others goofed off up to 3 more months.

I was reclassified to Military Police because I surely couldn't make it in the winter in the infantry. Official records show over 4500 men in the hospital with trenchfoot. Some brilliant general decided the war might end in 1944 and the troops wouldn't need overcoats, overshoes and other winter equipment. I guarantee that such a guy never spent a night in a foxhole.

I was assigned to an MP Battalion 705th at Southhampton for 4 months. They were doing a lot of convoy work and as I had my own Harley-Davidson motorcycle in 1941, I did a lot of hours on a 45 cu. in. Harley.

In April we were sent to La Harve and took many loads of men and equipment from the beach to a staging area and then escorted thousands of German prisoners to the ships for English prison camps.

The War in Europe ended on May 7, 1945. It took awhile to believe.

Anyone with a map knew the direction from France to the U.S. was west. Shortly after VE day (Victory in Europe), a large number of soldiers were put on a train going south. At one point we could see some of the Swiss Alps. We were unloaded at Marseille on the Mediterranean. We were in a staging camp. After yellow fever shots and different clothing, we were loaded on a troop ship, crossed the Mediterranean, across the Atlantic Ocean and saw the Panama Canal on July 3, 1945. Thirty five days later from leaving France, we rode landing craft into Manila, Philippine Islands. We couldn't get the ship up to the dock because there were too many sunken ships in our way. The devastation of Manila was terrible. One day as I was driving through Manila, I picked up an Air Force lieutenant who needed a ride. As we drove along, he said, "Isn't this a beautiful city?". I asked him, "What did you say, sir?". He repeated his message. I said that a few weeks ago I was on the Riviera in France and if this looks good to you, where did you come from? He had just flown in to Clark Field from Kurachi, India!! It is all in the eyes of the beholder.

A few days after our landing, we were moved north of Manila to an area just east of Clark Field, a huge airport. We were placed at the base of a mountain where Japs were a problem for some villages. We were a buffer for these civilians and certainly helpful in the security of Clark Field. The big day is here--August 14, 1945. The War is, Over. Thank God. About 30 of us are moved to Balanga, Bataan to train Filipino soldiers in a kind of basic training. In the spring of 1942, thousands of military personnel were on a fortified island, Corrigidor, just off the peninsula of Bataan. The famous Death March was from the tip of Bataan to San Fernando. These men and women were sick, hungry, in terrible physical condition. This area is tropical, hot and humid. Many died, passed out, were shot and treated brutally. The Army

Graves Registration Unit began to look for skeletons and any remains of these unfortunate victims.

At times some of these soldiers needed to check in areas where armed Japs were located. Everyone didn't get the news the war was over. It was an easy solution to their problem as we loaned them rifles and pistols as they were looking for remains of dead Americans. There was a temporary cemetery as this unit did the best they could. Another problem in Bataan was the pipeline that carried fuel to Clark Field ran to the tip of Bataan to storage tanks at Marveles. We patrolled the pipeline.

On December 1, 1945, we turned Bataan back to the Filipino Army and moved to Manila to work on black market operations. Most Filipinos were poor and Japan had them under control from 1942-1945, over 3 years of Jap domination.

You cannot imagine the problems faced and how desperate they were for food, clothing, the bare essentials. While I am on the subject, I had an interesting day as we were to take seed rice to some villages on the west side of Bataan. We used a 4 wheel drive truck as we had to ford several streams. I don't have to tell you what happened to seed rice given to hungry people.

The Death March becomes personal as I remember Wayne Cramer from Delong who graduated high school at 16, the University of Illinois at 20, a reserve officer sent to the Philippines in 1941. He was captured and died the third year in prison camp.

A high school friend, Jenro Lambasio, was Navy and captured. He spent 3 1/2 years as a prisoner, as did Bob Gilbert, also from Abingdon. Jenro tells that in prison camp a board was in a spot if you could bend it you were over 100# body weight. He came in off a work detail and losing weight, found he was less than 100 pounds. He asked me if I knew some Italian nicknames ...WOP, DAGO & GUINEA. Well, he said, "That makes me a skinny GUINEA".

What an attitude- He came to our 50th class reunion with Admiral Jim Stockdale who spent 3 years in Hanoi as a prisoner during the Vietnam War!! Wow! Two high school friends combine over 11 years as prisoner!! What can you say?

Not too far from my last duty in the Pacific was an orphanage of young girls in the care of some Catholic nuns. I asked one of the nuns what they did for Christmas, 1944. As their diet was mostly coconuts, they found some tissue paper and wrapped some of the coconuts. Imagine the disappointment! As platoon sergeant, I was in charge of several Jeeps. At times a Jeep can be borrowed an hour or two for personal use. It would be a good idea when you borrow the Jeep to bring candy or other items that will be given to the orphanage. Just prior to Christmas, the son of Governor Al Smith donned the red suit and flew a helicopter to an area near the orphanage. He had toys with him. After the chopper landed, the crowd was curious and Sergeant Cline called a detail of men to keep people away from the chopper. I didn't make it to the party but from all reports, it was a huge success.

Christmas has always been a special time in my life--Christmas of 1943..Tuscaloosa, Alabama, no big deal--Christmas 1944..a patient in a hospital in Manchester, England. The Germans bombed Manchester but not near us. A young nurse wanted us to go to an air raid shelter. My ward of patients was all infantry and we laughed at the rookie and stayed comfortable.

Christmas 1945--Manila was a different story--the older men had been in service 4 to 5 years. Some had been overseas more than 3 years. Many were married and that was part of your points for a trip home. No one could begrudge the older getting out first. In the Philippines, we were 8 to 9000 miles from home. That takes a lot longer than 2000 from England. Late January

1945 I was on a boat 24 days and landed in New York. A high school classmate was on the same boat. Not bad. No more than 20 young men from our class were in WWII and out of that small group two of 8,000,000 Army were on the same boat home. Back to Camp Grant, Illinois.. .discharged February 17, 1946. A train ride to Galesburg, Illinois in a snowstorm and there were Sam and Gladys waiting for their eldest son. The following day, the 14th, they celebrated their 23rd anniversary. In case there was ever a question, my Army Serial Number 16122867. Later in Korean War I was a first lieutenant 0-956101

As I had been overseas and wanted to spend time with my family, I signed up at Knox College for 2 quarters including a Geology work camp in NW Wyoming the summer of 1946. In the fall, I moved to University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana as a junior. A single ex-military on the GI Bill drew \$65 a month. In order to supplement this, I took advanced ROTC for another \$42 a [month. by](#) June of 1949, I had a degree in Agriculture, a master's in Agronomy, a certificate to teach high school vocational agriculture and a reserve commission. I was hired to open a VocAg program in Kewanee, Illinois on July 1, 1949.

The Korean War started on June 25, 1950. In less than 2 years out of the university, I received a telegram from U.S. Army to report to the Brooklyn Army Base in 9 days. We had a sale of furniture and headed for New York with my wife and infant daughter with a potty chair, a high chair and a playpen.

I was placed in the training section as executive officer to Capt. Frank Rhombert, a brilliant man. There were several hundred men at the base.

About 3 months later I was called in Colonel Haulson's office and asked if I would like to be Information and Education Officer for the base. It was interesting and challenging.

Fifteen months from arrival, I was eligible to return to Illinois. As my wife was 7 months pregnant, the doctor did not want her to travel 1000 miles in a car. I took Louise and Patti to Grand Central Station and they left for Chicago where Louise's sister lived. Polio was epidemic and pregnant women were especially at risk. Bingo!!

You are out of active duty--no insurance, wife with polio, no home, no job. What is important? Wife is not crippled, the baby and healthy and times should get better.

This might be a good time to start a business. We have nothing to lose so we did!!!

P.S. From the encyclopedia: Bataan Death March--A forced march of 70,000 U.S. and Filipino men and women, April 9, 1942. From the tip of Bataan to Fernando (55 miles), then by rail to Copas, then 8 miles to Camp O'Donnell. Starved and mistreated. 54,000 made it; 7000-10,000 died. the rest escaped in the jungle.

Maybe 25 years ago on a hot summer day I was mowing my yard across from my neighbor, Lyle McGran. We stopped a minute and were visiting. Lyle said, "This makes me think of Mariveles" I said to him the only Mariveles I can think of was at the tip of Bataan. Lyle says, "Yes. I was in the Engineer unit that built the storage tanks for fuel to Clark Field". "Yes, I said, "and we were the Military Police who patrolled that pipeline"! What a small world. Fall of 1946

University of Illinois had a great football team and they won the championship of the Big Ten, entitling them to play in the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California. Two of my U. of Ill. friends, my Dad and a friend, Kenny Davis, left home just after Christmas 1946 for a trip to California. We drove mostly Route 66--visited my Uncle Clair and family, saw some of the Rose Bowl Parade and a whale of a game against U.C.L.A. We beat the daylights out of the West Coast team. My uncle had a black funeral wreath on his door when we returned from the game.

People to People

The summer of 1962, I was named to join 26 other farmers on a trip to Europe. President Eisenhower had this idea of people of like interest visiting other countries.

We met in NY International Airport and flew to Belgium, then to Holland and Denmark, then to Sweden, then to Moscow, Russia, then to Kiasnador in Kubon peninsula. From there we went back to Moscow then to Budapest, Hungary. Did you know Buda is on one side of the Danube and Pest is on the other side? We continued to Berlin, Germany and then the long flight home.

Unusual Duty in the Korean War

My ninth day of active duty at the Brooklyn Army Base, a phone call was to travel to Port Huron, Michigan for a deceased lieutenant. There was no question but to go.

Several months later, I drew another escort to Pekin, Illinois. I made a mistake that day. At the request of the local Legion, I stayed & helped with another funeral that afternoon.

My last escort was to Chicago in December 1951. In this case, no family appeared for several hours after I did.

An incident resulting from being an MP

One in 8,000,000 would be pretty long odds. After WWII ended in August, 1945, five men were sent to a small village in Luzon. There was a camp nearby where many troops were waiting for transportation to the U.S.A. In this small village were a couple of restaurants with a bar and a dance floor.

One evening as another MP and I were on duty, one of the owners of these places came running to tell us a GI was on the dance floor twirling a pistol. As we neared the joint, my partner said he would grab the fellow's arm and I should go for the gun. The soldier was drunk, out of uniform and as we came toward him, he pulled the gun out of his pocket. I grabbed it, checked it and it had no bullets in it. The soldier threatened to kill us which was an idle treat. We called the camp and a Jeep driver and another officer came to get the drunk. The drunk took a swing at the lieutenant but no harm was done.

After checking the court martial manual, it was evident this was a major case. I went to the camp and talked to a captain about it. He said the man is just waiting for a chance to go to the U.S.A. I said that if I never see him again it will be fine but if I ever see him under similar circumstances, I will throw the book at him!!

Now fast forward to 1948 when Sam, Gladys, Marilyn and young Sam go to Tuscaloosa, Alabama where Jack and Eleanor Cline Gammon live. There they saw the first grandchild in the family, Nancy Jo.

On their way back to Illinois, Sam runs out of gas on the bridge at Paducah, KY and was pushed to the first gas station in Illinois. The attendant came to pump the gas. He asked Dad if he had a son in the Army. "Yes". Philippine Islands? "Yes". Military Police? "Yes". He said, "I threatened to kill him at that time!!". Wow! Small world.