

## **Life on a farm in Butler County, Kentucky An Infantry Soldiers Biography**

**Soldier: John Reed Fishburn S/N 35 483 005**

**Born: 5 October 1921**

**Birthplace: Butler County, Kentucky, near Woodbury**

**Parents: John Henry and Mary E. Fishburn**

**Order of Birth: Last born son**

**Education: Woodbury Grade School: Graduated in 1936**

**Morgantown High School: Graduated in 1941**

**Life on a farm in Butler County, Kentucky**

**I grew up in a farm family that included brothers Leslie, Harvey, Herbert, Roy and Ernest and sisters Edna, Alva, Ethel and Myrtle. Leslie was born in 1895 so I had siblings that were old enough to teach me about what I needed to learn to earn and to live a life.**

### **A farmer's year**

**A farmer's year is any business's year; the year begins when the accounting year starts. The year for a sharecropper usually begins when he moves onto the Landlord's property. The move often occurs in February for Kentucky sharecroppers. On my Daddy's place we simply used the calendar year except for the school year. I will tell about a typical farm year, starting with January.**

**January was when I got excited about the coming end of Grammar School and spent weekends playing games with my brothers and sisters or working on any project that interested me. As I got older I rode down the hills on sleds or in wagons that I made. I practiced tracking animals when it was muddy along the creek or in the snow. It was fun to track a rabbit and watch it bound away. Along about the end of January our thoughts were about caring for the animals, mending fences, repairing buildings and planning crops. There was always a need for wood to be carried to the fires. We spent a lot of time in the kitchen to keep from using too much firewood.**

**Carrying wood to the wood box, near the kitchen stove, was a daily chore. My sisters or Mother helped me when I spent the day working in the field. When I was in school and after the school term ended in February the chore was left for me. Wood had to be carried to the big fireplace during the heating season. My part of that chore was to carry the wood that I could lift and the kindling. The chores allowed me to see how much wood that I could carry at a time. I also learned when I could carry a backlog to the fireplace. Carrying the ashes to the ash pit was not much fun when the wind caught the ashes as I tried to empty the pail**

**February was the end of the Grade School year and a time to learn new skills in the woodworking or black smith shop. Mending fences was a typical outdoors task while the Kentucky clay was still soft. Hauling firewood was not much fun. But it had to be done when we had failed to put in enough firewood during the summer for the winter. Grafting fruit trees was added to the list of things to do, as needed.**

**We grafted the limbs from the wanted trees to the roots that always grew under the orchard trees. We cut the woody fibers at a 20-30 degree angle, tied the joint together and applied bees wax over the joint. Can not do was never taught we simply did more than we expected to need. Pride grew with success.**

**March was a time to watch the fruit trees blossom, hope the fruit would set, and begin the planting. Making a cold seed bed began at least two months before the last frost, as we selected a sunny spot in the woods near a wood source. We piled up as much wood as we needed to sterilize the soil under the seedbed. Then we burned the wood and built a wood frame around the seedbed as soon as the fire had burned out. Then we turned the soil in the seedbed with a shovel and smoothed the bed with a rake. Then we planted the seeds, tomato, pepper, flower and tobacco. After the seeds were planted we covered the bed with cheesecloth. Then we built a fence around the bed to keep animals off of the plot.**

**The hot bed was used to start the sweet potatoes and yams. That bed was located in a corner of the garden. Preparation began with digging an eighteen-inch hole about 42-inches wide by 96-inches long. Then the hole was filled with fresh horse or mule manure. A foot high frame around the hole was filled with about six-inches of dirt. Then the seed potato tubers were buried, in rows, in the soil. Boards were placed over the frame to keep the heat inside. Daily watering caused the manure to decay and heat the bed.**

**Soon after the plant beds had been planted we cleaned the barn and barnyard. We spent days as we loaded manure onto wagons and hauled it to the fields. It was not a pleasant job but it felt good to test the muscles in another way. The pride that I felt when I was told about a job done well was as good as any pay that I could have received.**

**From planting the seed in the beds and cleaning the barns we always had to go on to grubbing the ever-present sassafras bushes. Those bushes grew as fast as the tallest weeds it seeded. A sassafras plant will grow from none to six feet high starting in the middle of July. In some of the fields they had to be grubbed every year.**

**April started the rush months. The ground had to be broken/plowed and prepared for planting as we enjoyed the April showers. Days were spent in the field and garden following a draft team behind a breaking plow or dragging the plowed field. Carrots, peas and Irish potatoes were the first crops to be planted. Planting the other garden crops, including setting out the sweet potatoes, following planting the potatoes as soon as possible. The blossoms on the dogwood trees provided bright spots in the woods. If a chair needed a new bottom we cut the bark from a hickory tree and made the canes for the seats. I have seen chairs in use 50 years after had repaired them.**

**A 14-inch mole board plow was used to open the furrows for the Irish potatoes. Seed potato pieces, cut with two eyes on each piece, were dropped into the furrow and covered by a second pass with the plow.**

**The 14-inch mole board plow was used to heap the dirt for the sweet potatoes. Two passes made a good bed for the slips. The sweet potatoes were removed from the hot bed as they were large enough to be planted. We wanted to plant them on a rainy day so the slips did not need watered right after they were planted.**

**Squash and gourds were grown in the garden. The climbing varieties were planted along the rail fence, with the morning glories. The fence was covered with a mixture of flowers and vines most of the summer. Selected gourds were allowed to mature for seeds and for blue bird nests.**

**May was the time to plant the corn. The goal was to have the corn in the ground by the tenth of May.**

**We used a planter that was pulled by a team of horses or mules to plant the most of our field crops. The two seed hoppers were filled with a mixture of seeds, corn and pumpkins, corn and cow-peas or corn and soybeans. The team was guided by the person that had the best eye to keep the rows straight. None of us wanted to admit that we could not drive a team straight across a field.**

**Peas, beans and cotton were planted in garden rows that had been prepared with a one-horse single shovel plow or hoe then covered, by kicking the dirt with a foot or pulling the dirt with a hoe, with dirt**

**By the third week of May we hurried about as we cultivated the crops. Planting and cultivating kept us in the field as much as the draft animals could work. A farm is a place where the draft animals are put first on the rest regimen. A man has to follow the animal. A spare moment along the creek was a time to see the violets in bloom. The blossoms on the tulip poplars turned the trees white.**

**Soon after I had proved that I could handle a breaking plow I was allowed to prove that I could till corn with a double shovel. I started plowing after the first time that the crop had been cultivated because Daddy could not permit the crop to be thinned with a cultivator.**

**The double shovel has one large shovel and one small shovel on a twin beam tongue. The large shovel was placed on the left beam. The small shovel, on the right beam, was used to till the closest to the crop. Thus all of the turns at the end of the crop rows were clockwise until a selected number of rows had been tilled then I went around counterclockwise to till the other side of the rows. I could not lift the double shovel and the turns were 180 degrees. I laid the plow over on the side, held a shovel in the ground so the single-tree would not hit the mule's heels and skipped rows so the mule could help me when I got to the end of a row. A lot of the time I was assigned to the smaller fields where pumpkins and red eyed cow-peas were planted with the corn. In other fields pumpkins and soybeans were planted with the corn. The corn, red eyed cow-peas soybeans and pumpkins were food for the farm animals. The corn, cow-peas and pumpkins were also for the table.**

**June was hoeing time. Hoeing the corn was delayed until all of the corn had been cultivated three times or the leaves were so large that they broke as we tried to cultivate a last time. We hoed only the weediest areas in the fields. What a task hoeing was as we worked into July, the corn was at least waist high and the cool breezes failed. I worked and thought of a dip in the pond. At idle moments we looked at the blackberry briars and thought of a cobbler.**

**We enjoyed dehydrated peaches and apples for winter snacks. Those items like the other food came from some allotted space on the farm. All of the dried fruit came from Mother's kitchen and loving hands. She spent days in the kitchen as she removed stones from Alberta, free stone, peaches, and cut each peach into six to eight pieces. Then she spread the prepared peaches on an oilcloth and covered them with cheesecloth to dry in the summer sun. When she was satisfied that the peaches were dry enough to keep, not spoil, she put them into bags that she hung for winter days.**

**July was corn lay by time and a time to go to the orchard for cherries, berries and peaches. July was the time to begin another grade school year.**

**At school we all learned who passed the last year's work as we were seated for the current year. It was a time to feel satisfied, wear new overalls, and let bare feet heal. July was a time to get new pencils, tablets, and books.**

**After school I picked blackberries along the fences, as I walked home. The large ones were good, until the June bugs started on them.**

**August was the time to cut dead wood and culls for the fires. The tree limbs were used for the kitchen stove and to start the fires in the fireplace. It took days to cut enough wood for the 36-inch wide fireplace.**

**On wash days I helped Mother with washing clothes. I helped draw water from the well, carried wood and water to the kettles, and tended the fires under the kettles. As I got older I took my turn at the rub board and helped keep the clothes in the kettles under the water. So I learned what part of a garment needed the most lye soap or Proctor and Gamble [P&G] soap, and scrubbing. Mother did not trust me to wash the white clothes. We used two tubs with a hand turned wringer on one tub to remove the water from the clothes. A water vane that could be turned to either side on the wringer was used to return the water to tub, scrub tub or rinsing tub, that the clothes were being removed from. Many of the clothes were boiled after they were scrubbed to remove as much clay dirt as possible. One rinsing was usually all that the clothes got. After rinsing the clothes were hung on clotheslines to dry. The winter wind usually blew most of the residual water out of the clothes before we brought them inside to dry on the backs of chairs by the kitchen stove or by the fireplace.**

**August is supposed to be lazy dog days. On the farm we had to turn to removing the silt from the near dry ponds. That job was done with a two-horse scraper. The scraper bucket held maybe nine cubic feet of soil, wet or dry. The scraper had a steel beam that wrapped around the front. The beam was fastened to the scraper bucket with large pins that formed a hinge so the bucket could be dumped. Around and around one walked from the bottom of the pond, where the bucket was up-righted and filled muck, to the pond berm where the handles on the bucket were lifted to dump the muck. A boy hopped onto the bottom of the bucket for the return trip to the bottom of the pond. Riding the scraper bucket was intended to keep the single trees from hitting the heels of the draft animals. It took several twelve-hour days to clean a typical pond.**

**We attended the Church evening, outdoor and indoor, revival meetings in August too.**

**September was the time to harvest the apples. We stored apples in the root cellar, in canning jars and hung bags of dried apples in the smokehouse.**

**Mother peeled, cored, pared and spread all varieties of apples on an oilcloth and covered with cheesecloth to dry in the September sun too. She sacked the apples for winter use as she did the peaches.**

**I do not remember having a love relationship with a dried apple or peach pie. But anything that was on a Sunday table was good.**

**October was corn harvest time. We spent day husking or picking corn from the sturdy stalks and slammed the ears against a stop on the other side of the wagon as we walked along beside a wagon with sideboards on it. With the sideboards on the wagon bed it would hold about 30 bushels of ear corn. Our goal was to gather a hundred bushels a day. That meant starting before the sun while the shucks were still moist or frosty. If I got out of the field with the second load when I was 16 years old I was ahead of the game and too tired to go for another load. One had to be rested and have time for hunting too.**

**November was the month to harvest nuts, walnuts, hazelnuts, and hickory nuts, and butcher the hogs. Picking up the nuts was fun. Nothing to do but kick leaves find the nuts and put them in a grass sack. Sometimes I could fill the sack as full as I wanted to carry home.**

**The nuts were good as long as one did not have to prepare many of them. I would not want to crack the shells on any of nuts with a hammer for a living. There is not anything more peaceful than sitting under a tree and eating all that one wants, unless it is fishing.**

**November brought, cool days and cool nights, the kind of weather that is needed to cure meat in a salt pack. A sunny cool day was a time for butchering and processing pork.**

**Water was heated, hogs were butchered and hung to cool, meat was cut and trimmed, lard was rendered and soap was made in a work day. And sometimes, grinding sausage followed the other tasks during a 16-hour day.**

**Some of the meat, like the pork ribs, was consumed as fresh pork. The fat from the meat was rendered in the kettles to make lard. The byproducts of rendering the lard and acceptable flesh was used to make soap.**

**The trimmings from the hams, shoulders etc. were ground, in a hand grinder to make, and seasoned to make sausage. The most of the sausage was cooked and canned in the fat from the sausage during a second day of work as the meat was packed and processed.**

**The hams, shoulders and side meat was hung for smoking, after it had cured in the salt pack.**

**Sassafras, apple, and hickory wood was used during the smoking process. Smoking meat is like seasoning any dish for the table, except it takes longer to apply the chemicals. The fire must be allowed to burn enough to create smoke but flames are not wanted. So the cook must go in the smokehouse to put dirt on the wood to put out the flames and add wood/fuel.**

**December was a time to dream of Christmas, the end of the year and a new-year.**

**The Butler County, Kentucky Family Farm in the 1930s was an unusual place to grow up. The 1930 year, in particular, was very bad. We had a drought and hardly any crops grew. There were five men on the farm with me. My oldest brother Leslie was back from the Army, World War One, and working on The Ohio River Dam 49 and lived on the farm, in a cabin that had just been built down the hill from the main Farmhouse. My brother Harvey lived in a house on the farm. My brothers Roy and Ernest were still at home. My Father had developed skills in farming, woodworking, and black smithing.**

**At eleven years of age I had been asking to be permitted to help break ground with a 14-inch breaking plow that was pulled by two mules or horses for two or more years. I had been guiding a plow as I walked miles in front of my Daddy and my brothers. Finally, Daddy let me show him how I could guide the plow and make the turns. I proved to him that I could lean the plow over on the side and hold it up enough to keep the single trees from hitting the heels of the animals as I made a 360 degree turn at each corner of the field.**

**I was given an easy to handle team and allowed to start behind all of the others in the larger fields. We worked around the field until the lead team caught up with me. Then I had to wait at the next corner until all of the others had passed me. I then pulled in behind them. We continued that way until enough of the field was plowed for me to drag it.**

**I helped by riding a big dragy made from cross ties that was pulled by four mules. The drag was used to knock the tops off of the just turned soil to fill the low places as we prepared the field for planting. The reins/lines filled my hands as I stood and fought to keep balanced on the drag behind the mules. I ate a lot of dust.**

**The blacksmith shop was down the hill near the barn. In the shop the family made wagons, tools and did all sorts of repair work.**

**Woodworking was done in a loft over the stables. Family members made chests, kitchen cabinets and other items including gears etc. for grandfather clocks.**

**Farm animals included cows, horses, hogs and sheep. One or more family members cared for the animals, including medical care, shearing, milking, and breaking horses to ride or to harness work.**

**The kitchen and living room in the main Farmhouse were large rooms. The living room featured a large wood-burning fireplace with a mantle where the Bible was kept ready to be read several times a day. A grandfather clock sounded and displayed the time. The time was kept approximate by the time for sunrise as listed in the almanac. The kitchen featured a large table and wood-burning stove. My mother began the day in the kitchen preparing breakfast while the men were doing the chores. Her day continued washing dishes and preparing dinner. There was some time out to feed chickens, geese and guinea fowl and gather chicken eggs. And there was always time for the family and grand children.**

**For all she kept treats from the fruit trees and the garden. Special treats were her pickled peaches and sweet potato pies. One had to be there and smell a potato pie cooking to understand the longing for a first taste. Or to be given a pickled peach while the main meal was being prepared. Irish potatoes with butter from her churn on them are good memories. Biscuits fresh from the oven and butter remind me of those days on the farm. Mother would cook at least three pans of biscuits for every meal—36 biscuits. I can still taste those biscuits and molasses.**

**The main Farmhouse, orchard, garden, beehives and ash pit were protected from the farm animals by a rail fence. Gooseneck gourds, with holes in them for the blue bird nests, hung from the rail fence. Near the small fence gate stood tall posts.**

**One post was topped with a signal bell,. We came to the table for breakfast and supper after we had milked the cows and fed all of the animals. Some of the men did not have pocket watches. So, about one-half hour before Mother had dinner ready she rang the bell to call the men to the table the bell was used to call the men to the table for noon time meals. Thus the bell was rung regularly, before meals. Ringing the bell at other times was a call for help. All children wanted to ring the bell. To ring it alone was one of the first tests of strength and weight. Mother would blow a big conch shell like a horn to signal for help and call the men for dinner bBefore we had a bell, mother would blow a big conch shell**



like a horn. The low notes from the conch shellIt could be heard for a mile or more.

The other posts were topped with white martin houses, about the only painted item on the farm. The martin houses had four nesting holes on each of the four sides. The houses attracted martins and boys watching them every spring. The orchard, located at the back of the house, included apple, cherry, plum and peach trees with the honey bee hives near them. The garden with the wood ash pit near the entrance was used to raise peas, butter beans, green beans, tomatoes, potatoes and cotton for Mother's sewing projects.

**She would spin the cotton into thread for knitting and card it into bats for making quilts. She would also spin wool into yarn for knitting. The ash pit had a pail under the end of it to collect the lye that was leached out of the ashes to make soap.**

An old barn shed stood just outside the main Farmhouse yard. Mother kept chickens and guinea fowl below the loft. It was also used to hang tobacco to cure. The old barn was also used to hang tobacco to cure. And to shelter us as we stripped the stems from the tobacco leaves as it was prepared for market.and process. . Mother kept chickens and guinea fowl below the loft in a part of the barn. In the loft she kept magazines. Once as she was sorting the magazines she let me and my nephew, Henry, make paper airplanes and sail them out of the loft door. What a noise the guinea fowl made as the paper floated down among them.

The large farm fields were down the hill in the creek bottom. There the family grew corn, hay and sorghum. The corn was grown to feed the animals and for the table. The hay was for the cows, horses and sheep. The sorghum was for making molasses. The molasses was a feature of the breakfast table and an ingredient in many of the cookies.

My brother Harvey, his wife Nettie and their children lived in a house on a knoll beyond the barns. Their yard was protected from the summer heat by large shade trees. The trees, poultry and family feet kept the grass from growing in the yard. The dirt and small rocks made the yard a dusty or muddy place to play.

Leslie's cabin was in a hollow, up from the barn. The main room in the cabin featured two beds and a wood stove that Leslie made in the black smith shop. The stove and fire were tended with a poker and a shovel that he had also made in the blacksmith shop. The kitchen contained a commercial wood stove. Leslie made the hard maple table and storage cabinets in the wood shop over the stables. The china was visible through screen wire mesh between the cabinet door stiles and rails.

Leslie dug a well up the hollow from the cabin and covered with a stone with a hole that he

had chiseled in it The hole in the stone was large enough to draw water from the well with a 10-quart pail. Kettles were kept near the well for Monday laundry duty. Near the cabin there was a poultry house where my sister-in-law Dora raised chickens and geese. The gander chased everyone with his flapping wings and pinching. Some tufts of grass grew in spite of all of the shade and poultry.

My brother Harvey, his wife Nettie and their children lived in a house on a knoll beyond the barns. Their yard was protected from the summer heat by large shade trees. The trees, poultry and family feet kept the grass from growing in the yard. The dirt and small rocks made the yard a dusty or muddy place to play.

I spent about a week in 1934 showing my nephew, Henry, how to make whistles from the hickory nut tree limbs. We made whistles out of large and small branches. We move the stoppers in and out to change the notes. The bark dried out and split in a day or two

In summary the farm was a haven where a child could learn many skills and test himself every day. A haven until the jerks of life hit a family.

**Several jerks hit our family in March 1932. The men went to the blacksmith shop after turned the horses out to pasture one day. I would have been in too, but I had gone up to Leslie's house to get his milk pails so he could milk the cows before going home. The men were rained out of the field. They turned the horses out to pasture and went to the blacksmith shop. Leslie fired up the forge to weld a harness chain. Harvey and Ernest got restless and decided to concentrate some crude oil into a barrel. They continued to work with the oil as Leslie and Daddy took the hot chain out of the forge to hammer it and complete the weld/joint. As Leslie hammered on the chain at the anvil a spark flew into the oil stream. The oil stream carried the spark into the barrel where the fumes exploded.**

The oil was blasted over everything and ignited.. I was almost back when I heard the explosion. Not knowing what it was, I ran the rest of the way. Everyone rushed to get out of the burning building through the door and window. By the time I arrived, my Dad and Leslie had gotten everyone out of the shop. It was an awful mess. My Father and my brothers, Leslie, Harvey, and Ernest had been were burned. Harvey and Ernest were still on fire. I remember putting dirt and sand around their shoe tops to put out the flames around their sock tops. The socks were burning like big wicks on candles. Harvey was the most severely burned. He died the next day. Leslie got a horse and went for a doctor.

**Leslie went home where he suffered for days before he went to the Veterans Hospital in Louisville where he contracted tetanus double pneumonia and died about two weeks later. My DaddyFather and Ernest recovered from the burns.**

**Daddy's faith remained steadfast. He read the Bible every day. In August He and Mother took the chairs from the kitchen and put them with pallets in the back of the wagon. Grandchildren lay on the pallets and looked up at the stars as they headed to the meetings and the grandchildren came back sleeping**

**Another jerk came our way right after Daddy and Ernest had recuperated from the burns. We owing owed a lot of money.**

**So my father, Roy, Ernest, and I set up a sawmill to earn money to settle the debts and pay expenses. A 2 by 4 approximately 14 – 16 feet long fell on the big saw blade. It shot back like an arrow, almost completely severing my father's left arm. More hospital bills and more money owed. [I think this was in 1935, maybe 34, Alva would know.]**

**We still went on making molasses in the field near the maturing sorghum cane stalks. The cooking vat, about three feet wide, eight feet long and six inches deep, was set up over a wood fire pit that was over a foot deep. It took days to gather the firewood and haul it to the site. Two horses or mules walked counterclockwise in a circle as they pulled the tongue that turned the two-roller cane press that squeezed the juice from the canes. Making molasses was a family event, a boy kept the team moving. Daddy the cook tended the wood fire and watched the cook off. The molasses was removed from the end of the vat near the fire exhaust pipe. The juice end of the vat was near the open end of the fire pit. Except in the morning, when the cooking began, the juice was moved progressively toward the exhaust pipe end of the vat. Gates at the sides were used to control the movement of cooked juice as the water was boiled away. Never mind a thermometer the cook who had tended the vats many days knew about the amount of fire needed and when the molasses was done. Others spent the days knocking the leaves off of the cane stalks and hauling cane and wood to the press and cooling vat site.**

**Eating skimmings, the bubbles on the top of the cooking molasses, was a special treat around the cooking vat. We could eat skimmings off of the boiling molasses with spoons cut from sorghum canes as long as we were careful not to get in the way or get too near the cooking vat.**

**The farm was near Woodbury and the one two-room school where I attended grammar school. One room was for the first five grades,**

**the primer [first grade] through the 5th grade. grades primer through 5<sup>th</sup> and The other room was for grades 6 through 8. Grammar school was in session from mid July through mid February. The path to school was through the fields and pastures, ours and our neighbor's. A rule was to close the gates or not to open them, climb over. The schoolhouse was up on the side of the hill overlooking the town and boat docks on the Green River. Thus the schoolhouse sills rested on brick posts. The front posts were high enough for children to walk under the building. The other feature under the schoolhouse was shelves to hold our lunches. After a lunch was left there for a half of a day we could eat what the mice and rats had left or go hungry. Some of us carried our lunches in Karo Syrup cans to keep the rodents out. The privies and sassafras trees dominated the property line further up the hill. The open field permitted ball games to be played with balls made with saved string, when the boys could get the girls to fill in on a team.**

Inside the schoolhouse held a coal stove, the teacher's desk and wide seat/desks. Enough desks to seat 30 children, in six eight grades, each year. Two of the upper four grades alternated each year. Parents tried to enroll the children so they would not have to repeat a grade waiting for the needed grade to be offered.

My nephew, Henry, went to school with me for a short time in 1934. He attended school in overalls that Dora had sewn. The overalls were the first ones that he had that had gallowses that buttoned to the waistband in the back. He was proud of the overalls and learned the ABCs and to count some.

The jerks were felt again when Harvey's children were placed in an Orphan's Home. The youngest three were adopted. My Father got Homer, the oldest, Homer, the eldest, and brought him to live with us. He ran away from the orphanage and walked approximately 20 miles to our house. The sheriff came to get Homer once, but my father would not let the sheriff him take him.

Then the unfathomable jerk hit us when My Father lost his farm where he had toiled so many years. We became sharecroppers on the Cook place.

There my Father had a heart attack and died. My brother Roy, my nephew Homer and I continued with the farm work. We planted a crop in 1942. The last jerk for me on the farm came when I had to leave the crop in the field in July.

## The 80th Infantry Division Origin

The 80th Division was constituted August 5, 1917, in the National Army as Headquarters, 80th Infantry Division and was activated later that month at Camp Lee (now Fort Lee), Virginia. The Division was made up primarily of draftees from Virginia, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania.

The 80th Infantry Division was an Army Reserve unit, at Richmond, Virginia, Division in 1942.

In 1999 the unit is headquartered at Richmond, Virginia and known as the 80th Division (Institutional Training). The unit mailing address is:

**80th Division  
(Institutional Training)  
6700 Strathmore Road  
Richmond, Virginia 23230**

The division www site address is:

<http://www.usarc.army.mil/80thdiv/index.htm>

Uniform insignia and patches, shown below, made the men in the 80th Division easily recognized.



**Infantry Insignia**

**Blue Ridge Division Shoulder Patches**

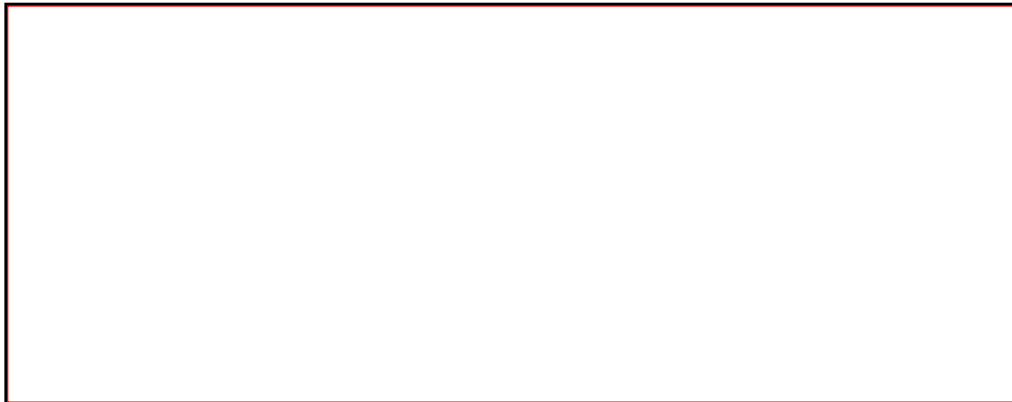
The three mountain peaks on the shoulder patch represent the three states, the origin of the unit. The division was nicknamed the "Blue Ridge Division."

**Camp Forrest**

**Camp Forrest was built to the east of and adjacent to an old National Guard camp, Camp Peay. The National Guard camp was built to the east of Tullahoma in 1926. It covered 1,040 acres. and was named after 1920's Tennessee Governor Austin Peay. Camp Peay and an annexed 85,000 acres was named Camp Forrest after Civil War cavalry General Nathan Bedford Forrest. Camp Forest itself was a hastily erected mobilization encampment in July 1942.**

**The Camp became one of the Army's largest training bases during the World War II period, between 1941 and 1946. The camp was a training area for infantry, artillery, engineer, and signal organizations.**

**It also served as a hospital center and temporary encampment area for troops during maneuvers. Incoming troops were provided with amenities such as service clubs, guest houses, library, post exchanges, post office, hospital, religious services, theaters, showers, Red Cross, and Army Emergency Relief facilities Recreation facilities included swimming, archery, tennis, a sports arena and a 9-hole golf course.**



*Downtown Tullahoma, Tennessee circa 1940's*

**There was not much to see in Tullahoma in 1942 although the town was splitting at the seams. The 1940 population of 4,500 population was increasing rapidly. As the construction operational activity at Camp Forrest the town grew to house the workers, Army personnel, and their families.**

**Army unit maneuvers and Camp Forrest operations affected the whole community in Coffee County. Civilians and military personnel became accustomed to blocked roads, traffic jams, crowded stores, the absence of mail delivery, and driving at night without lights. Soldiers were camping out on lawns and in fields. Many crops and fences were being destroyed.**

**80th Division World War II training at Camp Forrest in 1942**

**The 80th Division, Reserve Cadre, was ordered to active service on July 15, 1942 and John entered the United States Army on 16 July 1942 at , Kentucky. They traveled by bus, train and bus to Camp Forrest to arrive at about the same time.**

**Note: Present history, released by the Arnold Engineering Development Center in 1998 does not show that the 80th Infantry Division was stationed at Camp Forrest. The public release is on www site:**

**[www.arnold.af.mil/aedc/factsheets/campforrest/htm](http://www.arnold.af.mil/aedc/factsheets/campforrest/htm)**

**Upon arrival each man was given a box and told to put his civilian clothing for shipment back home. A physical inspection, a clothing issue, a bedding issue and a haircut issue followed. John was assigned to Company L, 80th Infantry Division for basic infantry training.**

**The enlisted men slept in tents and fought the insects day and night. Duck boards, installed between the tents and drill areas, kept the trainees above some of the Tennessee mud and dust. Training started each day with pushups to crawl backward out of the small tents.**



### **Enlisted Men's Quarters at Camp Forrest**

**Training started with basic commands. Fall in. At ease. Put your leggings on. Attention. Left face. Right face. Instructions like, "Pick up your issue and at the command forward march, step out on your left foot." Soon some commands and the associated Instructors body language had the wondering men at a bivouac area and the commands, "Halt: left face; at ease." Instructors talked about basic hygiene and clothing care then gave the command, "Fall-out" More of the same types of instruction followed as the instructor prepared the men to march to the mess area.**

**The instructors soon had the men listening to, "You had a good home; but you left. You left. You left. You right. You left." "Count**

**cadence count." Marching men responded, "Your left.--Your left. -- Your left-right-left." And chanted, "I don't want no more Army life. I wanna go; Oh gee, I wanna go home."**

**Trainees spent about half of their day drilling and the rest of the time policing up the grounds, picking up debris, rocks etc., off the duck boards and drill area. There was time for Religious Services on Sunday morning and a chance to go to the BX in the afternoon. At the BX one could get ice cream, by the pint. A pint of ice cream could be eaten before it melted while one stood around near the BX, no room for everyone inside.**

**As soon as they could march without tripping on each other close order drills began with wooden rifle models. Commands to handle the rifles included, "Right shoulder arms. Left shoulder arms. Present arms. Parade rest." Commands to march in columns included, "Forward; march. March in Place. Column left. Column Right. Column halt. To the rear." And soon more complex commands were given to ensure that men paid attention, "Double to the rear. Double to the rear with a slight hesitation and halt."**



### **Artillery Classes in session**

**Mixed in with the troop movement drilling was the weapons training and physical training. They learned to disassemble, clean, re-assemble, safely handle and shoot weapons. Exercises like push ups, duck walking, side straddle hop, knee bends, military press and other body movements kept them on the move and often nursing sore muscles.**

**The weeks passed as they trained, marched in reviews, and took time out for their turn at general camp service duty. A promotion to Private with a furlough occurred at the end of the basic training.**

**It was good to go home, relax, and see everyone. The letters did not tell the story that John**



was the most concerned about.

**Further Infantry training began when they returned from the furloughs. There were chances to prove the lessons taught in basic training and toughen up.**

**Thanksgiving dinner introduced the men to new food, like stuffed celery, cranberry sauce and mincemeat pie.**

Before December new barracks had been built. We moved into them, a whole company crowded into the two story buildings and learned Army housekeeping procedures.



**Typical World War II Temporary Barracks and Support Buildings**

Now they were singing, "Swing those arms and cover down. Keep those eyes off of the ground. There ain't no Jody boys lying around." Now together and very loud, "Some hope." Before Christmas the frosty morning silence was broken by men singing, "I don't know what I believe. But, I'll be home by Christmas Eve."



### **Column of Four Abreast Marching to the Parade Grounds**

**John remembered Buck Sergeant Tabor as a tough drill instructor during the training period. Under Sergeant Tabor, John excelled and by January he was promoted from Private to Sergeant, without holding the rank of Private First Class or Corporal. By the end of January there were rumors about some of the 80th Division men being assigned as cadre in a new division that was being formed.**

### **Formation of the 106th Infantry Division**

**The War Department authorized the 106th Infantry Division on 29 November 1942. The first unit, the 106th Quartermaster Company was activated at Camp Forest, Tennessee, on 15 December 1942 AT Camp Forrest, Tennessee. The 80th Infantry Division furnished the cadre for the 106th Quartermaster Company. The 806th Ordnance Company was activated 23 December 1942, at Camp Perry, Ohio.**

**The Assistant Division Commander of the 90th Motorized Division, Brigadier General Alan W. Jones, was named to command the 106th Infantry Division on 20 January 1943**

**The 80th Infantry Division provided the officer cadre. The cadre included the company commanders, regimental commanders, the General Staff Officers and some Special Staff Officers. Other officers came from Infantry Replacement Training Centers, Fort Benning and Officer Candidate School. Most of the officers of the cadre attended special refresher courses at various service schools per established procedures to organize a new division, prior to the division activation.**

**The 80th Infantry Division prepared two complete 1250 enlisted men cadre lists with**

**qualifications and experience statements, for the 106th Infantry Division. Major General Joseph D. Patch, the 80th Infantry Division CO, blindly pulled the cadre list with John's name on it out of a desk drawer in late January.**

**A supplementary cadre of fifty specialists was assigned from Camp Wheeler, Georgia.**

**A World War I 1st Division Officer, Colonel Herbert T. Perrin, was appointed Assistant 106th Infantry Division Commander on 2 February 1943. And Colonel William C. Baker Jr. was appointed Chief of Staff.**

**The Assistant Chief of Staff Officers were:**

**G-1: Major Max J. Roadruck**

**G-2: Lieutenant Colonel Robert T. Stout**

**G-3: Lieutenant Colonel George L. Descheneaux**

**G-4: Lieutenant Colonel George C. Nielson**

**The Special Staff included:**

**Adjutant General: Lieutenant Colonel Frank I Agule**

**Chemical Warfare Officer: Captain Herbert B. Livesey, Jr.**

**Engineer Officer: Major William J. Himes**

**Finance Officer: Major Royer K. Lewis**

**Headquarters Commandant: Captain Walter S. Glenney**

**Inspector General: Lieutenant Colonel Fredrick R. Ryan |**

**Judge Advocate: Major Byrne A. Bowman**

**Ordnance Officer: Major William T. Manahan**

**Provost Officer: Major William L. Mowlds**

**Quartermaster: Lieutenant Colonel Donald C. Foote**

**Signal Officer: Lieutenant Colonel Donald R. Bodine**

**Special Service Officer: Captain Robert B. Davis**

**Surgeon: Lieutenant Colonel Thair C. Rich**

**Chaplain: Major John A. Dunn**

**A World War I 106th Field Artillery Regiment, of the 27th Division, Brigadier General Ronald C. Brock, was named to command the 106th Infantry Division Field Artillery Commander. And Colonel Malin Craig Jr. was assigned as the 106th Infantry Division Field Artillery Executive Officer.**

**Fort Jackson**

**Fort Jackson was established on June 2, 1917, after the citizens of Columbia donated the**

land, almost 1,200 acres to the federal government to train soldiers for service during the World War I era. Donating the land initiated a long tradition of respect, cooperation and friendship between the city and the installation. Fort Jackson was incorporated into the city in October 1968.

The 1,200-acre facility was called the Sixth National Cantonment, one of 16 national cantonments. Later it was named Camp Jackson then renamed Fort Jackson, in honor of Major General Andrew Jackson, a native son of the Palmetto State and the seventh president of the United States.

### Years of Fort Jackson Growth

Within 11 days after the contracts to build the camp were signed the 110-man camp guard arrived. The labor force was more than 1,200 men after two barracks were completed. Nine thousand more laborers arrived during the next two months.

**Camp Jackson changed, virtually overnight, from a sandy-soil, pine and scrub-oak forest to an Army training center complete with a trolley line and hundreds of buildings. During the three-month construction period some 8,000 draftees arrived for training.**

Members of the national guard unit, the first soldiers to occupy the camp were moved to Camp Sevier in Greenville, S.C., and incorporated into the 30th "Old Hickory" Division. The 30th Division was also named in honor of Major General Andrew Jackson.

The 81st "Wildcat" Division was the first military unit to be organized at Fort Jackson under Major General Charles H. Barth, the camp's first official commander. The 30th Division and the 81st divisions, more that 45,000 men, went to France as a part of the WW I America Expeditionary Forces.

### The World War I Years

In less than eight months, construction of the vast camp was complete. But almost as suddenly as it began, the clamor subsided. With the signing of the armistice in 1918, The 30th Division was inactivated in 1918. The 5th Infantry Division was inactivated in 1921. The 5th Infantry Division also trained at Fort Jackson.

The Cantonment Lands Commission controlled the camp from 1925 to 1939. During that period the sleepy silence was broken by the occasional reports of weapons being fired by men in the South Carolina National Guard.

**In 1939 Fort Jackson, under federal control, was organized as an infantry training center. Four firing ranges were constructed, and more than 100 miles of roads were hard surfaced. The roads were named for Revolutionary War and Civil War heroes. More than 500,000 men received some phase of their training at Fort Jackson from 1939 through 1945.**

**The 30th "Old Hickory" Division was one of the first units to train at the Fort, for World War II service. Other units that trained at Fort Jackson during the World War II period were the 4th, 6th, 8th, 26th, 77th, 87th, 100th and 106th Divisions.**

### **The 106th Division Move to Fort Jackson**

**The men from the various units had arrived at Fort Jackson by nightfall on 14 February 1943.**

**At Fort Jackson a hurried period of intense training in administration, motor vehicle maintenance, intelligence, clerical and courts-martial procedures, signal-communications methods and procedures, supply procedures, physical training, and medical field service procedures began on 15 February and continued through the 28th of February.**

**On 1 March five reception units were formed to take care of the coming fillers, the men who would make up the complete division.**

**The fillers, recruits/inductees, began arriving on 12 March. By nightfall on Sunday 14 March the five Reception Units had processed 3,400 men.**

**The bands, 106th Division Artillery Band, originally the 222nd Field Artillery Band, 40th Division (Utah National Guard) and the 423rd Infantry Band, originally the 123rd Field Artillery Band, 33rd Infantry (Illinois National Guard), were activated 15 February 1943.**

**And the Office of the Quartermaster General, Heraldic Section, had finished preparing and approving the Division insignia.**

**The insignia was a gold lion's head on blue background, representing the Infantry, with a red border indicating Artillery support.**



### **The 106th Division Insignia**

**Brigadier General Alan W. Jones was promoted to Major General, and the 106th Division was activated on 15 March 1943.**

**Major General William H. Simpson, commanding the XII Corps and the Honorable Olin D. Johnson, Governor of South Carolina attended the ceremony as the 106th Infantry Division was activated with John R. Fishburn among the massed troops on 15 March 1943.**

**A World War I veteran, Master Sergeant Jay G. Bower acting as a representative of the 80th Infantry Division passed the colors to a member of the 422nd Infantry Regiment, 106th Infantry Division, eighteen-year-old Private Francis Albert Younkin.**

**The Sixth Service Command supplied another 4,076 men and the First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth Service Command each supplied a smaller number of men. Each troop train was met with a band at the reception center. At the reception center the men were assigned to the division units. All of the men gravitated to a regimental, battalion, company, platoon or squad assignment. The majority of the fillers had arrived by 25 March 1943 when the Division strength was 12,318.**

**Colonel Herbert T. Perrin, the Assistant Division Commander, was promoted to Brigadier General on 18 March 1943.**

### **106th Division Individual Training, Fourteen Weeks**

**On Saturday 27 March 1943 the 106th Division Infantry Regiments held their first formal reviews.**

**Recruit/individual training began before sunrise as the bugle sounded reveille on Monday 29 March 1943. It was time to prepare for breakfast, the daily barracks inspections and colors. John R. Fishburn at the left side of a column headed the men for the mess hall at the scheduled time. More than 12,000 of the 106th Division men were fed before 0700. The breakfast table in the Army is a special place. Men were learning to hold flatware in the little finger as they balanced a six-compartment stainless steel tray while sleepy mess attendants hammered a fork, with two butter laden bent tines, against a knife. Most of the time the butter landed in a desirable spot on the tray. Sleepy men sipped coffee from**

special cups and ate from cereal box bowls as they listened to the clamor of others slamming their near empty trays against the side of garbage cans.

There were more than 10,000 men afoot for training under regimental and battalion control. Ten thousand feet were hitting the pavement/ground or bridges in unison. Soon the bridges started to creak and men were ordered to break step as they approached a structure, wood or steel. The men repeated old chants and learned new ones to tell others about themselves.

Dinner at the mess added new adventures to the breakfast scene as men balanced trays and asked a mess attendant to put the potatoes here and refused gravy or asked for the meat where he wanted it. Some men just gestured with the tray by moving it about. Each man tried to find a recognized face before he sat to eat. Loners continued to sit wherever they could find a place at a table. After the meal the men ambled or hurried back to the barracks hoping that there would be a mail call.

**The marching men met and passed others uttering chants something like, " Hold your head up high and turn your eyes this way. Company L is passing by." "Swing your arms and cover down. Keep your eyes off of the ground. You aren't behind the plow. You're in the Army now." Some units sang a popular song like Don't Fence Me In heard where men could gather around a radio or jukebox. And quickly added, "I don't want no more Army life. I Wanna Go Home. Oh, Gee I wanna go home." Then they found themselves being led to repeat an old chant, "There ain't no need of going home. Jody's done got your gal and gone."**

Lonesome men took up collections to buy a cracker box radio, and put them on improvised shelves to listen to anyone's choice station, the first one inside had the option to select a station and listen to the banter about his choice.

The individual training emphasized physical conditioning, tactical procedures and rifle marksmanship. Duck walking, side straddle hop, squats, deep knee bends, push ups, military presses with a rifle were among the physical exercises. The obstacle courses were "Something that your muscles won't let your mind forget." The marching and problems went on through April. Officer and Non Commissioned Officer [NCO] training included special and general service school courses. Orientation courses were sandwiched in with other special training.

**Hank Williams expressed the feeling of men on guard duty, near and far, when he penned;**

**Did you hear that lonesome whippoorwill?**

**Did you hear that midnight train whining low?**

**I never knew a night could be so long, with time crawling by.**

**The moon just went behind the clouds to cry.**

**I'm so lonesome. I could cry.**

**Ten officers and 33 enlisted men were picked as instructors for a school that was established and met twice weekly for twelve weeks to educate enlisted men that had not met minimum educational standards [less than fourth grade] or who were not immediately suited to absorb the regular basic training. Among the 430 men attending the classes were 123 illiterates, five that could not speak English, and 302 that had recorded Grade V scores on the Army General Classification Test [AGCT].**

**On 1 May the Division insignia, a Golden Lion, was donned, as training continued.**

**The obstacle course training on 11 May included crossing the Ateree River. One man slipped and fell into the swift current and two men pulled him out. The obstacle course training ended with more marching and camping out as the weapons training began early in June.**

**During the weapons training the men took 16-mile hikes to the Leesburg firing range where each unit camped and fired small arms, machine guns, and mortars. Men looked down the sights of weapons and heard commands like: "Load and lock." "Ready on the left." "Ready on the Right." "Ready on the firing line." "Ready; aim; fire." Then each man looked for the red-flag [Maggie's drawers] that signified a miss behind his target. The artillery units fired 37mm Antitank guns when they were not standing gun drills. The available special weapons were fired too.**

**On Saturday 19 June 1943 the 106th Division held a full-strength parade at Ancrum Ferry Field. During the ceremonies the first two medals for valor were awarded to men in the 106th Division. Staff Sergeant Richard L. Nierman, of Cumberland, Maryland and Private Robert K. Maahs of Savannah, Georgia were awarded a Soldiers Medal for jumping into the Ateree River on May 11, without regard to personal safety, to rescue a comrade who had fallen into the swift current.**



**Corps training tests over six days were started on Monday 5 July and ended with the men being drenched by a pouring rainstorm. That basic training period ended with many men receiving promotions to signify accomplishment but no follow up furloughs were allowed.**

**The first off duty activity at the end of a day or after the noon meal was mail call. Each man stood waiting to hear his name called. When a man missed mail call for days he ducked away from the crowd silently, sucked the lonely feeling up and got busy. Leisure time during the individual training period allowed the men to organize sporting events, attend dances, write letters and go to the BX. They organized a boxing tournament, a baseball team, a softball tournament, and a basketball league. On 8 May the division boxing team won the Fort Jackson, "Tournament of the Champions." Title. The baseball team led the league until the last four games. In those four games they dropped back to third place. The parlor snakes attended the weekly dances, at the Service Club. Songs like; In The Mood, Little Brown Jug, and Pennsylvania 65,000 by the Glenn Miller Orchestra were featured on the juke boxes at the dances. Jazz buffs imagined a night watching Gene Krupa hammer on the skins. Some had a taterbug to pick during evening sing alongs.**

**Many letters to buddies, friends and relatives were in strange scrawls because of the conditions under which they were written. Letters were written sitting on a footlocker, a bunk or sitting at a table in a Day Room. Some tired men finish writing a letter under any available light, the entry light, a light over the stairs, over an escape ladder or in a latrine, after the lights in the barracks had been turned off.**

**When men gathered and sang songs like You are My sunshine someone would interject lets sing a song that he had heard as a boy, Often the song was Blue Eyes Crying In The Rain and wet eyed men turned away.**

**Forays were made to the BX to get writing paper, stamps, envelopes, candy, ice cream [pints], toiletries, shoe/boot polish and brushes.**

**Soldiers kept the photographer at the BX busy making portraits of men wanting to say, "You should see me now."**

## **Unit Training**

**On Monday 12 July the Division began twelve weeks of unit training and regimental tactical exercises. The majority of the time was to be spent in the field. But the Division school classes continued to be held during the Unit Training period.**

**On 22 July the Commanding General of Army Ground Forces, Lieutenant General Lesley J. McNair inspected the Division and expressed satisfaction with what he had found. Another one of the important reviews was a review in honor of General Enrico Gaspar Dutra, a Brazilian Minister of War**

**The Division was reorganized, in accordance with the latest change in Tactical Organization, in August. A Cannon Company was incorporated into each infantry regiment. The Special Troops were organized into a battalion, and the 106th Division Artillery and the 423rd Infantry Bands were amalgamated into the 106th Infantry Division Band. The diagrams on the following pages show the organization of a World War II Infantry Division. The details are approximate since the diagrams were drawn from text descriptions of units in action. Some of the organization details are shown on page 629 in the book A TIME FOR TRUMPETS. Charles B. Mac Donald wrote A TIME FOR TRUMPETS.**

**The beginning of September caused men to remember apple harvests. Others thought of the songs that described the days before Indian summer back home, e.g. September Song. Some thought of persimmon trees and wild grapes and the hunts coming up at home. There were thoughts of that Jody boy each time that proud men showed pictures of girls. Athletes remembered football practices and football games.**

**Combat firing proficiency tests occurred as the Unit Training period ended about 1 October. Each rifle platoon, each .30 caliber air-cooled machine-gun and 60mm mortar platoon, each .30 caliber water-cooled machine-gun and 81 mm mortar platoon and each mechanized cavalry platoon ran through its paces. The field artillery batteries displayed their skills.**

**Division schools, Officers and NCO, radio operation and maintenance, intelligence, gasoline engine maintenance, artillery mechanics, air-ground communications, ground communications, small arms and mortar maintenance, ammunitions handling and ordnance supply procedures, were in session during the unit-training period.**

**There was time for sporting activities during the unit training period too. The 424th Infantry Regiment won the Division swimming and volleyball tournaments. And, the 422nd Infantry Regiment won the boxing tournament.**

**Leisure activities were enjoyed when possible. Letter writing continued as time permitted, when the paper could be kept dry and the fingers were warm enough to hold a pen or pencil.**

**In the field men gathered around small fires when they could and talked about whatever came to mind. Some took out a harmonica and played as others sang. Red River Valley was remembered by many. Others thought of On The Banks Of The Wabash, Little Wabash in Illinois and namesake on the Illinois-Indiana border and on up to the northeast in Indiana.**

### **Command Post and Team training**

**Command post exercises began on Monday 3 October 1943. The CP exercises were the lead-in to the combined training period of training. The Regimental Combat-team, CT, exercises began on 1 November 1943 when each Battalion and Battery underwent combat firing tests. The going got tougher as the men hardened and began to feel that they were real soldiers. The tough kept going. The Division [D] series of problems followed on the heels of the combat firing tests.**

**The D series of problems, in which the 106th Infantry Division participated as a combat team, were judged by officer-umpired from the 78th Infantry Division. The weeks of exercises continued with winter maneuvers.**

**The maneuvers were a first for the 106th Division. The misery of field life continued. The winter rain and sleet chilled the men to the bones as they worked through one problem after the last one until Christmas Eve, Friday 24 December.**

**There was a three-day respite before another week hard work before the troops moved back into the Fort Jackson cantonments to prepare for the XII Corps maneuvers.**

**The XII Corps cumulative Status of training Report was published on 6 January 1944. The report disclosed the following ratings: Air-Ground and field Artillery Battery Tests, Very Satisfactory; MTP, Physical Fitness, Platoon Combat Firing, Satisfactory; Field Artillery Tests, Unsatisfactory.**

**The men, red legged men, in two of the Field Artillery Batteries had fallen down in their field tests. They retook and passed the tests between 9 January and 19 January.**

**The individual marksmanship scores with the different weapons were;**

**M1 rifle 88.6 percent    '03 rifle 88.1 percent                      Carbine 77.6 percent**

**0.45 pistol            68.6 percent    Submachine gun                      100.0 percent**

**There had been equipment substitutions during some of the tests. In the ground or train**

defense type .30 caliber machinegun replaced the combat vehicle weapon of the same caliber. The M1917.M1918 155mm howitzer was substituted for the M1 155mm howitzer, and scout cars were used instead of light armored cars.

During the year there were several changes in the Division staff. And the Division strength had changed. Up until September the Division had been over the listed strength; then 3500 men were transferred out, the transfers reduced the enlisted ranks to 12,301. The officer ranks had increased from 703 to 789 and the warrant officer ranks had increased from 2 to 38. The AGCT grouping for the Division at the end of the of the Combined training period were:

Grade I	4.3 percent	Grade II	31.2 percent	Grade III	33.2 percent
---------	-------------	----------	--------------	-----------	--------------

Grade IV	27.6 percent	Grade V	3.8 percent
----------	--------------	---------	-------------

The trek from South Carolina to Indiana

Seventy-one days on roads and maneuvers afield.

This account of the Tennessee maneuvers was in the book **ST VITH: A LION IN THE WAY**. Colonel R. Ernest Dupuy wrote the book. Henry R. Fishburn edited the story for this biography.

On this trek the Army wrote a new meaning to the Philadelphia catechism. Their catechism might have been:

Six days shall thou soldier and do all thou art able

On the seventh police the bivouac and stay able

The 422nd Infantry CO Col. Walter C. Phillips led the 106th Division's trek, in a truck convoy, from Fort Jackson, South Carolina to Fort Atterbury, Indiana on 20 January 1944. The 423rd Infantry CO Col. Charles C. Cavender led the second convoy on 21 January 1944, John R. Fishburn was in the trucks. And, the 424th Infantry CO Col. J. L. Gibney led the third convoy on 22 January 1944.

The likely assigned route for the motor truck convoy from South Carolina to Tennessee, based on 1997 American Automobile Association maps of South Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee was:

**US78/US378 from Fort Jackson rear Columbia, South Carolina to Columbia, South Carolina;**

**US78 from Columbia, South Carolina to Athens, Georgia or US378 from Columbia, South Carolina to US78 near Washington, Georgia and US78 to Athens Georgia;**

**US78 from Athens, Georgia to Atlanta, Georgia;**

**US41 from Atlanta, Georgia to a secondary road near Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia;**

**A secondary road from US41 to US27 then US27 to Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia;**

**US27 from Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia to US41 in Chattanooga, Tennessee;**

**US41 from Chattanooga, Tennessee to the destination near Murfreesboro, Tennessee**

**The first movement of each Infantry Regiment was to an overnight bivouac just outside Athens, Georgia. While at the Athens bivouac the men discussed the girls at the next bivouac a WAC training center at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia.**

**When each Regiment reached the second overnight bivouac, at Fort Oglethorpe, they found themselves restricted to their bivouac area. They were not allowed to meet the girls.**

**Each Regiment reached the Division assembly area in Rutherford County, near Murfreesboro, Tennessee by nightfall of the third day. The three-day trek had covered 442 miles, give or take. The total elapsed time was five days.**

**The men found warm sunny weather in Tennessee. It felt like springtime, although it was still wintertime, January. More than 20,000 men, gathered in Tennessee for Second Army sponsored maneuvers, reveled in the sun, for about a week, and participated in map exercises held in one of the maneuver area theatres and watched a field demonstration illustrating execution of staff plans.**

**The first field problem began on 31 January with the XII Corps Blue Forces, including the 78th Infantry Division, the 106th Infantry Division including John R. Fishburn, one tank battalion and two tank destroyer battalions with Tactical Air Division support, assembled south of Murphreesboro. The Corps mission was to advance north through Murfreesboro, in Rutherford County and seize the general line Greenwood-Bairds Mill-Gladeville, in Wilson County, defended by the Red Force consisting of the 26th Infantry Division**

**[reinforced], supported by Red Tactical Air Division. As the exercise began the winter weather returned with cold rain, sleet, and snow.**

**The 106th Division advanced in three columns and reached the XII Corps objective by the afternoon on 1 February and continued turning the Red Force flank until the maneuver ended on 2 February.**

**The Red Forces moved north to defend positions along the Cumberland River in Wilson County. The Blue Force mission was to advance north rapidly with the 106th Division, destroy the Red Forces encountered, and seize the Cumberland River between Lebanon-Beloat Road-Old Lick Branch in Wilson County.**

**The 106th Division, with John R. Fishburn in the 423rd Infantry Company L ranks, began the second exercise on 7 February accompanied by the falling cold rain. The men continued the advance to the river and successfully completed the exercise on 9 February as the cold rain continued to fall.**

**The rain surrendered to cold days before the third problem began on 14 February. On 13 February the temperature went down to 13 degrees above zero Fahrenheit.**

**By 14 February the line up had been changed. The 106th Infantry Division With John R. Fishburn in the Company L 423rd Infantry ranks [less CT 424], the 78th Infantry Division, the 17th Airborne Division and an armored group of three tank battalions made up the XII Corps Blue Forces that were concentrated west of Lebanon in Wilson County. The Blue Forces had a mission to advance east, seize rail facilities at Carthage Junction and destroy the Red forces west of Caney Fork in Smith County.**

**The Red opposing force consisted of the 26th Infantry Division, CT 424 and a Tank Destroyer group of three battalions, concentrated west of Rome-Alexandria in Smith and Dekalb Counties.**

**The Blue force moved out in the cold on 14 February to perform the initial part of the problem, securing the Liberty-Hames Gap-Rome as a line of departure for the coordinated attack. The Blue force had accomplished the first part of the exercise by noon on 14 February as the temperature rose. Late in that afternoon, 15 February, an attack on the Red force was launched. The 106th Infantry Division, reinforced by the attached armored group, advanced with two regiments abreast. When the operation ended on 16 February the Blue force was approaching New Middleton in Smith County.**

**For the fourth exercise, 21 to 24 February, the XII Corps [Blue] force had the 106th**

**Infantry Division with John R. Fishburn in Company L, 423rd Infantry, the 26th Infantry Division and 15th Armored Group of three tank battalions concentrated north of Lebanon, in Wilson County-Gordonsville, in Smith County. The mission was to break through the Red force {78th Infantry Division, 17th Airborne Division and Tank Destroyers between Vine and Cottage Home, capture the high ground near Milton, in Rutherford County, then advance south to capture Wartrace, in Bedford County, to prevent a Red force concentration.**

**The Blue force advanced slowly on 21 February, but by evening on 22 February the 106th Infantry Division reinforced by the 15th Armored Group, had broken through a created gap in the Red positions at Milton. Early on 23 February a strong Blue attack was launched which by nightfall had secured the first objective, the high ground south of Milton, and enjoyed a warm 72 degree-day. The 106th Infantry Division continued the attack successfully during the night to end the exercise early on 24 February.**

**The fifth exercise, last of February-beginning of March with John R. Fishburn and other the men in the 106th Infantry Division on the Blue force, with the XII Corps, The 26th Infantry Division, and an armored group of three tank destroyer battalions. The Blue force, commanded by Maj. Gen. Willard S. Paul, was concentrated east of Murfreesboro, in Rutherford County. The mission was to drive any Red forces encountered north of the Cumberland River, establish a bridgehead north of the Cumberland River, and advance to the north of Hartsville, in Trousdale county.**

**The Red force, commanded by Maj. Gen. Edwin P. Parker Jr., included the 78th Infantry Division, the 17th Airborne Division, and a tank destroyer group of two battalions, was concentrated north of Lebanon-Gordonsville, in Wilson and Smith Counties.**

**During the first day the motorized 106th Infantry Division moved into an assembly area at Bairds Mills, south of Lebanon in Wilson County. Early the next morning the 106th infantry Division moved out in an attack to seize the south bank of the Cumberland River. The attack moved slowly. Blown bridges and mines, as well as by the Red enemy resistance, delayed the Blue force along Spring Creek. The 106th Infantry Division in the Blue force crossed Spring Creek and reached the Cumberland River at Hunters Point and northwest of Providence by the close of the exercise. The 26th Infantry Division in the Blue force reached the Cumberland River in the vicinity of Cedar Bluff by the close of the exercise.**

**Maj. Gen. Alan W. Jones commanded the Red Force during the sixth exercise, 7 to 9 March 1944. The CT 328 of the 26th Infantry Division, the 106th Infantry Division and a tank destroyer group of three battalions was with the Red Force during the sixth exercise.**

**TAD and Army Service Units supported the Red Force.**

**The Red Force concentrated east of Bellwood-Watertown, in Wilson County, Tennessee had the mission to occupy, organize, and defend a position within the assigned sector along the general line Rome (inclusive)-Holmes Gap (inclusive) to protect the north flank of the Red Force.**

**The Blue Force included the XII Corps (the 26th Infantry Division less CT 328, 17th Airborne Division and an armored group of two tank battalions, commanded by Maj. Gen. Gilbert R. Cook, was concentrated west of Leesville. The Blue Force mission was to capture the high ground south of Carthage, in Smith County, and there prepare to operate to the southeast.**

**During the first day the Red covering force withdrew under pressure, but the outpost line remained intact. Throughout the day and evening, barriers including mined and mustardized demolitions were executed by**

**Red Force engineers, and units on the battle position continued organization of the ground.**

**By 1400 of the second day the 422nd Infantry Regiment had withdrawn from outpost and was assembled as a force reserve near New Middleton. The 422nd Infantry Regiment had suffered a thirty-two percent loss to casualties.**

**At about the same time on the second day a Blue Force attack against the Median Line of Resistance [MLR] two miles north of Commerce was repulsed by the 424th Infantry Regiment, but pressure in that vicinity continued. The Blue Force launched a coordinated attack on the Red Force at 0900 on the third day aimed at penetrating the Blue Force line near Grant to seize the XII Corps objective.**

**At about noon, The Blue Force Infantry, supported by tanks, attacked in the sector of the 423rd Infantry Regiment. The Red Force Tank Destroyer units and Infantry Anti-Tank weapons destroyed most of the tanks. The 422nd Infantry Regiment, the Blue Force reserves, counterattacked at 1315 and at the termination of the exercise Grant was still held by the Red Force. In its sector, the 424th Infantry Regiment committed its reserve battalion and halted the Blue Force advance.**

**The rain continued on into March when it rained seventeen more days. Mud was everywhere in the bivouac area, on the roads, on clothing, and on bedding. Men slogged from place to place and kicked the grass, weeds and clay off of their wet boots!**



**The seventh exercise [13 to 17 March] began in a snowstorm that changed to rain and sleet. Frost filmed the soft mud. The storm ended with thunder, lightning and a continued downpour of rain.**

**Maj. Gen. Alan W. Jones commanded the Red Force in the exercise. The Red Force included the 106th Infantry Division, an attached tank destroyer group of three battalions, and tactical air support. Concentrated north of the Cumberland River, east of Gallatin in Sumner County, the Red Force had the mission to defend the river line from Lock 4 to Lock 7.**

**Note: Lock 4 and Lock 7 were inundated when the Tennessee Valley Authority {TVA} built the Kentucky Dam. Thus sites of the exercise may not be shown on maps made in the last half of the 20th Century.**

**Against the Red Forces were committed the XII Corps' Blue Forces, commanded by Maj. Gen. Henry Terrell. The Blue Forces consisted of the 17th Airborne, the 26th Infantry Division, the 78th Infantry Division, and an armored group of two tank battalions. The Blue Force concentrated mainly north of Murfreesboro, in Rutherford County, Tennessee had been assigned as a mission to advance north, force crossings of the Cumberland River between Locks 4 and 7, and capture Westmoreland in Sumner County, Tennessee.**

**On the 13th of March the 106th Infantry Division covering force, consisting of two reinforced rifle companies, assisted by mock demolitions executed by the engineers, inflicted a considerable Red Force delay south of the river. But the covering force was cut off by the late afternoon as the Blue force overwhelmed and surrounded them. By nightfall the Blue forces were on the southern bank of the Cumberland River all along the line.**

**The next two days, the 14th and 15th of March, were spent in Blue Force preparations to cross the river while the 106th Infantry Division Artillery and Red Tactical Air Division impeded their movements by heavy concentrations of artillery shelling, bombing, strafing and gassing. Red Force patrols crossed the river and obtained a lot of vital information about the Blue Force activities.**

**Early on the 16th of March the Blue Force made a river crossing in assault boats, gained a toehold, built up its strength and advanced northward. A succession of counter attacks by the Red Force 106th Infantry Division held the main Blue force south of the Gallatin-Hartsville highway. The exercise closed on the 17th of March with the 106th Division clinging to a line generally north of the Gallatin-Hartsville highway. But the Blue force had penetrated the line to the vicinity of Rogana on the west flank.**

**The Red force had carried out a delaying action to the best of its ability against overwhelming Blue forces. The Red forces had had a dress rehearsal for battle. But, the rehearsal had been in the open where they had the liberty of mobility in action, and no defensive trench-line cordon to induce false confidence.**

**During the eighth and final exercise (20 to 23 March), the 106th Infantry Division was in the Blue Force with the XII Corps (the 26th Infantry Division, the 78th Infantry Division less CT 311 and an armored group of two tank battalions). The Blue force, commanded by Maj. Gen. Terrell, was concentrated around Westmoreland in Sumner County. The Blues had as their mission to advance south, force crossings of the Cumberland River between Lock 4 and Wilburn Creek, and capture the high ground north of the general line Gladeville-Watertown in Wilson County.**

**The Red Force, commanded by Maj. Gen. William M. Miley, ranks included the 17th Airborne Division, CT 311 of the 78th Infantry Division, and a tank Destroyer group of three battalions concentrated around Lebanon in Wilson County. The Red Force mission was to defend the Cumberland River.**

**On the 20th of March the Blue Force advanced with three Infantry Divisions abreast. The Blue Force met no resistance and very few demolition and gas delays. The Blue Force secured the north bank of the Cumberland River at most points along the front by 1020 hours. Strong combat patrols crossed the river by boat and ferry during the evening of the 21st and early morning on the 22nd. The strong river current made the boat and ferry crossing extremely difficult, and several boats were lost.**

**All foot elements of the 422nd Infantry Regiment and 424th Infantry Regiment had crossed the river by 1845 of the 22nd. The 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 424th Infantry Regiment met strong resistance four miles south of Hunters Point where they ran out of ammunition and were captured. The 2nd Battalion withdrew. The 422nd Infantry Regiment advanced against light resistance. At midnight the 422nd Infantry Regiment was ordered to withdraw to the area Dixon-Centerville to protect Averitts Ferry. Red units passed in the rear of the 422nd Infantry Regiment and seized Averitts Ferry. During the morning of the 23rd of March, the rest of the Blue Force was withdrawn to positions to protect bridge sites.**

**With eight exercises behind them the 106th Infantry Division concluded the 1944 Tennessee Maneuvers. They had participated in the exercises under particularly trying weather conditions. Now the Division was a trained combat team in theory. During the maneuver exercises personnel had been transferred to/from the division in about the numbers that could be expected during combat conditions.**

**On 1 February there were 912 officers and 12,556 enlisted men in the division. During February 232 enlisted men arrived and 94 enlisted men were transferred out. There was a turnover of officers too.**

**On 1 March there were 707 officers and 12,950 enlisted men in the division. And, during the month 1,157 men were transferred from the Army Specialized Training Program into the Division. Of the 871 men that were transferred out of the Division, almost 700 were sent to the replacement pool at Fort Meade, Maryland. The others went to service command units and officer candidate schools. Now it was time to complete the trek to Indiana, the maneuver exercises were over.**

**On 27 March the first of three truck-convoys left the Tennessee area to take the 106th Infantry Division to Camp Atterbury, Indiana.**

**The single route north can be followed approximately, on 1997 American Automobile Association maps, through Tennessee, Kentucky and Indiana. The route can not be traced with certainty because records of the route have not been found and signs are hard to read from the backside so the men on the trek did not note details about the route.**

**Because the men had been up and down highway US 231 many times it can be guessed that the trucks moved north on US 231 to US 31E near Bransford, Tennessee. Then each of the three convoys turned right on US 31E to US 31W at Elizabethtown, Kentucky. Each convoy rolled north on US 31W to Fort Knox, Kentucky and an overnight bivouac 129.5 miles from the starting point.**

**Each convoy left Fort Knox, Kentucky after an overnight stay at the famous fort. They took US 31W north to the Ohio River in Louisville, Kentucky. In Louisville US 31W joins US 31E, so the convoy rolled over a US 31 bridge across the Ohio River. They completed a 110.2 beeline along US 31 to a typical World War II camp, Camp Atterbury, Indiana, on 31 March 1944.**

**During the 71 days almost 700 miles had been covered during five days in the convoy journeys. One can guess that they traveled another five hundred miles to/from the maneuver exercises. The men had slogged maybe five hundred miles over the Tennessee hills during the maneuver exercises. Surely they kicked five hundred pounds of mud, grass and weeds off of water soaked boots.**

### **Camp Atterbury, Indiana**

**Camp Atterbury was established as an U.S. Army camp in 1942, during the height of the**

**construction of facilities for training men for military service in World War II. The buildings were built from the same drawings that were used to build many of the other World War II training camps to house men as they were trained to serve in the Army, Navy and Marines. So, the buildings at Camp Atterbury looked like the buildings at Camp Forrest, Tennessee.**

**The barracks buildings were based on Chicago frame construction techniques without any interior walls. The exterior walls included sheathing, lap siding and single hung windows, often referred to as barn sash windows. Two posts spaced about 12 feet apart supported the beams that supported the floor joists for the second story or roof supports. One end of the bottom floor of each barracks was dedicated to the latrine, [showers, wash basins, water closets and urinals] the coal fired furnace and the coal fired water heater. The latrine could accommodate a thousand men, 8 to 32 men at a time. The ceiling was the exposed structure and the bottom of the tongue and groove floorboards for the second floor. Tongue and groove flooring was also used on the first floor. Closet like shelves, that supported closet rods, adorned the interior walls between the windows. On the closet rods men hung uniforms with the left sleeve visible. Space on the closet rods for each person depended on how many men were occupying the barracks. Mops, brooms, soap, water and ever busy trainees kept the unfinished flooring clean and ready for daily inspections.**

**As the US Armed Forces moved up the Italian Peninsula and into France, Belgium, and Germany the training camps became Prisoner Of War Camps. Camp Atterbury among others became an Italian Prisoner Of War camp. The Italian prisoners built the Chapel in the Meadow. The three walls of the Chapel were built with surplus material from other construction projects to house the twelve builders and the Clergy. It has been reported that the builders used their blood to make the paint for a part of the interior decorations. The chapel has been restored and a fourth wall has been added to protect the interior.**

**The Indiana National Guard and the U.S. Army Reserve occupies the majority of the facilities at Camp Atterbury. That portion of the camp extends southward from just west of Edinburgh almost to Columbus. Much of it is a Reserve Forces Training Facility. Part of Camp Atterbury, like most of the other World War II camps, has been returned to local control. The grounds have been converted to a Job Corps training camp, recreational areas and a Memorial Area.**

### **106th Division Training at Camp Atterbury**

**The 106th Division moved their barracks bags into the temporary quarters at Camp Atterbury. Interested journalists brought their experience running a Division newspaper while they were in Tennessee and set up the Division newspaper, The Cub, again. Before**

the Division had their offices in order personnel transfers began. John Paul Kline arrived on 28 March 1944, from an Army Special Training Program assignment. He was assigned to the 2nd squad, 1st Platoon, M Company, 423rd Infantry Regiment.

In April 3,145 enlisted men were transferred out. The trained men were replaced with 1,220 ASTP Students, 1100 Air Cadets, 2,800 from various sources and 1,500 men from other divisions. John R. Fishburn was still with the 106th Division. He was relieved and encouraged.

The good feelings included the promise that his girlfriend from Butler County, Kentucky, Frances, would move to Indianapolis or Columbus and find work. They could see each other again. The 14 months in South Carolina and Tennessee had assured them that their relationship was a lasting one. Frances found work in Indianapolis. John spent his passes there or with his family members that had relocated to Greencastle, Indiana.

The recent arrivals were classified and assigned to basic, individual, unit and combined training classes according to their training needs. The 106th Division was forced to began the 1943 training regimen once again in April 1944. The training was intensified because the men seemed to be destined for a gangplank at any time.

**The training began under Regimental and Battalion Control. Assigned cadre took to the roads again with men headed to grinders, to gymnasiums, to obstacle courses, to classes, to parade grounds and to the mess halls. It became a habit to keep a cover under the belt and listen for the commands to fall in, to fall out and to police the grounds.**

Men in ranks repeated after leaders, "I went down south to see my Susie Ann. She met me at the door. Shoes and socks in her hands and feet all over the floor. Get along home Susie, one, one night and day." "Swing your arms and cover down. You are not behind the plow. You are in the Infantry now." "I have been working on the railroad all of the live long day just to pass the time away." "I don't know what I believe but I will be home by Christmas Eve." "Ain't no need going home. Jody boy has done got your gal and gone." "Going off to the country. Going off to the country. Can't take you. Nothing up there that a gal like you can do."

**From dusk to dawn men on guard duty jumped at strange sounds and thought. I never knew that a night could be so long.**

In April 3,145 men were transferred out. Buddies were gone and new alliances were made

at the mess tables, the BX and during off duty hours. John's Gal from Kentucky, Frances, moved to Indianapolis and started working there. John and Frances continued to spend as many hours together as they could. Their relationship of many years changed. They now hoped that the ides of time would allow them to be together for years.

In May 877 more men said their good byes. And the Division put on a two-day demonstration for the Hoosier State Press Association.

During the leisure hours the Division baseball team won the Indiana State championship and played in the National Semi-Pro Tournament at Wichita, Kansas. The Medical Detachment, 424th Infantry Regiment, won the Division softball championship. Company C, 331st Medical Battalion took the Division volleyball crown. Staff Sergeant William K. Dwyer, Company K, 422nd Infantry Regiment, carried the table tennis crown away from the tournament.

In June 195 men departed after a demonstration for the Under Secretary of War, Robert P. Patterson. Five thousand visitors attended an Infantry Day exercise on 15 June.

The 423rd Infantry Regiment Team won the Division's 1944 boxing championship by winning four of the individual boxing championships. The Division Artillery won three boxing championships. The 422nd Infantry Regiment won one boxing championship. The Special Troops took one boxing championship.

Men from the 106th Division participated in Independence Day parades in Indianapolis and Cleveland at the same time and 136 more men rambled away during the month.

In August 2,894 more were ordered away. Most of the men transferred out, 6,100, during those five months went to the Fort Meade, Maryland replacement depot. Over 60 percent of the trained Division Personnel had been taken from a Division that had trained to serve as a unit, before the unit was sent to the field. The remaining 40 percent had put 110 percent effort into preparing for any assignment.

**As the apples ripened and the corn husks on bulging ears turned brown the men in the 106th Division continued to prepare for their call for movement to the east coast. Few expected to go west. The war in the islands seemed to call for a different organization. Men prepared their last testaments and verified their life insurance policies in September. The call came early in October.**

John said good byes to his family and Frances. He left Indiana feeling that pride of

**knowing that he had melded the pride of his family, the 80th Infantry Division and the 106th Infantry Division together and had taken all of it as a way of life that he could be proud of.**

## **Outward bound**

**An advance party left Camp Atterbury early in the month and sailed from an eastern seaboard port toward England on 8 October 1944.**

**The trains started leaving Camp Atterbury, Indiana right after breakfast on Monday 9 October 1944. The train stopped along the tracks for snack meals at noon and in the evening. In the morning of 10 October the train stopped along the tracks for men to relax weary muscles and eat boiled eggs, pork, an apple, and bread. The food was washed down with water or coffee. Condensed milk and sugar made the overcooked coffee acceptable.**

**The train stopped at Camp Miles Standish near Boston, Massachusetts late in the afternoon on 10 October. Finally, tired men could drop their barracks bags and prepare bunks for a night of needed sleep in quarters, barracks, that were carbon copies of the ones that they had left at Camp Atterbury. It was easy to find the showers and the other facilities.**

**Camp Miles Standish was a staging camp for men to prepare to move overseas.**

**The preparation for sailing began early on 11 October. The ships for their Atlantic passage were refitted ocean liners from the Cunard Lines and the United States Lines.**

**The data the Cunard Lines ships was taken from Cunard Lines internet pages/files.**

## **The Ships from the Cunard Lines**



**Gross Tonnage - 45,647  
tons Dimensions - 264.76 x  
29.56m (868.7 x 97ft)  
Number of funnels - 4  
Number of masts - 2  
Construction - Steel  
Propulsion - Quadruple-  
screw Engines - Steam  
turbines Service speed - 23  
knots Builder - John Brown  
& Co Ltd, Glasgow**

**Launch date - 21 April 1913**

Passenger accommodation - 597 1st class, 614 2nd class, 2,052 3rd class .

### The Aquitania

**The Aquitania was requisitioned as a troop transport on 21 November 1939. It was used to transport Canadian troops until it was refitted in America and defensively armed with six-inch guns in 1940. After the refitting it was based in Sydney Australia and transported Australian and New Zealand troops. The Aquitania made two passages between Pearl Harbor and San Francisco. Then she was used as a troop transport on the Atlantic until after WW II Canadian and American troops had been repatriated. Then it was used to transport the wives and children of Canadian servicemen to Canada.**





**Gross Tonnage - 83,673 tons Dimensions - 300.94 x 36.14m (987.4 x 118.6ft) Number of funnels - 2 Number of masts - 2**

**Construction - Steel**

**Propulsion - Quadruple screw**

**Engines - Single reduction steam turbines**

**Service speed - 29 knots**

**Builder - John Brown & Co Ltd, Glasgow**

**Launch date - 27 September 1938**

**Passenger accommodation - 823 1st class, 662 cabin class, 798 tourist class**

### **The Queen Elizabeth [The Grey Ghost]**

**During March 1940 four of the world's greatest liners, the Mauretania, Normandie, the Queen Elizabeth and the Queen Mary, were berthed alongside each other. The Queen Elizabeth set sail for Singapore on 13 November 1940, via Cape Town. She was refitted and defensive armament was added at Singapore. On 11 February 1941 she sailed from Singapore to Sydney, arriving on 21 February. Then the interior décor was removed and she was refitted internally to carry troops. Following the refitting she made voyages carrying troops to the Middle East. Then five more months were spent carrying troops from Sydney to Suez, and returning with German POW's.**

**After the US entered the war the Queen Elizabeth sailed to Esquimalt, in Canada, and carried troops to Sydney. In April 1942 the Queen Elizabeth home ported in New York. In New York the accommodations were altered to carry 10,000 men. In June 1942 it began to make voyages from New York to Gourock and then to Suez, via Cape Town. In August 1942 it began a shuttle service between New York and Gourock until the war in Europe ended. Despite the**

**ever-present threat of U-boats the ship continued its service unscathed. After the war in Europe had ended the Queen Elizabeth used on the Pacific Ocean to transport troops for the war against Japan.**

The Queen Elizabeth was used to repatriate American troops until October 1945. Then she was used to repatriate Canadian troops. When the Queen Elizabeth was released from Government service on 6 March 1946 she had carried 750,000 troops and traveled 500,000 miles during her wartime voyages.

### United States Lines Ship

Gross Tonnage - Dimensions - 264.76 x 29.56m (705 x 85ft) Number of funnels - 2 Number of masts - 2 Construction - Steel Propulsion - Twin-screw Engines - Steam turbines Service speed - 20 knots - Launch date 1913 - Passenger accommodation - 582 cabin class, 461 tourist class, 196 3rd class

The SS Manhattan [USCGS Wakefield]

### 106th Division's Atlantic Crossing

The 106th Division Advance Party departed from Camp Atterbury, Indiana on 8 October 1944. Records of the Advance Party Atlantic crossing have not been found.

John Paul Kline recorded this sailing of the Queen Elizabeth. Henry R. Fishburn edited the story for this biography.

**The men in the 423rd Infantry Regiment and the 2nd Battalion, 424th Infantry Regiment, without the Artillery, crowded onto troop trains carrying their barracks bags on Tuesday 16 October 1944, arrived in New York after dark, and boarded a Cunard Lines Ocean Liner, the Queen Elizabeth. John P. Kline was assigned to stateroom B-95 with eight or nine other company members. The Queen Elizabeth, the Grey Ghost, sailed from New York early in the morning of 17 October 1944. The passengers stayed below as the Grey Ghost was bid adeu and passed the Statue of Liberty. The voyage across the Atlantic was peaceful. No one was placed on alert. Men passed the time talking, singing, writing letters and eating. Some men were sick before the lines were removed from the bits on the wharf. They claimed a spot and hung on.**

**The Cunard Lines crew served British greasy sausage, English sausage, and potatoes and an American selection of spam sandwiches and Malo Cups. John Paul Kline ate mostly Spam sandwiches and Malo Cups, for he could not stand the greasy English sausage and potatoes. Although the Queen Elizabeth had been refitted as a troop ship in Australia John Paul Kline decided that he would like to sail on her with his wife and family, after the war.**

**The passengers were placed on alert and stood on the outer decks with life belts on as the Grey Ghost arrived at Glasgow, Scotland, Firth of Clyde on 22 October. The crew explained that standing on deck with life belts on was a standard procedure when entering a harbor, where the submarines could be lying in wait. The passengers learned of two events after they had disembarked. Two submarines had chased the *Queen* during the crossing. The ship had a record of out-running fifty submarines on one mission.**

**The Queen Elizabeth passengers left Glasgow by train late in the evening and rode all night. Breakfast was coffee, chips and meat pie on the train. The train arrived at Cheltenham, England on 25 October. The 423rd Infantry Regiment was billeted on the grounds of the Cheltenham-Steeple-Chase track about one-half of a mile from town. John Paul Kline's, Company M, Heavy Weapons Machine Gun squad was billeted in the press building.**

**The story of this sailing of the Aquitania was published in the April, May, June 1997 issue of The CUB of the Golden Lion, a publication of the 106th Infantry Division Association, Inc. Bill Bucher Jr. wrote the story. Henry R. Fishburn edited the story for this biography.**

**On Friday 20 October 1944 the 422nd Infantry Regiment and the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 424th Infantry Regiment, without the Artillery, climbed into trucks at Camp Miles Standish near Taunton, Massachusetts. They were given strict orders to travel a circuitous route, with the greatest secrecy, to the Port of New York. Under the cover of darkness they stood nervously and gazed at the big ship before them. They were filled with a mixture of awe, excitement and foreboding because many of the men had never seen an ocean before. The name of the Aquitania had been painted over but the size of the ship and the four rakish funnels marked her as the famous Cunard liner Aquitania. The last man boarded her and settled into quarters on the six passenger decks before the bewitching hour to begin the transatlantic crossing.**

**Late in the morning on 21 October 1944 the Aquitania backed out of the dock in the Port of New York and turned toward the open sea and Greenock, Scotland. Many of the passengers manned the rails as the ship sailed by the Statue of Liberty. The Lady seemed to lift her torch in solemn tribute to American Men and Women on their way to battle. Many wondered would they ever see "the great lady" again. The jubilation felt by the passengers**

**was short lived.**

**Seasickness struck many of the passengers as the ship reached the cruising speed on the open seas. "We had a short religious service," wrote Milton Weiner (424/M). " The Rabbi said he expected all of us to be at each daily service no matter how seasick we might be. The next service the Rabbi attended was when we were docking at the Firth of Clyde, Scotland."**

**The Aquitania traveled a zig-zag course alone to fend off U-boat attacks. The turns added yaw to the pitching and rolling motion of the ship. The "Limey" food that did not agree with American stomachs compounded the motion of the ship. To ward off the seasickness Jim Rupert recalled, "They tried to keep us moving. When one group was sleeping on the bunks another was volunteered for the mopping details or waiting in line for the next meal." The meals were served twice a day and it took two hours for the men to pass through the line. Hershey bars helped many make it through the trip, which lasted eight long days.**

**The North Atlantic was rough but kind. The voyage was uneventful except a freighter crossed the path of the Aquitania. A shot, from one of Aquitania's big guns, over the bow of the freighter convinced the freighter's captain to keep his distance.**

**As the Aquitania approached Scotland two Allied escort ships materialized out of the mist and English flying boats flew out to greet to greet the big ship. The Aquitania landed at Greenock, Scotland on the Firth of Clyde on 28 October. Grateful passengers disembarked and boarded trains headed south for the midlands of England. The trains stopped at Adderbury, Banbury and Chipping Norton in the Midlands.**

**The story of this sailing of the Wakefield was published in the October, November, December 1997 issue of The CUB of the Golden Lion, a publication of the 106th Infantry Division Association, Inc. Bill Bucher Jr. wrote the story. Henry R. Fishburn edited the story for this biography.**

**On 10 November 1944 the 589th, the 590th, the 591st, and the 592nd Field Artillery Battalions, Headquarters Battery, the 106th Division Artillery and the Division Special Troops prepared to move out of Camp Miles Standish near Taunton, Massachusetts.**

**They marched to the mess hall, where they were served an early breakfast, moved out of their clean barracks, and boarded a troop train in a cold rain. The weather could not dampen their excitement. The young soldiers, many were eighteen or nineteen years old, were on their way to the European Theater of Operations. Most tried not to think about**

what might be waiting for them upon their arrival in Europe. After arriving at the Port of Boston they shuffled their barracks bags along in the rain as they stood in line to go aboard the USCGS Wakefield.

They pushed into cramped compartments filled with five high bunks, from the deck to the overhead, and stowed their gear any place that looked acceptable. The bunks were fastened up to the stanchions that supported the back corner of the bunk frames as everyone crowded into their assigned space. A chain was fastened to each front corner of the frames and the overhead to support the weight of the men in the bunks. The bottom two bunks had to be chained up when the deck was swabbed.

A mattress, a sack to cover the mattress and a blanket, whether one needed it or not, were provided. We were, in most cases, allowed to select a G. I. to alternately sleep in the bunk. The mattresses on the bunks rested on a heavy off-white canvas that had been fastened to an aluminum frame with a one-quarter-inch cotton line. The line had been routed through eyelets in the canvas and passed around the two-inch diameter frame. It was functional but many found that they did not miss a pillow when their turn came to sleep on a bunk. The lines on some of the bunks had to be tightened so the man below was not crowded from someone in the bunk above. Slim men slept in the bunks that were behind ventilation plenums.

Ventilation in the compartments was inadequate for the number of men assigned to them. The ventilation had been designed for twelve percent of the people that were now in each compartment. Similar accommodations for life rafts had been addressed. The Wakefield had been fitted with seventy-six inflatable life rafts that hung along her sides, and the passengers were told to wear a "Mae West" life vest at all times except when they were asleep or in a shower.

By 10:30 a.m. that morning the preparations for sailing were completed as the United States Coast Guard crew manned sea and anchor stations. The Wakefield pulled out of the Port of Boston and headed into the driving wind and rain of a North Atlantic Ocean storm.

The ship sailed alone as she was steered in a zig-zag course to the southeast. Unescorted travel was a very dangerous gamble, although German U-boats had not been seen along the East Coast for months.

The voyage was not easy. The ship rolled, yawed and pitched on the storm driven waves. "As the aft end of the ship rose out of the water the screws acted like giant hands that vibrated the entire ship until the blades were under the water again," said John M. Roberts (592FAB). Seasickness was rampant among the passengers. Most of them had

never experienced a ride that was remotely similar to that ride before. All wanted the ride to end.

Coast Guard cooks and bakers prepared the meals and shepherded KP "volunteers" turned mess cooks by Army selection criteria. The chow line extended half the length of the ship and it took two hours to reach a serving table and the Master At Arms who was counting the men who approached him and slid a tray along the serving table. "Two meals a day were served to those who were able to stand in the chow line and able to eat," observed Frances Aspinwall (589FAB) in his 1953 battalion history.

The head (latrine) was an experience by itself. The stainless steel urinals were shaped like the urinals in many public rest rooms. The commodes, supported above the deck, were shaped like a rain gutter with slat seats that stretched from rim to rim. Seawater was piped into one end of the troughs and flowed all of the time. Water and waste sloshed about as the ship wallowed on the sea. The troughs were aligned with the ship's keel but the passengers and the crew stayed away from the ends of the troughs and walked carefully around the waste. "You never sat on one of the holes at the end," John M. Roberts wrote with wry humor. "As the water hit the wall at the end of the trough, the water (and whatever was in the water) splashed and slopped up through the holes."

On 11 November the ship reached calm seas and the eerie glow of phosphorescence in the water around the ship that night revealed to the passengers that they were following the southern route across the ocean. Many of the passengers went up on the outside decks to escape the odor of stale food, tobacco, and seasickness that permeated the air in the compartments. Flying fish and porpoises cavorting along the side of the ship provided an interesting diversion from the monotony.

In the afternoon of 16 November 1944 the English coast emerged from the mist. Sighting land signaled that they had crossed the Atlantic. The Wakefield was met by a destroyer escort as she sailed into the Saint George's Channel, where she anchored for the night. As the daylight faded restless men saw the damage wrought by German bombing and the anti-aircraft batteries mounted along the shoreline of the English Channel and the city [Liverpool]. The city, under blacked out rules, fell silent as dusk turned to night.

The next morning an English pilot was brought aboard. The lumbering Wakefield began a slow approach to the docks at Liverpool. The ships' crew threw the lines over to the crews on the pier as a brass band played greetings. That was a pleasant taste of English hospitality. It was a moment that many of the passengers and crew would long remember.

The passengers were grateful for their safe passage and eager to plant their feet on land.

**Again the long lines formed and the men shuffled their duffel bags along as they disembarked. Thoughts of pleasant experiences they would have in England came to them as they boarded a train for the midlands of England.**

## **Preparation to sail to France**

**John Paul Kline recorded the activities and other scenes, written below, around Cheltenham.**

**The 423rd Regiment left Glasgow on a train late in the evening and rode all night. Coffee, chips and meat pie was served for breakfast, on the train.**

**We arrived at Cheltenham, England on 25 October 1944. The 423rd Regiment was billeted on the grounds of the Cheltenham Steeplechase track, about one-half mile from town. My squad was billeted in the press building.**

**The surrounding countryside was very hilly. It was a beautiful area. Before the June invasion of Normandy, the track area and grounds had been a very large encampment. There were countless wooden floors, in row by row formation throughout the grounds. They were used as floors for the hundreds of squad tents sheltering the multitude of troops.**

**My squad was fortunate to have quarters in the Pressroom, atop the Main Grandstand, overlooking the finish line on the track. Below us in front of the Grandstand building, was a picturesque recreation building. It was used for administrative purposes when the track was active. It had a lounge, and a pool table. We enjoyed it. Some of our troops were billeted in metal "Quonset" huts, a building that looks like a very large steel culvert pipe, sawed in half horizontally, lying on its side.**

**We spent many hours training and marching. The training was tough. We found very little physical evidence of the war, except the encampment area at Cheltenham Steeplechase track and munitions stored in protective bunkers along the roads, as we marched around the hilly countryside.**

**We could not see any damage that been done by the German bombers. During one of the marches, we came across the remains of an English bomber, lying scattered across a hilltop. The training was tough, but we did get a few evening passes into town.**

**To me, a country village boy, Cheltenham was a unique picturesque town. Most English towns were, I suppose. We walked into the town to find that it was always filled with soldiers. It was little wonder that the British were glad when we all went home. Most of our**

free evenings were spent walking the streets, having a few beers, trying to find some familiar face and some place to eat. The streets were crowded, the beer was warm, and we found very few familiar faces and a few places to eat. Food was not plentiful. We probably had more to eat than the local townspeople.

I remember going into town for dinner one evening. After a couple of warm glasses of ale in a Pub, I found a little restaurant on a side street where the tables were covered with quaint little embroidered tablecloths. Sitting at the table was relaxing, but the meal was sparse. I don't remember what I had to eat. I have a great distaste for lamb, so I am sure it was that.

John R. Fishburn remembered training to disembark from a ship via a cargo net ladder.

### Crossing the English Channel

John P. Kline recorded crossing the English Channel on the *Duke of Wellington* as follows:

On 28 November we boarded a train, at the Port of South Hampton and boarded the *Duke of Wellington*, a small English craft, on 29 November 1944. The Duke had seen a lot of action and was showing its age. The crew called the attention of the small number of troops to the ominous signs all about, like "Don't Prime Grenades" and "Keep Weapons Unloaded." The English Channel was very rough. I understand that it is always choppy.

I had never been on a sea-going vessel, other than the "*Queen*" on our way across the Atlantic Ocean. The Duke pounded the waves with its bow as she pitched and rolled like a roller coaster. We were happy to stand to on the outside deck with life jackets on, standard practice when entering a harbor area, as we entered the temporary harbor at Le Havre, France.

The city had been leveled to the ground and the original docking facilities had been destroyed during the battle for the city in September 1944. I saw a few German pillboxes that had been camouflaged to represent commercial buildings and a partially demolished house on the beach, with a bathtub hanging out of a window. The harbor was now made up of many old ships, cabled together to make the temporary harbor. We disembarked, formed up on the docks, marched nine miles and climbed into trucks late that night, in a very heavy rain. The truck ride ended when we arrived at Field J-40 (a staging area) near Rouen, France, on 1 December 1944.

Some men in the 422nd, 423rd, and 424th Infantry Regiments left the Midlands of England in trucks on 1 December 1944. The passengers on the trucks embarked on the SS Monowai



on 2 December at the Port of Liverpool, England. The Monowai sailed to Le Harve, France where she sat at anchor in the Seine Estuary in bad weather until 6 December before she tied up to a temporary pier at Le Harve, France. The passengers disembarked, formed up on the docks, marched nine miles and climbed into trucks, in snow and mud. The truck ride ended when they arrived at Field J-40 (a staging area) near Rouen, France, on 6 December 1944.

The Infantry truck drivers with the trucks, men in the 589th, the 590th, the 591st, and the 592nd Field Artillery Battalions met sailors who wore Amphibious Service Patches, when they were in a dress uniform, or US Coast Guardsmen. and embarked at Weymouth in LSTs on 1 December. Those proud daring men sailed the Large Slow Targets.

The men on the ships welcomed passengers for the return crossing in their thoughts or the flags that the signalmen ran up on the signal lines. Here are the flags that a signalman used to display his thoughts [WELCOME] to all:



**The British Admiralty designed the LST; but the 416 foot long ships with a 50 foot beam cruised at about 12 knots under the thrust from two screws driven by two 1200 horsepower General Motors Diesel engines. The ships often rode to the tops of a swell and shook like a coon in the mouth of a hound dog when the screws came out of the water. The ride on a LST in a storm was anything but pleasant. The ships vibrated when the sea was becalmed. At anchor the clamor of two or three of the Superior Diesel auxiliary engines continued to turn the direct current electric power generators. All three generators were paralleled when the tank deck exhaust fans were turned on.**

The exhaust fans vented through the main deck created more noise than the vehicle engines on the tank deck. The roar of the fans was deafening and the spray was like being in a driving rainstorm.

The LSTs anchored in the Seine Estuary off of Le Havre, France that night. They changed their nickname to that of all ships at anchor, Large Sitting Targets. The LSTs lay at anchor and tossed drearily.

**The crews occupied most of the berths and the passengers rested where they could find a place out of the rain. The two meals a day were served at the galley cafeteria counter. The counter was located along the aft side of a passageway athwart the ship with a ladder that led down to the aft crew's quarters, aft mess tables and the starboard mess tables beyond the scullery. A hundred and fifty men could be served before the crew ran out of mess trays. Then the wait began as the trays were washed by hand in the scullery and slung dry again. The flat ware was not ever dry. John's nephew can tell about working in the scullery and in the galley during his service on the USS LST 500.**

**Only one mess cook could squeeze into the scullery and stand at either of the two sinks. Gloves protected the mess cook's hands from the scalding water that was needed to clean the trays, flatware and mugs for 150 crewmen and the passengers.**

**After three weary days the LSTs were sailed up the Seine River to Rouen. The artillery vehicle drivers drove their equipment to Yerville to bivouac in pup tents for three days as the cold rain drenched them and chilled them to the core.**

**The following text is from the document that my brother Elvis Mac Fishburn and I wrote after we visited Uncle John in October 1998. Since we finished the first draft Uncle John, his daughter Frances, Mac and I have started at the beginning and have been working on what we can find to do immediately.**

**John entered the United States Army on 16 July 1942 and was assigned to Company L 80<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division for basic Infantry training at Camp Forest Tennessee. Camp Forest was a hastily erected mobilization tent encampment. Duck boards, installed between the tents and drill areas, kept the trainees above some of the Tennessee mud. Trainees spent about half of their day drilling and the rest of the time policing up the grounds, picking up debris, rocks etc., off the duck boards and drill area. John was promoted from Private to Sergeant within six months after entering service, without holding the rank of Private First Class or Corporal. John remembered Buck Sergeant Tabor as a tough drill instructor during the training period.**

**In January 1943, John was reassigned to Fort Jackson South Carolina, and promoted to Staff Sergeant. He became part of the Cadre to form the 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and was assigned to Company L 423<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment, 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. The first WWII mobilization draftees, 18 and 19 years olds, were assigned to the 106<sup>th</sup> for infantry training. The 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division departed from Camp Forest to participate in the 1943 Tennessee Maneuvers. And, John was promoted to Technical Sergeant during the maneuvers.**

**John reflected on the first time that he pulled guard duty. Each Regiment had their own guardhouse for the confinement of the Regiment prisoners. The prisoners were required to stand guard mount, where they stood with their arms folded during the change of guard. The guards carried live ammunition. Perhaps the live ammunition discouraged escape attempts. During the guard mount the guards were given special orders like, no one shall enter certain areas unless accompanied by the Officer of the Guard or the Officer of the Day.**

**One day the Commanding General, unaccompanied, approached a Private on guard and requested entry to a restricted area. The Private recognized the Commanding General but would not grant him access to the restricted area. The General asked to see the Private the next morning. The General spot promoted the Private to Corporal, when he reported.**

**Following the Tennessee Maneuvers in April 1943 the 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division reported to Camp Atterbury, Indiana. While at Camp Atterbury the 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division lost over 7,000 enlisted men and 600 officers who were sent to replacement depots. The remaining nucleus, or cadre, was tasked to train new replacements.**

**The Division was then fleshed out with personnel eliminated from cancelled training in the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) , Army Air Corp , Coast Artillery, Quartermaster , Band , Special Services , and other sources. Infantry training resumed and continued through the fall of 1943. The Division was then transferred to Fort Deavens, Massachusetts, where the Division trained to debark and embark to/from ships using cargo netting on the sides of ships, walls or cliffs.**

**In October 1944, the 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division moved via troop train to New York City where they embarked for England on the Queen Elizabeth. Upon arrival in England the training continued in debarking/embarking from/to ships, communications procedures and basic German phrases.**

**Le Havre, France was captured by the Allied Expeditionary Forces on 17 September 1944, therefore the 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division crossed the English Channel and landed at Le Havre without resistance. From Le Havre the 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division moved through Belgium to the "Forest of Ardennes" in the northern part of France, a two day 207 mile trip by truck convoys. Upon arrival the 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, which included the 422<sup>nd</sup>, 423<sup>rd</sup>, and 424<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiments, moved up to the front on 10 December and replaced the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division on the line south of the 99<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in the**

**Siegfried Line , the western frontier of Germany. The 106<sup>th</sup>'s positions extended for 18.5 miles and jutted out into Germany in a salient extending approximately 7 miles. The Germans launched their Ardennes Offensive (Battle of the Bulge) at 05:30 hours on Saturday 6 December 1944 and sustained the offensive until 01:00 hours 24 December 1944.**

**The 26<sup>th</sup> German Panzer Division under the command of Peiper attacked the center of the American lines in the forest, pushed the 99<sup>th</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Divisions back toward the Elsenborn Ridge and surrounded the 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. During attacks on the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of December the 423<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment was annihilated. The 423<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment lost their colors, and John was wounded two or more times. He suffered shrapnel wounds in the left cheek, forehead, back, legs, and lost the heel on his right foot.**

**The 422<sup>nd</sup> and 423<sup>rd</sup> Regiments of the 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Regiments being surrounded, out of ammunition, and sustaining heavy losses surrendered after inflicting heavy losses on the Germans.**

**After his capture on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December 1944, perhaps by the 26<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division, a fellow prisoner picked shrapnel from his back and helped him with other wounds.**

**After surrendering the Infantrymen were marched 60 miles to Limberg, Germany and then into a rail yard where they were loaded into 4-and-8 railroad cars (designed for 40 men or 8 horses). Sixty-to-a-hundred were loaded to a car. In the cars containing 60 men there was room for half to rest, sitting or prone, while in the cars containing 100 men there was standing room only for both the living and dead.**

**John was imprisoned in Stalag 5A and 3B with British prisoners. The British, who had been incarcerated there since the battle of Dunkirk, had the camps well organized. One German Doctor gave him a casual look and did nothing to treat his wounds or relieve his suffering.**

**After about three and one half months in prison and as the Russian and British/American Forces advanced toward the camps the prisoners were again crowded into box cars and provided the typical five gallon bucket for their toilet use. The battle lines moved back and**

forth with advances by the Russians and the British/ American Forces. Meanwhile, the train was shuttled up and down the tracks for nine days and nights. The prisoners were not given any food or water nor allowed to leave the train. John's only relief was catching a sooty-dirty-snow ball, thrown by a German guard. On the ninth day a number of American P-47 aircraft attacked the train.

The bombing and strafing destroyed the rail cars and many were killed or wounded. One man died with his head in John's arms. After the air attack, the prisoners escaped from the damaged cars or were released by the guards. Later the guards tried to reload the prisoners into the serviceable cars. Faced with the possible penalty of death the prisoners refused to board the train again. Then the guards began walking the prisoners 15 to 20 kilometers a day, toward the east then toward the west, keeping them constantly on the move. During the marches a German guard would ride ahead on a bicycle and select a place for them to overnight. They were held three or four days in an old brick factory where they were infested with body lice. It was too cold for them to remove all of their clothing to wash each item and attempt to kill the lice. Therefore, they were unable to rid themselves of the lice. The small ration of black bread and weak turnip soup and lice assured a miserable existence, night and day. Good fortune came on Friday, April 13, 1945.

The 2nd Armored Division liberated the prisoners in John's encampment, as they were marching along a road. The 2nd Armored Division was under General Patton's Command. After liberation they were sent back through France to Camp Lucky Strike, located at Le Havre. There they received medical care and liberal supplies of DDT, delousing powder. John applied the powder liberally and got the first nights sleep in months. John was also promoted to Master Sergeant while he was at Camp Lucky Strike. After medical evaluation and processing John boarded a troop ship and returned to the United States.

On the troop ship, crossing the Atlantic, most of the passengers were Non Commissioned Officers. But despite his rank, John volunteered for a detail delivering food from the ship stores to the troop galley and bakery. The detail provided access to processed food that John stuffed into his field jacket pockets. He and his friends would later enjoy fruit cocktail, evaporated milk, cereal and other items while top-side. They all gained weight. He debarked from the troop ship in New York and returned to Camp Atterbury, Indiana for processing.

**John was given a 65-day convalescent leave and a check for \$2500.00. John did not have enough cash money to return to Greencastle, Indiana, where his mother lived. In Indianapolis, Indiana, John presented the check to five or more banks before he could get a banker to call his mother, verify that she had a bank account, and verify that she would stand good for the check. He**

**finally got the check cashed and left the bank with a fist full of cash, more money than he had ever seen in his hands. John spent \$1500 during the first 15 days of the convalescent leave. He bought presents for Frances. John and Mary Frances Neighbors, from Anderson, Indiana were married on 16 June 1945. After the Convalescent Leave he reported to Miami Beach, Florida for further processing.**

**John was separated from the United States Army on 28 October 1945. He returned to civilian life and took various jobs. One of the jobs was in a lamp factory where he painted lamps. The work encouraged him to re-enlist in the United States Army in August 1949. He returned as a Technical Sergeant and was assigned to the Third Armored Division as a Platoon Sergeant to train recruits until June 1950.**

**Shortly after the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 reassignment orders arrived. In July 1950, John was reassigned to the 2nd Infantry Division in Korea. John was wounded in September 1950. The wounds included the loss of the thumb from his left hand, and other shrapnel wounds. He was medically evacuated to the Naval Hospital, Great Lakes, Illinois. John compliments the Naval Hospital for the excellent care he received during four months of hospitalization. After he recovered from his wounds, he returned to Fort Knox, Kentucky.**

**Back at Fort Knox he was assigned as a Platoon Sergeant, training recruits, in the 3rd Armored Division. In March 1951 he was again promoted to Master Sergeant, pay grade E-7. The promotion required reassignment to a command or committee function. John then served on the Infantry Rifle Marksmanship Committee until December 1955.**

**In December 1955, he was reassigned to France for a three-year tour with the Paris Eine Area Command. Just before the termination of his enlistment, John was returned to Fort Hamilton, New York where he re-enlisted on 3 August 1958. After re-enlistment, he was returned to Fort Knox, Kentucky.**

**At Fort Knox, he participated in a Medical Research Laboratory. The research included exposure of personnel, equipment, and laboratory specimens, to hot and cold climatic conditions while evaluating the ability to rapidly adapt to different climates. In March of 1960, John was assigned to a one-year tour in Korea, with the 7th Infantry Division. In March 1961 he returned to Fort Knox, Kentucky.**

**He returned to his Committee role in Infantry Rifle Marksmanship Training. In December 1961 he returned to Korea for another one-year tour, and was assigned to the First Corp.**

**In December 1962, he again returned to Fort Knox, Kentucky and his Committee role in Infantry Rifle Marksmanship Training.**

**In September 1965, John got two wishes. He got the third rocker when he was promoted to E-8 and transferred to a United States Army Pacific (USARPAC) assignment in Hawaii. It was while on this assignment that John called General Westmoreland by mistake. He enjoyed a personal chat with the Commander Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV). His eyes sparkled and a broad smile covered his face when reflected on that incident. Seldom does any enlisted soldier experience an opportunity to address a Four Star Commanding General. Upon completion of his Hawaii assignment John was posted to Fort Riley, Kansas**

**At Fort Riley he received training and orientation for Vietnam. In October 1968 John went to Vietnam where he was assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division. He served in the 1st Cavalry Division with the first Corp and fourth Corp. In February or March 1969 a VC 88mm mortar struck his hooch and sprayed the interior of the building with shrapnel. He had just returned from the shower and was wrapped with a towel. Shrapnel wounded both legs. When reporting for medical care the medics questioned how he received the wounds without having holes in his fatigues. He doesn't recall being awarded a Purple Heart for those wounds and tends to dismiss the entire experience as routine in an Infantryman's career. Upon completing his Vietnam tour in October 1969, John got a terminal assignment to Fort Campbell, Kentucky. There he was medically evaluated and processed for retirement. Master Sergeant John R. Fishburn was officially retired from the United States Army at Fort Knox, Kentucky on 1 July 1970.**

**Generals Served Under:**

**Bradley Europe**

**Major General Alan W. Jones Europe**

**MacArthur Korea**

**Westmoreland Vietnam**

**Abrams Vietnam**

**Awards and Honors:**

**Combat Infantry Badge Three times (About 160 Infantrymen have earned CIB three times, in three different Wars.)**

**Bronze Star (2)**

**Purple Heart (3)**

**Army Commendation Medal**

**Air Medal**

**Prisoner of War Service Medal**

**Good Conduct Medal (with 8 clusters or knots)**

**United Nations Service Medal**

**Korean Presidential Citation**

**Vietnam Service Medal**

**WW II Victory Medal**

**Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels, Honored by Governor Martha Collins, 1992**

**Family:**

**Wife: Mary Frances**

**Children:**

<b>Sherry G.</b>	<b>29 January 1948</b>
<b>Frances E.</b>	<b>2 July 1950</b>
<b>Janice K.</b>	<b>31 October 1953</b>
<b>John Kevin</b>	<b>6 December 1961</b>

**As told to Elvis Mac Fishburn (nephew) on 29 September 1998**

### **Foot Note**

**Uncle John is enjoying his retirement, looks well and was going fishing with his grand sons on the day I interviewed him. He explained to me how they were catching catfish from a tank using dog food as bait.**

*Page last revised 11/26/2006*

**[Print This Article](#)**