

Interview with Walter C Robbins Sr ID0005
20 November, 2003 – His Home (400S House)

Company = 250 men

Squad = 6 men

413th Inf Reg Co. B - out of the 250 men who went to Europe only 49 came back alive

Div = 3000 men

Dad thinks the lineup of Army groups was:

Army

Div

Regiment

Battalion

Company

Squad

Dad was a squad leader

Battle of the Bulge

The 1st Army under Patton? Was on one flank and the 3rd Army under Bradley? Was on the other flank. A Division of 3000 men (Dad couldn't remember which division) was placed in the middle. The Germans came through the middle and killed most of the men in the middle Div. Once the Germans were through the line the 1st and 3rd Armies came together and then had the Germans boxed in the "Bulge" - The Germans soon surrendered. That Div. was sacrificed to win the War according to Dad. Dad also said the members of that Div. were terribly bitter in the hospital.

Dad was in the hospital in France during the Battle of the Bulge.

Dad was on the Siegfried Line. He described being in one of the pillboxes. He said they were made of concrete, said to be 5' thick. He said they were probably about 10-12 feet in diameter and were domed shape at the top and covered with dirt. They had one door that made a turn and he had to post a guard at that point. He said while his squad was in one of the pillboxes a German mortar shell hit and shook the pillbox violently but did no damage to the structure. He said the pillboxes were spread out all along the Siegfried line. He said he thinks there was a concrete wall on each end of the line and the pillboxes all along between them across France.

Dad told about seeing a whale come up out of the water in the Atlantic during the crossing from New York to France on the Naval Transport Ship USS LeJeune. He said the whale came up showing its head and then its tail and then spouting water.

Dad also talked about the violent storm that occurred during that voyage. He said the ship would ride the waves and when the bow or stern would come down into the trough the deck would be washed by seawater.

He also told about being in the mess hall during the storm and about the trays, food, and men sliding across the tables and the floor. He said one of the guys was trying to walk through the mess hall with his food tray and he got sick and vomited all over a table. This sickened all the others in the room and they all threw down their trays and headed out of the room. Dad said lots of them got sick on the way out and the stench got so bad he went up to the top deck but it was almost as bad there. He said almost all the available space at the rail was taken by soldiers hanging over the rail being sick. He then thought he could go down to his bunk but it was even worse down there due to lack of circulation. He said that he never got sick but a big part of the troops did.

Concerning the USS LeJeune: Dad said he remembered hearing that it had been a German ship. He said it was a BIG ship. I related to him the dimensions. He said that the soldiers were on the 3rd level down as he could recall.

Dad also related a story about he being the only Sgt. and he didn't get a lot of sleep. Finally they got a replacement - a British guy. Dad went to get some sleep and had only laid down about 2 hours when they came to get him and said that he had to be the Sgt. again because his replacement had shot himself in the foot and was being taken to the hospital. Dad laughed and laughed because he thinks the guy did it on purpose to go back to the hospital and get out of the fighting. The happened after Dad had come back from the hospital in France.

Dad also told about a Lt. that had gotten lost so Dad being the next in rank became the Lt. until the guy came back in about 2-3 weeks. The original Lt. said that he had gotten lost. Dad doubted his story but he sure was glad that he was back.