



Curtis James Bankers lifetime memories:

MY CHILDHOOD

I was born May, 29, 1924, in west Peru, New York, which was a farming community, located East of Peasleeville in a farm house, that is now owned by the Henry Doty family. It is near the intersection of Peasleeville Road and Macomb Park Road. My father had a small farm there. The next year, my family moved to a farm owned by Joseph Denton in Durganville, a small (stucco) house, north of Peasleeville road, ¼ mile West of Denton road intersection. Two of my sisters were born there, Thelma, in 1926, and Alta, in 1928,(Alta died as an infant).

My father, Jeremiah Banker, had two children from a previous marriage, George and Marjorie. He was a mason and did Carpenter work and farming. I had two older brothers, Paul Heyward Banker and Lawrence Banker and four older sisters, Dorothy, Mildred, Edna and Pearl, in our family. My mother, Sophie Mae Banker, made butter in a glass churn which she sold at the local store.

I started school at age 5, in a one room School house located East of Denton road on the South side of Peasleeville road in Peru school, District #13. My first teacher was Muriel Lemay. She died of Cancer and was replaced by Bertha Coats. Bertha taught all grades, 1st through 8th. She was a disciplinarian and good teacher. I got a good start from my parents, and School. I learned early in life, that character, honesty and integrity were very important and it has been a great guiding factor in my life.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION YEARS:

In 1930, my father lost his farm. We moved to a farm owned by my uncle, George Newell. He moved his family to Whitehall, New York, where he bought an Automobile dealership. My father bought some cattle and started selling milk to the factory. The farm located on Denton road, was a 1 mile walk to school, but we were better off financially. A large farm meant more work for the family, which we all enjoyed. There were more barns for the blacksmith shop, hen house, 24 cattle,4 horses, a large farm house and 165 acres of land. We did well until the great depression of the 1930's. Our cows were sold.



Many unemployed people were roaming the country, to look for work. We had a garden and my father started working for the Highway department .This left the rest of the family to care for livestock. The next year the farm was rented to Willis Harper. He planted the whole farm to potatoes. This gave our family a chance to earn money working in the fields and harvesting potatoes. We took care of the animals after school. I helped cut wood for the stoves. We had no electric service so everything was done by hand, including cutting wood.

In 1938, Vernon Riley bought the farm. We moved and rented a house that belonged to Samuel Watson and lived there for one year. I started high school in Peru at the old High school and worked for my uncle, Joseph Banker during summer. I rode to school with Roy Hunter, in his car, that year. The Peru school had no school busses. A new Centralized School was being built for the next years students. That year we moved to, what previously was District 11 School, owned by Charles Morrow, at the intersection of Patent and Peasleeville roads. My father remodeled it so we could live in it.

That year, the new school opened and new school busses were taking us to school. It was my 2nd year of high school. I made the wrestling team, was a member of the Future Farmers of America (FFA), and helped move the picnic grounds, in Peasleeville, to a new location. I started a baseball team in Peasleeville. The next summer I worked on a farm for Mrs. McGarr. Then I quit school and got a job at a hog ranch in Salmon River. We collected garbage for the hogs and I helped inoculate them .The pay was better but the job ended when the owner, Mr. Dobson, was jailed and Ranch, hogs, and all equipment was sold at auction.

WORLD WAR TWO STARTED

On Dec.7, 1941, Pearl Harbor was bombed and War was declared. I was not old enough to serve yet. The next year, in September, at age 18, I decided to join the Army. With some coaxing, my father did, reluctantly, sign the paper for me to enlist. That is the only time I ever saw tears in my father's eyes. His father, wounded in the Civil War, had probably brought back bad memories. The 1st week of September 1942, I boarded the train for Albany, for physical examination and preliminaries, prior to being inducted. They gave me two weeks at home to get things in order, before being sworn into the Army. I worked at Ross Clark's apple orchard, in Peru, until time to leave. I know it was hard for my parents to see me go.



On September,30th, 1942 I was sworn into the United States Army, in the field Artillery. I reported to Camp Dix, New Jersey Induction Center for assignment. I was at Ft. Dix 2 weeks, getting shots, on kitchen police and other duties. I finally got orders for Fort Bragg, N.C. Field Artillery training center. They had received new long range guns,(commonly called "LONG TOMS"). No Soldier will ever forget basic training introducing new recruits to a very different life. Physical training didn't bother me much. Taking orders and regimentation did bother me. I passed a driver's test and got a driver's license. This got me out of a lot of gun drill, but not the other training. When finished with our16 weeks of training we had a week of bivouac and 8 mile forced march back to camp. Only 8 of us finished. My childhood years, walking to school and farm work, really helped me through the physical training.

After basic, I went to Camp Buckner as a possible replacement for North Africa duty. We drew new equipment. Some of us, including me, were going to Camp Roberts, California to form a unit for duty in the Pacific. This was a new unit for a Division that was already in combat. After a very long train ride we finally arrived at camp Roberts expecting regular wooden barracks, our hopes were dashed when we saw the Squad tents on frames and dirt streets. This would be our home base for the next year.

Our regular Company Commander had not arrived yet. We had some Non Commissioned officers and Lieutenants to get us settled and assigned to quarters. Our Company Commander soon arrived and things began to shape up. I drove a Chevrolet dump truck hauling sand from the river bottom, to pave the Company streets. We went into field training at Camp Pleyto and received pack howitzers for training. A pack howitzer is a 75 mm gun that can be dis-assembled for transport on mules. As it turned out, we were the mules. We spent a lot of time fighting fires which started when we fired the guns. The Camp was a group of tarpaper barracks with inch boards for bed's. We took 25 mile hikes, crew drill, laying the gun's for direct and indirect firing. We also watched the coast, in case of enemy invasion .

I drove Jeep for our Platoon Leader. I learned a lot about forward observation from him. Finally we got orders to prepare for overseas shipment and moved to Camp Stoneman, CA. Having trained for a year, we would join the 103rd Infantry Regiment,43rd Infantry Division in New Zealand. They were getting replacements and had seen combat at Guadalcanal and New Georgia Islands and had lost a few troops. Now they were getting a rest and re-training.



SOUTH PACIFIC THEATER OF OPERATIONS, February, 1944:

We took a ferry to Oakland, then boarded an old Dutch freighter, the Boschfontien, on Valentine day, Feb. 14th,1944. The ship officers were Dutch and the crew was Indonesian. We had no escort and the ship came very close to enemy held islands. Blackout conditions were enforced on board ship. Most Everyone was seasick the first few days. We crossed the Equator on the 23rd of Feb. We had P.T. on board ship and arrived on , March 6th,1944, at Noumea, New Caledonia, a French Island, which was the supply depot for all South Pacific forces. We worked, handling supplies until we left for New Zealand, March 25th on board the USS Tryon, following a typhoon, and arrived at Auckland , New Zealand, March 29th1944.

If there ever was a place on earth that I would think of living other than the good old USA, it would be New Zealand. The people there were the friendliest I have ever seen. Maybe it was wartime, but I enjoyed it there. We set up camp at Warkworth Fairgrounds. I went to town a few times, saw an opera, and took a Mauri girl to the movies. My buddy, James Bailey, introduced me to her and a girl that he had met. The Mauries, New Zealand natives, are Polynesian, like native Hawaiians. Bailey, Buchanan and I drove truck to haul troops to Rotorua, a Mauri village in the south part of the North Island. We transported troops to train with the 103rd Regiment, including our Cannon Company. I drove a long Ford truck with right hand steering wheel and shifting lever on my left. They drive on the left side of the road there, as British do. It took time to get used to these changes. Between trips, I trained with the rest of the Company. We had 6, M-7 Armored, self- propelled Howitzers, mounted on a Tank chassis, with a 50 Caliber Machine Gun and 105mm Howitzer main gun. We had these for the duration of the War.

Some of our food was from local farms during our 3 months stay in New Zealand, We slept in tents, on canvas cots. On chilly nights we used a number ten can filled with stones and gasoline to heat the tent. It was cold, because winter in the Southern Hemisphere is in July, opposite of ours, and the coldest month. June came and we were informed that our next assignment would be in New Guinea.

NEW GUINEA, July, 1944 :

We sailed from Auckland , on USS Shanks, July 5th, for Aitape, New Guinea, 75 miles West of Wewak. We did Patrols, Guard duty in log, sand bag, bunkers, preparing for the next beach landing and assisted in local defense. Our Base camp was near the beach at Aitape so we could swim. We unloaded ships on



to boats, as there were no docks, which meant that supplies and equipment had to come, or leave, by amphibious vehicles. The food, mostly Australian “c” rations, consisted of Beans , Hash , or Stew. You could take your choice or trade with someone.

We were issued 5, LVT-A 4 amphibious tanks in addition to our 6 M-7s, and trained for our next combat. I was assigned to Corporal Isaacson’s LVT crew. We spent several days preparing for our next move. The LVT-A4’s were like a boat, propelled by tracks, with tank turret and 75 mm main gun. Shortly after, I was assigned to an M-7 gun crew with Sgt. Schomerus. That was a good move for me because that LVT with Cpl. Isaacson on it, was later knocked out. The crew suffered casualties and some died.

Our Company went to the Druinimor River defense line and relieved the 32nd Division which had been in New Guinea for a very long time . We ran river patrols, with LVT’s, and manned the defenses until they declared the River was secure. Then we returned to our base camp. While at Aitape we saw Donald Austin, James Austin’s brother, who was in a field hospital with the 32nd Division. He was injured by concussion from a bomb blast. It was good to see him. We had all worked together at the hog ranch in Salmon River, New York before we joined the Army.

The Regiment had an outdoor screen where we sat on coconut logs and watched movies. That was our entertainment. Sunday Church services were at the same place. Our shoes and clothing were treated with a chemical to prevent fabric mold. The constant humidity and hot temperature, near the Equator, was hard on all our equipment and vehicles. One morning water was touching the bottom of my canvas cot. Shoes were floating out the opening of the tent.

Our troops built a frame to hold a 52 gallon drum overhead and got a showerhead from the Navy. We filled the drum with water and had a fresh water shower. Some troops from other Companies came over to use it. We made a deal with them, if they would fill the drum with water daily, they could use it. This worked out fine. One soldier made a water heater out of pipe, his “invention”, that heated water to wash clothes. After all the work to make life comfortable, we really hated to leave, which we knew would happen .

We boarded an LSM (Landing Ship Motorized) on Christmas Eve, 1944, joining several other Ships, for our next campaign, which was Luzon, Philippine Islands. The LSM has only sleeping room for the crew and



only one deck. We slept on the vehicles or on the deck for the long trip to Luzon.

One day we were attacked by enemy aircraft and the destroyer escort to our left rear shot it down. The Navy did a great job. We went North through the China Sea arriving at Lingayen Gulf on the 8th of January for a beach landing at San Fabian, Luzon, the next morning. Blackout conditions were enforced on all ships. There were four Infantry Divisions, and a Regimental Combat team landing on (operation M-1). Everything seemed so quiet that it was very hard for me to sleep. I watched the shore most of the night. It was quiet with only the sound of waves hitting the ship, and the darkness. I knew the enemy must be watching and waiting. I wondered what tomorrow would be like.

LUZON, PHILIPPINE ISLANDS, Jan. 9th, 1945:

The Navy Underwater demolitions crew, "Frog Men", had been working to clear all obstacles and de-fuse any mines that would hold up the assault of the beach landing. Dawn was approaching and "H Hour". Suddenly I saw a small bonfire on the left beach and then one on the right beach. This marked the landing area and also signaled that the area had been cleared of all obstacles. The LST's started unloading LVT4s off the ramp into the water. Smaller boats, all filled with Infantry, assembled in circles, then they formed a line, and headed toward the beach. Navy guns were shelling the beach with the largest weapons. The earth seemed to shake from the concussion. The sky was filled with tracers. A small boat was laying a smoke screen, hiding the first wave, which disappeared from view in the smoke. The second and third waves were close behind the first. We were in the fourth wave and started toward the beach. A 300 mm Artillery gun, that the enemy had placed in a cave on a mountain to our left front started to fire on the beach. One round hit the landing craft to our left in the front gun turret. An enemy aircraft had crashed to our right on the beach.

Suddenly our landing Ship became stuck, on a sand bar, near shore. Our Officer had the crew lower the ramp, then he jumped off the ramp ,with his hand over his head, to measure the water depth. All we could see was his hand above the water. Crawling back on the ramp he said we could unload the M-7 in front to lighten the load. We mounted up and drove our M-7 off the ramp. The tank, half floating, was pushed to shore by a large wave. The landing ship backed off and tried again to get closer to the beach, which it did. The large Enemy gun was still firing at the navy boats. Infantry troops had moved inland



securing the village of San Fabian. We dismounted while our Tank crossed a small river on a Railroad Bridge. Then we secured our assigned area near the village, prepared a defense and remained there all day and that night.

Our 5 LVT-A-4s, that were in the first wave, with rifle Companies, remained with them. We lost one, to enemy fire, the one I was assigned to in New Guinea. Corporal Alvin Isaachsen and Leo Sperdutti were killed in that amphibious tank. That night an enemy placed a grenade on the track of an M-7, to knock it out ,but it was found and disposed of. Bulldozers started digging the graves, to bury the dead, near our position.

The next day we moved closer to the front in support of the rifle Companies which had advanced inland toward San Jacinto. A dry river bed was covered with dead enemy, horses and enemy artillery It was hit with Navy, or our artillery, fire. The smell of decaying bodies was terrible. We ran over some of the dead to continue on. Our tank smelled terrible for days. The horses and human bodies had swollen, from the hot sun, would pop like a balloon. There was no way to get around them. What a horrible sight.

We advanced to the village of Pozarubio which was already destroyed from fighting. We were in a firing position for a few days providing support for our troops as well as harassing fire at night. We got some return fire from the enemy artillery which we named "Pistol Pete". One M-7 s was knocked out, on a direct fire mission, and the section chief, Sgt. Terracina was killed.

Hill 200 was well defended and the source of fire we had received, on the beach, from a large gun. Our Tank was called on to support a rifle Company that was pinned down by enemy fire on that hill. We were briefed and moved to about 100 yards from a cave where the fire was coming from. Seeing our large tank caused them to fire at us .I was loading the gun, so when I raised up above the armor plate to load, I was exposed from the waist up. I loaded a white Phosphorus, smoke, round and we fired into the cave opening. The enemy fire stopped. I then loaded a high explosive round and as the projectile left the gun a lone enemy came out of the cave and received the full blast of the shell burst. I saw his leg and boot fly into the air, a sight I have never forgotten. I had blood shooting up my arm, from my glove as I loaded the last round. Two of my fingers, on the right hand, were nearly cut off, just below the first joint. As soon as I could, I saw a medical aid man and was examined by a Doctor. He sewed



my fingers back on and sent me back to duty. I have a Purple Heart that is on my service records. We fought in the hills, going toward Baguio, for 38 consecutive days. The 103rd Inf. Regt. had 172 dead and 551 wounded in action. Enemy casualties were estimated at 10 times as many. The fighting was heavy at times.

One day, after my fingers were cut, our Company was ordered to lead rifle Companies using direct fire at the enemy. My crew chief decided that I would not be any use to the crew with my cut hand. He let me off as we crossed a bridge over a creek bed. I was in the river bed with a Medic who suggested we move away from the bridge. The enemy started shelling, trying to destroy the bridge and shrapnel was cutting off branches on trees all around us. We hunkered down and waited for the tanks to return. They returned and the fire shifted to them. My crew grabbed and almost threw me into the tank. We went back to our former firing positions outside Pozarubio village.

At night we would fire a volley at the enemy every hour to harass them, but it also kept us awake. One day we were receiving incoming fire and they got a direct hit on our newly dug latrine. We spent an entire day digging it to Army specifications, so many feet of trench per man, tissue on a tree branch and poles to sit on and canvas enclosed. We were really proud of it. Now it was destroyed.

We were once credited with stopping a Banzai attack and had killed 200 of the assaulting force. After 38 days of fighting, almost continuously, we received replacements and were relieved by another Division. We moved 80 miles South, to Clark Airfield area. After a few days we moved again, 60 miles, to an area near Manila, where the Country Club was. We supported the 1st Cavalry Division then made a large move to capture the Ipo Dam by going through Laguna De Bay area and several villages. Our M-7 broke down near Antipolo village. Then I got Yellow Jaundice and was sent to a field hospital for treatment. While there, the Doctor decided I had Combat Fatigue and I was sent to a Field Hospital on Leyte Island. After a week there I was sent back to Manila to a replacement Depot. I requested to be sent back to my own unit and after some time I was put on a train that went to about 10 miles from my company. IPO Dam is a water supply for Manila. After walking several miles, I got a ride with a Jeep from Division Headquarters. The Company was in a defense position. The 103rd Regiment, 43rd Division, had secured the Dam and was waiting for orders. The Division received a Citation for that Battle. Some Philippine troops were assigned



to our Division for that operation and were very good fighters.

About the 1st of July, 1945, the Division was relieved of combat operations and moved to a former POW camp near Cabanatuan. We started setting up tents and were told that our next mission would be the main Island of Japan. I was assigned to deliver mail to one of the line Companies on the East coast that was defending a small lumber mill village. The road to the village was a long, winding, road over a mountain. For security, I would load the one ton Dodge truck with civilians that were traveling that way. The mountain still had a few stragglers from the enemy force and I was alone on this mission. The first trip I reported to the rifle Company Commander that I would be making that trip every day so he could send stuff back with me. He asked that, my being in a tracked vehicle unit, if I could get a full tracked vehicle out of the bay for them to use. I went to where it was located to look at the situation and found a small amphibious jeep type vehicle, made by Studebaker, called a "weasel", with both tracks off, in between two large rocks. I informed the Captain that there was no way I could fix it without a wrecker that could get out there to pull it out. He agreed and no further action was taken. I continued making mail trips until that company moved back with the rest of the Regiment.

WE OCCUPIED JAPAN

The Division was now fully prepared for the Invasion of Honshu when we got word that the Atomic bomb had been dropped and the Japanese had surrendered. Being already prepared, we were ordered to remain on alert to ship out to Japan for occupation, prepared for combat. We started loading a ship and left Manila bay on August 31st aboard the USS Dade and arrived at Yokohama the 2nd of September, 1945. Yokohama was nearly destroyed from bombing and was a smoking mess of ruined buildings with a few smoke stacks sticking up, here and there.

We moved to a former air base near Kumagaya and occupied a large building that was still intact. Those of us with enough points would be going to the States with the 43rd Division, which meant most of us that had gone over with the Cannon Company, would be eligible. Troops from other units would be going back with us. We loaded on the USS General Hershey on September 27th and sailed out on the 30th. This ended our tour in the Pacific in World War 2.

WORLD WAR 2 ENDS:



We arrived at San Francisco on 10th of October, 1945. A jazz band was there playing music. General Wing, the 43rd Division Commander, made a short speech. We went to Camp Stoneman for processing. Soon it was completed. We boarded a train for our long trip. James Austin and I had been through the War together and arrived home together. After the war, we continued to be friends. I was discharged at Ft. Dix, New Jersey, on December 9th, 1945, after 3 yrs, 2 mo. and 9 days.

Upon entering the work force, jobs were hard to find, some troops were being discharged that had no job before they entered the service. Available work had been taken, for the war effort. I found work at Pal Razor blade Co. in Plattsburgh for about a week and was laid off because war production for most industries was reduced. I had mustering out pay, \$300.00, to use. I became friends with Nelson LaRock. He worked at Imperial Paper Company where they made wall covering and he got me work in the color department. I worked there when I married Dorothy Hebert on September 14th 1946. She was Pliny and Rhoda Hebert's daughter. We met and fell in love 4 months earlier. She worked at Pal Blade Company. I was in a car accident driven by Nelson La Rock, soon after and had a jaw injury for a while. I lost my job at Imperial. My Father-in Law got me a job at Pal Blade Company. They started laying workers off, so I re-enlisted in the Army. I was completely discouraged with civilian life.

On the 7th of February, 1947, I reported for duty at Fort Dix, N.J. The Army was very short on people at that time, because of peace time force reduction. I kept my wartime rank of PFC. Dorothy was going to have our first child. Carol was born on Sept. 10th, 1947. The Army pay was not enough, so she stayed at her parents. I reported to Fort Benning, Ga. in one of the last Cannon Companies. They had changed the Army Table of Organization. I was transferred to the 756th Heavy Tank Battalion (Glider), 82nd A B N Division. I was assigned to Headquarters Company, target Tank Section. Our job was to drive the tanks on the firing range for Officer Cadets to shoot at. That would cause a lot of repairs on the tanks. They fired tracers and dummy projectiles at the moving Tank.

The 3rd Infantry Division moved to the Sand Hill Area of Ft. Benning and needed a Tank Battalion. The 756th then became the 73rd Heavy Tank Battalion. In organizing, a Reconnaissance Platoon was formed and I was assigned as Mortar Squad Leader in the Recon Platoon, Headquarters Company, referred to as H&S Co. Lt. (Dusty) Rhodes was platoon Leader and Frank Wolf platoon Sgt.. There were 39 troops



in the Reconnaissance Platoon, consisting of Platoon HQ., Tank section, Scout Section, Rifle Squad and Mortar Squad. Although I had been driving Tanks, I was the only one who had Artillery training, which is a lot like Mortars. I was promoted to Corporal and attended the Armored School, Fort Knox, KY.

I graduated from there and returned to the 73rd Heavy Tank Battalion. On May 14th 1949, Jerry our second child was born in Plattsburgh, New York. Dorothy moved to Georgia as soon as the baby was old enough to travel. In April 1950 we got orders to go on Caribbean maneuvers. We had to attend training at Little Creek, Marine Base. After amphibious training, we had a training assault on Vieques Island. Then we had a few days rest at Port of Spain, Trinidad. We returned to the U.S. on a Navy ship, converted for troops. We arrived at Charleston, S.C. in May, 1950 and traveled to Fort Benning, Ga. by train. Dorothy had moved to Columbus before we left and was living in an apartment. I took a test and was promoted to Sergeant.

KOREAN WAR :

On June 25th, 1950, the North Korean Army invaded the Republic of South Korea and we were alerted for deployment overseas. On July 10th, the 73rd Heavy Tank Battalion received orders to ship out, with equipment and tanks. We had 4 days to get ready. We worked 12 hour shifts loading Tanks on flatcars, Packing, Stenciling, waterproofing all weapons, and to take care of family affairs.

On July 15th, we left Fort Benning for California. Dorothy went to live at her folks until she could find a place to live. She was pregnant with our third child. Pay was better so I could send her more of it in allowance. At times, Army Spouses, have to make difficult, mental and physical decisions. I praise them all. Our trip to California was delayed a couple times, when someone left a car on the tracks, in Illinois, and the train hit it. Later a Tank fell off a flatcar while traveling through the Rocky Mountains. We didn't stop to look for it. We arrived at camp Stoneman, long enough to replace some Tanks with rebuilt Tanks. The ship was loaded and we headed out for Korea. There were two other Tank units on board, the 6th and 70th Tank Battalions . I don't remember the name of the ship. The trip was about the same as all the other trips. We arrived in Pusan harbor on the 8th of August, 1950 and marched to camp Hialeah, outside Pusan, and camped there. The dock workers Union were on strike. The Navy had to unload the Tanks. The front lines were not far away from Pusan. Tank Companies were sent



immediately up to the front to support the Infantry that were in need of support. Our Recon Platoon, boarded flatcars and headed for the Eastern end of the front, near Pohang-dong. We went through a long tunnel and were on a flatcar right behind the engine. Steam, and smoke, made it very hard to breath. Upon arriving we took a position overlooking a small stream. Seeing no action, we moved back to the main camp. We cleaned the guns, test fired them, and did necessary patrols.

Orders were received to load up on an LST to make a beach landing at Incheon with the Marines. We had the same type Tanks as the Marines, so it was easier to supply our Battalion than the others. Our Recon Platoon, some of the Headquarters, plus "B" Company were on board the LST. The tide at Incheon harbor was a factor. We only had a short time to land the tanks before it went out and left a long mud flat until it came in again. That was very important for a successful landing. General Macarthur proved that he was an experienced, efficient Commander. The landing turned the War in our favor. Our Battalion's previous training at Little Creek Marine Base was about to pay off.

The marines took a small island before we could land. Our tank was near the front of the ship so we were off first. When I drove off there was a concrete seawall that we could not go over. After looking the situation over we followed the wall, until we had an opening. The opening was right at the village of Incheon. We took up a defense near a house, knocking down some picket fence for a field of fire, and remained there until the rest of the unit unloaded . We saw no action there, just happy Koreans parading. The 7th Infantry Division, from Japan, landed when the tide came in. My tank was in front of one of their foxholes. I took my turn on the tank that night and every time I raised up out of the tank the rifleman behind would take a shot at me. He, obviously, was not a very good marksman.

The rest of the 8th Army were moving up from Pusan and we then moved back to Pusan. I was hospitalized for an infection. When I was released from the Hospital I went back to the 73rd Tank Battalion. They were preparing for a move to North Korea. We shipped out and to Hungnam and moved from there to Hamhung. The Marines were moving back from the Chosin Reservoir battle area. We shared Thanksgiving dinner with some of them.

After all the refugees and most of the troops had boarded ships, we loaded our Tanks on a British



ship and watched as the 65th Puerto Rican Regiment set fire to the warehouses. The ship had no heat so we started the tank engines, to keep warm in the sub-zero cold. It was a few days until Christmas. We spent the 1950 Holliday in Pusan. Our time there was very short, mostly spent getting ready for a counter attack, with the 7th Infantry Division, up the center of the peninsula. Our objective was a road junction near Chechon.

The Chinese had infiltrated into the mountain villages so a raiding party was formed, to get rid of a rear area threat. The 73rd Tank Battalion Reconnaissance Platoon, 2 armored vehicles from another anti-aircraft unit, one had a twin 40mm anti- aircraft gun mounted on it and a halftrack had quad-50 caliber machine guns, and rifle company of Korean volunteers formed what became known as Rice's raiders, commanded by Col. Rice from the 7th Infantry Division. If a village had enemy in it, we would surround it, then riflemen would move in, set the buildings on fire, and wait for ammunition to blow up and the enemy to come out. Villagers were warned one day ahead of a raid, so they could move to a safe place. This worked very well and the rear areas were soon fairly safe. Mission completed, we all returned back to our regular unit.

WITH 1st R.O.K. Division

The 73rd Tank Battalion was then assigned to the 1st ROK Division near Seoul. The Chinese started their 1951 Spring offensive and we were assigned to reconnoiter roads on the left flank. On patrol, the Tank I was driving broke through a bridge. We sent a jeep back to get a retriever to pull us out. A Korean rifle Company was moving to the rear and enemy were advancing. We pulled the Tank out just in time and the Engineers were filling holes with land mines as soon as we passed through. That could have been bad news for us.

I was due for rotation, my three year enlistment plus the one year, (Truman) extension ran out, so I risked being captured, as a civilian. I have no idea how the Army would have handled that. After, I went back to Taegu to re-enlist, at 8th Army HQ. One of our Tank crew was killed on that trip. Some trucks coming toward us, on a narrow road, sideswiped our jeep dragging him onto the road. We got him to an aid station where he died. I was in charge so I had to make out a report the next day which was normal procedure for accidents.



Soon after, I was sent to Incheon, for processing, to rotate back to the States. The enemy was advancing. Having turned our weapons in put us in a bad situation. As it turned out, we processed, the enemy advance stopped and we boarded the ship for home. There were troops from several units on board, those that had enough points, or some disability that kept them from duty. I had enough points and was anxious to see my third child who was born on September, 29th, right after the Incheon landing. My wife had named him Curtis James Jr. because it was possible for me to be killed . We arrived at Seattle, Washington and processed at Fort Lewis. There were no bands, only an Army band at the field house. We were glad to be back!!

COLD WAR, 1951:

Our stay at Fort Lewis was short, only long enough to re-assign us and get orders cut. We had 30 days leave time. The train ride was to Chicago where we had at switch trains. Mike McCormick and I went that far together. He went to Georgia. That was the last time I saw him. Dorothy and the family were glad to see me in Plattsburgh, N.Y. It had been a long time since I had seen some of the family. After my leave, I reported to Fort Devins, Massachusetts then Fort Hamilton for re-assignment and processing. I was assigned to be a N.Y. National Guard Instructor at the Brooklyn Armory. I was not familiar with what this duty was.

At the Brooklyn Armory I reported to a warrant Officer that I was to replace. He gave me some of the details and got me a room at a private home in Brooklyn, where he had been staying. The lady that owned it was friendly and glad to have an Army person there. The Army Major, at the Armory, was also very helpful and got me started. I had to make out training reports for the National Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C. and check on the troops when they were training.

Shortly after, we went to Fort Drum for field training. The National Guard has to have this annually. This training lasted for 2 weeks. The vehicles used were from Troy Arsenal so we had to turn them in to the Arsenal, after the training. When I returned to Brooklyn I decided to apply for a transfer to the 278th Infantry Regiment stationed at Fort Drum. At Fort Drum I could have my wife and children there and rent a place to live in Watertown, N.Y. My brother, who was living there, could help me locate a place to live. The transfer went through and I was assigned to Tank Company, 278th Infantry.



Some of the troops were Korean War veterans so I fit right in and assigned as a tank commander. During part of the winter, 1951-52, A ski Company was formed and I was assigned to train in winter warfare. Our instructor was a Major who had served in the Finland, German and now the US Army. We learned how to ski and winter tactics in a cold climate. The major had fought the Russians so he was well aware of their tactics. I had learned to ski so it was easier for me to learn than the troop's from the South. Tactics were different, because of the frozen ground and snow. We finished that training and returned to our regular duties. Our 4th child, Donna, was born on March 24th, 1952 in Watertown, N.Y. Hospital. There was no Base Hospital at Fort Drum.

We were scheduled to go on winter Maneuvers, against the 82nd Airborne Division, as aggressor forces. The 82nd was not used to cold weather. We would catch them every morning in their sleeping bags. It was excellent training for them. The Tanks we used were old obsolete M-4s. In the spring we got new M-47 Tanks. Then we went to Little Creek, VA. for amphibious training, my 2nd time there. We spent most of 1952 in field training. I decided to take classes, try to pass a GED, and get my High School Diploma. I completed the tests and passed. I was at Fort Drum until January, 1953. The 278th Regiment had one Battalion in Iceland. I was due to rotate and given a choice of one year in Iceland, or Germany for three. I chose Germany and sailed the last week of December 1952, without family. Our ship arrived at the port of Bremen a few days later, January, 1953.

GERMANY – 1953-56

Germany was still under the control of the US, Britain and Russia. They didn't get their sovereignty back until 1954. I was briefed on the regulations and quarantined to camp in Bremen until I got orders and assigned to my new unit. After a couple of days, I got my assignment and boarded a train to Bad Kissingen, Germany to join the 2nd Battalion, 14th Armored Cavalry. The Headquarters for the 14th was at Fulda, Germany, near the border with East Germany, which was under Russian control. The 14th had the mission of securing the border from Bad Hersfeld to Bad Kissingen in the South. Each Battalion had their area to patrol. The barracks were very neat and we kept them clean each day.

The Regimental commander was Colonel Raymond W. Curtis, a very strict and proven leader. The 2nd Bn. commander was Col. Reynolds, also a very respected leader. The Officers in command near the



border had to be the best to earn the respect of the German people and Russians. This was, without a doubt, the most disciplined unit I had ever been in since joining the Army. This helps to increase esprit de corps and Morale in the troops. If I had any choice of any unit to serve with it would have been the 14th Armored Cavalry. We had a few bad troopers, but soon corrected them or got them out. They usually saw that it was better to straighten out. We had to be ready to move out at any time, day or night, in case the Russians decided to cross the border. Our equipment and Tanks were Combat ready. We had practice alerts at unscheduled times of night or day and had 6 minutes to mount our tanks to move out to our alert area near the border. We were not confined to a reservation, for training, but could enjoy the beautiful countryside, as we rode our Tanks through the winding roads and villages.

I had a high AGCT test score on my records so I was chosen to attend the 7th Army Tank Leaders course at Vilseck. This consisted of Officers as well as Enlisted ranks. I completed school 2nd in the class and also won the Military Stakes competition, which was a very tough test of skill and physical endurance. I am proud of that trophy.

I returned to my Company and was promoted to Sergeant First Class a short time later. The 14th Cavalry Headquarters in Fulda needed a Tank instructor at the N. C. O. Academy. I was ordered to report there and was appointed chief Tank Instructor. That was my position until the school closed. I returned to my Company as a Tank Commander and gave a lot of classes to our Tankers. I was on the Battalion pistol team, Umpire on maneuvers for another unit, and also represented our Company on the board of Governors at the Non Commissioned Officers Club. I enjoyed doing it. I also had to train my Tank crew.

In January 1956, I rotated back to the States and was assigned to a basic training unit. I really hated that duty and requested a transfer to the 714th Tank Battalion which was going to Germany. This time my family could go. My wife, pregnant for our 5th child was allowed to go anyway. I was glad to return to Germany. This time we were at Schweinfurt, and the families had all new quarters. It was still close to the border. We did not do border patrol. The spouses had to learn the evacuation route, in case of conflict, every year. They also had to keep an emergency supply packed, for 3 days, in the front closet. Dorothy didn't drive, so we arranged with another family to take her and the children with them if they



needed to evacuate. On June 26th, 1957 our 5th child, David was born in Wurzburg Hospital. I took a few days off until Dorothy was able to take care of the family. When she recovered, I hired a maid to help. We did mostly routine training and ran the tank firing ranges at Belson in 1958 for the Army. On March 3rd, 1959 our 6th child, Harry, was born at Wurzburg Army hospital.

FORT HOOD ,TEXAS

November, 1959, we rotated back to the US .I purchased an Opel car and had it shipped to have when we got to New York. I had a 30 day leave at home before reporting to Fort Hood, Texas. We arrived at Fort Hood the first week of December, 1959. They had no quarters, on base, for my family. I rented a house in Gatesville, about 40 miles from my unit so, as soon as possible, I bought a mobile home and moved to Killeen which was close to camp. On the 11th of December 1961, my wife gave birth to twin girls, Carla and Carmen, at the base Hospital. I became a Catholic, at the local Church in Harker Heights, near Killeen. My first assignment was giving basic to new recruits, which I hated, so I signed up for Officers classes from the Infantry school, Ft. Benning, GA., correspondent courses, to be a 2nd Lieutenant in the Infantry. I also attended the 2nd Armored Division NCO school where I graduated 2nd Place Honor Student. I talked to the Colonel, and got transferred to "D" company, an advanced training Company which was much better for me. I gave a lot of classes. I was responsible for our platoon being rated 3rd in the 2nd Armored Division , Platoon tests. I took command during an attack on a hill during that test because the assigned platoon Sergeant was not familiar with how to call for, or adjust, heavy Artillery support. I learned this from Cannon Company in World War 2 when I was a crew member in Cannon Company, 103rd Inf. Regt., 43rd Inf. Div., on an Artillery gun.

I became a Platoon Sergeant soon after. I could not get a promotion to E-7 because promotions in my Military Occupation Specialty were frozen at that time. I was doing very well with my Officers Course but the School changed some classes and I would have to take extra classes to complete the course. I was close to the maximum age limit, as a Lt. Officer, so I dropped the course. I decided to retire from the Army. I applied to retire on November 30th, 1963.

In September, the 2nd Armored Division went to Germany for a training exercise. I was in charge of "B Company rear as First Sergeant. This made it hard to clear the post, with my family, prior to



retiring. I had to take care of duty rosters, morning reports and one soldier had reported back from AWOL He had to be confined for Military Police. Most of the personnel were due for release so we started to run out of troops to perform the necessary duties, but by joining forces with another unit, with the same problem, I managed to keep everything operating until the main body of the Division returned. I hurried through clearing for retirement and on the 1st of December, 1963 I retired from the U.S. Army at Fort Hood, Texas, with honor. We had a parade ceremony and all of the retirees were presented their retirement certificates. My family watched the parade from the bleachers.

CIVILIAN AGAIN:

I had traded my Opel in for a 1961 Ford Station Wagon. This gave us more room on our trip home. Dorothy had purchased a house at 29 South Peru St. in Plattsburgh, N.Y., while I was in Germany the first time, so we had a place to live when I retired. An airman from the airbase was renting it and was moving out so it worked out fine.

My Army retirement was not nearly enough to support my family. Most of The jobs available were not something I could do, so I found a job pumping gas at the Airbase. This gave me time to look for a better job and put food on the table. The house was not large enough so, in 1964, I bought a house in Peasleeville, NY. My family loved it there. The house needed some repair. I did that on weekends. I quit working at the service station and went to work 'as a door to door salesman, selling roofing and siding. I quit that job and worked selling for Fuller Brush Company. It also required walking, door to door, so I kept looking and finally found employment at Pratt-Whitney in North Haven, Connecticut. They made parts for military aircraft engines. I would drive home on weekends and repair the old house. I rented a room at a private home in Wallingford, Connecticut during the week. I also took a course in writing while there on the GI bill, but my time ran out before I finished the course, so I did not graduate. Our last child, John, was born May 11th,1966. This completed our family. The work at Pratt Whitney was good but my wife was going blind and needed eye surgery, which would take a long time to recover. It forced me to find a job closer to home to be with the family.

A private employment agent got me a job as ambulance driver at the local Hospital as Ambulance driver. I drove and did other work for a year, then transferred to the powerhouse as a steam boiler



operator/handyman. I went to school at BOCES a local training center to learn heating and Plumbing, which the Hospital paid for. I was also taking welding training at Peru Central school. I worked at the Hospital until March 1974. I was terminated at the Hospital and started to work for Forrence orchard in Peru, N.Y. My wife was recovering from her eye surgery and was doing fine. The Job at Forrence Orchards was manual labor but I liked it. I was doing many different things, pruning trees, repairing tractors and machines, sprayers , mowers, trailers. I hauled the apples, during harvest, to storage.

I was taking a course in Auto Mechanics so that helped by giving me hands on experience. Pay is very low, minimum, for farm labor.. I worked there until my Son, Curtis Jr., who was in Chicago, got me a job as security guard at Kirby private investigators . Once again, I left my family and lived with my two older sons. My family joined me later and we lived in Chicago for a year. I never liked living in a city, especially with children.

I got a call from an old Army buddy, Bennie E. Rondeau. We had kept in contact with him many years. He lived in Jefferson City, Missouri, and worked at the State Prison. He said that he could get me employed at the Prison. Having studied Law Enforcement at a Chicago University, while at Kirby's, it was something I was trained for and I trusted my old friend. I did not like bringing my children up in Chicago. I went to his house that week end, to get more details. He gave me a good idea of the work and benefits so I decided to give it a try, if I could pass the test they gave to new Corrections Officers. I passed, which included range firing with all the weapons. I then had a 90 day trial. Later on I rented a mobile home and moved my family from Chicago. Dorothy was happy to leave there. I was trained on several jobs during my trial period. They decided that I would be better qualified to be at the Power Plant, because of previous experience. I went to work on night shift, 12PM to 8 AM. I had charge of 3 or 4 Inmates to keep the, high pressure, steam boilers operating. I bought a nice home in Russellville, a few miles West of Jefferson City, and we settled there.

I was elected as Alderman of the West Ward. Our children only lived a short distance from school. The older children were all married so there was only the twin's and John living at home. The people in Russellville treated us like we had always lived there and were very friendly, unlike Chicago. I helped make a swimming pool behind the school, which was a community project. After working at the Prison



for three years I left there and found a job on night shift at Lincoln University, doing the same work. It was not as dangerous as the prison. The power plant was supervised by a person that had been in the 82nd Div. when we maneuvered against them at Camp Drum, NY.in 1952. I enjoyed working there.

Moved to New Hampshire

I left Missouri In 1983 and moved to New Hampshire and started employment at Terradyne Inc. They made parts for Computers. Dorothy stayed in Missouri, until our house there was sold, then she moved to New Hampshire. Terradyne was probably the best job I ever had. The working conditions, bosses, pay and other employees were great. I worked nights on several different machines, punch press, drill press, bending machine and other jobs as a machine operator. I took a blueprint reading course, sponsored by the company. I worked there until I retired on April 1st, 1986. I had saved some money and with my Army retirement, Social security and 2 houses I owned I felt that it was time for me to retire and enjoy my remaining years doing whatever I chose to do. We moved back to our old house, in Peasleeville, N.Y, Which had been empty for 10 years.

RETIRED LIFE:

There were many things that I had wanted to do during my working years and now I had to decide which one had priority. I joined several military organizations as a start. I volunteered to work in the office for the American Military Retirees Association, located on Clinton Street, Plattsburgh, NY, each Wednesday. I also served on the Board of Governors at the American Legion, Post 20. I started raising vegetables in the home garden. All the old barns were torn down. I cleared up the area for a garden. The house had been empty about 10 years so repair work had to be done. This kept me busy for a long time. I went to some reunions as a member of the 43rd Division Association. I, later, joined a group to try and keep the Airbase open and manned the office for the group ,one day a week. I was Chaplain for 2 years at AMRA Chapter 2-1, took census for the local Catholic Church, and was Vice president for two terms at Chapter 2-1 also. I finally ended up President of 2-1 for two terms and elected to the AMRA National board of Directors twice. I served on 3 committees and was appointed chairman of the "disciplinary manual" committee.



In 1995 I decided to find old friends I had served with in Korea with the 73rd Heavy Tank Battalion. I went to a 7th Infantry Division reunion in Knoxville, KY, as they had informed me they had members from the 73rd. I was sad to see only 3 from the 73rd. Those 3 and I talked about forming our own Tank Battalion organization but no one was willing to start it. I contacted a CSM from the 73rd Armor, Third Battalion, assigned to the 82nd ABN Division, at Ft. Bragg, NC. He was in training and would work on it as soon as possible. He later informed me that the 73rd would be deactivated in 1997. I decided to try Vets Inc. from the Legion Magazine. They were getting reunions started for small and suggested a reunion at Breckenridge Hotel in Louisville, KY for our first meeting. We had to have 10 members for a group rate. I put a notice in the VFW Magazine, reunion column, so former members could contact me. We scheduled the first reunion for May, 1997. By that time our membership reached 34 and 18 came to the first reunion. It went very well and we formed plans for another one in 1998 at the same place. My plan had worked and the Organization membership was still growing.

I have been President of the 73rd Tankers Association until 2013. We had 18 reunions at several different locations and found over 400 former members. Some have passed away but we are still active. I am confident the new President, Bob Jones, will carry on with our traditions and motto, HONOR-FIDELITY-COURAGE.

END OF MY STORY

Life has been good to me, I am now 90 years old. I have had a few health problems, surgery and heart attack. I will now complete these memories. I did not go into detail as that would have taken entirely too long and probably never would have finished. I hope anyone reading this gets a benefit from it. (OLD SAYING): "You can take the boy away from the farm but you can't take the farm away from the boy". That saying can be related to the Military as well. I really miss the bugle calls, the boots marching in cadence, the pride of being a part of it all. I just plain loved Army life! I never seem to fit into civilian life very well but have managed to do some good. I have pride in my family and that is, in itself, a gratifying life experience. My children grew up and have their own families. The hard part is that Dorothy is in a Skilled Nursing Facility and it is difficult for me to see her as often as I would like. She has been a faithful wife and wonderful inspiration to me over the years. GOD Bless her!!



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