

SGT Norm Shetley
Wire Section, B Battery
499th Armored Field Artillery Battalion
14th Armored Division

Entered the Army July 1943

Basic Training: Fannin, TX

Went to ASTP at the University of Cincinnati

Sent to Camp Campbell, KY March 1944 to join the 14th Armored Division

Sent overseas: October 1944

Landed in Marseilles, France

Returned home: March 1946

Taught Elementary through Junior High School for 10 years and then worked for the State Department of Labor for 23 years

Retired: 1982

Wife passed: 2010

There isn't too much to say about basic other than it was hot and muggy!

Upon arriving in Marseille I volunteered to stay on the docks and drive the vehicles out to an assembly area that was about five or so miles outside of the city. One night, at about 02:00, a Lieutenant came and wok about ten of us up to drive some Jeeps out to the assembly area. I got to my Jeep and noticed that the left rear tire was low, so I told the Lieutenant and he said to just go on and that if it gets too low to come back to the docks. We got about half way through the city in convoy when I noticed that the tire was going down so I pulled out of the convoy and started back to the docks. After about 6 or 8 blocks I came to a right turn and I noticed that there were three Moroccans soldiers standing on the corner. A voice told me to be careful and just as I started to turn one of the soldiers reached out to grab the windshield and another poised to jump into the back seat. I hit the gas and that little Jeep jumped forward throwing the guy at the windshield right up against the Jeep and he then fell to the street. The other guy jumped but I had shot out from under him and he also hit the street. I never slowed down until I got to the docks. I was later told that the Moroccans would cut the American soldier's throats and take their vehicles to sell it to the French Army!

The 499th left Marseilles and went by convoy up the Rhone Valley and entered the front in the Colmar area. We were assigned to various infantry divisions. I had been assigned to the wire section of B Battery. We were stringing wire in some small town and our Corporal, Bunn Grigg, and the other lineman, John Dolan, had a snoot full of wine (I never cared for wine and I was the newest member of our section so I was sober). Griggs decided that he wanted to climb an old telephone pole to put the wire on. He got up the pole and Dolan jabbed him with our pike pole. He jumped and turned loose with his spurs and slid down the pole. His hands were loaded with splinters and after a few days he got an

infection. He went to the hospital and they took two of his fingers off! He never came back so I was made Corporal of the section.

We were hung up a bit in France, lack of gasoline or some such thing, and we stayed in a little town. The kitchen was all set up and as you went through the chow line and got to the end there was a box of Hershey's chocolates that you could grab a few sweets for later. They also had a box with cigarettes, no one took the Philip Morris smokes so I'd load up on those and I could sell them to the French for \$2 a smoke. A little French boy would hang around our kitchen truck and when you'd leave he'd grab onto your coat tail and ask for "Chocolat, Chocolat for me and my sista?!" so I'd give him a few pieces. Well this kept up for several days and being somewhat of a practical joker, I had a friend who chewed plug tobacco (his folks would mail him some) and I traded him a piece of chocolate for a piece of his tobacco which I then wrapped in a chocolate wrapper and when this young man asked me for chocolat again I gave him that piece. Sure enough he hurriedly unwrapped it, popped it into his mouth, spit it out immediately and exclaimed "Nix! Nix!!!" He never asked me for chocolat again until one day he came up behind me and didn't recognize me, he grabbed onto my coat-tail with his typical "Chocolat, Chocolat" saying and as soon as I turned around "NIX!!!!!"

One of my first days in combat sure was exciting. B Battery was set up just over a small hill from A Battery. One of our officers asked me to string wire to A Battery. I took a little hand roll of small wire and started over the hill (you couldn't see A Battery from B Battery). I got to the top of the hill and looked up and two planes were having a dog fight. I thought to myself that this was kind of neat. I watched and saw an object drop from one of the planes. There was a tank track about 14 to 18 inches deep just to the right of me. I dropped into the track and watched the object fall, then I turned over onto my stomach and the object, which was a bomb, fell just over the hill in the A Battery area and killed two GIs.

Then in the Battle of the Bulge we were transferred to support Patton's 3rd Army. One of our greatest battles was at the small towns of Hatten and Rittershofen in December 1944 – January 1945. (see the division history about one of the Generals stating it was one of the greatest battles ever fought).

In the vicinity of Lohr and traveling in a convoy we were heading up a slope when the convoy came to a halt. Which was okay because this was a beautiful area that was worth admiring with its rolling hills. I happened to look over the embankment and I noticed that there was a German boot with blood on it! So I said to Mac and Nolan that there is a wounded German around here. There were some willow trees by the stream so I stayed up top standing guard and providing cover while the guys went down the bank to see what we could flush out. Soon enough the guys flushed out five VERY young German soldiers. They gave up very quickly as they were happy to have the war ended for them. This was one of those times where Nolan came in quite handy as he could speak a little bit of German.

I didn't have much contact with the gun crews as I had my job to do and they had theirs. As we were about to go through the Siegfried Line our Captain called me to his tent and told me to strip down our Jeep in order to take one and a half mile of wire and go up through the Siegfried Line to the second house on the right as the Forward Observer would be there. So off we went. We got to the house and I

took the wire and threw it through the basement window and yelled for them to put the wire in the phone. No answer! So I went in to the basement and put the wire in the phone. When I got back up to the road my two helpers had left as someone had started shelling the town! I took off running back down the road and got about a quarter of a mile or so when a shell landed off to my left. I crossed over to the right side, still running, and a shell landed to my right! As I continued running I saw a German zig-zag trench that the Germans had dug. I dropped into the trench and as I hit the bottom a shell landed right next to the trench. It raised me up about a foot and I couldn't hear anything. I wondered what to do as they had zeroed in on me from their pillboxes. So I lay there thinking that they might that that they had got me. So I laid there for about 10 or 15 more minutes and then I took off running down the middle of the road. A soldier in a Jeep came up the road, he was lost, so I had him turn around and get us out of there heading back towards town. My co-workers said it was too hot to stay up there in the middle of the road with all those shells coming in.

To the best of my memory I only had one shower during our seven months on the line. They took us 10 miles back behind the lines and there was a long tent of shower heads. We lined up and were given new clothes and back to the front we went.

We were taught to dig foxholes back in the states but I only dug two while I was on the front lines since we were always on the go keeping the phone lines in.