

MY SERVICE WITH THE 45TH INFANTRY DIVISION  
FROM OCT. 11, 1950 TO AUG 1952 AT CAMP POLK,  
LOUISIANA, HOKKAIDO, JAPAN AND IN THE  
KOREAN WAR  
(BY ALVIN E BOESE)

1. CAMP POLK LOUISIANA

After being drafted into the Army on Oct. 11, 1950 I leave Portland, Oregon along with several other draftees from the Northwest area aboard a passenger train for Fort Riley, Kansas where we stay for several days. We get our uniforms here and receive orientation on what Army life will be like. It will be a very disciplined routine. We then leave Fort Riley by troop train and go to Camp Polk, Louisiana where we join other draftees and enlistees to bring the 45th Infantry Division up to full strength of about 20,000 men. The 45th Division is the newly activated Oklahoma National Guard and the division was only at about half strength. The 45th was also activated during the 2nd World War and served in Italy, France and Germany. The 45th is called the Thunderbird Division. The shoulder patch is a yellow bird with outstretched wings on a red background.

We now begin 5 ½ months of basic and advanced basic training. I am assigned to Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion of the 180th Infantry Regiment along with several other men from the northwest. Headquarters Co. is made up of three platoons and a motor pool. There is the Headquarters Platoon which is the intelligence section, Communications section which is the section that handles communications such as radios and field phones and the Pioneer and Ammunition Platoon or the P&A Platoon which handles all the Battalions ammunition supply except for the heavy artillery who handles their own. The P&A also is an engineer type platoon which does bridge construction, mine sweeping, bunker construction and the blowing up of bridges. I am assigned to the P&A platoon.

Basic training involves a lot of close order drill which is a lot of different types of marching routines. There is a lot of physical type training such as calisthenics and obstacle courses. It really made me hungry and I was always going for seconds in the chow line. Discipline was very strict. We were awakened every morning except Sunday around five thirty, get up and make your bed and then wait for the "fall out" call and then you had so many seconds to get out to the assembly area for roll call and calisthenics. If you didn't make it in so many seconds you kept doing it over and over till you did. One time we didn't make it and the sergeant told us that he wanted us down in so many seconds even if we had to break down the door. That is exactly what we did the next time. He didn't mention it again. After roll call and calisthenics we would go back into the barracks to shave and shower and wait for chow call. Then back to the barracks again till we fell out for the days training. This went on for several weeks. The basic training

also involved getting familiar with various weapons and some forced marches with full field pack, rifle and helmet. We had one forced march of twelve miles out, stay over night and then twelve miles back. My feet were killing me and I had a lot of blisters after the twelve miles. It was very hot and several guys passed out. There were a few who found out they had some real serious heart problems. I was really dreading the march back the next morning but when morning came I lucked out and was one of those picked to help the cooks take down their tent and pack their gear. By doing this I got to ride back on their truck. As sore as my feet were I doubt that I would have ever made it back to camp walking.

One of the toughest parts of basic training for me was going through the infiltration course. On this course you had to climb out of a trench on your stomach, then crawl across a field about one hundred feet pulling yourself along with your elbows with your rifle cradled in your arms. We had to keep real low to the ground at all times because there was always a machine gun firing live ammunition less than three feet over your heads. I thought maybe they were kidding about that till I saw the tracers (tracers are bullets which have an illuminating substance burning out the rear of them so the gunner can see where he is firing, especially at night and are placed at intervals in the belt of ammunition) whizzing over my head every so often. When you get across the field you have to crawl under barbed wire which is stretched like a large fish net about two feet off the ground. There are also several depressions in the ground at various locations with sand bags around them that have explosive charges going off to simulate combat situations. We pull ourselves along by pushing with our feet and pulling on the wire. A short time after we left Fort Riley two men were killed on a course just like this one when they were still beyond the wire one of them panicked and jumped up. The man alongside him rose up to drag him down just as the machine gun fire was in that location. The machine gunner didn't have a chance to stop firing in time.

We also had courses on hand to hand combat, judo and ju jitsu. All of the instructors were real professionals. They would have you come at them with a knife (the knife blade would be in a scabbard) and try to stab them, but no matter how hard we would try we always ended up flat on our backs. When we tried to come at them with a rifle and bayonet we ended up flat on our back again with them standing over us with our rifle and bayonet at our throat.

Of all the hand to hand combat training, I hated the bayonet training the worse. Here they had several dummies set up in a field and we had to rush at them screaming and yelling like a bunch of idiots, hit them with an upstroke with the butt of our rifle, then a down slash across them and finally bayoneting them. I disliked it so much that I told the instructor. I didn't feel good (I really didn't) and had a headache. He told me to go to the infirmary and get checked out. I told him I would try and tough it out.

We finished our training in March and were then informed that the division would be leaving for Japan the first part of April. We were all to have a two week furlough. Most of the guys from the Northwest chartered a bus but myself and a buddy from Aberdeen, Washington flew home. I wanted to have more time to spend with my

girlfriend (Lois) whom I was engaged to and with my parents and sister. It would be my only furlough while in the Army.

A few days after we arrive back we load up all of our gear, board a troop train and head for the Port of Embarkation at New Orleans, La. It was really hard to go home for such a short time and leave again, knowing that I would probably be overseas for the rest of my time in the Army.

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