

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)

3. WE ARRIVE IN JAPAN

After 30 days at sea we finally arrive in Japan at the port city of Muroran, which is located on the southern end of the island of Hokkaido, which is the northern most main island of Japan. To the south are the islands of Honshu and Kyushu. Mount Fujiama is on the island of Honshu and we got to see it when we were off the island of Honshu. There are hills around the harbor that are covered with houses. Many are pretty shabby looking and the first thing I noticed here and later all over the island was that none of the houses were painted. Just kind of gray looking.

After some time we disembark from the ship and load onto trucks that are waiting for us and drive several miles north to the small town of Chitose. At the edge of town within walking distance there is a huge city made up of Army squad tents. This will be our home for the next seven months. Each tent sleeps up to eight men and has two oil fired stoves in it. There are two upright poles in the tent where we will hang a mirror to shave by. There is no inside plumbing, and instead of a two holer out back, we have a twelve holer. It does not have a cover over it now but will have a squad tent over it in a few days. It was rather embarrassing using it in the daytime, especially when there were Japanese civilians walking by about one hundred yards away. When the twelve holer and also the mess hall sump were getting full/ the Japanese farmers would come by and pump them out and into carts called "honey buckets". They would spread this on their fields. We were told never to eat in a restaurant in town. Other parts of the division went to tent cities near the towns of Eniwa and Shimamatsu and some to an area that had regular buildings. During our stay here we will spend quite a bit of our off time going into town, shop for things to send home and drink Japanese beer. The beer is made out of rice and was pretty good at first when there were just a couple of beer halls, but there were later about a dozen of them, and such a demand for beer that some of it wasn't quite ready yet and would sometime make you sick. One funny thing that I still remember that happened in Chitose was when two of my buddies and I went into town and decided to take a ride in a rickshaw which in the old days was pulled by hand but now was pulled by a bicycle. Like a three wheeler. It held two people. Two of us got in and the third, Joe Fetrlie who weighed about two hundred pounds was following behind. We just got going good when Joe jumped up on the back causing the rickshaw to lean way back and putting the driver up in the air. He was hollering like crazy and still pedaling nothing but air. It was really funny but he didn't think so. No sense of humor. One day we took the bus to Sapporo (now Portland's sister city) and bought some things to send home.

We now began three phases of training. The first phase will be learning more about mine detecting, disarming various types of mines, getting more training on the use of various types of explosives for blowing up bridges, bridge abutments and pill boxes, learn to build bunkers, gun emplacements, and lay out barbed wire entanglements. Another one of our jobs is to assist the rifle companies (front line troops) when needed. We will be involved in a lot of day and night field exercises which are mock battle exercises. Our main job during these exercises will be moving the battalion's ammunition supply. Before the exercise we would take three two and a half ton trucks and go out to an old airstrip where our ammunition was all stored in some old airplane hangers. This airport was one of the airports where the Japanese trained their "Kamakase" Pilots during the Second World War. The first time we went out to do this mere was an earthquake right when we were loading the ammunition. There are no detonators in the hand grenades, mortar shells or recoilless rifle shells so we didn't have to worry about anything exploding. In an actual combat situation we would be carrying the detonators separately. This is backbreaking, boring work. By the time the two or three day exercise is over we will be loading all this ammunition two or three times because we will be moving from place to place. One night we were moving to a new location with our three truck loads of ammunition several hundred feet apart with no lights on to simulate combat conditions. A Japanese truck coming the other way didn't see the last truck right away and forced it onto the shoulder of the road. The shoulder gave way and the truck load of ammunition with half a dozen men on top of the load went rolling down into a shallow canyon. There were boxes of ammunition flying everywhere. Some of these boxes weigh up to 115 lbs. We always rode on top of the load because we didn't have extra vehicles for the men. Fortunately no one was killed but there were some serious injuries. One sergeant broke his leg so bad that he had to be sent back to the States and discharged. One of my buddies from Shelton, Washington had a broken arm, cuts and bruises, another had a section of one side of his face torn away and there were other minor injuries. I was lucky to be riding on one of the other trucks and didn't even know it had happened till after we got to our new location. On one of these nights one of the riflemen fell over a cliff and was killed.

Our next phase of training will be amphibious assault training. The first part takes place where they have erected a large wooden wall to resemble the side of a ship. It is about 30 feet high and has a ships cargo net hung over the side down into a wooden replica of a landing craft. We practice climbing down this for a couple of days with rifle, helmet and full field pack. A few days later the whole division moves out to one of Hokkaido's northern seaports where we load onto Navy Attack Transports to go out and do the real thing. We are on the ship that day and night and on the next day we are at the landing spot. Climbing down the side of a real ship and into a bobbing landing craft was a hair raising experience. When I looked down at that bobbing landing craft next to our rolling ship it looked like a hundred feet down instead of thirty. I thought, "can I do this". I made it o.k. On one of the other ships a guy was killed when the landing craft suddenly rose up just as he got to it and then crushed him between the landing craft and the side of the ship. There were many other injuries also. We would be the last wave of landing craft to hit the beach so we had to circle for almost an hour rolling around and some of the guys got real sick but they weren't allowed to stand up and throw up over the side

because this was supposed to be combat conditions and you had to keep your head down below the top of the landing craft. We finally got the signal to head in to the beach. When we hit the beach the ramp was dropped and imbedded itself into the sand. Our gung ho lieutenant turned to us and yelled, "follow me; and just as he stepped off the ramp a wave came in and he went in almost up to his neck. It receded when we came off and the water was only ankle deep. We made our assault up the beach and I noticed I was having a hard time moving in the sand. I still had one of the ties from my life jacket tied to me and I was dragging it.

We were looking around for the trucks that were supposed to pick us up like they told us they would. They were there all right, but a few miles down the road. We were really tired but still had to walk the few miles to the trucks. This ended our amphibious assault training. We were wondering why we were taking this type of training but didn't find out until there had been a change in plans later on that we had originally been scheduled for an amphibious landing somewhere in North Korea. We were sure glad that they had scrapped that plan. It could have been hazardous to our health.

Before going on, I have forgotten to mention "Stinky". He was a dog that I we acquired somehow and made him the mascot of the P&A Platoon. He had the appearance of a chow dog but was much smaller and light brown in color. We couldn't come up with a name for him until one day he came into the tent after being out in the rain for a long time. Someone said, "He stinks!!!. From then on we called him "Stinky". He was a real friendly dog and most everyone liked him. He usually slept at the foot of my bed at night.

We now begin the last phase of our training which is "Air Transport Training". We begin our training by driving a jeep and a weapons carrier onto a wooden platform which simulates the inside of a transport airplane. There are metal tie down rings on the platform where we learn how to tie down the vehicles and what type of knots to use. A few days later we go out to the airport where we drive our vehicles into transport planes called "Flying Box Cars". After tying them down some Air Force personnel come into the plane and give each of us a parachute. We didn't know that we would be going up in the plane. We sat down on bench type seats along the side of the plane. The pilot and co-pilot came aboard and headed for the cockpit. We said, "Hey!! don't you guys want to check our tie down job? They just said, "if you guys are willing to go-up in this plane, we are willing to fly it. I guess they knew we would make sure that the vehicles were secure. We took off and flew around Hokkaido for awhile and were starting back toward the airport when the plane suddenly dropped what seemed to be about a hundred feet. The pilot gave the engines full throttle and we leveled out. From where we were sitting we could look directly into the cockpit. Both the pilot and co-pilot turned around and were really cracking up because they knew we had the hell scared out of us. We thought we might crash or have to bail out. We had just hit a real bad air pocket. We flew around a little longer and then landed. That ended this phase of our training. Afterwards we were told that the 45th Div. was now the best trained infantry division that the U.S. had. We had been training for over 11 months.

It is now November and it is getting pretty cold. We have about two inches of snow on the ground. For the past several weeks new metal quonset huts have been under construction to replace the tents so we can have warmer units to live in during the sub zero winter weather. When we move in it is like moving into a ritzy motel after what we were used to living in. We now have inside plumbing with wash basins, showers, flush toilets, and even windows. We think we really have it made for the winter. Boy!, will we ever get a big surprise in a few weeks.

One night Shorty McGinnis and I (Shorty was one of my buddies in the Communications Platoon from Enterprise, Oregon. A real character) decide we will go out to celebrate our new living quarters. Instead of going into town to have a few beers we decide to go to the NCO (this is the Non Commissioned Officers Club) and they serve hard liquor. But we did have one problem though we were only Pfc's and you had to be at least a corporal to get into the NCO club. So, we borrowed a corporal shirt from two of our corporal buddies. We have to walk about a half mile to the NCO club. We didn't have any trouble getting in at all. The guard at the door saw our corporal stripes and let us right in. I was used to drinking mostly beer but tonight we were going to drink mixed drinks with whiskey in them. The drinks were very strong and in a short time I was becoming pretty disoriented. Then I felt real sick, so I decided to go outside for awhile. After realizing that there was no way I could drink anymore I went back and told Shorty that I was going back to camp. He said that he was going to stay awhile longer. I wandered back to camp where I was sick as a dog all night long. Shorty told me the next day that he stayed for a few more drinks and then started back down the road toward camp. He had just went a short distance when a convoy of trucks approached him going in the direction of camp. There was a jeep in the lead with the driver and a captain riding in it. Shorty stepped out into the roadway and flagged down the jeep. The captain asked him what the problem was. Shorty told him that he didn't have a problem, he just wanted a ride back to camp. The captain chewed him out up one side and down the other. Shorty didn't get his ride either. It was a good thing the captain didn't ask him for his I.D. and find out that he was impersonating a corporal. Both of us did get promoted to corporal a few months later.

Since I am on the subject of comical situations I can remember another one that happened while we were here in Japan. One of the guys got up late one night to go out to the ten holer and when he went in he found Bob Counter (one of my buddies in my platoon) with a flashlight and a long stick which he was probing around down in one of the holes. When he asked him what he was doing he told him that he had been to town and got sick on the beer he drank and had thrown up. Bob wore an upper denture plate and when he threw up the plate fell into the hole. He was trying to find the plate. No, he didn't find it. Some people do some really comical things when they drink a little too much. I remember another situation where one of the guys in another tent was in bed when one of his buddies came staggering in from town. His bed was right by the tent door. After awhile he noticed his buddy standing near the doorway. He said, "what are you doing?" He said, "I'm peeing out the doorway." After a quick look he said, "no you aren't, you're peeing in my boots." Well, so much for the humor.

A few days later some of us went to town for a few beers. While we were sitting at our table one of the bar maids came over and asked us when we were leaving for Korea. We told her that we weren't going to Korea. She said, "yes you are." We told her that we hadn't heard of anything about it. We had heard before that some of the bar maids were communist informers which this one must have been and was trying to pump us for information. Now if it was true that we were going to Korea, only some high ranking officer would have that information. Some officers did have live in women house keepers. We just shrugged it off and went on with our beer drinking.

About ten days after the incident in the beer hall when we fell out for roll call one morning we were given the bad news. We were told we would be leaving for the Korean front in a few days to relieve the 1st Cavalry Division on the central front. They had been there since the first part of the war. Here we thought we had it made for the winter. In a few days we were packed and ready to leave. Even Stinky.

For photo gallery, [click here](#).