

Robert Coffin Ingles

After High School, I worked for an aircraft company in Middle River, a suburb of Baltimore, for almost 3 years before being drafted into the U. S. Army in April, 1944. I fabricated over 100 rear tail gun turret sections for B-26 Bombers during that period of time before entering the U. S. Army.



Upon entering the U. S. Army, I was assigned to Camp Croft, South Carolina for basic infantry training. Following that, I was sent to Camp Shanks, New York, where later I was boarded on the Queen Mary ocean liner which had been converted to a troop ship. Three days later, I arrived in Glasgow, Scotland from which I took a train to Manchester in England.



From Manchester, another train took me to Southampton, a major port on the English Channel to Omaha Beach in Normandy, France (one of the major invasion beaches of D-day, which was on June 6, 1944).

From there, I was assigned to the 45th Division of U. S. Army Infantry, joining that division on Epinol, France. I was a squad leader in the combat zone of the Rhineland (commonly referred to as Alsace Lorraine) which was part of Germany prior to the end of World War I, thereafter becoming a part of France.

Along the way, I lost a good friend who was shot through the right eye. I will never forget how he cried for about a minute before he died. At about the same time, a soldier to my right was hit by a bullet in his left lung. I think that he survived. One bullet struck the leather boot on my left foot, but glanced off, so I escaped injury.

Shortly before Christmas in 1944, we were put on 24-hour alert to go North to engage in the Battle of the Bulge, the last big push by Hitler's Army. This operation was eventually called off.



On January 14th, 1945, I was assigned to take a reconnaissance patrol to a mountain east of our bivouac area. I had seven soldiers under my command. We were ambushed on the down slope of a snow laden mountain of the Voges, a foothill of the Alps. A rifle shot was heard and I instinctively looked for cover, ending up behind a large fallen tree, earlier felled by artillery shells.



Several times I got up to survey the area and each time I did, a rifle shot was fired, triggering a barrage of machine gun fire toward me. In one

instance, I noticed a 3-man squad of German soldiers behind the machine gun about 100 feet away. I decided to "play dead", but meanwhile I could hear the screams of my soldiers being shot to death. I never saw them again.

Each time the machine gun started shooting, I could feel the impact through the thick fallen tree and the machine gun shredded the sleeping bag strapped to my back.

After being captured, my infantry unit bombarded the area with artillery shells, and I helped the Germans to carry their casualties for evacuation from the combat area. Later, I had a lengthy conversation with the Commander of the unit that captured me. The Battle of the Bulge was over, and he realized that the War was in it's final months. He told me that the United States of America was later to deal with the Bolsheviks (the Russians). Of course, he was correct because, as Winston Churchill, then Prime Minister of Britain said that an Iron Curtain had fallen, and eventually a wall was constructed to separate West Germany from East Germany.





I was interned in several Prison Camps, ending in one in Bremnborge, near Bremn, a major harbor on the North Sea, west of England. I was liberated by a contingent of Welsh Guards, part of the British 2nd Army, on April 28th 1945.

I was taken to Le Havre, France for rehabilitation before being returned to the United States. (I was down to 110 pounds, from my normal weight of 155 pounds, due to poor nutrition during captivity.) I arrived in the United States in June 1945, and after a 65-day leave at home and two weeks in Miami Beach, Florida, I was assigned to Fort Ord, California as an Information and Education Officer to conduct lectures for troops which were being processed prior to leaving for Japan. (Japan had surrendered in August 1945, commonly referred to as V-J Day.)