

My father, M. Russell Dennett, apparently wrote a journal of his experiences in World War II. I believe it may have been written sometime after he returned home. It contains a list of the events he wished to cover and then the journal itself describing those events. I don't think he ever finished it. I have transcribed this below. My own comments, if any, are within double brackets ([[.]]) and italicized.

[[A single sheet of the journal's paper has been torn from the journal and contains a list of the events he wished to cover.]]

1. Turning eighteen 9/14/46 *[[should be 9/14/44]]* going to Milf. *[[Milford, MA]]*
2. Going over a week later with Roy and Henry (immediate) *[[Possibly classmates Roy Rehbein and Henry Murray?]]*
3. Leaving Milford for Ft Banks.
4. 5 PM Oct 20
5. Arriving at Devens at 8 PM 10/20/46 *[[should be 10.20.44]]*
6. Life at Devens
7. Train trip to Georgia
8. Basic training at Camp Wheeler
9. Activities at “ “
10. Coming home on Delay on Route
11. Arriving home Feb 18, 1945 at 6:30 PM
12. Leaving Worcester Feb 28 1945 at 1 PM for Fort Meade
13. Processing at Meade
14. One Sat eve in Washington, DC
15. At Camp Kilmer, NJ
16. Visits to NY City
17. Leaving the states (March 15, 1945) boarding ship March 13
18. Life on shipboard (U.S.S. Hermitage)
19. Arriving Le Harve France (March 26, 1946 *[[should be 1945]]*)
20. Train ride across France in Box Car
21. Easter Sunday in Le Grande, France Repple Depple *[[Thionville written underneath]]*
22. Catching my outfit by truck
23. Last night spent together with Henry Frankfort
24. Becoming one of the famous 4th Armored G.I.'s
25. My outfit the 53 Armored Inf Bn
26. At Ohrdruf Germany Concentration Camp
27. My first ariel attack by 6 German planes
28. Life during combat (38 days combat)
29. Taking the city of Glauchau Germany
30. Drive to Czechoslovakia
31. The people of “
32. Two wonderful weeks at Volyne, Czechoslovakia. Meeting the Russians
33. Back into Germany at Landshut
34. Occupation
35. Starting Army cook May 29, 1945
36. My 9 months in Landshut (Dec 15 made T/5)
37. To Plattling move Russian PW back to Russia
38. Going to Schwabach
39. Life at “ (March 20, made T/4)
40. Becoming the 53rd Constabulary Sqd.
41. Placed as Mess Sgt
42. Seeing Nuremberg and the Palace of Justice
43. Leaving Schwabach July 15
44. To Bremerhaven Germany
45. Leaving “ July 25
46. Life on shipboard (USS General Richardson)
47. My feelings on seeing NY and the Statue of Liberty August 2
48. To Camp Kilmer again
49. On to Fort Dix

50. Discharge in August 7, 1946 at 9:30 PM

51. Meeting Dad and Mother at Dover, NH

Chapter I

It all happened one late summer day on September Fourteenth nineteen hundred and forty four when I turned into my eighteenth year of living which was during the time my country was engaged in a World War and I was to go over to Milford and sign for the draft. I felt "big" that day as I knew it was my duty towards my God and country to become just a small part in the great machine.

Of course I didn't know what was ahead of me or how long I would be with my "Great Uncle Sam" but at that time all I had in mind was to get in and fight a fight that in later years I would rise my head to anyone and say "I Did my Bit."

Just a week later two of my very best buddies Roy H. Rhebein and Henry Murray and I went back to Milford and sign again for a immediate induction and so we waited for about three more weeks when the great news came and said we would go to Fort Bank, Massachusetts on October 20th for a physical examination and if passed, would start our army life on that day.

It didn't take long for those three weeks to pass here at home and when that Friday morning came and the three of us left Milford around 7 AM to see how our physical condition stood with the army examiners. It was an exam which I will never forget, lasting about two and half hours. The final word came to us in the late afternoon that all three of us passed and we would be sworn in at 5 PM that afternoon. It was a wonderful feeling when I raised my hand and took one step forward saying that I would solemnly swear

Chapter II Camp Devens, Mass

Arriving with all our civilian ??? around 8 P.M. that day at Camp Devens meant the start of living a new life with well over a few other million of fellows that were working and pulling together for the same cause. Our stay at Devens was only a week long just time enough to get the hang of army doings and ways. While at Devens I received letter from both Mother and Dad and oh how much they meant those days as it was really lonely for them back home alone. We all put in for weekend passes to come home the following weekend before we started for some training camp down south. But it all happened that we were in a group to move out of Devens at one P.M. on Saturday, and so our great hopes of seeing home once again was off.

By now we had received all of our issued clothing and had gone down to the railroad to board trains to take us somewhere in this vast United States to have our basic training for the Army. The cars were really old and with wooden seats which we were riding in for three days and two nights so you can just imagine how worn out all of us were when we finally reached our new camp where we would be staying for the next 3 ½ months which turned out to be Camp Wheeler, Georgia. This camp is in the middle of the state just 15 miles from the large city of Macon, Georgia.

This was known as an Infantry Replacement Training Center and we all found this out along with thousands other that we were going to be trained in the mightiest and proudest branch of the United States Army. We were trained for 11 weeks of the great many fundamentals of the Army such as the rifle, first aid, actions under fire, the mortar, and a many other too great to mention.

Then when the 12th and 13th week came around we were to move out into the surrounding areas of the camp and put everything that had been taught us into practice for the coming real thing which was not too far off. While was at Camp Wheeler I was qualified as Marksman in the rifle & carbine.

Both Thanksgiving and Christmas Day were very sad for me as it really was the first time that I had been away from Mother, Dad and my brother Bob on such family days as both these were.

Chapter III Delay in Route

Well on February 17, 1945 the time came when we would all leave Camp Wheeler and head for home. We left on that day late in the evening by troop train as far as Washington, D.C. and then we were on our own for ten days Delay in Route.

In Washington Station I sent Mother a telegram saying that I was on my way and would see her soon. When we arrived in Worcester around 5 P.M. on the 19th I again called Mother up and said that I would take the bus from Worcester to Hopedale. Well, it was a stormy night and just because of that the bus was three quarters of an hour late. But I will never forget the picture of my dear folks standing there at the corner waiting for me to come. Before the bus had moved away I was in my mother's arms once again and ho, what a feeling which words that I write can not ever express.

It was really eight wonderful home like days during this time as both Mother and Dad put themselves out of their way to make a week in my life always with many most happy memories. As Dad really knew what I would be going through he did not for one minute let on to me in anyway the difficulties I would be facing that were ahead of me over there. Of course I knew right well all the time here at home this may have been the last time I would ever see home again but right down in my heart I wasn't worry one bit as He just kept telling me He would always be beside me wherever I would go and if anyone ever has that feeling they know for sure everything will turn out all right in the end.

Those days past [sic] very fast and February 27th is one day that I shall never in my life ever forget as that was the day I left home and Mother and Dad for how long I did not know. Our train left the Worcester station around 1:30 P.M. and believe me it was very hard on Mother and Dad to say good-bye to me. The train left had about a five minute stop over there and I boarded it and left my bags on a seat and then came out on the platform once more to have my last words with them for a long time. The exasperation on both there [sic] faces shines in my memory know [sic] just as though it was yesterday. I knew they were holding back the tears and not until the train started to leave did I realize what a feeling was going through both of their minds. There standing arm in arm watching one of their sons go off to war.

Chapter IV At Meade and Kilmer

We all arrived at Fort Meade, Maryland safe and sound and was ready for everything which would be put before us. That following Saturday evening I was one of the lucky few in the group who had the chance to take a 6 hour pass wo Washington D.C. our capitol. Although my class in school did not get a chance to visit this city I tried to take in all the sights I could while there during that short length of time. We stayed at Fort Meade for only a week then were sent to out P.O.E. which turned out to be Camp Kilmer New Jersey to wait there another week before being put on a shipment for the boat trip. While at

Kilmer I spent two evenings going up to New York City with Henry seeing the sights for the first time and also visiting Radio City and seating in on a radio broadcast being put on over the air. Believe me every chance I got during the time I was at Kilmer and in New York I tried to call home every chance I could get as I knew that it would be a long time before I could hear their voices again.

Well all during my Army life so far I have just been wondering when that all important day would come when I would make my way up a gangplank on a ship to a distant far away land that day finally came on March 13, 1945 when I along with many other thousands of fellows. After we arrived on ship board we learned that our Company had landed on ship two days before we would sail and that was because of being on K.P. all the way over. As the next day, March 14, was my dear Mothers birthday I was very unhappy as I knew I couldn't get to a phone and give her my love, but that was just one more thing in the Army where you have to "grin and bear it."

On the 15 we woke in the morning finding very much to our surprise New York harbor just in the back of us and so we finally knew we were on our way.

Well we were on the U.S.S. Hermitage which in peace time was a Italian liner which was converted into a Army transport. In our convoy going across was made up of around 35 other ships and we happened to be on the lead ship. Our company was split up into four different shifts of working in kitchen. I was placed on the Galley Clean-up and work every day from noon until 6 P.M. and I found out by keeping busy all the time the voyage wasn't so long as some of the others thought. The trip across was very calm and it took us just 13 days which was considered rather fast for a convoy crossing the ocean during the war time.

Chapter V Stepping into A New Land

Around 9:30 A.M. on the 26th Day of March we were to step off of the Hermitage onto a landing craft and then the next moment we had finally landed at Le Harve, France. After landing I think it was about 3 miles that we had to walk through the main streets of Le Harve, I went to the Railroad station where we stayed there for about eight hours. While waiting there an air mail letter from Dad was given me along with thousands of others went to the other fellows and believe me I just read that letter and afterwards cried as I knew I was well over 3000 miles from home and its an awful feeling.

It was around 6:30 P.M. that evening when we were all loaded into box cars for our trip across France to a Replacement Depot. The car which I was in had around twenty other fellows and this is where we spent three days and two nights going to an unknown place. When we finally reached our destination it was just ten miles from the Luxembourg boarder and the name of the small village was called Le Grande, France. *[[From what I find on the Internet, this was most likely the 17th Replacement Depot in or near Angervilliers, France.]]*

I was a small garrison camp with about ten buildings and the rest of the area was taken up with eight men tents which we were in all the time there. Here we were issued our trusty M1 rifles which was to be our closest buddie all through the coming combat. We were called out Easter Sunday morning *[[April 1, 1945]]* to go out and "zero" our weapons in. While there we were put on many details around the camp and the one of them I got was guarding German P.W.'s.

Then the time came when we were to leave and put on a truck to cross into Germany. It was a cold and rainy day to start on our trip on top of gas cans which meant no smoking and a very miserable journey.

Henry and I spent our first night of the trip together in a little shack something like a chicken coop, and then in the morning we were on our way again and that evening was spent just two miles outside of Frankfurt sleeping on the wet ground with just a shelter half over us.

At this field in Frankfurt is where we were assigned to our different outfits and also where Henry and I broke up and later on we learned we went to different outfits but both in the same great Fourth Armored Division that had been General Patton's favorite Armored Division in the whole Third Army and which was the spearhead in all of its drive to meet the enemy.

That day as going to meet the outfits of course was considered dangerous as we were getting closer all the time to the front lines and were open for air attacks but as luck was with us all the way not a one showed up. About the only thing that went wrong with the truck that I was on, it got lost from the rest of the convoy and we were an hour or two behind the others.

After realizing where we were, being Ohrdruf Concentration Camp we learned that we had become one of the 53rd Armored Infantry Battalion of the 4th Armored Division. I was put in "C" company and in the Headquarters squad of the second platoon. The rest of the company was to arrive there the next day and spend a six day rest period. That evening we were put on our first taste of guard duty overseas and listening to the artillery going over my head was rather a frightening noise for those two hours.

The next day when the men came in was really a sight to see with fellows who hadn't shaved or taken a bath for well over a month. It was a great day meeting all the men who you would be close by for a long time to come. Of course every American G.I. is so inquisitive we had to go and look this Concentration Camp over and about a half mile from where we were staying the high Germans had machine gunned these Poles and Jews just a few hours before. There were bodies lying all over the ground naked. There were sheds full of them piled on top of each other with lye spread over the bodies. It was another sight in my life that I shall never forget as it made you realize that there was a war going on and something to fight for.

This was to be a week's rest but was cut to 3 days and as the day arrived I was very scared as I knew this meant going up to the front lines and anything could happen. About ten minutes after we left our area and was on our way down the road, three German planes were sighted coming down on us. This was my first time being fired upon and also there were dropped around a half dozen personnel bombs. Of course I didn't know what to do at first and when it was over I found myself lying on the floor of the halftracks really shaking all over. By this time I had become familiar with the rest of the fellows in the squad who were Platoon leader Lt. Oberhart from New York, Platoon Sgt Amos Crocker from Maine, Squad leader Frank Cuniff, Brooklyn, NY (a wonderful fellow) Bill Deagan, Jersey City, NJ, L. Guthrie, Cleveland Ohio (radio operator) Henry Cassinillie, driver, Portland Oregon, Arthur Lewis, from Ohio and Calvin Lombombard from Upper New York State, a swell bunch of fellows whom I'll remember always.

The following days were spent on the move most of the time taking small towns and driving on and on until we had come to a city by the name of Glauchau, Germany which had around 3000 Germans in it. Of course this meant meeting the enemy face to face and

firing at each other. Very much to my discoverment and satisfaction our platoon was going to be in reserve and search houses through the town. It took us around six hours to clear the town. On the outskirts of town we were ordered off the trucks along a river bed to pick up some prisoners that had escaped. While going along this stretch I happened to notice a German lying face down in the water acting as though dead, one of the fellows went down to him and kick him over and very much to our surprise he was very much alive.

We had left Glauchau and gone up on a large hill overlooking the city and later in the day we saw a line of P.W. about a mile long with four abreast that had been in that small city.

Another small experience of my combat was one day when we had pulled up in a field just outside a small town supposed to had been taken a few days before by other troops. Just to be sure everything was safe the headquarters squad were to search fox holes down to the edge of town. Everything seem to be in order and when we had turned our backs going towards the tracks we happed to hear someone yell "Comrade! Comrade!" and it was ten Germans who were giving themselves up. Very much to our surprise we took around 50 Germans out of that town and to think we were going to spend the night there without even knowing they were their.

[[That's all he wrote. It ends there. There are many blank pages left in the journal. I don't know why he never finished. Perhaps it was too much and brought back memories he would rather have forgotten. We'll never know for sure.]]