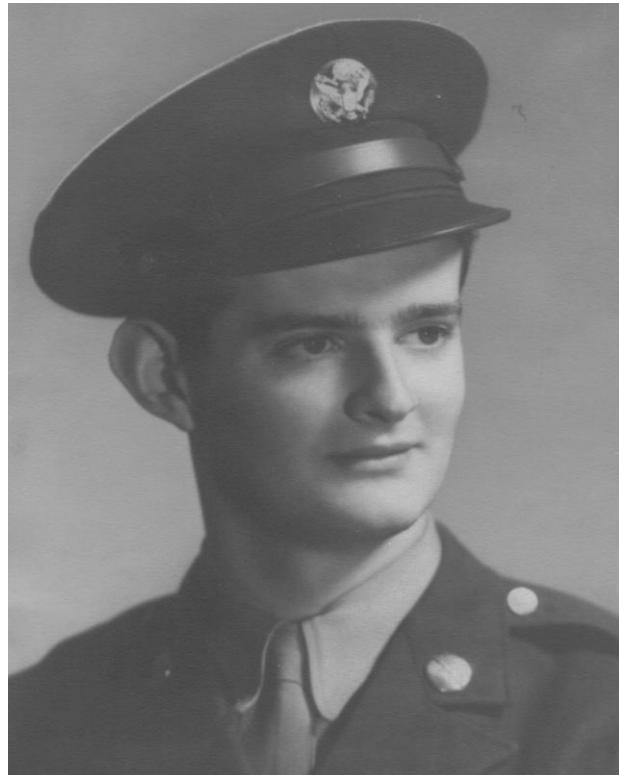


Going Across

The life and Times of Tom Sheehan

Volume one

By Mike Sheehan



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Cover Photo: Dad after basic training, before going overseas

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Preface

In my dad's 60th year of life he made me audio tape recordings recounting his personal experiences of World War Two. He made this for me since I had expressed a keen interest on the subject. He made it clear these tapes were certainly for my brothers and sisters too or anyone else who might want to hear them.

In his charming, self-deprecating manner he said on the tapes, "Probably it will be more valuable as you get to be very old and perhaps resting and recuperating from some elderly illness and have absolutely nothing else to do. You might want to play the tapes. It will probably help you go to sleep."

Now, I will admit even in my healthy 30's I dozed a few times listening to the tapes. But, as dad had instilled in me a strong sense of history, I knew they were quite valuable. I treasure them greatly.

Later, while dad was undergoing chemotherapy, we did a video interview. At this time we discussed his early years before the war and our family history in general.

After dad died, in 1996, I acquired some hundred or so family letters of correspondence between he and his family while he was away during the war (1943, 44 and 45.) I also interviewed my Aunt Peggy, dad's only sister. I gathered whatever other family information I could. Then finally I referred to several different history books. I used all this to put this present volume together.

This book is not intended in any way to glorify war. For that matter, it isn't necessarily written to show the horrors of war. Its purpose was and is to understand and acknowledge my father's experience.

In a perfect world everyone would be accorded the same treatment while "going across" his or her own continuum of time.

1

Coming of Age

Something my Dad and I often did, and I still do, was "mark" those dates that are of historical significance. One such date was September 1. This was the day Hitler launched his "Blitzkrieg" attack on Poland, beginning what we now call World War Two. In 1989 dad was 64 when he and I marked the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the war. On September 1, 1939 he was exactly fourteen and a half years old, ready to start his freshman year in high school. Dad had been born, Thomas Edward Sheehan, on March 1, 1925 here in Seattle, Washington.

He lived with his parents George and Margaret Sheehan and his younger sister Margaret Jane (Peggy). They all lived in the back of the family paint store on the corner of forty-fifth and Sunnyside. They had opened the paint store in-January 1938.

Kirkland Paints, a local distributor, had been looking for a Seattle area outlet to sell their paint. So for \$85 a month dad's folks rented the building at 2400 N. 45th and sold paint on consignment. George also contracted out as a painter. He would be out doing contract work while Margaret ran the store. He bid on some pretty big jobs, hospitals, Churches, schools as well as private homes. As business increased he employed a few men on a regular basis.

Business at the store also thrived, the main reason being that George was able to mix colors to give the customer whatever shade they desired. At the time this ability was very new, technologically speaking. You bought white paint and that was about it. But George could take a splotch of some material to match and by mixing oils with paint give you the desired color. For this reason his paint store became very well known locally. So, although it involved a lot of really hard work George and Margaret's venture did pay off for them. They eventually, after the war, were able to buy the building and the

adjacent lot from the original owner. Also Schorn Paints bought out Kirkland. The GF Sheehan business became a franchise.

But like most Americans it had been rough going during the depression for George and Margaret. In the late 20's and early 30's George was trying to save another business which, if it hadn't been for the crash of '29, may have done very well. He had developed a new heating product. At the time one of the more common ways of heating the home was still coal. He had patented a briquette made with oil and peat. This mixture was compressed into a standard size brick, which could be conveniently stored and/or fed into a furnace. I imagine it burned somewhat cleaner than coal.

By the time dad was a child of 2 or 3 his father had established three working plants, two here in Washington (Chehalis and Kent) and one in Minnesota (Minneapolis). In 1927 George and Margaret, with their two little ones, moved to Minneapolis to manage the plant there. Dad's maternal uncle, Bob Tangney, had also moved out from Seattle to lend a hand. George's brother, Will, seemed to play a part in the Minnesota site as well. Will more than likely had already been living out there. The Sheehan family had been established farmers in Minnesota since before the turn of the century. In fact George and most of his 10 siblings were born, during the late 1880's, in Houston County in the southeast corner of the state.

When George and Margaret first moved their family out there they had an apartment. They eventually moved into a house. In fact, things were going so well, they were even able to hire a "mammy", to look after the kids. A big black woman named Ella.

Although she was very young at the time dad's sister Peggy has some very vivid memories of their life back there, most of them very fond. Something that really stuck-out in her mind was the Mid-western weather. One winter the snow was so deep it was up to her big brothers eyebrows. When she stepped off the porch she disappeared entirely. This prompted dad to say, "Where did my Jane go?"

Then there was the time a lighting ball entered the family home and traveled from room to room. This must have been quite a dramatic event. Especially considering George's brother Joseph had been killed by lightning back in Montana in 1917.

Without exaggeration, things were looking very promising for his business. Then with the onset of the Depression George began to lose his financial backing as well as any hope of "success". Before he was ready to give up completely the decision was made to send the family back to Seattle to live with relatives.

So sometime in late 1929, early 1930 dad, Peggy and their mom rode the train (the old "Empire Builder") all the way across the Northern plains over the Rockies then the Cascades and on into Seattle. It was usually a four-day journey and they had to stop at least once because of snowdrifts.

As if to add to the drama of all this, they had brought along a fourth passenger. She was known as "Auntie", a story unto itself. "Auntie" whose name was Margaret McGeough was dad's great aunt. Julia McGeough had married Thomas Tangney. These were dad's maternal grandparents. Auntie was Julia's sister. Thomas Tangney, or "Pa" as dad's grandfather was known, had a brother named Pat. At the time of Julia and Pa's courtship there was also a courtship of sorts between Pat and Auntie. But, as it turned out this courtship ended abruptly. It isn't really clear why, but Pat Tangney wandered to the far-off coast of Australia where he apparently found another love. As a matter of fact one of his progeny became the first woman senator in Australia. Auntie was so distraught by the turn of events that she had a stroke soon after Pat left her. She was still very young when this happened, around 25-30 years of age. This would have been sometime in the late 1880's. She lived as an invalid for the rest of her life and had to rely on others to sustain her. Indeed she was going back to Seattle because the family back east had decided it was time for her sister Julia to take care of her.

So here's Margaret ready to start a journey of some 1600 miles having to look after a helpless adult and two children under five. Then on top of that, she had to say

goodbye to her husband for who knew how long, knowing that things were not going to improve for some time.

Although her story wasn't much different or even as bad as some of the others that were to be told over the next several years of the "Great Depression", one can imagine how dejected she must have felt. In talking about it later, dad's sister Peggy said she felt her mom really never got over that experience of losing everything they had. Peggy also feeling a bit of guilt told of her adventures on that trip. As she described it, they did at least have a private compartment and in it there was a button. Peggy learned if she pushed it a man in a red hat would come for her to see. She didn't care how many times her mom told her not to do that. She wanted to see the man in the red hat. She recalled dad saying, "Should my Jane be doing that?" Peggy's comment to me was "Your dad was always the good kid."

Having not lived through the depression I don't pretend to fathom the severity of its effects or what it was like on a personal level. Never the less, some of the historical facts and figures alone are quite dramatic. In the five months after the Market "crashed" in October of 1929, unemployment in America went from 1.5 million to at least 3.2 million. By the end of 1931 it reached 8 million, and early in 1932 it got as high as 12 million.

Some of the obvious effects of this were rampant homelessness and starvation. Millions had to rely on privately funded soup kitchens or handouts from others more fortunate. Dad used to recall how there would often be some stranger at the back porch of his grandmother's house and she would take them out a plate of food, which they would finish, then be on their way.

President Hoover did not feel it was the place of the Federal government to take leadership in solving the problems of the private citizen. True to this philosophy there was none to speak of and private and local leadership had its limits. One phenomenon that occurred in some of the larger cities, Seattle included, were "Hoovervilles." These

were areas where large numbers of people gathered collecting scraps of wood, tin, etc. to build a crude shelter. At one time Seattle had a sprawling Hooverville in what is now known as the International district.

Although Margaret may not have been too pleased with the way things had turned out for her family they were at least fortunate enough to have a roof over their heads. The home she, dad and Peggy were going to live in was her family home. She had been 21 when her family moved there and apparently lived there until she married George, at the age of 31, in 1924. So there must have been some comfort in the temporary living arrangements, considering her options.

This house was on the corner of 54th and Woodlawn, near Green Lake. "5401", (fifty-four-o-one) as it was referred to. Dad used to talk about how all the houses in his family were always referred to by their numbers. The paint store was 2400 (twenty-four hundred) and his Cousin Tom's house was 3715 (thirty-seven-fifteen). So, for example someone might say, "We'll see you at 5401 for dinner" or "let's go to 2400". I don't know if this was a practice common to the period or just to dad's family. Anyway dad thought it worth mentioning and so did I.

In 1913 Thomas Tangney (Pa) and Julia moved their family of nine (seven children; Frank, Tom, Margaret, Bob, Florence, Emmett and Bill) from Spokane, in eastern Washington, to Seattle. Soon after that they moved into 5401.

On returning home Margaret and the kids settled into one of the bedrooms upstairs. Auntie was put up for awhile at 5401 also. She was eventually put into a Catholic nursing home in west Seattle where she died in 1934. Also living at the house at this time was; grandma Tangney (Julia), Frank her oldest son and Bill her youngest.

Frank was one of the lucky ones who had steady employment. Which was a good thing because through a turn of events he had become the "man of the house". It was not until my dad was in his early teens that he learned that Pa had existed and that in fact he was still alive, living somewhere in Idaho. The split occurred when Frank was in France

during World War 1. In fact, in a letter he wrote to his sister Florence, he thanked her for the pictures from home but wondered why there weren't any shots of Pa. Since it was never talked about much there isn't a lot of information about the cause of the separation. In conversations dad had with Frank some years later it seemed to have something to do with both politics and religion. Although Pa was Catholic, as was the rest of the clan, apparently Julia was just a 'little too devout for his taste."

Pa had worked for the railroad and he traveled away from the family quite a lot. He developed a much broader, more liberal view of the world than his wife. He had embraced socialist ideals to some degree and that was certainly at odds with some of the prescribed tenets of the Holy Church.

However it did come about, Pa for the most part was out of the picture through the '20's and '30's. It's not clear whether he offered financial support or not. By 1920 all but one of their children (Bill) were adults, that may have made it easier for him to back out of the relationship.

However, my dad's cousin Jeanne did remember a period during the '30's when he would send a turkey from his farm for the Holidays. She said that it drove her mother crazy because she had to spend hours plucking those pinfeathers from the bird. She was quite relieved when he stopped sending them.

With the onset of the depression Frank willingly took it upon himself to support his kin. The only other family member who did not lose his job was his brother Tom. But, by the end of 1930 he had five children of his own to support. Incidentally Frank never had children of his own but he was always the benevolent Uncle. He seemed to very much enjoy his nieces and nephews. He would often take some of them on business trips or excursions of one sort or another.

The business Frank was in was selling water meters. He worked for a company called The National Meter Company. He was the sole representative for the entire region (Washington, Oregon and Idaho State) and there was no competition. He had a company

car plus an expense account on top of his regular salary. The reason his business was able to stay alive during the dark days of the depression was because their clientele was primarily municipalities. Obviously your average out of work citizen had no interest in purchasing water meters, much less the ability to, but cities and towns were still in business and they were trying to modernize their communities. I'm guessing the public works projects that Roosevelt was to later promote were very good for business, too. As it turned out Frank got to know just about every mayor in the territory and he met with many town councils selling his wares. Frank had a lot of connections as a result of his position.

At some point after his parent's separation he had acquired ownership of 5401. This was of mutual benefit to Frank and his mom. Julia had a place to spend out her days and Frank had someone to keep house. For all intents and purposes Frank had become the patriarch of the family. On November 11, 1930 Frank would turn 44.

Considering the times, when they moved to 5401 in early 1930 dad and his sister Peggy really were given a pretty stable environment, certainly in terms of basic sustenance. More than that though, as I perceive it, they were at this time enveloped by the Tangney clan completely and utterly (as the Irish would say).

Over the year and a half that they were to stay there, they bore witness, first hand, to the traditions and habits of their mother's people. This experience created a bond; at times an overwhelming sense of commitment, that stayed with dad his whole life. They (referring primarily to dads aunts and uncles) were a close knit family, at times to the exclusion of others. Indeed those that married into the family were sometimes referred to as "out-Laws" rather than in-laws.

Every Saturday night "the gang" would gather at 5401, probably play a few rounds of cards and definitely have a few drinks. This was during the last few years of prohibition. It wasn't so much that they were heavy drinkers, which without a doubt they were; it was to some extent a matter of pride. No one, especially the Republican regime

in Washington D.C., was going to deny them the right to practice a long-standing family tradition. Dad's Uncle Bob took to making "bathtub beer" in the basement at 5401. Dad recalled how there were several shelves down there covered with black oilcloth behind which Bob stored bottles of his brew.

Frank would also frequent "speakeasies" with his lady friend Mildred Blair. Speakeasies were the underground clubs of the time, where you could go for a drink in a social setting. The ones you see in the movies where you knock on the door and the bouncer on the other side peeps through a hole in the door to determine if you are to be allowed in. Frank knew of these through his many contacts. Some of these contacts were local police officers that were involved in these establishments, no doubt "on the take". Frank also socialized with those that actually ran some of the speakeasies. Dad recalled the time when the headline of the morning paper told of the operator of a local speakeasy reportedly being gunned down by the mob. Dad recognized him as one of Frank's friends who had visited 5401 not long before this incident. This is not to say that Frank was associating with gangsters. These sort of activities i.e.; bathtub beer, social drinking, were not uncommon. This was in no way considered illicit behavior by a large majority of otherwise law abiding citizens. And in fact prohibition was repealed in 1933 during Roosevelt's first term in office.

In the Irish-Catholic tradition of their family, the Tangneys were definitely Democrats. They were extremely disappointed when Herbert Hoover defeated Al Smith in 1928. Al Smith was the first Irish-Catholic to even be nominated to run for president. The Tangneys were probably particularly disgusted since, as was commonly believed, Smith lost primarily because he was Catholic. I suspect they were once again disappointed when he did not get the Democratic nomination in 1932. However they soon got behind FDR and supported his "new deal" programs all the way after his election. Although dad seemed to recall his Aunt Florence and his Uncle Tom thinking, by the end of his first term, FDR was a little too radical.

At any rate, they all took their politics very seriously. They kept themselves well informed of current events. They always took a paper. In his younger days Frank had actually been a reporter. His first job was for the Vancouver Sun in Canada, then for The Seattle Star. With the advent of radio, besides enjoying the variety of entertainment's shows and music programs, they kept abreast of world events with the regular news hours and special reports as they came in. No doubt they followed the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, in the fall of 1931, with interest. Certainly no one could imagine what it would lead to. Besides, things were so bad domestically it must have seemed pretty removed from their immediate problems.

One tragedy that was to befall the family during this period was the death of dad's Uncle Emmett. He died on April 12 1931, 9 days after his 31st birthday. Emmett was Pa and Julia's second youngest child. Their first born, Mary Jane died in infancy back in 1886. There's no record whether Pa attended the funeral or if he even knew of Emmett's death at the time. At some point in time, the family did discover that Pa was running a ranch in Homedale Idaho. Frank actually used to visit him when travelling the region on business, but it's not clear when the first contact was made.

Dad recalled his first real experience with death in all its Irish Catholic trappings. As dad put it he "never really knew Emmett existed until suddenly he showed up dead." Emmett had contracted Tuberculosis and as was the practice of the day he was put away in a sanatorium.

When he did finally succumb to the disease he was laid-out in the front room of 5401. For the better part of a week his open casket, surrounded by flowers, stayed in the living room for mourning. Rosaries were said every night. Dad was 6 years old at the time and it left quite an impression on him.

To say that the Tangneys were practicing Catholics would be an understatement. They were extremely devout. They would pray to this Saint for that and that Saint for this. Undoubtedly, these were hard times and you needed a lot of faith and also their

form of practice was the norm. Not being a practicing Catholic myself I couldn't say for sure, but I can't help but think if some of them were alive today they would be quite surprised, maybe shocked, by the freedoms some of todays followers have and/or take. Although most of the Tangneys were liberal minded, especially the men, for the most part they would not think of questioning the Church's authority. This I believe caused some conflicts. I may be stating the obvious. From what I've been told a majority of the family members were somewhat cold and aloof in their personal relationships. It could have been a form of Catholic repression or it could have simply been a family trait.

One relationship that is very intriguing is that between Frank and Mildred Blair. Mildred was from Canada. Frank had apparently met her when he worked for the "Sun" in Vancouver. At the age of seventeen she married a Canadian soldier who then went off to fight in World War 1. He never returned and she never learned of his fate. It was assumed he had been killed in action. Sometime after Frank and Mildred met and developed a friendship. Mildred moved to Seattle. For a time she served as Frank's secretary and even lived at 5401. She would escort Frank to social functions. They dated and she was in fact Frank's girlfriend. The problem was, in the eyes of the Catholic church Mildred was still married. There would be no way for her to ever get her marriage annulled since she could not prove her husband had died.

There is something quite enigmatic about both the relationship itself and Frank's character. It would appear that although their fondness for one another was mutually strong their relationship, which lasted for many years, remained platonic. In fact Frank usually made a point of arranging for some sort of chaperone when they would be in a situation that might be questionable. This often meant dad and/or Peggy or any of their cousins got to go on all sorts of outings. This is not to say Frank used the children in any way. He was very good about giving time to his nieces and nephews with or without Mildred.

The kids enjoyed "Mil", as she was known, and she was very good to them. She surely would have made a good mother, but this was to never happen. Her story ended rather tragically. She later became lost in alcohol and drugs. This eventually killed her. This turn of events undoubtedly came about because she saw the relationship between her and Frank would never be complete.

The thing that is interesting about Frank is that he, as others saw it, actually sought out so called "safe" relationships. Apparently Frank, at some point in his life, had resolved to never marry, but he still needed lady friends to accompany him to social functions. So he associated with women who for one reason or another could not marry within the Catholic Church, which naturally any future wife of his would have to be able to do.

Ironically Frank did, eventually marry, when he was 70. Dad used to describe the circumstances in quite a comical manner. Frank was dating Nettie Evans, who was divorced and non-Catholic. Safe enough, until one day when her ex-husband up and died. She could now be eligible for marriage if she were to convert to the Catholic faith. She did, under the condition of taking classes on Catholicism. They did indeed marry, but they had to sign a document swearing that their future children would be raised Catholic.

One other aspect of the Tangney lifestyle, maybe more important than religion, politics or even alcohol was sports. They were sports "nuts". Frank had played Football at Gonzaga University in Eastern Washington. Dad's Uncle Bill raced on the crew team at the University of Washington ("Udub"). This very much impressed dad and he recalled watching many races on Lake Washington.

Frank always had season tickets for the Udub football and basketball teams. Seattle had a couple of pro teams that some of the gang would go to see occasionally i.e. the Rainiers (baseball) and the Metropolitans (ice hockey).

Then of course they would listen to whatever was on the radio, maybe catch a Notre Dame game, or the Rainers, you name it. They even listened to tennis matches and crew races "over the air". Most of the old gang never lived to see ESPN; they would have thought themselves in heaven.

With this very brief description of the Tangney culture it may come across as fairly adult centered world. I would contend this to be true. It's not that the children were not included in activities or that they were not valued. Indeed they were often provided entertainment; i.e. taken on outings, etc. But to speak in general terms most of the seven Tangney adults were not particularly nurturing.

Of the seven only three ever had children; Tom, Margaret, and Bill. All of them, including those without children, did want what was "best" for the kids. They had been raised in what was really a very comfortable lifestyle. Pa's railroad job provided for a relatively lavish existence. Before that he had owned and operated the St. James Hotel, a regal establishment in Superior, Wisconsin. Unfortunately this burned down around the turn of the century. He was able, though, to secure the rail job soon after that. Most of them were provided a good private education.

Frank graduated from Gonzaga University (same class as Bing Crosby, as he often liked to mention). Tom received a degree in electrical engineering from the University of Cincinnati. Margaret, dad's mom, graduated from Holy Names Academy in Seattle. Unfortunately, when Pa left Julia, Florence had to attend public school, for this she was often bitter.

So with Frank's help, even with the depression going on, the next generation was able to live with some modicum of affluence. This was probably more true for dad and Peggy. To some degree dad lived a rather princely life. He was also to get a lot of attention due to constant bouts of rheumatic fever. Margaret believed this condition to have been caused by his childhood immunizations. This was not an uncommon occurrence.

But even though the children were provided for, even doted upon, it was to some degree superficial. Although "the gang" was indeed a tight knit, almost inseparable group, they were practically incapable of showing love. Physically they were cold and austere. Grandma (Julia) herself was actually rather warm and inviting, especially to the grandchildren.

But to varying degrees the Aunts and Uncles were not outwardly affectionate. On one extreme there was Florence. Florence by all accounts was, in a word, harsh. Perhaps it was that she never got over the change in lifestyle when Pa left. She was a proud woman, but sometimes to the point of being arrogant. When she and her future husband "Bud" Avery were first courting he was driving a laundry truck. She flat out told him he would have to get a better job before she would marry him. This must have motivated him greatly. He later got a job with Shell Oil. He worked his way up the corporate ladder and eventually had a very lucrative position.

Florence was one for putting on airs. Stature and position were very important to her. Dad's older cousin Jeanne remembered an incident that epitomized her attitude. When Jeanne was of the age when she was starting to wear high heel shoes she commented on how uncomfortable they were. Florence pulled her aside and said "We all have to make sacrifices for appearance sake". Her and Bud never had children. People always said that was a good thing. It's not that she was abusive but she was not the least bit capable of indulging children. As dad put it "Bud used to give us kids nickels and Florence would take them away".

Florence was also well known for her bickering with the other adults. She was not the only one to "go at it" though. Frank and her would often argue, invariably about money. And the tendency was to hold grudges for a while. Dad recalled that sometimes it was hard to keep track of who wasn't speaking to whom.

On the other end of the spectrum was dad's Uncle Tom (T.J.). Tom was a father of five and seems to have been the best suited for the job. He may not have escaped the

Tangney aloofness altogether but he had a sense of fun that was in and of itself quite comforting. Dad recalled the T.J. Tangney family visits. When it came time for them to go, all the kids would pile into the car and Tom at the drivers seat would grab a rag and motion wiping off his window. Then he would stick his arm through the already opened window and wave goodbye. Dad laughed at this no matter how many times he saw it. Dad, who was pretty funny himself, often gave his Uncle Tom the credit for inspiring his particular brand of humor. He also credited Tom for teaching him much about electrical wiring and building in general. Dad took advantage of any opportunity to watch Tom at work and Tom didn't seem to mind this.

Although growing up in the Tangney clan was not necessarily oppressive, there was a certain intensity and hierarchical structure that was pretty intimidating to the children. It was not something they would freely challenge. Although Peggy recalled one time when the gang was going on, again, about how they were acquainted with Bing Crosby. Cousin Jeanne said something to the affect of how tired she was of hearing about Bing Crosby. Well, that did not go over well. Jeanne was "shunned" for a considerable time because of that.

Probably one thing that did sustain the children through all the bickering, etc. was that they had each other. When living at 5401 dad always looked forward to the Tangney kids coming up from 3715 Corliss. This was the T.J. Tangney family; Dorothy, Jeanne, Tom, Jack and Bob. Bill and his wife Marge had the only other cousin, Kathleen, but she was not born until 1943, when most of the others were becoming adults.

These nurturing experiences continued for some time even after dad and his family moved out of 5401. He and his cousin Tom were especially close. They had a very real bond that lasted their whole lives. It was somewhat poignant when in their final years they were both diagnosed with prostate cancer around the same time and in fact died within months of each other.

Dad's family moved out of 5401 early in 1931, when George returned from Minnesota after all hope was lost for his briquette business. He sold off his patent to the Ford Company. No doubt it was for a very meager settlement, but he had to take what he could get.

Dad remembered when his dad and Uncle Bob arrived at 5401. It was Christmas Eve 1930 and there was a commotion at the front door. Dad was five years old at the time and he had not seen his dad for over a year. He did not at first recognize him and it took a while for them to become reacquainted.

Soon after, as dad put it, his family "took, up the business of tenant farming". Over the next several months, for probably nothing more than a place to live, George took care of other people's farms. He would tend to any crops that were growing and just keep up the property in general. None of these situations lasted long. Probably the reason being that the owners were "going under" and eventually came to the conclusion they would have to sell their property just to survive during these hard times.

The first farms they were to occupy were on Bainbridge Island, just across from Seattle on Puget Sound. Dad remembered fondly riding the "Mosquito Fleet" to and from Seattle. This was a collection of small Steam operated passenger boats. Peggy remembered covering her ears and screaming every time the steamers blew their whistles. Dad also recalled when family would come over on Sundays to visit. They would have a nice picnic on the beach. Someone would lug down the not yet outdated Victorola, crank it up and they would listen to the same 2 or 3 records all day.

The next farm was back on the mainland. It was in an area known as Juanita beach. This is on the north end of Lake Washington, which borders Seattle. Although this community would be a very short drive to get to today it was somewhat remote back then, dirt roads and all. It apparently had a very nice dwelling. It was an estate of sorts. George had planted a crop of "ground cherries." He was looking forward to harvesting these, unfortunately this situation, too, was only temporary. Dad remembered his father

being particularly disgusted over having to leave after all the work he had put into that farm.

Indeed these must have been very frustrating times for George. In 1931 he was 46 years old. He had been working very hard his whole life. He had come so close to success with his briquette business. He didn't necessarily want to be a millionaire; he just wanted to make a comfortable living.

The Sheehan family in contrast to the Tangneys hadn't lived the soft life, ever. They had toiled through the years. They too had their share of tragedies. Although they were resourceful, literate people they did not have the benefit of a good education.

George himself had only completed the eighth grade. George's parents Tom and Margaret Sheehan were tenant farmers when he was born near Caledonia, Minnesota in 1883. He was their fourth child. There were seven born after him. One was Margaret Emily who died just short of five months old in 1896. The only other girl born to Tom and Margaret was Mary. She was to outlive all her siblings by many years. She died in 1960.

It's not clear when the Sheehans had first settled in Minnesota, but certainly even at the time George was born it was still relatively untamed. When George was a boy the family moved clear across the state to Graceville on the Western border of the state. Here he and the other children pitched in to run the family farm, as was a very common practice. He learned much about farming and this would stay with him all his life.

During the early part of this century the family followed a typical pattern of Western movement. They first settled on a farm in Montana. This is where lightning in 1917 killed George's younger brother Joseph. They continued to migrate west, for a time farming in eastern Washington. Gradually they came to Seattle. It's not clear whether they came all together or little by little. Mary married and lived out her days in Montana. George's brother Will either never went West with the family or he returned to Minnesota on his own. At any rate he was there in the late 1920's when George was establishing his

briquette plant in Minneapolis. After the business failed George returned to Seattle where most of the Sheehans now lived, but Will remained in Minnesota moving to a small town named Bird Island where some of his line still live.

When the Sheehans did come to Seattle they had for the most part given up farming as a living, no doubt this is why they did come to the big city. In the early 20's farming had become less and less profitable. Prices had come down considerably since after World War 1. Ironically during the war profits had never been greater for American farmers. The reason for that was that the fighting in Europe disrupted farming over there, so American farms shipped surplus produce to the continent. When the war ended things got back to normal in Europe and an entire market was lost. So with prices so low and being tenant farmers, which the Sheehans were, it would be very difficult to realize any kind of profit after paying rent.

After moving to Seattle they all did what they could to find new ways to make a living. George's brother Rob drove a beer truck. Their brother John started a very successful creamery. The Red Shield Creamery operated out of downtown Seattle in what is today the Pike Place Market. They sold butter and other dairy products. They had something like a dozen delivery trucks and served a big area. John eventually included his brother Art as a partner. Their brother Jerry appears to have worked there at sometime too. Even their father, Tom, was listed as a clerk at the creamery when he died in 1922.

For the most part, they remained a very close family doing what they could to help each other out. When Jerry's first wife died he moved in with his parents so they could help him to raise his young children.

George too lived with them for a while in the early '20's. The 1920 census of the Tom Sheehan household listed George as a laborer. He apparently was working as a painter. This was how he got the experience he would later use running the paint store and contracting out.

He also had spent sometime working for a Mr. John Cord. John Cord was owner of the Well-Known Pantages Theatre. The Pantages headlined some of the more prominent vaudeville acts of the day. George worked as caretaker of Mr. Cords estate. He had his own living quarters (a well-furnished cabin on the premises). He would oversee some of the daily chores that went in to running the estate. This did entitle him to meet some of the entertainers that would come through town. It was probably this experience as well as his knowledge of farming that helped him secure the various "jobs" he got after he returned from Minnesota in late 1930.

These more than likely weren't jobs so much as arrangements that allowed his family to stay together. As it turned out they were all only temporary. There were many cases of men leaving their families travelling all over the country, often "riding the rails", trying to find any kind of work they could. These had to be very desperate and uncertain times for George and Margaret.

By contrast, while George was doing whatever he could to provide for his family dad's Uncle Frank was buying up land for investments. One such investment was a tract of waterfront property on nearby Whidbey Island. This property would become a very prominent part of clan life and in fact more than 65 years later it is still a cherished family getaway spot.

Dad recalled seeing the property for the first time during the spring/summer of 1931. At the time they were not actually living at 5401 but they spent a lot of time there probably partly just to make sure the children were well fed. Margaret and the kids would ride the steamer over to Seattle from Bainbridge Island and Frank would pick them up. Early one morning, when dad was around six, he woke up at 5401. They were all going to go on a big outing that day. Frank was very excited to show off his new acquirement. Into Frank's car piled Margaret, dad, Peggy, grandma Tangney and Frank's girlfriend Mildred. They were off on their big adventure.

Whereas, this trip from Seattle nowadays takes about 1 1/2 hours it would have been quite an excursion for 1931. Going through Seattle, North and South, was Highway 99 a two lane brick road running parallel with the Interurban train that went between Seattle and the town of Everett. They headed North on Highway 99, Frank's new model sedan averaging about 20 m.p.h. After almost two hours on "99" they turned off on to a dusty gravel/dirt road which, after a bumpy ride, eventually brought them to a bluff looking out over Puget Sound. Winding down the hill they came to the ferry dock at Mukeltio where they would cross the sound to Whidbey Island. At that time the only way to get on to the Island, the second longest in the lower '48 States, was by ferry. There is now a bridge at Deception Pass on the North end of the island. This was built in the late '30's as part of one of Roosevelt's Works programs.

After the 35-minute ferry ride they unloaded at Columbia beach heading up that first big hill which is quite a climb even today. More dusty unpaved roads took them through what must have seemed like unbounded wilderness. A good 45 minutes later brought them to a turn off, which became a fairly steep incline. As dad put it later, Frank would "put the car into 2nd and you would just hope for the best". Eventually they came to a trailhead and parked the car.

Frank led everyone on foot to a semi-clearing with a big stump where the picnic they had brought was spread out. Frank then pointed out the features of his new land and told of the plans he had for its development. Through the trees and down a steep hill you could see the harbor and the beaches of his neighbors. On his property was a still intact log chute, which had been used during the boom years of World War 1, to send fallen timber out into Holmes Harbor where it would be hauled off to a local mill and used in shipbuilding. Frank talked about his plan to build a cabin on the spot they were picnicking, which would serve as a family resort. Before long they had to pack up lunch and start the long journey home. They got back to Seattle about 8:00 that evening.

Having been gone a good twelve hours about 1 1/2 hours had been spent on the property the rest on the road.

It was just the first of countless trips to Whidbey. Construction did indeed begin on a cabin with the help of many. The cabin was officially christened on New Year's day 1933. Almost 65 years later the original structure is still standing and being enjoyed by a fourth generation of Tangney/Sheehan descendants.

One other significant investment Frank made around the same time was a 25-acre farm on the East Side of Lake Washington near the town of Kirkland. This farm was to play a very important part in dad's childhood. Even in his last days he spoke of his time on the farm with great fondness. He referred to it as "a paradise." Ironically his mother saw it as one of the lowest times in their lives.

They were poor. She and George, George especially, worked very hard on the farm and saw little to show for it. On the other hand they were better off than many others were during those bleak days of the early Depression were. They did not go without food and they were together as a family under one roof. Exactly how the decision was finally made to move to the farm may never be known. For Margaret it was no doubt desperation for George it may have seemed a worthwhile venture and for Frank he had nothing to lose.

When Frank had bought the farm the land was probably less than half developed. The dream was to make it a full functioning farm. This was certainly feasible under George's management. He was well within his element. Apparently George and Margaret had a very casual agreement with Frank. He did not charge rent or even expect to share in any profits made while the farm was to be developed. Probably it was understood that if the farm should become a lucrative business Frank would receive some of the proceeds. At the very least, in terms of real estate, Frank had been able to snatch up the land at very good price and indeed when he did finally sell the property later on in the '40's he got almost ten times what he had paid for it.

So on Labor Day weekend 1931 George, Margaret, Peggy and dad, with the help of various family members moved from the place on Juanita beach to the farm where they would live for the next 6 years. At the time dad was 6 years old. Peggy was 5.

The farm was situated in what was more or less a community of farms. Along a dirt road there were several farms portioned off in mostly rectangular shape with the shorter side along the road. So it had the feel of a neighborhood although on a slightly bigger scale than most. The other farms nearby were slightly smaller, but much more established.

The other farms had traditional farmhouses. Dad and his family were to live in what was essentially a cabin. Margaret called it the "shack on the farm." When they first moved in there was no electricity, although they were hooked up within the first year. They never had indoor plumbing the whole time they lived there. They used an outhouse. When winter was severe they had a chamber pot they would have to empty. They also never had a telephone while they lived on the farm. The fact that the neighbors had most of these amenities made it especially hard for Margaret. She was quite ashamed of their status.

Frank had talked about eventually building a nice modern home on the property. This never materialized and was often a bone of contention between Margaret and Frank. The dwelling they lived in wasn't quite a shack, although pretty close to it. It had two rooms, one served as the common area. This included the kitchen and family room. The other room was the sleeping quarters, where all four slept. There was a wood burning stove for cooking and heat. In the summer they would move the stove out onto the porch so it would not get so hot inside.

When they first moved onto the farm the house was adjacent to the dirt road. During the first year there, the decision was made to move the house further down into the middle of the farm away from the dusty road. So Old Bill the retired fire horse that came with the farm was hitched up and dragged the house down towards the wooded area

of the farm. This was near a creek that ran through the middle of the property. It sounds like quite an undertaking but I get the feeling Margaret was insistent.

That first year was probably very lean. Since they got there in the fall there probably weren't any major crops to be harvested. The farm did come with about a half dozen milking cows. There also were a variety of fruit trees; peach, cherry, apple and pear. They were probably able to pick from these and no doubt Margaret canned some for the coming winter.

More than likely Frank helped them with some basic staples that first year. After thinking about it later Peggy figured that Frank had something to do with her and dad getting presents that first Christmas too. George and Margaret tried to make the day special as best they could. George pointed out the fresh sleigh tracks in the snow in front of the house. The children were very amazed that Santa came all the way out to their farm. Peggy also recalled when a few years later Margaret felt it was time the children heard the truth about Santa Claus dad took it pretty hard. He was so upset he didn't go to school that day. Peggy recalled her response was "you mean there's no Easter bunny either?"

That fall and winter George and Margaret set about making the farm operational to get it ready for the next planting season. Since the house was heated with wood for fuel. George had to keep them in cordwood. To do this he would chop down a tree in the grove of alders near to where the house was moved. He would then have Old Bill drag the log to a large circular saw used to cut pieces that could then be split and stacked. To power the saw it was rigged so that he could back in their model "T" truck, take off the rear tire and attach a belt to the wheel. This would then turn the blade.

Later there was a variety of livestock to tend to. When they first moved to the farm they had the cows. There was a milk shed where they would milk the cows. Their English sheep dog Boots when commanded would round up the six cows and bring them in. In the shed they had a device that would separate the milk and cream. They also

churned their own butter. They were not in any way equipped as a dairy farm though. They were not able to pasteurize their milk. In fact Peggy remembered suffering from boils which the doctor said was probably caused by drinking unpasteurized milk. So within the first couple of years the cows were deemed impracticable and they were sold or traded off.

Over the years they also raised pigs, chickens and rabbits. These were both for their own consumption as well as to sell.

Interestingly George would never slaughter any of their animals himself. He might hire somebody to do it for them or work out a trade in exchange for this service. It wasn't so much that he lacked the skills to do this. It was more that he didn't have the heart. George was by all accounts a very gentle soul in all his endeavors.

Dad and Peggy both developed a sensitivity to animals themselves. Peggy recounted when there had been a chick born with no feathers. When everyone else said he wasn't worth bothering with Peggy decided to adopt him. She named him Jigs. She even made him a little sweater. Dad spoke very fondly of his dog Pal. He said, "Pal was about the best friend a kid could have." There also was Zeke. Zeke was a runt pig who became a pet. Zeke would follow the kids around just like a dog. There was another pet pig named Curly who the kids would ride around on.

Being so attached to all the animals may have made it a little harder for dad and Peggy to deal with the harsh realities of farm life. Although George and Margaret did sometimes try to shelter the kids they couldn't always hide things. Often when an animal was sold or taken away to be slaughtered Peggy remembers being told it ran away or just disappeared. The animals were never butchered on the farm but there was a smokehouse on the back porch where they would cure hams. Almost weekly they would have rabbit stew and of course this would coincide with one of the bunnies missing.

Even Zeke and Curly eventually had to meet their demise. In fact some of the Tangney cousins would later kid about the time there was some big family feast on the

farm. It was clear or at least rumored that Curly was the main course. Needless to say dad and Peggy were not very interested in their supper that day.

Then there were the unpleasant occurrences that couldn't be avoided or covered up. Peggy remembered how upset dad was when one of the dogs got a hold of and killed one of the rabbits.

When Old Bill, the draft horse, died he was so big he couldn't be properly buried so his carcass was left to rot in a corner of the farm. All the kids would go down there to watch the maggots. For years they would pay tribute to his bones.

One incident not at all gruesome, but tragic nonetheless, especially to George and Margaret, was the time when they had invested in 250 baby chicks and within the week they were stolen, every last one. Soon after that dad's Uncle Tom Tangney came out to the farm and wired a light over the chicken coop. There were never any problems after that but it had to be quite a loss. Nothing was ever found out about who might have committed such a crime.

Besides the variety of livestock George of course also raised various crops. In one field they raised hay and alfalfa. This was stored in the barn and used to feed some of the animals. There was another field, which was the main crop for the year, a "cash crop". One year it might be peas the next year maybe beans. Next to that, near the house, there was the family garden. This would have a variety of vegetables and some berries that could be picked fresh for meals or canned for later. There was also an area on the farm designated for potatoes. And of course there were the various fruit trees. The reality was the cash crop never really raised enough money to speak of but after the farm got going really well there was at least always enough food on the table.

There was no refrigeration so Margaret did a lot of canning. In the summer they would have ice delivered for the icebox. Other times they would put things in the stream to keep them cool. It really is a wonder they didn't contract any serious diseases, considering things like E Coli occurring even these days.

When it was time for harvesting the main crop George would have to hire extra help, but normally he ran the farm pretty much on his own. As one can imagine this could make for a long days work.

George was an early riser, 5:00 or so. He would usually light the stove, first thing, especially in the winter months. He would then have breakfast. Often he would tune in "the Sons of the Pioneers" a popular country western radio program. He particularly enjoyed the yodeling. He would then read the morning paper. Even out on the farm they took the daily paper (the Seattle Post- Intelligencer, the P.I.). Because they were somewhat isolated for them this was a very important link to the rest of the world. Everyone read the paper, including the children, once they were able to read. The Whole family would also listen to the different news broadcasters with great interest.

On a typical day after the morning rituals George would then head out to work the farm. Often he would be away from the house all day. Margaret might pack him a lunch or maybe one of the kids would bring it out to him. He would work the long day in the fields. Margaret would perform her domestic duties around the house.

Eventually the kids would share more and more in the daily chores as they got older. Dad remembered being responsible for fetching water for the day. As I said they never did have indoor plumbing. They did have a fresh water spring above where the cabin was finally moved to. Each day dad would fill up two buckets and bring them to the house. He would get more on Saturdays when the kids would have their weekly baths. Water would be heated up and they would fill a big tub in the kitchen.

The idea of the spring was very fascinating to me. I asked both dad and Peggy about this. It was a natural spring. It apparently rose up in a somewhat marshy area on the farm. Then it went back underground. The area where it came up was boxed in with a wooden frame. The framed area was filled with rocks. The water would form a pool over the rocks. So it wasn't muddy and the clean water could be collected into the buckets.

Eventually a trough was built that ran to the cabin. There was a "wedge" at the top of trough. When the wedge was removed the water would run down towards the cabin. It seemed to be a workable system. For Margaret, however, it had to wear on her as years went on. It no doubt added to her humiliation since all her neighbors had indoor plumbing not to mention her other family members who lived in the city.

One of the chores Peggy remembered was collecting the freshly laid eggs from the chicken coop. She recalled the not so pleasant experience of the hens pecking at her hands as she reached in to get the eggs. On the other hand she spoke fondly of how great those fresh eggs tasted.

Peggy also recalled working in the garden with her dad. She would follow him and old Bill as they dug a furrow. She would drop seed potatoes behind them. There was also always lots of weeding to do in the family garden. Then she would also perform many of the domestic type jobs e.g. preparing meals etc.

Peggy said she never really felt bad about it, it just seemed natural to help out. The reality was, either because of the times or their particular heritage, the girls were expected to take on the more mundane tasks. This was generally accepted and in dad's case fit in with his princely life I referred to.

Even though Peggy and dad did have their responsibilities on the farm they both were still allowed to enjoy it as their playground. Probably to some degree it was this way because for much of the world these were still hard times. Therefore George and Margaret may have been trying to indulge the kids to compensate for the unfortunate lifestyle they had been forced into.

For the kids it was a paradise. Not that dad or Peggy were ignorant of their parents struggles. Even though the farm never did become a viable way of making a living, dad and his family never went without. There was plenty of food and other needs were provided for with family (i.e. Frank's) help if need be.

So for a boy in his pre-teen years it was an ideal situation. The farm itself was bigger than most around them. Much of it was undeveloped so there was a variety of terrain (fields, streams, forest etc.) for a young boy to let his imagination run wild. Dad having been instilled with a sense of history, early on, used to reenact battles from Revolutionary War times or maybe the Civil War.

Certainly in terms of history, in the 1930's, World War 1 was still very much recent. Dad used to listen to Uncle Frank's war stories with great interest. Frank would occasionally pull out his rifle to show to the kids, much to grandma Tangency's chagrin.

Probably Frank had to embellish his stories a little since as an M.P. in France his experiences were more along the line of transporting AWOL American soldiers on a train ride across France. Certainly nothing would compare to what dad would later go through himself. Dad admitted though that when he did go into the service he still had a somewhat romantic view of war.

Dad didn't necessarily have a lot of toys on the farm, not unlike most kids of that era. There certainly was no toy market like there is today. He did have a collection of cars. They were die-cast metal with a hollow body. They were pretty much the Matchbox cars of its day. They were known as Tootsie cars.

When George had extra concrete from a job around the farm he would make roads out behind the house. Dad would spend hours driving his cars on these. Peggy recalled that sometimes dad would share his cars. Early on he demonstrated his somewhat meticulous nature. Peggy recalled the cars had to be arranged and moved in a particular manner. He was pretty insistent so she usually went along with it.

There were also a number of kids from the neighboring farms for dad and Peggy to play with. It seemed like all the kids usually would wind up at Peggy and Dad's farm. It was a lot of untamed property.

Dad had inherited the Tangney passion for sports, as such; different parts of the farm were set up to play different sports. The chicken coop had a hoop for basketball.

When it wasn't growing season the potato field was used to play football. The road to the house formed a ninety-degree turn. This became the baseball diamond. Not only would the neighboring kids play, occasionally the grownups would play too. Like on those summer Sundays when cousins, Aunts and Uncles might all come over from Seattle for a picnic or some such gathering (e.g. 4th of July).

Dad really enjoyed it when his cousins came to visit. But there was a good gang of kids living around the farm, too. They all spent a lot of time playing together. Often someone would go out to the road and call someone else until they all got together. Much of the time they would wind up back on Dad's farm because there was so much for them to do there.

Of course they all went to school together too. As was still not uncommon in the early 1930's, for outlying areas, the children from the surrounding farms all came together in a one-room schoolhouse. The children were separated by different grade levels. The teacher would have the challenge of providing different lessons to the different grades. Dad recounted how he would usually finish his own lessons then listen to what was being taught to the older grades.

Dad was apparently an exceptional student. Actually after he finished the first grade the teacher wanted to advance him into the third grade. It seems Margaret was against this, because she didn't want him to miss out on anything. It was very important to her that the children got a good education. She spent a lot of time working at home with them on their studies.

This was especially so with dad since off and on he missed quite a lot of school due to continual bouts of rheumatic fever. Since there was no real cure back then for RF. The doctor would order bed rest for dad. He missed the whole second half of fifth grade. In defense of his being allowed to advance to the sixth grade his teacher wrote, on his fifth grade report card; "Tommy has completed his text books at home under his mother's

and my supervision. Since his work has always been well done I recommend that he be promoted to the sixth grade."

As dad described it he didn't necessarily need all that bed rest. He really did enjoy school. He recalled how when he was on "bed rest" his dad would drive him in to school so he could be in the school play. It would be hard to just lay around especially at that age. It must have been frustrating since its not like he was some kind of invalid. In fact I get the impression he didn't lay around except maybe when he actually had a fever. There were apparently some body aches that went along with it, but this was not necessarily chronic.

Dad was seeing a specialist for his condition, in Seattle. For medical emergencies in general the nearest doctor was in Kirkland. At times this must have felt very isolating, particularly because they did not have a phone of their own. They would have to rely on their neighbors.

There were in fact a few serious injuries. One summer when the Tom and Gert (Tangney) family was visiting dad's Aunt Gert had a very close call indeed. She was on the front porch helping prepare a meal. Since it was summer the wood burning stove had been moved outside. She was cooking some spaghetti with a pressure cooker. Without warning the pot exploded. Gert's face was badly burned and apparently she was initially knocked out. They rushed her to the nearest medical facility. She did recover, but it could have been pretty bad.

Then there was a time when a group of children were playing baseball on the farm. Dad was catcher. He was too close to the batter and got hit by the bat right above the eye. As Peggy and dad described it there was quite a bit of blood. Dad ran to the house yelling, "It's not my eye! It's not my eye!" He was chased by the other kids yelling, "It's not his eye! It's not his eye!"

No doubt, these kinds of incidences played a part in the decision to finally leave the farm. Also, Margaret was getting concerned about the quality of education the

children were getting. There was also some concern about their Catholic education and the family's immersion, in general, in the Church. There were some local nuns who would come out to the farm to take the children into town to get their Catechism training. As important as all this was to Margaret apparently the family did not go to regular services. It seems the reason for this was Margaret's utter shame of their situation (i.e. "poor dirt farmers.") This must have also made her feel very guilty considering her religious convictions.

What seemed to be one of the culminating factors, for Margaret, was the whole issue of "The shack on the farm." Frank had always talked about building a modern farmhouse on the property, with indoor plumbing, etc. As this, for whatever reason, was not materializing Margaret became more and more frustrated. Her relationship with Frank was especially strained for some time because of this. Peggy remembers her mom "announcing", probably more or less rhetorical, they were not going to spend another year on the farm.

Sure enough, soon after that, the decision was made to quit the farm. Probably George saw that it had to be this way but I suspect he had some regrets. He was certainly within his element working the farm. Also, in terms of the Depression and recovery for the Economy in general, it was still tentative. As far as dad and Peggy were concerned it was a devastating blow.

In the fall of 1937 George and Margaret rented a house, up on a hill overlooking Greenlake, in Seattle. Peggy remembers being impressed with the fact that there was a telephone there, even though it wasn't in service when they first moved in. Peggy started at a nearby Catholic grade school. Dad remained on bed rest for part of the year, undoubtedly receiving some tutoring.

How they were able to pay rent is not exactly clear to me. George apparently started looking for odd jobs. He may have done some house painting. Which could explain how he eventually settled on the paint store idea.

Also, he had done some work for money while on the farm and they may have saved some up. George had been able to participate in local W.P.A. projects for a few seasons. The W.P.A. (Works Progress Administration) was one of Roosevelt's most popular work-relief programs. The program over time employed some 8 million people for various projects. Projects such as; building roads, bridges, public buildings, etc. One project George worked on was to help build a shelter in a nearby Bridle Trails State Park.

However things came about, that January (1938) the Sheehan family moved into the paint store at 2400 N. It seems George and Margaret raised the capital to open the store with a personal loan from Bud and Florence. Bud was by now doing well financially. This would, though, indicate how strained things were between Frank and Margaret at this time. Since Frank probably could have helped out, to put yourself in a position like that with Florence seemed rather desperate. Although it sounds like Bud was much more generous than Florence. That's not saying much there.

It was a risky move, to open the store by any account. As I said the Economy at that particular time was questionable. America at that time was recovering from a recent recession. October 19, 1937 was known as Black Tuesday. Without getting too technical, because of my own ignorance, Black Tuesday was another "crash" of the Stock Market. One indirect effect this crash had on the economy was, although unemployment had been improving steadily since 1933, by March of 1938 over 4 million people had lost their jobs since Black Tuesday, (a five-month period.) This brought the national unemployment rate back up to 20 per cent.

So certainly, for George and Margaret personally and financially 1938-39 was a very tentative time. Probably, the same, only different as far as their whole experience went since the depression started.

As far as things went for Peggy and Dad they seemed to recover over having to leave the farm pretty easily. Peggy recalls Catholic school being a bit of a shock, though. Some of the nuns could be a little harsh. Due to repeated bouts of rheumatic fever dad

went to St. Benedict school for only about half of the eighth grade, before he started public high school. Peggy recalled the nuns were generally very fond of dad and tended to indulge him a little. It could be because they thought him as sickly or just that he was a very good student. Probably it was more of the latter. In terms of playmates there were plenty in the new neighborhood.

Their shop was right on 45th Street. 45th was full of other shops and various businesses. There were Streetcars that ran up and down the middle of the street. Cars would go on the outside of the tracks. Even though 45th was quite a bustling commercial strip the neighborhoods North and South were very much residential. This is all very much the way that part of 45th street is now, except for the streetcars.

So, the side streets lent themselves to hours of play for the children living around there. There were summer days and nights of kick the can, hide and seek or just running around. One of the neighborhood kids that dad remembered was Bo Starkler. Bo was unable to walk. I believe he had contracted Polio, which of course at that time, with no vaccine, was very much a threat. Anyway, dad recalled how all the neighborhood kids made great efforts to include Bo in all their activities. He was pulled around in a red wagon. If he needed to go up steps or whatever he usually wanted dad to carry him. Dad spoke rather proudly of this. It was also clear that all the other kids were very sensitive and respectful in this situation.

Besides all the neighborhood kids, the Tangney cousins were now within walking distance. 3715 was one block over and about eight down from 2400. Dad enjoyed all his cousins but he and Tom jr. became practically inseparable. They would walk all over town together, like to the University of Washington or maybe Green Lake. Tom jr. was one grade younger than dad was. They also wound up going to different high schools. Tom went to O'Dea, a Catholic school, and dad went to Lincoln High which was very close to the paint store. Dad and Tom continued to enjoy their very special bond.

As 1938 moved into 1939 things were looking pretty good for the Sheehans. Peggy and dad after leaving the farm were still able to have a somewhat enjoyable childhood. For George and Margaret it looked as though the paint store was going to survive even prosper.

At the same time, there was certainly much concern about the world in general. As always the Sheehans kept themselves well informed of current events. This was either through the newspaper, an occasional newsreel along with the feature at the movie theatre and/or especially on the radio.

There had been a growing number of regular news programs on the radio. There were several well known voices like; H. V. Keltonborn, William Shirer and Edward R. Murrow just to name a few. At some point George and Margaret invested in one of those big short wave, a Zenith, radios of the day. It was actually quite a piece of furniture. This became a very essential part of the whole family lifestyle, as was the case all over America.

Although at the time there was no immediate threat to them they followed very closely the report's of Hitler and his storm troopers. The last Great War had not been that long ago and to the Sheehan/Tangney clans the Germans were viewed as war-like "Huns." Maybe it was partly because of their Irish background, but most of the gang was disgusted by the weakness of the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. There is a famous newsreel, from September 1938, where Chamberlain holds up the so-called Munich Treaty and declares "peace in our Time." Almost immediately Hitler continued his practice of annexing different parts of Europe (Austria and Czechoslovakia) to his Empire.

Dad and his family also would have followed reports of Japan trying to expand its front in main land China. The "Rape of Nanking" in 1937 caused much concern but it must have seemed that there was not much that could stop Japan either.

Obviously things got even more serious in September of 1939, when Germany invaded Poland. Much of that (three-day) Labor Day weekend was spent in front of the radio listening to details as they came in. Although things were bound to be unsure for some time, there must have been some relief felt when England and France finally declared war on Germany that Sunday (September 3rd.)

Dad began his freshman year of high school with the backdrop of Europe in utter crisis. By the time of his first Summer vacation as a high schooler the Axis, including German and Italian forces, as well as Russian forces under a non-aggression pact, had over run; Poland, Northern France, Belgium, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Hungary, Rumania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania. They also had a foothold in Northern Africa. By the end of dad's sophomore year (June 1941); Finland, Yugoslavia, Greece, Bulgaria, and island of Crete were also occupied.

Of course, during this time England was just barely holding on during the Battle of Britain, being bombed almost daily. In March of 1942 Congress authorized Roosevelt's Lend-Lease program. Under this act the United States sent aid to any "anti-Axis" country. This included financial aid as well as actual instruments of war. Some Americans were against this. They felt it meant America was no longer a neutral party. They wanted peace at any cost. One of these out spoken isolationist was Charles Lindburgh, the famous aviator. Generally dad and his clan were in favor of Lend-Lease.

As I write this (March 2003) I can not help but compare and contrast. My own son Tom is poised to start his freshman year next fall. While he and I certainly discuss and have concerns about George Bush's Iraq war most of his anxiety, which I definitely understand and sympathise with, is centered around the size of his new school and will he be able to find his classes? I have to wonder if dad and his classmates even had the luxury of worrying about details like that?

The previous fall (September 1940) Japan had joined the Axis under the Tripartite Pact. In July of 1941 Japan moved into and occupied French-Indochina (Vietnam.) In

response to this Roosevelt imposed trade embargoes on Japan. The U.S. had been trading metal; fuel and other supplies, which ultimately helped, support Japan's war machine. As a result of these embargoes Japan felt compelled to expand it's empire even more to acquire the raw materials it needed.

In December 1941 dad was a junior at Lincoln. He would soon start his Christmas vacation. He and his cousin Tom were scheming on a way to make some extra money for Christmas presents. They were going to make and sell holly wreaths. On Sunday, December 7, they went to an early mass. Then dad and Tom, possibly Tom's brother Jack, cut a quantity of holly from the bushes out behind the paint store. They gathered all the other materials they needed, i.e. wire etc, in the family room at 2400. As they started weaving away the Christmas music on the Zenith was interrupted by a news flash. The flash related something to the effect, that Japanese forces were attacking U.S. Naval forces in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

Dad immediately called in his mom and dad; undoubtedly Peggy joined them too. The radio advised them to stay tuned for further updates. Eventually, the airwaves were filled with nothing but reports on the situation. As dad put it, that was the end of their wreath-making project. After a while the Tangney boys went home. George, Margaret, Peggy and dad had dinner and sat around the radio following all the updates.

The next day President Roosevelt declared war with his famous "day of infamy" speech. Immediately America, and probably especially the west coast, was put on alert. Seattle was now subject to full blackouts at night. George was actually enlisted as an air raid warden. Every night he did his rounds. He had a couple of designated blocks he was to patrol. His duty was to make sure people had installed and were using heavy blinds to block out light from inside a house. Naturally porch lights could not be left on. He also was charged with checking each household to make sure they kept a bucket of sand on hand. The sand was in case of attack with incendiary bombs. The idea was the sand would help prevent a fire from spreading all through a neighborhood.

Also, cars were required to have blinders on their headlights. These blinders went over the light and had a little slit in the middle for some light. Of course, in 1941 there weren't all that many cars as there are today. Probably many people just chose not to drive around at night. Blackout also meant no marquees or streetlights at night, too.

Also during dad's junior year, spring of 1942, he suffered yet another relapse of rheumatic fever. He spent much of the second half of that school year on bed rest. One positive aspect of this, in dad's eyes was he had an opportunity to get to know his Grand Pa Tangney really well. Pa would come up and visit with dad almost daily. There was some concern among family members that Pa could be a bad influence on dad with his Socialist ideals. Dad thought they were all being ridiculous. He could make up his own mind about things. He just enjoyed his time with Pa.

I don't know exactly when Pa had returned to Seattle. He was in fact living at 5401. Grandma (Julia) had died December 5, 1940. She had suffered from a fairly prolonged illness. This was kind of a strain on the family. Frank had hired several housekeepers, since he still traveled quite a bit. The help invariably quit or were fired, because they couldn't stand dealing with dad's Aunt Florence. She would always find a problem with the smallest thing. Even dad and his cousin Jeanne were employed for a short period. They split a dollar every Saturday for cleaning the house. They quit after a month or so because they didn't want to put up with Florence. Dad said it was the first time he stood up to her.

As dad started his senior year of high school the whole world was literally at war. In the Pacific, during the six or so months following Pearl Harbor, the Japanese had rapidly increased their area of control. This included; most of Southeast Asia, the Dutch East Indies, The Philippines, and much of the central pacific. Their reach included outposts in the Caroline, Marianas, Marshall, Gilbert and Solomon Islands.

That past spring (1942) American forces had been captured and subjected to what became known as the “Bataan Death March.” General Douglas MacArthur escaped and vowed his famous, “I shall return.”

In June of 1942 Japan suffered what was their first real defeat and America’s first real victory. In the Naval battle of Midway the Japanese lost four aircraft carriers and nearly 250 airplanes, bombers and fighters.

During that fall and winter of dad’s senior year the Allies began making some progress or at least they were able to stave off total defeat. In Northern Africa it was tough going, but gains were eventually made. By May of 1943 Africa was in complete control of the Allies.

In the Pacific the Allies, mostly Americans engaged in the first offensive move in that theater, on the island of Guadalcanal. This was a major offensive and kept the Japanese occupied for some time. This offensive began in August 1942.

Also in the Pacific Theater at around the same time the Allies, mostly Australians and Americans, were involved in an important defensive campaign. This took place on the island of New Guinea. New Guinea would later come to play a major part in dad’s life.

New Guinea is a major island just North of Australia. It is generally a long (approximately 430 miles) and narrow island. It slants length wise, perpendicular to the northern coast of Australia. Its Eastern most tip is closest to Australia with its Western tip pointing up. It has a series of forbidding mountain ranges, which are covered by jungles, which make it even more forbidding. By the summer of 1942 the Japanese had control of the northern coast of New Guinea. The Allies still held Port Moresby on the Southern Coast. Port Moresby was the capitol of Papua, New Guinea. Papua was the territory making up the southeastern part of New Guinea.

At this time, fall of 1942, it was also the most forward point of the allied front of the Southwest Pacific Area. If the Japanese took Port Moresby it would put their planes

within bombing range of the Australian coast. This could feasibly support a Japanese invasion of Australia.

Port Moresby did indeed become an objective of the Japanese army. Attack by air or sea was not possible for the Japanese at this time, so from the northern coast they attacked over the Owen Stanley mountain range. They fought their way over the trail system known as the Kokoda Track. They came as close as 30 miles to the objective of Port Moresby. They were forced to retreat back over the track due to supply problems. One of the problems for the Japanese was that the mountains made it difficult to resupply. Another problem was that both men and supplies were also needed in the Guadalcanal campaign.

Australian and then Americans forces pushed the Japanese all the way back to the northern coast. Clearing them out of the area around the villages of Buna and Gona. Also pushing them west and north up the New Guinea coast. The Buna-Gona area was secured by January 1943. Australia was safe from invasion.

By dad's 18th birthday (March 1, 1943) he had certainly come of age both figuratively and chronologically. Certainly in his junior year it became clear he would be subject to the authority of the Selective Service system. In school they offered electives such as Morse code, aeronautics and meteorology. These subjects could obviously be applied in the different branches of the Armed Forces. He had even taken a course on the Pacific Rim. This would later be quite significant to his experience.

2

Going In

On or around dad's 18th birthday he received a telegram requesting him to report to his local draft board. Which he did. He was given a deferment allowing him to complete High school. He would then be subject to "call up" after that.

After graduation he and Tom Tangney worked a while for their Uncle Bob. Bob supervised a Goodyear warehouse. Dad used to talk about how he and Tom would move tires bigger than them, presumably for airplanes. Some how they would stand them up and roll them to where they needed to be. If they dropped them it was almost impossible to get them up again. Exactly how much he worked for Bob that summer I don't know.

On July 12th he was to report for his physical. There was certainly much anxiety on his part that he may not pass the physical. This was due to his history of bouts of Rheumatic Fever. Probably, secretly or maybe even openly his mother hoped he wouldn't pass. He reported to the old Armory (Eagle Auditorium), which is now the Center House at the Seattle Center. As dad described it "you walked around in a naked line about 4 blocks long." He recalled the doctors checked "your heart and your bottom." I suspect they checked things like vision and hearing too. The exam itself was not complicated or involved. Then, just like that, he was a Draftee in the United States Army. He was informed that he could leave but he would be on call.

Whether he knew exactly when he was supposed to report back or not he and Tom Tangney took a bus up to Whidbey Island to go to the family cabin, on July 24th. They had a couple of good swims in the cold water of Holmes Harbor. They may not have "opened up" necessarily but there must have been a feeling of closeness and the realization that this could possibly be the last time together. Dad was in fact going in the service. He was definitely going to be a soldier and American soldiers were dying.

Most of Tom's family drove up to the cabin the next day, to stay the week. Apparently dad and/or Tom went back on the bus before the week was out. There is a log from the cabin in which people record highlights of their stay at the cabin. There was no mention of dad or Tom Jr. after the 25th of July, in the log. Tom Tangney Sr. did note some interesting things occurring during their stay. One was that Mussolini had been deposed in Italy. He wrote "good riddance, eh what?" Another entry was about all the plane maneuvers going on. There is a navy airfield on the North end of Whidbey Island. This must have been the origin of these planes. Tom Sr. wrote "they whiz right by our windows occasionally we expect them to land right on our porch."

Later that month George and Margaret had relatives over to give dad a send off. July 12, 1943 had been the official date of his induction into the United States Army. On his discharge papers August 2, 1943 is listed as the "Date of Entry Into Active Service." He became Private Tom Sheehan ASN (Army Serial Number) 39-211-463.

On the 2nd of August he reported once again to the Armory. He said good-bye to his parents. Reflecting on it later he realized how hard it must have been for them. At the time he was 18 1/2 years old. Dad said when his own kids were around that age he would worry about them just going out never mind going to war. Not that he was naive but he didn't really think about what was in store for him. There was a certain amount of romantic excitement. Later he would come to see things differently but that was his mindset at the time.

Once in the Armory lines were formed and they gradually were loaded onto buses. Among the crowd of men/boys dad ran into an occasional classmate, also recent graduates of Lincoln. After boarding on a bus they headed South to Fort Lewis near Tacoma, Washington. After about three hours they entered the main gates. Fort Lewis was, and still is to some degree, one of the more prominent camps in the region. It was something of a transit station. Most soldiers were housed there temporarily until they got their orders and were shipped out.

Within an hour or so after arriving they were marched to a Quartermaster building. Here they were issued their army fatigues. They were allowed to wrap up their civilian clothes and prepare them to be sent home. They were then assigned to a barracks. Dad was placed in the upper floor of a two story barracks.

Reveille, they discovered the next morning, was at 4:30 A.M. It was at 5:15 on Sundays. Upon Arising they were to get a bucket and brush and scrub the barrack floor. Chow was at 5:00, "powdered eggs and rubber pancakes", as dad recalled. At 6:30 they fell in for roll call. At roll call the names of those shipping out were announced. If they weren't being shipped out they would drill and or be assigned various details. This was the routine for the next couple of weeks. Dad recalled it rained constantly the whole time. He spoke of it as being the wettest couple of weeks he had ever seen in this area.

It was definitely the understanding that being at Fort Lewis would be temporary. Dad wrote his parents and told them not to bother writing because of this. He would let them know when he was stationed somewhere on a more permanent basis. He also wrote that within the first couple of days he took three tests and some shots.

Finally one day his named was called. He was to prepare to ship out. He stuffed his things into his duffel bag, grabbed his helmet and his Government Issue Springfield rifle donned his Army overcoat and prepared to form up.

It was the middle of the night (the first of many such maneuvers) when those slated to ship out were loaded on to trucks. They drove for miles through the woods of Fort Lewis. They arrived at a waiting train "out in the middle of nowhere." They were marched by columns of two and boarded the train. They sat in seats of four.

Dad soon became acquainted with the other three soldiers sitting with him. There was Tony Buhr, Chuck Lanning and Bob Swain. They all quickly came to feel like old friends.

Tony Buhr was from Tacoma but he went to Seattle College, now Seattle University, a Catholic school. Tony actually knew dad's cousin Jeanne who also went to Seattle College.

Chuck Lanning was a 19 year old from West Seattle. He graduated the same year as dad, but was older.

Bob Swain was Canadian. He had also been to college. I'm not sure why he was in the U.S. Army. Most of his friends were in the Royal Canadian Armed Forces. His Uncle was a commander in the Third Battalion of the Cape Breton Highlanders. They would soon see action in Italy. In writing home dad described Bob as very "English acting." With dad I would normally have thought this was meant to be derogatory. This was not the case. He spoke very fondly of Bob, "a swell guy."

As the train rolled along they really had no idea of their final destination. There were rumors and guesses. Some of the trains were going to Fort Roberts, in California. Some were going to a camp in Denver, which meant you would be in the Army Air Force. The Air Force was not a separate branch of the services at that time. Other possibilities were camp Hood in Texas or Fort Riley in Kansas.

They went through Oregon, Idaho and Wyoming. At some point it was obvious they weren't going to California. They stopped in Denver, Colorado. They had a three-hour delay while train cars were switched. They actually were able to tour the Capitol building and took in some other sights. Then they re-boarded the train and headed East. Now the rumors were that they would be going to Fort Riley. If this were so it meant they would be going into the Cavalry.

There was quite a bit of chatter about this prospect. To some there was still a sort of glamorous allure regarding the Cavalry. It was certainly a big part of American history, especially out West. In the minds of some Cavalry still meant horse Cavalry in all its flashy show. So heading East they joked about all this.

On August 10, 1943 they arrived at Junction City, Kansas. They would indeed be going to Fort Riley. It was just 20 miles or so Northeast of Junction City. Fort Riley had first been established in 1852 to protect pioneers heading west. It eventually became the Mounted Service School, later just the Cavalry School. At the time dad got there it was known as the (CRTC) Cavalry Replacement Training Center. On the day dad arrived at Junction City the temperature was in the 100's. The Day before it had been 118 degrees. Dad described the land as desolate and barren. "It was like landing on the moon."

The day they arrived, before even being assigned to barracks, they had a forced march of several miles. This was with full packs. At least 4 of the men collapsed under the heat. Somewhat to dad's surprise he was not one of them. Also that first day he went to the dispensary to get more shots. After that he went to the classifications Barracks. He found out he was going to be in the Mechanized Cavalry. They were assigned to their permanent barracks. He was pleased that he and Tony were assigned to the same one. They were now members of the 4th platoon, Troop D of the 3rd Regiment CRTC.

Their whole training was to take 17 weeks. First, there would be 4 weeks of physical training. Then there would be 13 more weeks that would include more specialized training. When being oriented, by the Major, they were advised that after that 17 weeks they would be ready for replacement troops in battle, overseas. The Major also said they were there for "one reason and that was to kill." I think this made quite an impression on dad which I'm sure was the Major's intended effect.

In the first few weeks they would typically have a couple hours of exercise and drilling, rifle practice, etc. in the morning. Then they would have lectures and movies. The drilling always included marching. Every Friday night the whole camp would go on parade. For part of this they had to stand at attention for an extended period. Often troopers would collapse during this.

Since they were in the Cavalry they were referred to as troopers. This was not the case in regular army units. At first all the training took away some of the glamour they

had all talked about. But, dad actually seemed to thrive on it. He had gone from 145 lbs., when he entered, to 158 in 3 weeks. By the end of October he would be almost 180. He wrote home to say the food was o.k. but there was never enough. He often, almost every night, went to the P.X. to buy some ice cream or pie.

His parents were glad to hear this. They were very worried about his health. They were of course very worried about his safety in general. During the time dad was at Fort Riley America's 5th army and other Ally elements were fighting a very bloody, difficult war in Italy. Naturally George and Margaret were aware of all the details of the Italian campaign. I suspect it intensified their own anxieties towards dad and his fate. In one letter George sent to his "Tommy" he wrote, "They are having a tough time in Italy right now I hope they don't lose too many men." He closed this letter with, "Try and do anything to keep from going across-be careful. Love-Dad."

Dad continued to have success in his training. This time it was on the firing range. They had traded in their Springfields for a modern Garand M-1 semi-automatic rifle. The M-1 had a clip, which allowed you to fire one shot after another without having to "cock" each time, as you had to do with the, bolt action, Springfield. Dad had certainly never shot a rifle before being in the army. He may have handled Uncle Frank's World War 1 rifle, but that's about it. On the range to pass as a marksman you had to shoot 220 points out of a possible 300. Dad shot 252. He actually raised it to 261, a couple of weeks later. In writing home about this dad mentioned a lot of the boys let their guns kick back and hit them in the eye. His buddy Tony had a black eye that week.

Dad was enjoying many aspects of Army life. He enjoyed meeting people from all over the country. He made some interesting observations/generalizations. As he saw it; "people from the northwest are far superior to other sections. People from Jersey rank next. Philadelphia turns out the worst type of guys. The fellows from Texas and Oklahoma seem to be slow and rather backward."

Dad was almost amazed at how easy it was to make friends. He was developing some very close friendships too. The group of four that came out on the train; Dad, Chuck Lanning, Bob Swain, and Tony Buhr, grew to be very good friends. As it turned out they were all Catholic. So most every Sunday they all went to mass together. Then they would go to the P.X. diner for a bacon and eggs breakfast.

Dad related well to Tony. Tony was older and had actually finished college. Dad was beginning to realize how well educated he himself was. He could definitely "hold his own" with Tony and the older college men of his outfit. He was not arrogant about it. The truth was that at this time in America's history it was not necessarily uncommon to run into an adult with no more than an eighth grade education. Of course dad's mom had often stressed the importance of a good education.

Dad was also very close to Bob Swain. That fall (1943) Bob received word from back home that his father had died. Naturally this saddened all his friends in camp. Dad seemed to be especially effected by this. Bob didn't go home for the funeral. His mother insisted he stay at Fort Riley. If he did leave then he would have to start basic training all over. Later Bob tried to get a "hardship" discharge. Dad supported this and even insisted that Bob pursue it. Bob didn't get it. Later on, when basic was over dad loaned Bob some money so he could go home on a furlough. As with dad's parents, all of this brought up his own anxieties towards his parents. In the letter he sent informing them about Bob's dad dying he wrote; "Believe me I want you people to take care of yourselves."

Around the same time dad received some tragic news of his own. Grandpa Tangney had also died. Pa died on October 9, 1943. This was quite a shock to dad. He had received a very lucid, up beat letter from Pa only a month before. In this case there wasn't really any question as to whether dad would be able to get home for the funeral.

He did get to follow all the Tangney/Irish Catholic melo-drama through the U.S. Mail. There was the inherent guilt and blame. Margaret felt she didn't do enough for Pa.

Others reported that was not true. Gert Tangney (Cousin Tom's mom) wrote to dad saying; "Your mother, of course, is taking it quite hard. She shouldn't she did more than anyone else for him." At the same time Margaret basically accused Frank of driving Pa to his death because he didn't hire a housekeeper for him.

There was also some grief around the fact that, because of his falling out with the Church, Pa did not get a Catholic funeral. Margaret also felt guilt that she wasn't able to get Pa to come back to the church. A priest did come to the house to anoint him. Another priest also said a few prayers at his burial. This was all presumably unofficial. Officially there could be no funeral Mass, but later they were allowed a Requiem Mass. Some felt the Church was fair in it's treatment (Gert and Margaret) others felt it wasn't (Frank and Florence.) To try and comfort his mom dad wrote; "As far as the Church is concerned I think they did as much as was possible."

Back at the CRTC, by the 5th or 6th week of training, things started to get a little more specialized. Next he was to train on Machine guns. These were 45 pounders. They would rest on a tripod and the gunner would lie down on the ground. Dad complained about having to pack them from the shed to the firing range. As it turned out he excelled on the machine gun too. He was able to add a Sharpshooter medal to his Marksman one he had already got for the M-1. He got a score of 223 out of a possible 256. He had the tenth highest score in his platoon. Only 64% even qualified. Bob Swain was not one of them.

The bulk of the specialized training revolved around various vehicles. They were after all mechanized Cavalry. Their main function would be reconnaissance. Since they were replacement troops they could go into any established unit, not necessarily cavalry. In fact many infantry divisions had a Cavalry Troop attached to them permanently. Armored infantry divisions had an entire squadron. These elements would in theory act as the eyes and ears of the division. Larger Cavalry outfits would be used for

“reconnaissance in force. This would mean they could get some pretty tough assignments.

Some of the vehicles they might train on were; tanks, jeeps, half-tracks, scout cars, “6 by 6” trucks, and light trucks. Dad’s specialty was to be scout cars. He drove the big “6 bys”, as he called them, a number of times. These are the big trucks they used to transport troops and/or supplies. He said the 6 “bys” and the half-tracks were the most difficult because they had several gearshifts that you had to work with. The scout car was difficult at first, but he got some extra individual training and was able to keep up. He had not even driven a car before this.

Dad was not the only one who had difficulty driving. Apparently it was not uncommon for someone to tip a jeep over now and then. Dad recalled with some amusement a fellow from Brooklyn named John Carty. As dad put it “not only could John Carty not drive he also couldn’t see, either.” He had glasses as thick as coke bottles. When a group was out driving they would stop the vehicle to rotate drivers to give everyone a turn. When it was John Carty’s turn it would put everyone into a panic. They eventually got to where they would just tell the instructor or whoever that Carty was sick.

After the troopers had some preliminary training they would go out in the vehicles on daily maneuvers. They might drive around in columns. Sometimes they would be in smaller formations and have to work a certain “problem” using maps or what ever resources they had. They did a lot of this, all over Kansas.

Around the 9th week at the CRTC they began tactical training. This meant exercises and maneuvers designed to simulate combat conditions. Dad wrote at this time that the Major said they had “had more training in the first 9 weeks than he had in a year of officers training.” Even dad knew they weren’t ready for combat, though.

One exercise towards this end was the infiltration course. The troopers had to crawl along a 75 feet course while machine guns were firing live ammo at a level of

about 4 feet off the ground. There was barbed wire on the ground every 5 feet that you had to lift up and crawl under. There were also live mortar shells going off. One time while on the course dad witnessed a soldier who was in such a panic that he stood up in the middle of it. He did get shot. Apparently the guy survived but it had to be kind of unnerving for the others.

Their tactical training, in fact, all their training culminated in a two week Bivouac. This meant they were out in the field, fighting the elements and participating in more combat-like exercises. For at least part of their time out in the wilds of Kansas it was 20 degrees below zero. There was two to three feet of snow on the ground. This was in November of 1943. It would be dad's first Thanksgiving away from home. They actually had turkey served, mess kits and all, out in the field

Some of the more intense exercises were a village fighting course and one known as the superman course. The village-fighting course was considered the more dangerous one. This was where squads, of 8 men each, went into a mock village with specific duties to perform. They used live ammunition. Dad had a Thompson sub-machine gun. His task was to go into three different building and spray them with gunfire. The superman course was a 1½-mile course. First they had to climb a couple of 8-foot walls. Next they would climb under some barbed wire. Then they had to scale a 50-foot cliff. Finally they had to crawl through another infiltration course like they had done before.

Besides having a couple of frozen toes, (at one point they weren't sure whether or not he would lose them to frostbite), dad came through the bivouac with flying colors as usual. When he got back he wrote his parents saying, "instead of losing weight I gained 5 lbs. The fellows decided the tougher the life, the better I thrive."

By the week of December 9th dad's formal training had ended. There was a certain amount of conjecture as to what would be next for him. In fact there had been much discussion about this topic and others with family, sports was a big one as might be

expected, all through the 17 weeks of his training. This discussion was facilitated by a constant flow of letters between dad and his relatives, mostly his mother and father.

He did hear from some of his Aunts and Uncles mostly on the Tangney side. He and his cousin Tom certainly tried to keep in touch. Tom was now in his senior year at O'Dea high school. He was very busy socially and academically. He would speak very fondly, in his letters, of simpler times he and dad had enjoyed together as children. Dad's mom and his aunt Gert made note to dad that Tom really seemed to miss him.

Dad tried to make it clear that his letter's home were to his sister, Peggy, too. He addressed a few letters to her specifically. She was now a Senior at Lincoln High. She was taking some of the same classes he took last year. He tried to support her with this and offered bits of advice. He mentioned his picture he had of her in his wallet was getting worn out because he always had to pull it out to show to the guys.

It was certainly not an uncommon experience for other families, but these letters seemed to really sustain both dad and his parents especially. Of course there were telephones but it wasn't that simple or that economical to make a long distance phone call. In a few letters arrangements were being made for a phone call that would happen on some pre-determined date and time.

One topic, which afforded considerable discussion, was ASTP (Army Specialized Training Program.) ASTP was a program whereby the army would pay for you to go to college. When you were done you would have a certificate or degree of some sort, typically in engineering or something of that sort. It would imply a post-war commitment of a couple more years in the army. Around the beginning of October dad was made aware that he would be eligible to apply for ASTP. To be eligible just to apply you had to have an I.Q. score of 115 or more. Apparently those tests he took when he first arrived at Fort Lewis determined his eligibility. To actually qualify for ASTP you had to take a series of further tests and then you had to be interviewed before a review board. Since he was at Fort Riley if he did qualify he would probably be sent to the

University of Missouri. If he applied now it would mean he would not get a furlough following basic training, therefore he would not be home for this upcoming Christmas.

There were several letters back and forth discussing pros and cons regarding ASTP. He was very interested in what others thought. He wrote; "How about your opinion and the rest of the folks back in Seattle" he went on further to say "The opinions from home will help a lot so lets hear them." His parents were all for it especially his mom. I get the strong impression the main reason it appealed to them is that it would mean dad would not be "going across" for some time, if at all.

Dad's Uncle Tom Tangney sent a very thoughtful and sensitive letter. Dad had a good relationship with his Uncle Tom. I quote his letter extensively, because I suspect it had a lot to do with dad making his decision:

...in earning the opportunity to take a years college course. That's a real accomplishment & a definite honor, to be one of a very few out of a class of 150 to be given the offer. Evidently you are undecided as just what to do about accepting, but whether you go for it or not you've been well honored & deserving of our very best & sincere congratulations. It's a little difficult for us over here to figure out what is your best move. You, of course, have your own feelings in the matter, & you know the ground over there. Decisions on things of this nature, must, of necessity, be left pretty much to the judgement of yourself. But I think I know what my decision would be, were I in your shoes. My first and immediate reaction, when I was told of it, was that, by all means, take advantage of it & every other bit of schooling you can get with someone else paying the freight. No doubt it will be an excellently designed course, layed out and taught as only Uncle Sam knows how. My personal opinion is that it would be a grave mistake to pass it up. I could be wrong, as I say I'm not there on the spot with you to size up the situation from all angles, but I'd have to find some very good reasons, which I can't think of existing, for changing my opinion.

Mugs (dad's Mom) mentioned your suggestion that you'd miss out on your chance for a furlough. Heck Tom, a couple weeks furlough is a short lived thing, so sweet while it lasts, & after it's over it's twice as tough to go back too. You'd like to get home for a few days, & we'd all give a lot to see you back here, but I'd say pass it up for a year. You'll get a shot of education that you'll never get in books & probably few colleges & you'll love it I'm sure. As far as worrying about getting over seas, why don't you forget

it, if you haven't. It's not fun & if the guys who are running this war decide to put you thru a year's course instead of in the fox holes, go to it, you're doing your duty the way they see it should be done.

Tom wrapped up this part of his letter with; "Well, that's enough lecturing, I don't want to appear to be sticking my nose in your affairs, just telling you what a 53 year old thinks about. He then spent a full page talking about the latest sports news.

Dad did in fact apply for ASTP. He passed another test. The next step was to go before a review board. As things turned out he was never able to do that. Whether it was intentional or an oversight the 1st Sergeant neglected to tell dad and five others that they would have an opportunity to go before the board. Therefore he was not around when his turn came up. In discussing the mix up dad mentioned there was a rumor that since the Colonel was a Southerner he did not care for "Yankees. Margaret was convinced it was all because he was Catholic. George asked about this possibility, but I don't think he was as paranoid as Margaret regarding this matter.

Dad wrote home about this, which turned out to be a mistake. Margaret somehow contacted the Fort Riley Chaplain. The Chaplain bawled out the 1st Sergeant, who then bawled out dad. He told him to quit being such a baby. Dad was somewhat humiliated and not very happy with his mom, about the whole thing. He wrote her after being bawled out saying; "...I wish you wouldn't do anything like that again. I know you were trying to help me, but I think I could have handled it all by myself."

I think the whole incident changed things slightly between dad and his parents, particularly his mother. He was maybe more careful about sharing his disappointments as they occurred. Although I think it was probably a good thing to have happened. I think in some ways it matured dad and prepared him for the challenges that he was soon to face.

At any rate, when his basic training ended since ASTP was out, the question was raised once again what would be next for dad? He would be able to apply again for

ASTP after he got his next assignment whatever that was. But, it sounds as though he sort of soured on the whole subject. He never did pursue it again.

After Basic training dad waited for his orders. The expectation was that he would be shipped out of Fort Riley. It was possible that he could be shipped overseas, immediately. The general procedure was that after Basic you received an additional 6 months advanced training. This training could happen overseas but you wouldn't likely go right into combat. Another possibility was you would receive advanced training stateside. When dad knew when and where his next assignment was he would then know whether he might get a furlough and then be able to visit home.

As of December 17, 1943 dad still had not received his orders. It certainly looked like he would not be home for this Christmas, anyway. Tony Buhr had received his orders. He was to report to Fort Ord in California by January 12, 1944. Therefore he would be up in the Seattle/Tacoma area on furlough, before that. He would probably try to contact George and Margaret. Bob had also not received his orders yet, but most of the other men were shipping out.

The week of Christmas dad got his orders. He and pretty much the rest of the men were to report to a camp in North Dakota. Bob Swain had not got his orders, but he was going home on a furlough. Unfortunately for dad, or fortunately as he wondered about it later, he became very ill. So ill, the doctor would not allow him to ship out. He was sick with a bad flu for almost two weeks. He found out after the war that those who went to North Dakota were later sent to Europe. They joined a cavalry scout troop.

At one point that week in December, dad was the only one in the barracks. He remembers crawling out of bed to go to Church. He remembered seeing the Christmas tree in the PX. It made him feel very lonely. He figured this experience is why later in his life he got very sentimental about family around Christmas time. He did not write his parents until after he was feeling better. He may not have been well enough but he may also have wanted to spare his parents and/or avoid any drastic measures from them.

On January 16, 1944 dad wrote his folks to say he finally got his orders. He too would be reporting to Fort Ord where Tony was. Fort Ord was a POE (Port of Embarkation.) What this meant, going to a POE, was that he more than likely was “going across.” It also meant the Pacific. Dad in his budding sarcasm wrote, “...don’t get all upset and wire the President or something.” He also wrote a P.S. which I think reflects how much he had “come of age.” It said, “please stop worrying about me, everything will turn out fine.”

He was supposed to report to Fort Ord by February 1, 1944. This meant he would be able to visit home before that. Technically it was not a furlough it was known as a “delay in route.”

Before dad left Fort Riley he said goodbye to Bob Swain, who had come back from his furlough. Bob would eventually be sent to Camp Maxey in Texas. After that he was sent to Europe.

Dad took the train out of Junction City and proceeded to have a tour of the Western United States. He went through Utah, Colorado, and Nevada. In California he had to switch trains. He recalled spending the night on a hard wooden bench at the station in Davis, California. (*As children he showed us the bench, on one of our trips to Disneyland.*) He then went north through Oregon and on to Seattle. When he finally reported to Fort Ord he had spent 6 days on the road and 4 days in Seattle. Obviously trains were one of the main forms of transportation and during these times people were traveling here and there constantly. That meant the trains were almost always overcrowded. Dad recalled that he almost always had to stand up or sit on the floor.

Even though it was the middle of January George and Margaret had kept the tree and all the Christmas decorations up. I suspect George may have taken a few days off. He was very busy painting these days. The wartime economy was very good for business. He had hired a few steady workers. One was a Russian man. George said he couldn’t understand a word he said but he was a good worker.

The relatives all came by to visit. At this time the only other family member in the Service was Eddy Sheehan, one of dad's cousins. He was in the Navy. No doubt dad and Tom Tangney jr. spent some time together. Also, no doubt the time went by too fast.

Dad arrived at Fort Ord on the evening of February 1, 1944. He actually had a seat on the train from Portland, Oregon on. Fort Ord is near the town of Salinas. It is just south of the San Francisco bay area. Dad spoke about what a beautiful setting it was. The camp itself was one of the bigger camps of the time. It took a few days before dad discovered that Tony was still there. They were assigned to different sections, but got together when they could.

It was almost immediately that dad began what was to be a thirteen-day training program. Dad described it in a letter home that first week, "Believe me it is really a stiff training program. It seems like we work night and day. The physical conditioning has got everyone so stiff they can hardly move." The very first day included yet another infiltration course. It had been raining, so it was pretty muddy going. Also in the first week they went on a bivouac. They hiked seven miles with full 100 lbs. packs.

True to form, dad successfully met the challenges he faced. On the grenade-training course he pulled a muscle throwing the first one. Without bragging he reported; "...the rest of the morning I threw grenades with my injured arm and believe it or not I found that I was really accurate with them. We were throwing them into fox holes at different ranges."

Again, in a modest tone he recounted an incident that displayed his irrepressible leadership abilities. He wrote; "At 8 o'clock until midnight we had a night problem. I was squad leader and I tried to hurry the problem, so our whole squad was in bed at 10 o'clock. I had to report our work to the C.O. and he said very good, so it payed to rush things. I certainly do not like to be squad leader, but it comes up every so often."

Dad and Tony were on different schedules so they didn't see much of each other. Dad was again amazed how easy it was to make new friends. He met an Elroy Goebel from Denver. He was a Catholic too. He had been in his junior year of college when he was drafted. Dad seemed to really relate to the college type. Dad and Elroy soon became good friends.

By dad's account his training at Fort Ord was indeed "advanced." It sounds like those two weeks were very intense. This is probably because those in charge of the program knew it might be the last formal training these men would get before going into combat. At the same time each soldier had the same realization. Some would crack under this pressure.

Dad recalled one incident illustrating this. One of the final training courses was designed to simulate disembarking from a troop transport, while at sea. The exercise involved a 50-60 foot wall with netting hanging down its side. The men with full gear, including their rifles, would scale up the wall then climb over and down the other side. While they were doing this there would be people at the bottom shaking the netting, to mimic the effect of a ship being out on the open ocean.

On the day dad was training on this he had completed the course when he and several others noticed a soldier near the top. He was not moving. Some of the non-coms called to him but got no response. There was rising concern that if he lost his grip and fell he could easily break his neck. Dad came forward and asked if he could try to talk him down. When he was told to go ahead and try he slipped off his pack and gear. He and another volunteer headed up on either side of the stranded soldier. With some considerable effort they talked him down, one rung at a time.

In an almost anti-climatic way all of sudden training ceased. Dad and those he had been training with were put "on alert." This simply meant they were awaiting shipping orders. They were put on an occasional detail, but mostly they had a lot of free

time. This was quite a contrast from the weeks before. So he tried to catch up on his letters home.

There was the usual conjecture about what may happen next. Dad reported that they were issued warm weather clothes. The thinking was that that might mean either he was going to Australia or maybe Texas. He asked his parents to please not pray for Texas. I think dad was realistic about the implications of going oversea i.e. he could go into combat and he could get killed. He was very much of the attitude that he didn't want to miss out. Besides that he had heard that Texas was a god-awful place.

Speaking of God, I would say that dad became more and more serious about his religion, Catholicism. This is not to say that he didn't already have confidence and find comfort in his family's beliefs. He was always pleased when he was able to develop friendships with other Catholics. Tony and his new friend Elroy were also Catholic. They would all go to mass whenever it was possible.

But it was more than just going to mass. Dad wrote his parents mentioning that he and Elroy had run into a Czech-American who had said he was Greek Catholic. Dad sincerely tried to figure out how that was different from being Roman Catholic. He was sincerely perplexed by this question. He wrote his parents about this encounter; "they have the same pope, and also believe in the body & blood in communion. We both decided at the first opportunity we would look it up." Then he wrote; "I am really puzzled by it."

He carried a prayer book with his belongings. He mentioned it in a separate letter. He wrote about a recent newsreel he had seen. He wrote; "The newsreel showed a soldier that had his life saved by a prayer book just like mine. I really think the world of that prayer book." That is not to say that dad was any kind of bible thumping fanatic, but he did appear to have a strong faith.

Sometime around the third week of February dad got his orders and left Fort Ord. Tony had shipped out sometime the week before. Although it was pretty obvious they

both would be going to the Pacific Theater it was a big place and there was no telling when they might run into each other. Elroy and dad shipped out together.

A group of men took a train right up to the San Francisco waterfront. San Francisco is about 50-60 miles North of Fort Ord. The men then boarded, in small groups, passenger boats that took them into the harbor. Their shuttle would first make a stop at Alcatraz Island. Alcatraz was still very much an active federal penitentiary. This stop no doubt conjured up notions of gangsters and G-men. Their next and final stop was Angel Island. This camp was known as Fort MacDowell. Dad Fondly recalled that as he marched up to his new quarters a sign saying, "welcome Tom Sheehan", greeted him. This was done by Tony Buhr who somehow knew dad was coming. He and Tony were sharing the same barracks and by the looks of it would be going overseas together. The camp was strictly replacement troops and they were all organized by individual types, e.g. cavalry, artillery, infantry, etc.

Once there they had some additional training and they would hike around the island every day. Dad remembered his platoon's lieutenant, who had been a professor of botany or some such subject, seemed more interested in the flora and fauna of Angel Island than he was in maneuvers.

In the time he was there, dad was allowed two or three passes to go ashore to explore San Francisco. For dad's nineteenth birthday (March 1, 1944) he got to take in the follies at the Golden Gate Theater. Dad wrote home about all this. He could not tell them specifically that he was on Angel Island. His mail was now being censored. He did tell them he was at a new POE, "somewhere in California." He actually wrote that it was an island in San Francisco Bay, but it wasn't Alcatraz. I guess the censor didn't think that was vital defense information because they let it go through.

In a letter dated March 3, 1944 dad mentioned the latest news from the Pacific Front. He was very proud that the latest success involved a cavalry unit. He wrote; "Well I suppose you read in the paper about the 1st Cavalry attack on Admiralty Islands.

Tonight's paper led me to understand that they went in as a Recon. action and found the Japs so completely surprised that they made a full-scale attack of it. They did darn good too, considering they had scarcely any Air force or Naval protection. It does me good to see them use the Cavalry."

Generally things had been going pretty well for the Allies in the Pacific. In the very simplest of terms, as I understand it, the plan against Japan was to reduce their area of control by gradually pushing back their front. This would essentially be done by securing a series of airfields or securing land bases to develop airfields. These would then be used to support further forward motion. This forward motion would call for a cooperative effort involving air, ground and naval allied forces.

The notion of a front over vast ocean miles didn't fit the traditional one, in terms of military history prior to this time. The Allies were able to use this to their advantage. General MacArthur adopted a strategy whereby Japanese garrisons where bypassed and isolated to "wither on the vine." If Japanese forces were unable to be re-supplied their effectiveness would be greatly reduced.

In the case of the Navy strategy it had to be different. Their task was to try to engage and inflict overwhelming damage to the Japanese Naval forces while sustaining as little damage as they could to Allied ships. This is exactly what was achieved in the battle of Midway. The use of aircraft carriers was to be instrumental in these undertakings.

The manner in which these efforts were coordinated was by dividing the entire Pacific Theater into different Areas. The two main Areas of operations were the Central Pacific Area and the Southwest Pacific Area.

The Central Pacific Area (CPA) covered North from the equator to the northern tip of Japan's main island of Honshu. It ran East from the China Coast to the Hawaiian Islands. The CPA was under the command of Admiral Chester Nimitz.

The Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) went South of the Equator. From the Eastern end of the Solomon Islands it went West and included the Admiralty Islands, New Guinea, Australia, Indonesia, the Dutch East Indies, Southeast Asia and the Philippines. The SWPA fell under the command of General MacArthur.

The campaign dad had referred to involving the 1st cavalry in the Admiralty Islands was in the SWPA. It was on the island of Los Negros. It was a very important victory towards the goal of isolating Japanese forces. Los Negros was an island North of New Guinea.

In between Los Negros and the northern coast of New Guinea was the island of New Britain. On the Northern coast of New Britain was the major Japanese port of Rabaul. Rabaul served as a re-supply depot for most Japanese units in the SWPA. It also had a major airfield to help defend itself. In December of 1943 the Allies landed forces on the Southern Coast of New Britain. The 112th Regimental Combat Team, a Cavalry unit, and the 1st Marines engaged overwhelming Japanese Forces. It was decided rather than face the Rabaul head on it would be better to apply the strategy of isolating and reducing it's importance.

By seizing airfields on Los Negros the allies were able to send air sorties against convoys coming out of Rabaul. This effectively cut off several forward Japanese units. One such unit was the 18th imperial Army on the northern coast of New Guinea. These forces had already been forced westward up the coast after the allied victory in the Buna-Gona area. After Los Negros the Eighteenth Army, still strong but unable to count on being re-supplied, was continually pushed west by harassing Allied movements. Several times American and Australian forces would envelop the 18th Army by landing allied units west of their position while other units pushed to the East of them. Since retreat by way of water was not very feasible, due to allied control of the coast, they were forced into the jungle mountains where they could go around the westerly Allied units, to escape being trapped.

By the end of March 1944, as dad stood ready to go overseas, the Allies had made decided gains in the Pacific. In the Central Pacific Area they had first secured Makin and Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands. Next they pushed Northwest of that and took Einwetok and Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands.

In the Southwest Pacific Area they had taken most of the Solomon Islands, which are just East of New Britain and New Guinea. They secured airfields in the Admiralty Islands, including Los Negros. They were now engaged in choking off major Japanese positions of considerable strength. One was Rabaul on New Britain and another was the 18th Army on the northern coast of New Guinea.

In military terms the allies had forced a salient into the enemy's front and were turning their right flank.

So, this was the situation in the SWPA when dad got his sailing orders. I am not able to ascertain the exact date. The last letter he sent from Angel Island was dated March 18, 1944. His family would not hear from him for over a month. The next letter they got was postmarked April 19. On the letter itself the date was rubbed off. Either dad did this thinking it would not be allowed through, or the censors did it thinking it might give away troop positions.

When the orders came, all the replacement troops on the island were shuttled by harbor boats back to the San Francisco waterfront. All through the night the soldiers boarded the giant troop transport ship. It was a captured Italian ocean-liner that had been converted by the U.S. Navy. A local volunteer group gave them coffee and Doughnuts as they marched up the gangplank. A couple of tugboats pulled the ship from its berth and pointed it seaward. In the early morning hours they slipped under the Golden Gate Bridge and headed out on the ocean.

3

Going Across

They had only sailed 10 minutes out of the Golden Gate when the ship began rolling and bobbing up and down on the open ocean. Immediately there were soldiers throwing up everywhere. This ship carried 6,000 troops and had a crew of 1,500. Maybe most of the crew had their sea legs, but even besides them you can just imagine the volume. I suspect the sailors had seen this phenomenon before, maybe even a little amused by it.

By the next day the ocean had settled down and the soldiers were doing better. Many of them were put on detail to scrub all the mess. Some of the ship still retained the trappings of a luxury liner. There was marble decorated halls, chandeliers, etc. There was even a pool on the upper deck but that was off limits to enlisted men. The hull and outer bulkheads were painted Navy gray.

The soldiers had bunks down below deck. They were informed in case of attack these floors would be sealed off. The bunks were stacked 5 high. They had about 2 feet in between them. During the day the men were allowed on the main deck but they could not go on the upper decks. These were reserved for the officers and the nurses. Dad developed resentment towards the unfairness he was to encounter regarding a hierarchical system that was a part of the service. He understood the need for a chain of command and all that. Even so, because of all this he would carry a distaste for and was sensitive to social inequalities the rest of his life.

Boredom was always an issue. The ocean was certainly beautiful and the night sky was of course a completely different one than in Seattle. Dad remembered seeing the Southern Cross for the first time. Occasionally during the day they would spot whales, sharks and other marine life. Flying fish would jump right next to the ship.

But again there was the issue of boredom. To pass the time many of the soldiers played games. Dad had a deck of cards that his Uncle Frank had sent him while he was at Fort Riley. He would play hearts and cribbage. Lots of them would gamble but dad was not really interested in that. One day someone taught him to play chess. He had never played before. He soon became quite fascinated by the game. He said he lost his first 20-30 games, but after he won his first game he never lost again while in the service.

When they crossed the Equator those that had not done so before became members of the Davy Jones Club. There was a little ceremony and they got some little card or certificate.

After they did cross the Equator it got noticeably hotter, especially below deck. At night the men were allowed to sleep outside on the main deck. They would bring their blankets up and find whatever spot they could. Some would crawl into lifeboats or under stairs, wherever. The first night dad was sleeping on the deck he was awakened by a pain on his nose. He touched it and noticed it was bleeding. It was soon discovered that the deck was crawling with rats. It turns out one had crawled right over dads face and dug his claw into it. After that some of them didn't want to sleep on deck whether it was too hot down below or not. Others organized guard duty. They took turns staying up watching for the rodents.

At one point on the trip someone noticed that the ship was sailing in a circling pattern. As it turned out there had been a possible sighting of an enemy submarine stalking them. They were circling to wait for a destroyer escort. Eventually, the decision was made that the destroyer would be too slow. So they straightened out and continued on, without incident.

The ships first stop was the port of Noumea, New Caledonia. This is about a thousand miles off the East Coast of Australia and south of the Solomon Islands. While there the sailors were allowed ashore but the soldiers were not.

The next stop was to be Milne Bay. Milne Bay is at the easternmost tip of New Guinea. To get there they would have to cross the Coral Sea. As they crossed the Sea they ran into a major typhoon. There were forty-foot waves and hurricane strength winds. The crew had to take evasive action to keep the ship from capsizing.

When they made it to Milne Bay they dropped anchor. They stayed there for maybe one or two days, but no one went ashore. There was some question as to who occupied the surrounding territory. Whether the ship officers really didn't know or it was just that the soldiers were kept out of the loop I don't know. At any rate, after just a few days they weighed anchor and sailed out of the bay.

After Milne Bay they went around the eastern tip of New Guinea to Goodenough Island just north and off the coast. They were to disembark at Goodenough. There were no docks, so they had to climb down rope ladders as they had practiced at Fort Ord. They loaded on to LCI's (Landing Craft, Infantry.) These were landing craft about 160 feet long, capable of carrying around 200 troops. They actually had bunks for longer excursions. They had a few guns mounted on the deck. On either side of the bow there was a ramp that would drop for the soldiers to go a shore. (These are not those ones where the whole front drops like you see in the movies.) The LCI would usually basically run a ground on the beach. If it couldn't get back to sea on its own power, a tugboat would come to help.

Goodenough was a sprawling camp. The island acted as both a training and staging area for future operations. It was a well-established camp. They even showed movies almost nightly. They had three theaters in camp. One was so far away they shuttled soldiers in trucks to see a show.

When they arrived they were assigned to tents which held a squad of six in each. One of the first things dad became immediately aware of was how there were so many mosquitoes. Soon after arriving they were each issued Atabrine pills. Atabrine was a

drug developed to help suppress the symptoms that come with Malaria. One of its side effects was that it turned your skin yellow.

There were certainly other creatures more exotic but relatively as prolific as mosquitoes. There were countless varieties of colorful and unusual birds. The rivers were “infested”, as dad put it, with crocodiles. When they went down to the river to bathe or do their laundry they had to post an armed sentry.

Then there were countless types of snakes. There were some that were poisonous. There were also giant Pythons, 15-20 feet long. These were capable of swallowing a wild boar whole. Dad and some others actually saw one that had evidently done just that. Dad also recounted an awful story regarding one of those pythons. A couple of fellows thought it would be funny to put a dead one in another soldier’s cot. When the soldier was getting ready to bed down for the night he came upon it. He went quite berserk. He was heard screaming as he was running through camp. He basically went mad. They took him to the infirmary. He was consequently sent home.

It wound up being almost two months that dad was stationed on Goodenough Island. His temporary assignment was the 278th Replacement Company at the 5th replacement depot.

It was somewhat agonizing waiting to be assigned to a permanent outfit. But on the other hand, dad had to admit it really was quite the life there. There was some training and drills mostly just to keep the men busy. Almost daily they went swimming in the ocean. They had even started a baseball league. They had two full diamonds in camp. He was really enjoying this and his team was getting quite a reputation. They had a semi-pro pitcher from the states on their team.

More agonizing than anything for dad at this time was that he was getting no mail from home. Since leaving Angel Island in late march it was almost 60 days before he got his first letter. He finally got a v-mail letter on May 16, 1944.

V-mail was designed to make mail service more efficient. V-mail was a standard (8 inches by 12½ inches) form letter provided by the post office. It came with explicit instructions: you must use ink and you must write within the margins. The letter was then photographed by the post office and reduced to a smaller size (about 4 inches by 5½.) This was supposed to make it easier to handle the unprecedented quantities of mail being sent around the world. One drawback was that you could only send one page at a time. There was constant debate about which was faster, v-mail or airmail.

Dad kept sending letters assuming they were getting through but expressing his frustration that he wasn't getting any mail himself. One day dad was called to the Red Cross station, which was apparently quite a distance from his quarters. On his way up there he wondered if some tragedy had befallen his family. As it turned out his mother had asked the Red Cross to help locate him and let him know they had been getting his mail. This was actually right after he got that first v-mail and his mail was coming a little more regularly. Apparently it had been coming over to a different replacement camp in the area but since he wasn't there it went all the way back to the States. I guess it was lost forever.

While on Goodenough island dad and Tony went to mass every Sunday. They were also staying after for a "study club." Dad proudly wrote home that he had been reading the Catholic New Testament.

One moment that dad said he would never forget, while on Goodenough, was when he heard about the Allied invasion at Normandy on June 6, 1944. He had just written to his parents how he had to wonder when that second front was going to begin. (The existing front was the Russian Army closing in on Germany from the East.) He was on guard duty that night. Therefore he had an opportunity to listen to the news at the radio shack. He was excited to be able to go back to his quarters to tell the others.

By the middle of June 1944 they were finally going to be assigned to a permanent outfit. They were boarded on a troopship and started up the New Guinea coast. They

may have had an escort. There were still some Japanese submarines operating in the area. Japanese air power had pretty much been neutralized at this point in time.

They dropped anchor off the coast of the Buna-Gona area. They climbed down the sides of the transport on rope ladders and were loaded in to dukws, which took them ashore. Dukws were what was known as "ducks." Dukws were basically an amphibious 2 ½ ton truck. They were normally used for short runs from ship to shore. They could drive right up onto the beach, which allowed for quick unloading of cargo and/or men.

Dad didn't really say how long they were at Buna-Gona. It may have been as short as one night. He did have time to tour the area. He saw evidence of the carnage that had taken place in January of 1943. This was where the Allies finally defeated the Japanese forces that had been pushed all the way back over the Owen Stanley range after being so close to Port Morseby. There was still wrecked equipment and skeletons of Japanese soldiers strewn about the area.

After some time they were loaded back on the transport ship and sailed further north up the coast. They went ashore at the port of Finschhafen on the Huon Peninsula. This was about 200 miles up from Buna-Gona. It was also the point of New Guinea closest (less than 50 miles) to Cape Gloucester, New Britain.

Cape Gloucester was at the westernmost tip of New Britain. This area was the region of New Britain that had recently been secured by the 1st marines and the 112th Cavalry. This campaign had been important because occupying the Cape helped protect Allied vessels travelling through those waters between New Guinea and New Britain, known as Dampier straits.

After landing at Finschhafen dad and the other Cavalry replacement troops were loaded onto trucks and taken several miles inland through jungle roads. Dad and Tony, along with the others, were mustered off the truck. A Sergeant who was to give them

their new orders then approached them. They were now members of Troop E, 112th Cavalry.

After all this time, since leaving Fort Lewis together, not only were dad and Tony in the same Troop. They were in fact assigned to the same squad. The 112th Regimental Combat Team was broken down in a pattern somewhat typical of most other units. The regiment consisted of two Squadrons, 1st and 2nd. Each squadron had three Troops. In addition to this there was one (HQ) Headquarters Troop that served the entire regiment.

It was a little different than most infantry units with different nominal designations. To compare Cavalry to Infantry, a Squadron was similar to a Battalion and a Troop was the same as a Company.

In the 112th the six combat Troops were A, B, C (1st Squadron) and E, F, G (2nd Squadron.) Each Troop had five Platoons. This included the Headquarters Platoon; a weapons platoon and three rifle Platoons. Platoons were then broken down into Squads.

Dad and Tony were assigned to the weapons Platoon of Troop E. The weapons platoon had two mortar squads and two machine gun squads. Dad and Tony were assigned to the same machine gun squad. When at full strength a machine gun squad consisted of ten men. There were two air-cooled 45 caliber guns. With air-cooled machine guns, as opposed to water-cooled, you had to be sure to let the gun cool down at times. If you fired steady, with no breaks the barrel could actually melt and the gun could jam. Of the ten there were two gunners, two tri-pod carriers and six ammo carriers. At the time of their initial assignment dad and Tony were ammo carriers.

While at Finschhafen dad and the new recruits got to know the rest of the 112th Troopers. The 112th was a National Guard outfit from Texas. They were a Cavalry unit that had been stationed at Fort Bliss in El Paso. They were mobilized for active duty in November of 1940. They arrived at New Caledonia, from the States in August of 1942. In December of 1943 after staging from Goodenough Island they landed near Arawe on New Britain. In coordination with the 1st Marines they engaged the enemy. The main

Japanese resistance was broken by January of 1944. In the early part of June the 112th arrived at Finschhafen to be refitted. They had sustained some heavy losses.

Dad recalled, generally he liked the Texans. He found that most of them had not had a lot of schooling and many were illiterate. Dad would often help the Troopers read their mail from home. He would occasionally help them scratch out a note home, too. He learned they were in fact originally horse cavalry. They had actually shipped over with their horses. When it was realized that mounted cavalry was in no way practicable in jungle warfare the Army sold the horses in New Caledonia. The Texans were very unhappy about this.

One notable thing that happened to dad on Finschhafen was when he was called to the tent of the Commanding Officer of the 112th, General Julian Cunningham. It turned out dad and one other Trooper had been selected for an appointment to West Point Military Academy.

He originally said yes. He wrote his parents to ask for their thoughts. Margaret actually wired a telegram saying she thought he should take it. He eventually turned it down. He later wrote a letter explaining extensively his reasoning:

I suppose you are still wondering about that West Point deal, well you might as well forget it, because I have decided. Here is the explanation. I had plenty of advice on the deal, and don't think I didn't. I also got your wire. Most of the advice wanted me to take it, but every time I asked anyone what they would do they said they would refuse it. You don't seem to think it would change my life much, but mom those 8 years are 8 years that I am really going to enjoy, at home with family and everyone. It's no fun going to school when you have to go to bed at a certain hour, you have to yes sir everyone you see, stand an inspection every Saturday. That's not for me mom, and I know you can see it. I want to be just one of the crowd when I get back. If anybody doesn't agree with my ideas it is (he crossed something out here) too bad, because it's my life. Besides all that I don't even know if I could make it. Anyway another episode in my army life is closed.

After he had first been offered the appointment word got around the camp. His new nickname was "West Point."

Near the end of June 1944 the 112th was ordered to move out. They boarded LCIs and headed up New Guinea coast again. They had a full destroyer escort this time. They were to travel some 400 miles. After three days they arrived at their destination, which was the area near a coastal village named Aitape. This was an established beachhead so there would be no resistance when disembarking. The troopers may or may not have known this. The 112th arrived at Aitape on June 27, 1944.

The initial Ataipe landing had been on April 22. It was part of a two pronged assault. Another assault occurred at Hollandia 200 miles or so further up the coast from Aitape.

There were airfields at Hollandia that could support a push north of New Guinea as the Allies prepared to liberate the Philippines. The reason for landing at Aitape was, as I understand it, twofold. One reason there were also airfields there. They were known as Tadji Airfields. These fields could be instrumental in actions in the area including the main assaults in the Hollandia area.

The other reason for landing was to contain the Japanese 18th Army. After being squeezed out of the Buna-Gona area the 18th Army had gradually pushed further and further west along the New Guinea coast. They were believed to be somewhere near the coastal village of Wewak, which was about 100 miles back down the coast from Ataipe. The concern was that 18th would try took hook up with the Japanese 2nd Army which was operating in the area surrounding Hollandia.

The task for those forces around Ataipe was to create and defend a perimeter that would protect Tadji airfields. The fields were just inland from the coast. The terrain further inland (south) from the airfields was heavily jungled and spotted with swamps. To the east, the direction in which it was believed the 18th army was, there was a series of rivers. At about 2 miles distance from Tadji fields was the Nigia River. About 5 miles beyond that was the X-Ray River. Then about 2 or 3 miles past the x-ray river was the Driniumor River. Each of these rivers generally runs north and south. They come out of

the mountains from the south and run north into the ocean. By the time the 112th arrived at Aitape the Driniumor River was the established line of the defense.

That first night the 112th bivouacked just inland from the beach. They dug foxholes and set up their perimeter. Some slept in their foxholes. Some slept in hammocks that had been issued complete with mosquito netting. The next morning it had been discovered that one of the soldiers in a hammock had been hacked to death presumably with a machete. Orders were given for everyone to discard and bury their hammocks. They were never used again.

That same night around ten or eleven dad and Tony had felt huge reverberations. The ground was shaking almost like an earthquake. Then they noticed the sound of explosions to the east. It was surmised Allied Naval guns were bombarding suspected enemy positions. Dad and Tony also talked about the fact that they would be heading into a combat zone. Tony admitted that he was somewhat fearful. Dad recalled that for whatever reason, maybe his youth, he was not anticipating too much what might happen.

The next morning they moved out through the Jungle. They had to march single file. They crossed a river and they crossed through a minefield. The minefield had a safe path running through it, marked with tape. They then caught up to an overland trail that went east to west. They headed east towards the Driniumor River.

Dad later tried to describe what it was like to head out along the trail. First there is the feeling of being “completely engulfed” by the jungle. During the day it’s light but you don’t really see the sun shining. Even so it’s stifling hot. Often there are intense rainsqualls. The rain just pours down on you. You are “virtually smothered in water.” After the rain passes the sun beats down on the jungle again and steam rises off the ground. It’s forever humid. Consequently the plant life grows back rapidly. Dad said how you could clear an area of vegetation and a week later it’s completely grown back.

You are made aware of the fact that besides malaria and typhus carrying bugs there are a number of poisonous snakes all over. There were also parasites in the creeks

and streams where they would need to fill their canteens. Besides the Atabrine they carried for Malaria they were also issued water purification pills. They would put one in their canteen whenever they filled them up.

That second night the column bivouacked at a native village known as Chinapelli. Dad and Tony dug a foxhole under one of the grass huts in Chinapelli. They wondered why the huts were raised six or seven feet off the ground. They figured it was to keep the snakes out. The next morning they woke up half covered in water. "It was like sleeping in a bathtub," dad recalled.

They continued eastward along the trail. They would be crossing the X-Ray River then to the Driniumor River where they would take up their position on the line. After they had been going along for a while all of a sudden the entire column was held up. After a while General Cunningham Commanding Officer of the 112th, passed by on the trail. He gave the men words of encouragement, "Hi soldier", etc. Some of the seasoned troopers were amazed that he still insisted on wearing his Officer insignia on his lapel. They knew Japanese snipers often tried to target Officers to reduce the leadership value of a unit.

As they waited there dad and those with him could hear two different kinds of machine gun fire and sporadic rifle fire. After a few hours they were told to move out again. The word was that the lead squad had come up to a Japanese machine gun nest adjacent to the trail. Orders were given and the nest was soon neutralized. As they headed down the trail, after about half an hour, sure enough off to the side was a Japanese machine gun with 2 or 3 dead Japanese soldiers near it.

They soon reached the X-Ray River. 1st Squadron halted there. They would stand here in reserve. The 2nd Squadron, including Troop E, proceeded the extra 3 or 4 miles to the Driniumor. They arrived at the jungle village of Afua, which was directly adjacent to the river. Afua consisted of a few native huts. They now relieved the infantry unit that was there, which would now move back down the river (north) to fill in the line.

The men of 2nd squadron were ordered to take positions along the river. Dad dug a quick foxhole. He was the furthermost point of his Troop, armed with only his M-1 rifle. He watched for any movement on the other side of the river. At some point he dozed off. Early in the morning he was awakened by someone saying, "Don't move. Don't move." Before dad really knew what was happening another trooper came up beside him to flick a snake off of him. It was, as far as they knew, of the poisonous variety. It had crawled up to his body for warmth. As dad later put it, "That was my first morning on the Line."

Next 2nd Squadron could eat a quick breakfast then they would need to set about reorganizing their positions. On the line they were eating k-rations. There were k-rations and c-rations. Dad recalled that c-rations were more filling but they usually contained something you would need to heat, like a can of stew or beans. K-rations contained a little compressed can about an inch high and two inches wide. These cans might contain something like eggs and bacon, cheese and bacon, corned beef and potatoes. K-rations might also include some kind of a fruit bar. There would also be a powder mix for cocoa, or lemonade. Or there may be instant coffee. Dad personally felt k-rations were much more handy than c-rations you could fit 6 or 7 easily in your pack.

After breakfast they set about the business of reorganizing. Foxholes were improved i.e. made deeper and/or given better cover perhaps with logs or sandbags. Machine guns were sighted for maximum effect. They would arrange the machine guns to shoot in crossfire. Every third bullet or so was a tracer so you could follow it's path when in combat. Unfortunately this would also give away your position which was usually well concealed in the jungle.

Telephone wire would be laid down to keep in contact with other positions and the CP (Command Post), which at this time was behind them, west of Afua. Dad mentioned he remembered there being "miles and miles" of telephone cable all over the jungle. One ongoing problem was the Japanese would often sneak around and cut the

wires. There were of course short wave radios in those days but I suspect they were not very effective in the jungle.

There was one interesting aspect of the village of Afua that dad noted. Natives did not inhabit the village at this time. The women and children had been relocated to a Ferguson Island and many of the men acted as litter bearers for the wounded all along the line and to the rear. Anyway, although the village was uninhabited, there was a little runt pig that was always wandering around the village apparently oblivious there was a war going on. Even when Afua traded hands a few times in the weeks to come the pig was always there.

By the end of June and the beginning of July the positions along the west bank of the Driniumor were for the most part in place. The 128th Infantry was closest to the mouth of the river. The 127th Infantry held the center position. Up stream at the end of the line was the 112th. They were the right flank as it were. Afua was, at that time, the furthest position south. There were two artillery units in place on the beach just west of the Driniumor.

On July 6, 1944 dad scratched out a v-mail to try to let his family know he was now in a combat zone. He wrote a sort of code so that it would get by the censors. He hoped his family would figure it out. He wrote, "I met some friends of Lincoln's cheer leader, back in 1939. You can find his picture in the annual. I'm fine, everything is o.k. so don't worry." As it turned out one of Lincoln High School's cheerleaders in 1939 was of Japanese descent. Apparently dad's sister Peggy figured out his message.

For several days patrols were sent across the river to reconnoiter. One patrol had made contact with the enemy. The rumor that went around was that they had discovered a Japanese machine gun nest. The officer in charge had ordered his men to charge uphill with their pistols. As dad put it this may have fit in nicely in the civil war put it didn't make sense here. At any rate two of the troopers were killed. They were both replacements so dad and Tony knew them both. This kind of hit home for he and Tony.

Further up the chain of command there was concern that the 18th Army was beginning to move into the area in great Strength. To try to determine if this was in any way true the order was given to execute a Reconnaissance in force. On July 10, 1944 at the northern end of the line a battalion of the 128th was sent across the Driniumor, along the coast to try to find and engage the enemy. On the southern end, 1st Squadron of the 112th was pulled up from reserve to occupy the positions around Afua. The 2nd Squadron, dad's Squadron, was sent across the river to also try to find and engage the enemy.

Dad described how when they crossed they would go single file. Since they were quite exposed, while out in the river, each man would run across quickly to catch up with those already on the other side. Once across they headed east. There was no path at the point where they entered the jungle. They hacked away at the overgrown vegetation with their machetes. They did not get very far, maybe a mile, when nightfall was approaching. They dug in setting up in a defensive circle.

As it turn out the Japanese had massed 3 full regiments just east of the Driniumor. They had also moved in artillery to support them. The Japanese objective was to capture and secure the Tadji airfields.

At midnight July 10-11 the Japanese offensive began. 2nd Squadron 112th held their defensive position. The main activity was going on downstream, northwest of their position. Dad described how he could hear the Japanese cannon shells going over their position then exploding downstream. He also heard all kinds of gunfire and mortars exploding.

In the morning of the 11th, 2nd squadron still held their position east of the river. They ate their k-rations while awaiting orders. Around 10:00 a.m. they were given the order to fall back to the other side of the Driniumor. As they reached Afua the 1st Squadron was pulling back to the X-Ray River to take up defensive positions there. The 2nd Squadron was to also fall back. Troop E was the rearguard during this retreat.

As they looked across the river, Japanese troops were approaching the river and crossing it. As Troop E began pulling out one platoon would take a position with machine guns set up. They would then fall back a ways passing through the other platoon that had set up to give them covering fire. They repeated this procedure several times until they seemed a safe distance from any oncoming Japanese.

Troop E was now in a foot race to catch up with the rest of the 112th. Right at this time a torrential rainstorm had begun. This created a muddy quagmire. Dad recounted how the mud was so thick that his boot got stuck. It was so stuck he had to pull his foot out of the boot and leave it behind. He raced all the way back to the X-Ray River, one boot on and one boot off.

After about 5 or 6 hours they got to the X-Ray. Positions were being hastily set up. Almost immediately the order was given asking for volunteers to form patrols. They wanted patrols to reconnoiter between the X-Ray and the Driniumor to try and ascertain the enemy's strength and location. Dad joined a squad of ten. He traded in his M-1 for a sub-machine gun. As they patrolled they discovered several Americans who had been killed during the initial onslaught. They did not engage any Japanese units but they did determine the positions of some units. They returned to the X-Ray before nightfall. They re-supplied. Dad got a new boot.

The next morning the order came to try and recapture Afua. Elements of the 112th engaged pockets of resistance as they moved on Afua. They were able to overtake these positions and move on. As they arrived at Afua there was some Japanese in the village but they were easily pushed out and Afua was secured. Apparently that runt pig will still roaming around the village.

After recapturing Afua three troops were sent south of the village to occupy that area. Two troops dug in at Afua and the areas just north of it. Troop E was held in reserve on a hill west of Afua. Dad said that while in reserve he and some other members of Troop E fashioned a very nice "lean to" to shelter them from the incessant rain. At the

time it brought back childhood memories of the farm when he built similar shelters, playing war. It was a little different now. From where they were they heard constant rifle, machine gun, mortar and artillery fire. As dad seemed to remember they stayed there in reserve for at least one or two nights.

On around July 14 Troop E was pulled out of reserve. They were to go north, downstream, to help fill in a gap in the line along the Driniumor. They were to hook up with the 124th infantry, which had been pulled up out of reserve to serve on the line. To get to the point on the line, where they were ordered to, Troop E would have to go through enemy held positions. When they first got to the river dad remembers seeing hundreds of dead Japanese soldiers. They were probably killed on the first night of the offensive.

Dad recalled an interesting thing that happened as they moved north through the jungle. There were a couple of soldiers in their outfit of Mexican descent. He said, with beards they looked Japanese. With this in mind they were put in front of the column. As it turned out they were spotted by a Japanese patrol that in fact seemed to take them for Japanese and continued on down the trail. At that time someone from Troop E yelled "on the ground." The Troopers all got down on the ground and started firing. Several Japanese were killed and the others scattered into the jungle. Troop E got up and moved on.

Next they came to a series of pillboxes. These were basically foxholes covered and fortified with logs. They may have in fact been built by Americans but abandoned after the initial assault. There were slots where the Japanese could stick out their machine guns. These faced east towards the river.

When they first encountered these pillboxes everyone took cover behind logs or whatever they could. Almost immediately a couple of the more experienced troopers grabbed some sub-machine guns and sprayed the surrounding treetops. Sure enough

Japanese snipers fell out of a couple of trees. They would have been able to pick off those Americans lying on the ground.

Now they had to take care of the pillboxes. They were prepared to try a bazooka that had been brought along. As it turned out no one had brought the two flashlight sized batteries they needed to make it operational. Dad remembered the feeling of disgust that they had packed that thing all over the jungle for no good reason. They tried barraging the pillboxes with point blank rifle and machine gun fire. That was ineffective.

Then it was decided that they should try to approach from its blind side, the back, and throw a grenade in. Dad either volunteered or was chosen. With suppressing fire being put on the pillbox he crawled around to the back. Then he moved up towards one of the slots where a gun stuck out and threw a phosphorus grenade in the pillbox. (Phosphorus grenades created a veritable fireball when it exploded.) He heard some panicked voices and then an explosion. Immediately a squad of Americans rushed up and pried open a trap door in the back ready to fire. There were nine or ten dead Japanese in there. Moving further downstream they had to use the same method on a couple more pillboxes. Whether dad did it again or not, I don't know.

Eventually Troop E made it to a clearing where they hooked up with elements of the 124th. They were known as the Dixie Division. The 124th had just joined the line the night before. They were very glad to see some clearly experienced troops. Dad remembers Troop E probably looked the worse for wear, but at the same time they came in with a bit of confidence. He also remembers the Dixie Division looking very "GI." All infantry division were under orders to shave every morning even in combat. The cavalry, the 112th anyway, were allowed to grow beards if they wanted too. This was the only time dad ever grew a beard. Apparently he had a pretty full one.

That night it was decided that since Troop E was more experienced one or two of them should share a foxhole with the infantrymen. Apparently the night before some of the 124th mistakenly killed some of their own men in a panic. So dad shared a foxhole

with two or three of the infantrymen. He said they were indeed pretty jumpy. They kept wanting to shoot their guns but he told them "no." He admitted he wasn't always sure there wasn't something or someone out there but he restrained himself.

In the morning the first thing the troopers did was spray the trees and snipers fell out a few of the trees. After breakfast they began to move out. Troop E was going to escort the 124th down the line to where they were to fill in the gap. The lead infantry platoon headed across the clearing to get to the path. Just then there was all kinds of machine gun, rifle fire even mortar fire. Dad saw one of the soldiers get his head basically cut off by machine gun fire. Four or five of the infantrymen were bleeding on the ground. Everyone was stunned. Troop E grabbed cover and started returning fire. Dad, still an ammo carrier, started firing a machine gun until the real gunner got there. Troop E was short on ammo so they kept getting it from men of the 124th. (Later on there was apparently a big stink about this.) Dad grabbed his M-1 and moved over to the far end of the perimeter. As he was going over he walked right by a couple of men from the 124th. He noticed they were about to load a mortar shell down the tube the wrong way. The tips were designed to explode on contact. He immediately grabbed it. If he hadn't probably they all would have died. Then he helped them adjust their tube. They had it pointed almost straight up. It would have come right back down on them.

Just then a colonel came upon the scene. He barked, "What the hell's going on here? Who's doing all that firing?" One of the infantrymen told him it was the Cavalry. It was easy to see dad was Cavalry, since he had a full beard. The colonel turned to dad and asked what they were firing at. Dad said they were firing at the Japanese. The colonel said, "Well I don't see any Japanese and I want this firing to stop." Dad said he wasn't in charge. The colonel said to dad, "Do you have any idea who you're talking to soldier?" Dad said, "No I don't." "I'm Lieutenant Colonel Smith, West Point '33!" "Oh, well I'm Tom Sheehan, Lincoln High '43." The colonel just glared at him and

stomped away. After the firefight subsided Troop E led the 124th to their designated position up the river, fighting all the way.

When Troop E returned to the Afua area they discovered that the Japanese had retaken the village. 1st Squadron and the other two Troops of 2nd Squadron had been pushed into to the surrounding hills. Soon a counter-attack was mounted. This included Troop E.

The 112th slowly gained ground. Dad recalled the scene as they were prepared for the final push on Afua. There were about 200 Troopers spread out in a line behind logs and whatever else could provide cover. About 30 yards a way the Japanese were in a similar formation. The American position was given the order to prepare to attack. When the order to charge came Troop E charged through Troop F, firing at the enemy position. Then Troop F charged through Troop E, doing the same. Dad remembered this charge vividly. He saw the man next to him die instantly. As dad described it, as the man fell “the blood ran out of him and he turned absolutely pale.” The charge continued and the Japanese were on the run. Afua was in American hands again. The pig was still there.

After this Troop E was put in reserve once again. They were given a detail though. To keep Americans supplied (some of the 112th had not eaten for 2 or 3 days) C-47 cargo plane would parachute food, ammunition and other supplies in a clearing just northwest of Afua. Troop E was sent to retrieve the supplies they needed, without incident.

Dad did recall a story, he had heard, of a re-supply detail involving another unit. This was at a point further north, down the river. The only place supplies could be dropped was on an island in the middle of the Driniumor. Americans on the west side of the river lay down their weapons and ran out to retrieve some of the crates. At the same time a Japanese detail on the other side of the river, thinking they could use some of the supplies, also put their weapons down and ran out to the island. Both parties looked at

each other and then ran back to their respective riverbanks. The Americans eventually drove the Japanese off and got re-supplied.

Even though Afua had been retaken and the line restored, as dad put it, “confusion was the order of the day.” There were still considerable enemy forces west of the Driniumor, behind American lines. Also the Japanese had made a new jungle trail south of Afua, up in the mountain foothills. They were using this to swing around the American’s right flank, at Afua. As dad put it the line in their area was very “fluid” at this time.

Dad recalled with some amusement, how units would be marched this way and that way. One time he could not restrain his sarcasm. He called out to a unit they just passed for a second time, “Hey, fancy seeing you out here. Are you out for a stroll?”

Another time he was amazed when a Japanese column, four abreast, came through their area “like they were on parade.” They were allowed to pass on the trail, where an American ambush had been set. After they passed the Americans opened up from both sides of the trail with machine gun fire, rifle fire and grenades. They killed 20 to 30 Japanese and sent the rest of them scattering through the jungles.

One other time Troop E was pulled out of reserve again to try to relieve a stranded Cavalry unit. Troop C had been surrounded and completely cut off by enemy forces, on a hill west of Afua. Several unsuccessful attempts had been made to break through to the beleaguered Troop. It was now Troop E’s turn to try.

They approached through dense jungle, crawling low, single file. As the point man was crawling over a log enemy machine gun fire poured down on the column. The lead man, now alone on the other side of the log, had been shot. They were able to talk to him but could not reach him to help. They also could not determine through the thick undergrowth exactly where the enemy positions were.

A soldier next to dad, “the nervous type” as he described him, jumped up and started firing his M-1 at a suspected machine gun nest. Dad reached up and grabbed him

yelling. "down, down!" He knew standing up like that would draw enemy fire on them, which indeed it did. They were immediately barraged with machine gun fire, rifle fire and grenades. Bullets were whizzing everywhere. Dad later said, "This was probably the closet call I ever had." A Trooper near dad called out, "That's it. I've been hit. It's my butt. I can feel the blood." Dad crawled over to take a look. What he saw was that the top of the other guy's canteen had been blown off. It was water he felt dripping. Even in the middle of this melee he and dad had a good laugh about this. Just then a bullet ricocheted into the inside of dad's helmet. It spun all the way around and dropped right in front of his face.

Troop E could hear Troop C up on the hill, but could not see them. It was clear they would not be able to get to them. The Lieutenant got on the phone to HQ. He said they would have to fall back. They crawled out the same way they came in. They dragged five wounded out with them. They had not been able to get to the man on the other side of the log. He subsequently died of his wounds. Troop C was eventually relieved a couple of days later. This was probably due mostly to the fact that the Japanese were unable to stay re-supplied.

Gradually the situation on the American right flank improved. This was partly because of the Japanese re-supply issue. But, this was also because of the superior firepower of the Allies. American artillery had become more and more effective. There was also Australian air support from planes using Tadji Airfield. Dad said there were a few mishaps though.

On one occasion American 155 howitzers were finding their range. As it turned out they were shelling American positions. Someone got on the phone and this was soon corrected. On another occasion when dad was on a re-supply detail, they were strafed by Australian fighter planes in an open field. The Troopers tried to wave them off. When the Australians kept strafing some of the Americans actually started firing back at them. They took cover and made some calls to rectify the situation.

As resistance began to weaken along the southern flank, the 112th prepared for a big push across the Driniumor south of Afua. They were to link up with American forces, which were coming upstream from the north along the eastern side of the river, in a move to envelop any remaining Japanese along the line. It was not confirmed but it appeared that Japanese units were beginning to withdraw from the entire Driniumor River area.

Around this same time dad noticed Tony did not seem to feel well. There was a general rule if you had a fever of 103 or more you would be pulled off the line. Tony didn't necessarily want to abandon his comrades but he was sick enough to go to the field hospital where it was decided he should be relieved of his duty for now.

As elements of the 112th prepared for the big push across the Driniumor their strength was considerably depleted. (Later when the 112th was finally pulled off the line, Troop E had 23 out of 150 that had gone in. This included killed, wounded or medically unfit.)

On the morning they were to advance across the river, there were 3 Troopers in dad's machine gun squad, where there would normally be 10. He was now a gunner. He recalled by this time he had lost a lot of weight and that, "four square cornered, 45 pound machine gun" would dig into your shoulders and was something to lug around. The other gunner with dad was a replacement. Dad had to show him how to operate his weapon. They had to enlist infantrymen to help carry ammo and the tri-pods. After they crossed the river dad would sight both guns. This would be repeated as they advanced forward.

Dad recalled a great irony he observed during this assault. As he held his position off to his side he observed an American bayoneting a Japanese soldier. Soon he saw an American medic rushing to the scene. The medic examined the Japanese soldier lying there. The medic began administering blood to the Japanese prisoner. It just seemed a little odd to dad.

As dad was setting up his gun after advancing once more he noticed two Japanese bodies to his side. When he looked closer he noticed they were still very much alive. He pulled out his side arm from its holster and motioned for them to raise their hands. This they did. He searched them for weapons keeping in mind that they might be booby-trapped. It would not be unheard of.

In other campaigns in the Pacific wounded or dying Japanese were booby trapped with grenades so that if an enemy was examining them they might be blown up with them. This could be dangerous for souvenir hunters. Dad said there were a couple of guys in his outfit who had pouches of gold fillings that they had taken out of the mouths of dead Japanese.

As dad put it, his capturing those two prisoners was pretty much the culmination of the campaign for him. Soon after that the forces coming up from the north and those around Afua linked completing there envelopment.

Dad and the other members of Troop E who were still in combat were allowed to “congregate” back in Afua. Dad said he talked with a Japanese prisoner who spoke English. He had actually attended the University of California. He had heard rumors that San Francisco had been bombed and wanted to know if this were true. Dad informed him that it was not true.

By mid August 1944 the Driniumor River Campaign was considered over. 6 by 6 trucks arrived to take the 112th back to Aitape. They were being relieved. Engineers had bulldozed a road all the way up to Afua alongside the Driniumor’s riverbank. Each truck carried a separate Troop. As dad remember, with only 23 left in Troop E it was pretty comfortable. They drove down towards the ocean they hadn’t seen in 44 days. Past the pillboxes and no doubt countless other reminders of what they had been through.

They turned left at the mouth of the river and headed down the beach.

Dad fondly remembered their approach to the Aitape area. As the trucks slowed down one of the other outfit’s regimental band serenaded them with the tune “Gary

Owen.” Gary Owen is one of the official songs of the 7th cavalry. Of course it was also significant to dad because of its Irish background. Dad said it was almost surreal and certainly very moving.

Dad had not written home since his letter of July 6 about the cheerleader. He sent them a six page, up beat, almost lighthearted letter dated August 13, 1944. He opened it with, “Well once again the mail is on its way. I was a little indisposed awhile...” He let them know he was getting a well deserved rest and that he was being treated very well. He went on, “Tonight I enjoyed a double helping of strawberry shortcake, boy was it good! Tomorrow we are going swimming in the afternoon, or rather in the ocean. (joke) I still have a sense of humor. I’ve seen two shows in two nights so entertainment is good too.”

He got a little serious and sentimental as well. When he wrote to his parents about sister Peggy he said, “I hope she misses me I know I miss her. I think more every day I have the most wonderful family in the world.” He also wrote soberly, “Tomorrow I get to mass again, however I have said and read more prayers lately, than any priest ever said, it’s really a great consolation in the jungle.” He closed his letter showing both humor and compassion, “This has been a long letter and hard on the censor also I’m tired so I’ll sign off until tomorrow.”

Also enclosed was a letter from the CO of the 112th. It was a copy and obviously went to all the men. The censor had to cut out the name of the campaign:

Headquarters, 112TH CAV RGT

Apo 705

Subject: 112th Cavalry.

To : The Officers and men of the regiment.

1. Today marks the close of the successful _____ campaign against the enemy during the period June 28, 1944 to August 11, 1944.
2. Again I address you with appreciation and respect for your loyalty, courage and devotion to duty shown in this short but severe campaign.

3. Since leaving the United States the regiment has accomplished in full measure all assigned tasks. It is a record to be proud of and has been made possible through your discipline and esprit de corps.
4. You have lived up to the best traditions of United States Army and the Cavalry, reflecting credit upon yourselves, your families and your state.
5. Let us never forget our comrades now lying in the jungles of New Britain and New Guinea and with their example before us carry on to the end of the road.

Julian W. Cunningham

Brigadier General U.S. Army
commanding

The 112th remained at Aitape for the time being. They would refit and regroup once again. Just as all throughout training dad had come through this ordeal with flying colors. There was talk of him becoming a corporal or at the very least a Squad leader. Tony had gotten well enough to rejoin the outfit. They were allowed to rest for the most part. They were able to swim in the ocean almost every day. Armed sentries would be out in boats to watch for sharks.

Dad had developed a bad case of jungle Rot. This was a condition caused by being constantly wet in the humid jungles. He had sores on his leg that would not heal. He had been given different remedies, but nothing seemed to help. He recalled that, when he was still up near Afua, he went to the field hospital to have his leg looked at. There were two lines, one for purple hearts and one for sulfa. Someone handed him a Purple Heart request form. He handed it back saying he didn't think that that was a real wound and got in the sulfa line.

The sulfa never really helped. What dad found most helpful was soaking his leg in the salt water of the ocean. So, he really looked forward to this, besides the fact that the 70-degree water was quite relaxing. One day as they were marching down to ocean dad collapsed. He completely blacked out.

4

Coming Home

Dad came to at the nearby aid station. Then he was moved to the Aitape hospital. His main symptoms were aching joints and a pain in his chest. He had also lost a lot of weight. He was down to 145 pounds. He was around 180 when he had first come overseas. The initial diagnosis was Rheumatic Fever. This was really no surprise. He recognized the symptoms from his childhood. There was some question about his heart but the doctors could find nothing wrong. There would be some test to do. He would probably be sent to a forward hospital.

He spent a little over two weeks in the hospital in Aitape. Then it was definite he would be flown to another hospital for further test. So he had to say good bye to Tony and the others. They were sorry to see him go, but I think they were also glad for him because he wouldn't be facing combat, soon anyway. There was absolutely no way of knowing what would happen to him. He may get better and be able to rejoin the outfit, or he may take a while to recuperate and join another outfit, or he could even get discharged. There was no way of telling.

He was boarded on a C-47 and was flown to the 35th hospital in Lae, New Guinea. Lae was just south of Finschhafen also on the Huon Peninsula. He arrived there sometime in the middle of September 1944. Colonel Mayo of the famous Mayo clinic back in the States ran the 35th hospital. When dad got there he was subjected to the same test he had already had, such as x-rays, electrocardiograms.

Dad wrote home often and there was much of the usual conjecture back and forth between he and his parents, mostly his mom. The conjecture was not just about dad and his future, but about the future of the world too. Dad's letters seemed to take on a much more worldly tone, in more ways than one.

For one thing dad had thought very much about what he would like to do with his life when he got back, if he ever did. Naturally he would go to college. By this point that was a given.

He was pretty decided that he wanted to teach. I personally think his experience with people, adults, from all over the U.S. who had not had an adequate education left quite an impression on him. I think him helping his fellow, illiterate, Troopers with letters etc. was especially rewarding for him. It was not a feeling of superiority by any means. He had great respect for his comrades in arms. Regarding the whole topic of teaching he wrote:

You know mom the more I think of what I'd like to do after the war is over the more I like the idea of teaching. If there was more money in it I really think it would be fun to teach High school. Maybe teach history and coach 1 or 2 sports. Also be a sports writer on the side. Boy I sure want to go the old U. of W. when I get back. Over here you really get hungry for education at least I do. Nothing would please me better than a stack of homework right now.

There was of course some question about his health and whether or not he was even going to get healthy enough to play sports or for that matter, coach. Regarding his health he wrote, "...they would have to give me a good bed rest, in order that I would be in good shape ten years from now. I don't know where I'll get that rest the states are a possibility, but I wouldn't plan on it."

When and if he would get back to the States of course was a big question. As he saw the war he agreed with many that it looked like Germany could be finished by Christmas (1944.) He felt the longer they made it out the harder the peace terms should be. He was very much in favor of a United Nations concept to help prevent war in the future.

As far as the war with Japan was concerned he disagreed with his mom and others. He did not think they would give up soon. He was concerned the war in the Pacific would go on for at least a couple more years. He wrote referring to the Japanese

Army, "You can bomb them all you want but you still will have to dig them out, and that takes time and lives. When you are fighting over here a life isn't worth much it's you or him none of this surrender business."

It is not that dad was some kind of bloodthirsty killer, but he knew first hand what war was and he knew how to go about fighting one. It was still feasible he would be considered well enough to go back into combat, as men, especially experienced men were badly needed. That he was still willing was evident when he wrote, "I'm not kidding when I say I'd love to be back to the good old 112th and handle the machine gun again, even though it's tough work, that fighting is just in my blood. The first time it was a little one-sided I'd like to whip them on an even terms, I know it can be done."

In the meantime he was lying around the hospital in Lae. He as always was making new friends. He did a lot of reading. He even signed up for an Army correspondence course in electronics.

He also in his modest way impressed others with his keen intellect. The USO arranged all kinds of entertainment for the troops. While dad was at the 35th Hospital they had arranged for a world class champion chess player to play against anyone who wanted to challenge him. He played against 50 patients at the same time. Only three beat him. Dad was one of them.

Then on another occasion someone yelled out, to no one in particular, "I bet no one can name all the 48 States (it was 1944) in short order." Some people said they knew dad could do it. He agreed he probably could. As was common bets were made. Then dad proceeded to name them all in less than a minute.

At the end of October he had something of a relapse. He had another attack of Rheumatic Fever. The doctors suggested he had chronic Rheumatic Fever and it would take some time before he was better. It was also discovered that he had a systolic heart murmur although this did not need to be considered of any great consequence.

It was decided that to recuperate he would need to get more bed rest and in a drier region. He was going Stateside. This did not in any way mean he was being discharged. He would be going to a facility in Palm spring, California, where it was dry and warm. This hospital, Torney General, had a ward designated specifically to Rheumatic Fever patients.

Sometime in late October 1944 he was placed on a cot in a stripped down C-47. After leaving Lae it stopped off at Buna-Gona. It had to make several stops to refuel, next was Gaudalcanal. Then they stopped at Christmas Island. Next they landed at Hickam Field near Pearl Harbor. Dad spent the night there. The next day they headed east to San Franciso. Certainly this was no luxury flight. The inside was not in any way insulated. It was cold up at 8,000 feet. Also a flight like this was by no means routine. After landing at Hamilton Field in California dad was informed that normally only 1 in 5 flights made it across. They either would have to turn back or they would wind up ditching in the ocean.

When dad did arrive on November 1, 1944 he sent a wire addressed to his mom. It Said, "ARRIVED IN STATES FEELING FINE EXPECT BE TRANSFERRED NEARER HOME SOON WITH LOVE TOMMY." Dad later mentioned to me that he had also been able to make a brief phone call home too.

He then flew to Los Angeles. From there he took a train to Palm springs and was admitted to Torney General Hospital. Torney was actually a lavish resort, formerly the Hotel Mirador, that had been converted into a hospital by the Army.

After settling in it was explained to him how the recuperation program was designed. He wrote his parents to explain it:

They treat the rheumatic cases according to a regular routine. One week flat in bed, one week up a half hour at each meal, the next week up around the ward, then the next week up and around the hospital. That is the order as long as nothing happens during that time. They don't intend on giving discharges any more, I don't believe. They have it all worked out now, a regular program.

They even had colored cards that went on the patient's chart to identify which stage they were at.

When a patient reached the last stage they would begin reconditioning. For this they would go to another facility. This camp was known as Mill Creek. It was basically a sports camp, which of course would appeal to dad. It would be something to shoot for. Although since dad had a heart murmur there was some question as to when and if he would be able to participate in an exercise program such as the one at Mill Creek

After reconditioning, he would be allowed a 21-day furlough. Then it was assumed he could be assigned to another unit even possibly go overseas. Although the protocol was that a rheumatic fever patient would not be shipped overseas before six months after starting a recuperation program and not without a complete physical.

By the time dad got to Torney he had seen quite a few doctors. He was amazed when one doctor suggested he might have never really had rheumatic fever and didn't seem to have a heart murmur. It seemed ridiculous to dad since five or six doctors before this one thought he had Rheumatic Fever.

All the same dad saw this as possibly good news. It could mean he still might get to go overseas again, maybe even Europe this time. Dad sent a letter home expressing these very thoughts. Margaret apparently threatened to write a letter to someone protesting this diagnosis. I'm sure she couldn't bare the thought of dad going back into combat.

Margaret certainly always had dad's best interests in mind. She often schemed about how to "fix" things for dad, probably not unlike many moms during these times. One advantage Margaret saw was working in the paint store. She was able to talk (gossip) with all kinds of people who came in to buy paint. She often spoke with military personnel, e.g. officers, etc. to get their angles on things. Any ways dad was not happy about Margaret's latest intentions and said so in no uncertain terms:

...So you still think I can't take care of myself. If I should come home someday and start the University, would you hold my hand until I got to school. I'm not the little kid that left home a year and a half ago. I've told you so many times mom to please leave things alone. If I felt like blowing off I always thought I could make myself feel better by telling somebody my troubles. I'm not asking for any help. I can see now that you and dad were to helpful when were kids. I should have been made to fight my own battles when I was a kid. Anyway getting down to the present case. I would gladly go back overseas, if they told me I was in perfect health, and if I'm not in perfect health I'll never go back. As far as my history is concerned they know all they want to about that. So you can forget the letter, and I'm not fooling. Anyway I have decided one thing, I won't tell you anymore of my troubles. Lots of times I dwell on troubles in order to make a letter, but that will cease right now. I know you won't do anything I wouldn't want you to do, even though you think it is for my own good.

Subsequent letters were never of this same tone. But, dad obviously got his point across. Apparently later that month, December 1944, he got a new doctor or something because dad did confirm in a letter home that he was indeed a Rheumatic fever patient and he indeed would not be allowed overseas for at least six months.

Also that December, his second Christmas away from home, dad had a major malaria attack. He had fevers and chills. His temperature got as high as 106 degrees. It stayed at 105 for a couple of days. Dad explained to his parents that the Atabrine they took overseas was just to suppress the symptoms of malaria. Since he had stopped taking it and the parasite was still in him he could have attacks off and on for some time. He would indeed struggle with recurring bouts for the next five years.

In January 1945 dad received some devastating news. Tony buhr had been killed during the Allied invasion of Leyte Island in the Philippines. Dad had followed that campaign as it unfolded. He had tried to follow the whereabouts of the 112th after he had left them. He did not for a fact know that they were fighting at Leyte. The 112th had been folded in to the 1st Cavalry Division. The 1st played a prominent part in the invasion, but news reports would not necessarily mention the 112th.

Tony had been killed on December 3, 1944. Dad didn't find out until after the first of the year. Dad's parents knew before he did. Margaret chose not to tell him right away because of his malaria attacks. It naturally was quite a shock when he did find out. Some of his immediate thoughts as he wrote to his parents were:

For some reason I just never figured he would get it. He and I both seemed to live charmed lives. I feel so bad, because I know how he wanted to live. Always planning on our getting together in Seattle. It is such a miserable place to die too. Of course I know he probably hoped something would happen so he could get out of that living hell. I hope he got my last letter, but I'm afraid he didn't. He was so darn anxious to see his niece. He was a swell kid to me. Always looked out for me, I'm really going to miss him. I'm afraid to think of all the other boys that may not come back. It makes me not want to come back myself. Of course I'll get over it.

Margaret wrote Tony's mother to give her condolences. It's interesting that everyone (Margaret, dad and Tony's mom) took consolation in the thought that at least Tony was not suffering any more himself. Mrs. Buhr wrote, in responding to Margaret's letter, "Yes, I do feel the same way that God was good to Tony to take him, before this terrible slaughter would have changed Tony. Tony probably would have broken down, he could not have taken it for long."

Certainly dad went through many different feelings because of this. I think, generally, he was frustrated just lying around. He wanted to be where he could be useful. Probably he felt guilty not being with his outfit and the others in combat.

Dad used to tell me he wondered, if he had been there he might have been able to save Tony's life. Later that year a Lieutenant from the 112th, also at Torney General with Rheumatic Fever, recounted the actual events of Tony's death. While under heavy enemy fire Tony lifted his head up from behind a log. He was shot right between the eyes and died instantly. Dad used to maintain that if he had been there he might have pulled him down in time.

It wasn't just guilt though. Dad was a combat veteran now. The statistics for those that actually had been in front line action during World War Two was something

like one in every ten. Most of the other patients at Torney had not been in actual combat, many had never even been overseas.

Not that dad in any way had a chip on his shoulder regarding this. He mentioned in one letter home that the others guys in his ward were interested in hearing about his experiences. But he never brought it up unless asked about it and he didn't care for those veterans that bragged about their experiences. While he was still on bed rest he was ceremoniously awarded his Combat Infantryman's Badge and a Ribbon with a Bronze Star, which represented serving in a campaign. This earned him great respect of the other patients, probably mostly because he was so modest about it all.

But although dad was a seasoned soldier, he still had developed a disgust for the Army and all it's hierarchy. In regards to the fight on Leyte dad wrote, "Yes, I know that Philippine deal was MacArthur's idea. He'll be able to wear another ribbon now. I don't suppose you heard about the mansion he had built at Hollandia. Our U.S. Engineers spent a lot of valuable time and money building it. After it was built they all cancelled their war bonds, and I don't blame them." Dad also expressed the opinion that he had been inadequately trained. He felt one way he could possibly be useful would be in preparing recruits before going into combat.

Not that dad was all that miserable down there in sunny southern California. From some of his letters it almost sounded like an early Elvis Presley movie, sunshine and pretty girls everywhere. By the sound of it the girls were pretty fond of dad. He was apparently hotly pursued by a few of them. One of his female friends said it was his Irish charm. Dad wrote home about all this in his usual unpretentious manner, "I've been trying to pull away from these two gals, but it is certainly a job. It is really getting to be a joke about these women down here...I walk down the path and about three or four girls come running up and yelling "Tommy!" Oh well it is a lot of fun anyway." I think this was all pretty new for dad but he seemed to make the best of it.

Dad was thinking very seriously, at this time, about going to college and getting and education. He was practically aching to go to school. I think on some level dad sort of struggled with the whole girls vs. school thing. He did say the girl he married had to be intelligent (*credit to my mom.*)

Of course putting everything in question was dad's health. Along with the malaria attacks he had some other setbacks. All the patients who were admitted when he was, got off bed rest long before him. One factor that determined progress for the Rheumatic Fever cases was something known as "sed" rates. This referred to a sedimentary rate of something in their blood. Dad's Sed rate took a while to come down. Dad weight was still very low since he came back to the States. The doctor actually prescribed daily milkshakes for dad. This slow progress probably frustrated dad. It certainly concerned his parents.

One highlight for dad during his recuperation at Torney General was a surprise visit by his Uncle Frank. Frank just showed up one afternoon and visited with dad for about three hours. He apparently made a side trip during one of his business trips. Dad said later, he thought Frank was glad to see him in one piece. There may have been some family concern as to whether dad had been maimed or seriously wounded. Since no one had actually seen dad yet they couldn't know if he was trying to protect them. Since dad had several times wrote his parents not to come visit him. His reasoning was simply that it would be too expensive. They may have been suspicious. Frank was able to report that he was all there.

Gradually dad's health improved. He was eventually allowed to move around the hospital. Not long after that he even began trying some physical activities, i.e. basketball, swimming. He didn't always tell the doctors though. Finally he was deemed fit for a reconditioning program. This meant he would go to the Mill Creek camp. But it also meant he would be given a furlough before that.

Dad came home on furlough sometime in the middle of April 1945. He was feeling better physically so he must have had a good time. His sister Peggy remembered dad wore his uniform the whole time he was up. She wasn't sure if this was standard practice or just because he had lost a lot of weight and didn't have any civilian clothes that would fit him.

He was able to get up to the cabin on Whidbey Island. Dad's whole family, his cousin Trudy Sheehan, Uncle Frank and Frank's friend Nettie Evans were also up there. They were up there when news came of President Roosevelt's death, on April 12. Dad had been very much a supporter of Roosevelt. He was proud that 70% of those in the Service had voted for FDR in the election of the previous fall. Even though he was not one of them, since he was only nineteen years old at the time. The twenty-sixth amendment, allowing eighteen-year-olds to vote, wouldn't be ratified until 1971.

While dad was still on furlough, it was obvious Germany would be defeated any day. In Fact dad arrived at Mill Creek on May 13th and Germany surrendered on May 7, 1945.

The fight with Japan had come far but considering the resolve of the Japanese forces it was far from over. In early April 1945 the Allies had invaded the island of Okinawa. This was about 325 miles south of Japan. It was basically the last objective before invading Japan itself. As it would turn out Okinawa took until the end of June before it was considered secured. Then there would be mass bombings to be followed by a proposed invasion of Japan. This invasion would call for all available men. This meant that by no means could it be assumed that dad was not going to go back into a combat unit.

But in mid-May dad reported to Mill Creek for reconditioning. Mill Creek is in the mountains east of Los Angeles, near the town of Redlands. It sounds like it was pretty much a resort of sorts. It was basically a sports camp. There was a lot of baseball played among other activities.

When dad arrived he was reunited with some of his new friends he had made at the hospital in Palm Springs. He fondly recalled his friend Frank Gallagher. Apparently “Gallagher and Sheehan” was an old vaudeville act and reference was often made to this. It sounds like dad and Frank had quite a good time. They, along with a few others, got an occasional pass to go into L.A. for the weekend.

Dad recalled an interesting thing that happened while he was at Mill Creek. As he put it he was “called to pick up his rifle once again.” This time it was to deal with the “Zoot-Suiters” who were causing trouble in Redlands. Zoot-Suiters were gangs, mostly Chicano, who at the time were roaming the streets. They were reported to be beating up some soldiers when caught alone and defenseless. Dad thought this all very Ironic, as the war seemed to be close to over then to have things like this happening in our own country.

While still at Mill Creek the Americans dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This brought much relief to dad’s family. It was very soon clear that dad would not have to be re-assigned to a combat outfit. In fact he received his Honorable Discharge fourteen days after Nagasaki on August 23, 1945.

Dad recalled that when he returned to Seattle his father came down to the train station in a taxi to welcome him home. He said his dad was so proud and no doubt relieved.

Epilogue to Volume One

Dad was twenty years old when he returned home. This would end up accounting for less than a third of his life. Yet in this amount of time he experienced and endured more than many of us ever will.

Even so he did go to college and did become a teacher. He completed a long and successful career in education. He had a profound effect on countless lives.

This will be the subject of Volume Two.



Some of “the gang” l-r (Tangneys) Bob, Florence, Bill
Margaret, George Sheehan, “Ceece MacDonald and Frank



Margaret and George



Grandpa "Pa" Tangney



Dad and Peggy on the farm



Peggy and dad in Minnesota



Peggy, (cousins) Dorothy, Jeanne and dad on "Old Bill"



Cousins Tom Tangney (foreground), Jack, Bobby and dad sitting in back



Peggy, Frank and dad



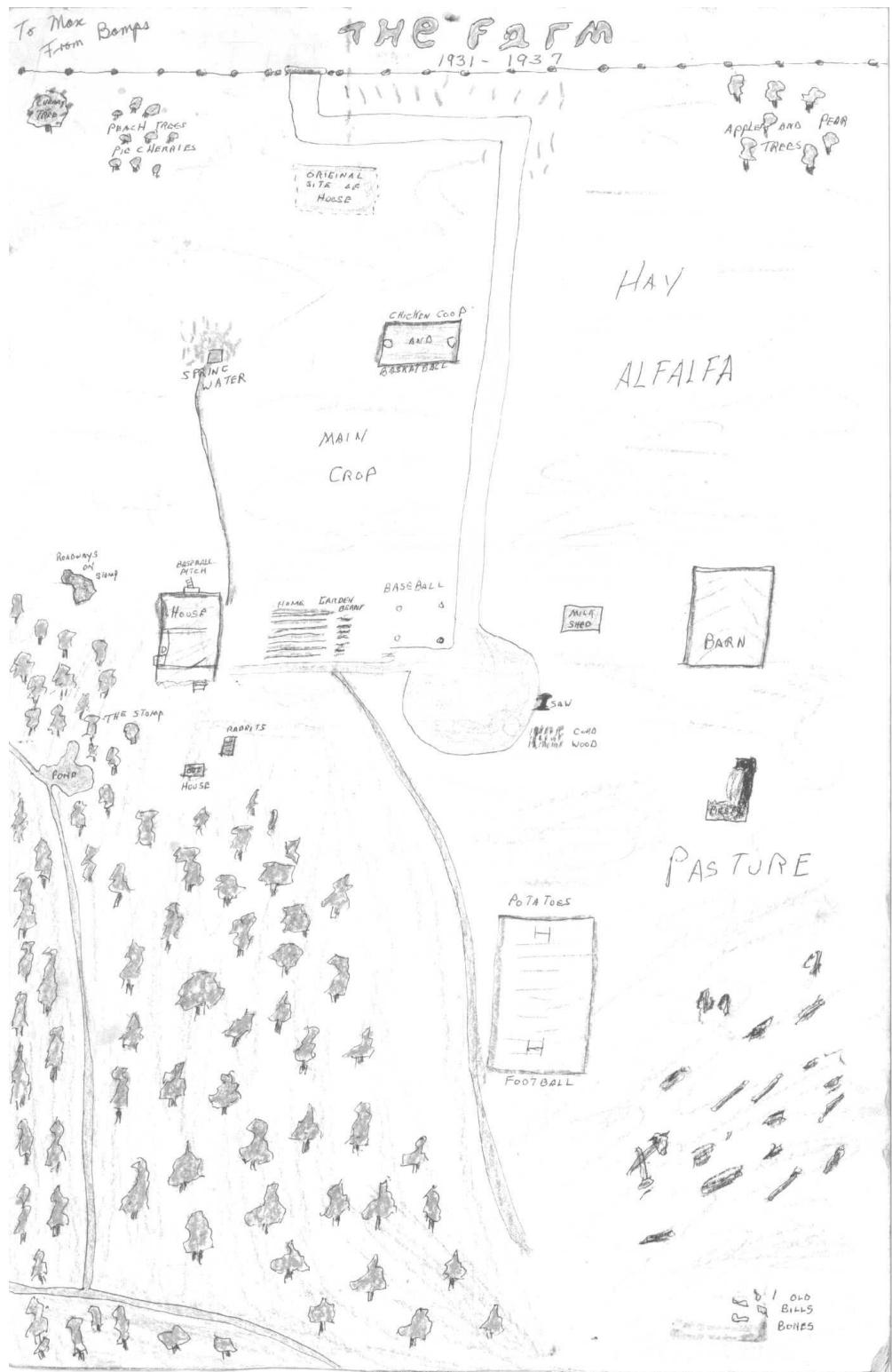
Paint Store on 45th



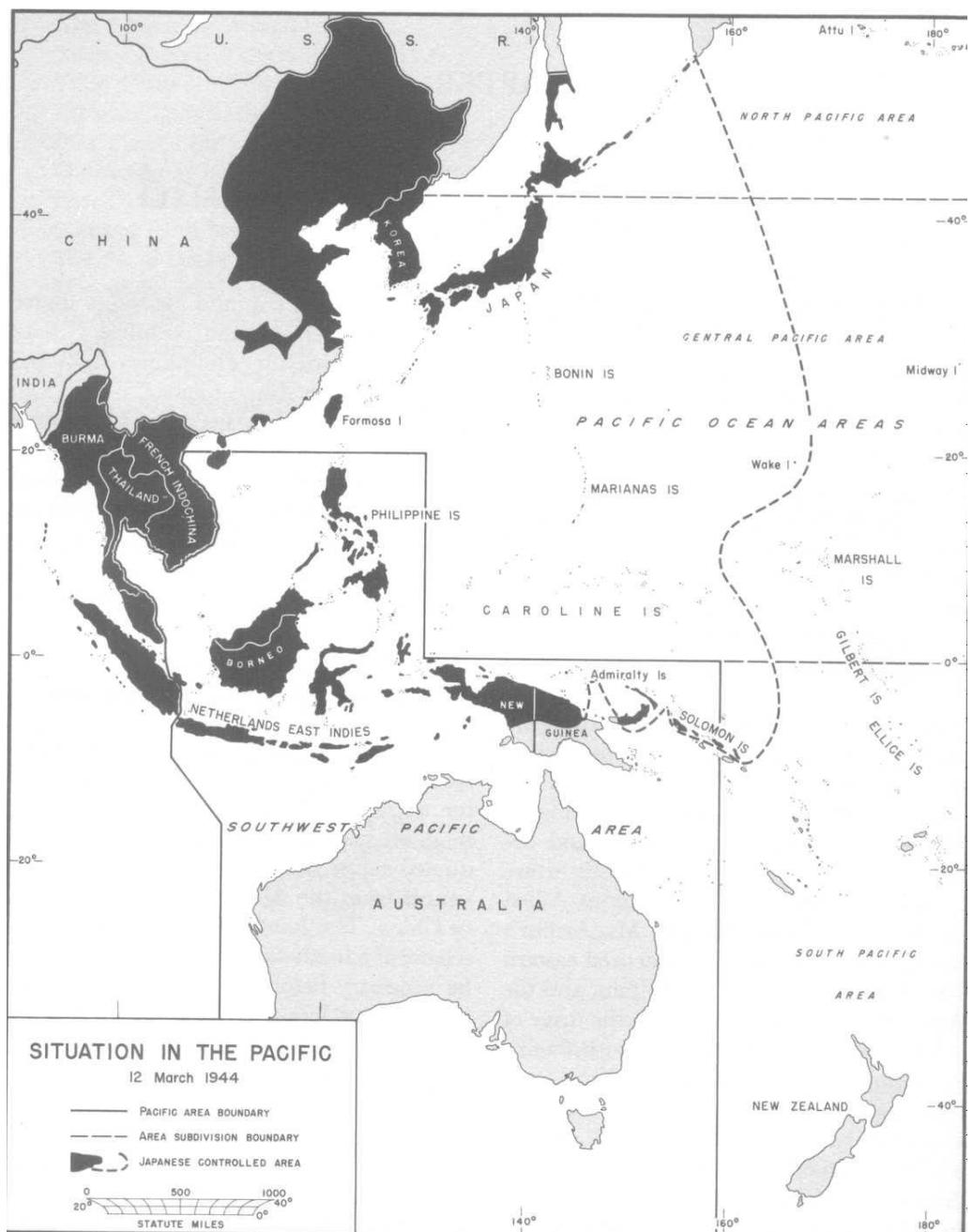
Cavalry Replacement Training Center-Fort Riley,
Kansas Dad is 2nd from the right, back row



Dad recuperating at Torney General Hospital in Palm Springs



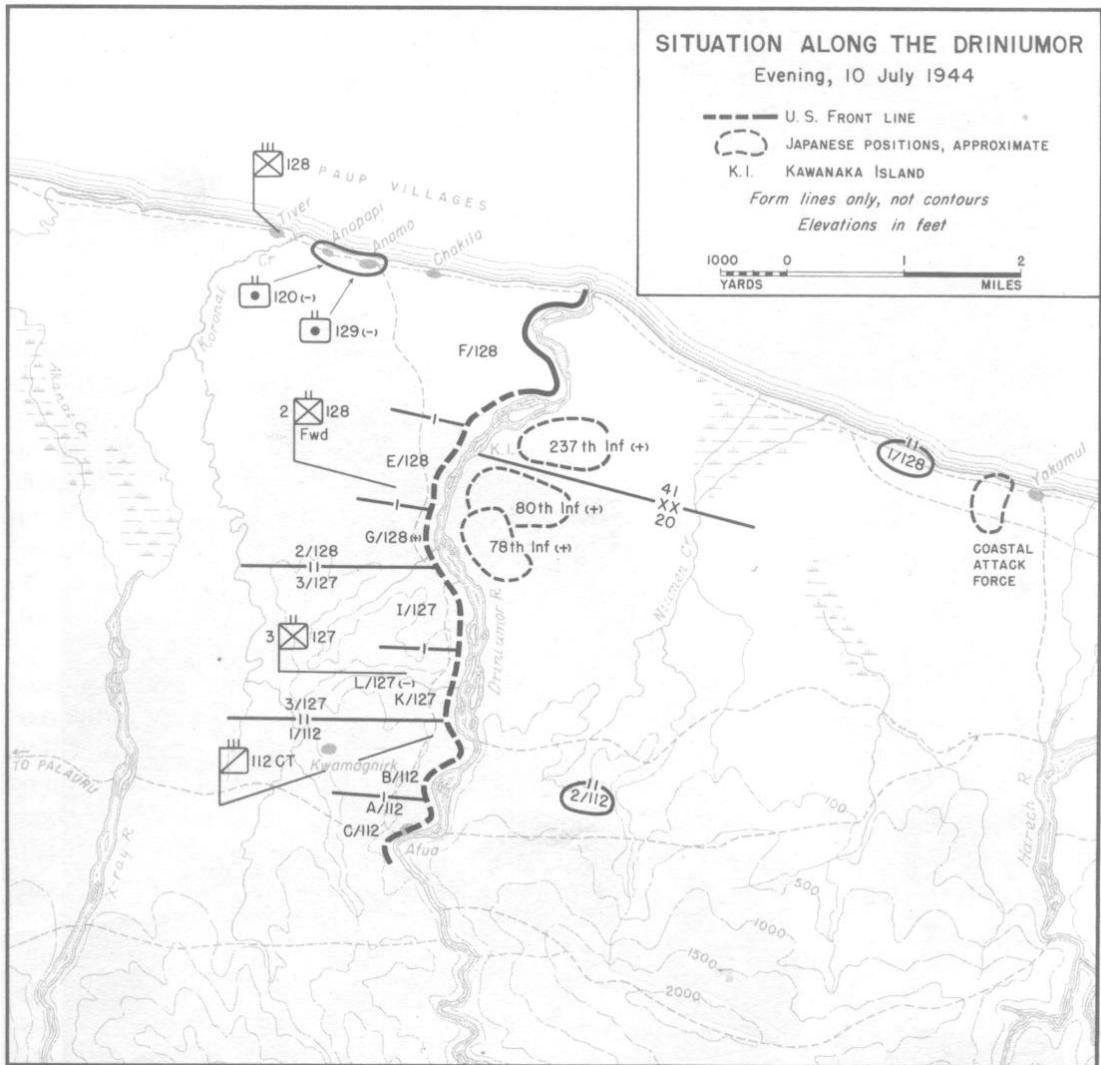
"A paradise", dad made this map in his 60's



From Smith, *The Approach to the Philippines*



From Smith, *The Approach to the Philippines*



From Smith, *The Approach to the Philippines*

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b. Letters

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T.S. to G. & M. S., 8/29/43

Peggy Sheehan (P.S.) to T.S., 9/6/43

Tom Tangney jr. (T.Tjr.) to T.S., 9/7/43

Margaret Sheehan (M.S.) to T.S., 9/12/43

T.S. to P.S., 9/13/43

George Sheehan (G.S.) to T.S., 9/14/43

T.S. to G.M. & P. S., 9/16/43

T.S. to G.M.S., 10/6/43

T.S. to G.M.S., 10/9/43

Gert Tangney (G.T.) to T.S., 10/13/43

T.S. to G.M.S., 10/17/43

M.S. to T.S., 10/22/43

T.S. to G.M.S., 10/23/43

T.S. to G.M.S., 10/24/43

M.S. to T.S., 10/27/43

G.S. to T.S., 10/30/43

T.S. to G.M.S., 11/6/43

Tom Tangney Sr. (T.Tsr.) to T.S., 11/8/43

M.S. to T.S., 11/11/43

T.S. to G.M.S., 11/12/43

T.S. to G.M.S., 11/17/43

T.S. to G.M.S., 11/23/43

M.S. to T.S., 12/3/43

T.Tjr. to T.S., 12/5/43

T.S. to G.M.S., 12/5/43

G.S. to T.S., 12/5/43

T.S. to G.M.S., 12/9/43

T.S. to G.M.S., 12/17/43

T.S. to G.M.S., 12/31/43

T.S. to G.M.S., 1/3/44

T.S. to G.M.S., 1/6/44

T.S. to G.M.S., 1/10/44

T.S. to G.M.S., 2/1/44

T.S. to G.M.S., 2/3/44

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T.S. to G.M.S., 2/7/44

T.S. to G.M.S., 2/12/44

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T.S. to G.M.S., 2/28/44

T.S. to G.M.S., 2/29/44

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T.S. to G.M.S., 4/21/44

T.S. to G.M.S., 4/24/44

T.S. to G.M.S., 4/25/44

T.S. to G.M.S., 4/26/44

T.S. to G.M.S., 4/30/44

T.S. to G.M.S., 5/7/44

T.S. to G.M.S., 5/11/44

T.S. to G.M.S., 5/13/44

T.S. to G.M.S., 5/16/44

T.S. to G.M.S., 5/23/44

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T.S. to G.M.S., 5/28/44

T.S. to G.M.S., 6/2/44

T.S. to G.M.S., 6/6/44

T.S. to G.M.S., 6/7/44

T.S. to G.M.S., 6/21/44
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T.S. to G.M.S., 9/3/44
T.S. to G.M.S., 9/25/44
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T.S. to G.M.S. (telegram), 11/1/44
T.S. to G.M.S., 11/10/44
T.S. to G.M.S., 11/19/44
T.S. to G.M.S., 11/29/44
T.S. to G.M.S., 11/30/44
T.S. to G.M.S., 12/7/44
T.S. to G.M.S., 12/12/44
T.S. to G.M.S., 12/14/44
T.S. to G.M.S., 12/25/44
T.S. to G.M.S., 12/26/44
M.S. to Mrs. A. Buhr (M.A.B), 12/29/44
T.S. to G.M.S., 12/30/44
M.A.B. to M.S., 1/1/45
T.S. to G.M.S., 1/1/45

T.S. to G.M.S., 1/2/45

T.S. to G.M.S., 1/4/45

T.S. to P.S., 1/5/45

T.S. to G.M.S., 1/20/45

T.S. to G.M.S., 1/24/45

T.S. to G.M.S., 1/28/45

T.S. to G.M.S., 2/3/45

T.S. to G.M.S., 2/7/45

T.S. to G.M.S., 2/20/45

T.S. to G.M.S., 2/21/45

T.S. to G.M.S., 5/2/45

c. Interviews/Personal Narratives (recordings-audio & video)

Jeanne (Tangney) Coward

Peggy (Sheehan) Manning

Tom Sheehan

Jack Tangney

Tom Tangney jr.

d. Other Documents

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Whidbey Island Cabin "Log", entries:7/24/43, 7/25/43, 4/13/45